Global Governance and Democratic Accountability

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Globalization in the contemporary world means that transnational relationships are both extensive and intensive (Held et al., 1999). States and other organizations exert effects over great distances; people's lives can be fundamentally changed, or ended, as a result of decisions made only days or moments earlier, thousands of miles away. In other words, interdependence is high.

States remain the most powerful actors in world politics, but it is no longer even a reasonable simplification to think of world politics simply as politics among states. A larger variety of other organizations, from multinational corporations to nongovernmental organizations, exercise authority and engage in political action across state boundaries. Increasingly extensive networks of communication and affiliation link people in different societies, even when they do not belong to the same formal organization. Some of these networks are benign; others are designed to achieve nefarious purposes such as drug smuggling and money laundering, while members of still others seek to destroy societies or groups of people whom they fear or hate.

Interdependence without any organized government would lead actors to seek to solve their own problems by imposing costs on others. In response, those of their targets who could rationally retaliate – and perhaps some for whom retaliation would be less rational – would do so. The result, familiar in times of war or severe economic strife, would be conflict.

Seeking to ameliorate such conflict, states have for over a century sought to construct international institutions to enable them to cooperate when they have common

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or complementary interests (Keohane 1984). That is, they have established rudimentary institutions of governance, bilaterally, regionally, or globally. These attempts at governance, including global governance, are a natural result of increasing interdependence. They also help to create the conditions for further development of the networks of interdependence that are commonly referred to as globalization (Keohane and Nye 2001, ch. 10).

Since states do not monopolize channels of contact among societies, they cannot hope to monopolize institutions of global governance, even those that they have formally established, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO). States have a privileged position in these organizations, since they founded them, constitute their membership, monopolize voting rights, and providing continuing financial support. Except in the European Union, states also retain the legal authority to implement the decisions of international organizations in domestic law. Yet the entities whose activities are regulated include firms as well as states; and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play an active role in lobbying governments and international institutions, and in generating publicity for the causes they espouse. NGOs are typically more single-minded and agile than states, which gives them advantages in media struggles. Equally important, religious organizations and movements command the allegiance of billions of people.

The complexity of these patterns of politics makes it very difficult to trace causal relationships and determine patterns of influence. This complexity also makes normative analysis difficult. Emerging patterns of governance are new, and operate at multiple levels. Globalization makes some degree of global-level regulation essential, but both

institutions and loyalties are much deeper at local and national levels. Hence it is not clear what principles and practices that are justified domestically would be appropriate at a world scale. Governance can be defined as the making and implementation of rules, and the exercise of power, within a given domain of activity. "Global governance" refers to rule-making and power-exercise at a global scale, but not necessarily by entities authorized by general agreement to act. Global governance can be exercised by states, religious organizations, and business corporations, as well as by intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Since there is no global government, global governance involves strategic interactions among entities that are not arranged in formal hierarchies.

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We live in a democratic era, and I share the widespread belief that rules are only legitimate if they conform to broadly democratic principles, appropriately adapted for the context.   In democratic theory, individuals are regarded as inherently equal in fundamental rights, and political power is granted to officials by the people, who can

withdraw that authority in accordance with constitutional arrangements. The legitimacy of an official action in a democracy depends in part on whether the official is accountable. Hence a key question of global governance involves the types and practices of accountability that are appropriate at this scale. The key question addressed in this article is: what do democratic principles, properly adapted, imply about desirable patterns of accountability in world politics? Which entities should be held accountable, to whom, in what ways? And from a policy standpoint, what do these normative judgments imply about "accountability gaps" – situations in which actual practice differs greatly from a desirable state of affairs?

Part II of this article discusses the concept of accountability, as related to global governance. Part III discusses the various entities that we might want to hold accountable, and how to do this. Contrary to what one might believe on the basis of much writing on the subject, intergovernmental organizations, along with weak states, seem among the most accountable entities in world politics. Corporations, transgovernmental networks, religious organizations and movements, terrorist networks, and powerful states are much less accountable. If we believe in accountability, as I do, we need especially to pay attention to states. How can powerful states can be held more accountable in world politics?

Before getting to these arguments, which constitute the heart of this article, it seems important to put the issue of accountability into the context of an interpretation of global society and the global system. It would otherwise be too easy to sketch a highly idealized view of the world. Such a conception is very helpful in thinking about fundamental normative principles, as in the profoundly important work of John Rawls

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(1971, 1993), but it is not adequate if one's purposes is to critique actual situations in world politics. To make such a critique, one needs to sketch out institutional arrangements that satisfy our normative criteria to the extent feasible given the realities of world politics. Although these institutions may be normatively much superior to the actual state of affairs, they may nevertheless fall well short of the arrangements that would fully satisfy abstract normative demands.[1]   I therefore begin in Part I by contrasting the concept of a "universal global society" with the reality: that world politics as a whole lacks universally accepted values and institutions. In reality, many people and groups in the contemporary world not only hold values that are antithetical to those of others, but seek forcibly to make others' practices conform to their own preferences. Attempts to increase accountability in world politics must take account of the airplane assassins of 9/11, their confederates, and their supporters. Political theory will not be credible if it demands that good people enter into what is in effect a suicide pact.[2]

I.   Non-Universal Global Society within a Global System

David Held has recently outlined in a very sophisticated way a vision of three models of sovereignty: classic, liberal, cosmopolitan. For Held, there has been movement over the past century from classic to liberal sovereignty. In liberal conceptions of sovereignty, legitimacy is not conferred automatically by control. Indeed, institutions that limit state authority have been developed. Moving beyond liberal sovereignty, Held envisages a prospective movement to cosmopolitan law and governance. Multilevel governance, including governance at the global level, will be "shaped and formed by an overarching cosmopolitan legal framework" (Held 2002b: 33).

