

**‘The Theory and Practice of Global and Regional Governance:  
Accommodating American Exceptionalism and European Pluralism’<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Theorising about international relations has a strong intellectual tradition. Theorising about regionalism also has a long, if not entirely successful, pedigree. But theorising about global governance—which should not be confused with international relations—has only become fashionable in the post Cold War era, which we might also refer to as the ‘era of globalisation’. As in many areas of the social sciences, in terms of both theory and practice, this theorising has been largely dominated, for a range of explainable reasons, by North American scholarship. The aim of this paper is to provide a small corrective to the lop-sided nature of this debate by looking at European understandings of global governance in comparative perspective to the North American literature. For heuristic purposes, these competing perspectives are given the short-hand descriptions of ‘American exceptionalist’ and ‘European pluralist’ approaches to governance.

**Keywords:** Global and Regional Governance, American Exceptionalism, European Pluralism

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was prepared for the European Commission Advisory Group on Social Sciences and Humanities in the European Research Area (SSHERA) *Workshop on Global Governance and the EU: Research Priorities for the Next Decade* in April 20, 2005. The paper followed a broad based theoretical presentation on global governance by Robert Keohane. My brief was to identify elements of a research agenda on global governance of more direct relevance to Europe.

The paper’s longer term genesis lies in the development of the application to establish a *Network of Excellence on Global Governance, Regionalism and Regulation* (GARNET) under the European Framework 6 Programme. The emergence of GARNET has come about through an exciting and evolving Europe wide conversation on global governance. Although the Coordinator of this Network, I am in terms of expertise something of an outsider to the scholarly community interested in Europe. Thus I offer thanks to other key members of this incredibly rich, but intellectually diverse group, of scholars for helping in the formation of my thinking. Thanks in particular go to Mary Farrell, Karoline Postel-Vinay, Mario Telo, Luk Van Langenhove, Brigitte Young, Heribert Dieter, Dick Robison, Geoffrey Underhill, David Armstrong, Helge Hveem, Furio Cerrutti, Laszlo Csaba and Elmar Altvater. They, of course, are not accountable for any of the more egregious statements contained in this paper.



## **Introduction**

Notwithstanding coordination problems that have arisen in a number of major policy domains in the Europe Union in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the EU is still the most institutionalised regional policy community exhibiting a complex system of governance beyond the territorial state (see Sandholtz and Stone Sweet, 1998; Gavin, 2001 and Rosamond, 2000). It is also, notwithstanding difficulties of definition, also an empirical laboratory without equal for studying governance beyond the level of the state. But research on multi-level regional governance in Europe is often detached from the wider analytical questions of an extra-European nature in the contemporary theory and practice of global and regional governance. At a time when we have seen a series institutional and political crises in the governance and regulation of world order under conditions of globalisation (see Stiglitz, 2002) there is a clear need for scholarly and policy-oriented research on the theory and practice of the global regulatory framework(s) across the economic and security domains (and Europe's role in that framework) to be brought together in more systematic manner.

As in many areas of the social sciences, in terms of both theory and practice such theorising has often been dominated by North American scholarship. Thus a normative assumption of this paper is that there is a need for more systematic collective European thinking about best how to reshape the structures of global governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are live issues of scholarly concern within many sectors of the EU's social science research community, but they cast massive policy shadows over extant frameworks of regulation and governance and how to (re)form them.

The aim of to paper is therefore to think about European understandings of global and regional governance in comparative perspective with some North American understandings. For heuristic purposes, these competing perspectives are given the short-hand descriptions of 'Americian exceptionalist' and 'European pluralist' approaches to governance. The paper is in four sections. Section one looks at the relationship between economic globalisation and governance. Section two looks at the trans-Atlantic divide in the theory and practice of global governance and section three looks at regional governance and the global regulatory framework with reference to the role of the EU as a model of regional regulation. Section four provides a brief discussion of the degree to which the trans-Atlantic divide impacts on method in the scholarly study of global governance.

## Global Governance

Globalisation has exacerbated the need for new understandings (both normative and analytical) of governance to cope with the challenges it throws up.<sup>2</sup> The key problem generated by globalisation is the disjuncture that exists between market structures and governance structures. As Keohane (2001) has noted ‘interdependence and the lack of governance, when combined, make a deadly mixture’. Most importantly, however defined, globalisation has become the principal metaphor around which political contest over the governance of the modern world order is being conducted (see Higgott, 2000). The theory and practice of globalisation and the development of regionalism (and not only in Europe) are two key drivers in the development of the contemporary global order. They should be seen not as discrete activities but intimately, dialectically even, linked. The European research community needs not only to stay abreast of these debates, but also shape them in a manner reflecting Europe’s strong intellectual traditions and its emerging normative priorities and interests. European scholars of global governance need to be ‘theory makers’ not simply ‘theory takers’.

Governance, under conditions of globalisation, is no longer something to be researched in separate contexts, with the boundary of the state determining the location at which policy issues are addressed. This is recognised in both scholarly and policy-focused literature. In addition, the importance of the link between normative and practical questions in relation to multi-level governance continues to grow. This is now well recognised both within the EU, with its emphasis on issues of ‘open coordination’ and more generally in the contemporary debate over multilateralism in the wake of September 11, 2001 (see Higgott, 2004).

A standard political science definition would nowadays see governance as a process of interaction between different societal actors (public and private) and political actors and the growing interdependence between them as the interaction between societies and institutions become ever more complex and diverse (Kooiman, 2003). By extension, (global) governance might be seen as the way in which actors—individuals, institutions (again both public and private)—attempt to accommodate conflicting interests through processes of collective action

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<sup>2</sup> This is not another paper on globalisation or its impact on the policy process. The literature on this topic now abounds. See *inter alia*, Altvater and Mankopf, 1999, Scholte, 2005, Held *et al*, 1999, Hurst and Thompson, 2002 and reiger and Leibfried, 2003.

decision making in a range of areas operating beyond state borders. It encompasses the activities of government, the stuff of traditional political science) but it also includes other channels of communication and especially other prominent and emerging non-state actors in global and regional market places (such as MNCs, banks, financial institutions, ratings agencies, commercial associations) and civil society (such as NGOs, sector specific advocacy coalitions and social movements) that are generating trans-national mechanisms of governance and networks across the range of functional policy domains (see Biersteker and Hall, 2002; Higgott, et al, 2000; Scholte, 2005).

