THE CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTIVES OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Milos BALABAN, Martin POTUCEK
balaban@fsv.cuni.cz, potucek@fsv.cuni.cz

Abstract

Global governance consists of a set of institutions, procedures and networks that jointly influence collective decision making (agreements, regulations, specific choices) necessary to tackle global challenges. The need to manage problems of global nature – to govern globally – is generated by globalization processes. Globalization gradually but irreversibly undermines the once-exclusive position of nation states, which (voluntarily or involuntarily) surrender a substantial part of their informal as well as formal decision-making authority to superior international or supranational structures. Regional political and economic organizations, but also non-governmental organizations, the mass media and supranational economic corporations are thus gaining more influence in the international arena.

The study focuses on analyzing the position of individual actors in the global governance process. It reaches the conclusion that, despite being so numerous and diverse, the above-mentioned actors are unable to respond to the host of new political, economic and security challenges and threats generated by today's dynamically changing international environment. The resulting “institutional vacuum” is even more serious due to the crisis of global legitimacy and influence of the UNO – which, however, cannot be replaced by any other platform of the G-8, G-20 type. The study highlights the role of the European Union which, through its political and economic influence, puts into operation an effective system of multilateral international cooperation to solve the key global problems.

Keywords
Global governance, sovereignty, nation state, international organization, regional organization, strategy, multilateralism, multi-polarity, the United Nations Organization, the European Union.

Theoretical Bases

Global governance consists of the set of institutions, procedures and networks which mutually influence collective decisions (agreements, regulations, specific choices), necessary to tackle global challenges. The necessity to manage problems of a global character – govern globally – is induced first of all by the processes of globalization.

Understanding these processes – and attempts to manage them on the level of a rational collective action – is, for the present, at the very beginning. Nevertheless there is a theoretical basis on which it is possible to rely. It is represented by three significant definition characters of global governance:

1. multi-level (global governance is realized in a parallel on various hierarchic levels, it cannot be limited e.g. to a level of a nation state only);
2. plurality of regulators (global governance uses besides traditional tools of state power and administration also other regulators and actors, first of all the market, public sector and mass media);
3. existence of non-hierarchic networks (global governance cannot rely only on hierarchies; it is connected with horizontal linkages, formal and informal information, communication and action networks of actors).
The first character of global governance definition means that due to the influence of globalization there is gradual, nevertheless inexorable weakening of the former supreme position of nation states; these give up (voluntarily and also involuntarily) a significant part of their formal and informal decision-making authority both in favor of superior international or supra-national structures and, in a decentralization process, in favor of their own regions and municipalities.

The second character of the global governance definition means the real withdrawal of the states in the ongoing procedure of “division of labor” between them and other actors from commercial and civilian sectors. Sharing the competence, responsibility and mutual dependence between the actors of the market and the state was expressed succinctly even decades ago by Charles Lindblom⁷. In last decades also the actors of a civilian sector³ have significantly succeeded together with the mass media.

The third character of global governance definition is connected with new possibilities of information and communication technologies and it is difficult to intercept them analytically; nevertheless, they fundamentally affect the character and possibilities of application: there is the existence and activities of networks disrespecting hierarchic structures of the power and administration which might be very fluid but at the same time very vigorous⁴.

The issue of global governance, its character and actors are at the same time distinctly interconnected with questions how to ensure the security on a national, regional and global level.

**Nation States, Globalization, Regionalization and New Actors**

Global governance in the contemporary world has been passing through a very complicated phase of the development which has a wide range of both positive and negative features. Renowned authors are having second thoughts, first of all, about the capabilities of a current shape of global governance to respond appropriately to unprecedented challenges of globalization⁵. These deficits appear even more in the foreground under the pressure of a global crisis of financial markets and world economy. The drawbacks include the fact that the global networks form new possibilities for the activities of organized crime or that the weakening nation states are unable to effectively prevent the massive tax evasion of globally operating companies.

Nevertheless, basically, it is possible to say that the nation states still preserve the position of dominant components of a global order even if they are under the increasing pressure of economic globalization and dissemination of information and communication technologies and therefore also with the proliferation of regional political and economic organizations and supra-national virtual groups of interest, based on sharing common religious, cultural, ethnic or other identities. According to the American political scientist Richard Haas⁶, today the power in the world is “in many hands and in many places”⁶.

