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Response to Galtung

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Response

David L. Blaney

I. The Idea of Global Governance

The end of the Cold War and a heightened sense of the globalization of political, economic, and cultural space have inspired a number of international political theorists to imagine the emergence of an extensive and (relatively) democratic global governance.¹ These efforts present no single vision or formula. Some stress the extension of the role of existing international organizations and regimes, supplemented by new nongovernmental, or “sovereignty free,” actors and more informal processes and fora for decision-making.² Others tie the growing capacity for global governance to the rise of a “global civil society.” As a construction of borderless social movements, interests, knowledges, and practices, the associational life of global civil society is seen as the basis for the inclusion of plural groups, organizations, and political fora into an emergent and democratically accountable “world politics.”³ Despite these differences in language and emphasis, thinking about global governance converges on a project of wide scope, encompassing the breadth of the international political agenda and substantial depth, linking the local and the global (or, perhaps better, the individual actor and various centers of decision-making) in processes of deliberation, governance, and accountability.

These ambitions associated with global governance involve rethinking/remaking the contours of global social and political space. Global democracy demands a substantial break with a familiar “international relations” dictated by the organization of the globe as a system of independent states or, as it is put, an “international society.”⁴ Globalization, in its various modes, is taken as the motor for the creation of a “global society,” comprising dense networks of communications, production, and consumption and extensive areas of joint interest, common values, and purposes. Together, these are the prerequisites of a shared global political project: the power of the principle of state sovereignty to guide political practice is diminished as global-

ization obliterates the distinction between the inside and outside of the political community or state. Obliterating this distinction makes it possible for us to think about the occupants of the globe as “the people,” as “global citizens” engaged in the practice of a “world politics.”⁵ Consequently, ideas of a national economy, the national interest, or the national welfare are said to fade in the face of a world economy, world interests, and the global welfare.

However, global governance retains the mark of international society in (at least) one respect. Seeing society writ large, as global, does not entail for these theorists writing the state form as a world state or world government.⁶ Instead, global governance suggests a vision of a highly cooperative and consensual global society where governance is dispersed and intermittent—a varying combination of ethical commitment, prudent self-policing, friendly persuasion, temporary collaborations, and collectively mobilized sanctions. The distinction between the roles of governed and governor and the domains of society and polity are blurred if not denied. In this way, a governed global society remains “anarchical” in traditional international relations terms in that it lacks the centralized authority definitive of the state or domestic government.

Global governance must be seen, then, as a bold project, challenging a long tradition of thinking about the necessity of centralized authority for any political community, domestic or global. Political thinkers of the modern era have told us that individuals engaged in extensive social intercourse—living in a single system of social cooperation—will find their lives, property, and rights threatened where legitimate central authority is lacking. This is the central message of Hobbes, Locke, and the American founding fathers. The conventional view of international relations theorists is merely the flip side: without central authority, an extensive system of social cooperation is impossible. We normally associate this cautionary tale with a “realist” or “power politics” understanding of international relations. Global governance challenges this stricture and cautionary tale, imagining a self-organizing or governing global society without the centralized authority associated with government.

The central problem with this move, in my view, is *not* the attempt to step outside of the confines of our traditions of politi-

cal thinking and imagine alternative forms of political community. Rather, I am concerned that proponents of global governance establish its immediate possibility as a democratic practice only by willing away two persistent features of global society: hierarchy and moral diversity. A global society fractured by hierarchy risks being self-organized as oligarchy, as effective governance by the few. The breadth and depth of the imagined global governance requires the presence (and perhaps imposition) of an extensive set of “common” values and purposes in a global society better characterized as morally diverse. Thus, apart from the issue of the necessity of central authority, the democratic quality of global governance cannot be taken for granted except by ignoring these features of global social life. The implications of each must be discussed in more detail.

II. Hierarchy and Global Society

The problem of democratically governing a hierarchical global society will be considered first. It is the expansive and integrative processes associated with capitalism that allow us to conceive of a world economy—a singular economic space, defined by interactions of individuals, firms, and regions—as opposed to merely an international economy of trade, capital, and labor flows between national economies. In this “global society,” the production of wealth is organized as a capitalist global division of labor. This means that the structure of global production is both functionally differentiated as individuals, firms, regions, and states play specialized and hierarchically ordered roles in the process of wealth production because these specialized roles are unequally valued in the world market according to their “independent” contributions to global production. The unequal rewards organized by the world market structure a hierarchy of achievement and status, distinguishing classes of consumers and producers, sunrise and sunset industries or firms, advanced and backward regions, core and peripheral countries. The difficulty faced by global governance is that “global citizens” enter into world politics with the mark of economic and social inequality. If we accept the quite plausible view that economic and social hierarchy translates into political inequality, a “world politics”—whether of individuals, groups, or states—will func-