This is an attractive vision, somewhat more ambitious than my own call two years ago to create "working institutions for a [global] polity of unprecedented size and diversity" (Keohane 2001: 12). Both visions, however, would be much more attainable if global society were universal. 25 years ago, Hedley Bull drew an important conceptual distinction between society and system. The states in an international society, for Bull, are "conscious of certain common interests and common values." They "conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions" (Bull 1977: 13). States in an international system that is not an international society do not share common values or work together in international institutions. "When Cortes and Pizarro parleyed with the Aztec and Inca kings [and] when George III sent Lord Macartney to Peking ... this was outside the framework of any shared conception of an international society of which the parties on both sides were members with like rights and duties" (*Ibid*.: 15). However, Bull believed that the European states system had become, by the 1970s, an international society.

Since in the contemporary world entities other than states help to compose society, it seems more appropriate to speak now of global rather than international society. But 9/11 should make us be cautious about believing that global society is becoming universalized. Terrorists have brought sudden external violence and the fear of such violence back into our lives with a vengeance, and the security-seeking, force-wielding state has not been far behind. We therefore need to remind ourselves that a universal global society remains a dream, and one that may be receding from view rather than becoming closer. An increasingly globalized world society has indeed been developing, but it exists within a violence-prone system, both international and

transnational. The world is not neatly divided into "zones of peace" and a "zones of turmoil" (Singer and Wildavsky 1993), or areas of "complex interdependence" and "realism" (Keohane and Nye 1977/2001).Relationships of peaceful exchange among societies, and violent conflict involving non-state actors, can occur in the same physical spaces.

Human rights advocates have long been aware that a universal global society is more aspiration than reality. The torturers and mass murderers of the world do not share fundamental values with committed and humane democrats. In the wake of 9/11 we have become acutely aware of terrorists' attempts to kill other people, personally unknown to them, who merely stand for hated values or live in states whose policies the terrorists oppose. Perhaps even more soberly, we realize that millions of people cheered or at least sought to justify the evil deeds of 9/11.

On a global scale, common values are lacking. The Taliban did not try to emulate the social organization of western society, and in fact rejected much of it, such as the practice of enabling women to live public lives. Many fundamentalist religious people do not share – indeed, reject – secular ideals such as those of pluralist democracy. Indeed, one reason that democratic values are not spreading universally is that dogmatic religions claiming exclusive access to comprehensive ultimate truth contain fundamentally anti-democratic elements. Their claim of comprehensiveness means that they assert authority over issues involving the governance of human affairs. Their claim of exclusive access to ultimate truth means that they appeal for authority not to human experience, science or public opinion but to established authority or privileged knowledge of the divine, and they reject accountability to publics and human institutions. Insofar as people believe

that power is legitimated by divine authority, they will not be drawn toward liberal democracy.

We must unfortunately conclude that the vision of a universal global society is a mirage. There is indeed a global society: common values and common institutions are not geographically bounded. But the global society in which we live is not universal: it does not include members of al-Qaeda, suicide bombers, or substantial elements of the populations of U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. It also excludes other fundamentalists who believe that as the "chosen people" they have special rights and privileges. People with these beliefs may belong to global societies of their own, but they do not belong to the same global society as do those of us who believe in liberal and democratic values. To genuinely belong to an open global society, one must accept others, with very different beliefs about ultimate truth and the good life, as participants, as long as they follow principles of reciprocity in accordance with fair procedural rules (Rawls 1993).

Even a universal global society would propose a challenge to global governance under the best of circumstances, and it would be difficult to implement a cosmopolitan vision. If globalization of public authority occurred, individual citizens would have few incentives to try to monitor governments' behavior. Indeed, the larger the polity, the more individuals can rationally be ignorant, since each person's actions have so little effect on policies. That is, the very size of a global polity would create immense incentive problems for voters – in mass election campaigns it would seem pointless to most voters to invest in acquiring information when one's own vote would count, relatively speaking, for so little. It would also be hard, without political parties that operated on a global

scale, or a coherent civil society, to aggregate interests and coherently articulate claims. Even a universal global society would lack a strong civil society with robust communication patterns and strong feelings of solidarity with others in the society.

We see these difficulties in the European Union, which is a highly favorable situation, with common democratic values and democratic institutions such as the European Parliament. But the European Union remains largely a set of intergovernmental and supranational institutions supported by a pact among elites, without deep loyalty from the publics of member countries. Even after 45 years of the European Community, it lacks a broad sense of collective identity and mutual support.

