

Post Hegemonic Global Governance

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What are the prospects for effective global governance? It is widely held that global governance is a public good, but what are the political factors that are likely to ensure its provision? Is the USA able or willing to provide it? Can international institutions, norms, or causal beliefs, in the absence of US leadership, fill in?

Recent books by two prominent scholars address these questions. John Ikenberry (2011), largely from a classical realist perspective, argues that the USA still possesses sufficient credible material capabilities to induce order, although often in the form of soft power. The USA also enjoys an institutional legacy and shared social purpose that will provide the necessary guidance. The USA created a persistent large scale liberal order which is attractive to other liberal democracies and those likely to focus their collective wills.

Amitav Acharya (2014), coming from more of an English school perspective, argues that the US' material edge is declining, particularly *vis-à-vis* the BRICs, and that the unquestioned normative authority of the USA now lacks global consensus. Regional governance is increasingly likely, he suggests, complemented by US leadership at the global level

Each work is really an extended essay. Each author necessarily glosses over some items. Ikenberry never defines 'liberal democracy', so the true nature of the shared interests he articulates lack precision. The degree to which such shared goals are universal is also not demonstrated, leaving him open to challenges that he is advocating a false universalism masking imperialistic impulses (Betts, 2011; Barma *et al.*, 2013). Acharya does not address the effectiveness of regional governance. In the environmental domain regional governance has proven to be far weaker than global efforts, suggesting a stronger need for *global* governance in the future.

Their arguments about global governance and the US' role hinge on capacities and national purpose, or how countries envisage their national interest. They disagree about the distribution of material capacities and their enduring utility. Both take interests as given. For Ikenberry, interests consist of shared broad democratic and capitalist

interests that lead states to favor multilateralism. For Acharya, they are expressions of postcolonial identity and material interests.

Interests have been notoriously difficult to specify *ex ante*. But without a theory of state interests it is difficult to confidently anticipate future US or Chinese practices.

It is indisputable that the USA no longer possesses uniform material influence across all the major issues on the contemporary agenda. The USA may still retain primacy but it is by no means hegemonic in a material sense, and the extent of its ideological hegemony rests on the extent to which the US liberal vision is truly shared, something which Acharya disputes. The USA has declined in relative power capabilities since the 1970s in terms of economic clout, most notably *vis-à-vis* the BRICs (Simmons and de Jonge Oudraat, 2000; Layne, 2012). US percentage of world trade has declined, as has its role in direct foreign investment (DFI). Other countries are increasingly holding currencies other than the dollar, and the extent to which the US enjoys monetary influence is based largely on others' trust in the US economy and willingness to hold treasury notes. The relative size of the US conventional military has declined. US nuclear hegemony is real, but is not credible against non-nuclear powers, because of operational nuclear norms. The USA does not appear to have any material influence in the area of climate change, and its soft power fails to yield any discernible movement in terms of reaching a global accord on climate change.

Complex interdependence tempers the ease with which material leverage can be applied. Declining US legitimacy makes it more politically costly to apply sanctions and other tools of influence.

Brave new world

In the face of declining relative capabilities, and the lack of credible moral authority, what options are left for understanding global governance? While the USA may still be able to respond to conflicts and crises, it no longer enjoys the singular ability to provide governance. Global governance is increasingly being shaped by factors beyond the state-based ontology presented by Ikenberry and Acharya. Alternative perspectives help identify other sources of governance that are less state-centric, and that focus more clearly on state beliefs and the social purpose behind collective action.

A new ontology focuses on the significant systemic changes which have evolved throughout the twentieth century (Hale *et al.*, 2013). The new ontology creates a new set of challenges for the international community, as well as the way in which these challenges are likely to be addressed. Analogies to the early twentieth century are thus misplaced. The traditional approaches to global governance focus on inadequate mechanisms of influence, on individual policy spaces which do not recognize issue-coupling, and do not heed the power of understanding in governing an uncertain world.

The current ontology is one of more actors, and actor groups; of new and more issues; of more interconnections between issues, and of more rapid technological change. World politics is now characterized by the legitimate involvement of states,

international institutions, NGOs, MNCs, and scientific networks. New issues compete for attention on the international agenda, in combination with existing ones. In addition to arms control, traditional security, trade, DFI, MNC governance, and financial and monetary issues, we now see non-traditional security issues, intellectual property, cyber terrorism, energy, environmental issues, human rights, public health, and migration – all on the international agenda. Such issues are increasingly causally interconnected. Technological change, especially changes in information technology, but also the speed of intervention, threatens to create new problems as well as tilting the international balance of power. Global supply chains create connections between decisions and conditions in countries in an economically interdependent world.