tion more as domination than participation, more as oligarchy than democracy.⁷

Despite this implication, the problem of hierarchy is rarely seriously addressed by those announcing the emergence of democratic global governance. Instead, there is a tendency to conceive of the agents of a prospective global democracy as untarnished by a world of unequal resources, living standards, and access to production and communications technologies. A "world politics" may be envisioned, for example, as a "global polyarchy," importing terminology that assumes a relative equality of access and influence and a process of political arbitration standing apart from economic and social domination.⁸ Similarly, some authors use the language of global civil society to suggest that the associational life of a "world politics" is equally accessible to all, and, thereby, substantially democratic. More specifically, although claimed to arise as a response to both the progressive failure of the state to adapt to changing global conditions and the growing alienation produced by the extension and intensification of global capitalism, global civil society defines and is defined in terms of a political space unfettered by either. Unleashed from the determinations of the state system and global capitalism, a global civil society is purportedly free to reinvent political space *de novo*.⁹ The immediacy of democratic global governance is fashioned in this act of forgetting.

III. Moral Diversity

The issue of moral diversity raises similar concerns about the self-organization of a global society. A persistent and irresolvable diversity of moral views has often been assumed by international relations theorists, contributing to their sense of the limited possibilities of a "world politics" and the greater efficacy of an "international relations" of independent political communities or states.¹⁰ Indeed, the system of states, in part, owes its origins and continuing appeal to the idea that recognition of the authority of independent political communities is crucial for securing "mutual toleration and mutual accommodation" among the irreconcilable values and visions expressed in the diverse ways of life sharing the globe.¹¹ This view, however, is

increasingly challenged. There is much debate about the value of sovereign states as political communities (as well as the supporting notions of "nationality," "culture," etc.) and increasing concern about the adequacy of the modes of tolerance and accommodation constitutive of international society. Nonetheless, the problem of moral diversity and the appeal of sovereign statehood remain as prominent features of the political landscape. Processes of globalization, even as they contribute to certain forms of homogenization, reveal, create, and contain diverse ways of life. These multiple and evolving ways of life continue to "imagine" and organize themselves as independent political communities, seeking the status and protections of nationhood either within or as a state. Thus, the sorts of agreements on values and visions, rules and norms, laws and institutions necessary to global governance must be continuously negotiated within (or imposed upon) a morally and politically diverse world.¹²

Rather than dispute this, proponents of global governance appear to embrace plurality in the abstract just as they take substantial commonality for granted.¹³ To be more precise, global governance embraces a multiplicity of kinds of actors but presumes that they together will be engaged in some complicated (but as yet to be fully described) way in a series of common projects of governance. These (otherwise diverse) actors are assumed to share common understandings of the nature, purpose, and reach of governance. We must also presume that they are equally capable of deliberation on rules and policies and that they embrace a common standard for what counts as a compelling argument and justification for action. We need not resort to an assertion of "unassimilable, radical difference"¹⁴ to see that agreement on such matters remains fleeting in our current political communities and that efforts to attain agreement often bring charges of forced assimilation or marginalization of difference. There is little reason to think that writing society as global society resolves important differences across morally diverse traditions. We would want to raise such questions as: How restrictive of difference are these commonalities and agreements? What sort of actor must one be to be empowered? Do rules of global political discourse constitute a culture that excludes or marginalizes the voice of certain peoples, groups, or individuals? While

the answers are not self-evident, the danger is that global governance represents an extension and imposition of conceptions of society, civil society, and governance preeminent in European modernity. Elevating such conceptions, though they are disputed in a lively conversation in Europe and beyond, to the “universal” without a genuinely global conversation is problematic. Such a global conversation, inevitably punctuated by conflict and stalled by argument where fundamental moral disagreement and hierarchy and dominance remain, will be difficult and time-consuming but no more so than progress toward global democracy of which this conversation is a necessary complement.¹⁵

IV. Dr. Galtung: Power and Self-Government

Dr. Galtung’s thoughts on “Global Governance for and by Global Democracy” contain an important strength relative to this emerging literature, but they also share an important weakness. The strength is Dr. Galtung’s keen appreciation of the force of hierarchy and domination in global social life, which has long been at the core of his contributions to international relations theory.¹⁶ This appreciation leads Dr. Galtung to a different and more circumspect sense of the possibilities and limits of democratic global governance.