Recognizing these realities, sophisticated proponents of greater global governance understand that cosmopolitan democracy cannot be based on a strict analogy with domestic democratic politics, and they do not rely exclusively on electoral accountability. They recognize that even in constitutional democracies, many other kinds of accountability exist, including hierarchical and supervisory accountability, legal accountability (interpreted by courts), and peer accountability among government agencies that compete with one another. Even in the absence of institutionalized accountability mechanisms, reputational accountability can also play a role. [3]

Reliance on diversified types of accountability is supported by the experience of the EU. There is significant accountability in the EU, but electoral accountability, involving the European Parliament, is only part of the picture. EU institutions are accountable to governments; agencies within governments are held accountable to one another through the process of "comitology;" a considerable degree of transparency holds participants, much of the time, accountable to the public through the media. In the EU,

political authority and forms of government have become "diffused" (Held 2002b: 38). As Anne-Marie Slaughter puts it, "disaggregating the State makes it possible to disaggregate sovereignty as well" (Slaughter 2000: 203).

In the absence of a universal global society, cosmopolitan democracy is very unlikely on a global scale. Disaggregating the state seems like a recipe for self-destruction when faced with al-Queda. Indeed, the strong tendency in the United States since 9/11 has been to consolidate and centralize authority. Transgovernmental networks of cooperation against terrorism will play a role, but they will be accompanied by stronger, more aggregated states. Powerful states will seek to link the various levels of governance more coherently rather than to differentiate them, or to allow themselves only to serve as elements of a broader structure of cosmopolitan governance. They will tighten control of their borders and surveillance of people within those borders.

The overall result will be a **system** in Bull's sense. Globalization, implying a high level of interdependence, will continue. At a superficial level, most states may remain in a universal international society, accepting common institutions and rules. They can hardly do otherwise if they are to receive political recognition, be allowed freely to trade, and attract investment, much less to be recipients of aid. But acceptance of common global values within societies will be more uneven. No set of common values and institutions will be universally accepted. Global society will therefore not be universal but rather partial. It will exist within the context of a broader international and transnational system, in which both states and non-state actors will play crucial roles.

What will this society-within-system look like? Of course, we don't know –
anything said on this subject is speculation. However, five features of this society-
within-system can very tentatively be suggested:

1. Large parts of the world will remain in the imagined global society of pre-
   9/11 times. Indeed, some parts of the world formerly outside this society
   – such as China and Russia – may well move into it, even at an accelerated
   rate in response to terrorist threats. Within this sphere, "complex
   interdependence" (Keohane and Nye 1977/2001) and "soft power" (Nye
   2002) will remain important.

2. The fundamental values of substantial populations will be antithetical to
   one another – especially, wherever fundamentalist versions of exclusivist,
   messianic religions, claiming that their doctrines are comprehensive,
   prevail in one society. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all subject to
   such interpretations. People who believe that their doctrines alone
   represent revealed truth have often in history been ill-disposed toward
   people with different beliefs, and the present seems no exception.
   Relatively few societies now are dominated by people professing such
   beliefs, but there is a danger that the number of such societies will
   increase. Between societies dominated by such people and democratic
   societies there will not be a common global society – only a system of
   interactions.[4]

3. Force will continue to be fragmented, controlled mostly by states, but sometimes in the hands of small groups that need not control large amounts of contiguous territory.

4. Within the open global society – the world of complex interdependence – progress toward the cosmopolitan ideal may well occur. Common rules and practices will develop on the basis of procedural agreement – as suggested by the work of Jurgen Habermas (1999) or John Rawls (1999).

5. But in the wider system, the cosmopolitan ideal will be unrealistic even as an ideal. Coercion and bargaining will be the chief means of influence, not persuasion and emulation. Hence the state will remain a central actor. Power will not be diffused. Furthermore, territoriality may well be strengthened. For instance, we are now seeing strong pressures to re-establish controls over national borders in the US and in Europe.

II. Governance and the Accountability Gap

An accountability relationship is one in which an individual, group or other entity makes demands on an agent to report on his or her activities, and has the ability to impose costs on the agent. We can speak of an authorized or institutionalized accountability relationship when the requirement to report, and the right to sanction, are mutually understood and accepted. Other accountability relationships are more contested. In such situations, certain individuals, groups, or entities claim the right to hold agents accountable, but the agents do not recognize a corresponding obligation. I refer to the actor holding an agent accountable as a "principal" when the accountability relationship

is institutionalized. When the relationship is not institutionalized, I refer to the actor seeking to hold an agent accountable as a "would-be principal." Much of the politics of accountability involves struggles over who should be accepted as a principal (Behn 2001).