Such a combination of changes lead to increased complexity, and uncertainty for decision makers (Jervis, 1997). Traditional state decision makers are befuddled by the array of problems, uncertainty about their own interests, and frustration with the limitations of national and international institutions which had been constructed to deal with problems in isolation to one another

Despite brief historical moments when global governance cohered around major issues, the current order is highly disarticulated. Practices, norms, principles, causal justifications for practices, and formal institutions are different for most of the major issues on the international agenda. This variation is because of the variation in policy networks involved in different issues, and their disparate interests, understandings, and material capabilities. Thus while there are common social mechanisms which are applied in world politics – coercion, inducements, leadership, modeling, persuasion, and good old log rolling – few are uniformly applied across all issues, and in many instances several forces occur simultaneously so their effects are over determined.

New governance opportunities

Global problems have been successfully addressed by social mechanisms which do not rely solely on state calculations of material interests and the application of power. The application of hegemony and leadership rest on the ability to justify policies against a background of shared understandings. Shared norms and causal understandings inform patterns of global governance.

A variety of institutional approaches have mobilized interests in order to generate intended outcomes (Keohane, 1984). The persistence of the post-World War II economic order has persisted through a combination of international institutions and US leadership. The US academic literature is divided over the extent to which governance efforts have dwindled in effectiveness since 2000, and the relative responsibility of domestic pressures and declining US influence. Elsewhere institutional efforts have had mixed success. They are not good at recognizing and addressing new issues in a timely manner – such as energy governance, public health, climate change, or migration. Nor are they good at addressing the interconnections between issues.

Still, a number of novel and innovative approaches have operated without direct state involvement, or at best in the shadow of state interests (Braithwaite

and Drahos, 2000). Transgovernmental collaboration (Slaughter, 2004), orchestration (Abbott and Snidal, 2009), private governance (Cutler *et al.*, 1999; Haufler, 2001; Hall and Biersteker, 2002) and various public-private partnerships and networks have all produced meaningful cooperation on substantive topics.

Transformative efforts have generated unintentional consequences by influencing states and other actors or through normative persuasion and social learning. Institutionalized ideas have come to inform international institutions and widespread long-term policy changes. Communities of practice have developed robust patterns of collective behavior (Adler and Pouliot, 2011; Ruggie, 2014).

Norms have led states to create new institutions to guide collective behavior on their behalf. While norms in and of themselves do not shape governance beyond establishing aspirations, when connected to formal institutions they provide the foundations for governance. Norms may provide for institutional development beyond that of self-interest, and lead to new and interesting results.

Knowledge-based governance is also an interesting approach. Learning to appreciate new causal ideas and understanding have also led to the creation of new institutions and changed state practices. As states gain improved understandings about an uncertain world they create institutions and develop new practices that coordinate behavior to provide global public goods.

Normative and knowledge-based governance may interact, as the practices based on new knowledge get codified as norms. Conversely, norms of representation (who gets to participate in governance) may favor approaches based on new sources of knowledge.

Norm-based governance

Norm-based governance has received much scholarly attention (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Risse *et al.*, 1999). Three types of norms inform global governance: generative norms, principled norms, and procedural norms.

Generative norms constitute global governance. Such ideas as respect for sovereignty, embedded liberalism, multilateralism, reciprocity, and the rule of law have been analyzed as possible norms that constitute governance. They establish the parameters of governance, and their application provides a hopeful but constrained set of expectations for global governance: inclusive, but state centric and capitalist. They are unlikely to accommodate easily to challenges of new issues or to grasp the interconnections between them.

Still, a new generative norm of ecological sensitivity may be emerging, as states experience environmental threats and develop a variety of new regimes and practices for their management. As states and other actors become enmeshed in environmental protection efforts their understandings of the contemporary policy space become broader to encompass the connections between environmental protection and substantively linked areas of activity, which may lead gradually and incrementally to a richer and more functionally integrated landscape of global governance arrangements.

Substantive norms – in a regulatory or permissive sense – shape expectations and behaviors of actors. Again, a number of substantive norms have operated to govern international behavior, including the elimination of the slave trade and slavery; the land mines ban; nuclear no first use; banning the use of mercenaries, although this may be eroding; banning whaling, although this remains contested; and banning piracy. Acharya calls for a permissive norm of tolerance.

