

POLITY WITHOUT DEMOS: DEFINING GLOBAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Dan Herman
Wilfred Laurier University

This article examines how global governance is constructed and held to account for its various constituent parts, and notes that as the geographic scope of cause and effect widens, and as the mechanisms for their governance is increasingly structured along multi-level and networked lines of authority, accountability becomes ever more challenging given the presence of still undefined polity. This forces scholars of global governance not only to question the design, actors and structure of global governance, but also to investigate the deeper meanings of global governance in relation to power, identity and ethics. This paper endeavours to look at both sets of issues, and in the process argues that global governance cannot exist as an accountable mechanism of rule without an overarching commitment to global ethics that has so far escaped its reach.

Dan Herman is a PhD candidate in Global Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs at Wilfred Laurier University. His research focuses on the governance of international trade, and the political economy and two-level games that shape it. He holds a Masters (MSc) in Development Studies from the London School of Economics.

Introduction

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates debates the question of governance and the notions of accountability and oversight in his description of an ideal society.¹ Central to this debate is the theme of *quis custodiet ipsos custodes*, –who will watch the watchers? The question, now over 2000 years old, highlights the most fundamental aspect of governance – accountability – and its relevance at all levels of government. Thereafter, constitutional designers have sought to separate the powers of government to ensure a system of checks and balances akin to a system of “watching the watchers.” The return of democratic, participative rule in modern nation states can provide both ex post and ex ante accountability for those governed. Yet as the effects of economic and cultural globalization are increasingly felt by local populations, domestic accountability alone does not suffice. Efforts toward the establishment of mechanisms of global governance have subsequently attempted to reconcile the gaps present between local governance and local experience and the trans-national issues and causes that increasingly impact them. As the geographic scope of cause and effect widens, and as the mechanisms for their governance is increasingly structured along multi-level and networked lines of authority, how can constituents hold the decision makers that shape their environment accountable? And more important, who is defined as the demos in an increasingly global polity?

These questions force scholars of global governance not only to question the design, actors and structure of global governance, but also to

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, with English translation by Desmond Lee, Penguin: New York (1955).

investigate the deeper meanings of global governance in relation to power, identity, and ethics. This paper endeavors to look at both sets of issues, and in the process argues that global governance cannot exist as an accountable mechanism of rule without an overarching commitment to global ethics that has so far escaped its reach. In so doing, accountability that satisfies the demands of a system of global governance is necessarily framed as the product of ethics and internalized cosmopolitanism rather than vice-versa. Notions of accountability are inextricably framed by the questions of to whom is global governance accountable, and to what ends, given the breadth of stakeholders involved. The study and design of global governance must therefore answer both in order to evolve into a constitutive element of how the world and its countless working parts are governed.

The first section of the paper examines how notions of accountability reared at the national or local level inform debates on the accountability of global governance, in particular the consensus that now exists around the prevalence of accountability deficits in existing mechanism of global governance. The second section delves into the causal factors that inform this perceived accountability deficit. It focuses on two primary factors: the perceived legitimacy of the actors within global governance networks, and the breakdown of “equivalence” among polity and demos as global rather than local governance pre-dominates. The third section highlights proposals to better equip global governance with mechanisms to ensure accountability, and the ideational and societal constraints that have so far mitigated their advance. The paper concludes with a discussion of the endurance of “place”

and the constraints it poses to the adoption of global ethics and to the accountability of global governance.

Held to account

In national or local-level democracies, accountability can be measured ex post through the choices made by citizens at the polls, or with more difficulty, ex ante through the proactive framing of party preferences and policy to align with voter desires. The fear of exclusion (loss) or replacement (loss) thus drives forms of democratic political accountability for political hosts that govern defined constituencies within defined territorial boundaries. Accountability in traditional areas of international relations or international organizations relies on a delegated aspect of that accountability.² Thus, national governments are held to account for the inter-state relations they enter into, as well as their participation in inter-national forums of cooperation.

