Ruslan Seitkazin

GLOBALISATION AND DEMOCRACY: THE CONCEPT OF COSMOPOLITANISM

Ruslan Seitkazin, PhD student of the Doctoral School of Public Administration Sciences, National University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary, seitkazin.ruslan@gmail.com

To what extent can democracy be extended beyond borders? It was given for granted that the values and norms of democracy could only be applied within the boundaries of a country. Yet, over the past twenty years, it has been progressively debated that democracy can also affect global politics and international organizations. Today, the methods the world has for enforcing international law is too much dependent on whether a powerful geo-political force like the US or Russia is eager to commit resources to the issue. In such occasions, "a big state" will more likely do what it wants, acting simply in its own interests. It is argued that international law enforcement must not rely on some nation states lending part of their military apparatus to global or regional democratic entities, but instead, a military force must be globally recruited based on individuals, not countries. However, in the modern world such institutions are deficient, and therefore often rely on a big state to act. In contrast, cosmopolitan democracy is more about seeking a new enforcement approach that is more genuinely transnational. It is suggested that within the framework of cosmopolitan law, there is an opportunity of improving, rather enhancing both our means of enforcement and our international organisations. This article reviews the idea of cosmopolitan democracy, a project of normative political theory started to develop since the early 1990s put forward by David Held, concentrating on its ability to offer a new approach to the identity problem.

KEYWORDS:
cosmopolitan democracy, the UN, globalisation, cosmopolitan citizenship, IGOs

The victory of the West over the Soviet regime inspired the hope that international relations can be driven by the ideals of the rule of law and democracy. The concept of globalising democracy may be understood as a phenomenon that impacts the internal modes of different countries, but it could also be seen as a new way of regulating and understanding political relations worldwide, and since the threat of nuclear war had receded, western political actors were urged to actively apply their tenets of the rule of law within the domain of international affairs. This marks a central notion underpinning cosmopolitan democracy, which more precisely, could be described as the endeavour to globalise democratic principles while, simultaneously, democratising globalisation.[1] In the 1990s, the political idea of cosmopolitan democracy was developed by a group of thinkers, such as David Held, for example, within the development of institutional connections between national civil communities that strengthen democratic principles within both the international arena and a country.[2]

In short, cosmopolitan democracy is a normative project of political theory that attempts to address some of the procedures, principles and values of democracy within a system of global policy. The major purpose is to provide a voice to the people of the world community on an institutional level that parallels governments. "We live today at a fundamental point of transition", states David Held in introducing the scheme for cosmopolitan democracy.[3] In such a transitional stage, a vast discrepancy can be identified between the ideals of democracy and the globalised concept of power. It is noteworthy that a remedy is perceived in "the entrenchment of democratic autonomy on a cosmopolitan basis"[4] by deepening and extending democracy across nations, regions and global networks There is a belief underlying this perception that the separation between the foreign and domestic spheres of politics is continually being blurred[5] and that the idea of state sovereignty is unchallenged and indivisible.[6] However, globalisation is viewed as a linear or irreversible historical process and the mode of the nation state will ultimately be eclipsed by the new forces it has set in motion. Furthermore, globalisation neither dissolves nor minimises country power, but rather changes its nature. Yet, Held suggests that five "disjunctures" have emerged between globalisation and the nation state. It was argued that these disjunctures between globalisation and the nation state require cosmopolitan democracy in order to tackle the following issues, namely the regulation of global financial markets, the international drugs trade, and the regulation of nuclear waste.[7] In addition, Held recognises recurring cosmopolitan realities that help to increase the probability of cosmopolitan democracy. Although it was assumed that the formation of global society

---

[1]   HELD 2002.
[2]   ARCHIBUGI 2004.
[3]   HELD 2006, 304.
[4]   HELD 2006, 305.
[5]   MCGREW 1997, 13.
[6]   ROSENAU 2005, 73.
[7]   HELD et al. 1999.

