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Klaus Dingwerth and Philipp Pattberg

In one of the first issues of *Global Governance,* Larry Finkelstein observed that "'Global Governance' appears to be virtually anything." A decade later, the concept of global governance has become ever more popular—and confusion about its meaning ever greater. While we do think that some flexibility in the use of concepts is both theoretically desirable and practically unavoidable, we believe that the current disarray is a hindrance to more fruitful discussions and to the goal of developing more coherent theories of global governance. We therefore argue that a more careful use of the term *global governance* is necessary to overcome the current confusion spawned by the variation in uses of the concept. After clarifying the basic function of concepts in social science and reviewing the different uses of global governance in the current literature, we use the term as an analytical concept that provides a perspective on world politics different from the more traditional notion of "international relations." KEYWORDS: global governance, world politics, international relations, use of concepts.

In contemporary academic debate about world politics, "global governance" is all over the place.[1] Whether it is observable phenomena such as an NGO's worldwide campaign against corruption, political visions that are expressed in a call for a more powerful international legal system, or the ubiquitous talk about global governance itself, almost any process or structure of politics beyond the state—regardless of scope, content, or context—has within the last few years been declared part of a general idea of global governance.[2] What this idea is about is a question rarely addressed. Instead, most of the works on global governance stop short of pondering why they are using the newly coined term—rather than, say, more old-fashioned terms such as *international organization* or *international politics*—and what is implied by its use. On the other hand, those who do ask, "What is global governance?" are likely to come to the conclusion that "'Global Governance' appears to be virtually anything."[3]

More than a decade after the publication of *Governing without Government*[4] in 1992, the publication of the Commission on Global Governance's *Our Global Neighbourhood* in 1995,[5] and the inauguration of

this journal, *Global Governance,* also in 1995, we take stock of the conceptual debate on global governance and make suggestions for the way ahead. We argue that the concept of global governance can help us make sense of the interactions and transformations we observe in world politics only if it is used in a more careful way. Our argument unfolds in three steps: First, we contend that concepts are the most basic research tool social science has at its disposal. The core function of concepts lies in ordering and structuring our observations and experiences in order to allow for general propositions. Next we apply this argument to our analysis of the way the term global governance has been used in the literature. We distinguish between two general uses of the concept: global governance as a set of observable phenomena, and global governance as a political program. Then, after analyzing the different uses of the concept, we develop suggestions for future research that adopts a global governance perspective. In the concluding section, we discuss how such a perspective might enrich our understanding of politics beyond the state, what specific research questions emerge from the adoption of such a perspective, and what the limitations of a "global governance perspective" are.

Concepts as Tools

Concepts are the most basic tool science has at its disposal. If we understand science as being, at least to a certain extent, charged with the task of organizing the information we obtain from observing and experiencing the world, then the role of concepts is pivotal. By relating certain phenomena to each other and keeping others apart, concepts fulfill the central function of ordering and structuring our perception of the world. As a result, concepts help us, among other things, to make judgments about the relevance and significance of information, to analyze specific situations, or to create new ideas. Because they allow us to make generalizations, concepts are fundamental to individual as well as collective learning processes. Thus, "we might separately learn about tables, chairs, sofas but the process of learning will be facilitated if we arrive at the concept of furniture."[6]

This does not imply that the content of a specific concept needs to be entirely fixed in order for meaningful communication to take place. To the contrary, the precise meaning of a concept will in almost any case be subject to different interpretations and to contestation. However, while ordinary language can cope with a relatively large degree of conceptual imprecision, scientific communication is usually based on clearer-cut distinctions between the phenomena it analyzes and on more precise

definitions of the concepts it uses. Accordingly, scientific concept formation should follow certain basic rules. Most importantly, concepts should, to the extent possible, not group objects together that do not share similarities; in other words, a single concept should not be used for phenomena that are essentially different (polysemy). If this basic rule is neglected, the analytical power of the concept in question is diminished by the various meanings of the term and by the additional efforts analysts have to make to determine which of the various meanings is invoked in a specific argument or proposition. In other words, "because we cannot achieve a basic level of agreement on the terms by which we analyze the social world, agreement on conclusions is impossible."[7] In our view, the rather careless use of the term global governance has contributed to rendering the academic discourse as confusing as it is and to profoundly limiting the cumulativeness of research findings.

