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**Addressing the Decision-Making Process at the Global Level
and Multilateralism**

Maria Gabriela Sterian¹

Abstract: In the new global order, some items are likely to give new impetus to multilateralism: the growing discontent in the increasing activity linked to global governance and the slow pace of reform, the emergence of new powers and their impact to the system, global financial crisis and other issues of global concern. Each of these have an impact on the issue of multilateralism and international responses are given according to the role of each part. This paper aims to underline the role of multilateralism as form of international cooperation and the link with global economic governance. It has been tried to emphasizing the concepts already developed by known researchers in the field. The approach is a more theoretic one done in a comparative manner with emphasis on results and future research. The key results are related to pros and cons of redefining the paradigm of multilateralism. The implications are varied in terms of studying the concepts and addresses researchers in the field, but also lecturers and students. The main added value is the compared approach of the old multilateralism and the new one and its formal relationship with the global economic governance.

Keywords: multilateralism; global governance; international organizations; regionalism

1. Introduction

After the Cold War, interest in international institutions began to flourish and multilateralism has taken a new momentum in research studies. At that time, there were several forms of international cooperation, but none was conceptualized (Caporaso, 1992). It was felt that multilateralism is the weapon of the weak (Kagan, 2005), which means that multilateral agreements do not require power for imposing solutions to international problems.

The multilateral system is based on a variety of institutions and organizations, but the core is, still, United Nations and the institutions created after the Bretton Woods Conference. The countries understood that their weak status was very important in adopting the multilateralism collectively (Katzenstein, 1986).

2. Multilateralism versus Global Governance

Multilateralism was created as a form of cooperation among states to institutionalize intergovernmental cooperation and to replace anarchy (van Lagenhove, 2010) and was defined as the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states through ad hoc agreements or institutions (Keohane, 1990). It also presents a generic form through institutional arrangements that define and stabilize the property rights of states, coordinates and manages collaborative problems (Ruggie, 1992).

It is built on principles that are different from other forms of international relations by generalized principles of conduct, indivisibility and mutuality. Multilateralism can be a way or an instrument in

¹ Assistant Professor, Phd in progress, Romanian-American University, Bucharest, Romania, tel.: +4 021.202.95.00, Corresponding author: steriangabriela@yahoo.com.

achieving specific goals, such as global economic governance, migration control or economic liberalization (Bouchard and Peterson, 2011).

The conceptualization of multilateralism requires its classification according to some specific features. Such a classification would be the first related to governance (Rosencrance, 2008): subtle – United Nations, average – WTO or IMF, strong – coalition among great economic powers. An alternative classification of multilateralism states (Peterson et al, 2008): institutionalized – WTO, crystallized – the Kyoto Protocol, aspirant – agreements on foreign direct investments.

In exploring the various forms of multilateralism, a central concern is the compliance or non-compliance with the existing norms and procedures, so we have a direct link to international law, which is the focal point in discussions regarding how multilateralism should look like in the twenty-first century.

Multilateral relations between states are not games where parties have equal rights and obligations. In terms of global order, the world was held for a long time in a bipolar framework: differences between East and West and the balance built on the principle of destruction. With the end of Cold War, unipolar world has become dominated by the US hegemony. With the emergence of a multipolar world order, the structures of global governance face several challenges, which refers to the difficulties of adapting the existing structures and the development of new actors on international arena, eager to have a say in global issues (Haas, 1993).

It is assumed that these evolutions will contribute to the weakening of the role of multilateral institutions, thus leading to the new global economic governance. It seeks understanding of the multipolarity impact on multilateral institutions and the contribution of regionalism to global governance.

The problems associated with traditional national framework are represented by the United Nations system and its institutions and more informal multilateral agreements, such as G8 and G20, which have become extremely important for global economic governance.

Global economy and world politics are characterized by an unprecedented interdependence. Recent developments suggest that global governance is increasing. Countries are eager to find common solutions to common challenges and to coordinate the action in regional and global forums, more or less institutionalized. The international system has no change to survive in the absence of a strong and wise leadership (Gilpin, 2004).

