

Two Global Challenges to Global Governance

by Furio Cerutti

(Dip. di Filosofia, Univ. di Firenze)

Since it was first introduced by the World Bank, later receiving academic dignity in Rosenau and Czempel's seminal essay collection on *Governance without Government* (1992), the notion of governance has rapidly become an extremely successful keyword in both political and scientific debates. Its career is now two decades old, and all along this time its popularity has raised doubts about the intellectual costs (lack of clarity and diffusiveness) paid in order to achieve it. As early as 1995, one critic objected that (global) governance “appears to be virtually everything” (Finkelstein 1995, 368);¹ then Rosenau himself spoke of “a still amorphous entity called ‘global governance’ (Rosenau 1999, 287); finally last year Claus Offe has aired his misgivings about “governance” being at least to an extent an “empty signifier”, while indicating which narrow conditions should be met in order to prevent the notion from that fate (Offe 2009).

Rather than discussing the pros and cons of the general notion of “governance” it makes more sense to focus on “global governance”, a concept that is not merely a specification of the basic notion and is better described if we regard it as an independent one. Conceptual clarity does not abound in this field either, and to steer clear of the dominating polysemy it is useful to start with a distinction between two basic usages of the word: global governance as a problem (§1) and global governance as a project (§2). I shall then propose to keep this notion alive as a necessary evil and to seek a better defined use of it (§3), at least by establishing some order or scale of relevance among its various issues. This is what I try to do in §4 by reading global governance in the light of my theory of global challenges, which I think upset politics as we were used to see it in modern times. The difficulties with communicating global challenges, particularly man-made climate change, in a time of politics in transition are explained in §5.

I. Global Governance as a problem

Global governance seen as a problem means asking the question: how can the globalized world be governed?

This question has two premises and at least one implication. The *first premise* is that with regard to economy, technology, politics and communication the world is globalized in the sense that some processes and challenges are met neither by local public or private institutions and their policies nor by the traditional (diplomatic) cooperation among them; the very distinction of

¹ To be true, one is reminded of this biting remark fifteen years on, when reading the updated definition of “global governance” attempted by the new editors of “Global Governance”, s. Farer and Sisk 2010,1.

domestic and international becomes obsolete in this context (this explains the adjective “global”). On this count the theory of global governance can be seen as a development of the international regime theory which goes beyond its origin, for example by introducing the notion of transnational regimes, which also “include the ‘subpolitics’ of non-state actors” and is for example the basis of Zürn’s idea of a “*complex global governance*”(Beck 2009, 185, italics mine).²

The *second premise* applies to the noun “governance”: in the global context a government-like, hierarchical management of the problems does not work in the twofold sense that this government does not exist nor is likely to come up, and that the complex nature of the problems and the irreducible diversity of the actors do not allow for a statist solution to the governance riddle. Offe adds that governance (as a problem) arises when market forces prove as unable as governments to manage the problems, a reading of the term that misses its affinity with the functioning of the market as a self-steering system. Although the theoretical presuppositions of the global governance concept are nowhere fully clarified, in many of its versions it can be understood as a performance of the system, provided by the accidental combination of various forces and actions in an impersonal and, as it were, actor-less way (the combination that brings about governance takes place behind the actors’ back). This feature of governance and especially global governance was essential to Rosenau’s definition of these concepts: “Governance includes all channels through which control or steering mechanisms frame goals, issue directives, and pursue policies.” (Rosenau 2000, 182) and in this sense global governance is “the sum of myriad –literally millions- of control mechanisms driven by different histories, goals, structures and processes” (*ibidem*, 183). In a post-Cold War environment lacking, along with a true hegemon, any central principle or order, hierarchy or grand logics Rosenau went as far as to see a new anarchy, consisting not just of the absence of a highest authority, but its disaggregation as well.³ This allows nonetheless for an “upsurge in the collective capacity to govern”, due to the rule systems now deeper “permeating daily life, permanent over time, extensive in space wider in functional scope, more bureaucratic”. It is therefore an anarchy in which, even in the absence of an overall structural order, “it is possible to identify pockets of coherence operating at different levels and in different parts of the world that can serve as bases for assessing the contours of global governance in the future”” (*ibidem*, 185). It would be worth to inquire into the possible connection between this view of how global governance comes into being and the system theory of society, including the theory

² While Rosenau 1992, 8-9, stressed the gap between regimes and global governance, in Young 2002 the latter still seems to consist of the former; and is then identified with international organizations by Karns and Mingst 2004 .

