Toward a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly

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Abstract
There is widespread recognition of a democratic deficit in global governance. While recognizing this deficit is easy, remedying it is going to be hard. Many existing proposals for global democratization are not very imaginative in that they begin from the assumption that the model for global democracy already exists in something like the form already taken by developed liberal democracies. One of the more prominent such models is the 'popularly elected global assembly' or PEGA. We accept the basic justifications for global democracy advanced by PEGA campaigners, but believe there is a need to move beyond facile invocations of electoral democracy at the global level. We examine the contribution to the development of global deliberative democracy that could be made by Deliberative Global Citizens' Assemblies of ordinary citizens drawn from all the countries of the world. Such assemblies would be both deliberative and composed of ordinary citizens of the world – not elected politicians. We do not proclaim this kind of innovation as *the* solution to the problem of effective and democratically legitimate global governance. Rather, we call for its exploration as a complement to existing international institutions and a focal point for global deliberative systems.

Policy Implications

- Deliberative Global Citizens' Assemblies constitute an institutional alternative to prominent proposals for a Popularly Elected Global Assembly.
- A DGCA would provide novel and potentially substantial contributions to accountability, legitimacy and deliberative quality in global governance.
- A DGCA could help remedy the global democratic deficit, giving a voice to ordinary people.
- A DGCA could serve as an institutional focal point to make international interactions in general more deliberative and inclusive, and so more democratically defensible.
- A DGCA would not have to be a general-purpose quasi-legislative body. Assemblies could be issue specific and advisory.

1. Approaching global democracy

The idea that there is a democratic deficit in global governance is now widely accepted. Increasingly, authority on many issues is migrating from the sovereign state to various kinds of transnational arrangements, or to impersonal forces in the global political economy. Political authority exercised by international organizations gener-

ally eludes democratic control – except at one very considerable remove, through the representation of states that are internally democratic in international bodies such as the United Nations and its various organs or the World Trade Organization. There is a danger that people will come to see that their national governments are often at the mercy of international forces over which they have no control, and this may exacerbate citizen

disillusion with and disengagement from national politics. There is now a large and rapidly growing literature on global democracy (joined recently by a special issue of *Millennium*, 37 (3), May 2009 on 'Interrogating Democracy in International Relations'; a symposium in *Ethics and International Affairs*, 24 (1), March 2010 on 'Global Democracy'; and a special section on 'Deliberation and Global Governance' in *Review of International Studies*, 36 (2), April 2010).

Recognizing the global democratic deficit is easy; remedying it is going to be hard. Clearly some creative thinking is going to be needed for democracy to apply in a setting it has never been taken into before, the global polity, with characteristics so different from the local and national systems where democracy has hitherto found a home. In this article we examine the contribution to the development of global deliberative democracy that could be made by assemblies of ordinary citizens drawn from all the countries of the world.

Many existing proposals for global democratization are not very imaginative in that they begin from the assumption that the model for a global democracy already exists in something like the form already taken by (mostly western) developed liberal democracies. The practical task, then, is to develop institutions at the global level that should eventually look something like those of a liberal democracy, with a legislature at the core. Proponents of this model want that legislature eventually to be directly elected. But they accept that in the short run interim measures will be necessary. The latter might involve endowing the existing UN General Assembly with more powers, or organizing representation from national legislatures to a global assembly. The interim measures often put considerable power in the hands of existing states to select representatives to a global body (just as currently happens with the UN General Assembly).

In this article we criticize only the most prominent such model, called a 'popularly elected global assembly' by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss (2001). We shall call it the PEGA model, though we note immediately that 'popularly elected' refers only to the ultimate aspiration, not the interim steps along the way. Falk and Strauss have been joined by many others, notably in the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA Campaign, 2010), endorsed by many high-profile individuals from around the globe. We accept the basic justifications for global democracy advanced by PEGA campaigners, but believe there are far better ways to proceed.

Now, the road to global democracy may well be long and arduous. The problem with PEGA is that it starts in the wrong place. The PEGA proposal is hard to envisage in practice, and even if it could be established, it has all kinds of deficiencies that its proponents skate over.

