8

global governance as a summative phenomenon

w. andy knight

Global order is conceived...[as] a single set of arrangements even though these are not causally linked into a single coherent array of patterns. The organic whole that comprises the present or future global order is organic only in the sense that its diverse actors are all claimants upon the same earthbound resources and all of them must cope with the same environmental conditions, noxious and polluted as these may be.1

Introduction

The post-Cold War period, marked by the intensification of globalization and a new world disorder, has triggered an intense and growing interest in governance at all levels. The interest in what can be called ‘summative global governance’ is held by scholars and practitioners, by state and non-state actors, by public and private institutions and by licit and even illicit groups. This chapter is concerned with global governance as a summative phenomenon and the extent to which globalizing dynamics are forcing us to reconceptualize the governance of the globe.

I argue here that this holistic conceptualization of global governance is in part linked to the recognition that international governance institutions are no longer adequate to address contemporary transnational issues and problems and that ‘summative’ global governance (the sum total of all governance processes and institutions...
that seek to address transnational issues affecting our planet) repre­
sents, in effect, a definite shift in paradigm – from ‘international’ to
‘global’ politics – and an evolution in multilateralism, as top-down
and bottom-up multilateral activities and institutions intersect. In
the absence of world government, the patchwork concoction that we
call ‘global governance’ may in fact be our best hope for bringing
stability, equity, justice and sustainability to our present new world
disorder.

The chapter is divided along the following lines. It first examines
the characteristics of the new world disorder and the effects this
environment of turbulence, flux, fragmentation, disequilibrium and
uncertainty is having on established forms of governance. Since this
is only one part of the puzzle, the next section highlights the integra­
tive and fragmentary forces that stem from complex interdependence
and the intensification of globalization and argues that these forces
challenge traditional notions of multilateralism and the Westphalian
form of governance at the international level. Those challenges have
raised the prospects for the establishment other forms of governance
to deal with transnational issues and problems. The next section
describes the evolution of the concept and practice of global govern­
ance, distinguishing it from international governance by suggesting
that in the case of the former there is a decreased salience of states
and increased salience of non-state actors in the processes of norm-
building, rule-setting and compliance-monitoring that occur at the
global level. It also shows that global governance can operate at many
levels – local/sub-national, national, regional, trans-regional and
global. What follows is a discussion of the contemporary interest in
global governance as a summative phenomenon. That interest stems
from various scholarly attempts to align the re-conceptualization of
governance with what is actually happening on the ground. Clearly,
global governance has not replaced international governance. Rather,
both forms of governance currently operate alongside each other, at
times complementing one another but at other times clashing with
each other. Finally, the conclusion sums up the chapter and explains
that the patchwork of what we call ‘summative global governance’
is actually a response to globalizing dynamics which has resulted
in a messy entanglement of state-centric and multi-centric institu­
tions and processes at multiple levels, both formal and informal, top-
down and bottom-up, which strive to address the transnational issues
arising from the new world disorder.