

Conceptualising Global Governance in International Relations

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The questions of *how the concept of global governance can be used to describe the prevailing global order and what is the most appropriate way of formulating the concept of global governance* are interesting not only because of the growing literature and interest in the concept and the fact that divergent theoretical frameworks have approached the conceptualisation of global governance differently; but, more significantly, they are interesting in that they challenge the limits of traditional IR theory to explain a world where the shape and importance of individual states is changing and the role of agents above and below the state is increasing. According to Hollis et al. (1990), these realities have “constituted a formidable barrier to a theory of International Relations” and have contributed to questioning the capacity of the discipline to explain changes in an ever more complex world order, particularly given that evidence appears to “support conflicting theories equally well and that evidence varies in interpretation between theories” (54).

In response to the aforementioned questions this paper contends that *although particular theoretical paradigms within IR emphasise specific characteristics of global governance, no single paradigm has been capable of capturing the complexity of global governance. Resultantly, the conceptualisation of global governance requires a combination of particular aspects of realism, institutionalism, constructivism, and pluralism*. Although independently these theoretical paradigms are deficient, together they go a long way in explaining power, order, norms and change in the world order. Thus, in order to enhance the comprehensiveness and sophistication of the discourse on global governance, IR as a discipline must develop the capacity to transcend stringent theoretical boundaries.

In substantiating the thesis, this paper provides a critical analysis of the theoretical literature on global governance, employing primarily the works of Robert Cox (1981), Keohane and Nye (2000); Mansbach et al. (1996); James Roseneau (1992), Robert O’Brien et al. (2000), Kenichi Ohmae (1995); and, Kenneth Waltz (1998), supplemented by additional supporting literature. The first section of this paper contextualises global governance within global political, economic, social and ideational developments, delineates the history of the discourse on global governance, defines the central elements of governance consistent across the literature, and connects the concept of governance to the global realm. The second section identifies and defines five key themes that emerged from the review of theoretical literature that function to organise the ensuing critical analysis. Organising the theoretical literature according to the paradigms of realism, institutionalism and constructivism, this section delineates the characteristics of each paradigm according to the key themes, determines the interpretation of each paradigm of the concept of global governance, and identifies strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm in conceptualising global governance. The third section bridges the theoretical paradigms and fills the persisting gaps, utilising Rosenau’s concept of global order, to generate an aggregate/eclectic conceptualisation of global governance. The final section postulates on the capacity of the discipline of IR to transcend stringent theoretical boundaries to provide for a useful and meaningful conceptualisation of global governance.

Contextualisation

In providing the foundation from which to understand the discourse on global governance this section contextualises global governance within global political, economic, social and ideational developments; delineates the history of the

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discourse on the global order; defines the central elements of governance across the literature; and, connects the concept of governance to the global realm.

Global Political, Socio-Economic and Ideational Developments

Globalisation – the expansion, intensification and acceleration of global interconnectedness – has significant political, socio-economic and ideational dimensions that have functioned to reorder the global system. Many of these developments have been facilitated and accelerated by technological advancements, particularly in information and communication technologies. In terms of political developments, as a result of the emergence of actors and institutions above and below the state, such as Multinational Economic Institutions (MEI) (e.g. International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation), Global Social Movements (GSM), as well as international law regimes, power – the ability to affect actor's perceptions, intentions, or actions – is no longer specific to states in that it has become increasingly diffused throughout the global system with the emergence of new centers and authorities beyond the state (O'Brien et al., 2000: 16). Economic developments include the liberalisation of economies; the global expansion of trade; growing economic interdependence of countries (Ibid); the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions; the development of global financial centers; increased global capital flows; the growth of multinational corporations; and, the aforementioned expansion of MEIs. Furthermore, there have been significant social and ideational developments such as the global spread of "liberal democracy" and capitalism subsequent to the Cold War; the expansion of neo liberal globalisation (Ibid); the simultaneous homogenisation of cultures and the localised reactions against the stretch of "Western" culture; the global movement of people; the development of "global cities"; and, the ideological expansion of the social arena for civil society and social movements among others. Together, these developments have facilitated the development of new global actors and networks, and have reordered the global system to create "generalised principles of conduct" (Ruggie, 1998).