Strictly state-based, regional, or supra-national bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the European Union (EU), operate in somewhat similar fashion. In both cases, national governments are entrusted with negotiation at a supra-state level. However, should constituents disagree with the results, they may choose to vote differently at the national level, or as was the case recently in Ireland, to call

² Grant and Keohane (2005) provide a useful overview of accountability at both the domestic and global levels: Grant, R. and R. Keohane, (2005). "Accountability and Abuses of Power in World Politics" *American Political Science Review* 99 (1): 29-43.

for the government's immediate replacement.³ In short, a clear constituency exists to hold national governments accountable for their actions, no matter the forum. On another level, however, the decisions made at the supra-national level, while legitimized by the participation of national governments, are not held to account by any direct constituency. There is no recall procedure for citizens of a State to hold supra-national, regional, global or other multilateral-type institutions to account in a direct manner.

Global governance as the ultimate extension of such forms of beyond-national governance exhibits but a weak, and perhaps tangential, relationship between polity and demos. And therein emerges one of the primary paradoxes of global governance. For if global governance is to be accountable, to whom will it be accountable? To repeat the question pondered by philosophers so long ago, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who will watch global governance, and why?

³ Following the February 2011 collapse of Ireland's coalition government as a result of outcry over the conditions of an IMF/EU bailout, the Irish electorate (with a turnout of over 70 percent) handed the ruling Fianna Fáil party the worst defeat of a sitting government since the formation of the Irish state in 1921, a result interpreted in many circles as "indicating public anger at the government and the EU." For example, see: Waterfield, B. (2011) "Ireland's new government on a collision course with EU," *The Telegraph*, February 26, 2011.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ireland/8349497/Irelands-new-government-on-a-collision-course-with-EU.html>

The sum of its moving parts

Compared to traditional state-based polities, this question of accountability has added importance for the study of global governance as the latter must be understood beyond the confines of strictly inter-state relations. Increasingly, a body of knowledge is coalescing around the conceptualization of global governance as issue-specific, multi-level governance processes. These processes encompass state and non-state actors who operate at various levels of geographic authority, and whose authority is both buttressed by, and shared with, private corporations and non-governmental organizations.⁴ Governance is thus neither a question of singular actors, nor of the explicit weakening of the state in a zero-sum game with non-state actors, but rather a question of collaborative processes amongst many akin to Foucault's technologies of government as governmentality.⁵ Deciphering to whom each of these actors is accountable, let alone how and why, is no easy task, and thus the commonplace perception that global governance as currently designed suffers from a deficit of both accountability and legitimacy.

This deficit exists for two reasons. The first is derived from the individual measures of accountability perceived of each participant in these new multi-level governance networks. While private actors are almost by

⁴ Burke-White, W. 2005. "Complementarity in Practice: The International Criminal Court as Part of a System of Multi-level Global Governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo" *Leiden Journal of International Law* 18: 557-590; Sending O.J. and I.B. Neumann. (2006).

"Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States and Power" *International Studies Quarterly*. 50 (3); Rosenau, J.N. (1999). "Toward an Ontology for Global Governance" in *Approaches to Global Governance Theory*, Martin Hewson and Timothy J. Sinclair; editors, SUNY Press: 287-302.

⁵ As detailed in Sending and Neumann. (2006): 651-672.

definition viewed with mistrust due to their profit-orientation and shareholder, rather than broader stakeholder, privileging, non-governmental organizations are largely viewed as benevolent actors.⁶ However, such normatively-positive perceptions aside, reality may produce a quite different result. As Robert Wade (2009) notes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) “claim to be motivated to do good for the world and not to judge the cost of effort according to the material benefits accruing to their members.”⁷ His analysis highlights, however, that the positive perceptions of many, if not most NGOs, are earned without proper investigation into their actual activities, and highlights the potentially negative outcomes that may accrue to local populations as a result of a societal embrace of these lightly-policed actors. Thus, while NGOs “have incentives to deliver newspaper headlines and knock-out blows, which show them to be doing a valuable job and deserving of financial support,” their actual impact comes with little objective analysis, as who is to hold them ultimately accountable?⁸

