

# Order and regulation: Global Governance as a hegemonic discourse of international politics?

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## ABSTRACT

Under the heading of 'Global Governance' a discussion is taking place on changes in political regulation at the international level. In this contribution Global Governance is understood as a discourse which is a part of the search process of emerging post-Fordist politics and its substantiation. This is based on the Foucault concept of discourse. It is analyzed in terms of five dimensions: 'globalisation'; 'world problems' and 'global challenges'; Realpolitik; 'Utopia' and democracy; and finally the 'general interest' of world society. This shows how Global Governance is articulated with the dominant transformations of the political which are understood from the perspective of regulation theory. It is demonstrated that this discourse, which legitimizes societal developments and provides a guide for action, is not at all in contradiction to the post-Fordist neoliberal transformation of society, but rather serves to make the handling of globalization-induced crises more effective. The article does not aim to provide a precise analysis of the discourse or its ontological and epistemological basis; instead it seeks to open up a perspective which should serve to stimulate discussion and research about the changing nature of international politics and hegemony.

## KEYWORDS

Global Governance; hegemony; post-Fordist politics; crisis of neoliberal globalization; Foucaultian discourse concept; regulation theory.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The social scientific debate on Global Governance is at present one of the most absorbing in political science, and the political importance of the concept is also increasing. The terms 're-regulation' (of the world

economy) and 'Global Governance' are often used synonymously. In particular it has concentrated attention on the changing role of the state and of institutions in international politics. Global Governance means more than this, however. This article is concerned with its importance as a discourse in the context of globalization and its restructuring of the political, particularly at the international level. It is intended in this way to contribute to the analysis of current formation of hegemony. Following the dissolution of the Fordist compromises since the 1980s the issue at stake is now the construction of post-Fordist compromises, particularly in the sphere of the political. Global Governance is a part of this constitutional process.<sup>1</sup>

The main argument is that as a discourse the concept is a part of the search process of emerging post-Fordist politics and the latter's scientific and non-scientific substantiation. Especially at the moment in which the negative implications of the present dramatic changes become obvious, i.e. articulate themselves as crises or criticism and protest – e.g. the financial crises in Asia, Russia, Mexico, the increasing criticism of the UNO, growing divisions within society, protests against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) or the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as more generally against the worsening of the living conditions of a large number of people – , the general concept becomes important. From this point of view – the transformation towards post-Fordism and its obvious crises – , the various contributions on Global Governance are interesting even though they represent only a partial area of the search for post-Fordist compromises, its material basis, specific institutional configurations and socially accepted reference points, and have not yet provided a compact definition of the hegemonic pattern of the political.

This article intends to pose the question onto the table why Global Governance became such an attractive discourse in social sciences and is gaining importance in political debates. With this, a productive discussion about the meaning of the Global Governance discourse should be initiated and, therefore, some points of reference for future research in International Relations and International Political Economy are sketched out. I want to show exemplarily in what sense 'junctions' between the Global Governance discourse and societal transformations do exist. It is argued that the former articulates itself with the structural transformations of the political, integrates dominant meanings of these transformations and its problems, offers a broadly accepted concept of politics, bridges existing and developing contradictions and, therefore, is able to 'frame' the dominant political transformations. In this sense the discourse is sorting complex societal relations, makes them plausible and serves as a point of orientation for political action.

In order to grasp Global Governance more precisely as a possible hegemonic discourse of post-Fordist politics, I use the discourse concept of

Michel Foucault. According to Foucault discourses are selective, draw lines and constitute knowledge as to socially 'correct' thinking and action (Foucault, 1977: 47). The constitution of discourse represents a process which is struggled over, and at the same time it forms 'spaces' and 'rules of the game', in and according to which conflicts are settled. Discourses have effects on power when they become institutionalized, are linked to action and become carriers of valid knowledge (Link, 1983: 60). Discourses are hegemonic when they become the 'historical-organic ideology' (Antonio Gramsci) of ruling actors, who in this way gain consent in society for their particular interests (usually by making concessions and compromises). Of course, this cannot just be manufactured by elites but must have a material basis in society. This process is part of complex struggles and their institutionalization over societal regulation (see below). Let there be no misunderstanding: the Global Governance discourse does not 'lead' the post-Fordist restructuring of politics, but it is well on its way, via scientific and non-scientific contributions in the form of studies, programmatic writings, policy papers, discussions, newspaper articles, lectures, advisory bodies, etc. involving very differing actors, to 'framing' the present developments and to helping to define, among other things, certain developments and the reasons for them as unavoidable and legitimate. In this way other concepts of societal development are pushed aside or rendered 'implausible' in view of the dominant patterns. A certain set of guidelines and practices are legitimized as appropriate – and others are dismissed. This can be seen particularly clearly with regard to the central topic of the Global Governance discourse, the political re-regulation of economic globalization (cf. section 3.2). Foucault calls this the genealogical part of the analysis, which examines the formation of the discourse. Even this article is not an empirical discourse analysis; the recourse to Foucault's concept of discourse allows some insights to the importance of Global Governance in the actual transformation processes.