Global governance is thus those arrangements—from weak to strong in influence—that actors attempt to put in place to advance, retard or regulate market globalisation. This is the core of the relationship between the market and the theory and practice of governance. It reflects a tension over the continued pace of economic liberalisation. It is a political struggle about the distribution of global wealth, not merely a technical economic debate about how best to produce that wealth. The struggle has become increasingly vocalised since the anti-globalisation backlash of the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus interest in the theory and practice of global governance reflect growing despair over the mismatch between the over-development of a global economy and what we might call the ‘under-development’ of a global polity (see Higgott and Ougaard, 2002 and Ougaard, 2001).

As a field of inquiry, global governance is not simply a new hosting metaphor for those activities that interest the scholar of international relations (traditionally understood) and that for too long were simply juxtaposed against the domestic interests of the scholar of political science. Rather, it represents a new field of inquiry that arises out of a growing awareness of the impact of globalization on scholarship and dissatisfaction with traditional models of public policy that fail to capture the shift in the relationship between public and private sectors in general (see Stoker, 1999, Haufleur et al, 1999) and state authority and market power at the global level in particular (Strange, 1996.) The methodological nationalism that underwrote much public policy analysis and practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is rapidly becoming redundant as the non-national manageability of policy problems and a growing interest in the importance of the portability of ideas in the policy process, especially over issues of cross border policy transfer (Stone, 2004) grow.

The demand for research on global governance has also followed the recognition that 'sovereignty is increasingly a relational and relative question of responsibility rather than one of absolute principled legal control over specifically determined space (Krasner, 1999) the result of which is a dramatic change in the role of International law. In this context 'governance' has become a hosting metaphor identifying non-traditional actors (non-state actors such as NGOs and networks) that participate as mobilising agents broadening and deepening policy understanding beyond the traditional, exclusivist, international activities of states and their agents (see Slaughter, 2004). In short, the demand for global and regional governance is dramatic and complex. The increasing role of multi-level governance structures in key policy areas, enhanced by the role and functions of both issue-specific and regional specialised agencies, has grown dramatically.

Yet in some key areas of the global cooperative agenda, in both the economic and the security domain, we appear to be witnessing the deterioration of collective governance capacity and resistance to its enhancement (see Held and McGrew, 2002). For an increasing number of actors, global governance questions resist the technocratic fix and pose major political and ethical questions about the appropriate manner in which policy is made, decisions are taken and implemented and resources are distributed. This is an issue for the theorist as much as the practitioner. Indeed, a problem with the much of the contemporary analysis of the demand for governance, beyond the confines of the state, is that it is often posed as a technical, managerial and invariably 'economistic' problem. This approach removes any notion of politics or ethics from it. In such a context, governance assumes the mantle of an ethically neutral activity—rather similar to the manner in which we used to understand the notion of public administration within states throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But actors in this process are not ethically neutral and dispassionate. They are players with political agendas. This is so whether we include the relevant international institutions (UN and alliances in the security domain, the IMF or BIS in the international financial arena; the WTO, regional and bilateral institutional arrangements in the trade arena; the World Bank in the context of development) or those ever more visible non state actors (such as MNCs, NGOs) and various advocacy coalitions and global public policy networks such as the Davos Forum or the emerging counter voices to be found at the Global and European Social Forum

or what is generically thought of as the alter-globalisation movement (see Cutler *et al*, 1999 and Nayyar, 2002).

Many of the tensions can be attributed to our often ill-defined notion of globalisation. In this regard globalisation and governance have fast become the two most overworked clichés of the late 20<sup>th</sup>/early 21<sup>st</sup> century policy sciences. But, like most clichés, their overuse is the product of something ‘real’ happening. Most importantly, they are interlinked. Governance, as opposed to government, would not have emerged as a concept without the growth of globalisation over the last several decades. Thus, their clichéd status notwithstanding, both concepts will become more, rather than less important as the current decade progresses. Understanding this fact demands a dramatic rethink of the paradigmatic structures that have, for far too long driven policy making in the OECD world. Most understanding of policy making still emanate from narrow statist methodologies (Stone, 2002). We need to develop modes of analysis and methods of investigation that take us beyond these methodologies and broaden the analysis to include ecological sustainable, gender sensitive and human security concerns across the North-South divide and in the transition economies.

But care must be taken. An interest in governance has become something of a cottage industry. This is especially the case in the search for ‘good governance’ and best practice in public life. Governance has become a synonym for problem solving. But, there is a polarisation at the core of our modern understanding of governance—between governance as accountability and representation and governance as effectiveness and efficiency. This polarisation is at the core of the theory-practice divide at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Brassett and Higgott, 2004). This is increasingly recognised at all levels of governance, from the sub-state and sub-regional level, through the national and supra-national levels in Europe. It is also recognised that the boundaries of thought and action between these levels are increasingly porous. These issues are significant within both global and regional contexts.

Governance is a necessity for the smooth functioning of market-based societies. But, there is a dilemma. Institutions that make up the regulatory framework are potentially oppressive and governments potentially coercive. This is not a new observation. This situation—the essentiality of institutions for governance, but the potential for institutions to act as agents of oppression—is what Keohane (2001) calls the ‘governance dilemma’. Put as a question: ‘How do we ensure the effective and efficient delivery of governance while at the same time

ensuring democratic, inclusive and accountable governance structures to the society (with small or large) that it claims to serve?' This dilemma—essentially a question of legitimacy—can only be resolved by considering both the normative and the empirical dimensions of institutional and governance frameworks.

Under conditions of globalisation this is becoming an increasingly important question as the policy process transcends and outgrows the level of the nation state into seemingly more remote and less accountable institutions. Economic globalisation exacerbates the 'democratic deficit'. Governments under conditions of globalisation, in both the developed and developing world have become increasingly obsessed with the first, empirical, understanding of governance—as enhanced effective and efficient delivery of services. This discussion has been at the expense of the second, normative understanding of governance, and the democratic and accountable nature of the institutions of governance.

