

The future of Global Governance in the age of Trump

by Tarık OĞUZLU

The subject of global governance is all about the efforts to find solutions to various problems of global life through the participation of multiple actors within multilateral frameworks in horizontal structures. Different from government, governance requires cooperation of various actors in horizontal structures which have developed a high degree of global consciousness and responsibility among each other. At stake here is to come up with global solutions to global problems and challenges in different issue areas, such as security, finance, trade, development, climate change, environment, migration, etc.

Increasing attempts in the name of global governance can be made sense of in reference to both liberal and realist International Relations perspectives. From a liberal perspective, global governance requires the existence of a global community of humankind which shares common universal values and consciousness. Putting human beings at a higher ethical position than nation-states and assuming that people of different belongings can cooperate in case of common identities and values, liberalism holds that global governance would take strong root in parallel to the shrinking of the world and intensification of interdependent and transnational relations beyond traditional state boundaries. The growing



primacy of non-state actors in global governance can be well understood from a liberal perspective because liberalism assumes that the world is bigger than states and unitary state assumption does not hold true in the age of globalism.

Realism on the other hand assumes that global governance owes its existence to the growing need on the part of different nation-states to join their forces against various kinds of threats and challenges endangering their security and well-being. Confronted with terrorism, environmental problems, transboundary issues and other threats, states would conclude that they are not able to deal with such challenges on their own. From a realist perspective global governance appears to be a well-crafted security strategy that would add up to states' capabilities in warding off threats leveled against their territorial integrity, economic well-being and other concerns. Though global governance implies a degree of erosion of state sovereignty, states might also benefit from such practices in their efforts to

maintain their primacy in global politics.

That said, the election of Donald Trump as new American President and the confluence of many other factors appear now to carry great risks and uncertainties as for the legitimacy and effectiveness of various attempts undertaken in the name of global governance. As of today, it is now becoming more difficult than ever to justify global governance initiatives from both theoretical perspectives. This short essay will try to examine various challenges leveled against the sustainability of global governance in the near future.

The first observation to make in this regard concerns the fact that the initial advocates of global governance, namely the developed liberal western powers, seem to have lost their confidence in such exercises in recent years. For long, western powers assumed that their values and norms, particularly pertaining to global governance and management of international relations are universal and that other nations would easily adopt them provided that they are offered the right incentives and notice that they immensely gain from the existing liberal world order. However, what was missing from their analysis is the fact that western powers, mainly the United States and the European Union members, developed a highly positive view of global governance so long as global governance initiatives contributed to the primacy of western powers and the persistence of the liberal world order. They have long overlooked the possibility that various global governance initiatives undertaken under their stewardship might be equally seen as value-laden and one-sided by non-western powers.

Recent years have unmistakably demonstrat-

ed that many non-western powers have begun to view global governance as practiced in line with liberal democratic values as being extremely biased in favour of western powers. Neither the emerging norm of responsibility to protect, nor the universal standards of human rights, nor the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nor the idea of unfettered free trade, nor the neoliberal economic programs do now strike sympathetic chords with many non-western powers. From the perspective of the latter globalization and the issue of global governance are now being increasingly equated with Americanization and western imperialism.

This issue has two sides. While on the one hand non-western powers equate globalization with US-led imperialism and challenge the legitimacy of existing global governance institutions, a growing number of westerners have on the other hand turned alarmingly sceptical about the merits of global governance in recent years. From the perspective of those critical westerners the existing global governance mechanisms have more facilitated the rise of non-western powers than strengthened the primacy of the West in global politics. To many of them, global governance now denotes the erosion of western primacy in global politics and sharing of western privileges with many others.

Second, regionalisation has now become a much more relevant policy tool than global governance in finding solutions to various problems confronting different groups of countries located in different geographical settings. Countries which share a common regional consciousness and have developed highly interdependent relations among each other tend to develop authen-

tic responses to global challenges. The years ahead will likely see that countries will tend to ally with those with which they share similar security conceptualizations, interdependent economic interactions, same regional environment and similar political values.