³ This resonates with Beck’s formulation that “a relatively clear-cut system of international politics oriented to national interests and relative weights is being replaced by a non-clear-cut (dis)order called global governance” (Beck 199,185).

of complex adaptive systems developed at the Santa Fe Institute, and its notion of self-organization, which is used by Rosenau as well.⁴

Whatever its general framework, this view seems to conjure up an actor-less understanding of global governance, whose success or failure in managing global problems is the performance of impersonal mechanisms, regardless of what actors intend to do, or the unintended and unconscious result of how they act. If this reading is correct, we could go as far as to say that the first example of (European-American) global governance in the history of International Relations is the idea of international, if anarchical society created by the English School of International Relations (see lastly Bull 1977): in it (unlike in the international system, in which actors simply interact) goals are achieved (reduction of violence) and rules (*pacta sunt servanda*) established *as if* actors had agreed on pursuing them, while we know that is far from being the case. It is my assumption that in explaining the emergence of both international society and global governance the “as if” clause is the logical key to reconciling the anarchy of intentional acts by the players and the achievement of some order that makes the survival and evolutionary wellbeing of the players possible.

Opposite to this, global governance is seen by other authors as resulting, if any, from the endeavours of state, non-state and private actors to coordinate their actions in order to manage global problems and meet global threats, in a situation in which world government is not an option nor can a worldwide statute law be passed, let alone imposed. In this sense global governance as a performance, mostly referred to a single issue area, is the result of *political will* to produce it. This is still an analytical understanding of global governance (as a problem), which is however compatible with the normative version we are soon going to explore. Particularly in this version “global governance” is less and less handled in recent literature as an overall problem or general theory of, and rather regarded as a problem within a single substantive issue area (financial and environmental global governance come first, followed by energy, health, Internet, migration, patents offices, biopolitics; two titles regard the political champion of “good” global governance, the European Union).⁵

Finally, the *hidden implication* of the global governance notion I alluded to at the outset is that defining and solving the problems that affect the world of globalization is more important than addressing the classical problem: who governs it? Governance – as Offe put it – is not the vantage point from which we can peer into power and distribution relationships (Offe 2009). One can take this – as Offe does - as an objection pointing at the functionalist rather than critical nature of the

⁴ Successful mechanisms of governance, which “manage to evoke the consent of the governed”, are “self-organizing systems, steering arrangements” (Rosenau 2000, 184).

⁵ This makeshift survey draws upon the book titles, published between 2008 and 2010, coming up under “global governance” in HOLLIS, Harvard libraries’ online catalogue.

governance concept. However, with regard to problems such as the global challenges I shall address later in this paper, it is also possible to see the priority of the question “how to govern it (if ever possible)?” over “who governs it” as the signpost of an epoch-making transformation; in its course we are confronted with problems in front of which the eventual adversarial character (who wins, who loses?) of the solution is of secondary importance or even pointless compared with the necessity to find a solution whatsoever, given the lethal nature of the challenges.

II. Global Governance as a project

The normative version of the concept is based on the same premises as above (effective global dimension of the problems, no world government, no chance for any statist, authoritative solution, preference for multilateralism), but goes beyond the analytical attitude of watching whether global governance succeeds or fails, and adopts the second stand of those we have just described: governance derives from the planned actions of the actors, who in a reflective posture can be induced to perform them. Unlike the “problem” version, which is obviously limited to science, this version is widely represented in scientific and policy-oriented terms. Suffice it to recall the Commission on Global Governance, which worked between 1992 and 1995, and the UN Global Compact Governance Board/Office; not to speak of the bodies that, though not working under that headline, provide some amount of global governance such as G8, G15, G22 or the Financial Stability Board, strengthened after one of the major failures of global financial and economic governance, the crisis that started in the autumn of 2008. Five years before the deadline of 2015, the far from brilliant outlook⁶ of the Millennium Goals, set by the United Nations in order to make the world more just and better governable, does not witness a general advance in global governance.

In this version global governance is more explicitly presented as an anti-neoliberal project, as it means providing governance for the otherwise anarchical and therefore unjust globalized world, instead of relying on what worldwide market forces and national governments driven by the idea of national interest may bring about; it means to organize solutions for what would otherwise remain an open problem or risk or challenge or danger. A vast literature now exists in each of the issue areas envisaged as the most important venues of this version of global governance: human rights, international distributive justice, world poverty⁷, environment and especially climate change, and more. It is significant (and, I may say, refreshing) that these studies from which field-specific policy recommendations are drawn, have replaced the all-including World Order Model Proposals (WOMPs) issued in the Eighties by Richard Falk and his team at Princeton. Motivations for these

⁶ This results even from the official report 2009 on goal attainment, [s.http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_Report_2009_ENG.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_Report_2009_ENG.pdf)

⁷ S. Pogge 2008 and his research project now funded by the EU under the 7th Framework Programme.

studies range from the political (to bring some just order and governability into the globalized world) to the religious and ethical ones; in the latter case with variations on the idea of justice that vary from pure normativism, in a mostly Rawlsian attitude, to more politically perceptive versions (justice not only as a moral value, but as element of stability and development as well, s. for example Jacquet *et al.*, 2003). If we look at the links between global governance and political theory, most significant is still David Held's approach, in which global governance is the area of problems to which cosmopolitanism, in his moderate version, can give political answers.⁸

Lastly, despite the different purpose, the normative version of "global governance" shares the two premises with the analytical one, but not the hidden implication. Here actors matter of course, and they are taken to issue for what they do or omit to do. This brings into play on the one hand the category of accountability and the wider one of responsibility⁹, on the other the classical political issue of legitimacy, though with regard to global governance and its projection into the future this question cannot be handled in the classical way, as I have argued in Cerutti 2011.