The profound and dynamic *structural* changes of politics in post-Fordism and especially of international politics to which Global Governance centrally refers and which is our concern here, cannot however be adequately comprehended by a discourse-theoretical analysis of social reality.<sup>2</sup> Even if it is plausible that there is no meaningful reality for actors outside of discourses, relatively 'independent' structures exist which are reproduced through actions and, at the same time, are very difficult to change for the actors. Structures are a theoretical construction, but – without grasping reality in full – they point to 'corridors' for action in the sense of restrictions and opportunities which are beyond non-theoretical discursive practices. The opportunities of certain forms of action to establish themselves are clearly less at certain times, or even non-existent. This historical-materialist concept of structure is, from my perspective, appropriate to the questions discussed here. According to this concept, in bourgeois-capitalist societies

structural principles such as the separation of the political and the economic, wage labor and the private ownership of the means of production take effect which are more deeply anchored than explicit norms. From a historical-materialist point of view it is therefore a question of more than simply intersubjectivity and communicative action because communication about the fundamental structures of bourgeois-capitalist socialization usually does not take place. With this more comprehensive concept of structure, which does not negate the importance of institutions with regard to norm-setting and the structuring of action, one aspect in particular comes into view which is underestimated in many studies on Global Governance: competition in international politics and the economy as a structural principle of bourgeois-capitalist (world) societalization. This competition is made possible and given its dynamism in particular by the existence of fragmented spaces – whether these are organized as nation-states or otherwise. This central fact must be taken into account in the analysis of the dynamism, structures, directions and explanatory patterns of international politics.

The dynamism of the ongoing transformations, namely the changes in international politics, can be understood very well with regulation theory. As do all historical-materialist theories, it proceeds from the ontological assumption that bourgeois-capitalist societies are permeated by contradictions. The concept of (societal) regulation,<sup>3</sup> which gives the theory its name, represents a rupture, however, with other historical-materialist approaches: in contrast to the assumption that the multitude of contradictions and the ensuing crises will drive the capitalist form of society into its 'final crisis'. Another view is taken here: why and how are the contradictions dealt with to give bourgeois-capitalist development its dynamism? How can the crises-driven dynamism of societal processes be stabilized institutionally? And for our purpose here: What is the role of the Global Governance discourse here?

After these introductory and methodological-theoretical remarks, in the next section central contributions and core arguments of the Global Governance discourse are presented. In a further step I sketch out the transformations of international politics and its contradictions in order to show how the discourse and structural transformations articulate with each other. Global Governance will be interpreted as a *possibly* hegemonic discourse of post-Fordist international politics because in its foundation it is compatible with the dominant transformations. Actually, it is not hegemonic. We will see that Global Governance does not counter post-Fordist neoliberal social transformations but has a legitimizing and orienting function. Mainly, it serves as a framework to deal with crises and make their management more effective. The article concludes with a short summary and an outlook towards further research.

## 2. CENTRAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORE ARGUMENTS OF THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE DISCOURSE<sup>4</sup>

At an early stage Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James Rosenau analyzed governance without government (Czempiel and Rosenau, 1992) in international politics and the latter developed the research perspective of a postnational paradigm, which would have to take up a multi-centered perspective in addition to a state-centered one (1995: 18–20). The concept achieved prominence in the last decade in the field of International Relations and International Political Economy to describe how an international system of rules had established itself following a discussion about the end of the US hegemony of the postwar period and to describe the forms and conditions of collective action at the international level. There is an important difference, however, between the largely analytical use of the concept by Rosenau and the normative meaning of Global Governance in many other contributions. The analytical version uses the concept in order to understand the changing political structures and processes, whereas the normative contributions intend to sketch out the possibilities for desirable developments without taking into account systematically the limits (Hummel, 2002: 113).<sup>5</sup>

The central 'discourse element' in the international discussion is the Report of the UN Commission on Global Governance (CGG, 1995) which made the concept known beyond the confines of the scientific debate and at the same time stimulated the scientific discussion. This approach was concretized for example in the actors-centered studies on global public policy networks which are supposed to be constituted by state actors, NGOs, enterprises and international organizations (Reinike, 1998). Their function consists in the effective treatment of problems or in connecting different levels in their role as 'multi-level network managers' (Reinike *et al.*, 2001: 12). UNO Secretary-General Kofi Annan refers explicitly to these approaches in his Global Compact Initiative (for a presentation and critique cf. Paul, 2001). Without using this term explicitly, the Group of Lisbon (1997) with its report 'Limits to Competition' made a major contribution to the discussion on the political re-regulation of the world economy. For the discussion in the German-speaking countries the contributions by Dirk Messner and Franz Nuscheler of the Duisburg Institute for Development and Peace (Duisburger Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden – INEF) are a central point of reference (Messner and Nuscheler, 1996; Hauchler *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, the concept was treated with a high political ranking in the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission 'Globalisation of the World Economy', which consisted of thirteen members of parliament and thirteen scientists (one of whom was female). In 2001 an interim report was presented and the final report followed in 2002 (Enquete Commission, 2001, 2002).

In the discussions on the fringes of political science such as historic-materialist International Political Economy the concept of Global

Governance is being increasingly used (Altvater and Mahnkopf, 1999; Prakash and Hart, 1999). Feminist authors are attempting to affiliate to the concept of Global Governance because it offers the opportunity to break through the 'realist' fixation with the state and the gender-blind conceptualization of international politics this entails (Meyer and Prüggl, 1999; Ruf, 2000: 174ff.; Ruppert, 2000: 50–7; Wichterich, 2000: 274–6). Contributions from a 'southern' perspective remain the exception. In a report for the mentioned Bundestag Enquete Commission Walden Bello (2001), the director of an NGO think-tank in Thailand, outlined a critique of the ruling system of 'global economic governance' and presented 'deglobalisation' and pluralistic Global Governance as an alternative approach. (Bello, 2001: 39ff.) The most detailed discussion of the meaning of the concept in German is to be found in a study financed by the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Brand, Brunnengräber, Schrader, Stock and Wahl, 2000).

