

: Conference Report

Berlin Summer Dialogue 2014

sef:

Global Governance: A Past Model with Future Prospects? Policy-Makers and Academics in Dialogue

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Global governance currently faces a number of challenges. Stakeholder landscapes and patterns of behaviour are shifting and becoming increasingly complex. New agenda-setting powers are demanding more democratic decision-making structures and a greater say in international negotiations. At the same time, institutional multilateralism is being overtaken by various formal and informal fora, clubs and networks. These shifts in international relations put a question mark over the future viability of global governance. What do new agenda-setting powers expect from global governance? What are the parallels and differences to the so-called “Western” paradigm of global governance? How can a new paradigm be implemented? What role do the local and national as well as the regional and global levels play

for global governance today? Can the current patchwork governance be regarded as a building block or a fragmentary element of global governance for the future? Is there a need for a concept of post-global governance?

These and further questions were discussed at the sef: Berlin Summer Dialogue in Berlin Town Hall on 26 June 2014. Entitled “Global Governance: A Past Model with Future Prospects. Policy-Makers and Academics in Dialogue”, the Expert Conference brought together more than 50 participants from ministries, embassies, universities, think tanks and NGOs from different world regions

The central aim of global governance – to provide institutional mechanisms and multilateral arrangements for cooperative problem-solving, thus facilitating the political management of globalisation – is today more relevant than ever. There was therefore a broad consensus that global governance is still a helpful heuristic concept when referring to global affairs. Many participants also made a stand against the pessimism often voiced – at least in academia – regarding the future viability of global governance. Professor Klaus Dingwerth from the University of St Gallen reminded the conference that global governance needs to take into account both formal and informal decision-making processes. The decline of formal institutions that is definitely taking place by no means implies a decline of decision-making in general. It is, however, difficult to define an exact and universal meaning of global governance as different actors pursue different interests in international relations and therefore with regard to global governance.



Cord Jakobeit and Ambassador Gelson Fonseca Junior (l.t.r.)

“The West vs. the rest”

One of the core political problems accompanying global governance since the 1990s is the question whether a “right” concept of universal values exists. Although the concept of global governance that has dominated the debate since the 1990s is a predominantly Western one, there is now a broad consensus that this supremacy has become obsolete. “Views on global governance are not a privileged domain of the developed world,” said Ambassador Gelson Fonseca Junior, Consul General of the Federative Republic of Brazil to Portugal and Former Permanent Representative to the United Nations. At the same time, several representatives from emerging powers stressed that their countries and clubs like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) should not be regarded as spoilers in international relations. In fact, these countries have benefited from the rules and structures of international relations while struggling for a more active role. One of the objectives of new agenda-setting powers, therefore, is to change the mindset still prevailing in many developed countries from “the West vs. the rest” to “the West and the rest”, as Ambassador H H S Viswanathan, Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, put it.

From Burden Sharing to “Leadership Sharing”

As the main obstacle to successful global governance, participants identified the requirements of leadership and responsibility on the part of the governments of both old and new agenda-setting powers. Professor Lothar Brock, Senior Professor at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, pointed out that it is still – to a large extent – the governments who have to substitute for a world government and are therefore accountable for global governance. “But governments are not always able and willing to cooperate in ways needed to cope with world problems. So obviously, governance without government goes along with governments without governance,” Professor Brock criticised.

In this regard, the outdated but still prevailing dominance of Western leadership also drew criticism. On the one hand, Western countries agree to the concept of “common but differentiated responsibility”, as has emerged prominently in the climate change negotiations, for example. On the other hand, however, the assertion of rising economies is continuously blocked, as can be observed, for example, in the allocation of executive positions in the international financial institutions, as one participant criticised. Mzukisi Qobo, Deputy Director of the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation at the University of Pretoria, characterised this development as evidence of a “trust deficiency in the global sphere”.

There was agreement that new agenda-setting powers have different options when putting forth their own paradigms of global governance. According to Professor Cord Jakobeit from the University of Hamburg, emerging powers can either conform to the current rules of the international system or reform them in a more confrontative manner. When it comes to the implementation of new paradigms, emerging powers can either bypass or replace international institutions. As an example of the bypassing of existing institutions, the establishment of the BRICS Development Bank was discussed. Ambassador Viswanathan added that new agenda-setting powers like BRICS could also move into niche areas of international relations that are not as regulated yet, e.g. the field of cyber security. Global governance should therefore not only be about burden sharing; it should entail leadership sharing as well, he said.

Multi-Level Governance: Where Should Global Governance Take Place?

The requirements of leadership and responsibility also trigger the question on what level global governance – the formulation of goals and their implementation – should actually take place. Although participants agreed that the primary responsibility for the implementation of global governance remains with the state, they also unanimously agreed that support from other spheres of influence can help in untying the knot. With regard to the discussion of a reform of the UN Security Council, for example, states and other stakeholders have hosted public debates on the issue. Such public debates can generate new input and a new level of legitimacy from outside the circle of academics and politicians usually debating these topics. Of course, civil society has gained and is still



Simone Ariane Pflaum

gaining further influence on many topics relevant for global governance and has won a greater say in international decision-making processes. “Yet civil society, too, has become enmeshed in the struggle over who gets what at which price,” Professor Brock added.