Recent years have witnessed the rise of many new regional institutions all over the world. The failure of the United Nations and many existing global institutions in meeting global challenges seems to have driven this process. Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Collective Security Treaty Organization can be considered as security organizations rivalling the legitimacy of western security organizations, such as NATO. On the other hand, Eurasian Economic Union, BRICS, One Belt One Road Initiative and Mercosur can be seen as regional initiatives putting development, trade and economic integration at the center of their missions. BRICS Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank are equally contesting the primacy of World Bank and International Monetary Foundations in the realm of development aid and global finance. Many regional free trade initiatives also rival the well-established free trade initiatives in Europe and North America. China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership rivals the US-led Trans-pacific Partnership in East and South East Asia. The growing resistance against the western conceptualizations of human rights, state-society relations and humanitarian interventions, particularly on the part of Russia and China, do also reveal that western political values are strongly contested in non-western regions. All such developments suggest that various groups of countries located in particular geographies, sharing common cul-

tural traits, political values and interdependent economic relations do now increasingly see regional platforms more useful than global ones in addressing myriad challenges of globalization.

Third, a particular requirement for the successful implementation of global governance is the presence of political leaders who cherish the values of globalism, internationalism, multiculturalism, secular universal human rights and openness. Adopting win-win approaches to the solution of global problems requires that collective identities transcending national boundaries and particularistic belongings remain the major reference point in the consciousness of people all over the world. However, what have been unfolding over the last decade should cause alarm bells ring for the adherents of global governance. Anti-immigrant, xenophobic, anti-globalist, populist, mercantilist and nativist political circles have been on the rise in many developed western countries. The election of Donald Trump to US presidency, Brexit and the rise of extremely populist parties in many EU members are the most relevant examples in this regard.

The thing that should worry the supporters of global governance is that western countries have lately begun to define globalization and the sharing of power and authority with non-western actors in global institutions as detrimental to their national interests. The differences between the former American presidents Barak Obama and George W. Bush on the one hand and current president Trump on the other are revealing in this context. Obama was a true believer of global governance and thought that opening up to erstwhile enemies while simultaneously asking traditional allies to contribute more to the pro-

vision of public goods would eventually result in democratization of international relations and sustainable global governance structures. Obama and Bush were of the view that liberal democratic values of the western international community offered the best road map for the successful implementation of global governance practices around the world.

Yet, unlike Obama, Bush believed that western norms and values were the best and it was the mission of western powers to help project them all over the world through the use of every means available. Bush was in the business of imposing western norms onto others as far as global governance issues were concerned. Obama was more open to the idea that successful global governance passes through democratization of international relations and accommodation of rising non-western powers. Trump, on the other hand, is neither Obama nor Trump. Put simply, he does not believe in the idea of global governance and the value of global multilateral platforms in dealing with myriad global challenges and threats. He is a nativist and defines his main mission as making America great again. Let alone believing in American exceptionalism and adopting a missionary foreign policy stance in the footsteps of early twentieth-century president Wilson, Trump appears to believe that international system is anarchic and states could achieve their survival mainly through self-help security strategies. Relying on allies and outsourcing responsibility to global governance institutions are anathema to him. To him, adopting a mercantilist economic mentality and securing the cooperation of other great powers in a real-politik manner seem to be the wisest strategies to follow in today's world. Such a mentality

does not bode well for strengthening global governance practices.

Finally, non-western powers have also increased their efforts to take advantage of growing disillusionment in the West with globalization. Buoyed by their increasing material power capabilities, particularly in the case of China, and encouraged by the growing reluctance of western powers to take on the responsibility of providing global public goods, particularly in the case of the United States, non-western rising powers have three main choices before them. They would either integrate with the existing global governance institutions in the name of proving their responsible stakeholder identity; or challenge their legitimacy head on by shaking the foundational grounds of the existing system in a revolutionary spirit; or alternatively help craft new institutional settings while simultaneously trying to increase their bargaining power within the existing institutions.

Of all, the leading non-western powers, mainly China and Russia, seem to have chosen the third alternative. That they want to bring into existence new regional governance institutions under their leadership shows that they are not happy with the way how existing institutions operate. They think that they are not represented fairly within them. Their increasing material power capabilities give them hope that they could potentially act as hegemons in their regions. The easiest way to help justify their hegemonic aspirations in the eyes of their neighbours would be to act within particular regional platforms that they establish and ask their neighbours to participate. Their evolutionary approach towards existing global governance institutions on the one hand

and revolutionary attitude towards helping bring into existence brand-new institutional platforms on the other suggest that global governance will likely take on a more regional character in the years to come.

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