Some putative substantive norms remain highly contested. Responsibility to protect for failed states is possibly supported by states as a principle, selectively administered, and challenged by non-state actors as potentially hypocritical and a return to colonialist practices. Respect for human rights norms is largely limited to the USA, Western Europe, Japan, and Oceania. They do not command universal respect; nor do they appear to be spreading (Hafner-Burton and Ron, 2009; Donnelly, 2014; Nickel, 2014; Simmons, 2014). Reducing greenhouse gas emissions to provide for global climate change of 2 degrees C is increasingly apparent as a futile aspirational goal, as diplomatic practices fail to fall into line.

Many norms are exaggerated. In fact, with increasing globalization the political stakes behind normative authority are greater, and normative claims become more politicized (Zurn *et al.*, 2012).

There may yet be some emergent substantive norms. Many new norms begin at the national level and then diffuse more broadly (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 893). Potential candidates include women's suffrage, same sex marriage, marijuana decriminalization, and the elimination of capital punishment.

Procedural norms establish the legitimate procedures for collective decision making. Legitimacy is a social fact, subject to the perceptions and values of the governed (Brunnee and Toope, 1997; Cohen and Sable, 2006; McNamara, 2010). Normative claims for legitimate procedures remain highly contested, and none have been directly related to the procedural expectations or perceptions of actors (Bernstein, 2011; Scholte, 2011). Opinions vary on what constitutes legitimacy, from processes, outputs, outcomes to effects. For example, Keohane cites a transparent process (Keohane, 2011), Young and Mitchell (Young, 1991; Mitchell *et al.*, 2006) cite outcomes that are seen as fair, while Dunlop discusses outcomes informed by socially authoritative actors (Dunlop, 2000), and Vibert mentions outcomes that are seen as providing valued outcomes (Vibert, 2007).

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, although widely cited as a procedural norm for climate governance and at times as a broader norm regulating governance in environmental issues more generally, lacks the universal consensus to be systematically applied to climate change negotiations, much less universal application.

As more non-state actors become routinely involved in global governance the scope of norm acceptance becomes broader. To what extent must norms be universally accepted by states and non-state actors? Invoking global norms becomes problematic when they may not be widely shared by all the relevant actors. For instance, norms of sovereignty, justifiable intervention, human rights, the rules of war, and even nuclear

norms, while shared by states, may not be respected by non-state militants. Which actors enjoy a legitimate role in governance?

Governance through knowledge

Knowledge and learning have informed global governance as well. Causal ideas become institutionalized through the persuasive power of epistemic communities. Epistemic communities and their institutionalized ideas are causally implicated in a number of successful social learning global governance efforts, including environmental protection, macroeconomic management, and public health (Cooper, 1989; Ikenberry, 1993; Haas, 1999; Haas, 2000; Chwioroth, 2007).

In many instances causal understandings precede and constitute normative understandings – creating robust institutional arrangements founded on both normative beliefs and causal understandings about how to achieve the goals in practice. Here there are several dynamics at play. Norms without causal associations are less likely to inform meaningful international institutions that are capable of enforcing those norms. However, in some instances norms and causal understandings advance hand in hand. In other instances, such as the environment, the gradual acceptance of the causal understandings has led to new widespread practices which are then translated into normative injunctions as well.

We may wonder to what extent further causal beliefs are likely to inform multilateral order in addition to the existing normative and causal marriages around macroeconomic management, some areas of environmental protection, and some issues of public health. Emergent causal beliefs, with their attendant epistemic networks, may be forming around Sustainable Development. To the extent that sustainable development becomes consensual, then it will warrant drawing policy links between economic development, environmental protection, and possibly social justice, leading to a more comprehensive tapestry of global governance.

Conclusion

Ikenberry and Acharya pose some of the most salient questions in world politics for twenty-first century global governance. Yet there are many alternatives to global governance than the power and ideological ones that they propound. Many are less well established conceptually and may be emergent in the political world, but they do offer a broader and more constructive array of conceptual approaches to understanding the prospects for world order in a post hegemonic world. To the extent that fruitful new framing ideas and effective networks for their diffusion exist, more comprehensive and robust forms of global governance are possible.

Further challenges to understanding the future of global governance involve questions of institutional design. How can international and national institutions be reconfigured to provide early warning signs of crises emanating from a tightly coupled complex world, and be better able to develop governance approaches that reflect the uncertainties and interconnections in the world.

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Peter M. Haas is a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He received his Ph.D. in 1986 from MIT, and has been at UMASS since 1987. He has had visiting positions at Yale University, Brown, Oxford, and the Wissenschaftszentrum, Berlin. He has published on international relations theory, constructivism, international environmental politics, global governance, and the interplay of science and international institutions at the international level. He was awarded the 2014 Distinguished Scholar Award from the Environmental Studies Section of the International Studies Association.

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