Connecting Governance to the Global Realm

According to Scott Turner (1998), the emerging global order poses empirical and normative challenges to the state-centered, realist paradigm of IR (25). Turner states that the emergence of a global civil society – including international organisations, social movements and the growing rights discourse among others – has fundamentally challenged state-centered realist assumptions, necessitating a reconceptualisation of the global order beyond that of anarchism (Ibid, 36). According to the Commission on Global Governance, governance involves the "the many ways that individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs" (O'Brien, 2000: 2).

Although the concept of governance is not uniformly defined in the social sciences, its Latin origins suggest that governance pertains to the process of "steering" society and is most often used to describe authority, institutions, interests and actors within the state; wherein, rather than independently ruling a country, the role of the state would be to steer society by brokering competing interests and interacting with private and social actors. According to Rosenau (1992), the concept of governance is more inclusive than government as it embraces "governmental institutions and informal, non government mechanisms whereby needs and wants are fulfilled" (4). For him, governance is a system of rules accepted by the majority. The key components of governance are: rules, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and processes (Ibid).

As an emerging concept in international relations (IR) theory global governance is a global political project that has challenged the capacity of the social sciences to generate theoretical insights and practical tools to explain contemporary transformations in the global order. Indeed, in the absence of an overarching political authority in the anarchic international realm, academics have sought to make sense of the new world order – global governance is an example of this attempt. Biermann et al. (2002) note that the discourse around global governance has followed a series of developments: initially it focused on the emergence of international governance regimes and norm setting within regimes and then pertained to the growth in the number of international regimes in the 1980s and 1990s and research on the influence of the regimes on policies pursued by nation states (Biermann et al., 2002). The concept emerged as a result of the inadequacy of either the classical realist or functional paradigms to explain the post Cold War global order. Rosenau (1992) has used the concept of global governance to refer to regulation and interdependent relations in the absence of overarching political authority in the international system. For him, global

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governance is “governance without government” (Rosenau, 1992: 10), indicating a shift from statism to integration. The concept of global governance seeks to describe the current condition of international society and is sometimes limited to describing traditional forms of international relations premised on the centrality of states as rational autonomous actors and at other times broadened to encompass the social construction of identities and interests, and social and political interaction among a plethora of agents. Indeed, there is not yet a uniform definition of the concept of global governance. Resultantly, the subsequent sections of this paper seek to clarify the ontology, structure and entities that compose global governance, in order to give meaning and value to the concept.

Theoretical Analysis

Through undertaking a comprehensive review of the theoretical literature on global order and global governance, five key themes that were recurrent throughout each of the paradigms and are addressed differently in them, have been selected to function as the basis for structuring the ensuing comparative analysis. The themes are: (1) the architecture of the world order; (2) the role of the state in international relations; (3) the role of agency beyond the state; (4) adaptiveness, accountability and legitimacy of global governance; and, (5) the distribution of power. This section analyses the paradigms of realism, institutionalism, constructivism and pluralism in order to: delineate the key characteristics of each paradigm according to the aforementioned key themes; determine the interpretation of each paradigm of the concept of global governance; and, identify strengths and weakness of each paradigm in conceptualising global governance. In so doing, this analysis seeks to evaluate the utility of each of the paradigms in contributing to a comprehensive conceptualisation of global governance.