III. Preserving 'Global Governance' as a Necessary Evil.

Because of its many meanings, of the ambivalence of pertaining to both the analytical and normative realms, and of referring to both the holistic (global governance as ersatz for world government) and the specific, issue-related level a lover of intellectual clarity would have good reasons to drop "global governance" altogether and look for other, unambiguous and less generic formulations. For this there is indeed one more reason which I will mention at the end of this section.

"Global governance" shares however these drawbacks with other similar notions such as globalization; in these cases it is rather advisable to use the word as rarely as possible, to dispense with it whenever a more appropriate term is available, and – what is more – to specify the meaning in which in the specific case we resort to it. What I am suggesting is a pragmatic, unambitious use of the notion: it cannot be easily dropped because it usefully denotes a new dimension (global) and a problematic novelty (the somewhat enigmatic governance, which must be used for things for which there is no government available, and ought to be researched even if we do not yet know exactly what it is). Finally, in the present situation of conceptual uncertainty and of epoch-making,

⁸ For this mix of global governance cf. the new (2010) international journal "Global Policy", for which LSE Global Governance (run by Held, Mary Kaldor and the economist Danny Quah) is the main hub, as well as Held's forthcoming redrafting of his theory of cosmopolitanism.

⁹ On their difference s. the Special Issue 2010 (Cerutti 2010) of "Science and Engineering Ethics" on *Risk and Responsibility*, particularly my own and E. Pulcini's contributions.

but far from conclusive change in the real world, any attempt at giving the term a stringent well-defined meaning is – I am afraid - bound to fail.¹⁰

These pragmatic suggestions come out of a reflection on what are perhaps the greatest limits of “global governance”: in itself it is a procedural-only or subjective-only notion, focused on actors and rules of action, and that takes little note of what is the substantive matter (with its specific constraints) on which governance should be exercised. Or if it does, as in the literature on single issues of governance quoted above, it risks to fail to see the whole picture and the connections between its aspects. In working on global governance one has to strike a *delicate balance* between the attention for the single, fragmented elements of the globalized world and the circumstance that it is still *one* world, that governance for one of its aspects (say, energy) cannot work without having more or less interplay with other aspects (say, greenhouse gases emissions as well as religious tolerance and dialog with the fuel-producing countries)¹¹. While we keep distance from a picture of global governance too closely resembling a world government that neatly manages all problems of the planet, it is hard not to see that an advance in governance on a certain problem must somehow affect the governance of other problems; beyond eventual links among the single problems, the actors and addressees of last resort of the several profiles of governance are still the same individuals, while the different or separate games take place on one and the same planet. Global governance as a whole is a mosaic of the several issue-related “governances”, although the image shown in the mosaic remains far from being unitary.

If this is true, one procedure to give “global governance” a better defined version could be to ask whether a *scale of relevance* can be ascertained among the several pieces/problems of global governance (as a problem), making possible to establish *priorities* among the policies to pursue in order to bring about global governance (as a project). Just to start, the higher the potential of an issue to hinder global governance in general as well as of other issues, the higher should be assessed its relevance as a problem.¹²

My suggestion is to begin with recognizing the primacy of (narrowly defined) global challenges for global governance.¹³

¹⁰ This is one of the reasons, the other being lack of space, why I do not review in this paper the various definitions given to the term nor make any attempt at proposing an other one.

¹¹ Global governance for the contacts between world cultures and civilizations, does it make sense? I think so, it would mean a set of standards and behaviours to be agreed upon among the main worldwide actors in a field that is as explosive as that of the geoeconomic elements related to energy policies. If it has to grasp something of our situation, “governance” should be thought of in association with problems of soft, not just hard power.

¹² Attempts at reforming and clarifying the concept while being aware of its deficits are not new, cf. Latham 1999.

¹³ The following is based on my theory of global challenges as developed in Cerutti 2007.

4. What Global Challenges Mean for Global Governance.

I term challenges such as nuclear weapons (considered in themselves, while nuclear proliferation is but a subphenomenon) and climate change *global* in a very narrow sense, because they are lethal and planet-wide, can hit approximately everybody on earth and can be reasonably addressed only by the near totality of countries and peoples. I see at this time no other challenge meeting these criteria for being truly global, that is possessing the same ultimate features as the threats to individual life and limbs upon which Thomas Hobbes built his explanation of why the Leviathan is born (although the outcome this time is by far not as straightforward) . They are lethal not in the sense that they would biologically wipe out humankind, although this cannot be excluded in case of an all-out nuclear war; but they would destroy or upset (at once nuclear war, gradually a climate change heading for its worst scenario) human civilization, by which I mean not a set of values, but a set of material and cultural tools (agriculture, communications, transportation and trade) that allow unspecialized animals like the humans to survive and to thrive.

