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Power, Norms and Governance in International Relations

Polyarchies, Competitive Oligarchies, or Inclusive Hegemonies? 23 Global Intergovernmental Organizations Compared

Dawisson Belém Lopes

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Abstract

In this paper, I assume that global intergovernmental organizations (GIGOs) function as "enablers" of interstate liberal politics by way of their multilateral institutional frameworks. To support this view, I recall and adapt the classical concept of "polyarchy," coined in the early 1950s by Robert A. Dahl. It consists of a two-dimensional theoretical construct applicable for measuring the level of liberalization in modern political societies. It follows that the more actors who take part in politics, and the more that institutions allow political opposition, the more open a society (of states) is likely to be. I thus wish to assess and rate the level of "polyarchization" of 23 GIGOs that cover various issue areas and fit some specific criteria (for example, more than one hundred member states from at least three different continents). The methodology section includes a scorecard that I have specially developed to help achieve these research objectives.
Keywords: Robert A. Dahl, polyarchy, international organizations, democracy, political theory, international relations

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Dawisson Belém Lopes

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1 Introduction

Since the late 1970s, worldviews supported by the premise of "systemic anarchy" have become commonplace in academic reflections on international politics (Bull 1977; Waltz 1979; Keohane 1984; Wendt 1996).[1] Systemic (or structural) anarchy implies that in an environment where sovereign states have supreme authority over the limits of their respective territories, there can be no world government. It is a logical corollary to the modern principle of equality

1 This working paper is a by-product of a research stay at the GIGA and of collaboration within the Contested World Orders (CWO) project. I am thankful to GIGA for partly financing this research enterprise. I would also like to express my gratitude to João Paulo Oliveira, Clara Silberschneider, Nikolas Passos, and Patricia Springer for their valuable research assistance.

among nations. So if there is not an instance of power above or beyond states, (structural) anarchy will prevail. It is up to each state to control its own jurisdiction and the use of force within its borders.

This modern international system (also termed "Westphalian") is extensively based on the notion of territorial sovereignty and the horizontal relationship among states (as opposed to the "vertical" relationship between the ruler and the ruled seen at the domestic level). Martin Wight (1966) even claimed that what one identified as "international politics" should actually be termed "diplomatics," since there is no public space in the world dedicated to sovereign nations, but only interactions, on a more or less regular basis, between their diplomatic corps (or armed forces, when diplomacy fails). Kenneth Waltz (1979) postulated that the modern international system was not the result of deliberate policy choices, but rather a delicate balance reached among states as a result of their efforts at national survival and to constrain each other into some compromise.

This mechanistic and sovereigntist perspective became more nuanced over the years and was accompanied by profound reconfigurations in the field of international studies. Although no actor capable of overpowering the modern nation-state has been acknowledged to date, we can already identify new loci of authority that compete with the "territorial sovereignty" paradigm, injecting new political content and interfering with the course of international relations. Some authors have used the term "governance without government" (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Young 1999) to describe the fluidity of political authority in the contemporary world. Government is usually used to refer to the activities supported by formal authorities – for example, the police power that ensures the implementation of duly established policies. Governance refers to those activities underpinned by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal responsibilities and do not necessarily require police power to be put into practice. According to James Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (1992), governance is a broader concept than government, as the former does not necessarily have to be carried out by the latter.

Noting the fragmentation and multiplicity of relations of political authority in contemporary politics, Rodney Hall and Thomas Biersteker (2002) developed the concept of "private authority." While the term "political authority" was, over the course of modernity, usually linked to the management of public affairs, the authors realized that some private entities have recently begun to exercise authority and influence with respect to a growing number of international issues. Actors from the private sector are not only important for the international economy but have also become critically relevant in matters involving multiple areas of systemic governance. These agents have been involved in, among other things, the establishment of social norms, the provision of welfare, the safeguarding of contracts, peacekeeping, and bioethics. Not by coincidence, Hall and Biersteker (2002) pointed out the emergence of private authority as an unequivocal sign of global governance. Even though such private authority almost never exceeds the authority of the nation-state, for the authors it is increas-

ingly important in understanding the political dynamics of international relations – which today include actors as diverse as states, market players, international organizations, transnational movements, mafias, churches, etc.

The complexity of this "global governance without a world government" framework has been intensified recently by the debate about political legitimacy in international relations. The question that recurrently arises is as follows: If there is "governance without government" on a global scale, where does it derive its legitimate authority? Even assuming that democracy is the preferred political regime and the source of procedural legitimacy for most domestic constituencies, some serious theoretical pitfalls still remain when organizations operate according to democratic formulas within the ambit of the modern system of states.

2 Current International Relations Research

In the current stage of international relations, the emergence of global issues that potentially affect the entire planet has required new public policies that traditional territorial states might find difficult to carry out. These issues require international and cross-border approaches, since their causes and effects are no longer restricted to certain states, regions, or groups of states. In sum, the contemporary problematic can be enunciated this way: few international actors have the wherewithal to single-handedly tackle global issues. Calls for a form of global governance that is compatible with (some degree of) democracy have thus spread.

Nonetheless, such calls for more democratic global governance – that is, governance that provides for more open and pluralistic decision-making processes regarding major global issues with repercussions on a planetary scale – often clash with allegations that, in practical terms, the responsibility for implementing this goal is limited to the technocratic elites of intergovernmental organizations, who have little or no connection with an electorate or genuinely global audiences (Keohane, Macedo and Moravcsik 2009; Marks 2001). It is skeptically said that international organizations entrusted with the tasks of global governance consist, in most cases, of "bureaucratic bargaining systems" among rulers, because these organizations are opaque and fundamentally antidemocratic (Dahl 1999; Dahrendorf 1999).