Democratic accountability within a constitutional system is a relationship in which power-wielders are accountable to broad publics. Democratic accountability in world politics could be conceptualized as a hypothetical system in which agents whose actions made a sufficiently great impact on the lives of people in other societies would have to report to those people and be subject to sanctions from them (Held 2002b: 27). But accountability need not be democratic. Indeed, it can also be hierarchical (in which subordinates are accountable to superiors) or pluralistic (as in Madisonian constitutionalism, in which different branches of government are accountable to one another). Actual systems of accountability in constitutional democracies combine all three syndromes of accountability: democratic, hierarchic, and pluralistic. As noted above, they rely on a number of different mechanisms, not just on hierarchy and elections. They also rely on horizontal supervision (checks and balances), fiscal and legal controls, peer review, markets, and general concerns about reputation.

Normatively, from the perspective of democratic theory, what justifies demands that an agent be held accountable by some person or group? Three different sets of justifications are commonly enunciated:

a. **Authorization.** Hobbes, and many others, have emphasized that the process by which one entity authorizes another to act may confer rights on the authorizer and obligations on the agent (Pitkin 1972).

b. **Support**. Those who provide financial or political support to a ruler have a claim to hold the ruler accountable. As in the American Revolution, a basic democratic claim is, "no taxation without representation"

c. **Impact.** It is often argued, as David Held has said, that "those who are 'choice-determining' for some people [should be] fully accountable for their actions" (Held 2002b: 26).

Authorization and support are the basis for what I will call internal accountability. They create capabilities to hold entities accountable because the principal is providing legitimacy or financial resources to the agent. This is "internal" accountability since the principal and agent are institutionally linked to one another. Since providing authorization and support create means of influence, such influence can be used to close any "accountability gap" that may open up between valid normative arguments for internal accountability and actual practice. Nevertheless, much of the literature on accountability, and much anti-globalization talk from Right and Left, focuses exclusively on internal accountability. Globalization, and international institutions, are said to threaten democracy (Dahl 1999).

In my view, however, the most serious normative problems arise with respect to what I call external accountability: accountability to people outside the acting entity,

whose lives are affected by it. African farmers may suffer or prosper as a result of World

Bank policies; economic opportunities of people in India area are affected by the

strategies of IBM and Microsoft; Afghans are liberated, displaced, or destroyed by United

States military action. The normative question arises in these situations: should the acting

entity be accountable to the set of people it affects? This is a very difficult normative

question. Merely being affected cannot be sufficient to create a valid claim. If it were,

virtually nothing could ever be done, since there would be so many requirements for

consultation, and even veto points. I do not seek to resolve this issue here, but I note it

as a problem that political philosophers should address. Perhaps the law of torts will be

useful here. "In every instance, before negligence can be predicated of a given act, back

of the act must be sought and found a duty to the individual complaining."[5] To develop a

theory of external accountability, it may be necessary to construct a theory of the duties

that parties owe to one another in a poorly institutionalized but increasingly globalized

world.

If we determine that a group affected by some set of actions has a valid claim on

the acting entity, we can ask the empirical question: in practice, can it effectively demand

the accountability that it deserves? If not, there is an accountability gap. In the rest of

this article, I am concerned principally with external accountability gaps and how they

might be closed.[6]

In general, rulers dislike being held accountable. To be sure, they may often have

reasons to submit to accountability mechanisms. In a democratic or pluralistic system,

accountability may be essential to maintain the confidence of the public; and in any

system, some degree of accountability may be necessary to maintain the credibility of the

agent. That is, other dimensions of power may be more important to the ruler than lack

of accountability.[7] Furthermore, constitutional systems may be designed to limit abuses

of power without reducing the amount of influence the leaders have when action is

necessary. But we can expect power-holders to seek to avoid accountability when they

can do so without jeopardizing other goals. And in the absence of a constitutional system,

the ability to avoid being held externally accountable can be viewed as one

dimension of power. Discussing accountability without focusing on issues of power

would be like discussing motivations of corporate leaders without mentioning money.

III.   Accountability in System and Society

The mixed society-within-system that I am projecting yields mixed implications

for accountability.   Internal accountability will be strong, but external accountability will

be weak. It almost goes without saying that where conflicts of interest are pronounced,

powerful states will not let themselves be held accountable to their adversaries. The

United States is not going to be held accountable for its anti-terrorism tactics to al-Qaeda.

It is also true that asymmetries of power attenuate accountability. Europe is not going to

be held accountable for its immigration policies to the countries of origin of would-be

immigrants. Only when they have interests in holding others accountable – as on trade

policies in the WTO – are powerful states disposed to let themselves be held accountable.

Yet demands for external accountability will continue to be made against states,

intergovernmental organizations, corporations, and other entities viewed as powerful.

These demands will largely be made by non-state actors and advocacy networks– hence I

speak of "transnational accountability." Meeting these demands, to some extent, will be

essential to the legitimacy of institutional arrangements within global society, since many of these claims for accountability will be widely viewed as having some elements of validity.

With respect to transnational accountability, two sets of questions then arise: 1) With respect to which entities are there significant accountability gaps? 2) What types of external accountability could be applicable to these entities?

Transnational Accountability: Entities

Consider the entities conventionally held accountable on a transnational basis. The most prominent, judging from demonstrations, press coverage, and even scholarly articles, are major intergovernmental organizations concerned with economic globalization: the European Union, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. These organizations are major targets of demands for accountability. They certainly have deficiencies in accountability. They do not meet democratic standards of accountability as applied in the best-functioning democracies of our era. But ironically, these entities seem to me to be relatively accountable, compared to other important global actors.

