Democratic Accountability in Global Politics: Norms, not Agents

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The standard model of democratic accountability emphasizes accountability to the appropriate agents. This model has proven difficult to adapt to the challenges posed by global governance. This article critiques the Westphalian assumptions underlying the standard model and develops an alternative model of accountability to democratic norms rather than to specific agents.

Rapid growth in the reach and influence of global governance arrangements has triggered broad concern among citizens and scholars alike about the lack of democratic accountability in global politics. This important question bears directly on the legitimacy of global governance regimes and on the prospects for democratizing power in the supranational context (Nye 2001). Keohane (2006) sees the prospect of interdependence without accountable governance as a "deadly mix," and the widespread calls for greater democracy and accountability emanating from civil society suggest that such fears are neither isolated nor exaggerated. Yet despite consensus on the urgency of making global governance more accountable, there is little agreement on whether or how this might be possible.

The present debate centers on whether concepts and models of democratic accountability worked out within states can or should be applied in the global context. Some scholars, following Dahl (1999), argue that the political preconditions of democratic accountability—a taken-for-granted *demos* within a bounded political community and clear mechanisms tying power wielders in the community to that *demos*—are absent in global politics and unlikely to emerge, making democratic accountability beyond the state impossible. Others, following Held (1995, 2004), insist that familiar models of democratic accountability can be adapted globally through overlapping and multilayered institutional forms designed to restore the aforementioned symmetry between rulers and ruled at all levels of governance. Still others, most notably Keohane and his collaborators (Grant and Keohane 2005; Keohane 2003, 2006; Keohane and Nye 2003), agree that the stark differences between the state and global contexts render familiar notions of democratic accountability unworkable globally. They advocate a more ecumenical approach to accountability that, while not strictly democratic, would effectively curb abuses of power and be more appropriate for the global context. I refer to these as the pessimistic, cosmopolitan, and pluralistic approaches, respectively.

Despite their divergent views, all three conceive democratic accountability in the same way, as a question of making those who wield power answerable to the appropriate people. For pessimists, only the *demos* can legitimately authorize power and hold it to account; for cosmopolitans, *all those affected by political decisions* constitute a new kind of *demos* empowered through cosmopolitan institutions; for pluralists, the *demos* problem is insoluble and sets too demanding a standard, making nondemocratic mechanisms of accountability the best option. I argue that this focus on *who* should hold power to account reflects an unnecessarily narrow understanding of democratic accountability and develop an alternative approach emphasizing *why* power must be accountable in democracy. This approach suggests a model of global democratic accountability to norms, not agents, that offers a clear and pragmatic alternative to the three positions just described.

The essay begins by analyzing the standard model of democratic accountability endorsed by pessimists, cosmopolitans, and pluralists, showing how its emphasis on the appropriate accountability holders

makes it poorly suited to the complexities of global governance. Next, I argue that the standard model's emphasis on *who* should hold power to account can be understood as an artifact of certain Westphalian assumptions about the boundedness and territoriality of politics, assumptions that translate the democratic principles explaining *why* power must be accountable into familiar arguments about *who* the accountability holders should be. Once these assumptions are identified, it becomes apparent how questions of *who* and *why* get conflated in the domestic context and why democratic accountability proves so problematic in global politics. Globalization at once renders the standard model unworkable and directs our attention back to the flawed assumptions that make it so. Building on these analyses, I develop an alternative model of democratic accountability that emphasizes democratic principles and normative standards for accountability rather than democratic agents of accountability. This approach provides a more pragmatic response to challenges posed by global governance than do the pessimistic and cosmopolitan approaches, without giving up on *democratic* accountability, as the pluralists do.

Before beginning, I want to address a few concerns about the project itself. In developing an alternative model of democratic accountability, I am not suggesting that this model should replace or supplant the standard model. Rather, I shall argue that the alternative model extends and complements the standard model. As I elaborate below, the standard model remains central to local and national politics (though the alternative model clarifies some puzzles about it). In the transnational and global contexts, where the standard model proves inapposite (for reasons I explicate below), the alternate model indicates how we might make governance more democratic. As this remark suggests, I do not claim that my account is equivalent to global democracy or an adequate substitute for it. Indeed, one of my aims is precisely to show that we can have greater democratic accountability in global politics *without* having global democracy. It is thus important to preserve the distinction between a fully democratic political system and the various modalities of democratic accountability it comprises.

The alternative model of democratic accountability presented here reconceptualizes democracy to meet the challenges that global interdependence poses for democratic theory and practice. One might certainly take issue with the substance of this account, but the mere fact of its divergence from the standard account should not, in itself, count as an argument against it; if it were, the very idea of reconceptualization would become incoherent. I am not claiming that the standard model is wrong or defective, only that it doesn't work outside the state. Again, one might disagree, but the claim is hardly radical—as the views of pessimists and pluralists testify. The question is not, in any case, whether we should abandon the standard model for the alternative one, or even which one is better; it is whether the alternative model can help us see possibilities for *greater* democratic accountability where the standard model breaks down.

The Standard Model of Democratic Accountability

I begin by reconstructing the standard model of democratic accountability, relying heavily on the work of Held and of Grant and Keohane. Not only is this work insightful and widely regarded, but using it to expound the standard model ensures that the account underlying my analysis is consonant with that which shapes the contemporary debate on global democratic accountability.

Accountability is not exclusively a democratic concept (Philp 2009). Grant and Keohane argue that "accountability . . . implies that some actors have the right to hold other actors to a set of standards, to judge whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of those standards, and to impose sanctions if they determine that those responsibilities have not been met" (2005, 29).[1] This relationship of accountability is "institutionalized" when the principal's right to receive reports and to sanction is recognized and accepted by the agent (Keohane 2003, 139). Information plays a key role in holding power wielders to account (Keohane and Nye 2003, 389). Equally important is the accountability holder's *capacity* to sanction (Keohane 2006, 5); power-asymmetries between accountability holders and power wielders can disrupt the sanctioning process when the former is too weak, in either absolute or relative terms, to sanction the latter effectively (Rubenstein 2007, 617). Accountability is fundamentally a power relationship; the ability to avoid being held to account is a form of power (Keohane 2003, 142), as, by implication, is the right to hold to account.