It is admitted, however, that this tension between the democratization of international relations and the performance of international multilateral institutions can be perceived from other angles. Despite their grudging recognition of the unfulfilled promises of multilateralism and the major obstacles faced in the implementation of democratic global governance, Magdalena Bexell, Jonas Tallberg, and Anders Uhlin (2010) postulate the existence of intense contemporary transnational activity, which in some cases reaches as far as the interior of intergovernmental organizations (for instance, the European Union, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations (UN)), bringing with it democratizing potential (for

example, the formal inclusion of nonstate actors in consultation and decision-making procedures).

Robert Keohane, Stephen Macedo, and Andrew Moravcsik (2009) contend, from a different point of view, that formal international institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the European Union contribute to the promotion of a "constitutional democracy" paradigm in international relations by safeguarding individuals and minorities against the interests of ruling coalitions and powerful factions. Moreover, they hypothesize that the promotion of multilateral cooperation unleashes the propagation of information and arguments – and, indirectly, the generation of accountability – as often happens with cases that are brought to the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice.

Thus, examining the multifaceted relationship between democracy, global governance, and the modern system of states first demands, in my opinion, an attempt to catalogue and classify the very diverse theoretical approaches, lest we compare excessively disparate objects. In the literature there are at least two established ways of approaching the democratization of global governance, which I call, for the sake of didacticism, (a) traditional and (b) contemporary.

Traditional approaches to the "democratization of global governance" focus on the pluralization of state actors with a proven ability to participate in formal multilateral arrangements, to develop and vocalize their preferences (on an equal footing with other players), and to make decisions regarding the various agendas of international relations. These approaches are derived from the diagnosis that states (actors with territory and sovereignty) matter and, more than that, are necessary participants in efforts to solve the global public administration puzzle (see Hurrell 2008 for an extended account of "pluralism" in international relations).

Along these lines, Guy Hermet (2002: 44) argues that, although it is subject to the trends of globalization regarding a myriad of new issues, the territorial state remains the only actor able to halt, at least provisionally, the clashes that paralyze the global, regional, and national political agendas. It is an unavoidable reference, so to speak, for "space management." Therefore, any measure to establish democratic governance in the international system will depend on sovereign states' effective capacity to collegially formulate and inscribe international regimes into the proceedings of public international law.

Darren Hawkins et al. (2006) have employed "principal–agent" theories (derived from modern representative democracy) to explain some of the decision-making processes occurring in multilateral international organizations. According to this analytical framework, "delegation" takes place when "an amount of political authority is conceded to an agent by a principal, empowering the former in the name of the latter" (Hawkins et al. 2006: 7). According to the authors, delegation within international organizations (IOs) works very similarly to that within domestic politics; the difference is that instead of individuals it is the states that assign powers (always limited by a mandate) to the IOs. Thus, international organiza-

tions are the agents that can implement states' policy decisions and pursue their strategic goals.

The traditional approach to the democratization of global governance also demands an emphasis on the concept of the "system of states." This concept resembles, in terms of method, the representative/constitutional conception of democracy, whereby citizens are able to influence international affairs through the national elections they participate in. As Susan Marks (2001: 50) summarizes it, it is as if democracy can only materialize through the "nation-state container." Furthermore, greater attention is paid to the formalities of international political participation, which are led (and almost monopolized) by sovereign states (Bexell, Tallberg and Uhlin 2010).

If states are hubs of political loyalties par excellence, how is it possible to imagine a legitimate locus of power that is above and beyond sovereign states? For Robert Howse (2001), this is a relatively simple mental operation: he proposes an analogy between the formal attribution of authority that states grant to international organizations on the one hand and the (actual or presumed) allocation of authority from individuals to state representatives on the other. Interstate multilateralism is the device by which relations within the system of states are legitimated, in the shadow of liberal contractualist formulas, in modern political theory.

However, it should be clear that the argument of multilateralism as an extension of domestic democracy will invariably prove fallacious because nondemocratic states make up a considerable portion of the membership of global international organizations. Additionally, as Miles Kahler (1992) has already convincingly demonstrated, the more members in a formal multilateral arrangement, the greater the tendency that "minilateral" practices will take place (that is, the formation of small "clubs" of actors with similar or compatible interests within the framework of international institutions).

In a nearly opposite direction to that of traditionalists, contemporary approaches take into account the incorporation of nonstate actors – such as local governments, NGOs, advocacy networks, social movements, political parties, transnational corporations, philanthropic agencies, etc. – into global decision-making practices formerly dominated by states (Alger 2010; Bexell, Tallberg and Uhlin 2010; Keohane, Macedo and Moravcsik 2009; Prakesh and Gugerty 2010; Tallberg et al. 2013). Such approaches thus acknowledge the transnational characteristics acquired by democracy in the midst of the broad and all-encompassing process of the globalization of social and human relations (Marks 2001; Held 2004; Zweifel 2006).

Contemporary interpretations of the democratization of global governance take as a model institutional formulas that allow for the more direct exercise of democracy by "global citizens" (those directly involved in political processes) and mix up the ingredients of representation, participation, and deliberation (Bexell, Tallberg and Uhlin 2010). The alleged advantage of "contemporary" approaches lies in their inclusiveness, since the participation of transnational actors (beyond and below the state) expands and improves the access to public

power for a significant strata of the world's population – which would most likely remain ostracized by the usual representative channels (Marks 2001).

