

1 Introduction: In Search of Global Democracy

It is widely recognized that international bodies and organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the G20 currently suffer severe democratic deficits (Nye 2001; Zürn 2018). They often fail to operate transparently and accountably, can be impervious to public criticism, and privilege some interests (e.g., in economic growth) over the broader range of values held by people across the world. Moreover, these undemocratic global institutions have often performed poorly in solving key transnational problems. For example, the last demonstrably effective multilateral global environmental agreement remains the 1987 Montreal Protocol for the protection of stratospheric ozone (some progress on climate change in the 2015 Paris Agreement notwithstanding). We intend to show that a deliberative approach to global governance can advance both democratic legitimacy and effective problem-solving.

1.1 Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy reconceptualizes governance as effective, inclusive, and transformative communication encompassing citizens and policymakers. The basic idea, applicable globally no less than at other levels of governance, is that the legitimacy of any collective decision rests on the right, capacity, and opportunity of those subject to or affected by that decision (or their representatives) to participate in deliberation that is consequential for the content of the decision. Deliberation is noncoercive, reflective communication about matters of common concern, in which people try to communicate in terms that make sense to those with different starting points or frameworks. Thus, it entails giving reasons, respect for others, effective listening, and openness to change in positions if persuaded. Participants grant equal and adequate opportunities to one another (e.g., to offer reasons in support of and against various proposals) and they assume certain responsibilities (e.g., to listen actively and to make a sincere effort to understand others' perspectives).

Deliberative democracy is now well established in political theory, empirical social science, and institutional practice and experimentation, though the real world of governance generally falls far short of deliberative ideals. Deliberative democrats have their eyes on whole systems of governance – not just isolated institutional experiments. Unlike more familiar conceptions of democracy, deliberative democracy can apply to contexts where elections are unavailable – such as global governance – though if elections are available, deliberation can fruitfully coexist with them.

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We will argue that deliberative global governance can empower the global community to make more legitimate and effective decisions to the benefit of present and future generations. A deliberative approach offers a way out of current impasses in global governance and a vision for its future. This approach can draw on the wisdom of communities directly affected by climate change, violent conflict, extreme poverty, and other global problems to develop solutions that will best serve humanity's needs and interests. We base our claims and proposals not just on reasoning about what is possible but also on evidence from existing deliberative practice. We are well aware of relevant limitations on the respective capacities of citizens, political leaders, and political systems but at the same time believe that capacities can be developed. We draw on our own research and scholarship and that of others, integrating and extending them into a statement of what deliberative global governance can and should entail.

1.2 Why Deliberative Democracy Applies to the Global Level

Some existing proposals for global democracy, especially those involving an elected UN Parliamentary Assembly (Falk and Strauss 2011), think of democratic aspirations in terms of a people (or demos) with a shared political identity coupled with a robust set of authoritative institutions of the sort found in liberal democratic states. Critics of global democracy dismiss such proposals as utopian and out of step with the realities of international relations (for example, Keohane 2015).

But global democratization does not have to follow the democratic institutions found in nation-states (Kuypers and Dryzek 2016). Moreover, proposals for global democracy modeled on national templates often misread history. In many countries, a shared national identity emerged only *after* state institutions took shape, and key democratic mechanisms such as curbs on arbitrary state power often came well before elections (Goodin 2010). Any realizable vision for global democratization needs to take as its starting point important circumstances and constraints that are likely to operate for the foreseeable future, including the absence of a centralized world government and far greater cultural and institutional heterogeneity than exists within any one state.

A deliberative approach enables creativity in thinking about how to reduce the global democratic deficit in feasible ways, which do not require a unitary global demos or a global state, let alone global elections. Instead of a global demos, it is possible to think in terms of diverse global publics, already found around areas of common concern, from climate change to international trade to human rights. In the absence of recourse to centralized means of exercising legitimate coercive force, other ways of coordinating global action prove

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crucial, including persuasion and deliberation. Rather than resting hopes on a global parliament or the like, legitimate representation can be conceptualized in broader terms, such as ensuring that the range of discourses to which people subscribe – including those embodying values such as concern for the vulnerable and respect for nature – is reflected in global decision-making bodies.