Realist Paradigm

In assessing the realist paradigm in its interpretation of the global order this section employs the works of Waltz (1998) and McNeil (1994). The realist paradigm considers the architecture of the global order to be one that is anarchic, based upon self-help, and premised upon state sovereignty. It positions self-interested states – unitary rational actors – as the most important players in world politics and leaves little room for agency beyond the state; thus, denying the role of non state actors, civil society and intergovernmental organisations among others (McNeill, 1994). According to the realist paradigm, states seek to survive and maximise power, and calculate their interests in terms of power – traditionally defined in terms of physical force. Resultantly, the international realm is assumed to be fraught with conflict. According to Waltz, although sovereignty makes states functionally similar, it is their capability, or relative power, that determines the global order. Indeed, as states are central to this paradigm, they are considered to be the only accountable and legitimate actors in world politics. Within the paradigm, global governance, equated to state-centered multilateralism, is considered to be contrived by rational autonomous states in their efforts to improve their standing and increase their relative power in international economic competition, influence weaker states, and/or compete for international prestige. Although they may recognise the existence of additional actors and institutions within global governance, ultimately international institutions are determined by and governed by states, specifically the hegemonic states that created them, and other actors also have states as their origin. Although other IR paradigms point to the increasing interdependence of states as contributing to a new global order, realists such as Waltz (1998) have said that rather than growing interdependence of states, we are witnessing the increasing inequality of states (700). This paradigm contributes to our understanding of global governance through emphasising the centrality of the state and importance of power and self-interest in the international realm. However, this paradigm is deficient in that it makes little room for ideas, civil society, institutions and transnational forces in its analysis, except as mechanisms of power politics by self interested states.

Institutionalist Paradigm

This section explores the dimensions of the institutionalist paradigm – which may be either neo realist or neo liberal in its approach – on global governance with particular attention to the concepts of *complex interdependence* (Keohane and Nye, 2000), *regimes* (Rosenau, 1992) and *functional and temporal interdependence* (Biermann et al., 2002), in order to demonstrate how institutionalism contributes to the conceptualisation of global governance by focusing on institutions as agents of governance in the global realm. Institutionalism concerns the broad conceptualisation of how institutions, “formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organisational

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structure or political economy” structure the parameters of conduct (Hall et al., 1996: 936). According to Hall and Taylor (1996), although institutionalists hold that “conflict among rival groups for scarce resources lies at the heart of politics”, they enlarge this perspective by asserting that institutions enhance or limit the capacities of some interests over others and that institutions are the “principal factor structuring collective behaviour and generating distinctive outcomes” (937). Within this framework, institutions provide for regularised patterns of conduct by controlling options, allocating resources, distributing power, structuring incentives and providing actors with varying degrees of certainty about the “present and future behaviour of other actors, enforcement mechanisms for agreements, penalties and defection” (Hall et al., 1996: 938). For this paradigm, interests and objectives are created in institutional contexts and are not exogenous to institutions (Hall et al., 1996; Eaton, 2004). Thus, within the institutionalist paradigm, the international system is not anarchic; rather, it has an implicit or explicit structure that impacts how states will act.

Within the institutionalist paradigm academics hold diverse views about the importance of institutions and the role of states and agency. For instance, Young (1995) argues that international institutions are major actors, and perhaps the most important ones, while O’Brien (2000) asserts that within these institutions, states often maintain the key decision making role. Although institutionalists rarely insist that institutions are the only causal force in international politics – as they are considered to be located within a causal chain that accommodates a role for other factors – institutions are considered to be a primary determining factor, thus leaving little room for agency.

In terms of adaptiveness, institutionalism emphasises path dependence, wherein “the effects of forces are mediated by the contextual features of a given situation often inherited from the past” – the most significant of which are institutions (Hall et al, 1996: 939). Institutions are considered to be persistent determinants driving actions and historical developments along paths, which are punctuated by critical junctures that affect the contours of state capacities, social life, political processes, policy legacies, and ensuing policy choices (Hall et al, 1996; Pierson, 2000). *Path dependence* may result in *unintended consequences*, wherein relatively small events may produce large and often irrevocable consequences (Ibid). Within this paradigm, accountability and legitimacy within the international realm are sought through institutions. Furthermore, a notable feature of institutionalism is the prominent role of power and *asymmetrical relations of power* in the operation and development of institutions (Hall et al, 1996: 939). According to Dowding (2000), institutions disproportionately distribute power and access to decision making and agenda setting so that some groups have more or less power than other groups (126).