The two global challenges (and other that may come, perhaps biotechnology) are relevant not just to moral philosophy or the philosophy of history,¹⁴ but politics and policy making as well. Foreign policy has now been dealing with nuclear weapons for nearly sixty-five years (remember the failed Baruch Plan of 1946) and in the last times a mix of foreign and industrial policy (emissions reduction, carbon emissions trading) becomes at least once per year (Copenhagen 2009, Cancun 2010) a burning issue in international and domestic policy. They are somehow on the agenda, but in both cases global governance is far from achieved: the very nuclear non-proliferation regime, though it hardly affect the existence of nuclear weapons, is under strain, or heavily shaken (Pant 2010), and effective global measures to curb global warming are far from being agreed upon. Both issues are likely to remain on the agenda, but there are reasons why it is difficult or unlikely that they are seen by the relevant actors in their radical novelty and grasped with the necessary determination, something for which no sufficient coalition of forces is in sight.

Here are the – four – reasons for all that.

The two global threats – first - remain lethal for humankind as long as they are not eliminated (nuclear weapons) or adequately curbed in their roots (global warming). Nuclear deterrence, despite of its relative merits, remains structurally unstable at least in the long run; the opposite opinion deserves quoting Thomas Schelling's sarcastic dictum after the end of the Cold War: renewing our confidence in it is very much alike the guy who, after just one round of Russian roulette, said "It isn't that dangerous after all". Because of the very physical nature of this tool of

¹⁴ They mark the end of modernity and the opening of a post-modern era of which we do not know much, except that it has little to do with the postmodern readings.

foreign and military policy, only its material elimination (which would solve the problem only temporarily, since the technology can be resuscitated) or a new way of shaping foreign and security policy (in the sense of a *Weltinnenpolitik*) that neutralizes nuclear weapons would help, not a compromise that does not untie national sovereignty and the possession of the “absolute” weapon. Still for (even more evident) physical reasons global warming must be tackled at its root (emissions containing greenhouse gases) by means of a serious and costly *mitigation* policy, because halfway measures would only hurt (financially) but not help; mere (still, even if less costly) *adaptation* would bring some solace to the present generations but leave the problem unaddressed or in a worse shape for the future.

The first reason informed us that, when addressing problem with a substantial physical component (unlike in the case of social problems), global governance does not have the tools of traditional politics – compromise, bargaining, change of coalition – at its disposal. The second reason, explicitly valid for global warming, is that it also lacks the tool of temporalization (Luhmann’s *Verzeitlichung*), that is postponement either openly or by blurring the agenda. There is a deep gap between the timing of the post-Kyoto process and nature’s time, according to which measures of emissions reduction or sequestration would be ineffective in keeping temperature increase by 2100 under 2° (the maximum acceptable level) if started later than 2016.

The third reason is known as *tragedy of the commons*. The depletion of global or planetary common goods such as the atmosphere, the protective ozone layer and a relatively stable temperature is not seriously dealt with by the community of present users\spoilers either because the many particular interests of those who do not want to pay for the necessary changes prevail over the general interest in protecting those goods, or because the majority of present users\spoilers does not regard the interest of future generations as worth being protected. The protection of local commons such as pasture lands in middle-age Europe is not comparable, as little analogy between humankind and the single communities can be drawn.

The fourth reason could be by analogy called *tragedy of democracy*. Democracy is a successful way to regulate conflicts of principles and interests and to prevent them from becoming disruptive and bloody in as much as it enables the majority to govern and the minority to have its fundamental rights respected (liberal democracy) and rerun the electoral game with a chance of becoming majority. A scarcely talked-about pre-condition for democracy to be seen as the most just and advantageous method of conflict resolution is some *stability of the social and natural environment*: whatever majority can come out of the elections or the parliamentary vote, that environment shall not be significantly or irreversibly damaged or upset, and the next majority or coalition will have something (at worst, the damages of an unsuccessful war) to redress, but not to restart in a waste land. Now, this

stability is no longer a safe and implicit assumption (and that pre-condition, so far insufficiently highlighted because it was in fact obvious, needs to be worked out). Wrong decisions, significantly postponed decisions as well as omissions (the refusal to put global environmental challenges or a more incisive nuclear treaty on the agenda) can spoil the natural environment more than it is already, and contribute to cause irreversible damages. In this light, democracy looks a less promising method of governance than it used to be in the pre-global challenges era, and should be open to rethink itself under the pressure of the new challenges¹⁵; even if it remains more reassuring than other forms of governance because it allows for public debate on the agenda and pluralistic control of decision-making. All types of Leviathan are severely challenged by the new global threats in their basic protecting function, a fact which erodes their legitimacy. This is true for the democratic Leviathan as well, though still performing better than the others. Yet, being better performing than the others does not make by itself the level of protection provided by the democratic Leviathan adequate to the challenge.