Note that the argument is not without controversy. As Margaret Keck (2004) pointed out, the activism of transnational civil society in international organizations may represent positions not people and ideas not voters. Thus, the promotion of inclusion can generate collateral problems of selectivity and representational bias.

In view of the above theoretical difficulties and moral problems, authors such as David Held, Peter Singer and Jürgen Habermas have tried to imagine possibilities for inclusion and reconciliation that lie between the traditional democratic method of decision making (which assumes the representation and/or participation of each and every citizen) and the desirable effectiveness of states' foreign policies. As a first step, Held (2004: 108) proposed a bold reform of the current model of global governance, established throughout the 1990s. "The possibility of a global social-democratic polity is connected to an expanded framework of states and agencies bound by the principles of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights," he states. By rejecting the proposal of a gradual evolution within the already established set of institutions, Held suggested the creation of a comprehensive and interconnected network of public fora; overlapping cities, states, and regions; and, finally, the entire transnational order. In local domains the participatory processes of the demoi would take place in a direct fashion, and in more remote domains there would be mediation through representative mechanisms. In this context, the formation of a global assembly, encompassing all states and agencies, could be envisaged. This assembly would address the most salient global concerns (global health and disease; food supply and distribution; financial instability; foreign debt; climate change; disarmament; nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; etc.).

Contrary to this view of global democracy (which he labels "Kantian"), Kazancigil (2002: 61–62) states that "it takes all states and nations to share similar worldviews, principles, and political systems, a condition that probably will never be met on a planetary scale." He argues the unfeasibility of a model based on the concept of a "global constituency," because it is a "distant perspective, almost utopian." He admits, as the most optimistic hypothesis, the existence of some regional democratic governance in the world today (namely, in parts of the EU), but argues that this reaches only a limited number of state and nonstate actors.

Singer (2004) contends that if the group to which one must justify his or her behavior is a tribe or a nation, its morality tends to be tribal or national. If, however, the communications revolution has created a global audience, one might feel the need to justify his or her behavior to the whole world. Such a change, for the author, creates the material basis for a new ethic that reaches all of the planet's inhabitants. It is therefore possible to argue that individuals suitably adapted to the new global dimension of political decisions will be able to think of social integration beyond the neighborhood, the city, or the country. Contemporaneously, the virtue of thinking of the "political" as existing beyond the territorial boundaries of the state seems to be a requirement.

Regarding the possibility of applying democratic formulas to international relations, Habermas (1998) argues that a political community must – if it regards itself as democratic – be able to distinguish between those who are its members and those who are not. The self-referential concept of "collective self-determination" refers to the logical space occupied by citizens brought together as members of a particular political community (as opposed to other political communities gathered under other states). This particular political community establishes itself as democratic when it is capable of elaborating its own standards and norms for the interactions it promotes with other political communities around the world. The solidarity forged by the population within a state is rooted in one particular collective identity, supported by historical references and moral persons. This is what shapes the nation and establishes its potential for self-administration.

A similar argument is put forward by Howse (2001), for whom the applicability of the term "demos" in reference to issues related to the modern system of states remains questionable. The author elucidates his objection as follows: "as there is not a transnational demos, then transnational civil society will continue extracting its legitimacy from the ability to represent interests, values, and those stakeholders which have some domestic salience" (Howse 2001: 362).

The two perspectives – traditional and contemporary – are highly relevant to studies on the democratization of international politics, either because of their potential or because of their limits. It is not my intention to propose a reflection on the topic of global governance democratization that necessarily evokes the "armor of the nation-state" reading (Marks 2001) nor to accept the idea of "global governance against the state" (Hermet 2001). After all, it is not a matter of pursuing the extremes of the debate but rather of advancing a useful proposal for understanding the ultimately constitutive problem of international politics.

3 Research Problem and Research Design

Given the "systemic anarchy" – and the absence of a global democratic system or a universal Leviathan – there surely are theoretical as well as empirical barriers to "democratizing" international politics. In this paper, the starting question was as follows: Considering the absence of a polity on a planetary scale, is there a way to speak of democratic political interactions in a system of territorial sovereign states?

First, it is important to recall that different approaches to the subject of democratization have led to different formulas for operationalizing "democracy" in the academic realm of International Relations (IR). Susan Marks (2001), for instance, has set forth a tripartite division of the projects for the democratization of global governance, grouping them into (a) world government, (b) pan-national democracy, and (c) cosmopolitan democracy projects. While the first category refers, quite literally, to the possibility of building a global democratic state, and the second to the pool of existing democratic regimes in the world, the third combines

elements from (a) and (b), associating the growing democratization at the domestic level with the emergence of transnational and supranational institutions with the capacity to democratize contemporary international politics. Raffaele Marchetti (2012), in a different fashion, has divided contemporary approaches into transnational and cosmopolitan, identifying at least three normative models for the purpose of applying democratic formulas to international politics (see Table 1). In order to grasp the degree of "transnational democracy" of different international institutions, Thomas Zweifel (2006) pioneered the measurement of seven indicators – namely, appointment, political participation, transparency, reason-giving, overrule, monitoring, and independence. The results proved disheartening for the democrats around the world: of the eleven entities under evaluation, only two (the European Union and the International Criminal Court) achieved positive scores for transnational democracy. All others were considered deficient according to Zweifel's classification (see Table 2).

Table 1: Democratic Formulas Applied to International Politics

Approach	Model	Democratic Scope	Democratic Principle	Institutional Design
Traditional	Intergovernmental	National demoi	Symmetrical association	Interstate multilateralism
Contemporary (1)	Transnational	Transnational demoi	Inclusion of representative social positions	Hybrid networks (with state and nonstate actors)
Contemporary (2)	Cosmopolitan	Global demos	Universal inclusion	World federation

Source: Adapted from Marchetti (2012: 12).