Global democracy, in Dr. Galtung’s telling, depends on (1) modifying certain institutions (e.g., the UN, especially the Security Council; ECOSOC; and GATT) in a democratic direction; (2) enhancing the role of more democratic global assemblies and political fora (e.g., the UN General Assembly and global conference diplomacy); and (3) integrating new voices (e.g., various local, regional, and international associations; and individuals) into processes of deliberation, decision, and accountability. It is clear that this process of institutional reform and transformation must occur within and as a response to the present hierarchical ordering of the globe. The power of the nation-state (and, consequently, the continuing force of the idea of international society), of the “great powers” within international society, and of capital within a world economy cannot be willed away but must be checked, channeled, and changed in more democratic directions in any new institutional arrangements. Not surprisingly,

then, Dr. Galtung is less confident that the emerging global society can be self-organizing as it is rife with power and conflict, with particularized interests and viewpoints. This characterization of global society allows him less of a departure from the traditions of political thinking. He sees the need for a legitimate central authority (albeit confederal in nature) for weaving divergent views and interests into decisions by which all can abide. Thus, the institutional structures of Dr. Galtung's global governance appear as modeled on domestic or European Union (EU) "government," however "soft," with a tricameral legislature and an executive/cabinet analog both molded from and grafted onto the UN system.

In all of this, Dr. Galtung counsels a gradualism, respecting the need of and capacity for learning as a key component of ambitions for global democracy. It is only, finally, with the gradual achievement of more democratic governance that Dr. Galtung believes we can begin to address seriously the question of global inequality. This sense of timing also allows, in my view, greater space for the global conversation, proposed above as a condition of global democracy. While this relative circumspection might be indicted as "conservatism," and certainly Dr. Galtung's vision is less immediately ambitious and encompassing than others, it would be better to see his counsel as a recognition that the future must be built within, out of, and against the materials provided by the present; that is, there is no space where we can think together about a (perhaps) common future that is free from the determinations of the present.

V. "The People"?

However, in Dr. Galtung's institutionalization of the role of "the people" in global democracy, he takes a step not unlike the one that I have attributed to the broader literature: the need to imagine an unambiguously democratic agent. In Dr. Galtung's view, it will only be with the adoption of direct voting by "the people" that global democracy will be realized. In the meantime, "the people" gain a voice through their associations ("interpeople organizations") in a "world version of civil society." The deliberations of these associations would be housed in a United Nations People's Assembly, initially complementing and check-

ing the General Assembly and a Corporate Assembly, and, finally, becoming the preeminent body.

But, what counts as “the people”? Dr. Galtung gives one answer in which he establishes criteria for “world citizenship.” “World citizens” must be “internationally representative,” internally democratic, and capable of displaying a “general human solidarity” or taking a “world perspective” on issues. Dr. Galtung seems here to disallow a politics where “citizens” (as individuals or groups) frame political demands in terms of their parochial identities, interests, or visions. The requirement of internal democracy apparently likewise restricts the status of world citizenship to those groups that can be thought of as consensual associations. The consequence of these strictures is that “the people” appear in democratic global governance as mostly cleansed of nationality, localized relations of domination, particular economic interests, and parochial moral views. The problem is that these divisions, particularities, and hierarchies are not contingent facts about people and groups that can be discarded at will. These characteristics are partially constitutive of identity and are crucial to groups’ and individuals’ capacities to act (and their reasons for acting) in the world. Cleansed of these traits, the idea of “the people” loses its reality and individual actors are robbed of their status as (albeit imperfect) agents.

Further, Dr. Galtung constructs “the people” as a relatively unadulterated opponent of centralized and concentrated political and economic power by defining “world civil society” in opposition to the state and to capital, if not to hierarchy in general. What this underplays is the interconnection of associational life with both capitalism and the state.¹⁷ First, civil society, rather than distinct from capitalism, is coterminous with it. Civil society is the sphere of “voluntary” and “autonomous” activity, demarcating the space where individuals/groups establish relationships based on exchange and contract in the market, discover interests in common (or in conflict) with others, and join or form groups or alliances of various kinds. Second, this sphere of the “autonomous” activity of individuals and groups is demarcated and sustained by a set of civil, political, and socio-economic (if not cultural) rights. The space these rights carve out for “autonomous” activity depends on a certain kind of polity—constitutionally limited and acting, at least to some extent, to

protect these rights and the health of civil society. The relations of state and society that stabilize a sphere of civil society are not, then, free of hierarchy, power, and contradiction. Rather, though civil society may be a site for launching movements for further democratization or justice in a society, activities in this sphere also express the atomization, domination, and superficial politics of a liberal political economy. Writing these relations as amongst world civil society, global capitalism, and a “soft” global government is not to erase these tensions but to transfer them to a global political economy.