The European Union is *sui generis*, since it is so much stronger and more elaborately institutionalized than traditional international organizations. Its members have pooled their sovereignty, giving up both a veto over many decisions and the right to decide whether an EU decision will become part of their own domestic law. The EU may or may not evolve into a sovereign state, but in its current condition it lies somewhere between an international organization and a state. As noted above, the EU combines

traditional accountability of the bureaucracy to governments with a variety of other forms of accountability, including elections to the European Parliament and multiple forums in which governmental departments can query their counterparts on issues ranging from agriculture to finance.

Traditional international organizations are internally accountable to states on the basis of authorization and support. They have to be created by states and they require continuing financial support from states. Externally, there are significant accountability gaps. Indeed, many poor people affected by the policies of the IMF, World Bank and the WTO have no direct ability to hold these organizations accountable. Nevertheless, there is a vaguely held notion that these people should have some say in what these organizations do – that the "voices of the poor," in the World Bank's phrase, should be heard. That is, many people feel that these organizations should be externally as well as internally accountable.

Various NGOs purporting to speak for affected people, and principles that would help these people, gain legitimacy on the basis of this widespread belief. One result of their endeavors is that the decision-making processes of multilateral organizations have become more remarkably transparent. The World Bank in particular has done a great deal to incorporate NGOs into its decision-making processes.[8] Indeed, in transparency multilateral organizations now compare well to the decision-making processes of most governments, even some democratic governments. When their processes are not transparent, the chief source of non-transparency is governmental pressure for confidentiality. But the decentralization and discord characteristic of world politics mean that these organizations cannot keep secrets very well. Important negotiations, such as

those about the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) several years ago, are almost bound to "leak." And their leaders spend much of their time trying to answer charges against their organizations, seeking to persuade constituencies that the organizations are actually both constructive and responsive.

Multilateral organizations are therefore anything but "out of control bureaucracies," accountable to nobody.[9] Indeed, the real problem seems to me quite the opposite. These organizations are subject to accountability claims from almost everybody, but in the last analysis they are in fact accountable, through internal processes, only to a few powerful states and the European Union. NGOs and other would-be principals demand accountability. But these NGOs are weak compared to governments, to which the multilateral organizations are chiefly accountable. When these would –be principals lose the battle due to their institutionally weak positions, they condemn the multilateral organizations as "unaccountable." Their real targets are powerful governments of rich countries, perhaps multinational corporations, or even global capitalism – but it is the multilateral organizations that are damaged by the NGO attacks.

What the controversies indicate is not that the intergovernmental organizations are unaccountable, but that accountability is a distributional issue. The issue is not so much: are these organizations accountable? The answer to that question is "yes." They are internally accountable to the states that authorized their creation and that provide financial support and to a lesser extent they are accountable to NGOs and the media. The real issues are whether the balance of internal and external accountability is justifiable, and whether multilateral organizations are accountable to the right groups.

NGO's make a normative claim for accountability to groups that are affected, or for accountability to principles such as "sustainable development" or "human rights." In other words, external accountability claims based on the impact of these organizations compete with internal accountability claims, largely by governments, based on authorization and support. These are serious issues, but they are not issues of "lack of accountability" as much as issues of "accountability to whom?" Different types of accountability favor different accountability-holders. Once again, accountability is largely a matter of power.

Ironically, intergovernmental organizations have been the principal targets of people demanding external accountability because they are weak and visible. They are good targets because they do not have strong constituencies, and it is much easier to see how they could be reformed than to reform more powerful entities such as multinational corporations or states.

It seems to me that the external accountability gaps are greatest with respect to entities that are not conventionally held accountable on a transnational basis. Six such sets of entities can be mentioned:

1. **Multinational corporations**. Multinational corporations are held internally accountable, with more or less success, to their shareholders, who authorize action and provide support. But their actions also have enormous effects on other people. The "anti-globalization movement" is right to be concerned about corporate power, even if its proposed remedies seem incoherent. If we are concerned about the effects of powerful entities on powerless people, we scholars should be asking how to hold corporations accountable – as national

governments in capitalist societies have sought to hold corporations accountable for over a century. The effects are particularly pronounced for media conglomerates, but we have not focused on them. Globalization means that it is more difficult for national governments to hold corporations accountable than in the past. Why isn't our field paying more attention?[10]

2. **Transgovernmental and private sector networks** (Keohane and Nye 1974). Anne-Marie Slaughter (2000) has argued that these networks – such as those linking securities regulators or central bankers -- lead to "disaggregated sovereignty" and that, on the whole, this is a benign development. I am much less sanguine than she is about disaggregated sovereignty being compatible with meaningful accountability. Disaggregating sovereignty makes it much more difficult to identify the locus of decisions. Since these networks are often informal, they are not very transparent. Institutionalized arrangements that would structure internal accountability are lacking, and it is often hard for groups that are affected to identify those effects and demand external accountability.