We believe there is a need to move beyond facile invocations of electoral democracy at the global level toward more nuanced contemplation of what is possible and desirable, given the complex realities of the international system. But pointing to the deficiencies of electoral democracy at the global level is not enough unless we can come up with some better alternative. Here we confine ourselves to an institutional proposal that retains many of the basic value commitments of the proponents of an (eventually) elected global assembly while proving superior in several respects. We propose what we believe to be a better starting point in the form of a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly, or DGCA. As the name implies, this assembly would be both deliberative and composed of ordinary citizens of the world – not elected politicians. We shall speak of the DGCA in the singular, though it is quite possible that multiple, issue-specific assemblies would prove more appropriate. The deliberative aspect of the DGCA means that it can mesh quite nicely with broader movements for the deliberative democratization of the global system (for a survey of deliberative approaches to global democracy, see Smith and Brassett, 2008).

The DGCA would be able to draw on the experience of numerous processes that have been implemented around the world that involve both deliberation and (more or less) random selection of lay citizen participants. Examples include citizens' assemblies as pioneered in British Columbia (Warren and Pearse, 2008), citizens' juries, consensus conferences, deliberative polls and the Australian Citizens' Parliament (2009; see also Dryzek, 2009). These processes have been deployed and in some cases instigated in countries such as India, Brazil and China – not just in developed liberal democracies (see Fishkin et al., 2006; Melo and Baiocchi, 2006; Rao and Sanyal, 2010). Some transnational experiments have been carried out – for example the EU-wide EuroPolis deliberative opinion poll in 2009 (EuroPolis, 2009).

We take no position here on the precise function of a DGCA in relation to existing institutions. Maximally, it could be envisaged as a kind of global constitutional convention, though that would be taking a very big leap into the dark. More realistically, it could deliberate specific issues, which themselves could be large and complex (climate change) or relatively tractable (regulation of global trade in toxic wastes). It could be advisory only; or it could have some guarantee that its recommendations would receive some response by other international bodies. It could pass decisive judgments on matters assigned to it by other institutions, or it could exercise oversight of the operations of existing international governmental bodies. Our argument for the superiority of the DGCA over PEGA as a focal point for global democratization holds irrespective of where it would fit on any of these dimensions. We do however believe that

there are particular kinds of issues for which a DGCA would be especially appropriate. Notably, these would include issues where there is widespread recognition of the need for joint action in pursuit of global public goods, yet where there is impasse across key actors and in existing processes. At the time of writing, climate change constitutes such an issue.

2. The problems with a Popularly Elected Global Assembly

The model of the liberal democratic state on which PEGA is based is not one that commends itself universally, and many existing states would not to want to be party to any increase in the standing of that model. Even some existing liberal democracies – most notably, the United States – have reasons for not supporting any extension of liberal democratic principles to the level of global institutions. It would be easy to dismiss all these considerations as anti-democratic holdovers that need to be overcome. But we can reconstruct some of these considerations in ways that turn out to be defensible from a democratic point of view. Other considerations are more a matter of realpolitik, but none the less important to take into account.

Why might existing states oppose the idea of an elected PEGA? The reasons will vary across states, and doubtless some states with good global citizenship credentials (such as Sweden) would support the idea. But any proposal for global institution building immediately confronts two very large problems in the form of the United States and China. The United States is reluctant to cede any of its own sovereignty, while China defends Westphalian sovereignty as an ideal for all states, not just itself. As confirmed at the COP-15 Climate Summit in December 2009, both prefer a world order in which there are no more multilateral institutions to bind them in anything like legal terms. The United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) Campaign currently finds little resonance in either the United States or China.

Historically the United States has been unwilling to cede formal authority to international bodies – with the important exception of trade policy, where it has let itself be subject to World Trade Organization rulings. Across the US political spectrum, the idea that there can be no authority above that established in the US Constitution is an article of faith. The website for the UNPA Campaign lists thousands of endorsements, including many from members of parliaments around the globe (UNPA Campaign, 2010). But there is not a single endorsement from a member of the US Congress, or from any mainstream US politician. This US resistance is of course a problem for any institutional innovation in the global system – including the kind that we propose. But it is especially problematic for an *elected* interna-

tional body – or a body that aspires to elections. An elected global body would be a direct challenge to the elected institutions of US national government in the way a DGCA would not. A DGCA looks like something entirely different.