Table 2: "Transnational Democracy" in 11 International Institutions

	Global Multipurpose IOs		*Global Issue-Bound IOs*			*Regionally Based IOs*					
Dimension	UN	ICC	WB	IMF	WTO	EU	OAU	AU	NAFTA	NATO	ASEAN
Appointment	-1	0	0	-1	0	+1	-1	-1	0	0	-1
Participation	-1	+1	0	0	-1	+1	-1	0	0	-1	0
Transparency	0	0	0	0	-1	0	-1	0	0	0	0
Reason-giving	0	+1	+1	-1	0	+1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Overrule	-1	0	-1	-1	+1	+1	0	0	0	0	-1
Monitoring	-1	0	0	0	-1	+1	-1	0	0	0	0
Independence	-1	+1	-1	0	0	-1	-1	0	-1	0	-1
SCORE	-5	+3	-1	-3	-2	+4	-6	-2	-2	-2	-4
Ranking	10th	2nd	3rd	8th	4th	1st	11th	7th	4th	4th	9th

Source: Adapted from Zweifel (2006: 177).

According to Zweifel, the direct confrontation between the UN and the WTO has benefited the latter. Based on the evaluation of its Security Council, the UN was found to be successful in criteria such as transparency and the capacity to offer public arguments (reason-giving). Of the whole universe of cases and based on all of the criteria employed for comparison, the UN only outperformed the now defunct Organization of African Unity. The WTO – notwithstanding its difficulties in monitoring its members, its lack of transparency, and its poor in-

clusion of nonstate actors in decision-making processes – received good scores in categories such as "appointment" (its director-general is appointed by member-state consensus), "reason-giving," and "independence." Its capacity to prevail over its members (so-called "overrule") merited special recognition. It achieved fourth place in the general rankings. When paired together, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank reached distinct positions. According to the criteria employed, the World Bank appeared to be slightly more used to democratizing processes than the IMF – based on the organizations' ability to share the underlying reasons for their decisions with policy stakeholders. Overall, the IMF and World Bank were neutral or deficient with regard to most of the indicators. Both received the grade "-1" for the "overrule criterion," which leads one to infer that when member states have consolidated their positions, the two multilateral banks can do little to resist them (see Table 2).

The absence of a mechanism to weigh Zweifel's operational criteria for transnational democracy is noteworthy. There is no hierarchy among indicators for the calculation of the index, as those indicators simply assume, in a somewhat vague and impressionistic manner, values ranging from "-1" (absence of democracy) to "+1" (presence of democracy). On this scale, "0" (zero) represents a dysfunctional democracy. Nonetheless, the unilinearity of indicators may distort the conclusions achieved, as there are certain elements that turn out to be more decisive than others for the functioning of democracy. For example, it might be claimed in defense of the UN that by privileging the Security Council in this measurement exercise, the author jettisoned all the political potential of the General Assembly, thereby throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

More important than the index itself and the ranking developed by Thomas Zweifel are in fact the reflections on the subject that they provoke, beginning with the institutional conception of democracy the author evokes for his analysis. Arguably, what Zweifel delivers is not precisely a transnational ontology, since he brings together many institutions from domestic democracy as parameters. It seems inappropriate to expect that international courts and organizations can reproduce conventional democratic experiences in the same way contemporary nation-states would, given the absence of a global polity or global demos. However, the gravest problem, in my view, lies not in the study's "methodological statism" but in the hardly comparable objects, which include a court of justice, two multilateral banks, two global international organizations, and six regional international organizations (with rather discrepant ambitions and levels of institutionalization). Although laudable per se, this broad comparative enterprise cannot fully achieve its heuristic objectives.

In this paper I have opted to adapt the conceptual tools of conventional democratic theory in order to reach my goals. By applying the concept of "polyarchy" to the study of international politics, I attempt to subvert the original plan, inasmuch as this concept was conceived by social scientist Robert Dahl in the early 1950s, to approach institutional environments from the perspective of domestic polities.

As far as Dahl's political pluralism is concerned, the polyarchization of a society – that is, the increase in levels of political participation and public contestation – should be seen as just "one aspect of democratization" (Dahl 2005: 17). The conceptual parsimony found in this author's construct is consistent with his epistemological choice to treat democracy as a Weberian ideal-type that is unattainable in actual situations, both domestically and internationally. Therefore, as one state develops into a political system that allows opposition, rivalry, or competition between the government and its adversaries, its perceived level of polyarchy increases; likewise, whenever one country expands the number of individuals and groups with access to institutional mechanisms for participation in political life, the degree of polyarchy increases. It must be pointed out, however, that a comprehensive system of public contestation and pluralism should not be mistaken for the full democratization of a society (see Figure 1). In Dahl's own terms, "polyarchies [...] can be thought of as regimes relatively (but incompletely) democratized, or, in other words, polyarchies are institutional schemes that have been substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, they are highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation" (Dahl 2005: 31).

Figure 1: Liberalization, Inclusiveness, and Democratization

Source: Dahl (2005: 30).

