

**Global Government, Mixed Coalitions, and  
the Future of International Cooperation**

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**ABSTRACT**

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Over the last 20 years, the distribution of power among countries has shifted away from the bipolar military standoff of the Cold War era and the economic dominance of the United States, Europe, and Japan. At the same time, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations agencies and the International Monetary Fund, constituted to perform global functions on behalf of their member states, are increasingly bypassed by private and semiprivate initiatives in a wide range of arenas—from global health to banking supervision and climate change.

In this essay, William Savedoff addresses the question of what these changes mean for the future of international cooperation from a broad historical perspective. He argues that multipolarity has been the norm in international relations and that the rise of opportunistic alliances to pursue international goals is not new. While global governance institutions will continue to be important, mixed coalitions of state and nonstate actors are likely to play a growing role in solving international problems. These models for international cooperation are both promising and problematic: promising because they have demonstrated agility and success; problematic because they may address the wrong issues and because they cannot compel cooperation for key public goods.

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## **Introduction**

Over the last 20 years, the distribution of power among countries has shifted away from the bipolar military standoff of the Cold War era and the economic dominance of the United States, Europe and Japan. Today, countries like Brazil, China, India, Russia, and Turkey are asserting themselves in international policy discussions as demonstrated by the way the G-20 has eclipsed the G-7. At the same time, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations agencies and the International Monetary Fund, constituted to perform global functions on behalf of their member states, are increasingly bypassed by private and semi-private initiatives in a wide range of arenas—from global health to banking supervision and climate change.

This essay addresses the question of what these changes mean for the future of international cooperation from a broad historical perspective. In particular, I argue that multipolarity is actually the norm in international relations. The growing power of countries like China and India represents a return to the global distribution of power preceding the acceleration of economic and military expansion in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Second, the rise of mixed forms of international cooperation, of opportunistic alliances, is not new; rather, such mechanisms for addressing international issues preceded the rise of global governance institutions in the post-WWII period. In other words, the world we are living in today is normal; the world of 1945–1990 was the aberration. Finally, while global governance institutions will continue to be important, mixed coalitions of state and nonstate actors are likely to play a growing role in solving international problems. These models for international cooperation are both promising and problematic: promising because they have demonstrated agility and success; problematic because they may address the wrong issues and because they cannot compel cooperation for key public goods.

To make these points, I will begin by contrasting two forms of international cooperation. I will then describe how I view the history of international cooperation in three areas which transcend national boundaries in different ways: health, finance, and the environment. I will conclude with a discussion of what this means for the coming decades in terms of the global issues we face.

## **Forms of international cooperation**

For the purpose of this discussion, I'd like to offer a simplified contrast between two different paradigms for international cooperation: one which I will call “global government” and the other “mixed coalition.”

International cooperation that follows a global-government paradigm models its organizations, procedures, and actions on the typical form of a modern nation-state. The logic of such an approach is to use the authority and legitimacy of government to establish rules and actions that are binding on member states. The United Nations system is the most

obvious creation under this paradigm, along with international organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and the World Trade Organization.

The European Union (EU) also fits clearly within this paradigm. A kind of unanimity or at least consensus was required to establish the constitutional structure for the EU, conferring a degree of legitimacy and authority on its supranational institutions. Thereafter, to a greater or lesser extent, these institutions have had some authority to compel member states to adhere to common rules and procedures. This is not an all-or-nothing structure. Principles of subsidiarity and other forms of overlapping sovereignty make the EU workable at the same time that its authority, and the authority of its member states and even their subnational entities, is a constant work in progress. This is not unique to the EU—the United States scrapped its first constitution when its weak central authority proved difficult to manage. The current constitution, adopted in 1789, increased the authority of the federal government in areas such as interstate commerce. This constitution is still in force, but it did not resolve the relative power and authority of the federal government and states, which continues to be contested over time and with regard to a range of different issues.

The global-government paradigm generally seeks fixed membership of nation-states for a wide range of activities that can be carried out by international institutions. The resulting laws and institutions are usually established on the basis of unanimity which allows them to be binding on all members. Yet achieving unanimity for international cooperation often requires accepting (or at least compromising with) the position staked out by the most cautious or least cooperative member state. While some issues genuinely require unanimity, it could be useful to distinguish those issues that do not require unanimity. For these kinds of issues, a different voluntary and non-unanimous approach might be preferable.<sup>1</sup>

Such a voluntary and non-unanimous approach to international cooperation might be described as following a mixed-coalition paradigm. Such an approach is more fluid than the notion of global government institutions. It assembles interested parties—which may include some nation-states but also NGOs, private foundations, for-profit firms, and civil society groups—around specific initiatives that may or may not result in the establishment of formal organizations. Such an approach works opportunistically, finding members who can take action in a way that ultimately, it is hoped, will demonstrate success and gain broader international adherence. Initiatives that could be characterized this way include the Advance Market Commitment for Pneumococcal Vaccines, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), the International Campaign to End Landmines, and the Global Fund Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

A recent essay by Michael Green and Matthew Bishop, “The art of the posse-able,” refers to such mixed coalitions as posses.<sup>2</sup> In the western United States, sheriffs would call volunteers

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<sup>1</sup> This point was made by Andrew Rogerson at a recent conference and related to me by Owen Barder.

