

Global Governance as the Hegemonic Project of Liberal Global Civil Society

If there was ever a primacy of politics in the international realm, with the end of the Cold War the world has entered into an era of increased complexity. Both economic and societal actors are more and more bypassing their governments and challenging as much as they can the autonomy of political decision-making. The most important claim of this essay is that this has led to a situation where there are as many as three hegemonic projects concerning world affairs. First, in the realm of international politics the Western model of the liberal constitutional state continues to challenge all other forms of political organization. Second, in the economic realm transnational corporations have become the key actors in global business. Third, in the realm of transnational society a galaxy of mostly liberal non-governmental organizations and social movements is raising claims for superior moral authority. Among each other, these three hegemonic projects are involved in a set of sometimes cooperative, sometimes antagonistic relationships. When taken together, these relationships can be said to make up the post-Westphalian, or neo-medieval, world order.

During the Cold War, most International Relations scholars were primarily concerned with the hegemonic project of Western-style international politics. Albeit in a more or less detached manner, most typically they have acted as *'advisers of the prince'*, figuring out the best ways for political decision-makers to control their domestic societies and to regulate their relationships with the external environment. In the late 1960s and the 1970s, there was an increasing awareness that the alleged primacy of international politics was challenged by transnational economics. Accordingly, the hegemonic project of transnational corporations was addressed by mostly (neo)liberal and (neo)Marxist scholars. In more recent times, and after the comeback of political realism during the time of the so-called second Cold War, economic globalization is the catchword for the increased leverage of market forces vis-à-vis individual states and the state system as a whole.

But whereas the first and second hegemonic project mentioned above have been theorized both in a problem-solving and in a more critical mood, the hegemonic claims of liberal global civil society were broadly neglected until very recently. Ever since the 1940s, when realists silenced liberal scholars as incorrigible utopians, the importance of world society has been downplayed by the great majority of International Relations scholars. Only in the last five or

ten years, the hegemonic project of world society has once again become a concern to a significant minority of IR scholars, mostly under the label of global governance. Although the term has obviously been (mis)used for other conceptual purposes as well, I claim that the presumed advent of world society is the core assumption that conveys the concept of global governance its meaning as an innovative tool for analytical and normative discourse. As soon as this is openly recognized, the concept of global governance can be (re)construed in such a way as to have much clearer conceptual contours than is commonly the case.

In order to clear the way for a heuristically more fruitful use of the concept, in the present paper I understand global governance as the hegemonic project of liberal global civil society. To prepare the ground for conceptual reconstruction, the first section starts with a series of clarifications about global governance as it has been actually used thus far. In continuation of this critical effort, the second section cuts back some false aspirations and tells some uncomfortable truths, which are all too often left unsaid. Having thus cleared the floor, in the third section I will locate global governance within the “*governance triangle*”, i.e. the conceptual triangle formed by international politics, global economics, and world society. It will thereby become clearer what exactly I mean when claiming that global governance is the hegemonic project of liberal global civil society. As I show in the fourth section, the most serious conceptual weakness of global governance is at the same time its most important strategic asset. Both in theory and in practice, as it were, global governance oscillates between “*parapolitics*” as the continuation of political activity beyond the organizational sphere of the state, and “*metapolitics*” as the allocation of organizational purpose and substantive demands to political and economic actors. In the fifth section, I discuss global corporatism as a highly problematic strategy to settle the periodic conflicts within the triangle formed by politics, economics, and civil society. After the clarifying digressions in the last two sections, it becomes finally possible, in the conclusion, to pin down global governance as a political project in the making – the hegemonic project of liberal global civil society.

1. Conceptual Clarifications

Global governance is more than just a stylish catchword. For many practitioners in national administrations, international organizations, transnational corporations, and nongovernmental organizations, global governance is the attempt to establish a novel agenda in world politics. For many theoreticians in the social, economic and political sciences, global governance is the

crystallization point for a brand-new vocabulary about politics beyond the nation state system. Reading the signs of the times, private and public foundations redirect their research funding from the academic discipline of international relations towards the research agenda about global civil society and global governance. As is usually the case with new ideas, many young intellectuals are linking their personal career opportunities with the latest academic fad that promises to challenge conventional wisdom. At the same time, global governance is invoked as an attractive problem-solving device by professionals involved in international affairs. In short, a growing network of practitioners and theoreticians is committed to global governance as an operational and conceptual agenda.

In 1992, a prominent group of international relations scholars launched speculations about “*governance without government*” (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). In 1995, a group of senior statesmen gathered in the UN-funded “*Commission for Global Governance*” came to the conclusion that, if the nation-state system is becoming unable to deal with the planet’s most pressing problems such as market regulation and environmental degradation, transnational networks of good-willed people should work together to do the trick (Commission, 1995). In the same year, another volume about global governance was edited (Desai, 1995) and “*Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*” was founded in close collaboration with the United Nations University.