szakmai fórum ●

is simply represented in globalisation, the tenets of egalitarian individualism, impartial reasoning and reciprocal recognition, have already been determined as a set of legal frameworks of global and regional governance in certain respects. This was justified by examples, such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Bill of Human Rights, the Covenants of Rights and the statute of the International Criminal Court. Interestingly, in his model for the new order, Held does not seek an entire replacement of state-based democracy by cosmopolitan democracy. Conversely, Held accentuates the new reformation from "a community of fate within boundaries" of the country to "overlapping communities of fate".[8]

Generally speaking, democracy was invented and established within territorially bounded political communities. It has been acknowledged that democracy of nation states is embedded in the contemporary state, and a fixed territory is bounded. Yet, the territorial basis of the autonomy of the state and nation state democracies has been called into question by globalisation. The perception of fixed people within a country has been challenged by asylum seekers and other forms of international immigration, as well as holders of dual or multiple citizenships. Additionally, the idea of citizens' rule is questioned by the fact that people of various nations have no opportunity to grant their consent to decisions that influence them, despite the fact that those are made elsewhere. The notion of popular sovereignty is now restricted by international agreements, and often the process of decision-making at international level excludes the involvement of ordinary people. It has been argued that people have less input in international and domestic policies than the International Monetary Fund (IMF) does, for example. It is argued that people have minimal control over international forces and agencies, and that they do not have a means or channel through which to voice their agreements or disagreements. Moreover, the notion of a politically autonomous, or self-governing community is undermined by internationalisation. National organisations by no means merely define policies for themselves, and states by no means define what is appropriate or right for their own residents.

Nevertheless, the basis of democratic legitimacy, or a tenet of the agreement through elections, is also open to challenge, and the relevance and scope of this tenet is agreed by processes of global and regional restructuring. Mechanisms of accountability might be weakened and obscured by the system of overlapping political structures. The nature of accountability of NATO, multinational corporations (MNCs) and IMF to the general public of governments, in which they work, or to the various groups they impact beyond a given state, continues to be an acute question. It is worth noting that there is an issue about the adequate locus for the democratic articulation of the political good, and about the appropriate location of people, democracy and politics. It is suggested that if the agent at the centre of contemporary political discourse, be a group or person, is locked into the diversity

---

8   HELD 1998, 24.

of overlapping units – international and domestic – then the proper "home" of democracy and politics becomes a complicating and puzzling issue. Therefore, Held examines whether the nation state can remain at the heart of democratic thought, and whether it is in fact the most suitable locus for democracy. It could be argued that all of these challenges show that democracy might not operate in the globalising world, in which the imperative of competition between nation states deprives citizens of their power and voice. Moreover, it is believed that the traditional democracies derived from nation states are unable to provide humane governance. Thus, if the idea of democracy is taken seriously, does this mean that we should extend the democratic tenet to international relations? Furthermore, it is noted that even if society or country relations are democratised, the country cannot exert efficient regulation over global platforms. In addition, many countries in the Global South are progressively disempowered as independent, rather than autonomous actors and therefore, democratisation should expand via 'transnational market forces'.[9] Furthermore, the cosmopolitan democratic scheme aims to democratise global levels of decision-making that are predominated by market forces and states. It expands the scope of democratisation beyond society and state relations, highlighting accountability, participation, agenda-setting and law-making by the citizens of the world using their representatives. Now, it is crucial to clarify who these people are. For instance, it is noted that people are represented by members of the global civil society, constituting the Citizen Assembly or the UN People's Assembly. Yet, Held proposes that people's constituencies will be determined according to the scope and nature of debatable transnational problems with the probability of general referenda cutting through countries and nations. It has been argued that democratic entities must be developed and redesigned to reflect issues of multiplicity and questions that impact and gather people together, irrespective of whether they are in one country or another. What is more, cosmopolitan democracy underlines that democracy within democratic relations and a concrete community are interdependent, and that new binding and organisational mechanisms should be launched if democracy is to develop and survive in the future.