Although the energies of most IR institutionalists focus on the role of formal international institutions in coordinating international cooperation (i.e. the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations among others), it is worth reiterating that norms, processes, and conventions among others also constitute what we refer to as institutions, as there is a critical connection between systemic, structural and formal institutions within this paradigm, as systemic processes often become embedded overtime or come to be taken as a given. For instance, within the institutionalist paradigm, Keohane and Nye (2000) introduce the concept of *complex interdependence* – closely identified with neoliberal institutionalism – to refer to complex transnational connections and interdependencies between states and societies, specifically military and economic processes, wherein states are no longer the most appropriate units of analysis. Rather than referring primarily to formal institutions, complex interdependence is more systemic and structural, embracing the concept of *regimes* to diminish realist assertions of anarchy and facilitate cooperation. According to Rosenau (1992), regimes are “forms of governance without government” in that they preside over a particular issue area of international relations (e.g. environment, human rights, nuclear proliferation, etc.) (9). Regimes provide for transparent and predictable state behaviour in the international system. However, for him, regimes should not be confused with global governance, which is a more “all encompassing concept”. Biermann et al. (2002) identify additional informal institutions, asserting that the international system is characterised by *temporal interdependence*, wherein global governance creates intergenerational interdependencies that pose further governance challenges – this is directly related to the concept of *path dependency*; and, *functional interdependence* that relates to the interdependence of various social, political and economic systems, related to mutual sustainability.

The institutionalist paradigm has much to contribute to the conceptualisation of global governance, particularly in terms of its emphasis on types of interdependence, international regimes, and formal and systemic/structural institutions that take us beyond the realist state-centered approach to reveal a more complex and layered

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understanding of international politics. Despite its many contributions, the limits of the institutionalist perspectives are increasingly recognised by observers of the field, specifically: its inability to explain change because of its emphasis on continuity; the limited role for agency; and, minimal attention paid to causality in terms of determining how institutions affect behaviour.

Constructivist Paradigm

Utilising the work of Wendt (1992, 1999), Ruggie (1998) and Mansbach et al. (1996) this section explores the constructivist approach to global governance, which is one that focuses on the social construction of identities and interests of actors and ideational factors; is more concerned with the way norms, rules and institutions constitute the identities and interests of actors; and, rests on an intersubjective dimension of human action. Ruggie (1998) criticised state-centered approaches for considering the identity and interests of other actors as being exogenous and given, and problematised state-centered approaches as: (1) neglecting how the identity and interests of other actors came to be constructed; (2) failing to account for changes in identity and interests over time; and (3) overlooking how identities and ideas can shape state interests (14-16).

Rejecting the realist claim that the architecture of the world order is one of anarchy, constructivists assert, “Anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992) in that anarchy does not exist in and of itself, rather it has been constructed. Rather than the realist assertion that the distribution of capabilities determines international relations, according to Wendt international politics is determined by shared culture and ideas, such that capabilities only have meaning because of the ideas that we attach to them. Thus, the state itself is a construct considered to be no more than a complex set of social functions (Mansbach et al., 1996). Likewise, power, accountability and legitimacy are also considered to be social constructs. The constructivist paradigm provides for agency in that “individuals and groups become functionally linked as they discover that they share common interests and needs that transcend existing frontiers” (Ibid, 191). Within this conglomerate system, functional linkages and identities between the actors overlap and create “transnational perceptions of mutual interest” and lead to regularised and often institutionalised relations among groups. Thus, according to constructivists, new actors in the global system emerge as a result of the deficiency of the territorially delimited state to respond to changes (Ibid).

