

From the Global Village to a Global Polis

Aristotelian thoughts on Global Governance

Draft Version
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This paper argues that global governance must be based on arguing processes about values and aims rather than on a decision-making process about given functional tasks. Misleading as well is the idea, that the globe must be united under one hegemonic discourse or – if you prefer it more traditional – one hegemonic power, if not for market than for security reasons.

One might wonder why the grandfather of Political Science should contribute to this critical focus on global governance. Particularly if scholars of International Politics are the audience, it is not quite clear if Aristotle could count as a grandfather of the discipline anyway. Thukydides, if you need an old dead Greek, might be more common. With this ancestor, the Greek city-state plays a important part in some of the stories, told by realist to explain the eternal law of balance of power. The narrative which is offered here has not the intention to follow this tradition.

An other very familiar and rather un-critical perspective of global governance is the notion of progress in a Hegelian sense which was introduced already ten years ago by Fukuyama's well known end of history. Even though this idea of progress might be traced back in a very broad perspective to the Aristotelian notion of teleology, this is not the starting point of the Aristotelian story of this paper.

As far as values are at stake, particularly if Aristotle is mentioned, one might remember the communitarian-cosmopolitan debate. However, to have this debate in mind is misleading to understand the argument of the paper here. It will not follow the communitarian road of arguments. Values are rooted in a historical process and these processes came to different results. But these value constructing argumentation are not bound to a community which already exists. The community comes into being as a result of the praxis of argumentation. Globalisation is understood as a economic enterprise. It is time to move from the global village as assembly of oikoi to a global polis.

To develop the central argument about the praxis of argumentation about values and aims as basis of global governance, this paper will make three other claims:

If we would like to describe the shift from government to governance and thereby try to abolish the notion of hierarchical statism as the only possibility to bear agency, our understanding of politics itself comes into question. It is not sufficient to construct governance as the absence of one deciding government and understand it as a decision-making process of many governments maybe including some non-governmental actors. What is at stake, if we move from government to governance, is our notion of politics.

Politics must be understood as one constitutive space where values and aims, identities and interests are constructed by a process of argumentation. The actors are not forced to enter the political sphere via an *aliénation totale* as Rousseau told us, but they do not arrive with fixed interest or given functional tasks either. Our notion of politics is nevertheless deeply connected with the notion of actors (and their interests) co-operating or competing (not to say fighting) for a decision to manufacture a state where their needs and interests are satisfied. However, a useful notion of politics would be one which is aware of the contested and constructed nature of political interests and decisions. This understanding is particularly urgent if the political process is rooted in a realm of governance where order is not one of fixed hierarchies but one of an ongoing stabilisation process in different kinds of argumentation and negotiations.

The functional discourse of global governance which will be criticised in the first part of the paper was a very optimistic one: There are interests and there are functional tasks – based on the common interests of wealth – and we have the globalisation of markets and the globalisation of governance. So why bother? The 11th of September changed this attitude. An act of mass murder and mass destruction cannot be integrated in a rational discourse about economic interests and functional tasks. The rationale of the terrorists is part of a totally different set of values and interests. Therefore the communitarian reaction might be the obvious one. But if the own community is the only realm where values can be discussed war is the only solution to interact with other communities. To wage war becomes even more urgent if the second lesson from the terrorist attacks is learned. It is the territory, stupid! The functional approach was not only too optimistic about the possible interests and values but it neglected the “function” of

territory. It was its central claim that territorial structures are obsolete because the new global age will be dominated not through control over territory but over functions. There are some regional centres and the rest counts as periphery which one can neglect, for example Taliban-Afghanistan.

If your community is attacked by terrorist, which values are rooted in a discourse you cannot talk to and you learned that there should no safe harbours for them in any corner of the globe, this new kind of territorial governance became a very belligerent one. An attack on Iraq is the logical next step. *Territorial governance* has to dominate not only global functions, but the territory of the globe. To avoid the logic of this belligerent territorial governance, this paper does not argue for a “constructive dialogue” with terrorists and dictators, for them containment and sometimes war might be the adequate measurement. However, one need a starting point for the dialogue with the discourse they are rooted in and which gave them legitimacy in the eye of some beholders.