Notwithstanding this, proponents of cosmopolitan democracy believe that, in the short term, this could alter the UN Security Council by providing the Third World an important voice and reforming the veto system. It has been proposed to establish a second UN chamber and to create regional parliaments that improve the role of institutions, such as the European Parliament. Moreover, it has also been suggested that an obligatory jurisdiction be created before the International Court and a new international Human Rights Court be organised.[10] However, in the long term, there is a hope that a global parliament will be produced by cosmopolitan democracy, the dividing of economic and political interests, and electoral processes and the public findings of consultative assemblies. It would also provide an interlinked global legal system that comprises elements of civil and criminal

---

9   Falk 1995, 120.
10   Archibugi 1995.

szakmai fórum •

law and the permanent movement of an increasing portion of coercive capacity in nation states to global and regional bodies. Yet, how could these ideas be implemented and how feasible are they?

It is important to note that the normative stance, which lies behind cosmopolitan democracy, is fairly robust. It stresses the significance of individualistic morality, where every citizen is equal.[11] It also emphasises the extent of the threats and goals that are general to humanity as a whole.[12] Moreover, if the idea of a "civilisation community of fate"[13] is accepted, it will be suggested to improve the democratic nature of the international entities responsible for solving global problems. It is argued that international governmental organisations (IGOs) must conduct relations between countries and have nothing "directly to do with cosmopolitan citizenship".[14] Held acknowledges that the UN is an international body, but also emphasises that it has also developed an innovative system of global governance.[15] Yet, the tenet of national self-determination is also proclaimed in the UN Charter, which conflicts with cosmopolitanism. It is difficult to believe that the UN could have been developed and maintained without the principles of national self-determination. Moreover, the national self-determination is much more globally adopted than that of fundamental human rights. It means not only that there are some non-liberal democratic countries that sustain only the rights of their own people. Put precisely, no country implements the tenet of universal human rights. Global human rights must meet global human commitments to assure the standard rights of everyone else, but arguably, the people in developed states do not fulfil such commitments for those in the developing countries. Nevertheless, it could be noted that after World War II, both the cosmopolitan and nationalist concepts have fostered the development of global order, even though these tenets contradict each other in some respects. In addition, the tenet of national self-determination is more critical for the UN, and for the UN it could operate without cosmopolitan ideas, for instance, as a mere alliance of multinational states for global security without the promotion of human rights. On the contrary, many states including China would not engage with and maintain the UN without the tenet of national self-determination. This principle allows different country modes to actively participate in a common sphere and is a prerogative for global order. As for the other IGOs, Held underestimates the reality of nationalists, arguing that the new structures of economic regulation are indispensable to conquering the fragmentation of policy-making in tackling the issues of the global economy. Yet, organisations, such as the World Bank, OECD and IMF are international, even though global and transnational impacts can be exerted. It is believed that such institutions have made some achievements in transnational economic

---

[11]   Coates 2000.
[12]   Held 2006.
[13]   Beck 2006, 7.
[14]   Miller 1999, 74.
[15]   Held 2002, 38.

co-ordination and because of internationality, they have influence on the global economy.[16] The effectiveness of IGOs depends on the widely based maintenance of countries, which appeal to their citizens to contribute to them. It is noted that since 'technocratic elites are vulnerable', the legitimacy of the maintenance of democratic states is needed by IGOs.[17] Moreover, Held supports the goal of establishing a new economic agency at the international level; however, there is a big gap between the practicability of launching a new international entity and a new universal agency. Held's over-evaluation of cosmopolitan realities derives from his narrow concept of the country. He asserts that the appearance of "overlapping communities of fate" in the process of globalisation has demoralised the effectiveness of the country as the only community of fate. Notwithstanding this, Held also states that the national interest frequently takes precedent over global issues, and this arouses controversy in the long-term for international communities. For instance, the 1992 bio-diversity protocol in Brazil was not signed by the USA,[18] and this shows how the international community was helpless in imposing the environmental agenda that was a priority issue for many countries. Thereby, it was proposed that more legal improvements should be granted in order to enhance the role of international communities by creating a global parliament, for example.[19] However, this idea seems unnecessary and unfeasible.