What are the 'core elements' which can be distilled from the various contributions to the discourse (in a somewhat different form cf. Brand *et al.*, 2000: ch. 2)? Generally speaking, *first*, it is assumed that many social processes and the problems and policies associated with them are taking place at the international level. This is the meaning of the term globalization, which is, moreover, primarily interpreted in an economic sense.<sup>6</sup> It is argued that this process, which of itself is positive, welfare-increasing and inevitable, produces instability and crises and must therefore be politically and multilaterally corrected, particularly within the framework of the UNO. Instability and crises do exist in the form of growth and currency crises, as political and poverty crises, etc. It is important to note that the contributions to Global Governance do interpret real or potential crises as a consequence of incoherent economic and political processes. It is assumed that instability and crises will reduce when the globalization process is regulated politically. 'To reduce it to the lowest common denominator, "Global Governance" means politically accompanying the process of globalisation' (Enquete Commission, 2002: 415, our translation). Order is to be set against global problems and crises, which can be clearly seen in the German translation of the title of the report of the CGG as 'world order policy'. Global Governance is therefore a discourse on political regulation, which takes changes in the political as its subject and will intervene in them. A double perspective prevails of understanding Global Governance as a process (a) which politically pushes international relations in a desirable direction, namely that of a process of international competition and economic growth which is as crisis-free as possible, and (b) by means of which the 'negative consequences of globalisation' are dealt with. The Group of Lisbon (1997) states most clearly and decidedly that the issue is one of humane competition and contrary to aggressive competition ideology.

*Secondly*, the problems arising are conceived of as 'world problems', a characteristic of which is that they affect all societies and people and

therefore everyone must have an interest in dealing with them effectively. In addition to the substantiation of international politics by common interests the normative issue is that of the emergence of a 'world ethos' or universal rights and of the necessity of new visions for dealing with world problems (Messner and Nuscheler, 1996: 8).

*Thirdly*, the problems should be dealt with cooperatively and in dialogue. Different actors and their interests are prepared to make compromises in the face of serious world problems due to the recognition by the actors of the advantages of cooperation. In general and in individual policy fields, 'win-win situations' are diagnosed. Furthermore, a major role is played by experts, who have a superior awareness of the problems and the competence for dealing with them.

*Fourthly*, the problems cannot be dealt with by the institutional systems of individual nation-states because in the process of globalization the latter have lost their ability to regulate central areas, namely in dealing with the ever more important cross-frontier problems. The contributions to Global Governance now make suggestions as to how this loss of the ability to control should be dealt with: this is to be done by means of international cooperation and the establishment of an adequate international institutional system, whereby the already existing system is regarded as inadequate. Messner and Nuscheler (1996: 5–7) see the necessity and first signs of a 'Global Governance architecture'; in the CGG the establishment of a Committee for Economic Security plays a major role (CGG, 1996: ch. 4).

As a *fifth* aspect, great importance is ascribed to 'civil society', i.e. non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations and private enterprises, in the articulation and treatment of problems; politics is (or should be) no longer the concern only of the state institutional system.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes civil society is reduced to the function of a 'correcting instance' (Messner and Nuscheler, 1996: 4), in other contributions it is seen emphatically in the sense of self-organization and creativity (CGG, 1996: 369).

And *finally* it is established that there is a democracy deficit at the international level. The Group of Lisbon states, 'that procedures of representative democracy are rescinded at the global level. The global system is directed by oligarchical power structures which tend to merge into ever more efficient and better integrated networks which circumvent nation-state governments' (1997: 178, our translation).

### 3. GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AS A POTENTIALLY HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE OF POST-FORDIST POLITICS

In this section the question will be examined of the relationship in which the transformation of the political stands to precisely the increasingly important discourse on Global Governance. Following a brief outline of what I – with a view to the further argumentation – understand by post-Fordist politics, my interest lies subsequently in the question as to how far

central elements of the emerging Global Governance discourse link up to these developments and how far their relationship is one of tension.

### 3.1 Post-Fordist politics and its contradictions

The changes in present-day societies since mid of the 1970s have been analyzed many times. Social relations have been and are being profoundly transformed, in particular the relations between the political and the economic and between the state and society. These are not straightforward processes, but tendencies which are contradictory and contested. Nevertheless, the 1980s in particular can be characterized as more (USA, UK) or less (Germany, France) successful attempts by ruling forces to break up with Fordist compromises – not to speak of the often bloody imposition of neoliberal politics in many peripheral countries. A strengthening of the dominant classes *vis-à-vis* wage earners took place, in which financial capital won hegemony within the power bloc. A harsh critique of the state contributed to the legitimizing of market and private interests in areas which had previously been essentially in public hands. This delegitimized especially welfare services as well as corrective state interventions in the accumulation process.