James Ron and Alexander Cooley’s work (2002) on the efficacy and accountability of NGOs supports this thesis on the accountability-deficit

⁶ The relationship between feelings of trust towards an actor and perceptions of accountability regarding that actor are an important area of investigation for global governance. Subsequently it is instructive to note that annual research on trust indicators towards various actors highlights the primacy of NGOs as trusted agents vis-à-vis private actors or government Source: Edelman. 2010.. *Edelman 2010 Trust Barometer: An annual global opinion leaders survey*. Accessed at: <http://www.edelman.com/trust/2010>). Incidentally, academics are viewed as the most trusted.

⁷ Wade, R.H. (2009). “Accountability Gone Wrong: The World Bank, Non-governmental Organizations and the US Government in a Fight Over China” *New Political Economy* 14 (1): 26.

⁸ Ibid Wade (2009): 27.

facing NGOs.⁹ As these authors note, “Once established, transnationals [NGOs] are organizations like any other. To survive in a competitive world, they must justify their existence to donors, secure new contracts, and fend off competitors. Under specific institutional conditions, these imperatives will produce dysfunctional results.” While non-governmental organizations have been included in mechanisms of global governance as a means of “checking” the power of traditional state or private actors, their own accountability is not above reproach, leaving the mechanisms they “check” little better off with respect to truly objective analysis. Susan Sell and Aseem Prakash (2004) add that both NGOs and private actors are interest groups that seek to shape opinion, create political opportunities and graft preferred goals onto debates.^{10/11} From where, and for whom, those goals originate is the key to understanding how accountable an organization, no matter its sector, is for a broader population.

Although systems of democratic rule most often include protection for minority rights, with evidently varying degrees of effectiveness, neither civil society nor the private sector have such standards. Their participation and engagement in the mechanisms of global governance thus do little to provide a more objectively measured accountability, and rather exists solely to promote the interests of their principals, be they shareholders or funders.

⁹ Cooley A. and J. Ron. (2002). “The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and Political Economy of Transnational Action” *International Security* 27 (1): 39

¹⁰ Sell S. and A. Prakash (2004). “Using Ideas Strategically: The Contest between Business and NGO Networks in Intellectual Property Rights” *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (1): 144.

¹¹ And as these authors note, given that 55% of American households own equity in American corporations through either market investments or pension savings, are corporations and their profit-orientation as altruistic and benevolent as NGOs (151)?

Global governance, as understood as a networked form of authority leveraging efforts from state and non-state actors, thus suffers from the impact of these perceived constraints on the accountability of the principal actors within it, be they private organizations or altruistically-framed non-government organizations.

The breakdown of equivalence

Global governance, as a broad conceptual framework that describes the processes of power and authority in an age of globalization, might escape such criticism if all experienced the outcomes and effects of such governance equally. Yet as Chesterman notes, globalization and the mechanisms of global governance heretofore established to govern it, have been perceived as "as either brute capitalism or a new and more efficient form of colonialism."¹² Therein lies the second causal factor relating to global governance's accountability deficit: the separation of polity and demos. This is made abundantly clear by what David Held (2004) calls the "breakdown of equivalence" between governing and governed, between decision maker and stakeholder.¹³ For in an 'unbundled' world, the actors who shape ideas and make decisions, and the ideas that shape actors and inform decisions, are often far removed from the plurality of recipients that exists as a dispersed constituency of the "global". As such, the experiences of one group within

¹² Chesterman, S. (2008). "Globalization Rules: Accountability, Power and the Prospects for Global Administrative Law" *Global Governance*, 14 (1): 39.