Democratic accountability has traditionally referred to the right of *citizens* to hold their *rulers* to

[1]There is an important distinction between the right to sanction for failure to give an account and to sanction for the content of the account given (Philp 2009, 31–33).

account. Held describes it as entailing that rulers "must be held accountable to the governed through political mechanisms (the secret ballot, regular voting and competition between potential representatives, among other things) which give citizens satisfactory means for choosing, authorizing and controlling political decisions" (1996, 88–89). Choosing, authorizing, and controlling political decisions, and therefore necessarily those who make them, is the core of democratic accountability on this view. Liberal democracy provides "a political apparatus that would ensure the accountability of the governors to the governed"; the political mechanisms Held describes represent the only "satisfactory means for generating political decisions commensurate with the public interest" (Held 1996, 95). The standard to which power wielders and their decisions are held in this model of democratic accountability is the will of the people—or, less directly, their rights, welfare, and interests. Liberal-democratic political mechanisms are designed to subordinate power wielders and their decisions to this standard.[2] I refer to these arrangements through which citizens hold their governors to account through electoral and participatory mechanisms as the standard model of democratic accountability (SM).

Grant and Keohane (2005, 31–32) identify two main variants of democratic accountability in liberal-democratic practice: participation and delegation. Participation lets those who are affected by decisions hold rulers accountable—either directly or through elections and plebiscites. The people's right or entitlement to hold rulers to account flows from their status as those affected by government's decisions (the all-affected principle). Delegation lets citizens use political institutions, again including elections, to hold government to account. Here their entitlement to do so stems from their constitutive authority (the constituent sovereignty principle); citizens entrust their power to the government, in either a fiduciary or a trustee relationship. Both of these variants fit comfortably within the familiar understanding of democracy as popular control or "rule by the people."

Grant and Keohane (2005, 33) observe that participation and delegation overlap considerably and are often mixed in practice. This is hardly surprising: a central feature of the SM is the symmetry and congruence it reflects between accountability

holders (citizens) and power wielders (rulers) and between the decisions and policies rulers make and their constituents, who are of course the citizens themselves (Held 1995, 224). This symmetry and congruence presume—as liberal democratic theory has long done—the boundedness of the political community. Within a bounded or territorial polity the all-affected (participatory) and the constituent sovereignty (delegation) variants of the SM provide essentially identical answers to the key question of *who is entitled to hold power to account.* Those who possess constituent sovereignty and authorize government (the citizens) are also those affected by the political decisions taken by government (the populace)—hence the overlap. Once this presumption of boundedness breaks down, however, congruence and symmetry are disrupted and democratic accountability becomes deeply problematic.

Democratic Accountability and Global Governance

Pessimists, cosmopolitans, and pluralists agree that explosive growth in global governance has created democratic deficits or accountability gaps between existing democratic political arrangements and power wielders in many domains of social life. They disagree quite strongly, however, about the prospects for re-establishing democratic accountability in global politics.

Pessimists maintain that because there is no global *demos*, democratic accountability is inapposite and possibly dangerous when applied to global governance.[3] Dahl (1999) holds that closing accountability gaps would require global democratic institutions or global government. In his view, the influence of citizens within national states is already highly diluted, and the delegation necessary to manage the complex technical problems confronting modern societies carries steep democratic costs. Moreover, he doubts whether a suitably legitimate global *demos* could ever emerge and fears that popular influence would only be further attenuated and delegation further multiplied in global institutions. He therefore harbors serious doubts about whether such institutions could ever be meaningfully democratic (Dahl 1999, 20–21). Better, he counsels, to face these realities than

[2]Philip (2009, 33ff.) argues that what I call the standard model reflects principal-agent thinking that ascribes to accountability relationships a bilateral character they need not have. I agree, and I make use of this insight in developing my alternative below. Yet most models of *democratic* accountability, including Philip's (36), *do* have this bilateral quality.

[3]This "no demos" problem has received much attention in debates surrounding the democratic legitimacy of the EU; for a good recent overview, see Mette (2005).

to lend unwarranted legitimacy to global institutions by trying to make them "democratic" (Dahl 1999, 33).[4]

Cosmopolitans see the absence of a global *demos* and global democratic institutions as structural problems that can be remedied through the creation of new global democratic institutions and the democratization of existing governance arrangements. Such innovations aim "to restore symmetry and congruence" to global politics (Held 2004, 376). Doing so is, in Held's view, an important requirement of the cosmopolitan moral commitment, which is anchored by a "metaprinciple of autonomy" that is "at the core of the democratic project" (Held 2005, 20). It builds on a distinctive conception of the person as a citizen who is in principle "free and equal" (20). The main principles of cosmopolitan order can be derived from autonomy, including the ideas that consent is crucial to noncoercive governmental arrangements and a central component of agency; that government by consent can be realized through voting and representation (Held 2005, 13–14), and that "those significantly affected by public decisions, issues, or processes, should, *ceteris paribus*, have an equal opportunity, directly or indirectly through elected representatives, to influence and shape them" (Held 2005, 14).

Held outlines an ambitious program of political reform and construction to realize these aims. He imagines, among many other things, the regulation of global markets, a representative Security Council, and an international convention to consolidate humanitarian law (in the short term) and the taming of global markets, a global antitrust authority, mandatory standards for labor, the environment, and corporate behavior, "democratization of national and supranational governance (multilevel citizenship)" through regional and global representation, a global constitutional convention, an international tax mechanism, an array of human rights courts, and permanent peacemaking and peace-keeping forces (long term). Held maintains that these ambitious proposals fall short of global government,[5] but Marchetti and others embrace precisely this goal, arguing that the logic of moral cosmopolitanism requires "egalitarian participation in the decision-making and frame-setting process that

generate norms and regulate public life…" (2008, 207; cf. Cabrera 2004). On this view, in place of the all-affected principle endorsed by Held and others, "control over one's life" requires including everyone in public decision-making arrangements (Marchetti 2006, 2008). "An ultimate political authority" is required to replace the "fuzzy net of global governance" typically recommended by cosmopolitans (Marchetti 2006, 297).

Pluralists like Keohane agree with the cosmopolitans about what global democratic accountability would require (Keohane 2003, 140; 2006, 5), but they also share the pessimists' belief that this democratic standard is unworkable. "Comprehensive programs to institute democratic accountability at the global level on the basis of an analogy with domestic democracy founder on the absence of a coherent and well defined global public" (Grant and Keohane 2005, 33). Thus the cosmopolitan "vision would be utopian in the sense of illusory—impossible of realization under realistically foreseeable conditions" (Keohane 2006, 5). Pluralists urge scholars and activists to "resist the temptation to narrow the issue of accountability to that of democratic control" (Grant and Keohane 2005, 42). "If we are to work effectively to improve accountability in world politics, we need to abandon the domestic analogy: the belief that meaningful accountability has to be democratic, entailing popular elections" (Keohane 2003, 140; 2006, 18; Keohane and Nye 2003, 388).