China would also be a sticking point for any elected global assembly. China shows no signs of adopting elections at the national level – even though local elections have now been held for over two decades. Would the Chinese Communist party really want to organize – or allow somebody else to organize – China-wide competitive elections to a global body?

Another problem for China, as for any authoritarian state with no history of competitive elections, concerns just who will select the candidates in a meaningful fashion. Obviously if we let an authoritarian government do it, what we are likely to get is a travesty of competitive elections.

In national elections, people generally have a good idea of what is ultimately at stake in the election: who will form the government. In transnational elections, voters generally have no idea what is at stake, and there is no government to be formed. This matter is not one of voter ignorance. It is because the connection between vote and consequence is extremely tenuous. Consider in this light elections for the European Parliament, which is lauded as a prototype for a global assembly by Falk and Strauss (2001, p. 217). Voting in European elections does not yield a government. The European Parliament does exercise some power – though it is not in any sense the final sovereign authority of the EU. Power is shared with other EU institutions (and national governments).

EU elections are ignored by large numbers of voters: turnout is much lower than for national elections. Those who do bother to turn out often give considerable vent to what Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky (1993) call 'expressive' preferences. Voters do so precisely because they believe their vote to be inconsequential in instrumental terms. Now, expressive preferences could be ethical. Or they could refer to identity. Unfortunately in the case of EU elections, expressive preferences often turn out to be racist or xenophobic. That is why extreme nationalist and racist parties do much better in European elections than they do in national elections. If elections to the European Parliament do involve issues rather than expressive preferences, the issues in question are not European. They are national. Voters use European elections to pass judgment on their national government; and this is how (for example) journalists normally interpret results. So the fact that the Labour party in the UK took a beating at the elections to the European Parliament in 2009 had nothing to do with the stand of the Labour party and its candidates on European issues, but everything to do with the unpopularity of Gordon Brown's Labour government in London. Do we really

want to replicate these kinds of processes at the global level?

What kind of electoral system would be used for PEGA? We could let each country decide for itself. But that assumes every country – including microstates – would have at least one elected representative. Yet that would introduce its own distortions, because unless the elected assembly is very large, giving every microstate a representative would dilute the power of large population states such as China, India, the United States and Indonesia. If, on the other hand, we were to combine small states for electoral purposes (6 million would probably be the minimal size for one seat in a PEGA of 1,000 people), they would need to compromise on electoral system. There is a particular problem for countries committed to proportional representation, because that requires multi-member constituencies, and so several multiples of 6 million to get to the minimum size that would produce meaningful results.

Whatever voting system is used, those elected to PEGA would represent, and so be accountable to, particular constituencies. In national parliaments, the accompanying priority of constituency interests over the general good is curbed by political parties that identify with the nation as a whole. This does not of course apply in the case of separatist and regional parties. A global PEGA would be like a national parliament composed solely of representatives from regional parties – a bit like Belgium. (The only reason Belgium does not separate into Flanders and Wallonia is the irresolvable problem of French-speaking Brussels being surrounded by Flanders.) Now, Belgium has only two regions. A more pertinent comparison is with the parliament of Papua New Guinea, dominated by multiple regional interests that can sometimes adopt compromises, but rarely generate coherent policy.

Before turning to how a DGCA could overcome the problems associated with PEGA, we need to say a bit more about exactly what this proposal would involve.

3. The elements of a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly

The DGCA is grounded in the more general – and increasingly popular – idea of deliberative democracy. The essential idea is that political legitimacy is to be found in the right, opportunity and capacity of those subject to a collective decision (or their representatives) to participate in consequential deliberation about the decision. Deliberation in turn is a particular kind of communication, ideally featuring the giving of reasons and making of points in terms that can be accepted by other participants, non-coercion and reflection.