The interpretation of the concept of global governance by constructivists is premised on the system of ideation – constituted by identity and culture – wherein ideational factors have normative and instrumental dimensions that are expressed individually and collectively, and are context dependant (Ruggie, 1998: 879). The identities and interests of actors within global governance and the constitution of the concept itself is a product of international interaction. Indeed, according to Soh (1999), “the global governance structure is invented according to legitimacy and social consent” and therefore is not necessarily a product of efforts to reduce transaction costs; rather, is a result of ongoing interactions between actors (12). Resultantly, according to the constructivist paradigm, no particular structure of global governance would be permanent. Indeed, Cox (1998) – a notable critical theorist – has asserted the context and temporal-spatial dependency of any structure. The constructivist paradigm provides the concept of global governance with an intersubjective dimension and a more expansive understanding of how international institutions help to construct “actors, interests and social purposes that state-centered theories cannot” (Ibid, 10). Nevertheless, it fails to provide substantive explanations for societal change and the implications of social movements (Ibid, 12).

Pluralist Paradigm

The pluralist paradigm provides for the role of non-state actors and does not ascribe the state to be a central unitary actor; rather, conceives of the balanced interactions among societal forces. Utilising the work of Turner (1998), Ohmae (1995), O’Brien et al. (2000) and Strange (1996), this section explores the pluralist paradigm and its contribution to the conceptualisation of global governance, with particular attention to transnational *social movements, civil society, and market agents*. It is important to note from the onset that as this paradigm contributes newer conceptualisations, there are marked overlaps between pluralist and liberal institutionalist approaches – for instance, Koehn and Nye’s conceptualisation of complex interdependence – and constructivist/critical approaches. Opposed to state-centered conceptualisations of global governance, from this paradigm the architecture of the

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international system is a product of competing interests. Indeed, Ohmae (1995) asserts that states are just one of many actors. The pluralist paradigm enables a better understanding of agency beyond the state and considers non-state actors to be important in international politics. Furthermore, the state is looked upon as constituting a multiplicity of actors, interests and groups – unions, civil society organisations, international non governmental organisations among others – that compete, build coalitions and compromise with each other to influence the making of laws by the state. Legitimacy and accountability are derived from inclusion of interests and the participation of groups in the taking of decisions (Turner, 1998). The more powerful actors and interests have a greater propensity to affect change and rules.

The pluralist paradigm contributes to the conceptualisation of global governance an understanding of agency beyond the state and the notion of interests and actors as determining the state and the international system. Mansbach et al. (1997) identify six types of actors that create a conglomerate system: interstate governmental, interstate non-governmental, nation states, governmental non-central, interstate non-government, and individuals. Turner (1998) posits *global civil society* as an alternative to state-centered realism, including international institutions such as the United Nations, international separatist movements in places like Chechnya and Sri Lanka, international terrorist organisations like Hamas, multinational corporations like General Motors, and international non governmental organisations like Amnesty International. According to Turner, global civil society is mobilised around issues that the state and market systems have failed to address (1998: 29). Turner notes that global civil society is enabled by new technologies. Indeed, in *The Rise of Network Societies*, Manuel Castells (1996) asserts that network logic has been greatly assisted by and organised around the “revolution in information technology”, resulting in the decline of states as the primary political entity. Turner notes that although global civil society actors may be interrelated and interact with states, they are increasingly independent from states.

Moreover, O'Brien et al. (2000) introduce the concept of *complex multilateralism* to denote the emergence of civil society and transnational social movements (women's, environmental, human rights and labour) from below that aim to enhance the transparency and accountability of global governance through transforming global economic institutions. Additionally, Kenichi Ohmae (1995) looks at the global production of goods and services and contends that it is increasingly problematic to trace them back to the national level. Consequently, people, markets and firms are increasingly important agents that are no longer necessarily tied to a particular country as a result of an increasingly borderless economy. This paradigm contributes to our understanding of global governance by emphasising the significance of non-state actors in shaping the international system and the increasing prevalence of global networks. Nevertheless, this paradigm tends to overlook critical issues of the asymmetric distribution of power and elitism in the international system.