¹³ Held D. (2004). "Democratic Accountability and Political Effectiveness from a Cosmopolitan Perspective" *Government and Opposition*, 39 (2): 371.

that broad constituency may differ broadly from those of another. The ongoing divergence of real incomes and standards of living between industrialized, newly industrializing and least developed countries, despite the existence of a “World Trade Organization”, a “World Bank” and a host of international institutions that purportedly serve to even the playing field, speaks to the multiple realities and hyper-diversity of how global governance is experienced. As Seyla Benhabib (2005) notes, “it is clear that these organizations serve more the interest of donor countries than those whose livelihood and stakes in many parts of the world they affect.”¹⁴ What may seem as legitimate and as being held “to account” for some, may be experienced as illegitimate and lacking accountability by others. Therefore, global governance as a legitimate means of decision-making and authority is then far from having honestly defined to whom it is truly accountable. Efforts to correct this deficit, however, are not lacking.

Accountability for whom and by whom?

Numerous proposals exist aimed at creating more concrete means of holding the various global governance mechanisms accountable. For instance, Simon Chesterman’s (2008) “accountability on the march” proposes to mitigate the worst effects of globalization by establishing mechanisms of global administrative law consisting of “procedures and normative standards for regulatory decision-making that falls outside domestic legal structures and yet

¹⁴ Benhabib, S. (2005). “Borders, Boundaries, and Citizenship” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38 (4): 676.

is not properly covered by existing international law".¹⁵ This technocratic approach seeks to constrain non-conformative behaviour, both ex ante and ex post, through a participative, delegated and reflexive approach to decision-making that promises both input and output legitimacy.¹⁶ In similar fashion, Ruth Grant and Robert Keohane (2005) espouse a vision of accountability as a meshed and networked paradigm, grafted onto individual mechanisms of global governance where and how appropriate.¹⁷

While such models of legal or administrative accountability are indeed welcomed steps forward in a dialogue about how to improve accountability in global governance, they both fail to pass the litmus test of incorruptibility given their continued reliance on specific actors to shape the legal framework within which their behaviour rests. As Chesterman acknowledges, the possibility of capture remains, and the weakness of non-industrialized countries will continue to see their fate decided by the world's rule makers.^{18/19} Furthermore, Grant and Keohane admit that power continues to shape the definition and conceptual lens of such accountability. Weak states will continue to be subject to the whims of the powerful.²⁰ The limited, if at times non-existent, engagement between polity and demos is by

¹⁵ Chesterman, S. (2008): 39.

¹⁶ Ibid: 49.

¹⁷ Grant R. and R. Keohane. (2005): 29-43.

¹⁸ Chesterman, S. (2008): 49.

¹⁹ The World Trade Organization is often identified as operating with the most 'teeth' given the legal charter that constrains member state behaviour and establishes subsequent forums for dispute resolution. Its ability to dictate recourse for plaintiffs, however, is still highly correlated to the balance of power between disputants.

²⁰ Grant R. and R. Keohane. (2005): 40.

no means significantly reformed. Law can establish accountability if it is the product of dialogue and ‘equivalence’ between governed and governing (as understood in contemporary notions of trans-national and global). It can, however, also be used to entrench deficits where advantageous for one party.

Tackling and structuring equivalence remains beyond the grasp of both aforementioned projects. In part, the endurance of the equivalence gap can be explained by the lag observed between theoretical concepts of the global and their replication in society. Thus, while contemporary mechanisms of global governance endeavour to construct trans-national polities around issue-specific spaces, they do so with no commonly understood or accepted definition of who or what constitutes the demos associated with each space and thus no firm definition of who should participate in that dialogue. As Held notes, an extension of the democratic ethos that prevails in most national governments to the global level requires that those affected by extra-territorial decisions and the impacts that may accompany it, are given an ability to participate in the discourse related to that issue, thus re-establishing equivalence.²¹ The definition of stakeholder, traditionally defined within territorial boundaries, becomes an ambiguous and dynamic term, defined by issue and effect rather than place of origin.