Furthermore, Held believes that there is a deficiency of democratic tenets in decision-making, for instance, in the regulation of transnational finance or in non-renewable resources. However, it is doubtful whether ordinary people feel that they really need to express their opinions on the issues, or that they desire to have an impact on them. Quite the opposite, people are most concerned with the problems that influence them directly.[20] In addition, democracy is currently challenged by a deficiency of interest in politics, especially among youths, as the rate of voting turnouts shows.[21] Moreover, a proposition that the global parliament will facilitate a sense of cosmopolitan identity is dubious. In addition, the matter of non-democratic countries clearly constitutes a major obstacle to overcome with respect to the idea of a global parliament. If countries are not embedded into democratic principles, it is to be expected that they abide by the values of democracy on the global level. It could also be suggested that the global parliament project can bring some difficulties; however, what if the focus were to move towards existing organisations with the aim of bringing about the equality of all populations? In other words, the equal engagement of all state and non-state actors in the global arena. For example, there have been attempts to improve the involvement and status of non-state players within its system, namely by calling into existence the Non-Governmental Liaison Service for the onward integration of NGOs into the policy-making process and enhancing collaboration between

---

[16] Canovan 2001.
[17] Hirst 2000, 185.
[18] Birch 1993.
[19] Held 2006.
[20] Analysis 2011.
[21] UK Political Info 2010.

szakmai fórum ●

civil society groups and the UN agencies.[22] In addition, another trend within the UN is presented by global partnerships, such as the Millennium Development Goals, which include a diversity of actors amongst non-state and state members. In spite of criticism by Held of the UN, its effectiveness has hardly been questioned since its establishment in 1945.[23]

Above all, although Held admits the distinctions between individual states and their positions within different power blocks, he does not recognise the concept of power and sovereignty that cannot be structured irrespective of modern realities of power. In other words, if the UN's function is to operate global governance, which was a major goal of it, then more strength and scope must be given in order to achieve this role effectively.[24] However, this might only be reached by changing its constitutional system, particularly by transforming the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and supplementing executive mechanisms. It is noted that the lack of norms of enforcement measures will remain exclusively symbolic values, which are inadequate to resolving or preventing international conflicts and events, such as civil wars or crimes against humanity.[25] It could be proposed that the UN's jurisdiction is made obligatory and that it adheres to tenets of individual responsibility for war crimes and therefore, can be associated as a real guarantor of justice. This will help to enhance the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights into a mandatory set of principles by which to abide. For instance, in 2005 the UN considered the plan of Responsibility to Protect at the UN World Summit, where it was argued that states must advocate their residents from violation and crimes, as well as failing to do so. For such countries, this will result in collective action through the Security Council with different entities. This first move can make the aim of transparency and accountability of different international entities more reachable.

"The only forum in which genuine democracy occurs is within national boundaries"[26] is a simple statement. Hypothetically, if democracy will be formed as a set of ideals that might be performed to different degrees, it can be argued that the international order must be democratised, as Held suggests. This may potentially only be implemented by enhancing the UN's role and modes of international law. Therefore, it is logical that ethical values are conceived to apply to international relations. In addition, it is significant to make international law more workable and expand the scope of liabilities of the ICJ with respect to the tenet of individual liability.[27] It could also be proposed that the UN has an objective to advocate both a society of states and a society of people equally.[28] Concentrating on

---

22   BOUTROS-GHALI 1996, 1–52.
23   WOLF 2004.
24   BOUTROS-GHALI 2000.
25   ARCHIBUGI 1995.
26   KYMLICKA 1999, 124.
27   COATES 2000.
28   BOUTROS-GHALI 2000.

strengthening democracy within existing IGOs and individual countries, like the IMF or the UN, a scheme for global democracy can be moved within the domain of probability.[29] This does not mean that one must give up the very remote view of a borderless, cosmopolitan global order. Nevertheless, it is much more achievable to ask what else must be done to create greater transparency, justice and accountability within a cosmopolitan system.