For the questions dealt with here, four dimensions are crucial and they imply specific contradictions: the transformation of the state and of international politics, and the transformation of democracy and hegemony.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that neoliberal projects were until now a fundamental part of the emerging post-Fordism, i.e. the pushing back of specific state functions, the commodification of social relations and the strengthening of certain social forces, especially internationally oriented fractions of capital. Specific contradictions which are produced by these transformations and the fact that they cannot be 'regulated' adequately creates mid of the 1990s a situation of crisis – in the nation-states and at the international level. In the context of globalization it was not possible to create social coherence through political-institutional innovations. (To speak with regulation theory: to create a mode of regulation.) At the contrary, contradictions and crises are growing. In the following, some central aspects of the transformations of the last 20 years are sketched which are from my perspective crucial to show why there is no coherent mode of regulation.

(a) In the crisis of Fordism, i.e. in the 1970s intensive disputes take place on the technological, economic, sociocultural and political levels over the new direction of society. A central role is played by the internationalization of social processes, which leads to decreasing possibilities for nation-states to intervene against dominant interests (cf. among many others Jessop, 2002).<sup>9</sup> Internationalization means – roughly speaking – a better 'exit option' particularly for dominant actors due to their higher mobility. As a part, and as a result, of these disputes the state transforms itself into a 'national competition state' (Hirsch, 1995, 1997, c.f. also Cerny, 1990). That

which changes are the dominant criteria for political action: the primacy of international competitiveness, economic efficiency and the necessary 'free development of market forces' as well as, and connected with this, *realpolitik* become imperatives of political and social activity. The internationalization of major social processes – as the unintended consequences of a multitude of intentional strategies for the overcoming of the crisis of Fordism – thus reverberate as *Sachzwänge* (inherent necessities) which for their part are disputed as to their specific importance. With Nicos Poulantzas we can speak of the 'interiorising' of international relations in national societies, which takes place in varying ways. In particular the privatization of previously public tasks and the commercialization of politics limit political/state room for maneuver and opportunities of control (Brühl *et al.*, 2001) and create specific contradictions. However, in certain areas such as migration, military or security policy an increase in political regulation can be observed, which supports the thesis that it is not a question in general of a reduction in the regulative competence of nation-state political institutions but of a selective transformation.

(b) In international politics a 'global constitutionalism' dominates (Gill, 2000: 43–5, Scherrer, 2000a: 25ff., similarly Hein, 1999: 47), according to which the central tendency of international politics is the securing of private property through international norm-setting. The international system of institutions is also essentially concerned with securing accumulation and competition processes politically and institutionally by means of highly power-forming struggles. Liberal constitutional concepts are to be established at the international level, which can be seen in institutions such as the WTO and the TRIPS agreement, or in the proposals for an MAI, which temporarily failed in 1998 as a result of international protests and the dissent of southern governments. The dominant patterns of international politics are however highly controversial. The present resurrection of the aggressive unilateralism of the USA and the conflicts within the 'Triad', as well as the increasing criticism by some southern governments and civil society actors, are an indication of considerable conflicts. This is the basis for the majority of the hopes of strengthening concepts of Global Governance in the sense of cooperative, multilateral politics (Cox, 1997: 103; Nuscheler, 2000: 152ff.).

(c) The concepts and practices of democracy are changing profoundly. Liberal democracy – which was always confined to the political sphere – has developed with capitalism and the modern nation-state and was characterized in the postwar period at least in the metropolitan countries by the securing of the rights of the individual and the welfare state. Although democratic structures and procedures have always broken on the structural capitalist-patriarchal power relations, even the former are being undermined in the current transformations. Altogether, a formal understanding of democracy is dominant, which is largely equated with the

existing system of institutions and which, in addition, is functionalistically reduced to the solution of problems in a way which is as effective and legitimate as possible. 'In the final instance democratic procedures threaten to degenerate to processes of discussion and consultation without consequence, which are only intended to create ex post public legitimacy for decision-making processes which have been declared to be simply the execution of "inherent necessities"' (Görg and Hirsch, 1998: 232). It reduces the democracy of the competition state to the question as to how far it contributes to the creation of international competitiveness.

(d) 'Politics' is not exhausted in certain techniques of state actors in the narrow sense, but is made possible in the first place by societal relations and their hegemonic status. Antonio Gramsci (1992: 783) expressed this in the concept of hegemony and therefore characterized the spaces of the disputes as civil society. I.e. that neoliberal projects were until now decisive for the emerging post-Fordism and that they were pursued by media, foundations, business associations, etc. Moreover, neoliberal discourses have penetrated deeply into 'everyday consciousness' (Gramsci, 1994: 1334) and are part of 'self-technologies' (Foucault, 1984: 36). Ian Douglas voices the argument in his interpretation of the Report of the Commission on Global Governance that with a broad concept of power in the sense of control over life and over subjects 'globalisation actually *extends*, rather than fragments, state-ordered power' (Douglas, 1999: 153). Whereas specific state functions as welfare decrease disciplinary functions gain importance and are confirmed by the subjects.