Further, the new precariousness of that pre-condition raises a new problem for traditional democracy. A further presupposition for it to be able to present itself as the most legitimate method of governance was the *coincidence of the decision-makers*, the *demos* on election day, and *those affected* by the decisions, the totality of the citizens. Of course it was not just the actual citizens that were affected, but the next generations as well, at least one's own children and children's children; but the tacitly assumed stability of the environment put those affected in the present in the legitimate condition to speak for those affected in the future. Particularly in the republican tradition, what was democratically decided today used to be regarded as valid and good also for the citizens of tomorrow, while tyranny or oligarchy were considered to impose only the short-lived interests of the tyrant or the oligarchs. This is no longer the case, and it is correct to assume the possibility of a conflict of interest between generations: a fairly asymmetrical conflict, since the future generations are largely dependent on the effects of our decisions, while they have no instrument to coerce and deter us and do not even exist as present actors.

Let me recapitulate. We have started from a definition of global challenges and the two items that, according to a bulk of scientific evidence that cannot be exhibited and discussed here, meet the definition criteria. We have then examined the four reasons why the two global challenges have the potential to upset the very structure of policy-making as we know it and to make global governance (in the reordered version proposed) at the same time *more necessary and more unlikely* to materialize, because it would require a change in the motivational and normative core of politics:

15. This is the reason that makes recent (e.g. deliberative) theories of democracy unsatisfactory: they think of it just a relationship between citizens, groups and institutions, with no reference to the changing substantive problems democratic power has to come to terms or struggles with.

it would mean acting not just strategically, as actors driven by self interest and aimed at maximizing their utility, but – when it comes to coping with the global threats – primarily in an attitude of responsibility and care for the generations of the far future (those who may be exposed to catastrophic effects of climate change and to a re-emerged actual danger of nuclear war). It would mean, in a word, that future politics (from today on) should be “politics for the future”, which is profoundly different from the self-centred, present-day oriented politics modern actors have been practicing for the past five centuries (ideological politics apart). The rationale for this shift is that politics, beyond remaining the authoritative allocation of scarce resources (divisible goods subject to distributional conflicts), has now to manage the costly protection of global commons, which can be protected or lost only as whole (only the costs for this protection can be distributed in an adversarial way, but conflicts have been so far avoided by indifference to the endangered goods, that is by denying or postponing any protection policy).¹⁶

To this dilemma there is, I am afraid, no escape. The old strategy of appealing to the enlightened self interest of people and countries in order to make them act in an altruistic sense is unlikely to work, given the amount of economic costs and mental change required to, say, cutting down emissions by restructuring economy and life styles. This is mostly a philosophical subject matter that goes beyond the self-imposed limits of this paper; let me only note that taking seriously care (by mitigation of the greenhouse effect and a regime neutralizing nuclear arsenals) of those threats can be normatively (by arguments of responsibility rather than of justice) justified, but also seen as embedded in the meaning resources that make individual and collective life possible (cf.. Cerutti 2007, chps. 5 and 6). However, we do not need to assess the philosophical foundation of that attitude, in order to see that as a matter of fact (and as an object of empirical research) it is already significantly present among liberal- and cosmopolitan-minded citizens, including the sitting President of the United States,¹⁷ peace and ecological movements, epistemic communities. Alone, the presence of these forces in world politics seems far from bringing about treaties and policies really protecting present and future humankind from the global threats

Going back to the theoretical perspective, global challenges seem to build a *bridge* of their own between global governance as a problem and a project or policy.¹⁸ On the one hand they seem to provide global governance as a whole with a centre of gravity, around which other problems discussed in the related literature (say, energy) can be ordered according to their relevance and their

¹⁶ One of the first formulations of the problem and the indifference solution as seen by an economist is Kindleberger 1986.

¹⁷ In the personal view that inspires his rhetoric, cf. his Prague speech, April 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>

¹⁸ More in general it is wrong to handle the distinction of analytical and normative (first mentioned with regard to global governance by Rosenau 1992) as a clear-cut separation, that is as a fetish. On global reform being a theme of classical realism, and later becoming a taboo for neorealism cf. Scheuermann 2010.

links to the centre itself, in the sense that global energy governance has to be seen in connection with climate and nuclear safety problems. On the other, in the case of global challenges normative questions (how much and what kind of global governance should we build up?) seem to arise from the very incommensurable measure of man-made threat they carry along rather than from a moral or religious or legal command to do so. They affect and, if unresolved, undermine the very reason why humans have chosen to live in society and within political institutions: to be *protected* from dangers for life and limbs.