Any reconfiguration of global governance ought to be acceptable to different peoples around the world. This is especially true for a specifically democratic mode, which must respect the autonomy and equality of different people and peoples, and cannot be foisted upon them. Deliberation meets this standard because, although manifested differently across time and space, it is a cultural universal. All societies feature a disposition for people to exchange reasons and arguments, listen to one another, and take decisions on that basis. Amartya Sen (2003) points out that while democracy as voting is a Western ideal, democracy as public reasoning, or deliberation, can be found in all societies. Different cultures will embody and formalize deliberation in a variety of ways: Some may promote consensual agreement while others will honor contestation; some will require particular rituals as necessary; norms vary concerning who can say what. Sass and Dryzek (2014: 3) describe how, in myriad cultures, deliberation occurs such that “publicly accessible meanings, symbols, and norms shape the way political actors engage one another in discourse.”

All the world’s major religions endorse an ethic of reciprocity – treat others as you would like them to treat you (Neusner and Chilton 2009) – as do many moral codes. Experiments in many countries confirm that people will seek such reciprocity even at personal material cost (Henrich et al. 2004: 8). Translating this into *deliberative* reciprocity, which requires an effort to both reach and understand differently situated others, is often challenging, and in practice conflicts, hierarchies, and oppressive discourses intervene. Still, reciprocity norms are available as resources for promoting mutual justification in many religious, moral, and cultural traditions.

Because deliberation occurs even in states where the reach of constitutions is weak, it suits the global arena, which lacks an overarching constitutional framework. Deliberative global governance recognizes the vast range of communicative possibilities from different cultural contexts and seeks to incorporate those forms in transnational dialogue.

1.3 Preview

We intend to show that global democracy requires a meaningful and inclusive deliberative system that effectively links publics, discourses, representatives, and institutions.

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We begin by elucidating the basic justification for deliberative global governance. At its heart, as we asserted at the outset, deliberative democracy offers an account of legitimate governance – we show how deliberative legitimacy can be applied globally. Deliberation also enables accountability in settings where the familiar mechanism of accountability via electoral judgment on the performance of leaders is unavailable. We argue further that public deliberation can generate effective solutions for collective problems. After elaborating how deliberative legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness can work in practice in global politics, we demonstrate that deliberative democracy can make sense of – and if necessary confront – different sorts of power.

The deliberative approach can be applied to reform of existing global institutions and practices as well as the design of new ones. For existing institutions, we show how more inclusive and authentic deliberation can be sought in multilateral negotiations, international organizations and regimes, global constitutionalism and its pluralistic alternative, transnational governance networks, and scientific assessments. These kinds of improvements can pave the way for more thoroughgoing deliberative and democratic reconfiguration. For this larger change, we set out principles for a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly (DGCA), which could function in different ways, including as a second chamber for the UN General Assembly), nested deliberative forums in layers from the local to the global, transnational citizens' juries and related "mini-publics," deliberative crowdsourcing, and a global dissent channel. We demonstrate how such innovations are both financially affordable and feasible. Aside from formal institutions, deliberative governance needs healthy transnational public spheres and effective representation from global civil society, based in turn on effective engagement across different discourses (including reformist and radical discourses).

We show how these various practices and innovations can be integrated in global deliberative systems that join top-down and bottom-up governance (making sense of what is sometimes called "hybrid multilateralism"). Deliberative systems encompass stakeholders, civil society, expert communities, state representatives and policymakers, linking decision-making bodies with larger processes in the public sphere. It is each system as a whole that should yield authentic, inclusive, and effective deliberation – not just its components. The deliberative system idea can redeem the promise of "polycentric" governance and ensure that the variety of polycentric initiatives adds up to an effective response to a shared problem.

Institutional design can and should itself be deliberative and participatory, so deliberative global governance is both a framework and a process of reconstructive learning. Once established, deliberative institutions should reveal

a reflexive capacity to revise their structures and processes upon reflection on their own performance, avoiding the inability to reform themselves that many international organizations currently suffer.