A second pitfall would be to invent new concepts or categories for each single observation that differs from a previous one—a strategy clearly to avoid, since it would rid the concepts of our capacity to structure and order our observations. In the light of these two extremes, John Gerring and Paul Barresi have recently proposed a "min-max strategy" of concept formation in which a minimal definition and a maximal "ideal-type" definition of a concept form the two poles of a continuum along which different definitions of a concept can be situated. While the minimal definition encompasses only those elements that all nonidiosyncratic definitions of a concept have in common—thus combining a high extension (number of referents) with a low intension (number of attributes)—the maximal definition follows the inverse strategy and lists all attributes of an ideal-type definition. This min-max strategy, the authors argue, should help to resolve conceptual ambiguities that plague the use of many social science concepts by defining the universe of possible uses.

While we accede to the general claim of this view, we believe that the differences between the various uses of the term global governance are still too fundamental to allow for an application of this min-max strategy. In our view, a distinction between fundamentally different uses needs to precede such an application; accordingly, the following section distinguishes between global governance as an analytical concept that refers to observable phenomena and global governance as a political program.[8]

What Is Global Governance?

According to Lawrence Finkelstein, "We say 'governance' because we don't really know what to call what is going on."[9] In this section, we

test this claim against the background of the use of the term global governance in contemporary academic writings. Using our review of the academic debate as a base, we argue that Finkelstein's observation is incorrect. We—that is, scholars writing on the subject—do not say governance in order to conceal our ignorance about "what is really going on." Instead, the term governance has its own conceptual history. Its use in the political science literature has previously been restricted largely to domestic political contexts. Nonetheless, its increasing application to politics beyond the state is not without reason.

The confusion surrounding the meaning of global governance stems mainly from the fact that the concept is evoked not only where governance in the sense in which it has been introduced in political theory is at issue, but also in a variety of further contexts. As Thomas Weiss has observed, "Many academics and international practitioners employ 'governance' to connote a complex set of structures and processes, both public and private, while more popular writers tend to use it synonymously with 'government'."[10] We argue that it is not only academics versus popular writers, but also academics versus academics whose loose handling of the concept has contributed to blurring much of its content.

Different ideas about what global governance refers to derive from disagreement about the meaning of both *global* and *governance*. While the attribute global can at least refer to two different spheres—the top-level scale of human activity or the sum of all scales of activity—the term governance has several different uses in the literature.[11] Some authors have coined the term governance to denote a specific mode of social interaction whose logic differs from that of both markets and governments. In a more encompassing version, others have used governance to refer to all coexisting forms of collective regulation of social affairs, including the self-regulation of civil society, the coregulation of public and private actors, and authoritative regulation through government.[12] This broader notion of governance, incorporating steering processes induced by governments and public agencies, is also reflected in James Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel's understanding of the concept in *Governing Without Governments,* because this formulation assumes that normally governance is closely connected to the activities of government.[13] In the words of Gerry Stoker, governance can therefore be conceptualized as that part of human activity concerned with "creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action. The outputs of governance," Stoker adds, "are not therefore different from those of government. It is rather a matter of a difference in processes."[14]

The remainder of this section provides an overview of how the concept of global governance has been introduced in the academic debate. We distinguish between two different general uses of global governance in the academic literature. Besides its use as an analytical concept that attempts to capture the—actual, perceived, or constructed—reality of contemporary world politics (first subsection), the concept is often used to denote a specific political program, expressing either a normative perspective on how political institutions should react to the reduced steering capacity of national political systems or a critical perspective that refers to global governance as a hegemonic discourse (second subsection).

The Analytical Use: Global Governance as an Observable Phenomenon

Scholars who challenge the mainstream international relations (IR) assumption of sovereign nation-states embedded in an anarchical international system often refer to global governance as a conceptual reference point for their occupation with world politics.[15] Their analysis usually includes a variety of phenomena, such as global social movements; civil society; the activities of international organizations; the changing regulative capacity of states; private organizations; public-private networks; transnational rule making; and forms of private authority.[16] But as many authors allude to a "theory of global governance in the making," few have tried to think through the assumptions and implications of the concept of governance within the IR discipline.

The strand of thinking about world politics as global governance that comes closest to a theory is essentially linked to the work of Rosenau. Departing from a broad understanding of governance, he states that "global governance refers to more than the formal institutions and organizations through which the management of international affairs is or is not sustained. The United Nations system and national governments are surely central to the conduct of global governance, but they are only part of the full picture."[17] Rosenau sums up his understanding of global governance in his often quoted definition stating that "global governance is conceived to include systems of rule at all levels of human activity—from the family to the international organization—in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions."[18]