The theoretical concept of global governance sets a clear challenge to the traditional understanding of international relations as “*politics among nations*”. It contains the promise that, if successful, the cosmopolitan commitment of world citizens will rescue the planet from the threats posed by the crisis of government and by the negative externalities of the capitalist economy (Falk, 1995). At any level, from the local to the global, and from the civic to the governmental, people are called to take over responsibility to deal with the world’s most urgent collective-action problems (Lipschutz, 1996; Young, 1997). Recalling the recent hype of the globalization discourse, it is hardly surprising that global governance has become a hotly contested issue over the last few years. Things are very much in a state of flux, however, and the rush for the new theoretical domain is still going on (Messner and Nuscheler, 1996; Mürle, 1998; Reinicke, 1998; Smouts, 1998; Hewson and Sinclair, 1999; Rosenau, 2000; Drache, 2001).

In the meantime, the conceptual wooliness of global governance has created tremendous confusion. Take for example the definition offered by the Commission for Global Governance (1995: 2): “*Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and*

private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.” According to the UN-sponsored Commission for Global Governance, a multitude of actors and factors are contributing to global governance, such as intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, citizens’ movements, multinational corporations, the global capital market, and global mass media (1995: 3). In the briefest possible formula, global governance can therefore be defined as *“the ensemble of regulation mechanisms, formal and informal, that organize and coordinate socioeconomic relations, from the household and the family to governmental policies and international agreements”* (Massicotte, 1999: 139).

By this and similarly expansive definitions, the idea of global governance becomes almost all-inclusive (cf. Rosenau, 1995: 13; Finkelstein, 1995: 369). It can take virtually any meaning, covering a vast conceptual space to be filled with content by those involved into the theory and practice of world affairs. Nevertheless, it is cold comfort to state that global governance is an *“essentially contested concept”*. As a matter of fact, the theory of world politics is a field where almost everything is contested. There is definitely no need for a further proliferation of concepts to quarrel about. It might be tempting indeed to dismiss the concept as cheap and frivolous talk, as Susan Strange tried to do in vain in the 1980s with the incipient debate about international regimes (Strange, 1982). Of course it is a problem that in the field of global governance there is so much conceptual eye-wash and normative self-deception underway. Notwithstanding, the author of the present paper is firmly convinced that global governance is too interesting a theoretical development to be thrown to the theoretical dustbin.

In order to rescue the concept of global governance from its inherent wooliness, it is all the more important to get it right by telling some very simple, but partly uncomfortable, truths about the issue. This may be annoying to some, but since these truths are so often disregarded, it is not redundant to dwell on the less explicit but equally crucial features of the concept as it is commonly used by political scientists.

2. Five Truths about Global Governance

1. *Global governance is an offspring of economic globalization.* According to conventional wisdom, global governance is intimately linked to economic globalization (Prakash and Hart,

1999). In a time of borderless production and finance, the story goes, capital is increasingly endowed with an exit option vis-à-vis territorial statehood. Although there are clearly developments in the real world that point into this direction, the economic orthodoxy of liberalism is at least as important as the empirical evidence to make globalization appear inevitable. The adherents of orthodox economic liberalism foment and celebrate the emancipation of the market from the territorial state as a redemption from the inefficiencies associated with the public sector.

Against this, critical observers object that the crisis of government unleashed by economic globalization may undermine the very foundations of the liberal market society. A market without some sort of political regulation would be self-defeating. By the way, it is debatable whether and to what extent globalization leads to a retreat of the state and to a crisis of the embedded liberalism compromise (Ruggie, 1982; 1998; Hirst and Thompson, 1996; Vogel, 1996; Strange, 1996; 1998; Scholte, 1997; Mathews, 1997; Garrett, 1998; Bernauer, 2000). But insofar as it is assumed that globalization leads to a crisis of traditional politics, it generates the need some functional equivalent to political government.

This is were the idea of “*global governance*” or “*governance without government*” steps in. If the state loses the capacity to perform as the regulating subject, the unregulated pluralism of global public policy appears as an interesting alternative. To support this idea, it is assumed that economic globalization does not only lead to the retreat of the state but also to the formation of global civil society. Not only does the retreat of the state create a demand for some functional equivalent to political government, but the advent of global civil society does also create the possibility for global governance to perform as a substitute for international politics. The promise of global governance is that global civil society is in a position to fill the regulative gap created by economic globalization and the concomitant retreat of the state. Global governance is supposed to take over where government has lost its steering capacity.