Keohane and other pluralists give up on *democratic* accountability because they believe that its political requirements are utopian and too demanding. Nonetheless, they are concerned that global governance institutions' lack of legitimacy is potentially debilitating (Keohane and Nye 2003, 409, Nye 2001, 3). So they advocate alternate forms of accountability, with the hope that these will at least help to limit abuses of power by agents of global governance. Indeed, the pluralists argue that when we take a broad view of accountability, global governance institutions are among the most accountable actors in world politics (Keohane 2006, Keohane and Nye 2003, 143). This accountability is achieved through a variety of mechanisms—including hierarchical, supervisory, fiscal, legal, market, peer, and public reputational mechanisms—that mix delegation and participatory models (Grant and Keohane 2005, 35). Such mechanisms, pluralists argue, already do constrain important power wielders in world politics, including multilateral organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), transgovernmental networks, corporations, and states. The demand for greater *democratic* accountability thus "understates both the range and variety of mechanisms

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[4]Some scholars maintain that the EU's democratic deficits are more apparent than real. In comparison with actual practices in advanced industrialized democracies, rather than with ideals, it would do quite well; see Moravcsik (2002, 2004); Zweifel (2002). Moravcsik recognizes that this argument might not apply to international organizations *other than* the EU.

[5]For less sweeping recommendations based on similar arguments see Archibugi (2008).

of accountability that already exist" within international organizations and "fails to acknowledge that more democracy may dramatically weaken existing mechanisms and may erode the limited trust that these institutions currently command" (Philp 2009, 22). The focus, pluralists insist, should be on understanding and strengthening these alternative forms of accountability.

Because these approaches differ so starkly on the prospects for democratic accountability in global politics, it is easy to overlook the remarkable similarities among them. All three approaches equate *democratic* accountability with popular control and elections, even though pessimists and pluralists find this model unrealistic and overly demanding in the global context. All three approaches also agree in conceiving the main challenge to democratic accountability in global politics as one of restoring the appropriate symmetry and congruence between accountability holders and power wielders. All thus regard determining *who* the appropriate accountability holders are as paramount. Pessimists and pluralists see the problem as insoluble in the global context, while cosmopolitans propose to solve it by creating global democratic institutions to restore popular control over decisions and policies made by transnational power wielders. Finally, all three equate democratic accountability in global politics with a complete system of global democracy, setting up a stark—and false—choice between embracing global government and abandoning democratic accountability altogether. Crucially, the disagreement among these approaches is not about what global democratic accountability requires but about whether it is possible or desirable. Even if one accepts cosmopolitan reasoning, serious doubts remain about whether their proposals could be realized and become effective anytime soon.

This gloomy outlook reflects an unnecessarily narrow understanding of democratic accountability. The idea that full-blown global democracy is necessary to increase democratic accountability in global politics results from identifying democratic accountability with the familiar electoral mechanisms. This assumption puts all the emphasis on determining *who* the accountability holders are—which, as the foregoing summary indicates, is precisely the problem in the global context. I shall argue that by returning to the reasons *why* the people are entitled to hold rulers to account on the SM, it is possible to reconstruct an alternative model of democratic accountability to norms rather than agents. This possibility has been overlooked because the SM and liberal democratic practice incorporate a Westphalian conception of the polity whose assumptions conflate questions about *why* accountability is justified with questions about *who* the appropriate agents of accountability are. Unpacking these assumptions explains more clearly why the SM proves so problematic in an era of globalization and suggests that an alternative approach could allow for greater democratic accountability in global politics by other means. The alternative approach complements the SM, staking out a pragmatic middle ground between the cosmopolitan insistence on replicating a fully democratic system globally and the pessimistic rejection of democratic accountability as unrealistic and too demanding.

Principles of Democratic Accountability

As Grant and Keohane (2005, 29–30) argue, accountability always presumes that those who hold power to account have the right to do so and that all parties recognize and accept this entitlement. Thus the principles or arguments that entitle accountability holders to call power wielders to account, that *justify* accountability, are crucial. As we have seen, two overlapping principles justify accountability in the SM: constituent sovereignty and the all-affected principle.

From a democratic theoretical perspective, neither of these is a first principle; both derive from more fundamental democratic ideas, freedom and equality. These principles figure centrally in virtually every modern account of democracy. Locke used them to justify a transfer of sovereignty from the king to the people; Rousseau argued that together they establish the moral basis of relations among citizens. These principles abolish all grounds for domination and oppression (Pateman 1988, 39), implying constraints on the exercise of power and entitling people to a say in deliberating, shaping, and contesting decisions. All subsequent democratic theory, including Held's autonomy-based cosmopolitanism, relies on these principles.

Understanding why the SM proves so problematic in an era of increasing interdependence requires that we explore how it reconfigures freedom and equality into constituent sovereignty and all-affected principles. The SM, like modern democratic theory generally, internalizes a Westphalian conception of the state. The central assumptions of this conception are that the territorial state is a natural container of and vehicle for politics (Beitz 1991; Goodhart 2005; Held 1995). Let us briefly consider each of these

assumptions. That the state is *natural* simply means that it is taken for granted as an ontological feature of our world, a starting point for reflection about politics. The state's normative priority thus requires no justification. That the state is a natural *container of politics* reflects the Westphalian fiction that politics occurs within and is limited to the territory of the state, which represents a normatively unproblematic form of boundedness. The state as a natural *vehicle for politics* indicates the corollary idea that politics, so restricted, is fully adequate and appropriate. Indeed, on the Westphalian model, politics is possible only inside states; outside is anarchy, the realm of mere relations among polities (Walker 1993; Wight 1966). Put differently, the sovereign state makes politics possible. Held captures this complex conception neatly when referring to Westphalian states as "communities of fate"—and tellingly, he concludes that these communities must be reimagined for an era of complex, interdependent global politics. I want to stress that nothing in my argument hinges on whether these assumptions are or ever were correct; correct or not, they form the ontological and epistemological foundation of modern politics.[6]

In the Westphalian framework, freedom and equality are transfigured by these assumptions into constituent sovereignty and all-affected principles. To see this, consider that neither of the latter principles offers a plausible interpretation of democratic freedom and equality without the further assumption that the state is a natural container of and vehicle for politics. In fact, both all-affected and constituent sovereignty limit freedom and equality, though these limits are hidden within the Westphalian framework. Insofar as freedom and equality imply a concern with all affected interests; they cannot explain—indeed, they seem to rule out—a strictly territorial conception of politics. As an empirical characterization of democratic politics, all-affected is simply false.[7] Only Westphalian assumptions make it plausible to circumscribe the concern with who is affected in this way. Likewise, freedom and equality alone cannot explain why only the consent of those within a state is necessary or adequate; they would seem to require *everyone's* consent—as Filmer (1991, 189) long ago noted (cf. Goodin 2007, 68). A self-constituting act of consent is inescapably circular, as it is always undertaken by a

people already defined by the territory of the state their consent purportedly founds (Yack 2001).