5. Communicating Global Challenges, a Hurdle for Global Governance.

To review the theory of global governance in the light of the theory of global challenges remains here just a suggestion that cannot be fully developed in this paper. Instead, an other problem needs to be mentioned: to move actors to new steps, apparently Hobbesian threats have to be perceived as such, otherwise they will stimulate the birth neither of a (unlikely, undesirable) Superleviathan nor of more modest, but efficient institutional and policy solutions. This is exactly what seems to be the case: after fifty-five years or so of Mutual Assured Destruction nuclear weapons remain in the hands of national sovereigns, even if they are now friendlier to each other, while forty years after the scientific discovery of global warming emissions do not cease to go up. Beyond the cultural inability of national elites, still mired in the “national interest”, to realize the scope of the problem, beyond the pressure of special interests (oil, military-industrial complex) which oppose change, there are structural difficulties in the learning process by which the two global challenges can become primary issues on the agenda and generate coalitions. To explain this I shall focus on climate change governance.

As a premise, we must note that “institutions for the earth” only work effectively under the political circumstances that the editors of the volume devoted to them (Keohane *et al.* 1993) phrase as high level of governmental concern, hospitable contractual environment and sufficient political and administrative capacity of the national governments involved (vice versa, established institutions help to maintain and enhance those circumstances).¹⁹ Other circumstances of economic nature must be present and were present at Montreal 1987 (The Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer): a favourable cost-benefit ratio,²⁰ the twin (stick and carrot) possibility of imposing damaging as well as deterring sanctions (trade restrictions) on non-compliant actors, and legitimizing this threat by side-payments pledged by wealthier partners to the weakest economies to facilitate their adaptation to the new standards. This is not the case with the Kyoto

19. More on the ozone protection regime is to find in Parson 1993 and 2003.

20. “The monetary benefits of preventing future deaths from skin cancer far outweighed costs of CFC controls”, as Barrett 2003, 230 put it.

Protocol, in which the global marginal benefits are expected to exceed every nation's own marginal benefits (Aldy *et al.* 2003, 6). Let us however remind that the cost-benefit calculation is not the last word about the criterion as to whether or not to participate in environmental agreements, because countries, or rather political regimes and governing coalitions, are also motivated by cultural differences as to how to assess the value of global vs. particular benefits, especially when these are projected into the future.²¹ But it is true that cost\benefit considerations play a central role anyway and can even be a stumbling block as long as incentives are not restructured, and\or cultural change has not moved environmental protection up the value scale which presides over political decision-making in democratic regimes, overcoming the “generational nepotism” that makes people worry only for themselves, their children and children's children. Coming finally down to the economic aspects of Montreal and Kyoto, a further reason for the success of the former has been the limited and well-defined amount of change to be made (replace CFC by HFC and HCFC, which are themselves greenhouse gases, to be phased out by 2030 under the Copenhagen Amendments of 1992, cf. Barrett 2003, 222-237) by employing available technical resources; while Kyoto requires a vast amount of new technologies not yet available on a large scale, or not enough tested,²² and its costs in terms of decreasing GDP (1% each year) are to be taken seriously. In any case, the availability of new technologies as well as the possibility to promote by effective treaty provisions their transfer and their spreading to all polluting countries remains a pivotal element of successful intergovernmental policies creating new regulatory frameworks for economic and cultural change in the right direction. As to the restructuring of incentives, this notion can be illustrated with a recent example: the important attempt made in Tony Blair's Britain by his chief economist Lord Nicholas Stern (2006) to shift the attention from the costs of emissions reduction (cf. Nordhaus and Boyer 2000) to the dramatic economic costs (0,5-1% GDP yearly) that are to be borne in the future in case no action is taken right now as to contain the damages caused by man-made climate change. This causes and will keep causing actual economic losses to everybody rather than human suffering to the disadvantaged alone.

To work effectively, environmental protection on the global scale needs however other favourable circumstances beyond the political and economic ones. They may be called *cognitive and motivational*: the problem to address must come up with enough scientific evidence, and it must affect

21. Some evidence of cultural differences in the face of threats, which are reflected in the divergent approach to global warming of US and EU: five years ago, Europeans feared to be personally affected by global warming in the next ten years more intensely than Americans (73% vs. 64%); this is the only danger out of seven that is more feared on this side of the Atlantic, see Transatlantic Trends 2005, a thinner difference however against the divide between Democrats and Republicans in the US on the same question (73% vs.48%).

22. For example, it is true that the shift from fossil fuel (gasoline) to hydrogen in car engines has been hampered or slowed down by oil-friendly governments and corporations, but as a matter of fact hydrogen-based engines are not only still unsatisfactory in economic terms, they also require energy consumption (from which source?) to produce hydrogen, and the greenhouse gases they release have to be somehow sequestered.

public opinion and decision-makers in a clear and challenging way. The first standard was met in the case of the ozone layer depletion,²³ also because the causal chain (from the use of CFCs to the catalytic reactions destroying the protective O₃ layer and further to skin cancer due to unfiltered UV-radiations) is relatively clear and straightforward. This cannot be said of the cause-effect link that exists between expanding fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gases emissions and the global increase of the planet's average temperature, as we even lack until now overarching and generally accepted models of climate change across the ages. Making the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions a policy issue is reasonable and necessary, because there is evidence enough to be worried about, but it requires a more complex reasoning than the manifest "Montreal" sequence of "damage revealed (the depletion) / damage's causes (CFCs) and effects (skin cancer, primarily but not alone) identified / causes removed and replaced with other means (HFCs-HCFCs) without net losses of economic welfare".²⁴