Multipolar world encourages the intergovernmental cooperation rather than a supranational regionalism. A certain degree of supra-nationalism is accepted for litigation and taking common decisions in maintaining the legitimacy of regional cooperation.

3. The New Multilateralism

The institutions of global economic governance have become the most favorite subject of criticism. While globalization and systemic risk awareness have led to the need for global governance, the form it have taken it's no longer adequate to the current challenges, which have an increased sense of dissatisfaction about the multilateral order and, then, the crisis of multilateralism. The global institutions do not work anymore either individually or collectively (McGrew, 2011).

The crisis of multilateralism is kindled discussed by policy makers and researchers. Debates suggest that the core problem is the inadequacy of multilateral organizations, established to protect the sovereign countries and their interests, as well as global challenges that go beyond borders and interest (Weiss, 2008). This crisis and the growing importance of informal means at the expense of formal ones have a profound impact on international relations. Given the deadlock of formal institutions and the increased emphasis on bilateral relations, especially the ones between emerging countries, states feel they have no choice but to follow.

These arguments are supported by the failure of multilateral governance in addressing the global challenges and crises and the importance of state sovereignty and the implementation of the existing and new binding agreements at the global level. We have here the failure of the United Nations reforms, the continuation of the economic liberalization under WTO umbrella, the reluctance of great powers to join the International Court of Justice, the inefficient protection of financial regulations and solving the macroeconomic imbalances. In many respects, multi-polarity and political powers are related to the global financial crisis, but the connection goes back in time. Since 2005 the analysts have said that the Western economies lost their confidence in globalization, facing fierce competition in terms of transfer the investments and jobs to emerging countries, these being topics of analysis in European and American governments. Most developing countries have emerged from the crisis more or less wrinkled, but the United States and EU countries are facing serious problems in financial area.

The important growth rates in emerging countries are translated also in strong demand for representation in global economic governance. The desire of emerging powers to continue the globalization process and global governance is uncertain. These countries tend to emphasize their developing status and the need of protecting themselves in global competition. Although they support a fair representation in the institutions of global governance, they seem to stay away from taking responsibility for tasks and solving problems of global concern (Zakaria, 2009). There is strong evidence that suggests increasing commitments in multilateralism as basic principle of organizing the global governing. Current U.S. administration promotes multilateralism after a long period of unilateralism in its foreign policy. EU external relations are likely to serve its strategic goals by increasing its importance in terms of global economic governance and China engages in multilateral cooperation, which is an important element of its foreign policy.

High levels of economic interdependence, the existent mechanism of developing the integration process in developing countries and the desire to boost trade and attract foreign direct investors are items close related to the regionalization initiatives (Karns, Mingst, 2010). Some regional groups have advanced the economic integration by creating common institutions and policies, while others remain in the traditional form of free trade areas or customs union. And while some have developed complex supranational structures, others rely on less formal agreements. While the crisis has highlighted the challenges and global opportunities, regionalism seems to be out of control despite its role in addressing the future problems. Almost without sense, the phenomenon has grown in some parts of the world. The tendency of integration in Western Europe was politically motivated, the one in North America has mixed motivation and the one in the South-East Asia had market considerations (Gilpin, 2004).

G-20 takes the great responsibility in the current global governance in a multipolar world. The development of this forum was held together with the need to find common solutions to financial crisis. It promotes cooperation and joint global action to tackle the crisis and deepening economic interdependence. One of its key features is the reform of global governance. Some analysts say that the evolution of G-20 is a diluted form of multilateralism (Penttilä, 2009). In their point of view, the world moved to a dual center of power system consisting of formal and informal organizations. Where informal resolution is dealing with crisis, the formal implementation focuses on the results of informal organizations. Others say that maybe the G-20 promotes a dangerous kind of multilateralism (Tedesco and Youngs, 2009), because it is a new forum with old vices, lack transparency and public responsibility, and gives exclusivity to the great powers within the forum. As an informal forum, its decisions are taken behind closed doors and there is no treaty outlining the rules of conduct and access to information. Although G-20 is not open to many stakeholders, it has more members than the G-8 and a greater representation of global opinion.