<sup>2</sup> They in turn give credit for this usage to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2001).

and form a posse to pursue criminals, say a cattle rustler or murderer. The metaphor is useful for describing mixed coalitions because it emphasizes that the group is made of volunteers focusing on a specific goal. It is also a useful metaphor because it raises concerns about self-appointed groups which are sometimes legitimate expressions of collective purpose and sometimes illegitimate gangs endangering the public and violating rights. However, I am going to stick with the term mixed coalition because posses were relatively homogeneous—groups of local individuals who knew one another. Today’s mixed coalitions involve extremely heterogeneous actors.

## **Multipolarity and mixed coalitions are not new**

Most of the debate about how to construct international cooperation in a multipolar world is grounded on a fallacy that the global government paradigm—which was ascendant from WWII until the 1990s—is some kind of norm. World history before WWII is actually full of mixed coalitions that were the norm for more than a century. In addition, the ability to establish binding rules on nation-states through treaties and international organizations was premised on a large imbalance in world power that countered the tendency for member states to reject constraints on their autonomy.

The power differences among nation-states were not as unequal in the 19th century as they became in the 20th. Those discussing the rising power of middle-income countries seem to forget that many of these countries were major players on the international stage of the 19th century. Brazil served alongside Italy and Spain on the Geneva Tribunal, an international arbitration panel that settled a hotly contested dispute between the United States and Britain in the 1870s that could have otherwise led to war. Russia was identified by de Tocqueville in the mid-19th century as a powerful nation that would surpass Europe and was considered among the major powers right up until WWI. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) was a significant power in the 19th century. So in many ways, what we are seeing today is a return to the multipolar world we once knew and which was overshadowed by the rapid economic growth and rising military power of Western Europe and the United States in the 20th century.

The 19th century was also characterized by many mixed coalitions. While nation-states were fighting wars of conquest, civil society was spawning international scientific societies, labor unions, temperance societies, women’s suffrage movements, and abolitionist campaigns. Frances Stewart Lyons’s 1963 study of international cooperation in Europe between the Congress of Vienna (1815) and WWI (1914) identified nearly 3,000 international gatherings, the creation of 450 private and nongovernmental international organizations and 30 governmental ones.<sup>3</sup>

Nation-states frequently responded by ignoring or repressing civil society groups. But in many cases, such groups also gained nation-states as allies. Abolition was fought country by

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Berridge, Loughlin and Herring 2009.

country but eventually gained Britain (and its navy) as an ally in putting an end to slavery long before a Declaration of Human Rights was signed into international law. International progress against child labor and abuse of workers was also fought country by country, but the groups engaged in this struggle also learned from one another and provided support internationally. Public health was promoted by social campaigners and scientists in the 19th century, eventually adopted by national authorities, and formalized with the creation of international sanitary bureaus. In each case, the process leading to international collective action was better characterized as a mixed coalition than the action of established global governmental institutions.

## **Health, finance, and the environment**

To illustrate how the mixed-coalition paradigm was overshadowed by the global-government paradigm and has now reemerged, I am going to briefly discuss three areas of international cooperation: health, finance, and the environment. I will focus mostly on health and then consider the extent to which the history of international cooperation in finance and the environment support similar inferences.

### **Health**

In the 19th century, international cooperation around health was focused on limiting the spread of infectious diseases. Tools were extremely limited—quarantines, clean water and sanitation, smallpox vaccine—but made big differences. The increasing speed of ocean travel made the spread of disease more problematic because people could arrive at their destinations before they could recover or die from their illnesses.

The most common pattern for international action in this period began with nonstate actors that engaged in scientific exchanges on such things as health statistics, cholera, temperance, and tuberculosis. These conferences were later followed by governmental interest and action—all examples of what I've called the mixed-coalition paradigm. In particular, governments began to establish sanitary bureaus to address epidemics because quarantines were hugely disruptive of trade and commerce. This all became more formal, moving toward a global-government paradigm, with the creation of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau in 1903 and the Office International d'Hygiène Publique (OIHP) in 1907. Note that the OIHP was set up after a convention in Paris (1903) which was attended by 20 governments including those of Egypt, Persia, and Brazil alongside the United States and a number of European countries.