The four dimensions of post-Fordist politics in the course of the broader societal transformations create specific contradictions. This is important because from a regulation theory perspective we are interested in the form in which these contradictions may possibly be dealt with, i.e. in which the mode of regulation emerges. A central consequence of the dissolution of Fordist compromises is that specific possibilities for nation-state institutions are weakened (and not state power in general), namely those policies directed towards relative social compensations, which allowed a certain social cohesion also in a material sense. Furthermore, the contradictions between financial and other capital, between dominant and subordinate classes and the relationship between politics and the economy are inherent to the 'national competition state'. International politics is characterized by the paradox between competition and cooperation and, as it was argued before, yet there are no institutional patterns with which these contradictions could be stabilized institutionally. This is also the case for North-South relations and 'inter-Triad' competition which increasingly generates crises and criticism. The transforming forms of embeddedness remain controversial and precarious, particularly at the international level, which is particularly clear in the struggle over the establishment of an international political system of institutions. The transformation of democracy creates

not only contradictions between claims to effectiveness and legitimacy, but also between proclaimed rights and reality. The idea that democracy means more than a further resource in locational competition, namely the attempt to equalize unequal living conditions and to limit power and domination, continues to exist. It is precisely this fact which is taken up by the so-called anti-globalization movements (cf. Brand, 2003).

Finally, it should not be forgotten that even post-Fordist politics is based on relationships of compulsion and coercion. Where fundamental criticism of existing relationships succeeds in being clearly articulated or dominant interests are unable to assert themselves, there is a partial resounding to open violence. In addition, processes of 'primitive accumulation' continue to exist in the form of robbery, confiscation and open violence (for example via the patenting of 'traditional' knowledge). The New World Order is not a more or less successful cooperation but also and increasingly one of military force, as became particularly clear following September 11.

The fact that there is not a more or less coherent mode of regulation which could stabilize the contradictions and make sure a dynamic socio-economic growth led in the 1990s to crises and protest. Global Governance, as I stated at the beginning, becomes important at the moment when the contradictions of neoliberal globalization become obvious and are politicized in the form of crises and criticism. Global Governance is thus a part of the search process of the complex treatment of the contradictions in institutions and references.

### **3.2 Global Governance as part of a search process and crisis management**

In the following it will now be examined how far central elements of the Global Governance discourse link up to these changes and strengthen them, i.e. provide a 'framework' for the dominant trends and thus attempt to provide them with legitimacy. The following aspects refer to the above outlined 'core elements' of the discourse.

*3.2.1 'Globalisation' and the relationship between politics and economy.* The dominant concept of globalization defines the essence of the process, which is conceived to be economic, as unavoidable (cf. Röttger, 2001: 147–51, and from a feminist point of view Runyan, 1999: 213ff.). This is made possible by the contrasting of politics and the economy. The economic is conceived as the core process of globalization and precisely because of this as being in its core not object of political regulation. It is intended to promote a specific understanding of the political, i.e. to frame the globalization process, to avoid or smooth crises. The Global Governance discourse with its orientation towards the political secures the 'post-Fordist' frontier between politics and the economy. After the harsh state critique in the

1970s and 1980s, today we can observe an upgrading of the state, this time not so much as a welfare state but in its 'efficient' form (World Bank, 1997). This dominant understanding is promoted above all by political and scientific approaches which see the state as the embodiment of the general interest of society and as a neutral player. Its role should be to contain the negative consequences of a basically unassailable ('economic') globalization. The economy is the place of legitimate competition, politics that of cooperation. The iridescent concept presently in the debate of the state's ability to regulate, or of the regaining of this ability, is based on this. Outside of the discourse however the creation of competitiveness is becoming the guideline for political activity. The transformation of the state to the national competition state, global liberal constitutionalism, the neoimperialist world order and the fundamental power-forming of politics are kept out of the discourse terrain created by Global Governance.<sup>10</sup> Of course, concepts of efficiency and effectiveness confirm and strengthen relationships of power because 'efficiency' itself is a hegemonic construction which is defined essentially by the ruling actors (cf. Baxi, 1996: 533), which has been internalized by many actors as neoliberal governmentality and which above all serves to justify competitive state politics.<sup>11</sup>

3.2.2 *'World problems' and 'global challenges'*. The globalization, according to the dominant assumption of the Global Governance discourse, creates and sharpens 'world problems' such as economic instability, poverty, wars, environmental destruction, migration, etc. These problems are diagnosed, they *exist* and they should be solved efficiently.<sup>12</sup> In the Global Governance discourse it is not a question of the causes, of divergent interests or the question for whom which problems are actually important (the CGG, 1996 came nearest to this). This means that the priorities of the problems (which are relevant for the 'North') and their treatment (cooperatively) are given, priorities which are connected with the power to interpret. The supposed evidence of the world problems entails the danger that the political controversies over the hegemonic definition of problems will be underestimated. Secondly, there is a threat of a functionalist understanding of international politics as existing *in order to* be able to deal with problems. From this perspective, politics take place when world problems exist and need to be addressed. But with this, one strong tendency of post-Fordist restructuring is left out: the dominant tendency of 'global constitutionalism' to make sure property rights at the international level is no problem that affects all people in the same way but serves dominant interests against weaker ones. Here too, the Global Governance discourse on problem-solving and order-creating political regulation is detached only at first glance from the competition discourse. As already stated, 'successful' politics is judged today on the creation of competitiveness and on the improvement of the conditions of dominant economic activities and the utilization of capital.

This creates a connection between the solution of problems and the orientation towards competition: world problems such as poverty, climatic change, the erosion of biological diversity and distributional or gender-specific problems, and the 'efficient' treatment of them, are interpreted by means of these 'hard' criteria. In this way, a particular way of thinking about reality and (not) acting in that reality is structured.