The Conceptualisation of Global Governance

Having determined how the realist, institutionalist, constructivist and pluralist theoretical paradigms approach the concept of global governance according to five key themes, this section embraces Rosenau's (1992) approach to global governance – as being a more encompassing term and contends that although each paradigm independently proves to be inadequate, together the theories can go further in explaining global governance. This section extracts contributing elements of each paradigm and identifies persisting gaps in the conceptualisation of global governance. In order to address the gaps, this section considers the work James Rosenau (1992) on governance without government and subsequently delineates the most appropriate conceptualisation of global governance according to the aforementioned guiding themes.

Bridging the Theoretical Paradigms

Mansbach et al. (1996) assert that “much of international relations theory has been irrelevant to the political earthquakes of recent years” and propose that we “rethink the tools of the trade” (3). These realities have “constituted a formidable barrier to a theory of International Relations” and have contributed to questioning the capacity of the discipline to explain changes in an ever more complex world order, particularly given the fact that evidence appears to “support conflicting theories equally well and that evidence varies in interpretation between theories” (Hollis et al., 1990: 54). Indeed, as global governance is multifaceted, no single theoretical paradigm

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assessed above has been able to capture the full complexity of the process. Furthermore, the fact that there are multiple variants of the theoretical paradigms further problematises any conceptualisation of global governance. In order to develop a comprehensive, aggregate and eclectic conceptualisation that captures the full complexity of global governance, particular contributing elements of each paradigm must be extracted and combined. Although extracting particular elements of the aforementioned paradigms may be argued to compromise their integrity, each paradigm provides particular insights to understand global governance and their cumulative insights can take us further in conceptualising global governance.

The realist paradigm contributes to the conceptualisation of global governance the centrality of states, the importance of asymmetrical power in the international realm, and the anarchic nature of the international realm. Institutionalist expand this exercise by positioning institutions, norms, practices and conventions as additional agents of governance, emphasising types of interdependence to reveal a layered understanding of international politics. The pluralist paradigm emphasises the significance of non-state actors in shaping the international system and the increasing prevalence of global networks. The constructivist paradigm contributes to the conceptualisation an intersubjective dimension by focusing on ideational factors and the way norms, rules and institutions constitute the identities and interests of actors and vice versa, as well as contributes the notions of context dependency of the global order. Combined, these paradigms take us a long way in conceptualising global governance; nevertheless, there are several persisting gaps/deficiencies that must be addressed pertaining how an anarchic world order interrelates with governance and how global governance is sustained.

Addressing Persistent Gaps in the Conceptualisation of Global Governance

The work of James Rosenau (1992) on “governance without government” contributes to an aggregate/eclectic conceptualisation of global governance that extracts from the four paradigms and assists in addressing persistent gaps to provide a comprehensive conceptualisation. Rosenau’s conceptualisation of global order is critical to our understanding of global governance in that governance and order are considered to be interactive phenomena (1992: 9). Although an anarchic global order lacks a centralised authority, Rosenau seeks to determine “the extent to which the functions normally associated with governance are performed in world politics without the institution of government” (Ibid, 7). He asserts that in the global order, actors not derived from governments are performing governance functions. Thus for him, the global order must be conceptualised as a distinct set of arrangements and patterns, all encompassing, diverse, organic, ever changing, “embracing every region, country, international relationship, social movement, and private organization” that engages internationally (Ibid, 12-13). Relying greatly on the constructivist paradigm in this conceptualisation, Rosenau claims that this order is sustained at: (1) an ideational/intersubjective level; (2) a behavioural/objective level; and (3) the aggregate/political level to provide the foundation for cooperation and collective benefit in world politics (Ibid, 14-17, 28). Furthermore, according to Rosenau the global order is contextual and shaped by material conditions. Thus, Rosenau’s notion of the global order assists in the bridging of theoretical paradigms addressing the issue of how an anarchic world order interrelates with governance and global governance can be sustained.