The concept of “*à la carte*” multilateralism is also very interesting (Haas, 1993). Multilateral organizations have only an instrumental value for the great powers and their political interests. In the specific case of U.S. foreign policy, there are evidence showing their success in strengthening their own interests, based on the ability of systemic importance and global economic governance. The United States can choose how to act unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally, this depending on the

expected benefits. If international institutions do not meet its requirements, it can choose something else to satisfy its immediate interests. So, the global governance in a multipolar world is increasingly becoming an intergovernmental one and it is led by the interests of big powers.

4. The New versus the Old Multilateralism

The new paradigm of multilateralism refers to the collaboration at all levels between governments and between governments and other important actors in society. The new multilateralism (Cox, 1997) refers to the growing importance of civil society in participating at building multilateralism to adapt to the new global requirements. If the United States was the core of the previous system and international organizations were depending on the will of the states, in the new multilateralism the role is taken by actors outside the countries, actors that contest the conceptual notion of sovereignty and open the one of international system (van Langenhove, 2010):

Table 1. Multilateralism 1.0 versus Multilateralism 2.0

Multilateralism 1.0	Multilateralism 2.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the old multilateralism • countries are the core of the system • intergovernmental organizations are dependent on the states' will • the principle of sovereignty in decision making process • the policies are independent • the involvement of the citizens is limited to democratic representation at political level • the system is inflexible • formal institutions or organizations • the global order is divided into levels of governance, from global to local • unipolarity or bipolarity • perfect synchronization between regions and regional organizations • principle of subsidiarity in decision making process • the system is closed • United Nations play a central role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the new multilateralism • other actors are the core of the system • redistribution of global power, independent on the states' will • diversification of the multilateral organizations • the increased number of non-state actors at regional level • the policies are interconnected • the involvement of the citizens in the decisional process, not only at the political level • the system is flexible • informal agreements • there is no hierarchical structure of governance • multi-polarity • asymmetric synchronization between regions and regional organizations • principle of mutuality in decision making process • the system is open • informal organizations play a central role • United Nations do not play anymore a central role

The transition to a multipolar world is done under the auspices of the development of global economic governance (Behr and Jokela, 2011). The increased number of countries with very important roles globally makes it difficult to measure the absolute gains and to track the global interests. The continuous transition of power made not an easy way for the United States and EU to open the international cooperation. At the moment, no country is able to establish structures of the global economic governance, nor to ensure their proper functioning. The transition to a multipolar world order is associated with relative gains and traditional power politics, but also with the fragmentation resulted from the decentralization of economic and political powers.

Despite the significant changes that occurred in the global economy since 1945, the main institutions of the global governance tend to reflect an order centered on Western states in terms of values and representation (Cottier, Elsig, 2011). The analyses show the disconnection between current and actual distribution of power within the major institutions of global economic governance. The legitimacy links the representation, this meaning to which extent the international institutions are representative for the global society over which they exercise political or technical authority.

5. Conclusions

The legitimacy deficit is closely related to effective global governance and the crisis of multilateralism, which requires the redefining of the applied model. The transition is being made toward a less formal model of governance and negotiation. Global governance reform must reflect all these changes and realities of the contemporary world, addressed inefficiently. The important growth rates in emerging countries are translated also in strong demand for representation in global economic governance. The desire of emerging powers to continue the globalization process and global governance is uncertain. G-20 takes the great responsibility in the current global governance in a multipolar world. The development of this forum was held together with the need to find common solutions to financial crisis. It promotes cooperation and joint global action to tackle the crisis and deepening economic interdependence. One of its key features is the reform of global governance and it is outlined the need of further research in this direction.

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