Participants in the DGCA would be recruited via random selection (possibly with some stratification by social characteristics should some kinds of people be more likely to agree to participate when asked than others). While assemblies of many different sizes would be feasible, for a global assembly of 1,000 persons, this would mean around one participant for every 6 million people. Given that citizen participants would be present as citizens of the world, rather than representatives of nations or states, there would be less need to ensure that every state had a representative in comparison with existing UN bodies like the General Assembly. In some places, random selection is easy (via electoral rolls). In places lacking any such list, more ingenuity might be necessary (for example, randomly selecting a region, then a county, then a community, then a street, then a household).

There is now vast experience of such assemblies within states – including developing countries. To take just one example, in Andhra Pradesh in India in 2001 a citizens' jury was convened to deliberate the very complex issue of genetically modified organisms in agriculture, and to produce some policy recommendations (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002). Similar forums on this issue have taken place in Karnataka in India and Mali. In the Andhra Pradesh case, 14 of the 19 participants were women, and a majority were poor farmers close to poverty. They had few problems in eventually coming to grips with the complexities of the issue. In Brazil, numerous exercises in deliberative citizen participation on (for example) health systems management and city council budgeting have been effective in securing the participation of poor and marginalized individuals (Sousa Santos, 1998). What these examples suggest is that citizen forums based on random selection are not the preserve of wealthy societies and educated participants. Poverty and lack of education are not insuperable barriers to effective participation in deliberation, which (with a bit of effort) can accommodate individuals from diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds.

There is also vast experience in how to promote authentic deliberation in citizen forums. Participants are normally provided with information and access to advocates from different sides of an issue and with expert testimony, though citizens deliberate among themselves, not with these advocates and experts. Citizen participants can be subdivided into smaller groups of around 15–20 in order to enable face-to-face dialogue and give everyone a chance to have their say. Expert facilitation is normally provided in order to increase the constructiveness of the dialogue, uphold mutual respect and civility, and minimize (for example) ad hominem arguments, deception, stereotyping, personal attacks and withholding of information. The telling of personal stories can be encouraged. Again experience shows that high-quality deliberation can be achieved among ordinary citizens, and that they can come to master complex issues. Forum design matters a lot: so for example in situations

of high initial inequality in communicative competence across individuals, the process as a whole will benefit from an extensive learning phase prior to contemplation of collective decision. These challenges actually illustrate the degree to which the DGCA would be so much more inclusive than the PEGA, which, because its members would all be from global and national elites, does not have to face the question of how to enable the effective participation of those with little education.

Analysis of the dynamics of deliberative citizen forums shows that there is often a shift in the direction of public goods and regard for the interests of others, as well as those of society as a whole. Normally increases in trust, confidence, interest and civic commitment are also found (indeed, for some participants it proves to be a life-changing experience).

In a global setting, there are particular concerns relating to language, cultural differences in communicative styles, and cross-cultural deliberation. (Such problems are no less challenging for PEGA proposals.) Language problems can be solved via simultaneous translation. Activists in transnational networks have found clever ways to accommodate linguistic diversity in pan-European forums. For example, the European Social Forum uses a non-commercial translation network called *Babels*, composed of activists specializing in simultaneous translation. *Babels* has a principled commitment to oppose linguistic exclusion in Forum meetings.

Examination of different cultures shows that just about all of them have some tradition of deliberation. The palaver in some African societies is a form of conflict resolution through dialogue, sometimes with a leader acting as a mediator, and as such has deliberative features. Deliberation actually resonates in Confucian, Islamic and many indigenous cultures far more easily than does the adversarial politics associated with competitive elections in an individualistic society. Deliberative citizen forums have been applied successfully in diverse cultural settings, with generally similar effects on their participants. As Amartya Sen (2003) has pointed out, democracy as voting is a western construct, while democracy as public reason is universal.

Cross-cultural deliberation may nonetheless present challenges if participants from different cultures have different deliberative styles – for example, relatively aggressive argumentation versus a more consensual or deferential style (see Gambetta, 1998). Here the role of the facilitator is crucial: to ensure that the exercise of any particular style is not allowed to dominate other styles. There is plenty of experience with cross-cultural deliberation in national settings involving immigrant minorities and indigenous peoples that can be drawn upon.