If the functional approach of global governance is as insufficient as the territorial approach is too dangerous, a critical perspective on global governance which prepares the ground for a notion of politics placing the argumentation process in the middle of its focus, is particularly urgent. In the third part of the paper some Aristotelian thoughts are introduced under this perspective. His term of the political practice enables a fresh look and might be a useful instrument describing the process of global governance. However, if the widespread notion of politics looses some of its strength, the notion of political science, as a problem-solving enterprise already under pressure since years, might need similar corrections.

Along the familiar lines of post-positivist constructivism, Aristotle is not only useful to get a new notion of politics, his term *praxis* is also the cornerstone of its thinking about political science. If the meta-theoretical and the theoretical debates are getting in the state of bearing some empirical fruits, these fruits cannot be one of empirical data sets available for enhanced testing. These fruits must be the possibility to get in touch with politics again and be theoretical and methodical equipped to argue with the political practice and the political discourse as well. And this political argumentation is not primarily one about functions and procedures, but about values and aims.

To make good on these three claims the paper will be arranged in three parts. The first will try to show the need in functional debate of global governance to turn to a new notion of politics. The second will do this in respect to the *territorial approach* of global governance. The third part introduces will summarise the idea of the Aristotelian practice and examines the effect of this turn in the notion of politics to the self-image of political science.

FUNCTIONAL GOVERNANCE, PRAXIS AND POLITICS

The global governance was constructed as the functional, problem-solving framework to replace the picture of power politics and balance of power, which was the key feature of international politics as an endeavour of states. Beyond this common negative definition the new phrase was rather open for interpretation or as – one might say – confusion . (on this point see Konrad Späth's Conference Paper). However, the starting point as a functional one opposed to power politics, seems to neglect the political dimension as a praxis of argumentation between several and contested points of view of governance.

The functional focus of investigation remains on the quasi-technical solution of collective action problems. What falls by the wayside is a concept of politics that is concerned with questions of what purposes should be pursued, how certain situations should be evaluated and how a valid and legitimate interpretation of certain affairs can be attained. Even though a rationalist account of global governance has its own merits, the political character of global governance requires a different perspective on governance: Politics is concerned with the stabilising or changing of legitimate arguments and interpretations of certain event which are not susceptible to an understanding of governing, such as bureaucratic measures and instrumental efficiency. The characterisation of something as a problem and the specification of measures to cope with it are not a matter of given facts, but become questions of intersubjective contests over the proper meaning to be applied to the situation at hand.

The contests over the meaning of certain events indicate the importance of argumentation: It is the intersubjective practice of arguing that demonstrates the political nature of governance. The struggle around contested concepts and their application to given events is neither fought by individual actors with pre-defined preferences and interests, nor structurally determined by a compulsory logic. Only through arguments and their intersubjective acceptance in a certain context do political practices become understandable. The political practices of global governance evolve along corridors of accepted meanings and rules that enable actors to act in the first place, because

intersubjective arguments are accepted as valid reasons and circumscribe a space of legitimate engagement without necessarily determining the outcome.

With the introduction of the Aristotelian practice, the paper offers a heuristically fruitful perspective on global governance. Constructed as a process of argumentation, the concept of praxis seizes the middle ground between the mere power structure of a certain discourse and the voluntaristic decisions and consent of actors. Argumentation is not a praxis of domination or one enlightened by the light of reason only, primarily it is a search for arguments which can be accepted by the others because they appreciate these arguments as legitimate or they can image that these arguments are persuasive because they can integrate these argument in their set of values and legitimate aims.

TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE, TERRORISM AND LANGUAGE

After the attacks of the 11th of September it becomes clear, that an image of globalisation, which structured the global village as a net of region states in the centre surrounded with a unimportant periphery, is misleading. To make the world save for globalisation means to take the territory of the world and its population into account. This endeavour could be undertaken by several strategies: The first might focus on the idea of a network of co-operating governments. This would fit in the old notion, prior to globalisation, which constructed the world as separated territories under supreme powers, called states. If this is not enough, it might be interesting to rule by discourse. Then, the spread of the liberal discourse, if necessary with forcible means, is important. But the attempt to dominate with one discourse could be dangerous to implement. Therefore, the old idealistic idea of justice comes back into focus. Not the domination of one discourse, but the similarities in different discourses could lead to a common praxis. This praxis could integrate many frictions and conjectures to such an extent, that justice would be a promise, each discourse could make, believe and try to keep. After the construction of a world polity, we need a theory of international politics or, better, a theory of global politics.

The Return of Territory

The idea of globalisation is built on the dismantle-process of the state, understood as a unity of territory, people and power. The technological and economic process of globalisation constructs centres of power. These centres integrate some people and some territories. Other territories surround them as semi-peripheries and as useless and lost peripheries.

If the centre of the centre, the World Trade Center, could be hit by a massive attack of terror, which is rooted in the territory of the periphery, in the oil-rich semi-periphery as well as in the neglected periphery of Afghanistan, the analytical distinction of centre and periphery has lost its value. The periphery introduces itself as part of the centre.

The military reaction against the territory, which was formerly seen as too unimportant to waste any resource to pacify or to dominate it, brought the old linkage between territory and security back in mind. The government of one territory asks the governments of the other territories to secure their territory. The governments are responsible for their territories. If they are willing, but not capable, they will get assistance. If they are unwilling, they will be overthrown.

Therefore, global governance, as far as security is concerned, means the co-ordination and co-operation of governments to secure their territories as part of the global territory and to replace governments, who failed. This project is ambitious and dangerous, if we keep anti-terror wars from Gaza to Grosny in mind, where the local governments, which failed, still hold legitimacy in the population.

And why should the governments of the periphery co-operate in the first place, beside the argument, that they are forced to? The image of centre and periphery is obsolete as far as territory and security are concerned, but it is still valid if identity is the issue. Security, as we learned for theory, is always for someone and some purposes. If the aim is the stabilisation of the way of life of the centre, only, this might lead to tensions. World security cannot be organised like international security. The famous picture of the egg box, where every state is a cushioned egg, cannot be replaced by a global omelette for all issues, but kept in place for security. We need a common goal for common security. We need an Aristotelian understanding of the political praxis and, therefore as well a political theory for the global polis.

Discourse and Domination

Global governance is mainly a liberal idea. Liberalism, hence, is our theory of global politics. We have Hegel, history and Fukuyama on our side, so why bother?.

Unfortunately, the neo-liberal discourse failed. Its agenda was too narrow. The neo-liberal global village was just a village in its Grecian sense, a couple of oikoi with the task to foster their material and economic interest. Hence, like its Grecian predecessor, it needs domination. This is the crucial difference Aristotle made between the realm of need and force of the economy and the realm of possibilities and free argumentation of politics. We

can have an anarchical society of states, which maintains order, leaving justice and the pursuit of a common good to the states. But if we have a market, we have a realm for the pursuit of one common good – wealth – and no place for anarchy. (The false neo-realist analogy between international anarchy and markets is discussed in several other papers). In this perspective the market needs politics much more than the autarkic household economy of the Grecian oikos. If we integrate the market place with the project of globalisation into the anarchical society of states to such an extent, we have to discuss about justice, if we do not want discuss about domination and civil war.

But the problem is not a question of economic solidarity, only. The safe havens of the terrorists are part of the old neglected periphery. But terrorists and their ideas come from the most important semi-periphery: the oil-lands of the middle east. Unfortunately, we do not only interacted with a region for our benefit and the benefits of some regional despots. We dominated a region, which has a the notion it should dominate the world by itself and a past, where this domination was likely to succeed. So we have good reason why we have Islamic and not African terrorism. We do not only face the problem of more equal distribution of wealth, but the problem, which identity decides, what counts as value.