In nutrition, *Goutte de Lait*, a French model for improving health of poor women and children, spread throughout Europe and into Latin America (Uruguay and Chilean *Gota de Leche* campaigns).

After WWI, the global-government paradigm gained ground with the formal creation of the League of Nations and its Health Office (LNHO). The League of Nations can be seen as an

extension of the process that led to the fusion of German states or the creation of a French nation or any other major nation-state of the day—an effort to gain the benefits of extending consistent governmental institutions across larger boundaries to secure peace, welfare, and trade.

In this period, though, the mixed-coalition paradigm was joined by the rise of a new actor: corporate philanthropies. The Rockefeller Foundation was the most prominent example in the health field, contributing to the eradication of hookworm in the United States but also a catalyst for public health campaigns throughout the world and the establishment of public health schools and institutions throughout the Americas.<sup>4</sup>

The rise of the corporate foundations intersected with steps toward global government in interesting ways. The Rockefeller Foundation—which in relative terms was the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation of its era—provided between one-third and one-half of the budget for the League of Nations Health Office between the wars.<sup>5</sup> Thus, even though the LNHO was a creation of member states and responded to their health ministries, the Rockefeller Foundation funding gave it sufficient independence to pursue some independent research and standard-setting agendas. This independent action led to criticism that LNHO had constituted itself as a “super-health authority which supervises or criticizes the public health administrations of the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in this period we see two tensions—a rise in global governance and mixed coalitions simultaneous with member states resisting infringement of their authority.

After World War II, the global-government paradigm got its biggest boost, for two reasons. First, the idea that social-welfare states were the future was more widely shared despite ideological divisions separating the Soviet bloc from the Western countries. This was long before the conservative anti-government-bureaucracy backlash of the 1980s epitomized by Reagan and Thatcher and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Second, the large imbalance in power between nations allowed the United States and Western Europe to promote international organizations which they intended to control, which would constrain the policies of less powerful countries, and which would provide international legitimacy for their power. The dynamics of these international organizations did not entirely bear out this expectation but nevertheless served to generate an explosion of new institutions for global governance, most notably the United Nations, but also the IMF, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and, for health, the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO was created by absorbing regional institutions, mostly sanitary bureaus, and thus had a governance structure that was problematic from the start. It was embroiled in politics. For example, why should Pakistan be in the Eastern Mediterranean region rather than

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<sup>4</sup> Farley 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Weindling 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Sir George Buchanan in 1934 quoted in Weindling 1995.

Southeast Asia? Membership of Eastern European socialist countries was an issue as early as 1949. Initially, WHO had 48 members; today it has 194 member states. Disparities between voting strength and financial contributions in the 1960s and 1970s led to emergence of the Geneva Group (states which paid a majority of contributions) and the Group of 77 (representing interests of developing countries). Politicization continued through the end of the 20th century with regular resolutions focused on Palestinian and Taiwanese efforts to gain political recognition.

WHO evolved as a hybrid institution, a scientific and technical society with diplomatic and political structures. For a variety of reasons, it never gained the stature or reputation for effectiveness that was necessary for it to play a leading role in international cooperation in health. Rather, it has been mostly a follower.

Some indication of its lack of legitimacy comes from its continuing budgetary difficulties—also not a new phenomenon. In fact, the WHO budget was frozen in the 1980s and, in a now-familiar pattern, extrabudgetary funds flowed to disease-specific interventions. Note that this was right after the World Health Assembly passed its resolution in favor of “Health for All” and after 140 countries endorsed the “Health for All” declaration at Alma Ata. In other words, member states were ready to endorse the WHO’s policy agenda but then undermined that very agenda by substituting their own earmarked funding for money that should have supported the organization’s publicly endorsed mission.

Mixed coalitions continued to be active in the health field throughout this period. For example, in the 1970s, an international NGO called INFACT (Infant Formula Action Coalition) launched a campaign to resist efforts by Nestlé which promoted the use of infant feeding formulas in developing countries as a substitute for feeding infants with breast milk. INFACT successfully mobilized world opinion and called for a boycott of Nestlé products. The World Health Assembly eventually responded by passing a code for marketing breast-milk substitutes. Like 19th century efforts, this international collective action began with a nongovernmental initiative that exerted influence to compel state action.<sup>7</sup> Even then, action was driven not by any power of WHO to enforce its code but by popular pressure and reputation effects.