Moreover, the transfer of knowledge from the cognitive\scientific level to the motivational field of public opinion's attitude and political agenda setting is not guaranteed and can be delayed or distorted, but sometimes also accelerated in an unexpected way. This has to do with the complex and widely manipulated way how themes are chosen for public concern or dropped from it, images and symbols created or rapidly dissolved in the present universe of global communication. But it is also influenced by shifting majorities in interest and government coalitions, which may prevent a scientifically well-established alert notice from becoming a policy issue, or even contest treaty obligations when the domestic coalition comes under the sway of a party or lobby that regards itself as a loser in the treaty trade-offs.

Other motivational features result from the ethical terrain as well as from the threat perception. The Kyoto policy of imposing emissions reduction targets only on the developed countries out of fairness towards the developing countries that pollute in a hugely less amount, but are equally subject to the greenhouse effect caused by the former does not seem to strike a balance between *fairness and efficacy*: the emissions in the developing countries, already amounting to 21% of the total at the signing of the Kyoto agreement, will significantly increase in the next decades in as much as huge economies such as China, which has already overtaken the US as chief polluter, or Brazil will hit higher development targets, some times also using older and more polluting technologies or sources of energy. The fairness-motivated compensation for those countries entering the international effort against global warming should be found in monetary terms or technological aid rather than in

23. It took twelve years to Montreal from the first studies on ozone layer depletion by Rowland and Molina in 1975, but only two from the experimental evidence of the Antarctic hole in the ozone layer discovered by Farman in 1985, see Barrett 2003, chapter 8.

24. Cf. Weart 2003, 152-4.

dispensing them from target obligations. This would enhance the legitimacy of an international agreement in the eyes of the public opinion in developed countries and weaken the opposition of those who are impermeable to whatever fairness considerations.

Finally, the *public perception* of the specific threat must be dramatic and wide-spread enough as to generate requests of change addressed to decision-makers and to provide legitimacy for new measures against the opposition of particular interest groups. Ironically for those – such as the Copenhagen IR School - who believe that security problems are a perversion of politics (by themselves and not only in certain circumstances), the “securitization” of climate change helps provide enough motivation as to move things around. Under this regard, the threat carried by global warming looks pale if compared with the nuclear war’s. For the lucky circumstance that the generations living after 1945 were spared nuclear destruction we have to be grateful to and always reminiscent of the dead in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Without the worldwide known pictures of carnage that have shaped the imagery (and the catalogue of symbolic meanings) of all human beings who went to school somewhere for the past half century it would have been perhaps impossible to motivate the ruling *élites* to be cautious in front of the nonetheless existing nuclear weapons, which have been employed for deterrence and not for war and whose arsenals have been later reduced. There is so far no picture and no account of global warming that can hit the imagination of ordinary citizens in a politically dramatic way. The few who have direct experience of the related pain, the people suffering from increased desertification or coastal flooding, are speechless pariahs²⁵ in the present sophisticated world of political communication. Because of geographic differences and the gap in the resilience of a country’s infrastructure and civil society, global warming is not or not yet truly global, a circumstance that does not help build the sense of community which can “function as mechanism of social control among users of Common-Pool Resources”.²⁶ Climate change is a process connecting many events none of which is defining, while most are by now just micro-events (temperature changes, sea level increases) whose significance is mostly statistical and among the present generations can be grasped at best by far-sighted *élites*, not by the average voter. An impressive shift in the *threat perception* is needed also because the present generations seem to be much more keenly aware of the economic cost of reshuffling production and consumption²⁷ than of the threat itself in its twin aspects, the sufferance impending on future dwellers of the planet and the even higher costs they will have to pay for containing it (adaptation costs). The *time dislocation*, partly based on the physical inertia effect, represents a further relevant difficulty: the economic costs have to be paid by the present and next

²⁵ This holds true most recently for the Pakistanis hit by the floods in the summer of 2010.

²⁶ Young 2002, 156.

²⁷ For example raising a carbon tax so heavy for the consumers that it forces them to burn less fuel by improving the related technologies.

generations, the benefits will accrue only to the far future ones. A society has to be ethically convinced of the obligation it has towards them, as it cannot be a strategically managed sense of self-interest that pushes it on the road to reduce greenhouse emissions. Even the refocusing of our attention on the present and particularly future costs of global warming attempted by the Stern report will work only if we will feel a non-economic tie, that is solidarity, with our posterity, which makes feel their (economic) losses as if they were our losses.