2. *One should be careful not to romanticize global civil society.* Unfortunately the high hopes set in global civil society rest on a series of relatively naïve assumptions. As a matter of fact, it is tremendously naïve to presume that global society is always or prevalently *civil*. Moreover, it is not self-evident that global society consists only or primarily of good-willed and liberal-minded people. It should not be ignored that transnational terrorism and organized crime are an important part of global society, whether civil or not. There is no reason why world society should be more immune from corruption by criminal elements than domestic

societies. The absence of a global Leviathan would rather point into the opposite direction (cf. Mittelman and Johnston, 1999).

Ignoring these practical problems, it is sometimes maintained that global governance can lead to the provision of universal public goods to be financed by the Tobin tax and other sources (Mendez, 1995) – but it is not quite clear who should collect these revenues. In a similar way, it has been said that global governance offers an opportunity for saving the planet from ecological disaster (Litfin, 1999) – but it is not clear who is going to coordinate which efforts at what level, nor is it clear how the disparate efforts of global civil society are going to aggregate at the global level. Against such liberal naiveté it is worth recalling the realist adage that *can* does not derive from *ought*.

Let's face it. In some instances global governance will turn out to be a good thing, while in other instances it will turn out to be a mess. In some instances the aggregation of particular interests into a global civic movement may be an option, while in other instances there is no alternative to politics as the authoritative allocation of values from above. In some instances global society will be morally superior to either national governments or the market economy. In other instances civil society will be either completely indifferent towards urgent problems or even corrupted by criminal elements. Global governance should be welcomed as a possible solution to some problems, but it is no panacea against dilemmas of collective action.

3. *Global governance has an Anglo-American cultural imprint.* It is hard to translate “*governance*” into languages other than English, where the Oxford English Dictionary traces the term back by the well into the 14th century. Thus, the French “*gouvernance*” is easily discernible as a loan translation. Whereas “*governança*” and “*governançã*” have conquered a firm place in the Portuguese vocabulary, “*gobnanza*” still sounds odd to Spanish ears. The Italians have simply assimilated the English term into their domestic vocabularies, and the same is true for the Germanic and probably also for the Slavic languages. Given its difficult translatability into languages other than English, it is reasonable to assume that the term “*global governance*” is culturally not neutral. With its adoption into other linguistic environments, it transports part of the conceptual universe of English language in general, and of American social science in particular, into different cultural and academic contexts.

It is relatively clear that the conceptual diffusion of global governance into other language areas would be unthinkable if America was not the center, and if English was not the *lingua franca* of the international relations discipline. Just imagine that scholars in Continental

Europe or Latin America had coined a conceptual innovation which was not translatable into English. It is fairly unlikely that, in this not so hypothetical case, there would be a similar contagion effect as can be observed with regard to global governance. With the important exception of “*dependencia*” in the 1960s, theoretical concepts from the English language area are much more likely to flow to the rest of the world than concepts from any other Western or non-Western cultural environment (obvious exceptions are the concepts of *dependencia* from Spanish and *subsidiarity* from Neolatin/German).

4. Global governance has a Transatlantic organizational bias. There is a broad consensus that without a strong field of non-state actors there is no “*governance without government*”. Among the most important of those non-state actors are nongovernmental organizations, which are unevenly distributed over the world. This can be easily demonstrated by figures from the Yearbook of International Organizations (Union of International Associations, 2000, appendix 3 table 7, pp. 1487-1492). According to this statistical source, about 59 percent of all nongovernmental organizations have their headquarters in Europe. This is probably due to Europe’s national fragmentation, which leads to a multiplication of small and medium-sized nongovernmental organizations. When adding the American percentage to the European share, we arrive at 85 percent of all NGO headquarters worldwide. The Transatlantic bias of nongovernmental organizations becomes even more evident if one compares the absolute numbers of NGO headquarters in different states. In 2000 there were 19322 nongovernmental organizations, 3441 of which had their headquarter in the USA, 1973 in the UK, 1861 in France, 929 in Germany, and 522 in Canada. By comparison, there were only 258 headquarters in Japan, 199 in India, 87 in Russia, 49 in Nigeria, and 36 in China.

All in all, there is strong statistical evidence to support the claim that global governance has a Transatlantic bias. To be sure, NGOs are neither better nor worse just because they are typical products of the Western way of life. Nobody should have to apologize if he struggles for such inherently liberal things as global governance and global civil society. Nor can it be excluded that global governance can be used by counter-hegemonic movements as well, which tend to be more subversive of Western society. One could argue that there is the concept of global governance by nongovernmental organizations, and there is the counter-concept of global governance by transnational social movements. It would certainly take a long debate to discuss the vices and virtues of liberal and other conceptions of global civil society. In any case, it is a matter of intellectual honesty to be conscious about the non-universality of one’s

own normative claims. Insofar as the term “*global*” suggests general or even universal applicability, it would therefore make a lot of sense for liberal advocates of civil society to talk about “*transatlantic*” rather than “*global governance*” (Pollak and Shaffer, 2001).