This “global democratic accountability”, however, necessitates a structure within which stakeholder participation is anchored. Held’s proposed cosmopolitan multilateralism goes beyond Chesterman’s functional, albeit vague, vision of administrative law. It envisions a bridging

²¹ Held D. (2004): 372.

of global issue networks, regional parliaments and broadly defined “overlapping communities of fate”, in order to build a global architecture that reflects and accounts for the dependencies and subsidiarities that are no longer constrained by territorial boundaries.²²

However, like Chesterman, Held offers little concrete detail as to the functioning and procedural elements of his proposed multilateralism. How will accountability, as determined along the “equivalence” he proposes, be woven into a meshed vision of multi-level networked governance? Building upon pre-existing state and inter-state structures as he proposes does little to mitigate existing power disparities or the vulnerability to capture by special interests. Neither does his admission that the creation of this cosmopolitan multilateralism may require the imposition or coercion through threat of force.²³ Such arguments presuppose a universalistic acceptance and internalization of a common goal or framework for societal evolution. In doing so, cosmopolitanism, and by extension this vision of global governance, are projected as singular normative forces, akin to Meyer et al.’s “contemporary world culture.”²⁴ The latter argue that the forces behind this coalescence are rooted in communities of experts that propagate “the region of the modern world” and inform the decision-making processes that shape how governance is felt at the local level.²⁵ Yet if global governance is to function with reflexivity and equivalence, or in more common parlance, if it

²² Ibid: 382.

²³ Ibid: 385.

²⁴ Meyer, J.W., J. Boli, G. M. Thomas, and F. O. Ramirez (July 1997). “World Society and the Nation State”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 103 (1): 168.

²⁵ Ibid: 164.

is to be both held accountable and shaped by those who experience it, then such singular visions defy the realities of a global society.

Therein the importance of the analysis of the processes of governance, as opposed to simply the actors or ideas of governance, is highlighted as the key procedural step in our understanding of accountability. Anne-Marie Slaughter and David Zaring (2006) comment that "accountability is impossible without an understanding of how networks fit together with more traditional international organizations."²⁶ This more accurately pinpoints the key challenge of accountability in a networked, unbundled age. Accountability is not about singular forces or constituencies, nor singular conceptions of actors, be they state or non-state. Rather, global governance must be understood as the intersection of ideas, actors, and the plurality of geographies, ideologies, and stakeholders they represent.

Accountability is thus a plural interpretation of experienced reality. There is no single constituency, and there is no single experience. Perhaps acknowledging the aforementioned critique of his "cosmopolitan multilateralism", Held (2004) notes that his vision relies on the establishment of a form of multi-level or cosmopolitan citizenship. This citizenship would in effect create a singular "global". He argues that this cosmopolitan citizenship would defy traditional territorial identities and would allow citizens to participate in all political communities in which they have a critical stake, notably through trans-national referenda.²⁷ This call for plural

²⁶ Slaughter, A.-M. and D. Zaring. (2006). "Networking Goes International: An Update" *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2: 212.

²⁷ Held (2004):386.

citizenship is reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's much earlier call for global citizenship that sought to bridge societal divides "by using the common right to the face of the earth, which belongs to human beings generally."²⁸

The normative appeal of such visions is not to be discounted. Calls for global justice, global human rights, and other universalistic and altruistic calls for equality are rooted in a belief of the precedence of morality over materialism, no matter the physical and territorial boundaries involved. And as both Benhabib (2005) and Held (2004) argue, state-based or territorially-defined citizenship belie the realities of the migratory patterns of both issues and peoples. If, as Saskia Sassen (2005) argues, the state is no longer adequately measured by its borders, then neither can citizenship be measured by territorial borders alone.²⁹ The concept of place can defy traditional notions of polity. One place may represent many polities. And thus the cosmopolitan ideal of global citizenship should inform, if not define, accountability on the basis of a global demos, wherein each is a stakeholder in a variety of global or trans-national processes: a true return to equivalence. However, if our visualization and interpretation of society increasingly projects a networked, meshed, and unbundled notion of territory and citizenship, of governed and governing, why has accountability not kept up?

²⁸ Kant, I. (1795). *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. New York: Garland Pub, 1972: 8.