To Dr. Galtung’s credit, there is some ambivalence in his thinking on “the people.” He ponders the institutional complications arising because “the people” still appear as “peoples” in an international society. Are they to be represented in their role as citizens or as world citizens? The idea of “the people” likewise coexists only uneasily with the divisions and conflicts surrounding gender, generations, race, and class that Dr. Galtung highlights at the beginning of his essay, but, because of this ambivalence, troubling issues remain unaddressed. If “the people” appear marked by gender, class, race, nationality, and so on, global governance cannot count on the practice of world solidarity by imagined “world citizens” and must attend, beyond what Dr. Galtung does here, to processes of reconciling competing interests and negotiating moral incommensurabilities in a quasi legislative process embedded in a global context of power and domination. More precisely, merely extending the sorts of political processes characteristic of today’s “democratic” societies (elections, interest groups, parliamentary debate, and social movements) to the globe holds little promise of transforming today’s citizens into the globally civic-minded and deliberative actors that Dr. Galtung’s global democracy requires. I doubt this is merely a problem of gradually learning to “think globally.” Rather, it is that ideas of “the people” (as opposed to “peoples”), or “world citizenship,” or “world politics” engage a “silence” — things about which we have no clear way of speaking because our traditions of political thought have reserved citizenship and politics for domestic societies.¹⁸ This objection might be summarized by noting that it remains quite fuzzy (with the arguable exception of environmental issues)

what it means to think globally in a hierarchically ordered and morally diverse “global society.”

VI. Concluding Remarks

It is evident, then, that deliberate efforts to extend and enhance democratic practices at the global level so that we might be justified in speaking of global democracy must confront, not dismiss, the limits of our current political practice and imagination. We remain unable to say what it means to be a global citizen unless we bracket the divides of morality, nationality, gender, and class. We cannot identify an agent unambiguously capable of moving an international or global society toward a more democratic future. Thus, any moves toward global democracy will be hesitant and tainted by power, frustrating our best intentions and debasing our grandest visions; and we will legitimately take pride in small achievements. In addition, we may find sources of democratic inspiration and possibility in unlikely places. The increasing role of global corporations, business associations, and states in “managing” a world economy, for instance, may unwittingly open more democratic and egalitarian possibilities at least by the resistance engendered if not through the institutions and structures built.¹⁹ We may likewise discover unities that are the basis for “thinking globally” in a politics that returns to rather than dissolves the boundaries of gender, national, cultural, or moral diversity.²⁰

Dr. Galtung’s hopeful but generally circumspect vision is a welcome one in this uncertain conversation and groping process of building a more democratic world. His vision recognizes that these times offer the possibility of enhancing and gradually democratizing global governance. At the same time, he pays some, if not always adequate, heed to the limits of these times—the divisions and hierarchies that spark disorder and prompt mostly unilateral exercises of “governance.” These divides must be democratically negotiated on a global basis before we can make much progress toward establishing the conditions for global democracy. This paradox simultaneously defines our task and confounds our best efforts to simply and clearly chart our path to the future.

Notes

1. I bracket other, less democratic, conceptions (e.g., Gramscian notions of hegemony or the advocacy of "great power condominium" prevalent in U.S. foreign policymaking circles) because they detour us from Dr. Galtung's concern with global democracy.
2. See Lawrence Finkelstein, "What Is International Governance?" (Unpublished manuscript. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1991), esp. 10–12, for this reading of the emerging literature.
3. See Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society," in *Millennium* 21, no. 3 (1992): 389–420; Paul Wapner, "Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics," (Unpublished manuscript. Washington, D.C.: American University, 1994), 1–45; Martin Shaw, "Global Society and Global Responsibility: The Theoretical, Historical, and Political Limits of 'International Society,'" in *Millennium* 21, no. 3 (1992), 431–34; and Ken Booth, "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice," *Journal of International Affairs* 67 (1991), 544.
4. Hedley Bull, *Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University, 1977), chapter 1, is normally credited with popularizing this term and drawing a clear distinction between the requirements of a society of states and a world or global society.
5. This construction of the prerequisites for and possibility of global citizenship and world politics is clear and explicit in the literature on global governance. See especially Lipschutz, "Reconstructing World Politics"; Shaw, "Global Society and Global Responsibility"; and James N. Rosenau, "Governance, Order, and Change in World Politics" and "Citizenship in a Changing World," in *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). A compelling account and dissection of the logic of notions of global citizenship and world politics can be found in R. B. J. Walker, "On the Spatiotemporal Conditions of Democratic Practice," *Alternatives* 16, no. 2 (1991): 243–62 and "On the Possibilities of World Order Discourse," *Alternatives* 19, no. 2 (1994): 237–45.
6. Finkelstein, "International Governance," 10. This is implicit in the idea of "global civil society" and central to the conception of Rosenau's project: to conceive "governance without government."
7. The persistence of hierarchy and its roots in economic capacities is not disputed. My presentation of the issue might be. For a longer version of this argument, which stresses the continuing role of national boundaries as distributive devices, see Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, "Realizing Sovereignty," *Review of International Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 1995) and David L. Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah, "The Third World and a Problem with Borders," in *Problems without Borders: Perspectives on Third World Sovereignty*, ed. Mark E. Denham and Mark Owen Lombardi (London: MacMillan, forthcoming). It is at this point that we might want to re-insert the Gramscian reading of global governance as the manufacture of hegemony. See the essays in Stephen Gill, ed.,