Conceptualisation of Global Governance

Although particular theoretical paradigms within IR emphasise specific characteristics of global governance, no single paradigm has been capable of fully capturing the complexity of global governance. Resultantly, the conceptualisation of global governance requires a combination of particular aspects of realism, institutionalism, constructivism, and pluralism, that embraces and goes beyond Rosenau’s conception of global order to enhance the comprehensiveness and sophistication of the conceptualisation of global governance by infusing it with meaning and value. The following aggregate/eclectic conceptualisation of global governance is organised according to the aforementioned key themes. (1) The architecture of the global order is one of anarchy, not as the realist would have it as a constant state of war, rather as an ordered system that is intersubjectively and ideationally constructed by a multiplicity of actors and interests. Global governance constitutes this order, and is a layered and complex system of independent and interdependent ideas, interests, institutions, actors, movements, and relations that perform governance functions. (2) Within global governance, states remain active and critical actors in the global order; nevertheless, their position is not as dominant as it once was and their role will continue to change over time. The

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centrality of states has been socially constructed and based on consent. Resultantly, the relative power, authority and functions of states and other actors are context specific and will change and will be redistributed and reconstituted over time. (3) Global governance accounts for significant agency beyond and below the state that engage internationally – ranging from international non-governmental organisations, multinational corporations, international economic institutions to transnational social movements – and considers the ideas and identities of actors as critical to shaping the international system and institutions. Indeed, the multiplicity of actors at the intersubjective/ideational level fashion the system of global governance, as ideas and identities inform behaviours and objectives, which persist to inform global politics and institutions, and vice versa. Within global governance, states and other actors assume particular governance functions in steering the global order, whether those functions are economic, social, political, environmental, administrative, or adjudicative in nature. (4) The system of global governance adapts and changes over time. Accountability and legitimacy in this global order is attained through accounting for and engaging actors in taking decisions that will affect them. (5) Power is considered to be a social construct that is consented to. The relative power of particular actors and the distribution of power within the system of global governance greatly determined by whose interests will most likely be served by the global order and changes over time. In sum, global governance is conceptualised as a dynamic, all encompassing, layered, ordered and complex global system that is ideationally and intersubjectively constructed, wherein a multiplicity of state and non state actors, constituted by identities and interests with differential access to power, perform governance functions that collectively steer the global order.

Final Words

In Conclusion, although particular theoretical paradigms within IR emphasise specific characteristics of global governance, no single paradigm has been capable of capturing the complexity of global governance. Resultantly, the conceptualisation of global governance requires a combination of particular aspects of realism, institutionalism, constructivism, and pluralism. Although independently these theoretical paradigms are deficient, combined with Rosenau's concept of global order, they provide a more comprehensive and sophisticated conceptualisation that transcends the stringent theoretical boundaries of IR. The comprehensiveness, sophistication and analytical gains provided for by an aggregate/eclectic conceptualisation conceives of global governance as a dynamic, multi-layered and intersubjective system wherein public and private actors and institutions, with conflicting identities and interests cooperate, comply with formal and informal institutions and regimes, and perform functions of governance that steer the global order – “doing internationally what governments do at home” (Finklestein, 1995: 45).

While this theoretical analysis provides for a comprehensive aggregate/eclectic conceptualisation of global governance, this paper is limited in that the use of substantive case studies would have substantiated and illustrated the utility of this conceptualisation in describing the world order would have revealed additional gaps to be addressed. Most notably, this paper does not extensively examine: the role of norms in the international order; the interconnectivity between ideas, behaviours and politics; cooperation and competition in global governance; and, the implications of global governance for the future of the global system and the study of IR. Works of other scholars in this field may be able to address these issues that time and space prevented me from examining in further detail. Furthermore, it may be asserted that extracting certain elements of theoretical paradigms detracts from the utility and integrity of the concepts external from the paradigm.

The conceptualisation of global governance in IR is interesting not only because of the fact that divergent theoretical frameworks have approached the conceptualisation of global governance differently and that the conceptualisation of global governance challenges the limits of traditional IR theory to explain a world where the shape and importance of individual states is changing and the role of agents above and below the state is increasing. An aggregate/eclectic approach can take the discipline a long way in conceptualising global governance and other emerging concepts and realities.

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