The random selection and deliberative aspects of the DGCA are mutually reinforcing. Random selection means that most participants will not be strong partisans at the outset – and so are more amenable to reflection of the sort central to deliberation, and changing their minds as a result.

4. Why a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly would do better

With the key features of a DGCA in mind, we can revisit the criticisms we leveled at the PEGA proposal.

The *United States* problem is likely to be ameliorated because an assembly based on random selection from the citizenry does not look like a direct challenger to the US Congress; it is simply a very different kind of beast. One problem could be that it is so unfamiliar in a US context that politicians may simply not know what to make of it. While some deliberative processes based on lay citizen participation and random selection were invented in the United States (citizens' juries and deliberative polls) they have attracted less attention from national policy makers than in many other countries; they have been used mostly as attempted inputs to the system from the outside, promoted either as academic exercises or by foundations. Only at state and local levels of government have they been sponsored by government.

The *China* problem would be ameliorated simply by the fact that no elections would need to be organized in China. The Chinese government has shown itself willing (indeed, eager) to experiment with a variety of deliberative forms of consultation, especially at the local level. A Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly could be framed as an additional kind of innovation in this tradition. Of course random selection would mean that the Chinese Communist party hierarchy could not control the identity of the representatives from China. Assuming a size for the global forum of around 1,000 citizens, around 200 would come from China. The chances of any of these 200 being anti-regime activists is actually quite small.

We doubt that a DGCA would be embraced wholeheartedly by the leadership of either the United States or China in any foreseeable future. Yet there are reasons to suppose that a DGCA would be less objectionable to both than would a PEGA. A PEGA would be hard to frame as anything other than a general-purpose legislative body (though Strauss (2007) suggests that to begin with it should be seen as advisory). In contrast, a DGCA could be framed in a much more flexible fashion; it could be constituted for specific issues (just as national or subnational citizens' assemblies are currently constituted to deliberate a specific issue such as electoral system reform).

The *authoritarian states* problem is reduced again because elections would not need to be organized in such states. There is however a danger of governments

in such states trying to corrupt the selection process. We can distinguish between authoritarian states that probably have little to fear from what a random citizen might say in an international forum (for example, China and Russia) and those that could be quite worried (for example, Iran and Burma). These dangers notwithstanding, clearly random selection is democratically preferable to appointment of representatives by authoritarian governments – which is exactly what the PEGA proposal allows as an interim measure.

The *choice of electoral system* and *voting on irrelevant grounds* problems disappear along with elections. Participants would know from the outset that this was to be a global institution for deliberating global issues; there is no way the selection process could be used to pass judgment on the performance of national governments. Likewise, the *prioritization of constituency interests over common goods* problem is ameliorated because citizen participants would have no bonds of electoral accountability to particular constituencies.

The problem of *expressive voting* is solved because there is no inconsequential choice process involving the participation of ordinary voters in elections. Instead, there is a highly consequential choice process involving those selected. Experience suggests a high degree of enthusiasm and commitment on the part of a substantial number of citizens selected for deliberative forums – especially when the process seems to be taking place at a high level of government, and especially where ordinary people have had little prior opportunity to be involved in political participation of any kind. Around one-third of the 9,000 citizens randomly selected in the first cut for the Australian Citizens' Parliament in 2009 replied to say they were willing to participate – despite the substantial demands on their time (around one week) and energy that the Citizens' Parliament would involve. We also note the enthusiasm and commitment that individuals in China have shown when deliberative forums have been introduced locally.

Whatever specific issues we want a global body to address, it needs to be able to prioritize two kinds of considerations that are especially pressing when it comes to global issues. The body needs to:

1. take a long-term perspective;
2. consider the global good beyond national goods.