Having these argument in mind, we can very quick settle the question, if the *neo*-liberal agenda is the problem. If this would be the point, we just have to abolish the “neo” by “social” and create a nice place on earth under the liberal banner of wealth, tolerance, human rights and pluralism – difficult enough!

The *old* liberal school was very familiar with the problem of different values beyond material terms. Its solution was to abolish the question to a certain extend and concentrate on procedures and participation. But, unfortunately, this was not the general solution of the world, fostered by the ruse of reason. This was our solution after very bloody religious wars and revolutions. Are we prepared to wage these wars on a global scale? And if so, it is by no means clear, how the story would end. Liberalism was not the ideology of one victorious force, but the compromise after all were tired of the war.

Language and Justice

To secure the territory of the global polity, actor-related war as well as the spread of liberal ideas are important. They might be related: if our discourse gets more legitimacy, we need less domination. If we are illegitimate, we need more domination.

One important part of the illegitimacy of our discourse is the unequal distribution of wealth. It is not in the interest of the rich to build a just world, but it is in their interest to make it a little bit more just. If we would like to make the world safe for globalisation the Marshall Plan would be a better model than the measurements after World War I, intended to make the world safe for democracy.

But Liberalism, without the neo prefix, is difficult to implement as well. One asymmetric possibility starts with the nice order: "Listen! Our discourse is the best! If you would listen long enough, you will believe it (Rorty) or you will see that in the light of reason it is also yours (Habermas). Aristotle understood man as *zoon politicon* mainly because he saw him as *zoon logon echon*. Language is not an instrument to reach aims beyond it. Language bears this aims. They are constructed in the realm of language.

Our task is not to abolish our liberal discourse, but to understand the arguments the other discourses have to offer. Political scientists should search for common or similar rules and for acceptable and plausible arguments in the different cultural discourses, not to establish one common discourse instead of the others, but to link the different sets of argument in all possible ways. The new game would not substitute the old ones, but give them the opportunity to talk to each other, not in Esperanto and not from a common meta-narrative, but by understanding the language of each other, getting the ability to explain the others our problems and understand them, if they explain theirs to us. Thus a global polis would emerge which is not rooted in common mythical past (of course the Grecian analogy has its shortcomings), but in a common historical generated argumentative praxis

For this task, we need a fresh look on politics as well as on political science and grandfather Aristotle might give us some hints.

THE ARISTOTELIAN TURN

This argumentation could be traced back to some Aristotelian thoughts, which should be summarised now.

Politics does not mean domination. Quite the opposite is the case. Aristotle constructed the praxis of politics against the background of the law of domination known for the oikos and for countries ruled by despots. If global governance is the focus with replaces international anarchy we should know that there could be an other understanding of politics than that the territorial governance will offer. We do not need global hegemony, but we have to go down the path of multilateralism to reach the global polis of an arguing praxis.

However, global governance constructed as opposite of domination does not mean that the aims and values and therefore the tasks are fixed and the decisions ahead are only about functional implementation. Aristotle shows us that interests as well as power are not fixed entities prior to interaction. They are constructed in the praxis of argumentation. The arguments gain more legitimacy than others. The support of on argument, which gives power to the actor who argues with it, depends on the legitimacy it can hold over time. It is easier to integrate material arguments like a big purse or huge arsenals of weapons in a approach which focus around the praxis of argumentation than to integrate ideas and values in a materialistic matrix.

If politics is about the praxis of argumentation political science cannot be about the eternal law of power politics and not about preference hierachies in functional decision-making-procedures. Political science, again this is the focus Aristotle offers, must be about a methodology which examines the possible arguments of an arguing process. It must show which arguments count as legitimate and how new arguments could gain legitimacy. Political science is therefore always a value and norm guided enterprise. It has to show which norms count now and which norms and value could and should count in the future, because they can foster the process of argumentation and avoid one of war, which was the original task for the founding fathers of the discipline and which is still urgent.