This definition has four constitutive elements: systems of rule, levels of human activity, the pursuit of goals, and transnational repercussions. As to the first element, Rosenau is primarily interested in how

control is exerted in transnational politics, and to "grasp the concept of control one has to appreciate that it consists of relational phenomena that, taken holistically, constitute systems of rule."[19] Thus, systems of rule exist where a number of mechanisms are in place that relate to each other and that regulate or have an impact on the norms, expectations, and behavior of the relevant actors within the regulated area. Importantly, established legal or political authority is not a prerequisite for the effectiveness of a system of rule.[20]

Second, Rosenau's definition speaks of systems of rule "at all levels of human activity," thereby including local, subnational, national, international, and transnational control mechanisms. Rosenau's inclusion of the family level in his definition could be interpreted as a provocation to academics working in the field, intended to force analysts to ponder about the issue of scale, to give serious thought to the kinds of interlinkages that need analysis, and not to take for granted what theories of international relations conventionally assume to be the relevant actors of world politics.

Third, the definition stipulates that interactions should be considered phenomena of global governance only if they are intentional, that is, if they relate to the—individual or collective—pursuit of goals. This element is restrictive in that nonintentional processes are largely excluded from the realm of global governance. In practice, a distinction between intentional and nonintentional processes may, however, be problematic in many cases, and processes such as social learning or the diffusion of policy innovations could, in contrast to Rosenau's definition, also be considered elements of global governance.

Finally, Rosenau's definition mentions transnational repercussions as a fourth defining characteristic of global governance. Since the second criterion already includes the various levels of human activity, the requirement of transnational repercussions equally constitutes a restrictive rather than a broadening element of the definition.

In sum, Rosenau defends a rather broad concept of global governance, which is nevertheless rooted in the tradition in which governance has been introduced with regard to the study of domestic political systems. But why is such a concept necessary in the first place and how does it improve our understanding of world politics? From an analytical perspective, the concept of global governance describes a specific set of observable and related phenomena. Using this new term can be understood as an answer to the failures of existing theories of international relations to account for the empirical transformations. As world politics is rapidly changing, we have to adjust "our conceptual equipment to facilitate the analysis of how authority gets exercised in a decentralized world."[21] In the words of another observer,

> "Global governance" can be traced to a growing dissatisfaction among students of international relations with the realist and liberal-institutionalist theories that dominated the study of international organisation in the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, these failed to capture adequately the vast increase, in both numbers and influence, of non-state actors and the implications of technology in an age of globalisation.[22]

Thus, the term global governance can be seen as "a heuristic device to capture and describe the confusing and seemingly ever-accelerating transformation of the international system."[23] In other words, while the very idea of "inter-national" relations is conceptually based on an "often unquestioned preference for the nation state as the basic unit of analysis,"[24] the study of global governance acknowledges that a plethora of forms of social organization and political decisionmaking exist that are neither directed toward the state nor emanate from it. More precisely, the concept of global governance departs from more traditional views within the discipline in four important ways.

First, while the concept of international relations is by definition primarily interested in "politics among nations"[25] and pays rather little attention to nonstate actors, the term global governance does not establish such a hierarchy. In contrast to most theorizing about international relations, the notion of global governance attaches equal importance to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), transnational corporations (TNCs), and scientific actors. Thus, the Belgian government and Greenpeace are both considered actors within global governance. Next to civil society and business, science has its role, too. Thus, the European Union bases its trade restrictions on genetically modified organisms on scientific arguments; the Codex Alimentarius of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is informed by expert deliberations; and the assessment reports of scientific bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have significant impact on international as well as national policies. Besides these rather well documented forces of world politics, more actors populate the universe of global governance. Among them are supranational actors, such as the European Commission; judicial actors, such as the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the International Criminal Court (ICC); intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Bank or the large number of convention secretariats; hybrid and private organizations, such as the World Conservation Union or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC); and, finally, a number of other institutions such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) or the mass media, which are less easily subsumed under one of the above categories. In essence, global governance implies a multiactor perspective on world politics.

Second, while the term international relations suggests that international interaction can be analyzed separately from interaction at other levels of social interaction, the term global governance conceives of world politics as a multilevel system in which local, national, regional, and global political processes are inseparably linked. Global governance research is therefore particularly interested in the interlinkages between the different policy levels. It includes asking how WTO rules affect communities in different regions, and how communities in different regions affect WTO rules. It includes asking how ideas expressed in transnational forums affect and are affected by ideas and practices in national, regional, or local settings. And it includes asking how solutions to global problems can be found without neglecting the differentiated needs and capabilities of highly distinct local communities. The benefit of including these questions in the notion of global governance derives from the importance these linkages have in real life. Understanding how the "world political system"[26] works implies understanding how different spaces and levels of the system interact.