Gramsci, Historical Materialism, and International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993) and my review suggesting the implications of the Gramscian view for the idea of global governance: David L. Blaney, "Gramscian Readings of the Post-Cold War Transition," *Mershon International Studies Review* 38, Supplement 2 (1994).

8. Rosenau imports Robert Dahl's conception of "polyarchy" with this terminology in "Citizenship," 284–86.

9. Ronnie Lipschutz embraces this practice by arguing that the perspective of "civil society" allows us to reserve or abstract from the determinations and encumbrances of political economy ("Reconstructing World Politics," 389). My critique of this line of thinking can be found in Mustapha Kamal Pasha and David L. Blaney, "Global Civil Society and Democracy in the Third World" Unpublished manuscript. (Washington, D.C. and St. Paul, MN: American University and Macalester College, 1994). See also David L. Blaney and Mustapha Kamal Pasha, "Civil Society and Democracy in the Third World: Ambiguities and Historical Possibilities," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 28, no. 1 (1993): 3–24.

10. Although terms like "power" and "interest" have been assumed to drive the tradition of "realism," Rob Walker traces contemporary "realist" thought in international relations to Max Weber's appreciation of modernity as a rationalized, disenchanting, morally uncertain (and thereby morally plural) world. See R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations As Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), chapter 3. For example, a concern with moral plurality emerged in Hedley Bull's work in the concluding essay (with Adam Watson) in Bull and Watson, eds., *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1984). See also Raymond Aron, "The Heterogeneous Order of Values" in *Progress and Disillusion: The Dialectics of Modern Society* (New York: Praeger, 1968) and Hans J. Morgenthau's attempt to subjugate moral diversity by "interest" in his discussion of "Diplomacy" in *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1963).

11. On the origins of the states system, see Leo Gross, "The Peace of Westphalia, 1648–1948," in *International Law and Organization*, ed. Richard Falk and W. Hanrieden (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1968). Contemporary defenses of this idea can be found in Terry Nardin, *Law, Morality, and the Relations of States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1983); Michael Walzer, "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1980); and David Miller, "The Ethical Significance of Nationality," *Ethics* 98 (July 1988). The quoted phrase is from Nardin, 50.

12. A thriving cottage industry of sovereignty and globalization studies has emerged. My take on these topics and fairly numerous citations of this literature can be found in Inayatullah and Blaney, "Realizing Sovereignty" and David L. Blaney, "Cultural Neutrality and the Emergence of International Governance" Unpublished manuscript. (St. Paul, MN: Macalester College, 1994).

13. I would again point to the work of Lipschutz and Rosenau, cited above.

14. Donna J. Harraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 159.
15. See David L. Blaney and Naem Inayatullah, "Prelude to a Conversation of Cultures in International Society?: Todorov and Nandy on the Possibility of Dialogue," *Alternatives* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1994), for a discussion of the possibility of such a global conversation.
16. One need only point to Dr. Galtung's "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8 (1971) and "The Dominance System," in *The True Worlds* (New York: Free Press, 1980).
17. My reading is that Dr. Galtung thinks of world civil society as composed of labor (in opposition to capital) plus the new (and non-class-based) social movements opposed to all sorts of exclusions and hierarchies. See note 9.
18. I borrow this language from Rob Walker, "Spatiotemporal Conditions."
19. Once again, I would point to the Gramscian analysis of the limits and possibilities structured by efforts to establish hegemony in a context of increasing globalization. See the essays in Gill, *Gramsci, Historical Materialism, and International Relations*.
20. See Inayatullah and Blaney, "Realizing Sovereignty" and Blaney, "Cultural Neutrality and the Emergence of International Governance."