So, neither all affected nor constituent sovereignty is a coherent interpretation of freedom and equality *on its own*; Westphalian assumptions transfigure them into plausibly *democratic* principles while remaining largely invisible. These same assumptions enable and structure the symmetry and congruence distinctive of modern democratic theory and of the SM and help to explain how the SM becomes concerned with *who* is entitled to hold power to account. Once an "inside" is established, freedom and equality entitle everyone there to a vote and a say. This entitlement fosters demands for greater inclusion and makes those demands difficult to resist (in principle; they are bitterly resisted in practice). What we today consider the quintessential mechanisms of democratic accountability—elections, representation—predate the advent of modern democracy by centuries. The historical struggle for greater democratic accountability was a struggle not to create these mechanisms but to *democratize* them (Goodin 2008). It was precisely the question of who among the people should count as citizens that was up for grabs. Freedom and equality provided the leveling arguments that undercut the old hierarchies and established that everyone should be included. Similarly, that the will of the people—however defined—should become a standard for holding power wielders to account reflects the results of fierce battles over whose interests and welfare matter.

Identifying how these assumptions shape modern democratic theory and practice, and the SM in particular, reveals why globalization poses such serious challenges for democratic accountability. The SM's all-affected and constituent sovereignty principles function democratically within the Westphalian framework of assumptions; globalization undermines those assumptions, making theories that rely on them implausible and perhaps incoherent. Without those assumptions, there is no determinate or unproblematic answer to the *who* question, making the composition of the *demos* a controversial theoretical and political problem (Miller 2009). Without an antecedently defined answer, all-affected faces a problem of infinite regress: who decides who is relevantly affected in any given case? As Goodin argues, the logic of all-affected seems "to mean giving virtually everyone everywhere a vote on virtually everything decided anywhere" (2007, 68)—a political nonstarter.

Cosmopolitans—Held in particular—have labored heroically to find empirical solutions to this problem, stressing variables such as the significance

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[6]See, e.g., Beck (2004); Cerny (1996); Taylor (1996).

[7]It is odd that Grant and Keohane (2005, 12–13) characterize participation models as entitling everyone affected by laws, policies, and programs to hold decision makers accountable; they list states among the *least* accountable actors globally because they violate all-affected.

of the interests affected and the intensity of the effect. Such attempts only shift the question to who decides disputes over the criteria and their application.[8] The problem is not that Held overlooks the territorial assumptions of Westphalia; he is one of their most powerful critics. It is rather that he does not appreciate how deeply these assumptions structure the *principles* of modern democratic theory as well as its practice: those assumptions did normative as well as empirical work, making the limits necessary for the coherence of constituent sovereignty and all-affected seem natural. It is not, as Held recognizes, that these particular limits were necessary; it is that they were normatively unproblematic. Without those "natural" limits, the principles become unworkable.

An Alternative Model of Global Democratic Accountability

Cosmopolitans, pessimists, and pluralists all assume that greater democratic accountability in world politics can only be achieved by replicating the familiar features of the SM globally. I have argued that this approach is conceptually flawed because the constituent sovereignty and all-affected principles rely for their coherence and democratic legitimacy on Westphalian assumptions that do not obtain outside the state. In this section I sketch an alternative model of democratic accountability for global politics that preserves the democratic commitment to freedom and equality while reconceptualizing democratic accountability as a problem of norms rather than agents. On this model, accountability is achieved through mechanisms of accountability to general and inclusive norms that constrain power and enable agency.

As noted earlier, the development of democratic accountability reflects the gradual implementation of measures designed to make the existing framework of elections and representation more inclusive. Historically, as Shapiro argues, "democracy is as much about opposition to the arbitrary exercise of power as it is about collective self-government" (1999, 30), even though the academic literature often neglects this aspect of it. "Democracy is better thought of as a means of managing power relations so as to minimize domination" (Shapiro 2003, 3) than as a system of popular control. In fact, there is ample reason, on

both empirical and theoretical grounds, to doubt how effective and reliable elections and representation are as mechanisms of popular control (see, e.g., Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). And as Dahl (1999) laments, what control exists is increasingly attenuated by the size of liberal democratic states and the delegation required by their growing complexity. This is by no means to suggest that elections and representation should be abandoned; it is only to point out that as mechanisms of popular control they are hardly perfect. Understanding their democratization as a process of limiting power and reducing domination helps to make sense of the importance that has historically been attached to them despite these limitations.

The alternative model (AM) I propose builds on these insights. It begins from the recognition that there already exists a system of global governance, treating the challenge of achieving greater democratic accountability globally as one of democratizing that system. In other words, the AM does not prioritize (re)creating the specific mechanisms of accountability associated with the SM. Instead, following the historical pattern, it seeks to make existing arrangements conform to the democratic principles of freedom and equality, to make governance more inclusive and responsive and to limit the exercise of power. Elections and representation are one way to achieve these aims, but not the only way—and, for reasons already discussed, they are ill-suited to present and foreseeable conditions of global politics.

This approach involves two significant innovations that make it particularly useful in addressing the problem of democratic accountability in world politics. The first involves shifting our focus from *who* is entitled to hold power to account to the reasons *why* accountability is justified in democratic theory. The SM conflates these questions because within the Westphalian framework freedom and equality mainly informed debates about who should qualify as citizens, whose interests should count. Highlighting this justification, however, reminds us that the standard to which power wielders are held in democracy is consideration for the rights, welfare, and interests of all. Within the Westphalian framework, this standard becomes nearly equivalent with "the popular will." Outside that framework, as we have seen, the coherence of that notion breaks down. Focusing on democratic norms or standards of accountability rather than on the identity of the appropriate accountability holders thus suggests a way around the "no *demos*" problem. Instead of treating the will or interests of a *demos* as its standard the AM adopts

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[8] e.g., Held (2004, 1995). The complexity would anyway be overwhelming: how, institutionally, could the constantly shifting *demoi* relevant to each issue be organized politically?

a generalized conception of interests derived directly from democracy's core principles.[9]

The democratic norms or standards of accountability that I propose follow directly from freedom and equality and are familiar in democratic theory and practice. Historically, freedom and equality have been invoked to counteract domination and oppression; the commitment to these principles implies at least that no one should be subject to arbitrary power or to unwarranted interference. Democratic accountability standards are standards that constrain the exercise of power and enable meaningful political agency—the opportunity to deliberate, shape, and contest political decisions and processes—for everyone (Goodhart 2008). These standards can be interpreted and expressed as a democratic conception of emancipatory human rights.[10] There is a long tradition in democratic theory in which rights provide for protection, inclusion, and empowerment. Guarantees of fairness, education, personal liberty, bodily integrity, social and economic security, and political participation are fundamental democratic rights because they are necessary for preventing domination and oppression. They define abuses of power and establish the requirements of meaningful agency, specifying the standards to which rulers in democracies must adhere.[11] Indeed, these standards are commonly recognized in liberal democratic theory and practice: "Throughout the history of democratic thought, the focus has been on achieving certain specific rights and liberties as well as specific constitutional guarantees, as found, for example, in various bills of rights and declarations of the rights of man" (Rawls 2001, 45).