Questions about the legitimisation of the activities of governance beyond the territorial state are salient for both the scholar and the practitioner in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is especially so in the EU, where the demand for legitimation from the bottom up is high and the capacity to act from the top down is more fragile. These questions are central to both the global policy process itself and to the outcomes of the policy process. How do emerging processes and structures of global governance provide for both efficient and socially just policy-making on the one hand, and appropriate levels of accountability of these structures and processes on the other hand? Without this balance the rational, stable and harmonious development of an accountable and acceptable system of regulation at the global level will not be possible.

With this background in mind, there is a range of ways that an agenda for research into the theory and practice of global governance might be advanced. Keohane (2004; and Grant and Keohane, 2004) has advanced understanding of the limits of global governance as an exercise in expanded democratic (most frequently cosmopolitan) political theory. The extension of the 'domestic analogy' to the global level in the absence of those kinds of checks and balances that exists at the domestic level does not work. Making the important distinction between input legitimacy and output legitimacy Keohane demonstrates some of the key constraints facing the often all too easy assumption that multilateralism, the principal institution of global governance, will remain a key component of it in this new century. Using a mix of analytical and normative insights drawn from both realist and institutionalist



theoretical positions in international relations scholarship he shows how multilateralism as a foreign policy tool was always a modest endeavour and a social construction of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its identification with the 21<sup>st</sup> century interest in ‘global’ governance’ is misleading because it was predicated on an avowedly statist understanding of governance.

This is an important general starting point from which to consider the issues of research on global governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In what follows, I attempt to extract out a specific ‘European’ research agenda on global governance for the coming years that accommodates the European scholarly communities intellectual pluralism and the policy communities attendant interest in the multi-level governance of what Cooper (2003) calls the ‘post-modern state’ as opposed to what we might call a more American ‘exceptionalist’ and continuingly statist, modernist understanding of global governance. Thus, the next section identifies some of the key differences between US and European thinking about the theory and practice of global governance.

### **The Trans Atlantic Divide in the Theory and Practice of Governance**

Much that we learned about institutions is in danger of being unlearned in the global policy domain. I am not suggesting defending institutions that have fallen into disrepair simply for the sake of it. Scholars and practitioners are correct to point to deficiencies in institutions such as the UN. Similarly, we are correct to want to reform decision-making in the international economic institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO. What I am concerned about is the willingness to question the very utility of institutions—as ways or organising behaviour—that is growing in some parts of the global policy community, especially in the USA.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has demonstrated the central theoretical and practical importance of international institutions as the reducers of uncertainty and transactions costs and the importance of their role in making promises credible (Keohane, 1984 and 1989, Simmons and Martin, 2002). We may be cynical about international institutions and distrust them but most of us recognise that if they did not exist we would be re-inventing them in one way or another. Institutions, in theory at least, facilitate deal-making by enhancing trust and commitment to principled behaviour. But we are in danger of unlearning these principles, especially in the US foreign policy community. It seems to be unlearning the message about

the role of institutions at the very time when other parts of the world (and not just Europe) are learning the importance of them. This message is particularly important in those regions of the world such as East Asia in which the market economy is less firmly embedded than in Europe and where these questions, theoretical and philosophical as they may be, cast and will continue to cast massive policy shadows (see Higgott, 2005a).

While there is a strong secular trend away from multilateralism in both theory and practice, in the USA especially, it is not necessary to accede to Robert Kagan's (2003) overdrawn suggestion that 'Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus' to see sharp differences between American approaches towards world politics in general and global institutional cooperation and order (global governance) on the one hand and that of Europe and Asia on the other. The US and the EU, for example, differ on questions of 'partnership', 'burden sharing', and 'exceptionalism' as approaches to global economic management. For the current Bush Administration, what drives contemporary world order is 'primacy', 'real-politik' and freedom to manoeuvre. For Europeans (including the UK) it is 'globalisation', 'interdependence' and cooperation (see discussions in Daalder, 2003; Wallace, 2004). Europe, in theory if not always in practice, exhibits a stronger normative attitude towards multilateral governance structures than is to be found across the spectrum of the US policy community. It is inconceivable, for example, that any US administration would prepare a document similar to *The EU and the UN: The Choice of Multilateralism* (Commission of the European Communities) that argues for a 'systematic *integration of multilateral and bilateral policy objectives*' (their emphasis) (2003: 10).

Similarly, the EU disposition for multi-level-governance and 'sovereignty pooling' is incomprehensible to US foreign policy makers. The '*acquis communautaire*' (the body of common standards and regulations that have developed over the life of the European project), and notwithstanding perpetual complaints about excessive bureaucracy, are widely accepted in Europe. Europe, in theory if not always in practice, exhibits a stronger normative, some (Cooper, 2003) would say 'post-modern' attitude towards multilateral governance structures developing constitutional and regulatory frameworks that increasingly transcend the nation state. Such an approach is unthinkable anywhere across the spectrum of the US policy community. By contrast, the US policy community sees the global order through realist, geopolitical set of lenses.

These differences are to be found not only in attitudes towards the institutional development of the EU, but also in normative and security policy contexts. Europe leads the way over the US in the areas of human rights and the promotion of the rule of law in collaboration with other nations while, as Michael Lind would argue ‘... Washington today mocks[s] the very idea of international law’ (*Financial Times*, 25 January, 2005). In the security domain, especially since the failure of ‘old Europe’ to support the war in Iraq, we have heard senior American foreign policy makers express reservations about the ‘European project’ and outline not too subtle wishes for a weakening of that project via a divide and rule strategy towards ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe. But US objections have failed to prevent Europe establishing its own military planning agency independent of NATO and again in the face of US resistance, Europe proceeds with the Galileo project to create a satellite network of its own independent of the US.