5. More often than not, ideas about global governance are inherently economistic. An important branch of the global governance literature is characterized by a highly ambiguous relationship with politics and political science. On the one hand, global governance is said to be the political answer to globalization and the retreat of the state. On the other hand, it is generally defined as “*governance without government*” and therefore hardly fits with the conventional image of politics as the authoritative allocation of values (Easton, 1971). As a device to overcome market failures and problems of collective action, global governance is closer to the logic of rational-choice institutionalism than to the logic of political action. Paradoxically, it seems therefore justified to brand global governance as a form of anti-economistic economism. To bring this home, it is useful to take Richard Ashley’s (1983) analytical distinction of three modes of economism:

- “*historical economism*”: The empirically observable denationalization of the capitalist mode of production and trade is reified as a sort of historical necessity with no escape for political actors.
- “*logical economism*”: The increasing commitment of political scientists to the tenets of rational choice tends to reduce the logic of political behavior to the assumed behavioral characteristics of economic man.
- “*variable economism*”: The ‘realities’ of the market are understood as the confining conditions (independent variables) that determine regularities in political behavior (dependent variables).

This analytical distinction was initially designed by Ashley to criticize the debate of the late 1970s and early 1980s about power and interdependence. To be sure, there are some obvious differences between interdependence on the one hand, and globalization in the 1990s and 2000s on the other. But at least in one regard there is a clear *déjà vu*. First, the historical nemesis of globalization is mostly held responsible for the shift from government towards governance. This has been already pointed out in the last section. Second, global governance is often instrumentally understood as collective action undertaken by rational actors to overcome problems of market failure. Third, the options for global governance are often seen as shaped and constrained by the realities of the market economy. Political agency is thereby

in danger of being treated as an epiphenomenon vis-à-vis structural determination by the market. More often than not, global governance as the alleged political answer to the collective-action problems posed globalization is liable for the same anti-economistic economism as the literature of the 1970s about power and interdependence.

3. The Governance Triangle

Hopefully, the last two sections have made us somewhat more resistant against exaggerated expectations with regard to the problem-solving capacity, universal applicability, and value neutrality of global governance. There is a certain consensus that global governance is not so much as a self-contained social achievement but rather the societal corollary of economic globalization. Nevertheless, many authors exaggerate the problem-solving capacity of world society and underestimate its problematic features. For reasons of intellectual honesty, one should not overlook the fact that global governance is distinguished by an Anglo-American cultural imprint and a transatlantic organizational bias. More often than not, an economistic bias is inherent in the very conceptualization of global governance. On a balanced account, global governance may raise justified hopes in some quarters and preoccupations in some others. At the end of the day, there is little reason to assume that global civil society will bring about the advent of a better world.

On this sobering note, let us now turn back to the initial concern of this article, *i.e.* the proper place for global governance in the post-Westphalian, or neo-medieval, world order (about the concept of new medievalism cf. Friedrichs, 2001). To better understand the coordinates of the post-Westphalian world order, it is possible to trace a governance triangle with the state system and the world market at the basis, and with world society at the top (figure 1).

When reading the diagram inserted bellow, it is important to note that the symmetry of the triangle conveys an implicit normative claim concerning the hierarchy of the three components that make up its corners. It would be easy to trace at least two more triangles, with either the state system or the world market at the top. Each of the three possible triangles corresponds to one of the hegemonic projects mentioned in the introduction to this essay. Accordingly, it is fair to say that the governance triangle traced in the figure inserted bellow corresponds to the hegemonic project of world society. From a logical standpoint this hegemonic project could take different shapes, but in the present historical conjuncture it is the hegemonic project of liberal world civil society.