We explain how deliberative global governance can respond effectively to key global problems, notably climate change, armed conflict, and poverty. We indicate how a deliberative systems conceptualization of global climate governance offers a framework for more effective and ambitious action. We point to the strong affinities between deliberative governance and effective peacebuilding both within and across national boundaries. Finally, we describe how global poverty can be confronted through a deliberative approach to global justice involving direct participation by the poor – not just those (such as NGOs) who claim to speak on their behalf.

2 Why Deliberative Global Governance?

There are three key reasons to prioritize deliberative global governance: the legitimacy it can afford to collective decisions, the accountability it can enable, and its potential effectiveness in solving pressing problems. These reasons prove mutually reinforcing. We now show how legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness can be achieved in practice, and how to confront and cope with questions of power that stand in the way of deliberative governance.

2.1 Legitimacy

Legitimacy means that those who make rules or decisions do so in justified ways. Scholars commonly differentiate “normative” and “sociological” legitimacy. Normative legitimacy entails theorists and practitioners determining *ex ante* good standards with which rule-makers must comply. Standards might involve due process, respect for rights, or consent of the governed. For deliberative democracy, the standards include: due process (searching out policies that are acceptable to all affected or subjected); rights of free expression and to justification from authority-holders (see our discussion of accountability in Section 2.2); and consent to authority through public deliberation. It is through deliberation that people can have their say about policies affecting their welfare.

In sociological terms, government is legitimate insofar as those subjected to and affected by public decisions *believe* it is rightful. However, from a deliberative perspective, it is not enough for the “global governors” who make and implement rules (Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2010: 1–31) to take account of public opinion. Public opinion can rest on misunderstandings and unreflective assumptions. Deliberation puts these ideas to the test insofar as participants explain and justify relevant beliefs, preferences, and positions to each other. It is

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the result of this engagement that ought to be reflected in legitimate collective decisions. In an experimental design, Esaiasson, Gilljam, and Persson (2017) find that affected individuals are more likely to accept decisions when decision-makers clearly listen and explain, rather than just follow majority opinion. Birnbaum, Bodin, and Sandström (2015) find that in a natural resource management case, the deliberative qualities of the process mattered more for perceived legitimacy than more general democratic qualities.

On the face of it, advances in communications technology mean that exposure to different perspectives is stronger now than ever (though nearly half of the world's population still lacks Internet access; Internet World Stats 2018). However, all is not well in deliberative terms, as people often encase themselves in social media “echo chambers” where they share ideas only with like-minded others and avoid challenge from different viewpoints. Exposure to different ideas can be sought online (Coleman and Moss 2012), but more organized face-to-face settings (of the sort we outline in Section 4) provide opportunities for encountering diverse others in more deliberative fashion.

Sociological legitimacy (as well as normative legitimacy) does of course require that the results of such deliberative engagements somehow be transmitted to empowered institutions or processes. Along these lines, the United Nations has experimented with a range of participatory approaches such as the surveys, electronic forums, workshops, civil society dialogues, and crowdsourcing (of highly variable deliberative quality) that fed into the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (see Section 4.4).

For deliberative democrats, normative legitimacy does not mean that all ideas generated in public dialogue are equally worthy of consideration. Public deliberation can sort good arguments and considerations from bad ones. However, it is not appropriate to adopt a simple measure of “true” and “false” when determining which ideas are worthy. On most important issues there will be competing knowledge claims. The challenge for deliberative democracy is to maintain genuine respect for diversity without succumbing to an unhelpful relativism.

In practice, public deliberation will implicate elements of judgment, as well as objective truth and falsity. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAID's) joint consultations on circumcision as a preventative health measure had to contend with claims about the relationship between circumcision and religious/cultural purity, risk and proportionality, children's rights, etc. The verifiable fact that circumcised heterosexual males are 60 percent less likely to contract HIV could not be the sole basis for deciding to adopt this as a WHO recommendation. The decision also needed to take into account social values and cultural practices (Peltzer et al. 2007; WHO 2007).