Finally, the assumption that objective problems and pressure to solve them obviously exist implies that 'neutral' knowledge about complex subject-matters and their treatment are of central importance. This applies not only to the content but also to the form of knowledge. Experts (politicians, scientists, usually male and from the First World) are those who know where the problems lie and how to solve them. Other forms of knowledge and propositions are thus systematically devalued. Viewpoints which contradict the experts are dismissed as 'ideological' and particularist. Global Governance is a discourse among experts which grants privilege to a certain type of western, supercilious knowledge.

3.2.3 *Realpolitik*. Post-Fordist politics implies more, however, than the creation of competitiveness and its global-constitutionalist safeguarding. The dominant classical-bourgeois understanding of politics is maintained or even re-established (following the criticism of the new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s): 'politics' is primarily the concern of the state and the parties; 'civil society' should be guided by this. The liberal concept of civil society which dominates here is that of the place in society where critical and progressive actors meet. A growing awareness of problems by people and the increasing self-organization of civil society are observed. The CGG even speaks of a global associational revolution which is considered to be an expression of the growing ability of people to control their lives (for a criticism of this: Stienstra, 1999: 260 ff.). There is a danger of the fact being ignored that in civil society not only critical and progressive actors act but that this takes place under post-Fordist neoliberal conditions. And even civil society politics is increasingly conducted and justified in the name of *realpolitik*. Many organizations accept the conditions of the 'national competition state' and are trying to intervene in a way to correct them (cf. Brand *et al.*, 2001). The adaptation of the political concepts of parties and associations to *realpolitik* as well as their technocratic concepts of politics require a correspondingly stronger staging of politics. Concrete subject-matter – in particular intervention in economic processes which do not correspond to the dominant interests – is pushed back in comparison to its symbolic attribution of importance in a large number of spheres. Against a background of *realpolitik* imaginary round tables become the only plausible mode of politics. Unequal capacities to articulate or to establish one's interests, and the immense power of private enterprises, remain underexposed (for a criticism see Runyan, 1999: 212ff.; Scherrer, 2000b: 51).

Although the Global Governance discourse declares a considerable need for reforms, it strengthens a quite considerable trust in the existing system of institutions and privileges cooperative concepts of politics as the only legitimate ones. Different interests are regarded as basically concealable, conflicts play a secondary role.

Timothy Sinclair (2003: 9) calls this a *management vision of global governance*. 'It has become the term of choice because it avoids the unequivocally political connotations of "government", and the even worse implications of other labels such as power and authority. It provides a non-emotive language in which major issues of societal rule can be deliberated by experts and officials without making explicit what is implicit in the idea of global governance. Global governance is safe, balanced and neutral.'

3.2.4 *Utopia and Democracy*. There appears at first glance to be a certain tension between the facts outlined above and the 'utopian' aspects of the Global Governance discourse or the development of a 'new vision' (CGG, 1996). Ideas and initiatives are without doubt necessary and meaningful in all spheres of society; intellectuals play an important role here. It is important, however, *what* we understand by 'utopia'. After all, its necessity is diagnosed against the background of the unavoidability outlined above of central societal tendencies. Correspondingly, *realpolitik* approaches, leadership and the major role of experts dominate. With Theodor W. Adorno we could also thus name the dominant perspective a 'technocratic utopia'. It is well-known that Karl Popper called the appropriate form of politics for social change 'piecemeal technology' by 'social engineers'. The dramatic description of the situation – which prevails in most Global Governance contributions – is answered by very moderate political ideas, which is due to the fact that the constitution of the problems is paid scarcely any attention. The postulated comprehensive claim to profound changes exists alongside the broad acceptance of social relations as they are. Political ideas therefore often correspond to a rather naïve wishful thinking. This was expressed emphatically in one US American debate: 'We need enlightened leaders, but enlightened leaders need you' (Boston Research Center, 1995: 175; similarly CGG, 1996: 388). In addition to the rather limited area of political regulation, it is not only concrete-utopian ideas but concepts of order that stand at the center of Global Governance: the issue is one of maintaining or creating order within the existing *real* relationships which are threatened by crisis or even 'chaos'.

Even the 'democratic question' is not formulated particularly clearly in the Global Governance discourse (see also Ruppert, 2000: 50ff.). It partly appears to have been largely solved in any case, in that the capitalist metropolis have attained the model character as being 'very democratic' (Boston Research Center, 1995: 20). This pertains to the dominant present concepts of democracy and in particular strengthens the functionalist

concept of participation in which this is closely guided by efficiency criteria (Messner and Nuscheler, 1996: 6). Complementary to the justification based on *realpolitik* and efficiency, in other areas in which these do not apply a strong moralization takes place. The neoliberal 'common sense' essentially secures post-Fordist restructuring and resists the emphatic insistence that 'the citizens' of today are more independent than ever before. Many actors who regard themselves as critical point with a moral gesture to the necessary very Other, knowing that '(state) politics' is hardly suited as an addressee. Nevertheless, in future this will be one of the most important points of attraction of Global Governance. Similarly to the concept of sustainable development, it will become a positive point of reference for many actors that propositions which go beyond Today are regarded as necessary at all. One of the greatest tensions is that between far-reaching demands and propositions which can hardly be described as trailblazing (Baxi, 1996: 528).