The first of these considerations is problematic in existing liberal democratic and authoritarian states alike. In states with regular elections, politicians rarely have a time horizon much beyond the next election; adopting any longer time horizon increases the probability they will lose that election. In authoritarian systems, leaders often have to worry about the possibility of their own overthrow on a fairly continuous basis – and again this leads to a focus on the short term. And if authoritarian

or quasi-democratic Confucian states have shown themselves capable of taking a longer-term perspective (albeit to date mostly just with their own economic development in mind), that should give us pause before assuming that western electoral democracy is the most appropriate model for global governance.

The second of these considerations is especially problematic to the degree representation is organized by and from states, as it is in the PEGA model. Even when they recognize the global character of issues, states generally do their best to try to shift the burden for solving them on to other actors, and to treat negotiations as a venue for advancing their own self-interest. The climate change issue exemplifies this problem. Developed liberal states like the idea of purchasing alleged offsets for their pollution. Some do their best to shift responsibility to developing economies, and when the latter point to the historic benefits that developed liberal democracies have gained from their long history of fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions, use the unwillingness of developing states to come to the table as an excuse not to cut their own emissions. Participants in a DGCA would not be there as representatives of national governments (which consequently find it hard to reflect and change their minds), but as citizens of the world.

While there are no guarantees, we would expect a DGCA to adhere more closely to long-term considerations and bring global public goods to the fore in a way that would be problematic in PEGA. PEGA is likely to replicate and exacerbate some of the problems of the existing states system, precisely because its form of representation builds upon states. Even if it were to be popularly elected, those elections would probably be contested by candidates from state-based political parties (as they are in the European Parliament), who take their orders from state-based party organizations. We would expect the deliberative aspect of the DGCA, combined with the fact that its participants would not have strong connections to state governments or state-based political parties, to enable it to prioritize long-term considerations and public goods. There is some empirical evidence that it is exactly these kinds of values that come to the fore in, and are strengthened by, existing deliberative citizen forums. Many empirical studies on citizen deliberation show that as soon as participants start making an effort in serious listening and take a respectful attitude toward other positions and arguments, their own thinking is increasingly enlarged in both time and space.

5. Power and legitimacy

Our earlier discussion of reasons why a DGCA might be less objectionable than a PEGA to states such as the United States and China that are jealous of their own

sovereignty leads to a conundrum: a DGCA may be more acceptable precisely because it looks like a weaker innovation than a PEGA. PEGA proponents believe that the kind of legitimacy that an *elected* assembly possesses would help make its power effective when it came up against existing powerful institutions such as states and international organizations, and the informal power exercised by corporations, banks and other financial institutions, in networks and through bodies like the World Economic Forum. Yet in casting a PEGA as a challenge to existing sources of power, that makes it more likely that a PEGA will be resisted. But in such power terms, a DGCA might do better only to the extent that it does not challenge established centers of power in the global system.

There is a way out of this conundrum that depends on a more subtle appreciation of the nature of power. Hopes for the influence of a DGCA would rest ultimately on the idea of 'communicative power', very different to the conventional 'hard' account of power that deals in the resources mobilized by conflicting actors and the manifest rivalry between different organizations. Communicative power is characterized by Habermas (1996, pp. 486–487) as self-limiting: 'it influences the premises of judgment and decision making in the political system without intending to conquer the system itself'. Realist accounts of international relations would dismiss communicative power as a normative aspiration that bears no relation to what exists in international politics. However, communicative action oriented to reciprocal understanding, reason giving and persuasion in terms of collectively held norms can be shown to exist in international interaction. It exists, and takes effect, even in very unlikely places – such as negotiations between states over security issues. Risse (2000) demonstrates that in negotiations over the future of Germany at the end of the cold war, Soviet negotiators became persuaded that NATO could be reconceptualized as a collective security organization, rather than anti-Soviet alliance, such that a united Germany within NATO would not be an anti-Soviet threat (see also Müller, 2001). The pervasiveness of communicative action in international politics is confirmed by Crawford (2009), who points out that international interaction should feature much in the way of argument and persuasion because there is generally no sovereign authority at the system level capable of putting an end to discussion for the sake of decisive action (Crawford, 2009, p. 107). International politics in practice features massive amounts of communication intended to persuade rather than coerce. Coercion is actually diminishing in credibility to the extent that war between states is increasingly unavailable as an option; this development too ought to increase the incidence of communicative action.