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Engagement across different discourses, and the ensuing transmission of the outcome into decision-making processes, should ideally be achieved in a deliberative fashion. Such engagement allows for the possibility of developing mutual understanding, and perhaps even shared perspectives, and ultimately strengthens the capacity to be self-critical. A norm of inclusion has produced widespread civil society participation in international institutions (see Section 3.2). But these practices often fall far short of deliberative ideals. Shortcomings include an emphasis on the opportunity to speak without any assurance of being listened to or understood; dominance of participants from the Global North; and a tendency toward participatory performance with little impact on actual decisions. These deficiencies detract from the legitimacy of global governance but can be overcome.

2.2 Accountability

Accountability is a key ingredient of legitimacy. Within states, accountability is normally thought of in terms of governments being held accountable at periodic elections. However, accountability can be construed more broadly as involving rule-makers explaining their decisions and actions to rule-takers (those subject to collective decisions), with the latter being able to sanction the former if these explanations are found wanting (Grant and Keohane 2005). Accountability, then, intrinsically contains a deliberative element, insofar as decisions must be explained and justified to others, with the quality and type of explanation being important when it comes to how rule-takers opt to sanction the rule-makers (for example, by voting them out of office). At the global level, deliberation is even more crucial for accountability. Because electoral mechanisms do not exist, accountability must focus on giving an account – to other organizations and governments, to civil society, and to citizens – and on responding to questioning.

Those who make and implement rules and decisions ought to be accountable to those affected by or subjected to those rules and decisions. These global governors can be found in intergovernmental institutions (like the World Bank or the United Nations), as well as in private institutions that exercise authority (like the Forest Stewardship Council or The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria). They include leaders of organizations, states, funding agencies, courts, and investors.

International Relations scholars typically think of accountability in principal–agent terms: states (principals) delegate authority to international institutions (agents), and these institutions must be accountable to their member states. From this perspective, the World Bank would be accountable if its President and Executive Directors explained to the member countries

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represented on its Board of Governors how the Bank's policies and activities reflect these members' preferences (in annual reports and meetings). Any deviation from member-state preferences could then be exposed or punished by withholding funds or refusing to renew contracts.

Deliberative global governance entails a more expansive notion of accountability, especially in terms of the accountability "audience" (*to whom* governors ought to be accountable) and how accountability is achieved. Limiting the accountability audience to nation-states is insufficient. Many states are themselves undemocratic, leaving their citizens without any chain of accountability linking them democratically to international institutions. Even for citizens of democratic states, accountability is diluted when it is filtered through state representatives.

People affected by the decisions of international institutions will not usually have the capacity to sanction these institutions for abuses of power or poor choices. However, accountability does not always have to be punitive to be effective. A more expansive notion of accountability sees it as a mechanism for social learning. The requirement to explain and justify one's decisions and actions to a wider audience can prompt consideration of the needs, interests, and perspectives of audience members. When power-holders are obliged to try to explain their actions in terms that the audience will understand and accept, there is a possibility for reflection, learning, and attention to the consequences of their actions (Benhabib 1996: 71–72). These virtuous effects can be enhanced by a deliberative form of accountability.

Deliberative accountability involving anything like the full participation of an audience is rarely, if ever, practiced in international politics. More common is "narrative accountability" in Mansbridge's (2009: 384) terms, whereby institutions provide an account of their actions and decisions. Even the UN Security Council (UNSC), one of the most closed institutions in the international system, has introduced monthly "dialogues" between its president and civil society organizations to "advance transparency and accountability within the UN system" (WFUNA 2018). These meetings would be more appropriately called "briefings" because the style of exchange lacks a two-way questioning and answering that would characterize dialogue and deliberation. Two-way exchanges can already be found in the peer review practices of international organizations, for example when the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD's) Development Assistance Committee reviews a country's practices in providing assistance to poorer countries – though these are not very democratic, given that accountability is considered due only to the international organization and its member governments. International institutions do often recognize that accountability is important, including accountability to

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actors beyond nation-states. Transforming their limited accountability practices into deliberative accountability would advance the democratization of global governance, to the degree such practices become consequential for collective decisions.