From the 1980s onward, except for a brief period under the directorship of Gro Brundtland, WHO was increasingly eclipsed by other organizations in the health field. WHO’s response to the AIDS crisis was insufficient to satisfy international activists and member states, resulting in the creation of a separate agency, UNAIDS. Demand for support to improve health services in developing countries was filled by the World Bank and regional development banks. Then the 1990s came along with a massive flow of funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the subsequent creations of a series of mixed coalitions,

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<sup>7</sup> Berridge, Loughlin, and Herring 2009, 39.



the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation in 2000 (now the GAVI Alliance) and the Global Fund Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in 2002.

So what do we take from this story of international cooperation on health?

- The mixed-coalition paradigm was the first form of international cooperation and continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.
- The global-government paradigm rose to prominence after WWII with creation of the WHO, but this organization lost its core role by the 1980s.

Many reasons can be suggested for WHO's inability to achieve legitimacy and leadership in international cooperation on health. It may face inherent difficulties by trying to manage a technical scientific enterprise with bureaucratic procedures that are essentially diplomatic. It may also face inherent difficulties in managing a bureaucracy within a multilateral structure. Or it could have been poorly managed, organizationally or politically. Whatever the reasons, global health has seen a massive resurgence of the mixed-coalition paradigm since the 1990s. Names may have changed but the parallels are quite striking. In recent decades, we have the Gates Foundation funding WHO programs instead of the Rockefeller Foundation and the LNHO; INFACT instead of *Goutte de Lait*. We also have multiple institutions that blur the distinction between the global-government and mixed-coalition paradigms such as the GAVI Alliance and the Global Fund. They are formal, like government institutions, but membership is voluntary. They are powerful yet limited to particular spheres of action. Their legitimacy is not based clearly on either democratic or member-state principles.

## **Finance**

International cooperation on finance is more recent than in health. Countries in the 19th century experienced regular cycles of economic booms and busts, at least one severe economic downturn each decade. These crises were marked by massive bank failures called “panics.” While governments tried to address these crises in different ways, private banks played important roles. In fact, nongovernmental actors assumed functions that we normally consider the exclusive role of the state: provision of information and managing economy-wide liquidity. For example, in the 19th century, Credit Lyonnais developed the information systems necessary for understanding risk in financial markets, particularly around sovereign risk. In response to the Panics of 1893 and 1907, J.P. Morgan—a private but powerful banker—led syndicates of financiers to preserve financial-market liquidity.

The interwar years included struggles with reparations from WWI, efforts to reinstate the gold standard and then its failure. After WWII, the International Monetary Fund was created. Its original mandate was focused on international cooperation and *not* on advising countries regarding their domestic economic policies. In particular, it was charged with

- international monetary cooperation;
- support for a balanced expansion of world trade;
- promotion of exchange rate stability;
- establishing a multilateral payment system;
- eliminating foreign exchange restrictions;
- providing resources for balance of payment adjustment; and,
- shortening the duration and severity of balance of payment disequilibria.

This is a clear global-government paradigm but circumscribed and limited by the power of the member nation states. For example, a country's voting power is based largely on national income (so that the Netherlands has a larger vote than Brazil, South Africa, or Indonesia). Yet the IMF has considerable autonomy because, unlike WHO, the Global Fund, or even the World Bank, it does not need to go to member states for dues or contributions.

How did the IMF role expand so far beyond this limited mandate? Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore argue that the evolution of the IMF's expertise and analytical tools led it to rely on models focused on controlling domestic credit to resolve balance-of-payments disequilibria rather than international trade and exchange rates.<sup>8</sup> But to address international domestic-consumption policies, the IMF would have to impose conditions on lending, which was decidedly not in the original plan and was resisted by British among others. IMF lending came to a standstill in 1950 over this issue. Under Ivar Rooth, The IMF's managing director in the early 1950s, a compromise was reached that still holds today: that drawing a country's first 25 percent of quota would be automatic but conditionality could be imposed on drawing larger sums. An alternative perspective views conditionality as the solution to a collective-action problem. Conditionality is the way that the IMF's net creditors can be assured that borrowers will repay their loans.

This arrangement worked reasonably well with industrialized countries into the 1960s. However, the rise of newly independent states in this period was a challenge. The approach did not work well, and IMF staff started looking beyond the level of domestic credit to consider the impact of domestic taxation, subsidies, wage policies, and more. Rather than admit failure of the core principles and models, the staff argued that some complementary factors were missing, such as political will to enact policies or technical capacity. Instead of questioning its models, the IMF responded by providing the necessary services: if political will is lacking than greater persuasion is needed; if technical capacity is lacking than training is required.