Third, while the concept of international relations is traditionally linked to power relations, interest-based interstate bargaining, and, more recently, the role of norms and advocacy networks as the driving forces of politics beyond the state, the notion of global governance starts from the assumption that a wide variety of forms of governance exist next to each other and that a hierarchy among these various mechanisms is hard, if not impossible, to discern:

> There is no single organizing principle on which global governance rests, no emergent order around which communities and nations are likely to converge. Global governance is the sum of myriad—literally millions of—control mechanisms driven by different histories, goals, structures, and processes. . . . In terms of governance, the world is too disaggregated for grand logics that postulate a measure of global coherence.[27]

Examples of such mechanisms include the procedures of the UN Security Council governing the use of force laid out in Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the processes by which transnational social movements aim at persuading or pressuring governments to improve their human rights records, the joint environmental standard setting of business corporations and NGOs to promote sustainability, and transboundary alliances of cities and regions intended to foster mutual learning. The concept of governance captures this plurality of mechanisms that horizontally link activities of various actors. In a domestic context, governance refers to horizontal processes of self-coordination—

for instance, in issue networks, advocacy coalitions, or similar mechanisms—that alter the relation between public and private interests. Transferred to the international and transnational policy level, where central authority is largely absent, governance accordingly encompasses intergovernmental negotiations as well as other, less formal processes of coordination among a number of public and private actors.

Fourth, while research in the field of international relations tends to focus on the phenomenon of authority and its legitimation primarily in close connection with the state's ability to pursue its rational self-interest, a global governance perspective allows capturing the emergence of new spheres of authority in world politics independently of sovereign nation-states.[28] A growing number of authors have pointed to the emergence of private authority as a result of new steering mechanisms that differ from hierarchical domestic decisionmaking or nonhierarchical interstate bargaining.[29] For Doris Fuchs, "the core of the global governance argument concerns the acquisition of authoritative decision-making capacity by non-state and supra-state actors."[30] Examples of such new authority include private interfirm regimes that regulate whole market segments; private standard-setting cooperations between different societal actors; transnational advocacy networks that exercise moral authority in issue areas ranging from biodiversity to human rights; and illicit authorities, such as the mafia or mercenary armies.[31]

A benefit of including these new forms of authority in the conceptual framework of global governance lies in the possibility of asking hitherto neglected questions about the implications of global governance for fundamental political concepts such as democracy, sovereignty, and legitimacy. In more general terms, the concept of global governance seems more capable of accounting for the "crazy-quilt nature" of temporary world politics.[32]

The Normative Use: Global Governance as a Political Program

For some writers, global governance is not so much an empirical or analytical term as it is a political concept that captures a vision of how societies should address the most pressing global problems. Most often, the problems that global governance is expected to address are analytically linked to the process of economic globalization and a resulting loss of national authority. Thus, it has been argued that "theoretically, global governance offers an analytical concept to subsume various efforts at the global level to come to terms with this loss of control and to balance the uncontrolled processes of globalisation."[33]

Such a concept of global governance appears to be firmly embedded in practitioners' perspectives. Thus, despite the fact that the Commission on Global Governance—consisting almost exclusively of practitioners—defines global governance in analytical terms, a political conceptualization of global governance is usually attributed to its final report. In particular, its "call to action" in which the commission summarizes its reform proposals can be cited as an example. Here, the commission maintains that a "global civic ethic to guide action within the global neighbourhood, and leadership infused with that ethic, is vital to the quality of global governance."[34] This is then followed by more or less concrete reform proposals in the areas of global security, economic interdependence, the structure of the United Nations, and the rule of law.

In sum, it seems correct to argue that while the commission's account of global governance contains both empirical and normative elements, the core of its conception of global governance is constituted by the need for more cooperation among governments, more cooperation among governmental and nonstate actors, more coordination within the framework of the United Nations system, and a central position of humans within politics.[35]

In a similar way, the Study Commission—"Globalization of the World Economy: Challenges and Answers"—of the German Bundestag states:

> As the world becomes increasingly globalized and economic activities grow beyond national regulatory frameworks, it becomes more necessary to politically shape economic, social and environmental processes on a global scale. How the global challenges can be democratically managed has recently begun to be discussed under the heading of "global governance."[36]

In accordance with this definition of global governance, the study commission comes to the conclusion that we need "more global governance" and that "implementing global governance" is the real problem:

> The world wide process of politically managing globalization—global governance—is still in its early stages. Obstacles to global governance still exist, including power imbalances and national and international problems with democracy and legitimization; the almost lack of an ethical-normative consensus ("global ethos") is still interfering with the creation of a strong system of global governance. . . . At this point in time, global governance is still more of a vision than a description of the actual state of the international system.[37]