3. **The Roman Catholic Church**. The Vatican has a secretive, authoritarian structure, and is not very accountable to any human institutions or groups. The Church in a democratic society, such as the United States, has to be much more accountable if it is to retain the active allegiance of its members. In the pedophilia scandal in the United States in the first half of 2002, accountability was the central issue.

4. **Mass religious movements**, without hierarchical organizations. Fundamentalist Islamic movements fall into this category. Unlike the situation of the Roman Catholic Church, there is no hierarchical organization to hold accountable. Who holds imams who preach support for terrorism accountable?

5. **Covert terrorist networks** such as al-Qaeda. These networks are almost by definition not externally accountable. They do not accept the responsibility of identifying themselves, much less responding to questions or accepting others' right to sanction them. They cannot be "held accountable," although they can be punished.

6. **Powerful states.** The doctrine of sovereignty has traditionally served to protect states from external accountability, although it has not necessarily protected weak states from accountability to the strong (Krasner 1999). Multilateral institutions are designed to make states accountable to each other, if not to outsiders. Even moderately powerful states, however, can resist external accountability on many issues. It has been notably difficult for the United Nations to hold Israel accountable for its military actions on the West Bank. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have not been held accountable to the victims of the terrorists whose supporters they have often encouraged. And most of all, extremely powerful states seem virtually immune from accountability if they refuse to accept it. The United States is of course the chief case in point.[11]

Nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) pose a more difficult issue. In an earlier version of this lecture I listed NGOs as a seventh type of entity operating in world politics that should be held more accountable. Indeed, they are often not very transparent. Perhaps more seriously, their legitimacy and their accountability are disconnected. Their claims to a legitimate voice over policy are based on the disadvantaged people for whom they claim to speak, and on the abstract principles that they espouse. But they are internally accountable to wealthy, relatively public-spirited people in the United States and other rich countries, who do not experience the results of their actions. Hence there is a danger that they will engage in symbolic politics, satisfying to their internal constituencies but unresponsive to the real needs of the people whom they claim to serve.

On the other hand, NGOs, on the whole, only wield influence through persuasion and lobbying: they do not directly control resources. Apart from their moral claims and media presence, they are relatively weak. They are highly vulnerable to threats to their reputations. Weakness, as we have seen, ameliorates problems of accountability. My ironic conclusion is that we should not demand strong internal accountability of relatively weak NGOs – the proverbial "two kooks, a letterhead, and a fax machine." But as a particular NGO gains influence, it can exert effects, for good or ill, on people not its members. At this point, it can be as legitimately held externally accountable as other powerful entities that operate in world politics. [1]

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[1] For a thoughtful set of discussions of the accountability of NGOs, see *Chicago Journal of International Law* 2002.

The External Accountability of States

States are powerful and are often not externally accountable. But institutions of multilateralism exist that hold them accountable on some issues. If we care about accountability, we should inquire as to how such institutions could be extended, and made more effective.

We should begin by recognizing, as Rousseau did, that internal democracy will not assure accountability to outsiders whom the powerful democracy affects (Hoffmann 1987: 43). The United States, Israel, and other democracies are internally accountable but on key issues are not externally accountable. David Held (2002b: 21) has astutely pointed out that the external accountability problem may even be greater as a result of democracy: "arrogance has been reinforced by the claim of the political elites to derive their support from that most virtuous source of power – the demos."

Yet three mechanisms of external accountability apply to states. First, weak countries that depend economically on the decisions of richer countries are subject to demands for fiscal accountability. Albert Hirschman pointed out over fifty years ago that foreign trade, when it produces benefits, generates an "influence effect ." (Hirschman 1945). As I have repeatedly emphasized, accountability is a power-laden concept. Power comes from asymmetrical interdependence in favor of the power-wielder (Keohane and Nye, 1977).

The implication of the influence effect is that if rich countries are genuinely interested in holding poor countries accountable, they will give more aid. Dramatically increased efforts to increase the benefits that poor countries receive from globalization would create an influence effect, making it easier to hold these countries accountable for

their actions. Of course, for the poor countries such generosity would be problematic, precisely because it would make them more dependent on the rich.

A second mechanism of external accountability relies on the pockets of institutionalized accountability that currently exist in world politics. States that are members of regional organizations such as the European Union are subject to demands for accountability from their peers. And states that have joined organizations such as the WTO or the new International Criminal Court are subject to legal accountability with respect to specified activities. Europe, the United States, Japan and other rich countries are targets of demands for accountability in trade, with their agricultural subsidies and protection of old industries such as steel serving as prominent examples. The extension of some degree of accountability to powerful states, through multilateral institutions, offers a glimmer of hope. But we should remember that these powerful states do not accept accountability for its own sake, but chiefly because they gain benefits themselves from these institutions. And as recent US policies on steel and agriculture remind us, powerful democratic states are subject to much more internal than external accountability.