Having illustrated some of the factors that may make global governance fail in the case of global challenges, I share – as a conclusion – Rosenau’s view as expressed in a ten years old essay (Rosenau 2000): lack of achievement is not a good reason for dropping the concept of governance, which remains on the contrary an useful frame or, I would add more sceptically, a container-notion by which we can indicate whether the globalized world is moving towards an enhanced order or a more wasteful disorder.²⁸ Why are global challenges important in finding out what things look like in the process enhancing or undermining global governance? Because they remind us that, though not in hierarchical or hegemonic or (allegedly) safe ways as old Leviathan, global governance has first to fulfil the primary function of whatever, if fragmented, entity we may choose for managing our political affairs: security and its subjective offspring, protection (which as a performance of the governance system is also a fostering element for its legitimacy). We are not asking global governance to become an ersatz for a world government or a “world law”, as in Clark and Sohn’s famous blueprint (Clark and Sohn 1958), if we try to recognize priorities and reciprocal constraints among the innumerable tasks of this “signifier”, which we want to become a little less empty and more amenable to an ordered view of complexity.

WORKS CITED

Aldy, Joseph, Scott Barrett and Stavins Robert. 2003. *Thirteen Plus One: a Comparison of Global Climate Policy Architectures*. Faculty Research Working Papers Series 03-12, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Univ. <http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP03-012?OpenDocument>.

²⁸ This understanding of the term diverges from Rosenau’s original reading of governance as by definition successful (Rosenau 1992, 4-5).

- Barrett, Scott. 2003. *Environment and Statecraft*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Beck, Ulrich (2009) *World at Risk*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Bull, Hedley (1977) *The Anarchical Society*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press (1995)
- Cerutti, Furio (2007) *Global Challenges for Leviathan: A Political Philosophy of Nuclear Weapons and Global Warming*, Lanham, Md: Rowman&Littlefield (trad.ital. Milano: Vita e Pensiero 2010).
- , (2010) *Defining Risk, Motivating Responsibility and Rethinking Global Warming*, “Sci Eng Ethics” 16: 489-499.
- (2011) *The Deeper Roots of Legitimacy and its Future*, in Brassett, James and Eleni Tsingou (eds) 'Global Governance and Legitimacy', Special Issue of “Review of International Political Economy”, Volume 18, Issue 1.
- Clark, Glenville and Louis B. Sohn (1958) *World Peace through World Law*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hewson, Martin and Timothy J.Sinclair, eds.(1999) *Approaches to Global Governance Theory*, Albany: SUNY Press.
- Farer, Tom and Timothy D.Sisk (2010) *Enhancing International Cooperation: Between History and Necessity*, “Global Governance” 16, 1-12.
- Finkelstein, Lawrence (1995) *What is Global Governance?* ”Global Governance” 1,3, 367-72 at 368.
- Jacquet, Pierre, Jean Pisani-Ferry and Laurence Tubiana (2003) *A la Recherche de la Gouvernance Mondiale*, at <http://www.pisani-ferry.net/base/papiers/re-03-REF-gouvernance.pdf>
- Karns, Margaret and Karen Mingst (2004) *International Organizations : The Politics and Processes of Global Governance*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Keohane, Robert, Peter Haas and Marc Levy. 1993. *The Effectiveness of International Environmental Institutions*. In Haas, Peter et al., eds. *Institutions for the Earth*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press: 1-24.
- Kindleberger, Charles P. (1986) *Public Goods without International Government*, “ The American Economic Review”, vol.76, 1-13.
- Latham, Robert (1999) *Politics in a Floating World: Toward a Critique of Global Governance*, in Hewson and Sinclair, 23-54.
- Nordhaus, William and Joseph Boyer. 2000. *Warming the World: Economics Models of Global Warming*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press
- Offe, Claus (2009) *Governance: An ‘Empty Signifier’?*, in “Constellations”, 16, 4, 550-562.

Pant, Harsh V. (2010) *The Nuclear Treaty's Trembling Foundations*, "International Herald Tribune", August 14-15, 6.

Parson, Edward. 1993. Protecting the Ozone Layer. In Haas, Peter et al., eds., *Institutions for the Earth*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press: 27-74.

Pogge, Thomas (2008) *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rosenau, James (1992) *Governance, Order and Change in World Politics*, in Rosenau, James and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1-29.

--- (1999) *Toward an Ontology for Global Governance*, in Hewson and Sinclair, 287-302.

--- (2000) *Governance in a Globalizing World*, in Held, David and Anthony McGrew, eds., *The Global Transformations Reader*, Cambridge: Polity, 181-190.

Scheuermann, William E. (2010) *The (classical) Realist vision of global reform*, ("International Theory" 2:2, 246:282.

Stern Review. 2006. *The Economics of Climate Change*. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/stern_review_report.cfm

Transatlantic Trends. 2005. <http://www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/doc/2006>

Weart, Spencer. 2003. *The Discovery of Global Warming*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press .

Young, Oran R. 2002. *The Institutional Dimension of Environmental Change*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

[First draft, please do not quote. Apologies for the codes that have sneaked into the text and I could not yet remove]