In addition to practitioners, a number of academics have similarly adopted political concepts of global governance and argued that the goal

of global governance lies in regaining society's control over market forces which has been lost in the wake of globalization." This is clearly distinct from the analytical understanding of the term described in the previous section. Other authors have even made the point that the programmatic aspect of global governance has a long history, reflecting basic principles of human organization. In the words of Paul Wapner, global governance is "one of the most perennial and daunting challenges in world history":

> Ever since the Stoics imagined a single world, organized by a set of common principles, thinkers and practitioners have worked to conceptualise and bring into reality mechanisms to coordinate the diverse activities of a complex, multifarious world. For some, this project meant establishing a world government to legislate common laws and policies. For others, it meant simply building institutions of common understanding and practices supported by sovereign entities below the level of world government.[38]

However, the distinction between an analytical and a political use is not always as clear-cut as in these examples. To the contrary, a number of academics have used the term in a way that can be described as containing elements of either the analytical and the political or the analytical and the "academic-institutionalist" account of global governance. For example, in the German debate, Dirk Messner and Franz Nuscheler's use of the concept can be attributed to both a political program and a research program. Guided by the ideas of global welfare *(Weltgemeinwohl),* Messner and Nuscheler declare a global rule of law and a global ethic as prerequisites for any functioning global governance system, which they conceptualize as "the creation of networks, from the local to the global level, based on a shared problem-solving orientation, a fair balance of interests and a workable canon of shared norms and values as a basis for institutional structures for the handling of problems and conflicts."[39]

Global governance is, in this perspective, frequently conceived as a long-term project of global integration, for which the evolution of the European Union can be considered a model. A further definition, situated at the intersection of different concepts of global governance, is provided by Leon Gordenker and Thomas Weiss, who portray global governance as "efforts to bring more orderly and reliable responses to social and political issues that go beyond capacities of states to address individually."[40]

A second group of scholars also considers global governance to be a political program but takes a more critical position toward the expected

benefits of steering beyond state control, arguing that global governance is not a value-free term, but rather a highly politicized concept in the midst of a discursive struggle about who decides what for whom. From this critical theory perspective, global governance is not so much an answer to state failures in the globalization process as it is a hegemonic discourse to disguise the negative effects of neoliberal economic development on a global scale. In the words of Ulrich Brand, "The discourse of Global Governance . . . serves as a means to deal more effectively with the crisis-prone consequences caused by [postfordist-neoliberal social transformations]."[41] The protagonists of this critical version of global governance perceive the prevailing discourse on global steering mechanisms beyond the state as deeply embedded in a general political trend toward reregulation of the world economy that conceals the negative tendencies of late capitalism. Consequently, global governance as an attempt to reclaim political influence in order to reshape the institutional landscape of world politics is not understood as a counterforce to globalization but as its ideological companion.

The Need for Conceptual Clarification

Is the widespread adoption of the new concept of global governance warranted? And if so, how can we develop the term's full conceptual power for the analysis and evaluation of contemporary world politics?

We believe that global governance is a useful concept because it helps us identify and describe transformation processes in world politics. The concept reflects the view—shared by many members of the academic community—that we are living in a period of global transformations.[42] Considering these transformations, a new conceptual toolkit is required to the extent that it allows us to overcome the deficits of more traditional approaches. We hold that the concept of global governance is useful because it combines two strengths. First, while alternative attributes such as *international* or *transnational* are narrow in restricting analysis to either the relations between states or the transboundary relations between nonstate actors, the attribute *global*—in its more encompassing version—includes the worldwide transboundary interactions not only between a wide array of actors, but also among various policy levels. Second, the governance perspective distinguishes itself from more traditional notions of international politics by explicitly pointing to a greater variety of steering mechanisms and spheres of authority, thereby better reflecting the reality of contemporary world politics as we are observing it in many different policy areas.

In our view, global governance is therefore best seen as a specific perspective on world politics. As such, it differs from the state-centric perspective of seeing world politics as essentially "inter-national relations."[43] Global governance is useful as a new concept not only because it is different from international relations or international politics, but also from other related terms such as *transnational politics, world politics,* or *world order.* World politics is a more neutral concept that refers to political structures and processes that have transboundary repercussions. World order, in turn, refers to the structure of world politics and in particular to the number of power centers, distinguishing whether there is one hegemonic superpower (unipolar world order), two superpowers (bipolar world order), or several major powers (multipolar world order). Since global governance assumes, as a part of its definition, that power is shared among multiple "spheres of authority," it conceives of the emerging world order as essentially—and often radically—multipolar.