However influential Dahl's construct might be, I am not speaking of a hard-to-grasp abstraction, but rather of quite the opposite. This is an elegant, academically sound, and straightforward concept. What is more, drawing on Michael Coppedge (2012), one finds that varia-

bles related to *inclusiveness* and/or *public contestation* have been present in no less than 75 percent of all academic attempts to measure the level of democratization in the world over the last 50 years (this refers primarily to academia in the United States, Canada, and Europe). So, a considerable number of the well-known indices of democracy or democratization that have been crafted in the world over the last 50 years make use of such categories – of indicators that relate, in one way or another, to inclusiveness and contestation (see Table 3).[2]

Table 3: Indicators of "Country Democratization" Derived from Robert Dahl's Conceptual Categories

Principal components analysis of democracy indicators for 1990		
Indicator and source	**Contestation**	**Inclusiveness**
Civil liberties (Freedom House 2002)	0.98	0.13
Political rights (Freedom House 2002)	0.97	0.07
Competitiveness of participation (Marshall and Jaggers 2002)	0.93	0.02
Competition (Vanhanen 2000)	0.92	0.01
Type of regime (Cheibub and Gandhi 2004)	0.88	0.02
Executive constraints (Marshall and Jaggers 2002)	0.86	0.04
Competitiveness of executive recruitment (Marshall and Jaggers 2002)	0.80	0.12
Freedom of assembly and association (Cingranelli and Richards 2004)	0.80	0.05
Workers' rights (Cingranelli and Richards 2004)	0.77	0.05
Freedom of speech (Cingranelli and Richards 2004)	0.67	0.05
Political participation (Cingranelli and Richards 2004)	0.62	0.31
Adult suffrage % (Bollen 1998)	0.12	0.94
Women's political rights (Cingranelli and Richards 2004)	0.06	0.69
Openness of executive recruitment (Marshall and Jaggers 2002)	0.20	0.59
Participation (Vanhanen 2000)	0.51	0.37
Eigenvalue	9.30	1.21
Percentage of variance explained	62.0	8.0

Source: Coppedge (2012: 28).

One can reasonably conclude that in at least 75 percent of all cases that were studied by Coppedge, the indicators have drawn upon Dahlian democratic conceptions. Although the labels of operational indicators may vary from case to case, they nearly always refer to one of the two dimensions put forth by Dahl – inclusiveness or contestation – and very often refer to both of them. This omnipresence accounts for the strength of Robert Dahl's analytical categories and theoretical model. This is the same model many political scientists not long ago deemed old-fashioned, and then useless. Yet my attempt to rescue Dahl's categories from

2 Michael Coppedge maintains a public database entitled "Data Used in Publications on Democratization," which is available at: <www3.nd.edu/~mcoppedg/crd/datacrd.htm> (25 June 2014).

oblivion displays an extra feature, which benefits students and scholars alike: it enables fruitful dialogue between mainstream political scientists and IR experts.

Almost every person who has devoted herself to the study of democracy and democratization in domestic societies can be said to be a "Dahlian" from either a normative or a methodological viewpoint. Even so, the most difficult question remains unresolved: Even if one believes that the concept of polyarchy is useful for the study of contemporary politics, is it still reasonable to speak of *global polyarchies*? How about using this concept for the study of IR and intergovernmental organizations today? Here I contend that the notion of polyarchy is well suited to the discipline of IR and its phenomenology. After all, given the alleged difficulty for a democratic regime to become universal, one should be cautious about adopting thick conceptions of democracy for the study of international politics. By embracing a thinner and simpler definition (such as that crafted by Dahl), one can probably better capture the kind of democratic experience states and nonstate actors actually enjoy in international relations.

An intergovernmental organization (IGO) that includes more than one hundred member states and is representative of a relevant international regime, and yet allows for opposition to its ruling coalition, could possibly be thought of as a global polyarchy. Dahl (2005) employs his three-tiered classification to cover the main empirical possibilities for domestic societies: polyarchies, competitive oligarchies, and inclusive hegemonies. There is also a hidden fourth possibility: when there is neither participation nor contestation within a political society, the system should qualify as a closed hegemony. The ideal situation exists when the country – or in our case the IGO – reaches position III (see Figure 1).

My effort to assess the "polyarchization of IGOs" adopts different metrics and methodological pathways. Considering the practical challenges involved in this research, I have developed a scorecard to rate the IGOs with regard to each dimension of polyarchy (see Table 4 for coding). Say that 75 percent of my model is intergovernmental, while 25 percent goes transnational. In terms of participation and contestation, approximately 42 percent of an IGO's possible final score can come from its perceived ability to include states in decision-making procedures, whereas 33 percent comes from its ability to allow for contestation and 25 percent from its capacity to make nonstate actors take part in deliberations and decision-making procedures. As for eligibility criteria, two conditions must be met for an IGO to be considered "global" in scope: (a) a three-digit membership and (b) member states from at least three different continents.

To make this research project feasible, one needs to conceive of international organizations as universal and multilateral arenas capable of hosting some of the world's more powerful regimes and as open to public contestation and participation – reasonable expectations to have of IGOs in international affairs. I take 23 cases as being representative of the political experience of states in the contemporary world order.

Table 4: "Global Polyarchy" Scorecard (coding)

