

Why global agreements are more likely to solve global challenges than global democracy

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Abstract:

This paper first distinguishes between two broad approaches to global democracy. First, there is the non-governmental approach: this comes in the form of many so-called “global democracy” initiatives – often, internet-based - which, because they are informal and non-governmental, are not binding on nations. Second, there is the governmental approach: the idea either that all nations should become democratic in the hope that this would make solutions to global problems more likely. Or that some form of supra-national democratic process supported by nation-states would, if made available to citizens worldwide, have the same effect.

As far as non-governmental approaches are concerned, they have no binding influence over national governments. While offering a useful channel for global opinion-forming, their ability to resolve global problems is argued to be doubtful. As far as governmental approaches are concerned, clearly many countries around the world, including China, are not democratic. Nor is there any realistic prospect of a change in the foreseeable future. Neither, by the same token, are such countries likely to permit their citizens any vote on global affairs when they are not even allowed a vote on national affairs. The focus on democracy inherent in both these approaches, the paper argues, is thus an unrealistic Western-centric projection.

The paper argues instead for a focus on global agreements. Unlike a focus on democracy, global agreements focus directly on global problems, so offering a potentially swifter approach to solving them. Crucially, global agreements do not depend on democracy. Instead, they allow for each nation to participate in a manner that suits its particular political culture. For Western democratic nations, for example, governments may be driven by their citizens to participate via already-existing democratic processes. For non-democratic nations, governments could simply decide to participate without the involvement of their respective citizens. A focus on global agreements therefore accepts the world as it is. It is thus argued to offer a more realistic, practical and swifter approach to solving global challenges.

The paper goes on to discuss some past global agreements and suggests why some have been successful while others have failed. It proposes clear criteria for structuring successful, binding global agreements and explains how the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is unlikely to be successful because of its failure to meet such criteria.

Based on such an analysis, the paper discusses the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol) campaign as an example of how of how well-structured, binding global agreements might be achieved over a broad variety of global issues and via varying existing political structures.

It explains how the campaign is already using national democratic processes in Western democratic countries to achieve such an agreement, and how it may be capable of attracting the support of non-democratic countries. It discusses the campaign’s progress and how it has gained support from Members of Parliament in a growing number of countries around the world.