Recent discussions of American ‘empire’ have missed the longer-term perspective offered by the historian. The US remains the world’s dominant economic and military power. But its primacy is being eroded. After World War Two, its GDP was more than twice the size of Europe’s whereas now it is approximately the same. The five fold difference between the US and Japan then is now only twofold. In the military domain, US hard power (material military preponderance) to fight and win intensive conventional wars needs to be contrasted with the manner in which this power is substantially diminished in the new wars against non-state terror. Moreover, its use of hard power is undermining Nye’s (2002) ‘soft power’. America the altruistic hegemon that provided leadership in institution building in the post world war two era is increasingly seen as less popular (Pew Research Center, 18 March 2003) and rather as a selfish hegemon threatening stability in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bhagwati and Panagiriya, 2003). The more the US trumpets its strength the more difficult it becomes to secure its global agenda.

If we look at the rise of Europe over a similar period then, for all its problems, including the failure to ratify its Constitution and inability to speak with one voice on many issues, it is not as weak as analyses from across the Atlantic would have us think. In contrast to the US’s declaratory agendas/edicts for the current world order, the European project appears incremental, understated and yet quite startlingly successfully ‘transformative’. There is, as Mark Leonard (2004) notes, a ‘Eurosphere ... which is being gradually transformed by the European project.’ The absence of a constitution does not detract from this. Overtime it has

created a set of common standards, implemented through national institutions, that countries take on board without feeling threatened by, or generating hostility towards, this European agenda. Europe's more low-key approach carries little of the provocation inherent in the more assertive, sometime bellicose approach of contemporary US foreign policy. Unlike the US, Europe is not a target for counter-balancing. Rather, those states in its sphere that are not members are keen to join it. 'Unlike America, whose power provokes resistance, Europe's networks invite collaboration' Europe certainly will not, as the title of Leonard's work implies, 'Run the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. But neither, of course will the USA.

With the benefit of the historical perspective, what looks like European weakness through the traditional US state-centric realist power politics lenses actually looks like strength through the newer lenses of the increasingly diffused and networked nature of power of in the contemporary global era. This is a provocative thesis, but it is a necessary and important counter argument to the view that currently prevails on the other side of the Atlantic. More importantly, it is the basis for a comparative research agenda about the future of global governance. If this strong policy divide is built on deeper, epistemological understandings (and there is strong comparative evidence from other disciplines such as philosophy to suggest that it is) then assumptions that this divide is just a blip in the relationship are misguided and as such form the basis for a much needed comparative research agenda on global governance.

The US's growing differences are not just with Europe. Again, without over-stating the case, differences towards emerging regional multilateral governance structures may also be found in East Asia in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It too—withstanding difficult relations between the two major regional powers (China and Japan)—places a greater stress on multilateral and regional cooperation than the US, although, as in Europe, there may be a marked disconnect between theory and rhetoric on the one hand and application and practice on the other. But we live in an era of the 'new regionalism' in East Asia that has progressed apace since the financial crises of the latter part of the 1990s. The key elements of the new regionalism, are enhanced regional economic dialogue and interaction both *amongst* the states of Northeast Asia (China, Japan and South Korea) and *between* these states and the states of Southeast Asia through the development of the ASEAN Plus Three process. This is especially so in the domain of monetary cooperation in the post financial crisis era. East Asia could one day become the world's largest trade bloc (Dieter and Higgott, 2003; Pempel, 2005).

To be sure, these regional dialogues remain rudimentary when contrasted with the level of integration to be found in Europe, but they have been spurred on by the perceived limitations of the multilateral system and the changing relationships of the major regional actors to the USA—especially Japan and, recently China. These trends are growing rather than diminishing. US allies are drafting regional architectures with which the US is increasingly less comfortable. Europeans and Asians seem intent on creating an institutional order less dependent on American power, more dependent on rules and principles and in which the US is granted less prerogative and licence than in the past.

This tendency is not, of course unproblematic and the behaviour of China in East Asia over the medium to longer term is crucial. Those regional neighbours in awe of, and attracted by, China's market potential and willingness to enter into regional partnerships in the economic domain are much more sanguine about China's growing regional military might. It is possible to find considerable evidence of positive Chinese behaviour in the region, especially in its positive role towards the creation of an East Asian Economic Community and other regional dialogues. How its relationship with Japan will play out in the long run is the key to security and cooperation in East Asia. The problem—does increased wealth and power lead to greater cooperation or greater competition?—remains a perennial question of international relations. Is the region 'ripe for rivalry' or 'ripe for cooperation' (Pempel, 2005). This question remains central to the relationship between them. How it turns out will depend on how the regional conversation is managed and exactly what kind of governance structures are put in place in the coming decades. It is a major agenda item for both researcher and practitioner alike.

This question needs to be located in the wider context of the overall discussion about global and regional governance in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a general principle that we can draw about power and regionalism from the specific discussion of Europe and Asia. Let me put it as another question. 'Is it likely that we are entering an era where large sections of the global community look less to the major multilateral institutions—so much the playthings of the major powers—and more towards the development of regional activities and communities?' If so, then the growing salience of regional dialogues is a positive governance trend. But we have seen false starts in this process before, especially after the decolonisation process of the late 1950s/early 1960s. But if regionalism is an effort to transcend a unipolar world in which the hegemonic power shows an increasing reluctance, in contrast to times

past, to engage then, not a little ironically, contemporary US foreign policy may act as a catalyst to regional consolidation in Asia and other parts of the world. Growing discontent with US policy in, and towards, the East Asian region (especially since the Asian financial crises of the second half of the 1990s) has been one of the most significant factors in its enhanced regional dialogue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Adopting a cautionary principle however, it behoves us to remember that the current rupture in thinking between Washington and other points of the global compass since the turn of the century is so sharp that much of what was learned in the post-Cold War decade is in danger of being quickly forgotten. Prior to the rise to influence of the neo-conservatives (see Halper and Clarke, 2004), it was possible to identify a high degree of trust and loyalty amongst the ruling trans-Atlantic and (albeit to a lesser extent) trans-Pacific policy communities. Such was the degree of this trust across the Atlantic that even serious conflicts (over trade, for example) did not threaten the ability of the wider structure of institutions and shared expectations to contain them (Risse, 2002).