Inclusiveness Score			
Inclusiveness vis-à-vis States			
1.1	How do countries accede to the IGO?	Compliance with list of requirements	0
		Political acceptance by member states	1
		Unidirectional expression of interest by candidate	2
1.2	How many member states are there?	Fewer than 100 states	0
		Between 101 and 150 states	1
		More than 150 states	2
1.3	Can each member state participate in every IGO organ?	Restricted participation in some organs	0
		Every member is eligible, but only a few can participate in some organs	1
		Every member has access to every organ	2
1.4	How do countries participate in decision-making procedures?	Turn (e.g., there are observers that cannot voice their preferences)	0
		Turn and voice (e.g., there are members that can make speeches but not vote)	1
		Turn, voice, and vote (e.g., all members participate in, discuss, and vote on proposals)	2
1.5	What is the voting pattern?	One or more members with formal veto power	0
		Voting is asymmetric/weighted	1
		Strict voting parity	2
Inclusiveness vis-à-vis Nonstate Actors			
1.6	Can nonstate actors be accredited by the IGO?	No	0
		Yes	1
1.7	If YES, how do nonstate actors obtain formal recognition?	Compliance with list of requirements for acceptance	0
		Acceptance of request or invitation by states	1
		Unidirectional expression of interest by nonstate actor	2
1.8	How many nonstate actors have been accredited so far?	Fewer than 1,000	0
		More than 1,000	1
1.9	How do nonstate actors exert influence on decision-making procedures?	Turn	0
		Turn and voice	1
		Turn, voice, vote	2
Contestation Score			
2.1	Besides the secretariat and the general assembly, does any other organ make up the IGO's functional structure?	No	0
		Yes	1
2.2	If YES, is there a balanced relationship between the organs?	No	0
		Yes	1
2.3	What is the rule for resolution approval in its principal organ?	Consensus	0
		Qualified majority	1
		Simple majority	2
2.4	Are there reported cases of contestation of the IGO's institutional formula and/or constitution?	No	0
		Yes	1
2.5	Which instruments can a member state make use of to express its disagreement and/or oppose the ruling coalition?	No instrument whatsoever	0
		Opposition by voting	1
		Opposition via institutional instances	2
2.6	Is the secretary-general elected by the members or simply appointed by the ruling coalition?	Appointment	0
		Voting	1

Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

Global issues represent a new reality that few agents are able to cope with. In this sense, the 23 IGOs[3] I have studied here, thanks to their universal focus, are perhaps those formal institutions that have the most advanced tools in public administration and are able to wield influence over fields as diverse and broad as telecommunications, human rights, environment, trade, intellectual property, finance, etc. From such representativeness comes a substantial part of the political authority acquired by global intergovernmental organizations (GIGOs) since the Cold War.

In light of the aforementioned aspects, the main hypothesis of this paper is as follows: There may be a process of "polyarchization" in international politics underway, which is arguably manifesting inside multilateral international organizations. This process is leading to the inclusion of more and new actors (state and nonstate) in decision-making procedures within international bureaucracies as well as to greater openness to public contestation of international regimes. Nevertheless, this polyarchization obeys different logics and speeds as a result of the diversity of the embedded agendas, country coalitions, and power correlations within the many fields of institutionalized governance in international relations.

This paper's general objective is to assess, and measure where each intergovernmental organization stands in this so-called "polyarchization process" in contemporary international politics. It is also my goal to analyze the potential and limits of institutional designs and thematic scopes intended to "democratize" contemporary international relations. By identifying key coalitions and emergent power correlations, one can envisage important trends and, last but not least, compare international regimes' odds of achieving the more open and more pluralist management of collective-action problems in specific issue areas.

4 Methodological Note

4.1 On the Construction of the Index

The global intergovernmental organizations studied here have primarily been classified according to their institutional design – that is, by, first, consulting their constitutive treaties, official documents, and all available literature on the subject and by, second, interviewing

3 FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization); IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency); IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development); ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization); ILO (International Labor Organization); IMF (International Monetary Fund); IMO (International Maritime Organization); IOM (International Organization for Migrations); IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union); ISA (International Seabed Authority); ITSO (International Telecommunication Satellite Organization); ITU (International Telecommunications Union); OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons); UN (United Nations); UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization); UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization); UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization); UPU (Universal Postal Union); WCO (World Customs Organization); WHO (World Health Organization); WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization); WMO (World Meteorological Organization); WTO (World Trade Organization).

their bureaucrats, national diplomats, and experts on the issue area. A questionnaire has been completed for each GIGO under analysis, so the grades given for every item on the scorecard can be supported and justified. Most of the scores are formal and objective, as they are based on official texts or articles from the particular GIGO's founding treaty, while others have required extensive interpretive work on the part of the research team members.[4]

5 Findings

By applying my analytical model in order to evaluate and identify the polyarchization level of 23 GIGOs in contemporary world politics, I have generated some interesting data.

First, I have found that organizations primarily related to education and culture (UNESCO) and global public health (WHO) score higher on the "Global Polyarchy" index than all others (see figures 2 and 6). Although both education and public health may be two of the most pressing agendas for domestic policymakers, they do not enjoy the same status in international relations. At least, that would be the intuitive hypothesis one could propose to explain why UNESCO and WHO allow for broad participation and open contestation, despite all the setbacks that might befall member countries as powerful as the United States (for instance, the polemic Palestinian membership in UNESCO). On the other hand, the multilateral banks (IMF and IBRD) and international security organizations (IAEA and OPCW) have, predictably, some of the lowest scores. However, the four individual cases differ. While the IMF would qualify as something between a "closed hegemony" and a "competitive oligarchy," the IBRD, OPCW, and especially the IAEA fit well into the "inclusive hegemony" category (much participation and little contestation).

In accordance with its institutional design, the IMF emerges in this comparison as an NGO-averse organization, whose decision-making capacity lies in the hands of the stronger economic powers. Another possible explanation for the IMF's lower scores is the almost impervious technicality of debates relating to international finance (and weapons of mass destruction in the case of the IAEA). This could have been decisive in relegating these organizations to the bottom of the ranking. In addition, there is the Dahlian argument that global elites could have tacitly judged that incurring repression costs would be a more expensive strategy than making concessions to the lesser powers and nonstate actors on education and health issues (Dahl 2005; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). This same reasoning would not apply to economic and security agendas though. All in all, the results appear to be fairly consistent with the "high-versus-low-politics" cleavages in international relations – and reinforce their continued usefulness as a country-behavior predictor (see Figure 2).

