

Book Review:

Contemporary Global Governance: Multipolarity vs. New Discourses on Global Governance.

Edited by Dires Lesage and Pierre Vercauteren. pp. 262, US\$48.95

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Since the end of the Cold War, the world is heading towards a less centralized form of governance. As the United States is facing serious setbacks in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many emerging powers such as China, Russia and Brazil have formed regional alliances to create a multipolar and anti-hegemonic order. Fareed Zakaria refers to this development as the beginning of “the post-American world,” in which the United States retreats and the rest of the world advances in economic power and political influence (Zakaria, 2008). The collapse of the previous global trade talks in Geneva confirmed this point of view. In the Doha round of world trade talks in July 2008, the European Union (EU) and the United States urged China and India to lower their tariffs on industrial goods from the West in exchange for European and American tariff and subsidy cuts on agricultural products. But when China and India demanded the rights to raise tariffs on major imported cash crops such as cotton, sugar and rice, the EU and the United States opposed it because this would undermine the interests of European and American farmers. This trade disagreement signaled an end to more than a century of West-dominated global economic order (Lee, 2008). Against this background,

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it is time to look at the latest research on global governance in the early twenty-first century.

Contemporary Global Governance emerged from a conference in Belgium in 2005 that addressed the impacts of globalization on international governance and state sovereignty. The thirteen chapters in this edited volume are thematically grouped into two sections and address the following questions. First, what are the impacts of geopolitical changes on international order today? Second, what are the preconditions for effective governance in a multipolar world? Third, what are changing perceptions of global governance among international policymakers? The editors and contributors answer these questions by exploring the conceptual and policy dimensions of global governance. They offer important insights as they analyze the new possibilities in a multipolar world and the institutional mechanisms needed to support such an order.

The book's first section focuses on the emergence of a multipolar order. Dries Lesage conceptualizes multipolarity as "an international distribution of power in which three or more great powers possess exceptionally large capabilities" and none of them can subdue the others (p.13). He highlights three preconditions for effective governance in a multipolar world, namely respecting national sovereignty, reducing the development gap between the North and South, and accommodating the interests of developing countries in global economic institutions. Since many European countries are losing their dominance in global politics, the early twenty-first century has witnessed a gradual transition towards a post-Western world. In particular, the emerging markets in East Asia and Latin America as well as the oil-rich countries of the Middle East have created regional institutions to challenge the global leadership of the West.

No discussion of global governance is complete without mentioning China, Russia, India and Japan. Gustaaf Geeraerts and Jonathan Holslag stress that the current Chinese leaders are aware of the changing balance of power in global politics. They recognize the limits to China's power and are very pragmatic in pursuing their strategic goals. The same can be said of Vladimir Putin's decision to assert Russian international influence. Andrei P. Tsygankov states that Putin's assertive foreign policy is a direct response to

the growing U.S. military presence in Central Asia and the relocation of NATO forces along Russia's western frontier. Ian Taylor looks at the India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) as a new strategic alliance from the global South, even though this alliance still has a long way to go before it can challenge the unfair global trading mechanisms institutionalized by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Japan is probably not in the same rank as China and Russia in global politics. But according to Elena Atanassova-Cornelis, Japanese leaders have succeeded in advancing their national interests through the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the active participation in the United Nations' peace-keeping missions over the last few decades. As the world is heading towards a multipolar order, Svens Biscop calls on the EU to develop a comprehensive policy of pursuing global public goods such as political and social security for individuals, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and an inclusive economic order. Otherwise, the EU will be marginalized by the United States and other emerging powers in the twenty-first century.

The second section evaluates some transnational trends that inform our understanding of state sovereignty and global order. Pierre Vercauteren argues that there is no symbiotic relationship between global governance and democracy. Because the understanding of global governance varies from country to country and national leaders have conflicting interests, it is extremely difficult to establish a new global democratic order. This problem can be seen within the U.N. Commission for Human Rights which often admitted countries with poor human rights records and critical of American foreign policy. Barbara Delcourt and Nina Wilén discuss the U.S. campaign for creating a permanent Democratic Caucus and a Human Rights Council within the United Nations in order to replace the U.N. Commission for Human Rights. But this agenda of promoting democracy only serves the national interests of the United States and contradicts the U.N. policy of ensuring equality and pluralism among its member states.

Both Tine Vandervelden and Teun van de Voorde evaluate the role of the United Nations in pursuing global peace and security. In 2003, former U.N. Secretary-General

Kofi Annan created a High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes to assess current terrorist threats to international order. Kofi Annan urged countries to dissuade radical groups from embracing terrorism, to deny people with the means to carry out terrorist acts, and to organize a broad-based anti-terrorist struggle around the world. Although these recommendations are hard to implement, the United Nations is still the only forum for such discussion on global security. Francine Mestrum revisits the U.N. Millennium Development Goals, designed in 2000 to spur development by improving social and economic conditions in the impoverished nations of the world, and points out that progress towards poverty-reduction and sustainable development is uneven because many developing countries have followed the neo-liberal free-market economy and dismantled their social protection mechanisms and state-building capacities. Yves Palau shifts the focus to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and shows that the OECD has encountered the same administrative problems as the United Nations in promoting public governance among its member states. James N. Rosenau's conclusion is insightful. The end of the Cold War has created a diffuse global order characterized by interactions between far-flung regional economies rather than nation-states. This development indicates that the absence of a global authority does not necessarily lead to global chaos.

As with many conference proceedings, the interpretative framework of this work is the first methodological problem to be encountered. Aimed at global policymakers and students of international relations in the West, most of the chapters are Eurocentric and fail to consider the perspectives from the developing world. A good example is the challenge of China. The Chinese path to development has become an attractive model for many developing countries. The West has always strongly favored free-market privatization over government interference in the economy. But the economic growth of China has been driven by the effective use of government resources to encourage research and innovation, and a deliberate policy of protecting public property. Such strategic use of state resources has enabled China to accomplish its agenda of economic growth

and winning support from neighboring countries. This model of state-directed development is based on the powerful premise that political independence is a prerequisite for economic development. It is the rightful duty of any industrializing country to safeguard national sovereignty and pursue economic autonomy. China's development approach rejects the longstanding Euro-American policies of exporting democracy through military intervention and imposing neo-liberal reforms in the developing world. Gone is the era of human rights diplomacy and neo-liberal economics. This is the greatest Chinese challenge to the West-dominated model of global governance (Lampton, 2008; Leonard, 2008). Therefore, there are always new possibilities in a multipolar world. The most feasible option is to ensure transnational cooperation within a diffuse global framework rather than imposing a top-down model of governance. This will avoid escalating regional tensions into international conflicts and create a stable environment for development. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind the different approaches towards global governance and to avoid making generalizations about the subject.

This problem notwithstanding, this collection of essays is informative and provides a very useful introduction for students and general readers to the subject of global governance in the early twenty-first century.

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