The power concentrated in the hands of nation states is, for the present, the biggest, which is obvious when we take a look at the main actors of contemporary, already unexceptionable multi-polar world: the United States of America, China, Russia, Japan and India and also the European Union (it is not the nation state, nevertheless, in the frame of its more than a half of century development, individual member states – nation states – handed over the basic aspects of their sovereignty to the EU. However, this process has not been and will not be terminated minimally in a medium-term horizon. Despite this fact the EU is perceived thanks to the extent and the depth of political and economic integration as a real global actor). Even due to this fact we can summarize that the main world actors who encompass the half of the humanity and accounts for 75 % of GDP of the world and 80 % of
world arms spending ultimately most affect the character of global governance. This fact has
still been projected to a certain degree also in the biggest global political organization – United
Nations Organization whose key authority Security Council includes five permanent members
with the right of veto belonging among main world actors: the United States, the Great Britain,
France, Russia and China.

Also the importance of other nation actors has been growing and they might be marked
for regional powers: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela in Latin America, South
Africa and Nigeria in Africa, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey in Northern Africa and
the Middle East, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam in the Southern and South-eastern Asia,
Kazachstan in Central Asia, South Korea, Indonesia and Australia in Eastern Asia and Oceania.
This specification refers to one noticeable phenomenon: dynamism of the development of many
developing countries can be now classified as “emerging countries“ . Together with China, India
and Russia, their share on the world economy grew up significantly: from 39.7 % at the
beginning of the 90ies to 48 % in 2006. There has also been the mutual coordination which does
not depend on the geographical proximity but on common economic interests. The most
distinctive is the group “BRIC”, grouping Brazil, Russia, India and China. On the horizon is the
emergence called “VISTA“ (Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey and Argentina).

Despite this fact, the importance of large political-economic blocks has been growing
together with macro-regions connecting large groups of geographically close states which
reflects that together with the process of globalization, there is, in a parallel also the process of
regionalization. The prime example is, of course, the existence of the European Union which
became an example of the emergence and functioning of other regional organizations such as
e.g. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) or the African Union. Economic,
security and political interconnection of a transatlantic region is emphasized by the existence
and functioning of the North Atlantic Alliance which is the most powerful militarily-political
organization of the world and is very closely, in terms of the security and policy, interconnected
with the European Union. However, there are also other regional organizations such as the
Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the League of Arab States (LAS), Economic
Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS) or the South American Common Market
(Mercosur). A distinctive feature of all mentioned organization is that they have a substantial
economic and political influence in their regions and in some cases this influence is projected at
a global level.

The spectrum of actors is, however, even broader. In a global space, besides nation
states and regional organizations, there are large supranational economic corporations with the
influence which often exceeds not only the economic potential nation states (Microsoft), non-
governmental organizations (Greenpeace, Doctors Without Borders) and last, but not least also
the mass media (CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera), in many cases significantly forming political attitudes
and opinions of tens even hundreds of millions of people.

Nevertheless, the number and diversity of global actors do not guarantee that there is
or will be the adequate coordinated response to a wide spectrum of globalization challenges.
The velocity and the depth of challenges resulting from the globalization significantly increase
the pressure on all mentioned actors. It is enough to recall cursory the main challenges:
devastation of the environment and from this resulting negative climatic changes in vast
regions, global poverty, demographic imbalance between advanced and undeveloped regions,
mass migration, existence of so called failed states often connected with terrorism and
organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction etc. Recently, as already
mentioned, the global crisis of financial markets and world economy is another negative
phenomenon. It shows that neither UNO nor other global or regional institutions and subjects
(including the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund) are not capable to respond
adequately to crisis phenomena. There is, in the right sense of the world “institutional vacuum“.
Crisis of the UNO

Institutional crisis of the UNO begs the concern especially after the failure of the attempt to reform it in 2005. It is not excluded, that the influence of this organization on the form of global governance will gradually decline, especially as long as the UNO Security Council does not manage to face the threats to the international peace and security. Also the fulfillment of legitimate goals of some UNO global projects, such as Millennium Development Goals 2015 or the future of the Kyoto Protocol is endangered.