The AM's emphasis on rights as standards of accountability clarifies why democratic majorities or their representatives may not strip minorities of their rights, why they must respect due process and the rule of law, and so forth. The SM's focus on popular control makes such limits appear as constraints on democracy, creating an apparent tension; the AM shows that these restrictions enhance democratic accountability and flow from the same principled sources that justify popular control in the first place.

Similarly, the AM shows how judicial institutions and independent agencies contribute to democratic accountability: while not mechanisms of direct popular control, they nonetheless enhance accountability when their decisions respect and are guided by democratic standards.[12]

This shift from agents to norms allows the AM to avoid the *who* problem that proves so vexing in the global context. Instead, it emphasizes the normative standards that power and policies must respect. One practical benefit of this is to expand considerably the universe of accountability holders. In the supranational context, as Rubenstein (2007) has cogently argued, those to whom accountability is owed [on the SM] are often too weak (they lack sufficient power) to hold power wielders to account. She proposes a model of "surrogate accountability" in which third parties can set standards, gather information, and sanction power wielders on behalf of those who lack the power to do so for themselves. On the AM, the generality and inclusiveness of democratic norms helps to establish the legitimacy of such "third parties" (the term reflects the SM's bilateral character), yet the idea of "surrogacy" dissolves, because the AM has no prior conception of who the appropriate agents of accountability are. This expansion is useful because the variety and complexity of global governance arrangements suggests that more, diverse actors will be needed to hold power to account globally and because, as Rubenstein argues, it can help to compensate for power asymmetries in global politics.

Critics of NGOs often argue that they are neither representative nor entrusted with delegated authority and are therefore democratically illegitimate. On the SM this critique is difficult to answer. The AM, however, has no difficulty comprehending how transnational NGOs or social movements might, for example, hold the WTO democratically accountable. Conceptually, what would make this an instance of democratic accountability on the AM is the standard of accountability applied. The focus shifts from who the accountability holders are to the norms of democratic accountability invoked. So long as NGOs promote internationally recognized human rights norms, they should be seen as contributing to democratic accountability—providing they also respect those norms in their own advocacy and operations. This is not to say that those immediately impacted by acts of governance can be ignored or

[9]So, like Marchetti's (2006, 2008) all-included idea, the AM takes everyone into consideration; unlike his proposal, it does so without relying on a world government.

[10]See Goodhart (2005), Gould (2005).

[11]Protection of these rights is a necessary condition of democracy. If the rights are properly conceived and institutionalized, I believe it might also be a sufficient one. For now it is enough to stress that democracy requires these rights; nothing here hinges on the sufficiency claim.

[12]I am grateful to Carmen Pavel for suggesting this analogy to me.

that their views should be treated equivalently with those of "third parties." The more focused the effects of a decision, the more appropriate the SM becomes. Often, however, the effects of global actors' decisions and policies are diffuse across time and space, and sometimes deeply contested; decisions with limited immediate impact might set important precedents. In such cases the AM offers a measure of democratic accountability where the SM cannot.

The second key innovation of the AM is its expansion beyond the traditional mechanisms associated with the SM. On the AM, democratic standards of accountability are derived directly from democracy's core principles. These norms, rather than any particular mechanisms, make accountability democratic. This approach can thus enlist diverse mechanisms of accountability, as the pluralists advocate, without sacrificing, as they do, democracy's normative requirements. This is not to deny the import role of popular authorization or direct popular decision making in democracy; both remain central to national and local democracy—and might some day become appropriate globally. But the concept of democratic accountability need not be limited to the familiar mechanisms of the SM, especially in the global arena, where these mechanisms and the arguments justifying them fail. Beetham (1999, chap.1) warns against conflating democratic ideals and principles with the familiar institutions through which they are realized; the AM's expanded conception of democratic accountability relies on this insight in showing how those principles and ideals can operate through various mechanisms, making it more adaptable to the distinctive challenges of global politics.

This second innovation also makes it possible to envision holding a much broader set of power wielders *democratically* accountable. Pluralists see accountability that does not rely on delegation or participation or operate through the familiar mechanisms as not democratic.[13] This causes difficulties with respect to global governance—as they acknowledge—where diverse actors exercise power outside the familiar democratic framework of parliamentary oversight and regulation and without delegation or authority from a democratic public. If we think of democratic accountability as always involving delegation or participation by the correct public, most of these entities will appear, as the pluralists argue, to fall outside of its purview. For instance, transnational corporations (TNCs) do not hold democratically delegated authority and it is not obvious to what public or publics they should be accountable for the effects of their actions. Similarly, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the IMF or WTO have authority delegated to them by states. Pessimists and pluralists would despair of holding such power wielders democratically accountable, though pluralists take comfort in the potential of other mechanisms of accountability to limit abuses of power. On the AM, these alternative mechanisms can provide democratic accountability, so long as the standards to which power wielders are held are democratic ones. This implies that *any* entities exercising power—executing global governance functions—can and should be held *democratically* accountable.[14]

Let me briefly sketch how democratic accountability on the AM might work, focusing first on IGOs like the IMF, WTO, and World Bank, entities whose lack of democratic accountability figures centrally in these debates. IGOs would be made more accountable in three related ways. First, they would be required to take democratic human rights standards into account in their decisions and operations. Mechanisms such as human rights impact assessments for policies under consideration and human rights audits of past programs and operations would be conducted internally and reviewed by ombuds personnel and by independent human rights commissions (on which more below). Conformity with these norms would directly limit abuses of power and would help to avert future or unanticipated abuses associated with policy decisions taken by these organizations. In addition, IGOs would have to institutionalize opportunities for meaningful political agency—for deliberative input from groups and individuals to shape policies and priorities before their implementation.[15] Finally, IGOs would be required to institutionalize opportunities for groups or individuals to contest decisions or policies that violate their rights. Increasingly standardized procedures of global administrative law suggest a model here (though these presently lack a clear normative direction; Kingsbury, Krisch, and Stewart 2004). Such

[13]Grant and Keohane see that human rights and "democratic principles" are operative standards of accountability in global politics, but they stress that these norms function "even though their power does not derive from authority delegated to them" and "even in the absence of a global public comparable to domestic publics"—which for them amounts to saying, "even though they are not democratic." The confusion flows from their close adherence to the SM.