3.2.5 *The general interest of (world) society.* Finally, behind the dominant Global Governance discourse is the understanding that the issue at stake is one of the general interest of (world) society. That this general interest is always a societal construction as the result of social conflicts and the formation of compromises, will hardly be disputed. At the same time in most of the contributions on Global Governance this fact that this is constructed is not scrutinized further. There are three ways in which this is related to dominant perspectives: the state can in this way become the embodiment of precisely this general interest, which provides the reason for the necessity of the ability of the state to exercise control. The question as to the concrete processes and the subject-matter of state politics can safely be put aside because as the expression of the general interest it *a priori* does not need a reason. Secondly, societal conflicts can be represented here as basically reconcilable or – politically more pointed – certain political self-images and strategies can be delegitimized. And finally, a general interest of 'world society' is formulated largely from the perspective of the 'OECD world', which not only knows where the problems lie but also has available the means to deal with them (explicitly the Group of Lisbon, 1997: 27).

A remarkable tension arises here: 'world society's' general interest in political cooperation is not at all seen as being in conflict with 'national interests', which are in part quite different from the former. In national societies it has become the general interest to be competitive as a location *vis-à-vis* other societies. From my perspective this paradox between cooperation and competition is solved in the following way: the above described essentializing and inviolability of the economic will make it possible to regard political cooperation as the 'solution to world problems' as *not* being in open contradiction to the competition among locations, capital and labor, and the safeguarding of them by the competition state and by global

constitutionalism. A general interest in cooperative solutions to obvious problems with which everybody is faced to the same extent is formulated in which capitalist competition is no longer seen as a problem but exists as something more or less natural. Precisely due to this ignoring of various aspects is it possible to organize certain consensuses in post-Fordism. This is not at all new: the various forces in society always struggle for the generalization of their specific interests. What has changed, however, is the concrete historical forms in which this takes place. The actors themselves are more or less aware – usually much more strongly than the social sciences which reflect upon them – that they cannot establish their interests completely but must be prepared to make compromises. Such a discursive terrain of compromises is now provided by Global Governance. Of course, it remains contested what exactly international politics and its implications for other spacio-political levels does mean. However, some ‘truths’ seem to be unquestionable: that globalization is untouchable in its (economic) core which means the fundamental shift of power relations, a concept of politics which refers to cooperation and *realpolitik*. With this, world problems which seem to affect all people can be resolved. The discourse is so attractive because it contributes to the generalization of dominant interests.

The promoters of the dominant Global Governance discourse are intellectuals in the sense that with their orientation towards consensus and general interests they contribute to the formulation of ‘post-Fordist’ social compromises. That, too, is not so very new: the subordinate forces are sworn to the general welfare and this is achieved today by the creation of competitiveness and *realpolitik*. Particular interests and relationships of power threaten to disappear behind this. Of central importance to these intellectuals are the assumptions contained in what Robert Cox called a problem solving theory as opposed to a critical theory (Cox, 1986: 208). The imperative of thinking and of proposals is their political ‘usefulness’, in practice usually for state actors and justified as a contribution to general welfare. The effectiveness of intellectuals can also be seen in the fact that they largely succeed in delegitimizing practical and theoretical critique of the existing power relations (e.g. Nuscheler, 2000). It is a paradox here that the ‘neoliberal’ intellectuals and their think-tanks are very much aware of the conflicts contained in the present changes, i.e. of the necessity of a ‘class struggle from above’ (cf. Plehwe and Walpen, 1998; van der Pijl, 1998: ch. 4). The promoters of Global Governance are interested in integration and consensus, which they themselves help to formulate, without questioning the kernel of the present transformations.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. SUMMARY AND PROSPECTS

In this contribution it was intended to show how the dominant discourse on Global Governance condensates a conception of the international political

and thus could provide a 'framework' for it. It is not at all *per se* in contradiction to the dominant forms of politics and could certainly become a hegemonic discourse. Even if questions of hegemony are largely ignored or allowed to disappear in the concept of a 'general interest', the Global Governance discourse is in fact a part of the disputes over hegemony, the latter understood as a contradictory process in which – embedded in material conditions – specific viewpoints and interests are generalized. Global Governance attracts more attention in the context of the recent crises and growing criticism of the dominant transformations. With my argument it is obvious why Global Governance is so attractive. The ideas connected with it largely accept the changes which have taken place since the crisis of Fordism, these are accelerated and plausible 'answers' are offered for the ensuing 'problems'. By doing so they contribute, however, to a 'sustainable' capitalist globalization – in the sense of a non-questioning of neoliberal forces in emerging post-Fordism and with regard to the emergence of terrains of compromise – instead of formulating an alternative.

At the same time an abundance of questions arises which requires further investigation. First, the processes of the 'production of the discourse' would be worth more precise research. Which actors define specific interpretations of the problems and which win the upper hand? Which propositions on institutional changes, for example, are taken up, and which ones are not? What forces, factors and constellations produce new forms of political regulation or Global Governance, how do they function and what effects do they show (cf. Brand and Scherrer, 2002: 80)?

Moreover, it would require more work to investigate the concrete modes of the hegemonic process. One criterion for the hegemonic character of Global Governance, at least in Europe, lies in whether economic and political élites in the countries of the EU will succeed in defining their interests as general interests and in using this concept to formulate general ideas on the order and development of society, but at the same time, more investigation on the complex and simultaneous forms of dominance, supremacy and hegemony. For example, it is crucial for international politics if we live under conditions of a 'fragmented hegemony' world wide, i.e. that in the metropolis we can observe hegemonic social relations but in the North–South relations not (Brand, 2004).