The IMF looks like a success of the global-government paradigm. But is it? As a central bank for the world, it has never had full discretion over its ability to influence global liquidity. Instead, it essentially requires coordinated agreement among the central banks of countries

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<sup>8</sup> Barnett and Finnemore 2004.

which supply hard currency reserves—the United States, United Kingdom, Germany (through the European Central Bank) and Japan—to increase the IMF’s capital basis and permit an expansion of global liquidity. The IMF’s capital basis was increased to respond to the crises of the 1980s and 1990s but has proven inadequate in relation to the scale of the problems posed by the current financial crisis in the Euro zone. The idea of increasing liquidity by increasing the world’s implicit international currency, the SDR (special drawing rights), was created decades ago and has resurged with the latest financial crisis. But it continues to be resisted by the IMF’s most powerful member nations.

The IMF has also not expanded into financial regulation and banking supervision. An alternative instrument was created instead: the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, which is not a supranational authority but rather a coalition of governments or more precisely of their central banks. First set up after the financial crises of 1974 by 10 central banks, it included all major economies. It has taken on an increasing role in bank supervision in terms of establishing banking standards which has accelerated recently because of demands for increasing transparency, combating money laundering and tax evasion, and coordinating banking regulations. Other standard-setting organizations include the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Committee on Payment and Settlement Systems (CPSS), and the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSC). The creation of independent supervisory committees and standards-setting organizations could be considered appropriate specialization and separation of powers from a central bank, as is common to many economies. Alternatively, it could be an indication of reticence to cede regulatory authority to a supranational organization, much like the experience of the WHO.

The latest demonstration that the IMF will not occupy a central transnational governmental role is the creation of the Financial Stability Board. In 1999, the Financial Stability Forum was created by the G-7. In 2009, the G-20 meeting expanded and reconstituted it as the Financial Stability Board. The main reason for this move was to incorporate emerging economies such as Brazil, China, India, and Turkey into international financial-cooperation arrangements. Yet, the same goal could have been achieved by reforming the structure of IMF voting power. The next year or two, we will see if the IMF is recapitalized in a way that asserts its central role in global financial management.

So what do we take from this story of international cooperation on finance? First, mixed coalitions are present even in international financial cooperation. Second, the number of participating actors is more limited than in health. And finally, the creation of the IMF and its expanding role may have peaked. We are unlikely to get a world central bank any time soon and its supranational authority is likely to be constrained by the unwillingness of major economic powers to permit the creation of a new reserve currency and the expansion of alternative committees for regulation and standard setting.

As in the health sector, we have entered a period in which the ineffectiveness of an international organization or the inability of member states to cede authority is leading,

instead, to a growing number of other institutions with varied memberships to address specific tasks of international cooperation.

## **Environment**

International cooperation on the environment is significantly more recent than cooperation on health or finance, dating from the period in the 1960s when our species began to recognize just how massively we were making our own habitat uninhabitable.

The 1972 Stockholm Convention is a key moment in public recognition of this problem. Under the ascendant global-government paradigm of that period, countries agreed to create a United Nations Agency, the UN Environment Program. International efforts to address environmental problems expanded over succeeding decades, with milestones like the Brundtland Commission (1987) on “Sustainable Development” and “Agenda 21” coming out of the 1992 Rio Conference. In the 1990s, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the Global Environment Facility were also created. Jacob Scherr has argued that much of this action is legislative in nature, pointing to some 300 environmental treaties negotiated between 1972 and 1992.<sup>9</sup> But while this legislative approach was global, those who could actually implement and enforce the new rules were national. We have no global institutions with the authority to tax pollutants or enforce pollution-control laws.

Nevertheless, there is at least one clear example where the system worked—eliminating chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) to protect the ozone layer. The Vienna Convention addressing CFCs was signed in 1985 and the Montreal Protocol followed in 1987. The timetable for phasing out CFCs was specific and implemented. Many reasons are given for this success. Scientific evidence was strong and uncontroversial, links to cancers were compelling, environmental groups mobilized public opinion, and the UN Environment Program worked actively on the topic. In addition, economical substitutes for CFCs were available, mitigating resistance by industry; and financial provisions were made to assist low-income countries under the agreement.

But the CFC story is one of the rare ones; most of the visible successes of international cooperation in this period moved forward through mixed coalitions. The very idea of moving forward with mixed coalitions is celebrated by a number of leaders in the global environmental field. The term “Green Jazz” is used as a metaphor for this kind of action by James Gustave Speth, who cofounded the National Resources Defense Council in the 1970s. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development describes Green Jazz as what happens when “people recognize that they can care about issues such as sustainable development without needing others to legislate the solution.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Scherr and Gregg 2006 430.

