

WIKI n°5: Global Governance and Conceptual Challenges

The notion of governance carries multiple meanings. Initially, the concept of good governance aimed to apply business terminology to larger social collectives, beginning with nations and later expanding to encompass the world as a whole.

Subsequently, the emphasis shifted to the essential need to coordinate the activities and initiatives of both public and private actors to ensure a global balance of the planet. This highlights the impossibility of achieving international system stability without the synchronized efforts and harmonized strategies of state and non-state international actors. In this sense, global governance is best understood as an aspiration, orientation, or project rather than an established institutional reality.¹⁹

Thus, the hypothesis of governance is based on the principle of integrating a plurality of actors, reflecting diverse interests and identities while promoting decentralized decision-making processes. This concept transcends the idea of a single global leadership or a "world directorate" dominated by major powers. Instead, underscoring the necessity of dialogue and compromise among entities with not only differing interests but also distinct identities.²⁰

The foundations of contemporary global governance were established as early as 1944-1945 with the San Francisco Charter, which founded the United Nations, and the Bretton Woods Agreements, which led to the creation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These milestones paved the way for other institutions such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), while also transforming existing institutions. This "World Order, " often criticized as neocolonial and imperialist, largely endures today.

In 1948, following extensive negotiations between the Western and Soviet blocs, a compromise was reached, integrating civil and political rights (prioritized by the former) with economic, social, and cultural rights (a priority for the latter). This resulted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognizing rights and freedoms as essential elements of good governance.

¹⁹ Bertrand Badie. La gouvernance mondiale face aux grands enjeux : terrorisme, prolifération. Paris : Editions du Seuil, 2017.

²⁰ Bertrand Badie. La gouvernance mondiale face aux grands enjeux : terrorisme, prolifération. Paris : Editions du Seuil, 2017.

Further elaboration and development of these principles occurred in 1966 with the submission of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) for state adherence. Morocco ratified both covenants in 1979.

Additional international instruments addressing specific rights—such as those of children, women, and persons with disabilities— have further advanced the ideals of good global governance. Progress has been achieved through cooperation, collaboration, and participation across various phases, contingent on available human and financial resources. Nonetheless, numerous actors—states, corporations, political parties, unions, media, NGOs, and others— continue to strive for the implementation of good governance principles, focusing on conceptual foundations. However, the reality remains marked by ambivalence.

Within this world order, power imbalances are evident, particularly in the influence of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, who— despite occasional divisions—exercise the veto power granted by the United Nations Charter. Their influence is also derived from their economic and financial dominance, enabling them to contribute disproportionately to the budgets of the United Nations and its specialized institutions.

This disproportionate contribution allows them to exert collective pressure, as exemplified in economic sanctions against states, or individual sanctions such as US policies based on incentives and deterrence and on the extraterritorial application of U.S. law, as well as European policies, notably the French policy of conditioning "aid" on respect for "human rights" by " recipient"²¹ countries.

However, as with national governance, global governance faces significant challenges, including excessive power ambitions, domination, hegemony, conflicts of interest, and ideological or ethical clashes—issues exacerbated by globalization.

Experts remain divided on the origins and definition of globalization. Some trace its roots to the European explorations, while others associate it with the economic liberalization of the 1980s under United States President Ronald Reagan and United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who promoted deregulation through Reaganomics and Thatcherism.

During this period, many states—under the impetus of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—privatized public enterprises, often due to mismanagement or the need to repay external debt.

In this context of deregulated globalization of the 1980s, where hyper-liberal capitalism has emerged as a potential threat to democracy, the ideal was that good global governance rested on a threefold necessity: the commitment to collective action to address common challenges, development of a common vision to establish a shared direction, and the establishment of global coordination mechanisms. These elements,

²¹ All these quotation marks are used to highlight the ambiguity resulting from the proclamations when confronted with the practices of these states.

enshrined in the United Nations Charter, aim to maintain peace and security and promote development.

Thus, at the Millennium Summit in 2000, eight Millennium Development Goals were defined in a plan approved by all countries and the major global development institutions. While these goals were not achieved, they were transformed in 2015 into seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda, a more ambitious and interconnected framework designed to leave no one behind. The guiding principle became placing human beings at the center of all programs to improve the lives of people worldwide.