The fact that international interaction is pervaded by talk designed to persuade does not mean the talk is necessarily effective. Think for example of the protracted negotiations over several years in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) leading up to the Conference of the Parties (COP-15) in Copenhagen in 2009, which failed to produce an agreement. The UNFCCC process had its moments of deliberativeness but its design was not informed by deliberative principles. Indeed, it was not informed by any discernible principles. In that kind of context, where the need for persuasion is widely accepted by participants who also realize that the institutional framework in use is not producing much in the way of jointly acceptable results, there is surely an opening for a deliberative reform of the kind that a DGCA would represent.

We know from existing experience (mostly national) that citizen assemblies can be highly deliberative; and deliberation fits very closely with the idea of communicative action. So precisely because it would be a *deliberative* assembly, a DGCA would not necessarily constitute a rival to more established centers of power in international politics, be they states, informal financial networks, informal bodies such as the World Economic Forum, or international organizations. By operating in the realm of communicative action, a DGCA need not appear as a head-on challenge to established power in the conventional sense. Of course it might produce recommendations that key actors do not welcome; but then the challenge becomes one of extending the circle of persuasion to those actors.

The unique contribution of a DGCA to the legitimation of collective outcomes in the global system would, then, be in terms of its contribution to communicative action: it would ensure that collective outcomes were justified, or at least scrutinized, in terms that did not reduce to the interests of particular actors such as states, but instead in light of more general principles and concerns. To the extent that this kind of process was efficacious in affecting the content of outcomes, a DGCA could therefore contribute to what is sometimes called 'output legitimacy' (Scharpf, 1997), inasmuch as it would promote goals that a body of citizens value. Its contributions to 'input legitimacy' are equally substantial, in that it would involve a pioneering avenue for representative citizens of the world to have a say in global governance.

Now, the statistical or democratic representativeness of the citizen participants that underwrites this contribution to input legitimacy turns on one particular kind of representation claim. As Parkinson (2006) points out, there are typically many such claims in any moderately complex political system. In the global system, other representation claims can be made by the leaders of states. NGOs can also make claims – for Keck (2003) and Dryzek and Niemeyer (2008), NGOs can be best thought of as 'discursive representatives', representing particular discourses such as sustainability, human rights and

distributive justice. In a complex political system featuring multiple representation claims, no single institution (be it a PEGA or a DGCA) can realistically claim to be the sole repository of legitimate authority. Instead, multiple institutions and practices can contribute, and it is in their interactions that the generation of legitimacy can most effectively be sought. The theory of deliberative democracy would see these institutions and practices joined in a deliberative system (Parkinson, 2006).

6. Toward a global deliberative system

Beyond its intrinsic qualities, the real strength of a Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly is that it is well placed to act as an important focal point for the development of global deliberative systems spanning the public space of global civil society and the empowered space of public authority (see Hendriks, 2006, on how this works for citizen forums in national governance). It is in such systems that global democratization can most readily be pursued in the foreseeable future, and in which the generation of global legitimacy can be sought. Global democracy is much more easily envisaged in these communicative terms than in terms of elections and voting. Public space can feature relatively unconstrained communicative action engaging (for example) transnational media, internet forums, NGOs, citizen initiatives, activist publicizing and gatherings such as the World Economic Forum and World Social Forum. (Of course, public space in practice can also feature obstructions to deliberation from public relations, spin, propaganda and deception.) Empowered space features authority exercised by and in international governmental organizations, international negotiations, regimes and states. Ideally public space and empowered space would be deliberative internally – and deliberative in their relationships with each other, especially when it comes to transmission from public space to empowered space, and the accountability of empowered space to public space.