²⁹ Sassen, S. (2005). "When National Territory is Home to the Global: Old Borders to Novel Borderings", *New Political Economy*, 10 (4): 523-41.

A global polity, a local demos: where thought and practice diverge.

As Thomas Pogge (2008) notes, the privileging of one group amongst others is an all-too common part of the historical process of globalization.³⁰ While imperialism and colonization may have receded to the annals of history, the forced subservience of one people to the power of another remains active. What was physically-enforced slavery then, is economically- or culturally-enforced servitude now. Thus, cosmopolitan ideals regarding equality remain but a vision, poorly replicated in reality. Furthermore, while the ambiguity of what constitutes the domestic versus foreign confuses our perception of “who is us”, societies continue to identify themselves as defined polities and defined constituencies, despite the evident reality that doing so almost automatically identifies an “other”.³¹ The endurance of “place” and “people”, and of polity and demos, is not incongruent with the views held by Sassen (2005) on the unbundling and de-nationalization of territory and the state. For in both arguments, how the global is experienced and felt at the local level continues to matter.

Emanating upwards from these local constituencies, multilateral institutions, despite their often broad, near universal memberships, host negotiations on the governance of trade, the environment and security that far too often privilege the self-interest of powerful states and powerful local constituencies, rather than a true equivalence amongst all stakeholders. As

³⁰ Pogge, T. (1990). “General Introduction,” from *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Cambridge: Polity Press: 29.

³¹ Reich, R. B. (January/February 1990). “Who is US?”, *Harvard Business Review*: 53-64 quoted in Kobrin Kobrin, S. (1998). “Back to the Future: Neomedievalism and the Post-Modern Digital World Economy”, *Journal of International Affairs*, 51 (2): 368.

noted by Hedley Bull long ago, the presence of an international system does not necessarily confirm the presence of an international society.³² Thus, the Doha Trade Round remains stalled, in part due to the stubborn unwillingness of rich industrialized countries to eliminate domestic subsidies; the Copenhagen Summit on environmental governance and emissions reductions failed thanks in large part to industrialized and industrializing country reticence to risk economic growth; and the United Nations Security Council projects a willing indifference to the plights of its many stakeholders by a continuous jockeying of self-interest and economic relationships over the plight of the world's least-able populations.

This overview of contemporary mechanisms of global governance certainly reinforces the theme of an accountability deficit therein. However, as noted in the previous section, procedural innovations, be they legal or normative, will do little to change the equivalence of global governance so long as the ethics of those governed do not demand it. Global administrative law as proposed by Chesterman or similarly by Grant and Keohane will not quell the influence of power. Forms of cosmopolitanism, as proposed by Held, Kant or Benhabib, cannot be enforced or created at the 'global' level. Rather, both sets of ideational projects are dependent on the will of the local. Surmounting the barriers to true accountability in the machinations of global governance is thus dependent on the ethics of a still-plural demos. As Thomas Weiss notes in relation to the United Nations, "It is not enough that

³² Bull, H. (2002). "The European International Order," in *Hedley Bull on International Society*, Alderson and Hurrell; editors, London: McMillan Press: 172.

(it) be made to work; it must be seen to work for all.”³³ This undoubtedly applies to global governance as a whole.

Producing a cohesive global ethic – one that facilitates a form of global equivalence and is therefore unconstrained by a diversity of territories, cultures, and peoples – requires a grandiose public compact. This compact, however, need not homogenize values or culture, nor should it rely on altruistic visions of a cosmopolitan polity or global moral consciousness. For while Akira Iriye (2002) is correct in his observation that transnational efforts related to humanitarian and development projects, environmental issues, and human rights are steps toward a form of global community and global moral consciousness,³⁴ the ongoing persistence of the roots of crisis and inequality highlights the limited intra- and inter-societal depth and internalization of this consciousness. Be it contemporary attempts at reform of global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund³⁵ or historical chapters such as the rise and fall of the New International Economic Order³⁶, calls for redistributive strategies related to institutional power and the corridors of influence have been unable to overcome the power of entrenched interests and ultimately the power of local constituencies and fears of redistributive losses.