4 For an assessment of each individual criterion for the 23 GIGOs under analysis, see Table 5.

Table 5: An Overview of the GIGOs

DIMENSION	CRITERIA	FAO	IAEA	IBRD	ICAO	ILO	IMF	IMO	IOM	IPU	ISA	ITSO	ITU	OPCW	UN	UNESCO	UNIDO	UNWTO	UPU	WCO	WHO	WIPO	WMO	WTO
INTERGOVERN-MENTAL PARTICIPATION	How do countries accede to the IGO?	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	0
	How many member states are there?	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Can each member state participate in every IGO organ?	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2
	How do countries participate in decision-making procedures?	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	What is the voting pattern?	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
NONSTATE PARTICIPATION	Can nonstate actors be accredited by the IGO?	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	If YES, how do nonstate actors obtain formal recognition?	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
	How many nonstate actors have been accredited so far?	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	How do nonstate actors exert influence on decision-making procedures?	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
CONTESTATION	Besides the secretariat and the general assembly, does any other organ make up the IGO's functional structure?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	If YES, is there a balanced relationship between the organs?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	What is the rule for resolution approval in its principal organ?	1	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	0
	Are there reported cases of contestation of the IGO's institutional formula and/or constitution?	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
	Which instruments can a member state make use of to express its disagreement and/or oppose the ruling coalition?	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2
	Is the secretary-general elected by the members or simply appointed by the ruling coalition?	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL		16	14	12	16	16	10	15	17	15	17	14	17	12	16	19	14	18	17	15	18	17	15	16

Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

Figure 2: GIGOs – Global Polyarchies, Competitive Oligarchies, or Inclusive Hegemonies?

Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

When it comes to contestation, the five better-ranked GIGOs – UPU, ITU, UNWTO, WHO, and UNESCO – can easily be associated with "low-politics" or "technically oriented" international regimes. Another clue as to how GIGOs' institutional design may correspond to the political cleavages and power correlations can probably be found inside the organizations. Again, one can easily infer, by examining the available data, the greater permissiveness regarding contesting behaviors within the ambit of technique-bound GIGOs, in sharp contrast to the situation within the bottom three GIGOs (IAEA, OPCW, and IBRD) (see Figure 3).

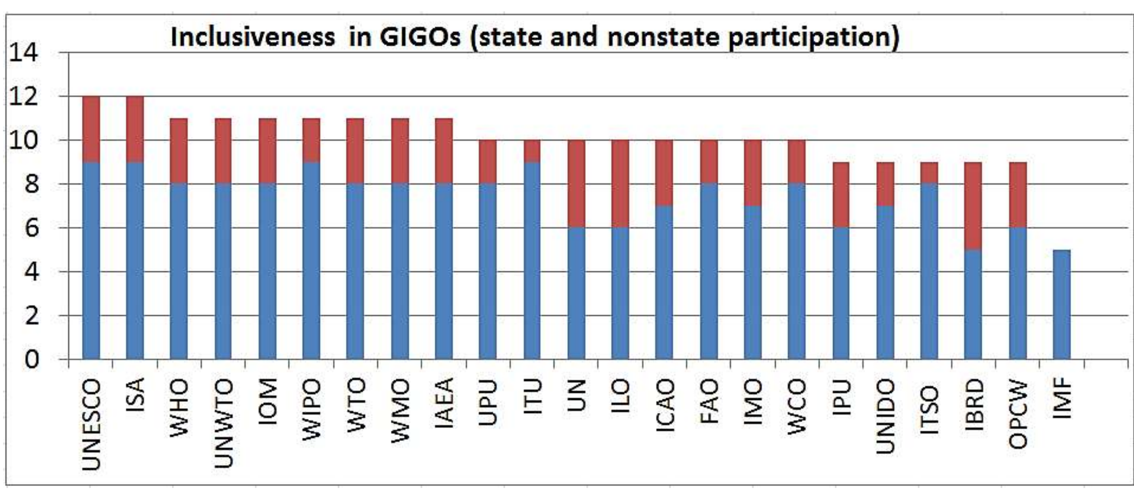
Among the most inclusive GIGOs, there will be those that combine state and nonstate participation in more balanced ways. Not surprisingly, UNESCO and WHO again receive good scores, whereas the IMF completely fails at including nonstate representatives in deliberative and decision-making procedures. Curiously, IAEA climbs many positions in this inclusiveness ranking and moves up to third place (see Figure 5). In terms of NGO-friendly GIGOs, the IBRD scores high, possibly because of the reforms it has undergone since the late 1980s, with a view to absorbing the harsh criticism it faced then and expanding the participation of global civil society in its decision-making procedures (Paloni and Zanardi 2006; Belém Lopes 2013). The UN and the ILO, which rank second and third, respectively, in this comparison, owe much of their score to their sophisticated and comprehensive institutional designs, inasmuch as they allow state and nonstate actors to interact and deliberate regularly with re-

gard to a myriad of international topics (Belém Lopes 2012; Kott and Droux 2013). The IMF, in sharp contrast, does not appear to welcome the participation of nonstate actors in its decision-making procedures at all (see figures 4 and 5).