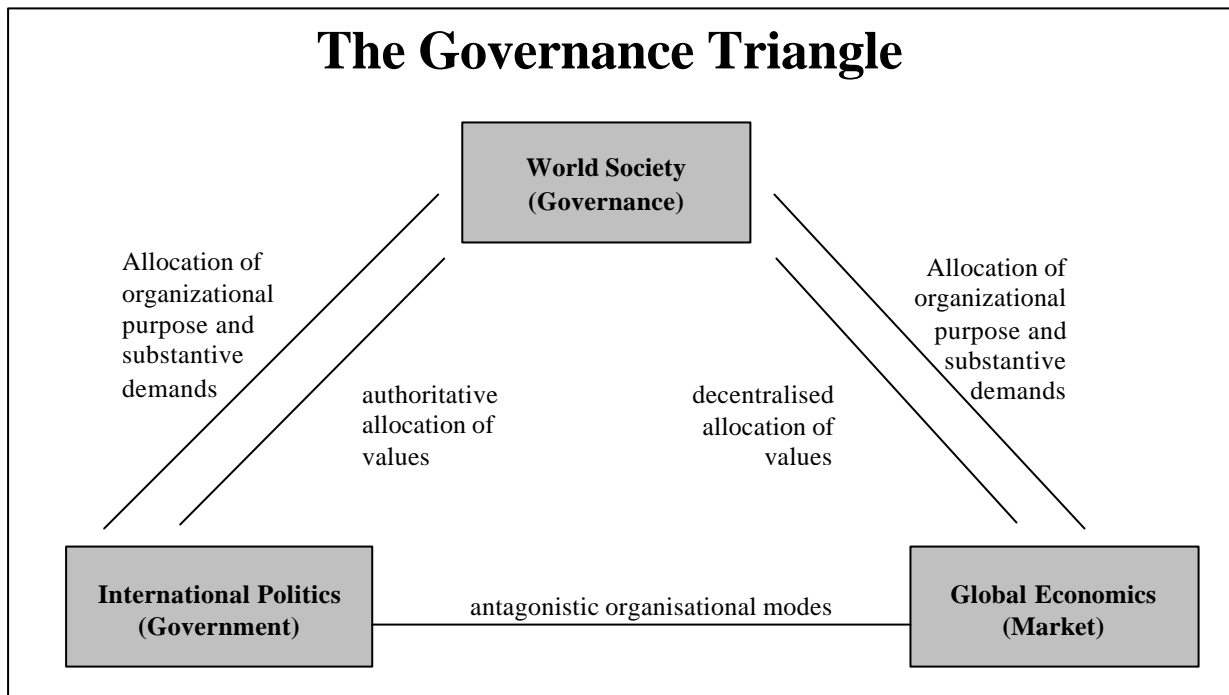


Figure 1

As already mentioned, the triangle could take different forms depending on whether one is inclined to privilege the hegemonic aspirations of international politics, of global economics, or of world society. According to the Hobbesian vision of international politics, only sovereign states are in a position to impose order to the market and to civil society. Only sovereign states are considered to be capable and entitled to determine the world political game. In this optic, the political and military interaction among governments and armies would be on top of the triangle. But of course, the Hobbesian viewpoint can be challenged by a Cobdenite advocacy of unrestrained free trade. An extreme free trader would probably deny the need for either the state apparatus or an organized civil society to allocate organizational purpose and substantive demands to the market. By virtue of the reputed impartiality of the invisible hand, the market should be on top of the triangle, assigning to politics the role of providing law and order, and to society the role of consuming goods and providing labor. The third possibility is the governance triangle as presented in the above figure. In this optic, world society is in a key position as the ultimate source of both organizational purpose and substantive values.

By virtue of the increasing functional differentiation at the global level (Luhmann, 1997), it is hardly surprising that the world looks different from each angle of the governance triangle. As a result, it is possible to distinguish between the primacy of politics, the preponderance of the

market, and the priority of civil society as three hegemonic projects in the post-Westphalian world order. To be sure, these are abstractions or ideal types. In the real world, compromise among the hegemonic projects is unavoidable. Transnational corporations will sometimes undergo public-private partnerships in order to shape their socio-political environment. States will sometimes work together with nongovernmental organizations and transnational social movements to hold in check transnational corporations. In other instances, human rights activists will try to convince transnational corporations that it is in their interest to outdo authoritarian states. The open clash between the three hegemonic projects will be rather the exception than the rule.

Nevertheless, it would be naïve to assume a stable harmony of interests among the divergent hegemonic projects (Zumach, 2002). It is completely normal that one sphere tries to colonize the other, and it is equally normal that each sphere rebuffs attempts by the other spheres to curtail its domain. To be competitive in this game, each realm must construct itself as an autonomous sphere of action, even if it is clear that functional autonomy can never be attained at the operational level.

	International politics » government	Global economics » market	World society » governance
Organizing principle	Authoritative allocation of values	Decentralized allocation of values	[Free association of individuals?]
Normative ethos	Claim to legitimate representation	Claim to superior efficiency	Claim to substantive values
Legal superstructure	International public law	International economic law	[International civil law?]

Figure 2

The symmetry suggested by the picture of three competing hegemonic projects requires one caveat. The unparalleled success of the globalization discourse is a strong indicator that in the present situation the weights are not evenly distributed. Economic reasoning is making inroads into the realms of politics and society, rather than the other way round. All the more, politics and society must struggle not to be assimilated too much by the economic discourse, and encroachments from the market should be rebuffed. The market must not be allowed to

supplant either political or societal dynamics. If it is true that the global economy is on the advance and the state somewhat on the retreat, the emergent global civil society should be expected rather to balance *against* than to bandwagon *with* economic actors. Of course, this is only a hypothesis. The opposite might also prove to be true. In that case, the global economy might carry the day and ultimately overdo both government and governance.