To their credit, PEGA proponents recognize this kind of focal quality, and believe that an elected global assembly (or interim institution) would act as a magnet for the lobbying activities of NGOs, corporations, activists and others. But a DGCA would do so much better here because all actors would have to engage it in deliberative fashion, precisely because it is a *deliberative* assembly. Lobbying, bargaining, threats and inducements would figure centrally in regard to a PEGA populated by conventional politicians; they would have no place at all in relation to a DGCA. The citizen forums on which the DGCA would be modeled allow all kinds of interests and advocates to make presentations to and be questioned by the citizen participants, but they do not allow lobbying behind closed doors.

A DGCA could contribute to deliberative relationships and the building of global deliberative systems in a way a PEGA could not. Communicative action of the sort that would be highlighted in a deliberative citizens' assembly contains seeds for communicative transformation in global politics. Extending such processes beyond the DGCA itself would of course be a major challenge, and much would depend on how exactly a DGCA would engage larger processes; that engagement should itself be deliberative, along lines we have just described. A DGCA could spur deliberative democracy whether it operated in public space at a distance from existing authoritative institutions, or in empowered space in conjunction with such institutions. And being deliberative has its advantages in a world where both the president of the United States (in Obama's book *The Audacity of Hope* (2006)) and the Chinese Communist party hierarchy have endorsed deliberative democracy (though for Obama deliberative democracy is what the US Constitution established, while for the Chinese Communists it means a set of adjuncts to their ultimate monopoly on power).

Conclusions

Our proposal for deliberative global citizens' assemblies can be linked to a broader movement for the introduction of deliberation and democracy in global affairs. Smith and Brassett (2008) provide a useful classification of the various deliberative approaches to global governance. They distinguish among 'liberal', 'cosmopolitan' and 'critical' perspectives. 'Liberals' seek to realize deliberative ideals within international and global institutions and the fundamental values and norms that guide global cooperative activities (Cohen and Sabel, 1997, 2005). This liberal understanding of deliberation does not necessarily require the participation of ordinary citizens. Proponents of the 'cosmopolitan' perspective (e.g. Bohman, 2007; Held, 1995, 2004) conceptualize global democracy in terms of constitutional arrangements and universal values, and can be open to a wider range of agents in global deliberative processes than with the liberal perspective. For cosmopolitans, deliberation is not only bound to political representatives, but includes nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations and civil society groups as well as ordinary citizens. Finally, the 'critical' perspective puts the stress on deliberation and the effective engagement of discourses in transnational civil democracy without recourse to formal institutions in the global sphere (Dryzek, 2006).

To the degree it seeks to promote communicative action in global public spheres, the DGCA supports such a 'critical' perspective on deliberative global governance. Yet the basic idea of a DGCA should not be objectionable to liberals. The DGCA does however provide an alternative to the heroic liberal task of transforming

existing institutions into more deliberative bodies. Such transformation would require institutional redesign that deviates from standard institutional settings (and prescriptions) in the international sphere, requiring consensual, nonpartisan settings with highly independent representatives (see Bächtiger et al., 2005). It is difficult to imagine a PEGA delivering on this. A DGCA, on the contrary, could have such ideals built into it from the outset: it involves a structured and non-adversarial setting for citizens who can change their minds independently without high costs. A DGCA might also seem consistent with cosmopolitan values, inasmuch as participants would be present as world citizens. But cosmopolitans often prematurely constrain deliberation by setting preconditions such as human rights, grounded in what can look like very western models of liberal democracy. A DGCA need not set strong preconditions for deliberation, but could rather build its processes up in a way that is sensitive to the different ways that public reasoning is manifested in different cultures.

We should not assume that existing liberal democratic states provide the model to which a global democracy, and in particular any global assembly, should aspire. The kind of democracy that has existed to date in developed liberal states may even fall short when it comes to the kinds of challenges that pervade global politics – even if we could get beyond the major obstacles to its adoption we have identified. We have proposed one innovation which we think would do better on several dimensions compared to existing electoral and quasi-electoral proposals, and is actually a more realistic proposition in the contemporary global system. We are not rash enough to proclaim it as *the* solution to the problem of effective, legitimate and democratic global governance, particularly in advance of it having been tested. But it surely merits exploration and testing as one component and instigator of an emerging global deliberative system that is in the end the best hope for global democratization.

Note

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