Figure 3: Relative Level of Contestation within GIGOs

Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

Figure 4: Relative Level of Inclusiveness of GIGOs

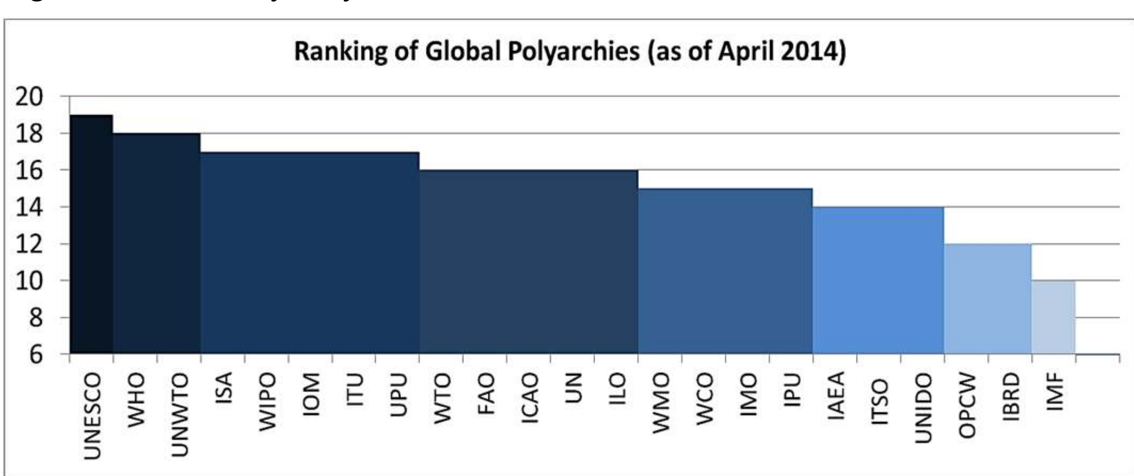


Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

Figure 5: Relative Level of "NGO-friendliness" of GIGOs

Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

Figure 6: Global Polyarchy Index



Source: Global Polyarchy Database (2014).

A few questions remain. In some cases, an inverse correlation between inclusiveness and contestation appears to exist. If this is actually so, why does it occur? A possible explanation for the alleged trade-off could be the complementary relationship between the two dimensions of the polyarchy concept. Think, for instance, about the pressure nonstate actors exercised some 15 years ago – for instance, in the famous protests against globalization that took place in Seattle and Genoa – in order to be recognized in formal negotiation environments. That pressure would have increased if the nonstate actors had not been permitted to participate in sessions, but was diffused because they did eventually join in negotiations. In these situations, oppositional behavior was (at least partially) replaced by a new participatory stance. Although this argument has not yet been systematically tested, it deserves some consideration, especially if one looks at the World Bank and how it differs from the IMF in terms of its inclusion of NGOs in deliberative practices (Belém Lopes 2013).

There is also a second question to grapple with: What should be done when contradictory processes take place "under the same roof"? The case of the UN provides an example: while the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council get some of the best grades, the UN Security Council drags the GIGO classification down due to its "exclusive club" structure and voting mechanisms. In the end, the UN qualifies as a middle-ranking organization, mostly because of the shadow of its Security Council, which reduces its polyarchical potential. Still, is it fair to treat the "various UNs" as one and the same (Jolly et al. 2009)?

Another methodological question that has arisen during this research is as follows: Is it scientifically sound to combine "hard" (formal-institutional) and "soft" (extra-institutional) indicators to make an index? Emphasizing the institutional hardware of GIGOs entails the risk of leaving most of the political essentials behind, because the processes that take place inside the organizations do not strictly correspond to the institutional settings (Reinalda and Verbeek 2004). This is why I felt the need to use the "hard" and the "soft" dialogue, however problematic it may be from an epistemological viewpoint. (For an erudite account of the WHO's contemporary politics and a case for the integration of hard and soft variables, see Hein and Moon 2013.)

Finally, I have faced the classic "small-N" research problem, given the limited number of GIGOs in the world today. According to experts, there are now some 300 active IGOs but only 10 to 15 percent of them qualify as GIGOs (Karns and Mingst 2004). Thirty to forty is definitely not a comfortable number of single cases to deal with – either for inferential statistics or for in-depth case studies (George and Bennett 2005; Coppedge 2012). This difficulty and those listed previously suggest the need for more investment in this broad research agenda in order to generate better analytical gains in the future.

6 Conclusion

Ongoing debate on the democratization of international politics is a must, and one which no political science or IR academic can bypass. Susan Marks (2001) succinctly stated the reasons for this phenomenon: on the one hand, the commitment to democracy has never before been so widespread throughout the world; on the other, never before has the awareness of its empirical limitations been so acute.

In view of the literature, I insist on the need to assess the democratization of international politics from a variety of both traditional and contemporary analytical perspectives. This allows for an understanding of how sovereign states and other important nonstate actors formulate and reformulate the institutional paths to a more plural and open – and, in a very particular sense, more democratic – management of global governance under conditions of structural anarchy. Contemporary political dynamics have led to expanded memberships in intergovernmental organizations and, by extension, have helped such institutions to globally project the values and rules that emerge from a process of normative construction. The cornerstones of this process are the organizations themselves – not to mention the hundreds if

not thousands of nongovernmental organizations, subnational governments, companies, individuals, etc., which have since the early 1990s been gaining the recognition and authorization to work within the arrangements of global governance, both on an ad hoc basis and as part of regular advocacy networks. Moreover, within intergovernmental organizations and international regimes, what is in fact at stake is less the ability to replicate the democratic formula (as we know it) to tackle the problematic issues of the international agenda than it is the authority that is increasingly vested in such institutions to fulfill the functions of global administration (even in nondemocratic ways). Therefore, intergovernmental organizations and international regimes are both important political actors and meta-political spaces (that is, microcosms) within the asymmetrical twenty-first-century system of global governance.

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