But let us leave aside these broader speculations and narrow down the focus to global civil society's quest for primacy, as it has been graphically illustrated in the '*governance triangle*'. When looking at the post-Westphalian world order from the standpoint of global civil society, it is important to note that there is a difference in kind between political and economic actors on the one hand, and societal actors on the other. Politics and economics can be understood as two different organizational modes supported by two distinct forms of legitimacy. Politics is based on the hierarchical allocation of values and derives most of its legitimacy from the claim to act on behalf of society as a whole. Economics, by contrast, is ideally based on the decentralized allocation of values and derives most of its legitimacy from the claim for the superior efficiency of the market. Each of these two organizational spheres can protect itself against colonization from the other by raising claim to its particular form of legitimacy. In the long run this might very well lead to a functional equilibrium between international politics and international economics. The actors of civil society, by contrast, are not distinguished by a specific organizational mode. Instead, they derive their legitimacy from the substance of the values they represent. Whether they struggle for democratic participation, minority rights, environmental protection, or religious fundamentalism, societal actors almost always refer to inter-subjectively held values.

Societal actors are different from political and economic actors in that they derive their legitimacy from the substance of their normative claims rather than from the virtues of a specific organizational mode. Whether non-governmental organizations or transnational social movements – the key actors of world society are both united and divided by their reliance on substantive values. Moreover, they are logically and ontologically prior to the state and the market. The generally held belief that both the state and the market are for society, and not the other way round, purveys them an additional portion of legitimacy. However, societal actors lack the formal legitimacy of the state to speak on behalf of society as a whole. Moreover, they are less efficient than the capitalist market when it comes to the allocation of values. The fundamental difference between the substantive legitimacy of civil society on the one hand, and the organizational legitimacy of the state and the market on the

other, is the source of both the strengths and weaknesses of societal actors in relationship to their political and economic counterparts.

In any case, there are powerful normative arguments to support the hegemonic project of global civil society. It is rather intuitive from the standpoint of '*We the Peoples*' that the primacy of politics or economics is not desirable either at the domestic or at the global level. At the domestic level, the primacy of politics has led several times in the 20th century to the horrors of totalitarianism, whereas the primacy of the market engenders the alienation of human beings from their social context and from their ecological environment. The apparent failure of both totalitarian politics and the free market doctrine can be turned into a powerful argument for the hegemonic project of civil society.

4. Parapolitics and Metapolitics

How can global civil society aspire to govern the post-Westphalian world system? This is a problem since global governance is not political in the traditional sense of politics as the "*authoritative allocation of values*" (Easton, 1971). Nevertheless, global governance is political in a more derivative sense. It oscillates between, on the one hand, *parapolitics* as the continuation of political activity beyond the organizational sphere of the state, and, on the other hand, *metapolitics* as the allocation of organizational purpose and substantive demands to political and economic actors. As a shortcut to illustrate what is meant by these two terms, it may be helpful to introduce the following equations: first, military relates to paramilitary like politics to parapolitics; second, theory relates to metatheory like politics to metapolitics.

Global governance as *parapolitics* is understood as the continuation of politics beyond the organizational sphere of the state. In this optic, governance has its organizational locus in the societal sphere as opposed to the political system. "*The state is engaged in government; civil society, in governance*" (Lipschutz, 1996: 249). As every attentive observer of day-to-day politics will recognize, the settlement of political issues is often rather negotiated among societal actors than allocated by sovereign authority. Although this is certainly true at the domestic level of the liberal constitution state, it is open to debate whether and to what extent it is also true at the international level, where the existence of civil society cannot simply be given for granted.

In any case, it would be naïve to presume a harmonious relationship between politics and parapolitics. Especially when it comes to the question of who is entitled to allocate values,

governance enters into an acute competition with government. This is necessarily so since governance clashes with the traditional understanding of politics, according to which the state is the paramount agency in charge with the “*authoritative allocation of values*”. In this optic, politics is either done with the state as the final arbiter, or it is illegitimate. Just as paramilitary activities from the standpoint of the regular troops, parapolitics is highly ambivalent from the standpoint of the political establishment. At the international level, this is exasperated by the absence of a consolidated civil society and by the questionable democratic legitimacy of nongovernmental organizations and transnational social movements.

The understanding of global governance as “*governance without government*” suggests that there is a viable option for parapolitics at the global level. Or, in other words: “*What we need is a conceptualization that enables us to penetrate and understand the government-like events that occur in the world of states even in the absence of government*” (Finkelstein, 1995: 368). Problem-solving by direct negotiation among the societal stakeholders looks like an attractive substitute for intergovernmental coordination in the absence of world government. To be sure, there are practical problems with global governance, such as limited impact, relatively high transaction costs, and the risk to fall victim of the least common denominator. Nevertheless, the possibility of solving problems that are not amenable to intergovernmental policy coordination conveys a certain amount of legitimacy to global governance (cf. Scharpf, 1998).