This leaves us with the relation between global governance and transnationalism. Global governance scholars draw heavily on older ideas about transnational relations. In an early article, Karl Kaiser highlights three important aspects incorporated in the concept of transnational relations: first, different national societies communicate across national boundaries; second, these interactions lead to changes within a given society; and, third, these changes force governments to react, either addressing their own society or other governments.[44] Transnational politics can therefore be understood as a system of institutional interlinkages between societies—including a wide range of nongovernmental societal actors—that affect the realm of domestic politics without involving intergovernmental relations. The idea of transnational politics thus "transposed pluralist theory to the level of international affairs."[45]

However, some qualitatively new aspects distinguish global governance from transnational relations. Whereas global governance as a concept incorporates many of the concerns raised by the transnational relations debate, it goes beyond this still rather state-centered approach by acknowledging the emergence of autonomous spheres of authority beyond the national/international dichotomy. Especially, the concept of global governance focuses on the complex interlinkages between different societal actors and governmental institutions. Thus, fundamental changes in the nature of core political concepts such as sovereignty and authority and hitherto unknown and unexpected actor coalitions that use new instruments of governance, thereby establishing new modes of governance, may justify the use of a new concept.

In sum, we therefore believe that global governance can be a useful concept to guide our analysis of political processes beyond the state. However, authors will need to be more explicit about their individual usages of the term if the current debate is to become more analytically fruitful. One suggestion could be to reserve the term global governance for denoting observable phenomena and the corresponding perspective on those phenomena, and to specify other uses as "the study of global governance" or "global governance research"; as "normative visions" or "political programs of global governance"; and as "global governance discourse" or "talk about global governance." In addition, authors will need to make sure that, given the many meanings ascribed to the concept, their own usage is consistent and does not slip across different meanings.[46]

Conclusion

Concepts are too important to just let go. They are the most fundamental tools of social scientists. To fulfill their functions in ordering our everyday observations, concepts need to balance precision with flexibility and clarity with the possibility of including qualitatively new observations. Our analysis of how the term global governance has been used in the literature suggests that, over the last decade, flexibility has been overstretched at the cost of precision and clarity.

As a result, we suggest that more clarity in the use of the term global governance may help overcome the misunderstanding and confusion that surround the concept. To achieve such clarity, we propose to use "global governance" as an analytical concept that provides a specific perspective on world politics different from that of "inter-national" relations. While we have not engaged ourselves in a discussion about whether or not a global governance perspective is appropriate in every issue area and under all circumstances, we do believe that once such a perspective is taken, new insights may be gained. We therefore conclude our article by raising four questions that follow from the notion of global governance as a specific perspective on world politics and sketch some initial answers to these questions. First, what is new about a global governance perspective? Second, what are the central research questions that emerge from this new perspective? Third, what are the potential benefits of a global governance perspective? And, finally, what are its limitations?

When we first presented our argument to our colleagues, one commentator asked if our conception of global governance was in any way

different from international governance plus transnational actors. Our response to this question is twofold. First, we believe there is a core difference in terms of the basic ontological assumptions of a global governance perspective as sketched above. Rather than presuming a priori a hierarchy between international and transnational spheres of political activity, a global governance perspective is based on the premise that both spheres have equal ontological status. In short, a global governance perspective acknowledges that world politics is neither international governance plus transnational actors nor transnational governance plus international actors. Accordingly, a research program that builds on this premise will ask a number of questions, such as: What dynamics characterize the two spheres? What factors determine whether actors seek to achieve their goals through one sphere and not through the other? And what kind of interactions exist between the two spheres? Research on these questions will benefit from previous research on international relations, but it will transcend the latter by taking transnational politics seriously.

Second, while the conceptual focus of international relations is actor-centered—the term centers on how two or more nation-states will behave when they need to coexist in a single world—the governance perspective chooses a different point of departure. The most fundamental observation we make when we make use of our global governance lens is not the existence of specific actors (e.g., states), but the existence of norms, rules, and standards that structure and constrain social activity. As a result, the research agenda associated with a global governance perspective is different. At its core, it includes such questions as: What forms of social regulation exist at the global level? Where do global norms, rules, and standards come from? How are they constructed, interpreted, implemented, and adjudicated? What relationships exist between rule makers and rule takers? What are consequences of global norms, rules, and standards? Who benefits? Who loses?