[14]Such entities might appropriately be accountable to other standards as well; e.g., TNCs to standards set by shareholders, employees, and consumers.

[15]See, e.g., Bohman (2004) and Goodhart (2008).

procedures should also be subject to the review of human rights commissions.

Human rights commissions might be organized functionally or regionally.[16] They would have responsibility for overseeing the internal efforts of IGOs to comply with democratic standards. They would also hear and adjudicate appeals and engage as mediators in arbitration, where appropriate. They should have independent investigatory powers similar to those given UN special rapporteurs, so that they could initiate studies or propose specific policy changes. Human rights commissions would have the power to sanction IGOs and to suspend or cancel programs where necessary to protect democratic human rights standards. They could also provide technical assistance to IGOs seeking to improve their human rights practices.

Additionally, human rights commissions would have oversight responsibility for TNCs, which would also be required to respect democratic human rights standards in all of their operations and decision making. This requirement would again curb direct abuses of power of the most obvious kind, but might also encompass ''policy'' decisions about foreign direct investment, labor and contracting procedures, and environmental management. In some cases soliciting direct input from stakeholders might be necessary, such as in decisions to (re)locate manufacturing facilities or dispose of harmful waste products. Human rights impact assessments could again be utilized by TNCs for these purposes. In addition, codes of conduct such as those proposed by John Ruggie, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, in his report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/ 4/035 9 February 2007; cf. Ruggie 2003) could be made subject to the monitoring procedures of human rights commissions. In cases of flagrant or repeated violations, direct sanctions might be imposed or permitted.

With respect to both IGOs and TNCs, then, internal accountability would be achieved through hierarchical, supervisory, and perhaps fiscal mechanisms (if states were willing to cut off funding for IGOs or programs that violated the standards or to

sanction firms that failed to heed their obligations). In addition, human rights commissions would provide legal accountability to back these internal mechanisms. Standardization of democratic human rights norms would also facilitate peer mechanisms of accountability, as networks of international officials and corporate compliance managers shared information and exerted professional pressure on their colleagues (see Slaughter 2004). Externally, the publicity and consistency of the democratic standard would enhance the ability of civil society actors to pressure IGOs and TNCs alike. The public input requirement for IGOs would offer an additional mechanism for direct influence of the kind increasingly seen in international treaty negotiations and world conferences. In this way, the internal mechanisms would be strengthened and reputational mechanisms—naming and shaming—would be leveraged. Conceivably this last process might also, with respect to TNCs, trigger (formal or informal) market mechanisms of accountability. While the AM shares the pluralists' view that traditional democratic mechanisms of popular control are unworkable in the global context, it shows how all of the various ''nondemocratic'' mechanisms of accountability mentioned by Grant and Keohane might, directly or indirectly, serve as democratic mechanisms.

Preventing democratic standards from themselves becoming a form of domination requires mechanisms to allow for their reconsideration and revision. While the standards can be derived, analytically and historically, from the democratic principles of freedom and equality, their generality and inclusiveness suggests that the standards themselves must somehow be open to deliberation, contestation, and renegotiation. Such a process is a requirement of democratic accountability. While the derivation of democratic standards provides a useful starting point, one whose plausibility is enhanced by its overlap with the existing international consensus on human rights, it can only be a starting point. It would be a mistake to think that the standards could ever be finalized: the democratic standard is always necessarily provisional —in part because the imperfections in existing standards will often become apparent only in practice. Besides, changing social conditions and our constantly evolving appreciation of how differently located and differently positioned people experience the world continually reshape our understanding of what freedom and equality for everyone means and requires.

One way in which such reconsideration might be formalized is through periodic world conferences,

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[16]Each offers advantages. Regional organizations could better address state violations, because they can interpret and enforce human rights norms in ways that avert fears of neo-imperialism and are sensitive to local understandings (the European Court of Human Rights is a model here). Functional organizations could better monitor IGOs, TNCs, and other actors whose activities and influence span many regions (the ILO is something of a model here).

with representatives from many sectors of society, perhaps elected and appointed in combination from lists drawn up by human rights commissions and supplemented by petition. These representatives could gather input, hear testimony, and suggest revisions that might be implemented by treaty, or they might issue interpretive statements to clarify the meaning of various standards and guide their implementation. While the idea of "representation" might appear to belong exclusively to the SM, innovative recent work by Rehfeld (2006) and Saward (2009) shows that representation itself cannot adequately be understood in electoral terms. Their work is akin to the reconceptualization of democratic accountability undertaken here, especially in its motivation by the challenges that globalization poses to traditional understandings.

There is of course a danger in such forums being captured by anti-democratic forces—as the sad history of the UN Commission on Human Rights and the disappointing debut of it successor, the Human Rights Council, illustrates.[17] I cannot fully address this worry here, but a counterexample indicates the kind of reply I have in mind. The problems these organizations face result from the participation of states not committed to human rights norms. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), by contrast, has not been similarly corrupted, mainly because it is governed by states and individuals committed to the norms it espouses. Rehfeld and Saward's work and the AM suggest that we might consider an institution like the ECHR representative or democratic—perhaps, on the AM, *more* democratic than UN bodies committed to formulaic ideas of popular control and electoral equality but lacking any genuine democratic commitment.

Notice that these proposals do not require significant new institutions or contentious reforms of existing institutional arrangements like those commonly proposed by cosmopolitans (though some such reforms might nonetheless be desirable). Many of the key mechanisms in the scheme of accountability envisioned here already exist and would be converted to *democratic* mechanisms through the adoption of appropriate democratic standards. Only the human rights commissions are new, and even in that case we have successful regional and functional models to build on. Recall that one of the main objections to cosmopolitan proposals, which seek essentially to globalize the SM, is that they are "utopian in the sense of illusory—impossible of

realization under realistically foreseeable conditions" (Keohane 2006, 5). The AM is not vulnerable to this objection. It can also answer cosmopolitan critics by stressing that the measures it advances are broadly consistent with cosmopolitan proposals and would not prejudice—and might even advance—the cosmopolitan agenda in the longer run. Institutionally, the AM occupies a pragmatic middle ground in the present debates.