On the other hand, however, global governance is also about *metapolitics*. As argued above, global governance presumes a separation of the world system into three spheres of action: the state system, the global economy, and world society. This leads to the question how these three spheres should relate to each other. Insofar as global governance tries to give an answer to this question, it can be a meta-political enterprise. Global governance is committed to civil society, just as economic globalization tends to emphasize the importance of the global economy. Both global governance and globalization run counter to conventional ideas about the primacy of politics. Global governance represents the world system as an arena of multi-level governance, where societal, political and economic actors interact in a non-hierarchical way at the local, national, regional and at the global level. In this optic, governance “*is a more encompassing phenomenon than government. It embraces governmental institutions, but it also subsumes informal, non-governmental mechanisms*” (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992: 4-5).

For some enthusiasts of global governance, world order is the stage for global public policy networks, where governmental and nongovernmental actors are peacefully together in private-public partnerships (Reinicke, 1998). However, it would be unwise to presume a pre-

established harmony of interests between the state, the economy, and society. In some issue areas, there are strong incentives for the three functional spheres of the world system to cooperate, whereas other issue areas are distinguished by latent or patent antagonism. States cannot allow for too much tax evasion by the market, and they cannot surrender minimal control over migration. Markets often have an interest in evading environmental standards dictated by the state, and in manipulating people's consumptive behavior. Society sometimes is subversive of public authority and critical of corporate power.

It would be inadequate to celebrate global governance as the spontaneous self-regulation of the world by global public policy. It is much more complicated than that. Even if we take global governance in the narrow sense of problem solving, it is very difficult to figure out which problems should be decided at what level. If we understand global governance in a broader sense, it comes close to a social superstructure in the sense of Gramsci. In this optic, global governance is a political project that wants to contribute to the *'maintenance and reproduction of a hegemonic order, able to reach compliance without having to resort to force'* (Massicotte, 1999: 136).

As parapolitics, global governance excludes international politics. As metapolitics, by contrast, it includes, among many other things, political relations among governments. From a strictly logical viewpoint, this is a startling contradiction. It is hard to conceptualize global governance as both beyond and above government. However, this logical contradiction becomes much less confusing as soon as global governance is understood as a hegemonic project. It turns out that, at least for practical purposes, the Janus-faced elusiveness of global governance is a strategic asset. To maximize the influence of global civil society, global governance is sometimes construed as *beyond* and sometimes as *above* politics.

5. The Lures of Global Corporatism

More often than not, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their networks are considered to be the constitutive units of world society, just as states and international organizations are regarded as the most important actors in international relations (cf. Keck and Sikkink, 1998). When talking about world society, however, one should be careful not to underestimate the importance of transnational social movements, including anti-globalization activists (O'Brien et al., 2000). Moreover, there is no logical reason to exclude organized religious fundamentalism and even terrorist movements from the overall picture of world

society. The least common denominator of all these entities is that, at least in principle, they are associations of individuals that lay claim to substantive values. In practice, the content of these values may range from human rights or sustainable development to proletarian emancipation or Islamic rectitude. Even the National Rifles Organization must be considered as part of civil society.

But be that as it may, it is the hegemonic project of the liberal part of world society that matters most in the present context. It is the core argument of this paper that, whether legitimate or not, there is an hegemonic project of liberal global civil society in the making. Over the last decade, mostly liberal nongovernmental organizations have been striving for more participation in the policy making process and for an improvement of their legal, political, and operational status within the UN family. At least in part, NGOs have been successful in going beyond article 71 of the United Nations charter concerning consultative status with ECOSOC (Willetts, 2000). All in all, nongovernmental organizations have acquired an increased say in the international policy making process, which includes economic organizations such as WTO and the World Bank (Alger, 2002).

As Marina Ottaway has pointed out in a recent article (2001), global corporatism is a tempting but highly dangerous strategy to institutionalize the increased importance of nongovernmental actors in the global scene. Thus, it is tempting to call for tripartite arrangements between the international public sector, the multinational private sector, and transnational civil society. The final report of the UN Vision Project on Global Public Policy Networks has called for such a tripartite model of global corporatism (Reinicke and Deng, 2000). The underlying idea is that the United Nations should coordinate cooperation at the global level between the public sector, the private sector, and civil society networks (Reinicke, 1998). This is broadly in line with “*Global Compact*”, an initiative sponsored by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (Zumach, 2002). Unsurprisingly, NGOs have often called for tripartite arrangements, most prominently at the Millennium Forum in New York. There is an understandable enthusiasm among NGO advocates for corporatist bodies such as the World Commission on Dams.