<sup>10</sup> Brown et al. 2000.

The reason for celebrating Green Jazz isn't hard to see. Official efforts have typically taken much longer to achieve success than informal coalitions. For example, from the time persistent organic pollutants were formally recognized as a problem in 1992, governments took 12 years to get a treaty into force.<sup>11</sup> This treaty was just the *beginning* of the phase requiring implementation by member states. By contrast, a mixed coalition aiming to phase out leaded gasoline in the 1990s was able to achieve success in only five years. The environmental movement is actively inventing all kinds of mixed coalitions to address pollutants ranging from toxic chemicals and artificial food additives to oil pipelines and greenhouse gases.

Climate change represents the biggest challenge and most problematic failure of the global-government paradigm. It could have been addressed much like CFCs and might have if the Kyoto Protocols had been followed by further progress. For many reasons it was not. The UNEP is not being authorized to pass a global gas tax or establish the world carbon cap-and-trade system. Yet the existence of a world government could and should actually do these things given the mass of scientific evidence on the impact of greenhouse gases and on the most socially and economically efficient ways to slow their production.

Seeing the failure of the global government approach, people are looking for ways to mobilize mixed coalitions. Important countries and subnational regions (such as California) are proceeding with cap and trade markets. David Wheeler has proposed that states and provinces could implement carbon sales taxes to discourage consumption of high-carbon-footprint goods and services.<sup>12</sup> This represents a second-best solution, but it could be effective if implemented by subnational authorities, like California, that govern large enough segments of consumers.

This cursory look at the environmental sector shows that today, and for the foreseeable future, the main form of international cooperation will be through mixed coalitions. The case of global warming, however, also shows that mixed coalitions may be inadequate for problems that require a global-government mechanism.

## **Mixed coalitions today**

The range of mixed coalitions that are active and influencing international cooperation is extremely wide.

*The International Campaign to End Landmines* began in the early 1990s. NGOs spearheaded the process and ultimately engaged a range of international organizations, UN agencies, and governments to draft a treaty. The key was a core of committed governments and organizations which carried the "Ottawa Process" forward and eventually brought along

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<sup>11</sup> Scherr and Gregg 2004, 432.

<sup>12</sup> David Wheeler 2010.

others. This culminated in the Mine Ban Treaty which was signed in 1997 in Oslo and came into force two years later.

An *Advance Market Commitment* (AMC) is a way for countries to encourage investment in developing products for which there may be strong social demand but no effective private demand. Numerous studies have shown how effective demand leads pharmaceutical companies to invest in diseases of the rich and neglect disease of the poor; and how *theoretically* a collective binding intertemporal commitment to purchase a vaccine could resolve this problem in specific cases. Recently, the Center for Global Development (CGD) convened a working group, negotiated a contract, and facilitated creation of the first ever AMC to purchase a vaccine.<sup>13</sup> This mixed coalition involved countries, philanthropic foundations, private corporations, and researchers. The AMC was successful and children are now being vaccinated for *Streptococcus pneumoniae* because this collective action problem was solved (see box 1).

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**Box 1: Selected Initiatives at CGD to Influence Mixed Coalitions and Global Government Institutions**

The ideas in this essay were significantly influenced by my work with the Center for Global Development (CGD) which translates its research into action through a variety of initiatives, some of which seek to influence governments, but most of which are directed toward mixed coalitions and global government institutions. The following table presents a selection of initiatives by way of illustration.

Examples of initiatives to influence individual governments include the Commitment to Development Index and HIV/AIDS Monitor, which assess performance and disseminate information publicly; the U.S. Development Strategy in Pakistan was a working group convened to analyze and advise the U.S. government on its strategy in a particular country.

CGD has had particular success in creating or supporting mixed coalitions. For example, the Advance Market Commitment mobilized \$1.5 billion to support development of a pneumococcal vaccine; the Evaluation Gap Working Group led to the creation of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie); and CGD action conceptualized the \$1 trillion financial package for developing countries that the G-20 endorsed in response to the financial crisis.

Finally, CGD efforts have also influenced global government institutions, with a series of working groups providing recommendations during leadership transitions for the multilateral development banks and UN agencies but also by influencing the World Bank to make the Clean Technology Fund consistent with climate change policies;

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<sup>13</sup> Levine et al. 2005.

addressing food security by UN agencies; and encouraging better policies at the IMF with regard to domestic health spending in borrowing countries.

More information can be found at [www.cgdev.org](http://www.cgdev.org).