Objections

The AM reconceives democratic accountability as accountability to norms, not agents. This approach raises three (interrelated) sets of potential objections concerning its democratic status, the role it gives to participation, and the human rights norms it embraces.

One worry about the AM is that it is not—or not sufficiently—democratic. The AM replaces the central doctrine of popular control with standards of legitimacy that, however appealing, are simply not equivalent with democracy. There are several important replies to this worry. First, I do not advocate replacing the standard model, as the objection implies. Rather, my argument concerns how we might extend our thinking about democratic accountability beyond the SM to meet important challenges that it cannot adequately address. The AM extends and complements the SM but does not replace it. They work in different contexts, with different assumptions. Second, to reiterate, democratic accountability is not equivalent with or exhaustive of democracy. The AM is not equivalent with the SM, but that does not show that the AM is not democratic. The AM reconceives democratic accountability in terms of norms, showing how greater democratic accountability can be achieved globally without the unrealistic and overly demanding exigencies of cosmopolitan democracy. It might be, as pessimists and pluralists maintain, that full-blown democracy is only possible within states. I take no position on this question, because I am not claiming that the proposals set out here are substitutes for existing democratic arrangements in states or that they amount to a fully democratic system of government. My point is that even without such a system, greater global democratic accountability is possible.

The worry might be that the AM "just isn't democracy," because democracy *means* popular control. But what democratic accountability means and

requires is precisely the point at issue. Democratic accountability has historically meant *more than* popular control by specific publics; drawing on these neglected aspects of it provides traction on the challenge of democratic accountability in global politics. I have distinguished democratic accountability from full-blown democracy, shown that it has been concerned as much with rights and with limiting domination and oppression as with popular control, and argued that focusing on these non-electoral dimensions, on democratic norms, suggests another model of democratic accountability that achieves limits on power, respect for rights, and opportunities for meaningful political agency.

A second, related concern is that the AM eliminates the empowering, face-to-face relationships between rulers and ruled vital to democracy. This concern again reflects the incorrect assumption that the two models are mutually exclusive. The AM does not eliminate or replace elections or any other mechanisms of the SM; these remain central to democratic practice where the SM remains viable (i.e., locally and nationally). The AM instead highlights other accountability mechanisms that do not involve popular control or direct delegation and that (therefore) are better suited to challenges of global democratic accountability. That said, the concern about participation regards elections and delegation as the most empowering aspects of democracy and judges the AM democratically deficient without them. Yet democratic theorists typically see civil society, public deliberation, and formal and informal arrangements for influencing and contesting decisions as democracy's most empowering features. These mechanisms are hard to define as democratic on the SM because they are not electoral or representative in the traditional sense. The AM recognizes them as democratic and seeks to promote them because they help to limit abuses of power, to protect rights, and to create opportunities for agency. It aims to make democratic participation and accountability possible globally—even in the absence of a fully democratic system—by protecting the rights on which they depend and by institutionalizing opportunities for political agency throughout the evolving network of global governance (cf. Bohman 2004, Goodhart 2008, Jacobson and Ruffer 2003).

There are two likely sources of confusion on these points. One is that, in endorsing global human rights standards, the AM might appear also to be endorsing a top-down legalistic or bureaucratic model in tension with the bottom-up and participatory ideal commonly associated with democracy. In fact, democratic

accountability always requires both a formal framework of rules and norms that enables participation as well as participation itself. This framework is taken for granted in the democratic state, where courts and bureaucratic agencies that uphold rights, check abuses of power, and facilitate agency are regularized parts of the democratic system. Establishing such a framework, and with it the entitlement to hold power wielders to account, must be part of any scheme for global democratic accountability; without it, one cannot speak meaningfully of accountability at all. The other source of confusion is treating all forms of participation as "belonging to" the SM. On this view, the AM appears either to collapse back into the SM or to get ensnared in contradiction. While elections are certainly participatory, not all forms of participation are mechanisms of popular control or delegation. Many, like civil society, are mechanisms of influence rather than control; they do not presume previously defined or static publics, but are fluid and changing across time, place, and issue area. They do not rest on the consent or involvement of all affected, but rather allow for engagement by self-selecting groups and individuals. (They might be "representative" in Rehfeld and Saward's sense, but this would still not make them "democratic" on the SM.) The AM is avowedly participatory, but that does not make it self-contradictory or indistinguishable from the SM.

An example might help to clarify some of these points (I am grateful to a reviewer for suggesting it to me). Consider the World Bank's recent efforts to achieve greater social accountability, for which it has won some deserved plaudits (see, e.g., World Bank 2010). Many of the Bank's programs are directed to making government officials and bureaucrats more accountable to their citizens—that is, they seek to buttress the SM in the national context. Others, however, seek to make the Bank itself more accountable. These programs typically involve cases where the population of those "significantly affected" is relatively clear (e.g., the residents of a village or region in which a program operates). Even in these cases, the Bank does not allow for its economists, project managers, or policy directors to be elected; it does not give stakeholders a veto over its projects. Rather, it seeks to improve its accountability by soliciting and responding to stakeholders' views and concerns, by giving them a chance to influence the formation and implementation of policies and programs, by ensuring that their rights and interests are respected, and by making it easier for them to raise a fuss when problems arise. Put differently, and perhaps a little tendentiously, the Bank adheres to norms

of democratic accountability while departing from the mechanisms familiar in the SM. The key intuition of the AM is that if the standards that guide and animate such alternative mechanisms are themselves democratic, and if they are formalized and extended across the universe of global governance activity in our world today, this would mark a significant gain in democratic accountability.

The final concern about the AM is its definition of democratic standards in terms of human rights. Some readers might doubt whether human rights really provide the legitimate standards that the AM requires in light of the now-familiar debates about the "universality" of human rights. This worry undervalues the unprecedented body of human rights law that enjoys international consent and the expanding overlapping consensus that human rights command globally (Donnelly 2007). Besides, even if it were correct that human rights norms are highly controversial, that controversy would not be germane to the debate on *democratic* accountability that I have joined in this essay. That debate presumes a normative commitment to democracy—presumes that greater democratic accountability would be desirable. Democratic accountability in global politics is unavoidably going to be *democratic*, and in that sense, its substantive moral commitments will not be universally shared. (A global norm of popular control would certainly not command consensus.) Democracy and human rights share a commitment to freedom and equality that make them revolutionary and disruptive; they upset traditional hierarchies of power and traditional values wherever they are introduced, in the West and elsewhere. For those who share the democratic commitment, human rights norms are uncontroversial; indeed, any model of democratic accountability that did not protect human rights would be found wanting. Some might prefer a different terminology, or to package the protections differently than I have done, but no democrat can object to the substance of the standards. This is not to deny that human rights discourse has been abused historically, enlisted in the service of colonialism and repressive regimes (see, e.g., Pagden 2003; Pitts 2006). But no idea, certainly no political concept, is immune to abuse and misuse. That is in part why the AM's norms and standards must themselves be accountable: so that they are not used as tools of domination.