With respect to decision-making outside the “usual suspects”, Simone Ariane Pflaum from the City of Freiburg vocalised the viewpoint of many cities: “We



Siddarth Mallavarapu

do not need to wait for the UN.” She illustrated that cities want to be partners in the implementation, but also in the formulation of international agreements. She is convinced that the intervention of city networks in international processes such as climate change, Habitat 3 and the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals has stimulated these negotiations. Within city networks, global governance has already overcome the dichotomy of North and South: “It is always issue-specific who is in front,” Simone Ariane Pflaum emphasised. South African cities and the city of Bogota are examples of cities leading on mobility, although they are lagging behind in other areas.

For Professor Andrew Cooper, Senior Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg/Centre for Global Cooperation Research (GCR21), regionalism still matters in global governance, too. However, it is becoming increasingly asymmetrical and fragmented. To Professor Cooper, there are too many disconnects between regionalism and global governance. At the same time, in many world regions like the Asia-Pacific, regional integration seems to be stalling. Many countries, e.g. Saudi Arabia, are now labelling themselves as regional hubs in order to take part in forums like the G20. On the other hand, one of the most successful groupings in global governance in the past few years has been a non-regional grouping, namely the Global Governance Group (3G), initiated by Singapore. 3G, which is made up of 28 non-G20 members, addressed the issue of legitimacy from the

start. According to Professor Cooper, it has large instrumental leverage with its main purpose of making small but powerful countries heard.

Besides, groupings like BRICS and MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, Australia) seem to point to the emergence of a new notion of regions that is not geographic. Ambassador Viswanathan objected that neither the members of these groupings nor the G20 claim to represent their regions in global governance. Professor Dingwerth reminded the audience of the fact that regions have always been geographically constructed. Free trade or the provision of security can create regions as well, as was the case with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). One of the main difficulties of regional groupings of any kind nevertheless remains the backlash on and the acceptance of their leaders within the respective regions. The main opponents to the G4 group – the alliance between Brazil, Germany India und Japan supporting each other’s bids for permanent seats on the UN Security Council – for example, were not the five permanent members but the regions behind the G4 on all continents, as Professor Tobias Debiel from the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) pointed out.

Nevertheless, many participants remained sceptical of whether the regional, the national or the local level is more legitimate or efficient in the solving of global problems. Professor Dingwerth specified this scepticism: “Sometimes it is hard to tell whether governance is taking place or if it is just people doing something, thereby deflecting attention away from intergovernmental decision-making at the UN.” The question that remains is whether integration across levels is necessary or if differentiated policy goals can be possible on different levels. For Philipp Pattberg from the University of Amsterdam, the dichotomy of top-down vs. bottom-up is a false one. To him, they are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they need to merge, as is now happening in the climate change negotiations.

Patchwork Governance – A Model for the Future?

Besides the different levels for decision-making, there is also an inflationary trend for global governance to take places outside formal institutions in whichever discussion forum seems appropriate. From an outsider’s perspective, global governance therefore often appears to be a heterogeneous, fragmented mix of formal and informal forums, regional institutions, clubs of states, and networks – a patchwork of governance modes. On the other hand, institutional multilateralism is not only contested but also complemented by the various clubs and fora, which again increase possibilities for cooperation, as Professor Siddarth Mallavarapu, Senior Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg/Centre for

Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21) pointed out. Sometimes, then, fragmentation and incoherence should also be regarded as an opportunity. For Philipp Pattberg, global governance is even necessarily patchy: “Global governance is like a building built by different people at different times with different materials.” However, he also pointed to the fact that it has not been empirically tested whether patchwork governance furthers or hinders the effectiveness, legitimacy and representation of decision-making processes. In theory, fragmentation can be good because it allows different actors to act at different speeds, Philipp Pattberg explained. Ambassador Viswanathan was convinced that global governance

we be satisfied with patchwork governance as it is?” and “How can we make interconnections?” were questions left open for discussion.

The Future Viability of Global Governance

Notwithstanding this partial discontent, the Expert Conference came to the conclusion that global governance is still a useful and important concept for international relations. Philipp Pattberg even concluded that “global governance remains necessary for truly global problems”. Compared to the alternatives projected in the 1990s, e.g. “the end of history” or “the clash of civilisations”, global governance even seems to be “alive and kicking,” as Cord Jakobeit put it. Nevertheless, there was a broad consensus that many new dimensions need to be taken into account when talking about global governance in the 21st century: “Western” hegemony with regard to values and norms has come to a halt. There is no magic formula for legitimate, representative and efficient governance across levels and thematic fora. Instead, empirical research needs to be done, especially regarding the effects of patchwork governance and a “new regionalism”. Mainly in the so-called “West”, a change of mindsets has to take place in order to catch up with the changes that have already taken place in the international arena. At the same time, Andrea Ribeiro Hoffmann from the Free University of Berlin argued that the concept of global governance is still able to capture the goings-on of international relations: “There is no need for post-global governance.” For Professor Brock, global governance clearly is a viable project: “Global governance may not even be a concept of the past which is good for the future; it may turn into a concept which has yet to be developed in order to bring to bear its normative, analytical and critical power.”



Mzukisi Qobo in conversation with other guests at the reception

can and needs to be implemented issue-specifically: “Not every state has a stake in every issue that is regulated in international relations.”

At the end of the day, many participants were not content with the current state of the debate. “Should

Imprint

The Development and Peace Foundation was founded in 1986 on the initiative of Willy Brandt. As a cross-party and non-profit-making organisation, the SEF provides an international high-level forum for shared thinking on urgent peace and development issues.

The reports to the conferences and events of the Development and Peace Foundation provide information about the discussions and results in a compact form.

Published by
Development and Peace Foundation/
Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden (SEF)
Dechenstr. 2 : D-53115 Bonn : Germany
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Contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.