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<b>Primary focus of initiative</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Individual governments	Commitment to Development Index  HIV/AIDS Monitor  U.S. Development Strategy in Pakistan
Mixed coalitions	Advance Market Commitment  Evaluation Gap  Unlocking \$1 Trillion for Developing Countries
Global government institutions	The Clean Technology Fund  Food Security and the Rome-Based Agencies  IMF Programs and Health Spending

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Another example is the *International Aid Transparency Initiative*, whose mission is to make information about aid spending easier to access, use, and understand. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has been functioning for several decades, might have addressed this long ago. Though the DAC does collect and publish information about aid flows, the data is difficult to access. Instead, it took a mixed coalition of a few committed governments, NGOs, and experts in aid information to agree upon a common open international standard for publishing more and better information about aid. This was accomplished in February 2011. Though it started as a mixed coalition, the idea is

compelling enough that 14 donor countries (including the United States) have signed on and more than 20 developing countries have endorsed the initiative.

A final example is the *Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation* established in Busan last year as the successor to a working group set up by the DAC, an organization based on consensus, whose members were rich countries. While the DAC sets multiple goals through strategic and comprehensive planning, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation is structured to move forward with initiatives supported by a small group of countries. Its membership is explicitly open to state and nonstate actors. The new organization is structured to work around “building blocks” which are goal-specific and member-specific.

Each of these initiatives could have been led by a UN agency or by a private corporation or an NGO. Instead, mixed groups of governments, foundations, NGOs, universities, and international organizations collaborated to solve a particular problem. When we look around the world today, it seems like the most active forms of international cooperation today are similar to these kinds of efforts. They resemble mixed coalitions or opportunistic alliances much more than they resemble formal public policy within or among nation-states.

These four examples also demonstrate something that may be new about the operation of mixed coalitions. The campaign to end landmines and the AMC both address issues that can rally common citizens, like abolition did in the 19th century. But the latter two examples are eminently bureaucratic. Developing common standards for data reporting and coordinating international public assistance are the kinds of things that government and institutions “do,” yet we find them today being promoted by mixed coalitions rather than legislative or executive procedures.

## **What is the future of international cooperation?**

I have argued that the multipolar world we live in, with its proliferation of mixed forms of international cooperation, is not new and that multipolarity itself is not the key difference between today and the post-WWII period. Constructing effective and comprehensive global governance institutions is difficult and unlikely to make much progress in the near future.

Why are global-governance institutions unlikely to emerge in the near future? I think there are at least three necessary conditions that are simply not in place.

First, the process of establishing nation-states with the associated legitimacy of governing institutions has required some level of homogeneity among subjects, regions, and power. In the United States, we struggle with the gaps between New York and Alabama; the European Union struggles with gaps between Finland and Greece. Getting the equivalent of a Senator for Ethiopia in the U.S. Congress or an EU representative for India is going to be difficult for a long time. Extremely powerful central authorities can overcome such heterogeneity—as the world’s major empires temporarily accomplished or even the Pax Americana of the 20th century. But those unipolar days are gone.



Second, establishing effective governance institutions also requires that powerful elites curb their appetites, that they see more gain in caring for the goose that lays the golden eggs than in killing it. This is a point made most recently in *Why Nations Fail* by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson,<sup>14</sup> but it is an idea raised by Mancur Olson (in “Dictatorship, Democracy and Development”),<sup>15</sup> Machiavelli, and others dating back at least to Confucius. Seeing how quickly elites reacted against regulating financial markets after the 2008 crisis suggests to me that we are not in a period where elites are thinking about the conditions necessary to preserve the societies in which they make and enjoy their wealth.

Finally, establishing effective governance institutions requires a model of bureaucratic responsiveness that we do not seem to have invented yet. The main approach to global governance continues to be based on nation-states as constituent members, and this creates at least two thick layers of protection against responding to real feedback—the layer of accountability from international organizations to nation-states and the accountability of nation-states to their citizens.

These three conditions are not in place. We have a multipolar world with heterogeneous sources of power, authority, and legitimacy. Even a recent BRICS conference attended by the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa demonstrated large gaps in their approaches to international cooperation and reflected only the most basic of common interests. In most of the rich countries, we have powerful elites bent on removing safety nets, regulations, and other instruments of collective action to pursue common goals. And internationally, we have created bureaucracies that seem clumsy and unresponsive.

What then is the future of international cooperation? It is likely to be a future of mixed coalitions which holds both promise and perils. For some purposes, these mixed coalitions will be remarkably effective. Mixed coalitions are promising because they take action and they're agile. The people, NGOs, foundations, agencies, and countries that want to take action get together and move. These mixed coalitions are promising also because they can pull on a broader range of resources, including rapid innovations in information and technology. These mixed coalitions can also be responsive to feedback. They don't tend to have endowments or dues to establish their autonomy. So they will only persist to the extent that members remain committed and they find resonance with others. Mixed coalitions also face checks and balances, because they can only do things that legitimate public authorities (nation-states) allow them to do.