The social scientific methods should also be examined more precisely. Because the prominence of the term Global Governance – as that of globalization – is not necessarily combined with its analytical precision and in many questions there are considerable differences among different theoretical approaches which are not connected with inexactness in the definitions, the varying socio-theoretical and sociopolitical assumptions must be made explicit (see also Grande and Risse, 2000: 245). After all, the question of the current transformation processes and the role of political regulation is not only an empirical question but always also a theoretical one.

Finally, one important question remains, namely whether Global Governance opens up opportunities for a new, higher evaluation of societal processes (cf. e.g. Ruppert, 2000: 56). This cannot be decided abstractly. As a counterpoint to US unilateralism it is certainly possible and currently urgently necessary.<sup>14</sup> And at the fringes, too, more critical positions can emerge, as the feminist debate for example has shown. How far Global Governance will become a hegemonic discourse depends not only on the struggles over interpretation but is also a question of international and inner-societal conflicts over institutional developments, material concessions, etc. If the considerations outlined here can contribute to the focusing of the understanding of Global Governance as a discourse and of its relationship to the structural dynamisms and if they generate new questions for research, much will have been gained.

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### NOTES

- 1 The concepts 'Fordism' and Post-Fordism' refer on an abstract level to different phases of bourgeois-capitalist societalization. In the following, they are used in a heuristic way to indicate from a regulationist perspective the contradictory and on a more concret level diverse transformation of capitalism towards a new phase.
- 2 Foucault pointed out the relationship between discursive and non-discursive practices, which do not form a dichotomy but which presuppose each other (1973: 224ff.) He names the economy as a central area of non-discursive practice which nevertheless structures societies. He did have problems, however, with grasping the relationship between discourse (speaking/spoken), non-discursive practices (activities) and products/objects (cf. Jäger, 2001: 87–96).
- 3 This distinction is based on regulation theory. For the German term *Regulierung*, I use *political regulation*, and *Regulation* is translated as *societal regulation*.
- 4 I am aware of the weakness that there is no clear criterion for ascribing contributions to the Global Governance discourse. This would be the task of a systematic discourse analysis. Here, the classification is done according to the system of Marianne Beisheim and Achim Brunnengräber in the interim and final reports of the Enquete Commission (2002: 453 ff.)
- 5 Achim Brunnengräber and Christian Stock (1999: 446) divide the contributions on Global Governance into empirical-analytical, emphatic and political-strategic variations. I do not use this, however, in view of the question dealt with in this contribution.
- 6 'Globalisation' is a much broader concept and, of course, its content is contested. But most contributions to Global Governance refer to the international level. An important exception is James Rosenau.

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- 7 In the debate on the development of a global civil society the term 'humane governance' is used (Falk, 1995) or as part of the global public in the horizon of a 'cosmopolitan democracy' (Held, 1996). The term Global Governance which is oriented to public regulation has until now found little resonance in the debates on global civil society. It is to be expected, however, that its importance will increase due to the greater attention paid to non-state actors and civil societal processes at an international level.
- 8 The structural transformations of the economy are not dealt with because Global Governance is a discourse of the political.
- 9 A further theoretical elaboration would show that the changing capacity of state intervention is part of transforming social power relations.
- 10 In addition, a further aspect is ignored which will not be examined in more detail here: the societal, and in particular technological 'transformation core' (Becker/Wehling, 1993) are today largely removed from the public-political access. Not the development of the financial markets or genetic technology, to name two current examples, are the subject of political controversy, but only the treatment of their consequences.
- 11 Neoliberals call this 'market-conforming' politics and for the justification of politics say: 'Global governance should only be extended where market failure exists.' (Diehl, 2000).
- 12 Of course, the existence of a multitude of problems on the material level cannot be denied. Their social construction as a specific problem is greatly underestimated, however.
- 13 The criteria for such a questioning would be counter neoliberal forces and decisive orientations as well as the connected institutional practices, such as privatization, for example. By 'neoliberal forces' I do not mean only the hardliners, but also those conservative and social-democratic forces which do not question the essentials of the neoliberal project (cf. Brand *et al.*, 2000: 57ff.)
- 14 There is another variation which appears to be even less capable of achieving hegemony, the propagators of which are nevertheless among the sharpest critics of Global Governance. These are the supporters of a world government, who in the Kantian tradition call themselves 'world federalists' (Harris/Yunker, 1999). They claim that the suggestions of the UN Commission on Global Governance are completely inadequate because they do not tackle the main problem of international politics: the existence of national sovereignty. The fixation on the toothless UNO is also criticized. There is already a very concrete practical suggestion for putting their ideas into practice, namely the 'Federation of Earth' (Harris/Yunker, 1999: 183ff.), which should replace the UNO. Such a world government, a 'constitutionally authorized legislation with criminal and civil law enforcement' (Harris, 1999: 166) would be 'genuine Global Governance' because it would really be capable of enforcing decisions. This position suffers however from the fact that it is characterized by a rather unreal picture of state sovereignty, in that it regards this as given to a large degree. The protagonists of a world federation criticize the UNO for its ineffectiveness but do not utter a single word about the aggressive military foreign policy and the unilateralism of the USA.

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