This argument might seem contradictory. In appealing to consensus on human rights norms and to their refinement through world conferences, the AM seems to rely on popular authorization or on an indirect "all-affected" justification. But it is no

embarrassment for the AM that it regards popular endorsement of its norms and standards as a good thing. I am happy to agree that there is a kind of indirect or second-order measure of popular agreement at work in the AM; that is both a strength of the AM and an indication of its attention to the dangers of domination. Again, the models are not mutually exclusive; the AM extends and rounds out the SM; it is strengthened, not undermined, by this overlap. Still, stark differences between the two models remain; I shall emphasize two. First, the AM envisions no referendum on norms; its standards do not require direct popular control or authorization. They could not, for this would mistake the normative and analytic role of rights in democratic theory, reducing democracy to majority whim. Consensus and popular endorsement lend legitimacy to the standards, and world conferences provide a check against domination, but the rights standards have a historical and analytic anchor, a core content that is not subject to popular approval. That this core enjoys global support says something important about democracy's value and appeal. Second, the SM requires popular control at the level of particular decisions and policies (all-affected), while the AM's democratic standards apply generally to the full range of decisions and policies. Norms evolve slowly and deliberately; popular input thus provides a broad steering mechanism and a check against domination, but it is radically limited in comparison with the SM.

Critics might suspect that the consensus to which I appeal is more apparent than real, that human rights norms are either too vague to be meaningful, or too substantive and controversial to serve as general standards, as the AM requires. The objection wrongly implies that either there is complete substantive agreement on human rights norms or they are unworkably vague. The reality is more complex. There exists broad and stable consensus on human rights at the level of general statements and guiding values; at the level of interpretation there is more disagreement, but it remains largely confined to the broader terms of shared understanding. Most "hot button" issues and substantive disagreements occur on the level of implementation (Donnelly 2003). This seems typical of political concepts. In the United States, there is a broad and stable constitutional consensus. Nonetheless, there are many different ways of interpreting the constitution that manifest in different ideologies and traditions of judicial reasoning. At the level of implementation, various disputes about constitutional limits and requirements provoke significant controversies and sharply divide society. These controversies do not

make the system unworkable or invalidate the general consensus; on the contrary, that consensus provides the framework in which such disputes are negotiated and renegotiated. The thin, general consensus sets the parameters in which differing interpretations and conflicts over implementation get worked out. The human rights standards of the AM will certainly generate some controversy in specific cases, and disagreements about how best to interpret human rights will remain. So the human rights norms will be messy and conflictual. Politically, this only makes them normal.

Even if critics find the democratic standard I have proposed wanting, the *model* of accountability outlined here remains viable. The AM could work in roughly the same way using another democratic standard (another interpretation of what freedom and equality require). To invalidate the model requires showing that the very idea of accountability to norms is somehow flawed or undemocratic. I prefer the human rights interpretation because human rights are formulated specifically for the global context, because they have a long association with emancipatory democratic theory, and because human rights *do* command a wide and meaningful global consensus today. Still, other standards might prove better; debate on that question would itself mark a significant advance in the discussion.

The AM extends and complements the logic of the SM, but it also presents a powerful critique of the SM. Conformity with democratic norms is a requirement of governmental and social institutions at the state level as well as the global level; when existing democratic practice departs from these norms, it must be brought into compliance. The same logic that led to the democratization of parliaments and citizenship within states invites and demands their ongoing democratization. Moreover, insofar as states are power wielders involved in global governance, they too must comply with democratic standards when they act "outwardly" in ways that could lead to domination or oppression. This requires both respecting democratic limits on the use of power and creating institutionalized opportunities for "outsiders" to deliberate, shape, and contest their decisions. Unfortunately I cannot elaborate on these ideas here.

Conclusion

At a historical juncture when governance no longer conforms to the familiar boundaries of the political,

standard models of democratic accountability have proven unworkable. Many critics have concluded that global democratic accountability is either impossible or that it requires (re)creating traditional democratic arrangements—a global government.

I have argued for another way. Instead of seeing democratic accountability as making power answerable to the right people, I have reconceived it as making power answerable to the right standards. The focus shifts to the principles that justify accountability within democratic theory and to the norms or standards derived from them. Specifically, I have argued that greater democratic accountability can be achieved through holding power wielders accountable to human rights standards derived from the core democratic principles of freedom and equality. These standards establish a sort of democratic minimum with which all governance activity should conform. This approach eliminates worries about who is entitled to hold power to account. Power can be made accountable to democratic norms through a variety of mechanisms and through the participation of many diverse actors. This model offers a workable and attractive approach to democratic accountability in global politics: it is normatively based, flexible, and applies to a wide range of governance activities. It builds on pluralists' important insights into accountability mechanisms without giving up on their democratic potential. It creates an enabling environment for participation in global governance.

This approach is incremental: it aims at realizing greater democratic accountability in global politics, not global democracy. Given the deep disagreements about the meaning, plausibility, and desirability of global democracy, incrementalism is appealing.[18] Accountability to norms is more feasible than cosmopolitan schemes; it could be implemented fairly easily through reform of existing institutions and arrangements (which is not to say such reforms will be easily achieved!). Still, it has the potential to generate meaningful change immediately, not in a distant, ideal future. It also seems likely to command a broader consensus among proponents of greater global democracy, as it remains agnostic with respect to the eventual institutional form that global democracy should take. Indeed, the democratic standards articulated here would be necessary on *any* account of global democracy (see Goodhart 2008)

This institutional incrementalism should not be mistaken for conservatism. Rather, it reflects

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[18]For an overview of the broader debates see Holden 2000, Shapiro and Hacker-Cordón 1999.

significant historical and theoretical insights: that democracy has historically meant much more than popular control and that it has been built up and patched together rather than built to plan—a fact that probably explains much of its unlikely success. This history suggests that incrementalism might also be the most plausible path toward the eventual realization of global democracy, in whatever form it might take. The model of democratic accountability envisioned here is flexible enough to respond to whatever developments lie ahead, yet robust enough to increase significantly the democratic accountability of global governance right now, and thus hopefully to guide those future developments in the right direction.

Acknowledgments

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