Can the same be said in the contemporary era in which the US, in an assertively nationalist manner, demonstrates little concern for problems other than those which affect it directly? Is it now rather Bhagwati and Panagariya's 'selfish hegemon'? Has the legitimacy of the hegemon's behaviour has ceased to be one of implicit acceptance and become one of explicit scrutiny? There are now large and sophisticated opinion surveys (notably Pew) that demonstrate how trust in the US to use of its power responsibly has waned dramatically. Taken to extremes, it is not impossible to envisage a situation in which the world does become more multi-polar. Not multi-polar in the traditional realist sense of other regions combining to balance against the US, but multi-polar in the sense that the US becomes less salient as an actor in the development and activities of other regions.

Are we are moving to a situation where we might no longer have a uni-polar order underwritten by US hegemonic power on the one hand, nor have a fully formed multipolar order, and functioning multilateral institutions on the other? The US having won the Cold War through a combination of hard power and soft power seems to hope that raw material power will be sufficient to intimidate other great powers. This assumes that China, Japan (and East Asia in general) as well as Russia, India, Brazil and Latin America are not capable of developing policies and strategies to mitigate the influence of US economic and military

power. We must develop research agendas that test all of these assumptions. US hegemony, or primacy in the military sphere, is not preventing the development of multi-polar initiatives in geo-political and economic domains, as the nature of regional institution building without US participation attests.

The reputation of multilateralism, seen in John Ruggie's (2003) terms as a principal (and principled) institutional form of global governance in both the economic and the security domain is badly damaged. In contrast to the post world war two era, the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has adopted an *ad hoc* approach towards multilateralism and institutionalism. The very idea that the dominant global power might need to act in a 'self-binding' manner has been disregarded (Martin, 2003)). A change of heart in the US is not all that is required to undo this situation. This is a *necessary*, but not *sufficient* condition to (re) build positive structures of global economic governance.

In the continued absence of global structures of economic governance (not a real prospect) we must expect policy makers to explore more manageable alternatives. Traditional state-centric, power politics approaches to the management of the world order under conditions of globalisation, for all but the USA, would appear to be coming less salient. More diffuse networked understandings of power, with loosely institutionalised regulatory actions providing a *modus operandi* for cooperation are becoming increasingly attractive. It is here that regionalism and multi-level governance, as we understand it in Europe, for all its faults and all its detractors, offers the bones of an alternative model. It is also the level that is proving increasingly attractive in other parts of the world such as East Asia. I consider it briefly in the section below.

### **Regionalism and the Global Regulatory Framework**

When conducting research in this area, the concept of regionalism refers generally to regional integration, as well as the more inclusive process of regionalisation. It can, however, also refer more specifically to the ideology of regionalism; that is region building as a political project. Regionalisation implies the formation of regions, whether by region building actors or more spontaneous processes. The concept of region is used to include both sub-national regions (provinces within states) and supra-national regions (world regions or macro regions). The process of regionalisation also has structural consequences beyond the particular region

in which it takes place. Trans-regionalism refers to institutions and organisations mediating between regions. If this occurs in a formalised way we speak of inter-regionalism. It is a key assumption of much research on Europe that the strategy of inter-regionalism followed by the EU may prove to be important in the construction of a new, possibly more balanced, world order.<sup>3</sup>

It is the meso regional level, between globalisation and the nation-state and especially in a European context, that most effort has been applied to the management of trans-territorial, or multi-territorial collective action problem solving. Moves toward regionally integrated problem solving have been more active in Europe than in other parts of the world. But this is not only a European phenomenon. Elsewhere, the growing linkages between different regional integration schemes, such as the FTA between the EU and Mercosur, or the development of the ASEAN Free Trade Area, for example, are evident (Sampson and Woolcock, 2003.)

There is also a growing tendency to devolve competencies from state-level to more local levels in countries that are participating in integration processes. As a result, political authority and powers are becoming increasingly dispersed while economic activities are getting more and more globalised. In addition, non-state actors are also becoming increasingly involved in governance. This is not simply an academic observation. It is also replete with policy implications. We should stop thinking in terms of hierarchical layers of competence separated by the subsidiarity principle. We cannot ignore the strong tendency towards networking arrangements at all levels of governance shaping, proposing, implementing and monitoring policy together. This emerging multi-level governance calls for new ideas and practices to organise governance at local, national, regional and global levels and deal with questions of:

1. How to co-ordinate policies at different levels of governance with supranational or macro-regional organisations.
2. How to make provision for the improved effective performance of multilateral institutions of global governance whose decision making is skewed by asymmetrical, or power influences or deadlocks—*pace* the contemporary UN or the WTO.

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<sup>3</sup> The literature on regionalism cannot be reviewed here. See *inter alia*, Gamble and Payne, 1996, Hettne *et al*, 1999, Breslin *et al*, 2000 and Higgott, 2005b



3. How to (re) organise regional representation of, and in, supranational organisations; such as the representation of the EU in international organisations like the UN.
4. How to understand the main drivers towards regionalisation and to monitor the impacts of regional integration processes in Europe and in extra-European areas; especially the role of the EU governance model on developments in accession states and other near neighbours.
5. How to understand the interface between supranational organisations, such as the UN, the OSCE, the CoE on the one hand and sub-regional state and local structures of governance on the other.
6. How to understand the manner in which these actors facilitate or impede processes of democratisation, marketisation, and enlargement.
7. How to gender mainstream these macrostructures of governance so that women and men can equally compete and maximize their benefits from the multi-level policy practices in the area of governance and regulation.

While regionalisation processes can be observed throughout the world over the past decade, with an increasing diversity and complexity in these processes, it is clear that there is, to date at least, no single model of regionalisation. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, societies are attempting to make their own choices as to the regionalisation processes that best reflect their own needs and the political commitment of the actors involved. But this is not to say that there is consensus within each regional grouping as to which model best reflects actor interests. On the contrary, regionalisation processes are contested (both in practice and in the theoretical literature). What is not in dispute is the desire for collective action by societies, through forms of regional cooperation to counter the adverse, often crisis driven, effects of globalisation on the one hand, and to maximise the benefits to be gained from the processes of globalisation on the other. But, global governance structures are not monolithic and regional governance systems display great differences in both scope and capacity to maintain order within the system (see Shaw, 2001 and Armstrong *et al*, 2004).