In connection with the UNO there is, in the foreground, also the question of the reform of the Security Council. It is obvious that the form of the Security Council does not quite respond to new political and economic realities in the world which have been distinctly different since 1945 when the UNO was established by the will of winners of the World War II. With regard to the economic influence and the number of inhabitants, the permanent membership in the Council with the right of veto may belong to e.g. India, Japan, Brazil or Germany. Nevertheless, there is a number of reasons why the reform in the medium term will not be accomplished. At first, the current members with the right of veto do not want the extension of the number of other members because they might lose their still supreme position on the international scene. However, there are also other reasons. For example Japan is an economic super-power, nevertheless there is still a question mark over its full independence in term of international policy which has been still limited by the postwar constitution designed by the former American military administration under the general Douglas MacArthur. China would hardly (also due historical reasons) agree with the membership of Japan. Considerable and ever growing has been the economic potential of India and Brazil, but their political influence in the world is limited. Also the potential membership of Germany would apparently induce a considerable debate, e.g. inside the European Union. The reform of the Security Council distinctly depends on the fact whether the process of the UNO reform renewal will succeed.

The weakened position of the UNO in the system of global governance is connected also with the development in the area of the international law application. After the end of the Cold War, significant disagreements in the UNO Security Council occurred during the interpretation and respect for international law in connection with the conditions of use of force, interpretation of the jeopardy of international peace and security and the balance between international intervention and state sovereignty. This was demonstrated first of all in connection with the intervention of the NATO against Yugoslavia (1999) and the intervention of the United States in Iraq (2003), when the UNO Security Council as an important actor was excluded from the process of political communication and from the decision making process about these acts. This process will obviously continue and, inter alia, results from the NATO study “Future Security Environment”. The study says that the international law will be softened in cases when it will be possible to use external force for the intervention in domestic affairs, as long as such intervention is justifiable from obvious humanitarian reasons. It is possible to assume that the question of the interpretation when such conditions occur, will, even in the UNO and its Security Council, create the discrepancies first of all among the United States, France and Great Britain that support this approach, on one hand, and China and Russia insisting on the integrity and respect for state sovereignty, on the other.

A number of questions remain regarding the future of the UNO and its agility. It is interesting, how a significant American futurist Alvin Toffler perceives the potential future shape of the UNO in the context of global governance. He proposed that the UNO became the federation of various agreements and pacts and changed its structure of permanent vertical bureaucracies into horizontal ones, i.e. units aimed at individual questionable issues. The growing role and the extent of actions of a wide range of regional organizations in the world...
might cause that such a model will be one of the possible alternatives of the UNO functioning. Nevertheless, it will be just one of the contributions to the strengthening of the global governance capacities.

UNO Alternatives, New International Order and the Role of the European Union

Besides the UNO, other institutions giving the global governance new impulses were formed. They are e.g. regular meeting of political leaders in the frame of the groups of the most advanced states of the world the G-8 and the G-20, which often deal with a very extensive agenda of global problems. However, their capability to bring adopted conclusions to the efficient implementation will be questionable and the character of parallel or potentially competing institutions regarding the current system of the UNO as well. The networks, either on political or technical level cannot be so much universal and legitimate as the UNO; therefore there is a general problem of their responsibility and controllability and also the risk of a conflict with other networks and institutions of global governance.

A serious problem might be just the question of legitimacy. It concerns first of all the platform G-8, associating United States of America, Canada, the Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Japan and Russia. The American politologist Francis Hoge called the association the club „primarily representing western culture“11, which does not reflect global reality, first of all due to the existence of China and India. It is undeniable, that the Chinese economy has been now much more powerful than the economy of the G-8 members or Canada, and China and India have almost three times more inhabitants than all member countries of the G-8 altogether. From the current political anachronism results also the limited capability to implement goals and tasks agreed on the G-8 summits which are e.g. the effort to stop the degradation of the environment, limiting global poverty, fight the AIDS or fight the terrorism. “The unsociability of the G-8 platform will not be a permanent state since the West will have to take into account that the center of international matters has been gradually moving, after almost five centuries, from the transatlantic area into the area of South and East Asia.

What might be then the future of global governance? It will be considerably dependent on the shape of the multi-polar world. The director of the London Centre for European Reform Charles Brant predicts the existence of two possible variants: one is based on competing, where the main role will be played by national states and the other based on respecting multilateral organizations and from this resulting respect for multilateral rules of acting. Which of these two variants will prevail is not quite clear. The first decade of the 21st century has shown the application of the “mix” of variants when addressing political, economic and security problems of the world, even if in many regards there was apparent a strong tendency of the strongest superpower – the United States to prefer the principles of unilateral, national policy and strategy or only selectively multilateral policy. Political, economic and security reality and the depth of problems of a contemporary world made them finally correct such policy. The promotion of the second variant which Charles Grant calls the „multilateral model of multi-polarity“, depends in many regards on the attitude of the European Union which as one of the significant global actors conclusively prefers this second variant. This is proved also by the words of European Security Strategy of 2003: “In the world of global threats, global markets and global mass media, our security and prosperity have been more and more dependent on the effective system of multilateral cooperation. Our goal is to create a stronger international community, well functioning international institutions and international order based on the observance of adopted norms“13.
The study was developed in the frame of a research task “Development of the Czech Society in the European Union: Challenges and Risks” (MSM 002162084).