Ultimately, a theory of global governance would thus differ from a theory of international politics. Its central unit of analysis would be the conditions for social activity (e.g., norms and rules) rather than actors and relations between them. In addition, its methodological challenge would be complexity rather than parsimony. But what can be expected from such a theory in the making? In our opinion, such a theory, once fully developed, should be able to answer three sets of questions: first, questions focusing on the emergence of global governance arrangements within and across different policy arenas; second, questions targeting the conditions for effective global governance; and, finally, questions directed toward the implications of the current transformation of governance for

core political concepts such as authority, sovereignty, and democratic legitimacy. However, such an optimistic view toward a theory of global governance must also anticipate its limitations. The core challenge is to balance the tendency toward theoretical complexity with the need for simplicity to avoid replicating the multidimensional and multicausal nature of current world politics. It is precisely this point where a clearer and more precise use of the global governance concept can serve as the necessary first step toward better theories of world politics. 🌐

Notes

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1. We understand *world politics* as a neutral concept that refers to political structures and processes that have transboundary repercussions as the object of both a global governance and a more traditional "inter-national" perspective.

2. Cf. Hongying Wang and James N. Rosenau, "Transparency International and Corruption as an Issue of Global Governance," *Global Governance* 7, no. 1 (2001): 25–49; Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ulrich Brand, "Order and Formation: Global Governance as a Possible Hegemonic Discourse of the Internationally Political," paper prepared for the workshop "Critical Perspectives on Global Governance," Amerang, Germany, 1–3 November 2002.

3. Lawrence S. Finkelstein, "What Is Global Governance?" *Global Governance* 1, no. 3 (1995): 368.

4. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

5. Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood.*

6. Claude Bélanger, *Concepts in Social Science and History,* available at www2.marianopolis.edu/quebechistory/events/concepts.htm (accessed 15 October 2003).

7. John Gerring and Paul A. Barresi, "Putting Ordinary Language to Work: A Min-Max Strategy of Concept Formation in the Social Sciences," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15, no. 2 (2003): 202.

8. This is not to deny, however, that Gerring and Barresi's min-max-strategy may be a very promising second step with regard to theory building in the study of global governance. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this clarification.

9. Finkelstein, "What Is Global Governance?" p. 368.

10. Thomas G. Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance: Conceptual and Actual Challenges," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000): 795.

11. Cf. Paul Hirst, "Democracy and Governance," in Jon Pierre, ed., *Debating Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 13–35; R. A. W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing Without Government," *Political Studies* 44, no. 4 (1996): 652–667. For recent contributions that try to bring some degree of order to the conceptual disarray, see Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Public-Private Partnerships: Effective and Legitimate Tools of International Governance," in Edgar Grande and Louis W. Pauly, eds., *Complex Sovereignty: Reconstituting Political Authority in the Twenty-first Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Unraveling the Central State, But How? Types of Multi-level Governance," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 233–243; Kees van Kersbergen and Frans van Waarden, "Governance as a Bridge Between Disciplines," *European Journal of Political Research* 43, no. 2 (2004): 143–172; and Elke Krahmann, "National, Regional, and Global Governance: One Phenomenon or Many?" *Global Governance* 9, no. 3 (2003): 323–346.

12. Renate Mayntz, "Governance im modernen Staat" (Governance in the modern state), in Arthur Benz, ed., *Governance—Regieren in komplexen Regelsystemen: Eine Einführung* (Governance—governing in complex rule systems: An introduction) (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), p. 66.

13. Rosenau and Czempiel, *Governing Without Government.*

14. Gerry Stoker, "Governance as Theory: Five Propositions," *International Social Science Journal* 155 (1998): 17–28.

15. For recent examples published in this journal, see Sverker C. Jagers and Johannes Stripple, "Climate Governance Beyond the State," *Global Governance* 9, no. 3 (2003): 385–399; Benedicte Bull, Morten Bøås, and Desmond McNeill, "Private Sector Influence in the Multilateral System: A Changing Structure of World Governance?" *Global Governance* 10, no. 4 (2004): 481–498.

16. Robert O'Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte, and Marc Williams, *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Global Civil Society and Global Environmental Governance: The Politics of Nature from Place to Planet* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); Frank Biermann and Steffen Bauer, *Managers of Global Governance: Assessing and Explaining the Effectiveness of Intergovernmental Organisations,* paper prepared for the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention, Portland, Oregon, 26 February–1 March 2003; Christoph Knill and Dirk Lehmkuhl, "Private Actors and the State: Internationalization and the Changing Patterns of Governance," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 15, no. 1 (2002): 41–63; Karsten Ronit and Volker Schneider, "Global Governance Through Private Organizations," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 12, no. 3 (1999):

243–266; John Gerard Ruggie, "Global Governance Net: The Global Compact as Learning Network," *Global Governance* 7, no. 4 (2001): 371–378; Klaus Dingwerth, "The Democratic Legitimacy of Public-Private Rule-making: What Can We Learn from the World Commission on Dams?" *Global Governance* 11, no. 1 (2005): 65–83; Rodney Bruce Hall and Thomas J. Biersteker, eds., *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

17. James N. Rosenau, "Governance in the Twenty-first Century," *Global Governance* 1, no. 1 (1995): 13.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 14.