2.3 Effectiveness: Compliance and the Common Good

Deliberative governance is valuable not just for intrinsic democratic reasons of legitimacy and accountability but also for the instrumental reason that it can enable progress in addressing collective problems – including complex and seemingly intractable ones, such as climate change, violent conflict, and extreme poverty, which we will address later. Intrinsic and instrumental reasons are linked here because democratic legitimacy can help secure compliance with collective decisions (see Section 2.3). Inclusive deliberation facilitates effective implementation of decisions inasmuch as it generates outcomes broadly recognized as legitimate. This does not mean implementation is automatic, only that decisions produced by inclusive public deliberation should generally provoke less resistance and be more likely to be implemented than decisions produced by power-politics and strategizing.

Addressing many global problems (such as climate change) relies upon overcoming free-riding, where individual countries or other actors seek to avoid contributing to the collective effort, while benefitting from the contributions of others. This means that commitment to collective decisions can be hard to secure. Deliberative processes promote common interests and public goods; arguments couched in such terms are more persuasive than those couched in terms of private interests. There is plenty of evidence here from experiments and small-scale forums on climate change, genetic technologies, and other issues (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014: 20–21). The success of norm entrepreneurs – those who seek to convince governments, organizations, societies, and corporations to adopt new standards to guide actions – in international politics depends crucially on their ability to convince others that the norm in question (be it a human right or a rule of war or environmental conservation) is a fundamental common interest (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). And parties to international negotiations often strive to couch their positions in terms of public goods, which helps explain the pervasiveness of implicit and explicit claims about justice in climate change negotiations. The efforts of norm entrepreneurs and justice advocates can meet with resistance, not least from those subscribing to different norms or definitions of justice. But when this happens, deliberation should typically be able to reconcile differences about what the common good entails.

2.4 Effectiveness: Slow Thinking and Creative Outcomes

Deliberation can further generate effective solutions because it embodies “slow thinking” in Kahneman’s (2011) terms. Work in cognitive psychology has shown that humans are “hard-wired” to be overconfident in their decision-making skills, while making systematic errors in their reasoning. This, Kahneman explains, is because human decision-making typically deploys only one of two available cognitive systems: System 1, which is fast, intuitive, and effortless, rather than System 2, which is slow, calculated, and effortful.

System 1 can lead people to misunderstand their own preferences, neglect the future, and underestimate risks. System 2, in contrast, helps people align their preferences with their values, take due consideration of how decisions relate to the future, and unpack the risks involved in these choices. As Kahneman and others have noted, System 2 is the realm of *deliberation* (in the personal as well as the social sense): slow and reasoned thinking about choices and their implications. While it is cognitively demanding to engage System 2, it leads to much better decision-making. Inculcating deliberation in governance systems is therefore a crucial way to make decisions that are more effective (i.e., not based on flawed reasoning). A paradigm example of slow thinking would be the deliberations of the Executive Committee convened to advise President John F. Kennedy on a response to the Soviet Union’s deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba (Allison 1971), which managed to avoid nuclear war. A paradigm example of fast thinking can be found in President Donald Trump’s tweets, riddled with factual inaccuracy, snap reactions, and prejudice. Comprehending and tackling climate change requires moving from fast System 1 thinking to the slower ruminations of System 2. Because climate change is a complex, multifaceted issue, deliberation in System 2 can allow individuals to understand probabilities of different climate-induced problems (such as the pros and cons of different climate models), see how these problems affect others on the ground, and comprehend the long-term (temporal) nature of the issue (Kahneman 2018).

In recognizing the benefits of deliberation for avoiding System 1 biases, decision-makers can take their time over decisions, ensuring that new frameworks, situated knowledge, and information feed into policy formation and implementation. The need for time does not excuse inaction: As the Cuban missile case shows, slow thinking can be deployed in short order to respond to a crisis.

2.5 Effectiveness: The Epistemic Argument

Democracy in general can promote effective collective problem-solving as it mobilizes “the wisdom of crowds.” As Landemore (2013) points out,