The EU has developed sophisticated regulatory frameworks through its institutional architecture and the effective crystallisation of international trade, investment and other common policies. Other regions are developing different regulatory and governance frameworks. On closer examination, it is clear that in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas the regional governance systems are all aiming towards a shared pursuit of governance

systems that can be considered to be not only effective but also democratic, legitimate and inclusive (Cerruti and Rudolph, 2001).

So, we must continue to ask where the European Union fits into the system of global governance. This will remain an iterative research agenda. At a normative level we should ask how the European Union can help to shape the global governance system, in all its complexity, towards a system that is both efficient and just—that is, one that is capable of maintaining stability, ensuring accountability, and guaranteeing the representation of all interests in the global institutions?

The global governance system is fragmented, ineffective, and undemocratic in its decision-making. Thus there is a priority for Europe to identify its role and its responsibility in addressing these issues. This role, as events since the turn of the century tells us, is subject to the vicissitudes of politics and indeed strong personality. But, difficulties notwithstanding, there are a range of reasons that make a greater role for Europe more, not less, important in the future. For example:

1. Europe does have an integrated governance system, linking institutional structures, policies, legal instruments that bring together the national and supranational level of decision-making and policy-implementation. Such integration is key to the overall success of *any* governance system.
2. In individual policy areas (for example, trade and competition policy) Europe has a sophisticated regulatory framework that is unequalled at the global level. To-date, only Europe has managed to develop a competition framework based upon the adoption by each state of common standards, procedures and laws. This is a framework that will not pass easily to the global trade community embodied in the WTO.
3. Europe is already engaged in a web of cooperative relations with other regional groupings, based upon either formal, institutional dialogue or more informal agreements. Inter-regional cooperation has increased in both the scope and density of the agreements. Although often misunderstood, the Asia-Europe (ASEM) process, EU-Mexico, EU-Mercosur, and the Cotonou Agreements constitute examples of the increased aspirations of regional group to build a density of relations and foster trust and understanding fundamental to a global governance framework.

4. The EU governance model relies heavily on the rule of law (see Stone Sweet, 2004). The role of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) is crucial in ensuring a system that is both effective and fair at the same time. The ECJ has a key role to play in ensuring the legal provisions of the Treaty of Rome (and subsequent amending treaties) are upheld by the member state governments, the supra-national institutions, and by organisations and individuals. The EU is a political actor, as much as a legal one. It aims not only to produce more efficient governance in Europe. Increasingly, it is also the conduit through which individuals, organisations as well as states seek redress for infringement of their rights. Notably, the ECJ is an important agent for enhancing gender equality within and across the EU and its member states.
5. Access to the ECL for private individuals as well as member states and the supranational institutions makes it distinctive from other international governance models. Contrast it with the WTO, where only states can make a complaint to the Dispute Settlement Body. If these legal principles of direct effect and supremacy were to be fully incorporated into other international agreements, and particularly in systems of global governance, there would be a radical change in the effectiveness, the capacity and the fairness of international and global governance.
6. The EU, for all its shortcomings has managed to instil a spirit of cooperation amongst a diverse group of member states, succeeded in showing the benefits of cooperation for its members and proving that cooperation need not be zero-sum and can be learned. In essence, cooperation within the context of an international governance system produces results where the participants can perceive cooperative action as a public good. This is not to suggest, of course, that cooperation among sovereign states or between states and non-state actors in the establishment of a governance system is either automatic or easy. Successful cooperation to-date has depended on a public-sector push and an emerging supranational structure.
7. The EU has proceeded further than any other regional grouping in the establishment of a governance system based upon the principle of pooled sovereignty in key areas in which decision-making is delegated and states accept authority in matters over which they would otherwise have national control .
8. The EU has evolved towards a model of governance with a degree of democratic legitimacy. Despite real criticisms and a literature on the democratic deficit (for a discussion see Bellamy, 2005 and Moravcsik, 2004) the EU continues to address the imbalance between the supranational and the national democratic structures.

9. Europe exhibits both common and distinctive features in its national social models. European models of the welfare state face common internal and external challenges arising from accelerated globalization. Within the academic and the policy communities, the debate about European socio-economic convergence versus national diversities, and stimulated by the “Lisbon strategy” (2000-2001), was aimed at building a competitive ‘European knowledge society’ consistent with social cohesion. Such a modernization process does impact (if only in a limited way) on the co-ordination of national social, economic, employment, research, technology, public health and enterprise policies.
10. The EU has a long experience of gender politics (dating back to Article 119 on equal pay in the Treaty of Rome). This provides a rare example of a primarily economic organisation developing a strong trans-national social policy backed by law. More recently, the policy of “gender mainstreaming” has been adopted, with the stated aim of incorporating gender awareness in all aspects of EU policy making and increasing the representation of women in key forums. These measures have been complemented by provisions to combat discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, age and other forms of disadvantage. These developments, and the networking and bargaining surrounding them, provide many lessons for regional and global governance.
11. While the European Union has emerged as a major actor in the world economy, with a reasonably developed and coherent set of trade policies, it is not so successful as a global political actor. For the EU to be taken seriously in the international arena, and to exert influence in the international institutions that currently form the global governance system, it needs a regional political identity as an effective and legitimate actor able to represent the interests of all member states. But finding legitimacy among its citizens and in public discourse within the EU on the one hand, and among the actors and institutions of global governance on the other has proved difficult and events can and do derail these processes (see Albert, *et al*, 2001 Reuber and Wolkersdorf, 2002).
12. The European Union has built up a dense web of cooperative relations with countries and regions in other parts of the world. These form a set of bilateral and multilateral relations linked to trade, aid, investment and other forms of development cooperation. Determined by historical, political and geographical factors, these links demonstrate distinctive priorities, value systems and normative considerations in the negotiation processes and decision-making frameworks, all of which shape the European approach to reform of the global governance system. In an era of often conflicting cultures and

intellectual traditions that shape the norms, values and priorities of the leading states in the global system, these differences will be reflected in particular visions of what should constitute a global governance system. The differences extend also to the scope of authority that should be vested in the global regulatory authority, the legal basis upon which authority is free to act, and the nature of its legitimacy with relevant stakeholders.