These points about feedback and limitations are important because mixed coalitions are not necessarily good. Some of the worst of these initiatives involve international campaigns to promote discriminatory laws that repress women and criminalize an individual's sexual orientation. One hopes such initiatives will only succeed temporarily. They do enormous damage, yet the arc of history seems to leave them behind. Notions of individual human

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<sup>14</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Olson 1993.

rights are recognized today in a way that would have been unimaginable a century ago, which makes me think that the most promising thing about mixed coalitions is that they are part of a global conversation on acceptable social norms and standards, which are always changing. Take the questions below as an illustration. Which had obvious answers one hundred years ago? How has that changed today, and how will it change in the future?

- Is it acceptable for a country to allow buying and selling of human beings as slaves?
- To prohibit women from voting?
- To allow people to die in famines?
- To bar women from driving cars?
- To pollute the oceans?
- To have a large carbon footprint?

I think mixed coalitions are effective precisely because they move these kinds of debates forward, resulting in slow but persistent improvements in global norms.

Still mixed coalitions are problematic. Not only because they can promote destructive and discriminatory initiatives. Even when they represent a good idea, the same factors that limit their behavior limit their capacity to be effective. In particular, mixed coalitions are not good for dealing with issues that require uniform adherence—such as a carbon tax or a ban on arms trade. If a mixed coalition had the authority to compel action it wouldn't be a mixed coalition anymore, it would have become a global-governance mechanism.

A lot of progress can still be made despite these problems. Mixed coalitions have been able to achieve a lot without being able to compel uniform action. The tragedy of this limitation, though, is the painful gap between what we accomplish and *what we could accomplish*. Coordinated management of international liquidity and stimulus could have brought the world economy through the recent crisis more smoothly, improving the lives of billions of people; regulation of small arms trade could completely change the level of insecurity in dozens of countries; coordinated increases in tobacco taxes could also save millions of lives; and so on.

What concerns me most is a particular class of issues that involve irreversible damage—and this is where I think mixed coalitions are both the only path forward and not at all assured of success. The three examples that come to mind are, not surprisingly, in health, finance and the environment.

*Microbial resistance to drugs* is increasing because of indiscriminate and improper use. Delaying the emergence of drug-resistant strains of disease requires enforceable regulations on the overuse of drugs in agriculture; misapplication of drugs promoted by pharmaceutical

companies, pharmacists, and doctors; and assuring appropriate disposal.<sup>16</sup> Barring unforeseen advances in our capacity to regulate drugs or some remarkable technological advance in genetics, we may live to see a period of increasing disease and death from infections that are easily treated today.

*Financial regulation and countercyclical stimulus* proved effective at avoiding major financial panics and encouraging stable economic growth. Yet today, political elites in the world's largest economies are focused on policies of austerity at times of recession and deregulation in an era of unbridled financial liberalism as if these policies would get us out of recessions and depressions. The lack of good macroeconomic policy has long-lasting effects on people, particularly in the way it damages the entry of young people entering labor markets with irreversible effects on their economic and social opportunities, and for their children.

*Climate change* is perhaps the largest irreversible challenge we face. A global carbon tax is absolutely critical if we are going to modify our social patterns to emit less carbon dioxide. I used to think that we might be saved by declining petroleum reserves but recent research by Alan Gelb and others has convinced me that peak oil—which I see as a positive thing rather than a problem—may actually be farther away than ever.<sup>17</sup> And research on the way energy efficiency gains get eaten up by more extensive use suggest to me that we can't solve the problem that way either.<sup>18</sup> Mixed coalitions will work hard on this issue and may have some impact but at substantial cost relative to the transition we could achieve with a gradual sustained increase in carbon taxes to price carbon fuel products at their true cost to society and the world.

So, mixed coalitions are a form of international self-organization that are promising and problematic. There is no guarantee that they will form to address the most important issues and no guarantee that any particular coalition or team will have the resources—financial or in legitimacy—to carry out important functions. We have no guarantees that global government institutions could agree upon and implement needed solutions either.

I remain optimistic that our complex mix of global governance and mixed coalitions will eventually resolve the many challenges that require international cooperation. But it is not an optimism based on any deterministic trend or teleology. Rather it is an optimism that comes from reading historical accounts about the “end of the world” and realizing that, at least so far, we've survived—and even progressed.

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<sup>16</sup> Nugent, Back, and Beith 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Gelb, Kaiser, and Viñuela 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Birdsall 2010.

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