20. Ibid., p. 15.

21. James N. Rosenau, "Globalization and Governance: Sustainability Between Fragmentation and Integration," paper prepared for the conference "Governance and Sustainability: New Challenges for the State, Business and Civil Society," Berlin, 30 September–1 October 2002, p. 1.

22. Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance," p. 796.

23. Ibid., p. 808.

24. Klaus D. Wolf and Gunther Hellmann, "Die Zukunft der Internationalen Beziehungen in Deutschland" (The future of international relations in Germany), in Gunther Hellmann, Klaus D. Wolf, and Michael Zürn, eds., *Die Neuen Internationalen Beziehungen: Forschungsstand und Perspektiven in Deutschland* (The new international relations: State of the art and perspectives in Germany) (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2003), p. 588 (our translation).

25. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

26. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 266.

27. Rosenau, "Governance in the Twenty-first Century," p. 16.

28. James N. Rosenau, "Toward an Ontology for Global Governance," in Martin Hewson and Thomas Sinclair, eds., *Approaches to Global Governance Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), pp. 295–296.

29. Claire A. Cutler, Virginia Haufler, and Tony Porter, eds., *Private Authority and International Affairs* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999); Hall and Biersteker, *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*.

30. Doris A. Fuchs, "Globalization and Global Governance: Discourses on Political Order at the Turn of the Century," in Doris Fuchs and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *Transformative Change and Global Order: Reflections on Theory and Practice* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002), p. 11.

31. Cf. Hall and Biersteker, *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*.

32. Rosenau, "Governance in the Twenty-first Century," p. 15.

33. Konrad Späth, *Inside Global Governance: New Borders of a Concept,* paper prepared for the workshop "Critical Perspectives on Global Governance," Amerang, Germany, 1–3 November 2002, p. 1.

34. Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood,* pp. 335–357; the quote appears on p. 335.

35. Holger Mürle, "Global Governance: Literaturbericht und Forschungsfragen" (Global governance: Literature review and research questions), *INEF Report 32* (Duisburg: Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden [INEF], 1998), pp. 10–11.

36. Deutscher Bundestag, Study Commission, "Globalization of the World Economy: Challenges and Answers," *Short Version of the Final Report* (Berlin: German Bundestag, 14th legislative period, 2002), p. 67.

37. Ibid., p. 74.

38. Paul Wapner, "Governance in Global Civil Society," in Oran R. Young, ed., *Global Governance: Drawing Insights from Environmental Experience* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), p. 82.

39. Dirk Messner and Franz Nuscheler, "Globale Trends, Globalisierung und Global Governance" (Global trends, globalization, and global governance), in Stiftung Frieden und Entwicklung, ed., *Globale Trends 1998* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997), p. 36 (our translation).

40. Leon Gordenker and Thomas G. Weiss, "Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions," in Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker, eds., *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), p. 17.

41. Ulrich Brand, "Nach dem Fordismus: Global Governance als der Neue Hegemoniale Diskurs des Internationalen Politikverständnisses" (After Fordism: Global governance as the new hegemonic discourse in international politics), *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 10, no. 1 (2003): 205 (English summary). For a similar argument, see Henk Overbeek, "Global Governance, Class, Hegemony: A Historical Materialist Perspective," Political Science Working Paper No.1 (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2004).

42. See, for example, David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); James N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

43. By distinguishing between a traditionally state-centric "inter-national" approach and global governance, we do not argue that all IR theories are based on an exclusively state-centric ontology. However, we assume that most "traditional perspectives within IR"—most notably realism, neorealism, and liberal institutionalism—share basic ontological characteristics different from those prevalent in the concept of global governance. In particular, these perspectives are based on an a priori understanding that world politics is best conceived of as politics among states. Nonstate actors—itself a concept that exemplifies the state-centric character of the perspective—play a role mainly through influencing the activities of states or by providing services to states. The analytical usage of *global governance* departs from these assumptions; its central claim is that world politics is considerably more than international governance plus transnational actors.

44. Karl Kaiser, "Transnationale Politik," in Ernst-Otto Czempiel, ed., *Die anachronistische Souveränität* (The anachronistic sovereingty) (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969), p. 96.

45. Thomas Risse, "Transnational Actors and World Politics," in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 258.

46. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer at *Global Governance* for this latter point.