European experience and EU scholarship can make a serious theoretical and practical contribution to the emerging notion of sovereignty. European approaches to governance have developed flexible and multidimensional concepts of sovereignty in the international system. As suggested earlier, these ideas of sovereignty contrast with the often bounded, state-based/intergovernmental characterisations of sovereignty and international relations as understood by most US practice and scholarship. In a situation of enhancing global economic integration requiring innovation in patterns of governance, it remains important to make an intellectual leap to overcome these more bounded notions of sovereignty. This may be characterised as the “sovereignty trap.” While states have done much to develop democracy and social justice in the advanced economies, the limits of national governance, and of the concepts on which it is based, appear less clear in regional and global integration processes. This is especially the case where sovereign capacity is reduced and attempts at co-operative solutions in a context of sovereign equality often appear unnecessarily zero-sum in nature.

The repressive potential of the state remains considerable, especially in the post 9/11 context, given the changing dynamics of international security. We need to escape from a bounded notion of sovereignty and narrow definitions of security and state-interest if the global integration process is deliver better governance. Central to overcoming these limitations must be the recognition that sovereignty can be disaggregated and redistributed across institutional levels from the local to the global. There are examples from EU experience, including the introduction of the single currency, which provide us with a practical example of the ‘division’ of sovereignty. Further cases of a similar nature are likely to develop in due course. It is little wonder that EU scholars put so much emphasis on multi-level models of governance (Rosamond, 2000) in contrast to the strict inter-governmentalism of theorising on the other side of the Atlantic (*pace* Moravcsik, 1994 and 1998.)

## **A Comment on Method**

The previous section provided the contours for research on global governance with a regional focus in which an understanding of the European experience might be useful. This is not to suggest that the European experience is, or should be, replicable the world over. This is not, for example, what empirical observation of emerging regionalism in East Asia would suggest. In East Asia, the emerging regulatory framework of regionalism is much more defensive of the imperative of state sovereignty (see Jayasuriya, 2004). Comparative regional analysis of a historical variety leading to systematic inference is thus crucial in contemporary research on global governance.<sup>4</sup>

Thus in this final section I say a little about the all too often neglected issue of research methodology. As noted, traditional understandings of governance (and by contemporary extension, global governance) have been bifurcated. The distinction has been between governance as effectiveness and efficiency in either the delivery of public goods or governance as democracy, representation and accountability. The first understanding has been underwritten by technical, managerialist insights and seen as ‘non political’. The second understanding is driven by normative theorising about how best to deliver greater democracy, representation and accountability. This has tended to draw excessively on loose, often ill-defined generalisations of a cosmopolitan theoretical persuasion (see for example, Held, 2004) that assumed the exportability of democratic models from the domestic to the global arena.

But cosmopolitanism invariably elides the difficulties inherent in any attempts to globalise the domestic model and indeed the need to distinguish between broad concepts of democracy on the one hand and specific component elements of democracy, such as ‘accountability’ on the other. We need to move beyond the initial bifurcation between technical and normative understandings of governance and begin to think strongly about eradicating the domestic-international divide as an inhibitor of research on governance. Applications of the ‘domestic analogy’ to the global domain are clearly limited as Grant and Keohane (2004) have pointed out. As the role of the nation state as a vehicle for democratic engagement becomes seemingly more problematic, the clamour for greater democratic engagement at the global

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<sup>4</sup> This was a key finding of the SSHERA Workshop. For a discussion see Telo, 2005. This paper also provides a detailed, issue specific research agenda for European scholarship in the coming decade.

level becomes stronger. This is obviously an important normative and policy question under conditions of globalisation (see Brassett and Higgott, 2003).

But it also raises important analytical-cum-methodological questions for the scholarly researcher on questions of global governance. Relevant to the argument advanced in the earlier parts of this paper, we can start by trying to close the gap that has developed in the study of comparative politics and political economy on the one hand and contemporary international politics and international political economy on the other. This separation was the unnatural outcome of increased specialisation in the social sciences in general and political science in particular throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a division that is no longer tenable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If the ‘marginalist revolution’ in economics rent asunder the social sciences at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, globalisation as both theory and practice now renders these disciplinary separations increasingly dysfunctional (Higgott, 1999). Without resolving this methodological problem, we are not going to solve the bigger normative problems.

Commitment to research across the comparative-international divide is often asserted rhetorically, more than it is practiced. But the days of asserting it and then simply doing what we have done before, be it working on national systems in an assumed global context or working on global structures with an unproblematic disregard for the nature of the way national systems are intruded into global structures should be gone. Similarly, globalisation has put paid to the comfortable distinction between the domestic and the international. The international-domestic divide might make sense in some areas of political science—say in the study of electoral systems on the one hand or inter-state conflict on the other—but it makes no sense in the study of global governance and extra-territorial politics where the comparative and international hands must always be washing each other.

Following David Laitin (2002), I see three basic approaches to the conduct of comparative politics—(1) increasingly strong statistical approaches that aspire to find similarity, difference and variation across a large number of similar units. (2) The formalisation and cross-sectional testing of the explanatory power of these variables. (3) The residual traditional narrative approach or what Dahl (1962) referred to as ‘empirical theory’. There is a place for all three approaches in the wider corpus of comparative politics and the new approaches are increasingly important, but it is the traditional, narrative approach that is

important for future research on (global) governance I would argue. There are (briefly) several reasons for this:

1. The longitudinal study of the genealogy of a contested concept such as governance requires it. Empirical narrative theorizing allows us to look at both persistent regularities and change in values, institutions, practices and processes over time.
2. The narrative approach allows us to identify paths and sequencing as we anchor research on governance in an historical perspective—which we ignore at our peril. The language changes but very often the issues, questions and agendas remain similar if not identical in substance. This is I think the case in the context of any long-term understanding of how we understand governance.
3. While we should always be cautious about the level of generality we can ascribe to any processes, the narrative-cum-genealogical approach allows us to demonstrate overtime the upswings and down swings in the fortunes/ hegemony of different understandings of governance.
4. In the last instance, neither political science nor international relations offer us de-contextualised understandings of key concepts, such as governance. Thus the strength of the narrative approach is in part to be found in its return to history and institutionalism in comparative politics and liberal political economy after a period in which both were marginalised in favour of ‘social science’.