Résumé

Global governance is a set of institutions, procedures and networks necessary for tackling global problems. Its important feature is that it operates simultaneously at various hierarchical tiers: it cannot be reduced only to nation-state level. In fact, current global development is characterized by a gradual erosion of the once exclusive role of the nation state, which, also due to globalization, surrenders (voluntarily or involuntarily) much of its formal and informal decision-making authority in favor of superior international or supranational structures (and, where the devolution takes place, to its own regions and municipalities). According to Richard Haass, the American political scientist, the power in today’s world is “in many hands and many places”.

Parallel to the globalization process, the rise of regionalism leads to the formation of large politico-economic blocs and macro-regions including whole groups of geographically close states. The European Union is a model example, along with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union or the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR). The global arena is not inhabited only by nation states and regional organizations, but also by large supranational economic corporations, non-governmental organizations and, last but not least, the mass media that, often to a considerable extent, influence the political attitudes and opinions of dozens or hundreds of millions of people. However, the number and diversity of global actors alone do not guarantee the adequate and coordinated response to the broad spectrum of global challenges. This can be seen especially in the institutional crisis of the UNO whose global influence has been deteriorating markedly over the past few years, also due to the failed attempt to its reform. Despite this, there is no real alternative to this still legitimate and universal platform, notwithstanding the existence of other rising global platforms such as the G-8 or the G-20.

The future of global governance will thus largely depend on what shape the multipolar world will acquire. The political scientist Charles Grant foresees two alternatives: one based on rivalry and dominated by nation states, the other based on respect for multilateral organizations and thus also for multilateral rules.

NOTES:

1 More see Potucek et al. (2007), Potucek (ed.) (2008).
7 The Study of the British Ministry of Defence „The DCDC Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007 – 2036“ anticipates, that if the UNO reform is not carried out, some powers or association will try to „fill in“ the vacuum after the UNO. Nevertheless, this will not obviously succeed because the consensus how to achieve “the utterance of the common will” is not easy. This will result in the fact that each actor will follow its own interests which leading to the increased risk of a wider confrontation and a conflict (see http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/Organisation/AgenciesOrganisations/DCDC, pp.51).
Before these two operations the UNO Security Council in 1994 completely failed in the decision making process regarding the question whether the UNO is to intervene in the Civil War connected with the genocide in Rwanda. At the end the adequate intervention did not take place. In the conflict there were 800 thousand casualties.


G-20 represents informal platform of 20 most advanced countries and the most dynamic developing countries. The G-20 includes: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Canada, Korea, Mexico, Russia, the Saudi Arabia, the South African Republic, Turkey, the Great Britain and the USA. The EU is represented by the presiding country of the EU and the European Central Bank. The establishment of the G-20 was initiated by the former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin.


References


Information about authors

Milos Balaban (1962)
is a head of the Center for Security Policy in the Center for Social and Economic Strategy of Faculty of Social Sciences within The Charles University in Prague. He specializes in the Czech Republic Security Policy, International Relations, and Development of Security Situation in Europe and in the world.

He is a graduate of the Military Academy in Brno (1985). In 2000 he graduated from the doctoral study at the Institute of International Studies of Faculty of Social Sciences of The Charles University in Prague, specializing in issues of the Russian armed forces and society.

He regularly publishes in a wide variety of periodicals; he is a member of editorial boards of journals Military views and The Science for Population Protection, several working groups and expert committees.

Martin Potucek (1948)
is Professor in the field of public and social policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague. He focuses on Exploring Processes of Formation and Realization of Public and Social Policy.

He is a graduate of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University (1973), where he graduated from sociology (1976). He completed his postgraduate studies at the University of Economics in Prague (1989) in the field of the Theory of Management and Planning. He habilitated in 1992 at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague in sociology, and at the same Faculty in 1998 was appointed to a Professor in the field of Public and Social Policy.

He is an author of 17 books, 5 textbooks; he published 65 original work in scientific journals and more than 90 research reports and projects. Within 1998–2006 he worked as an advisor to the Minister of Social Affairs and in 2004–2006 as an advisor to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic. He is a member of a number of scientific and editorial boards and professional companies in the Czech Republic and abroad.