³³ Weiss, T. (2009). “What Happened to the Idea of World Government?” *International Studies Quarterly*, 53: 267.

³⁴ Iriye, A. (2002). *Global Community: The role of international organizations in the making of the contemporary world*, Los Angeles, University of California Press.

³⁵ See, for example, Bryant, R.C. (2008). *Reform of IMF Quota Shares and Voting Shares: A Missed Opportunity*, Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution.

³⁶ See Hudson, M. (2003). *Global Fracture: The New International Economic Order*. 2nd Edition. New York, Harper and Row.

Moving beyond the peripheral forms of global community presented by Iriye requires addressing the social and economic barriers that stand in the way of widespread belief that a rising tide will indeed raise all boats. Yet reaching a pareto-improving consensus, and therefore the promise that redistribution to some will not cause economic or social losses to others is reliant on the two-level games between domestic and global levels of governance. While states with built-in safety nets and well-funded welfare systems are able to compensate for losses and facilitate re-allocation to new productive sectors, states without them are likely to face strong domestic resistance to any such redistribution and are likely to stand in the way of any form of true distributive equality. Thus, the domestic diversity of such welfare systems, and paucity of such systems in even the richest of states, stand in the way of a global public compact toward truly equivalent global governance. Perceived “equivalence” within global governance, especially in the economic realm, would benefit from the development of a form of global welfare, instituted to shield those negatively affected by global issues in both rich and poor members of the global community. As recent discussions related to a global tax on financial transactions highlight, the imposition of supra-national taxation faces significant opposition from interest groups in developed economies. In its absence, the development of global moral consciousness is thus unlikely to expand beyond ex post efforts and will instead continue to ignore the more challenging effort of reforming the ex ante factors and processes at the heart of a contemporary breakdown of equivalence.

Conclusion

To be viewed as truly legitimate, global governance must be designed to serve and be accountable to all of its stakeholders. In its most explicit form, this means equating a global polity with some form of global demos, wherein equivalence is sought amongst a broad array of issue-specific stakeholders allowing those affected to have a voice. The normative appeal of such a goal aside, innovations in administrative law or cosmopolitan ideals are unlikely to create accountability mechanisms sufficient in strength and constraining ability vis-à-vis the enduring power of vested interests. The endurance of the latter is indicative of the continuing relevance of “place” within global governance, notably the impact of global events and issues on domestic and local constituencies. Therefore, creating accountable mechanisms of global governance can only succeed if buoyed by a fundamental embrace of a global ethic based upon the equality of opportunity, in particular by the domestic constituencies of powerful states. Doing so, however, depends on a willingness of the powerful to accept sacrifices which, as Weiss acknowledges, depends on a “delicate grand bargain.”³⁷

Determining whether this grand bargain of ethics is utopian or relatively plausible is key to divining the future of global governance. If achievable, then global governance may still evolve into an accountable and legitimate form of governance in the 21st century wherein a plurality of global polities are held accountable by a plurality of global demos. However, if global ethics and the sacrifices required are too much of a divergence from

³⁷ Weiss (2009): 267.

the patterns of human behaviour that favour identity and proximity, then a rapid retrenchment away from the rhetoric and practice of governance at the global level is a likely next step. And while some authors such as Iriye (2002) highlight peripheral forms of transnational consciousness as progress toward global community and global moral consciousness, the continued presence of fortress-like barriers to economic and social convergence posit a limit to the bounds of global community and global ethics.

The study and practice of global governance is likely to evolve in an uneven pace, punctuated by progress in peripheral, non-economic areas of governance but stagnancy in matters of localized economic importance. The gradual development of global norms on human rights, for example, has yet to translate into a broadly internalized framework for economic justice. This remains the most imposing barrier to true equivalence in global governance and barring an unforeseen shift in the social psychology of a plurality of publics, it will significantly dampen progress toward legitimate and equivalent forms of global governance.