I stress ‘liberal political economy’ here which, unlike neo-classical economics on the one hand or much contemporary formal political science on the other, has understood how getting to grips with global governance requires a revival of institutionalism (see North, 1990). The contemporary study of comparative politics and international political economy are linked by the revival in the fortunes of institutionalism in political science, especially at the expense of the behaviouralism that had rendered institutional theory marginal from the 1960s to the early 1980s.

Moreover, the links between political economy and political philosophy are also becoming progressively more important as the ethical and moral context of globalisation comes under close scrutiny (see for example Pogge, 2001 and Brown, 2002)) Indeed, understanding of, and attention to, the importance of normative questions of governance and state practice as



exercises in accountability and democratic enhancement (in effect, politics) must catch up with our understanding of governance as exercises in effectiveness and efficiency.

These are general questions that affect all scholarship alike. It is here that there is common ground for the economics, philosophy, political science and the international relations community generally. But there are different traditions and different research agendas developing in different parts of the scholarly world. These traditions and agendas impede the prospects of or, perhaps more positively, counsel against, a common research agenda for all scholars of governance. Specifically, there is a substantial difference between what is, what will and what should be addressed by European scholars in the coming years and is likely to be addressed by scholars in the US.

This difference will pertain for both scholarly and policy reasons; nor is it a new assertion; nor indeed is it a universally accepted one. At a scholarly level, and for much of the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century social sciences has been dominated (in volume and output, methodological approaches, and agendas) by the American scholarly community. In many instances this is an understandable and appropriate assumption to draw from the research of such a substantial and sophisticated intellectual community as that which prevails in the USA. We should indeed be searching for wider patterns and common approaches that can only develop from operating with what we might call ‘global best practice’ in political science and international relations scholarship. But we need to be cautious. This search for best practice has all too often assumed a positive correlation between the hegemony of US scholarship on the one hand and best practice on the other.<sup>5</sup>

This is not an assumption that should rest untested in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century; especially given what some identify as the excessively close relationship between what passes for contemporary objective political science in the US on the one hand and the policies of the American state on the other (see Oren, 2003). Recent historical experience in both scholarly theory and policy practice does not confirm this correlation. Unlike many other areas of scientific activity, scholarly research in the social sciences reflects, inevitably, different intellectual traditions and normative concerns. These concerns are accompanied, again

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<sup>5</sup> Political science and international relations are all too often assumed to be ‘American social sciences’. See *inter alia*, Almond, 1990; Crick, 1959, Hoffmann, 1977 and Ricci, 1984 for insights into the historiographies of political science and IR

inevitably, by contested policy implications. Nowhere is this more so than in our study of the theory and practice of globalisation and regionalisation, and the implications of these phenomena for the theory and practice of governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The major policy question attendant on this state of affairs is how to create appropriate structures of governance to enhance the benefits that arise from processes of globalisation and regionalisation, whilst creating structures of decision-making and policy-making that mitigate the adverse aspects of these trends. Not only are there, as I suggested in the previous section, major differences at the level of policy between the US and Europe on these issues, there are also major differences between American and European scholars on these issues.

These differences between the two intellectual communities exists across the spectrum—from how we understand these developments, to how we interpret and then respond to them at the level of policy. As this paper has demonstrated, there is a stronger tradition in the EU of multilateral, collective action problem solving than is to be found, especially in the contemporary era, in the USA. To give one further example, in terms of gender studies, the EU can offer an alternative to the American liberal model of feminisms with its sole focus on *political* equality. Continental Europeans instead have a long tradition of positive freedoms of social rights and economic equality (see Young, 2002).

This is a problem for European scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Without overstating the case, it can be argued that the US scholarly community currently exhibits both a greater ideological and methodological coherence when contrasted with varied traditions and approaches found in the individual national research communities of Europe. European intellectual pluralism is both a strength and weakness. We should celebrate the intellectual vitality that emanates from this pluralism. But we should also identify and attempt to consolidate a greater Europe-wide understanding of these traditions as a precursor to improving their scholarly presentation and representation, with all the attendant downstream implications for the coherence of policy-making that such improvement would imply.

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<sup>6</sup> It is also a problem for American scholarship, but that is another story for another paper.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, global governance is not a monolithic concept. The institutions of global governance are many and varied and the scope of the regulatory frameworks differs significantly across issue areas. In some cases the legal provisions are strong, in others areas law plays an insignificant or no role at all. For example, what has been achieved in terms of the global regulation of trade is very different to what is, or what might be achieved with regard to the development of regulatory systems for policy in areas such as the environment, health, or migration. Moreover, the disparities in the power of individual actors (state and non-state alike) in policy areas cannot be gainsaid. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of multilateralism in global governance studies, as recent history shows us, unilateralism, especially but not exclusively in US policy (see Beeson and Higgott, 2005) remains a strongly salient factor.

Finding improvements and identifying reforms that will make the various components of the system more effective as well as more democratic demands a sustained and multi-faceted programme of enquiry, one that must necessarily be based upon coherent and coordinated multidisciplinary study. This has to be more than just a scholarly exercise. Both for the sake of its internal coherence and its credibility as an international political actor, the EU must take on a major share of the responsibility for advancing the theory and practice of global governance. Wherever possible this should be done as part of a cooperative endeavour with the world's other major economic and political power. As contemporary experience attests, this is not always easy. But there is no reason for the European scholarly and policy community not to attempt to carry forward this important discussion of its own volition. European social science on these issues needs to recognise not only the theoretical importance of the questions concerned for the scholar, but also the massive policy shadows that they cast for the wider European policy making community.

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