Finally, the most general form of accountability in world politics is reputational. States and other organizations with strong sources of internal loyalty probably rely on external reputation less than organizations, such as most NGOs, that lack broad bases of loyal members. Nevertheless, reputation is the only form of external accountability that appears to constrain the United States with respect to its political-military activities. Reputation is double-edged, since states may seek reputations for being tough bullies as well as for being reliable partners. And the lack of institutionalization of reputational

concerns makes reputation a relatively unreliable source of constraint. Yet reputational accountability has some potential significance because reputations of states matter for their other activities. To be effective, states have to be included in the relevant networks (Chayes and Chayes 1995). Hence, reputational accountability, weak though it is, is significant.

On any given issue, the United States can typically act unilaterally, dismissing demands for external accountability. Indeed, one of my themes is the weakness of external as opposed to internal accountability, as far as powerful states are concerned. However, the US has many objectives in the world, some of which require voluntary cooperation from others. It would be impossible for the United States to coerce other states on all issues of concern for it. Failing to cooperate with others leads them to retaliate in one form or another, following practices of reciprocity. More diffusely, damage to the reputation of the United States as a potential cooperator reduces the incentives for others to cooperate with the United States in anticipation of cooperation on some other issues in the future. Most generally, any country playing a long-term leadership role in global governance has a long-term interest in the legitimacy of global governance, as well as in its status as leader. To any sensible US administration, such concern for leadership would be a constraint – and a reason to let itself be held accountable, to some extent, on other issues.[12]

I have pointed to three sources of external accountability – the need of poor countries for aid, institutionalization in international organizations, and reputational concerns arising from multiple issues for powerful states such as the United States. None is very strong. But we should note that all three sources of accountability are augmented

by the political institutions that are part of globalization. Globalization is not a single phenomenon. Some aspects of globalization reflect economic and technological facts that cannot be affected by political action. Action at a distance, and harm at a distance, are more feasible, and frequent, now than ever before. Other aspects of globalization, such as the construction of multilateral institutions and policy networks, and efforts to create public spaces in which persuasion based on reason can occur, require political action: Max Weber's "strong and slow boring of hard boards" (Weber 1919/1965: 55). It would be tragic if the "anti-globalization" movement succeeded in demolishing or diminishing the institutions and networks developed to cope with globalization, without putting comparable institutions in their place. Since technologically-driven globalization will not disappear, such dismantling would reduce accountability and create more opportunities for the irresponsible use of power. Globalization may weaken internal accountability within democracies, but its political institutionalization is a condition for external accountability.

Here is another irony. Opponents of globalization often raise the issue of accountability as an argument against globalization. But they are thinking of a largely imaginary bygone world in which states really controlled their borders and in which democratic governments regulated domestic activities through democratic means. Their imaginary world is the United States during the New Deal, as they would have liked it to evolve – without Nazism, fascism, communism and World War II. In fact, the choice is not globalization or not, but relatively legitimate globalization with a measure of democratic and pluralistic external accountability over powerful entities, and illegitimate globalization without such accountability.

Having said all of this, it would nevertheless be naive to believe that the United States will be easy to hold externally accountable. Indeed, for the United States to be held accountable, internal accountability will have to supplement external accountability rather than substituting for it. Those of its own people who are sensitive to world politics will have to demand it, both on the grounds of self-interest and with respect to American values.

In view of contemporary American public attitudes, this hortatory comment does not necessarily offer much hope, at least in the short run. Indeed, my ironic conclusion is that with respect to accountability, the two sworn enemies – al-Qaeda and the United States – have in common their relative lack of accountability, compared to other actors in world politics.

Conclusions

Those of us who would like to see greater democratic and pluralistic accountability in world politics must recognize that global society, while real, will not become universal in the foreseeable future. Too many people believe in the superiority of their own worldviews and deny the obligation to tolerate the views of others. The resulting threats, along with traditional security concerns, help to ensure that powerful states seeking to control territory will continue to assert themselves. Cosmopolitan democracy is a distant ideal, not a feasible option for our time.

We should demand more external accountability of powerful entities engaged in various forms of global governance. Intergovernmental organizations and weak, dependent states are most easily held accountable. We cannot expect to hold shadowy

terrorist movements accountable. But we should pay more attention to the accountability

of corporations, transgovernmental networks, religious organizations and movements,

and powerful states.

The United States especially needs to be held accountable, because its internal

democracy cannot be counted on to defend the interests of weak peoples whom American

action may harm.   Yet it is very difficult to hold the United States accountable, since one

dimension of power is that it protects the power-holder from accountability. 9/11 implies

more concentration of power and more state action. As a result, the world is further from

the ideal of transnational accountability now than most of us recognized before 9/11.

If we recognize that powerful states pose the most serious threats to accountability in

world politics, we will see that well-meaning efforts to demand "more accountability"

from international organizations can be problematic. As I have argued, "more

accountable" often means "accountable to NGOs and advocacy networks," rather than

just to governments.   Certainly some real benefits could result from making the WTO

and the IMF more accountable to a wider range of interests and values.   But we should

be alert to the prospect that the political result of such a shift would be a reduction of

states' interests in such organizations. If states get less benefit from international

institutions, they will be less willing to provide resources and to accept demands on them,

through these institutions, for accountability. The ultimate result of such well-meaning

moves, therefore, could be a weakening of the accountability, limited as it is, that

multilateralism imposes on powerful states.