However, one should be well aware of the fact that global corporatism, just as its domestic counterpart, is absolutely not unproblematic. While increasing their legitimacy from above, global corporatism might actually alienate NGOs from their membership and diminish their legitimacy from below. Corporatist endeavors at the national level have shown that, at least in the long run, elite cronyism is a constant danger for the political culture. To be sure, nongovernmental organizations frequently use the language of entitlement. They often claim

to act on behalf of ordinary people, although there is little proof to it. At any rate, there is no a priori reason why NGOs should be more representative of '*We the Peoples*' than governments. Nevertheless, nongovernmental organizations point to substantive values and try to convey organizational purpose and substantive demands to political and economic actors. This may actually become more difficult when nongovernmental organizations are tied into corporatist schemes with the international public and private sector.

Therefore, Marina Ottaway (2001) is probably right that, instead of tripartite arrangements, the exercise of political pressure and '*good old*' lobbying is the more appropriate answer for nongovernmental organizations to the challenges posed by global governance.

Conclusion

After this detour into global corporatism, I will now turn back to the more moderate scheme outlined above in the '*governance triangle*': together with the other actors that populate world society, nongovernmental organizations inspire organizational purpose and substantive values into international politics and global economics (figure 1). For a very simple reason, this task is easier to fulfill with regard to international politics than with regard to global economics. In the political realm there are clear procedures for societal participation, at least as far as democratic politics is concerned. Societal actors may choose whether to operate on national governments, international organizations, or trans-governmental networks. Economic firms, by contrast, are less permeable to the substantive claims raised by societal actors. Almost by definition, market actors are reluctant to attempts of societal influence other than spontaneous consumer behavior. Only under very exceptional circumstances will they consent to codes of conduct, and the like. Moreover, the globalization discourse strongly suggests that the global market has gained, and the state system has lost relative power over world political outcomes. Accordingly, we would expect global governance to be complementary rather than antagonistic to government, and antagonistic rather than complementary to the market logic.

To be sure, discord and collaboration are possible any time vis-à-vis either the international public or the transnational private sector. In times of globalization, however, liberal global civil society has a genuine interest in joining the efforts of some states and transnational social movements to prevent the colonization of the public domain by the market. Under the present historic conjuncture, global governance has become a sphere of action in its own

right, aiming at the (self)organization of the public domain and the creation of sanctuaries outside political oppression and the market logic (Drache, 2001).

This recalls the Gramscian understanding of civil society as the space where hegemony is negotiated and maintained without the direct use of force. For those who subscribe to the liberal values shared by most nongovernmental organizations, there is a strong interest in the progressive development of international civil law, which until now is mostly conspicuous by its absence (Friedrichs, 2003). It is important to recall that both international politics and global economics are distinguished by the preponderance of a specific organizing principle, normative ethos, and legal superstructure (figure 2). It will greatly enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of liberal global civil society if it can subscribe to some organizational standards, a code of substantive values, and an embryonic body of international civil law. Moreover, it will be good for the cause of liberal global civil society if international lawyers become part of global governance networks (Toope, 2000: 104-108).

Last but not least, the legalization and institutionalization of global governance is also a matter of fairness. If there was a clear body of legal rules and some discernible institutional form for the actors concerned, it would become easier to pin down global governance as what it actually is, namely the hegemonic project of liberal global civil society. Non-liberal actors of world society such as transnational social movements, organized crime, and terrorism tend to be excluded by such an arrangement, and they will certainly develop their counter-strategies. At the same time, backward movements such as radical communitarianism and religious fundamentalism will constantly challenge the legitimacy of the liberal design. There is no reason to believe that world society shall be more harmonious or less antagonistic than international politics or the transnational economics. To the contrary, it will turn out that global governance is characterized by power relationships and shifting alliances just as any other realm of human intercourse.

Of course one may like the liberal vision of civil society, and one may also be critical about it. It should have become abundantly clear over these pages that the author of the present essay is very critical about liberal naiveté. Ever since the Greek pre-Socratics, we know that the becoming-in-reality of one thing precludes the realization of other things, and that it is in the course of justice that in the end all things have to pay for displacing other things. If the liberal vision of world order becomes reality, there will be only limited space, or no place at all, for alternative visions of human society. Some of these visions will be suppressed, while others are going to disappear altogether. More and more attitudes will be disqualified as criminal or

even terrorist, while the last residuals of self-contained tribalism are going to fade away in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific. At the end of the day, however, there is no logical reason why the hegemonic project of liberal global civil society should be more resilient to political subversion and normative erosion than its competitors and predecessors. From a world historical perspective, it is quite normal that opinions are divided on global governance as the hegemonic project of liberal global civil society.

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