In the long run global governance will only be legitimate if there is a substantial

measure of external accountability. Global governance can impose limits on powerful

states and other powerful organizations, but it also helps the powerful, because they shape the terms of governance. In their own long-run self-interest, therefore, powerful states such as the United States should accept a measure of accountability – despite their inclinations to the contrary. As in 1776, Americans should display "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind."

How, then, can we hope to hold powerful entities accountable in world politics? The first point is that to hold powerful states accountable, the world needs more multilateral governance, not less.   Indeed, one of my concerns about claims that multilateral organizations are "not accountable" is that weakening these organizations will give powerful governments more ability simply to act as they please. Holding states accountable depends on certain aspects of globalization: those that derive from the existence of significant political institutions with global scope.   If leaders of the anti-globalization movement believe that they are fostering equality and progressive policies in world politics by attacking multilateral institutions, they are sadly mistaken.

More fundamentally, holding powerful organizations accountable will require meshing together more effectively mechanisms of internal and external accountability. Global institutions are not strong enough to impose a fully satisfactory measure of external accountability on powerful states, corporations, or religious organizations. Multilateralism is not sufficient to control, in Benjamin Barber's phrase, either Jihad or MacWorld (Barber 1995).   For such control to be exercised, states themselves will have to take action, but in concert with one another.

Only democratic states can be counted on, more or less, to exercise such control on behalf of broad publics. But as we have seen, if those publics are encapsulated within

state boundaries, leaders of states will tend to ignore the costs that their policies impose on outsiders. External accountability will be minimal. In the long term, the only remedy for this situation is that networks of connection, and empathy, develop on a global basis so that democratic publics in powerful states demand that the interests of people in weaker states be taken into account. That is, people need to adopt a moral concept of reciprocity as described above, and as articulated by Rawls. To do they need to renounce doctrines, religious or otherwise, that deny the moral equality of other people, who hold different beliefs. In light of 9/11 it seems utopian to expect people everywhere to accept this moral concept of reciprocity. Yet such a conception is widely shared with successful national states, even within large ones.   There is no doubt that the people of the United States as a whole empathized with the people of Oklahoma City in 1995 and of New York City in 2001. At a global level the bonds of connection are much too weak now, even where common societies are well-established, to support the level of empathy that we observe within nation-states. But our best hope for cosmopolitan governance in the long run is the construction and strengthening of these personal and social ties.

Our principal task as scholars and citizens who believe in more accountability is to build support within our powerful, rich countries for acceptance of more effective and legitimate multilateral governance to achieve human purposes, for stronger transnational bonds of empathy, and for the increased external accountability that is likely to follow.

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Endnotes

[1] In *The Law of Peoples* Rawls has sought to move in the direction of sketching what he calls a "realistic

utopia." He has, of course, not escaped criticism for allegedly relaxing his principles too much, in order

to develop an international law that could be accepted by "decent hierarchical peoples" as well as by liberal democracies. Yet the level of specificity of *The Law of Peoples* is not sufficient to make judgments about which entities in world politics are subject to appropriate procedures for accountability. See Rawls (1999).

[2] Justice Robert H. Jackson is quoted as having said that the Bill of Rights should not be made into a suicide pact. See for instance, Richard A. Posner, "Civil Liberties and the Law," *The Atlantic*, December 2001.

[3] For a detailed discussion of types of accountability, see Keohane 2002.

[4] In my view, Samuel Huntington (1996) over-generalized his insights about a "clash of civilizations," but he was right to call attention to the importance of the different values to which people from different cultures are committed.

[5] Chief Justice McSherry in *W. Va. Central R. Co. v State*, 96 Md. 652, 666; quoted in Chief Justice Benjamin's Cardozo majority opinion in *Palsgraf v. Long Island Railroad Company*, 248 N. Y. 339, 162 N.E. 99 (1928).

[6] My normative perspective is founded on the impartialist views that stem from Kant, as enunciated recently by such thinkers as Rawls (1971, 1999) and Habermas (1996). It is also cosmopolitan, broadly consistent with arguments made by David Held (2002a).

[7] Hannah Arendt defined power as "the human ability to act in concert" (Arendt 1969: 143). In democratic, pluralistic societies, the ability to act in concert may require accountability of rulers.

[8] I am grateful to Kathryn Sikkink for this point.

[9] The reference is to Hannah Arendt (1969: 137), who described bureaucracy as "rule by Nobody."

[10] I am not including labor unions, since I do not regard them as powerful transnational actors. They are heavily rooted in domestic society and despite their activity at Seattle and elsewhere in protesting globalization, they have difficulty coordinating their actions on a transnational basis

[11] This is not to say that the United States is immune from influence by other states. It moderated its stance on the Geneva Conventions for prisoners from Afghanistan, and it followed established treaty practice in notifying foreign governments of the incarceration of their nationals in the wake of 9/11. But the ability of outsiders to hold the United States accountable in a meaningful sense is small.

[12] For a fine discussion of these and related issues, see Joseph S. Nye, The Paradox of American Power (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).