Nevertheless, the number of impressive scholarly work provides depth and extent analysis of cosmopolitan democracy, yet it has led to critiques comprising valuable ideas concerning the normative and empirical limitations, practical constraints and more importantly, the desirability of expanding democracy at the global arena. This resulted an enriched debate of the architecture of global governance in the future. It is clear that a gradualist methodology in the way of cosmopolitanism, which eliminates some of the obstacles the cosmopolitan democracy project faces is needed to be examined. However, this is a task for future study.

---

[29] Saward 2000.

REFERENCES

1. Analysis (2011): Podcast radio program, BBC Radio 4 [Podcast]. 27 March. Available: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00zlgdl (Downloaded: 02.03.2018).
2. ARCHIBUGI, Daniele (1995): From the United Nations to Cosmopolitan Democracy. In ARCHIBUGI, Daniele – HELD, David eds.: *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order.* Cambridge, Polity Press.
3. ARCHIBUGI, Daniele (2004): Cosmopolitan Democracy and its Critics: A Review. *European Journal of International Relations,* Vol. 10, No. 3. 437–473. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066104045543
4. BECK, Ulrich (2006): *The Cosmopolitan Vision.* Cambridge, Polity Press.
5. BIRCH, Anthony H. (1993): *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy.* London, Routledge.
6. BOUTROS-GHALI, Boutros (1996): *An Agenda for Democratization.* New York, Department of Public Information, the United Nations. 1–52.
7. BOUTROS-GHALI, Boutros (2000): Democratization at the International Level. An Agenda for Democratization. In HOLDEN, Barry eds.: *Global Democracy. Key Debates.* London, Routledge.
8. CANOVAN, Margaret (2001): Sleeping Dogs, Prowling Cats and Soaring Doves: Three Paradoxes in the Political Theory of Nationhood. *Political Studies,* Vol. 49, No. 2. 203–215. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00309
9. COATES, Tony (2000): Neither Cosmopolitanism nor Realism. In HOLDEN, Barry eds.: *Global Democracy. Key Debates.* London, Routledge.
10. FALK, Richard (1995): The World Order Between Inter-state Law and the Law of Humanity: the Role of Civil Society Institutions. In ARCHIBUGI, Daniele – HELD, David eds.: *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order.* Oxford, Polity Press.
11. HELD, David (1998): Democracy and Globalization. In ARCHIBUGI, Daniele – HELD, David – KÖHLER, Martin eds.: *Re-imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy.* Cambridge, Polity Press.
12. HELD, David – McGREW, Anthony – GOLDBLATT, David – PERRATON, Jonathan (1999): *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture.* Stanford, Stanford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780333981689_2
13. HELD, David (2002): Globalization, Corporate Practice and Cosmopolitan Social Standards. *Contemporary Political Theory,* Vol. 1, No. 1. 59–78.
14. HELD, David (2006): *Models of Democracy.* Cambridge, Polity Press.
15. HIRST, Paul (2000): Globalization, the Nation-State and Political Theory. In O'SULLIVAN, Noël ed.: *Political Theory in Transition.* London, Routledge.
16. HOLDEN, Barry ed. (2000): *Global Democracy. Key Debates.* London, Routledge.
17. KYMLICKA, Will (1999): Citizenship in an Era of Globalization: Commentary on Held. In SHAPIRO, Ian – HACKER-CORDÓN, Casiano eds.: *Democracy's Edges.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511586361.008

18. McGrew, Anthony (1997): Globalization and Territorial Democracy: An Introduction. In McGrew, Anthony eds.: *The Transformation of Democracy? Globalization and Territorial Democracy.* Cambridge, Polity Press.

19. Miller, David (1999): Bounded Citizenship. In Hutchings, Kimberly – Dannreuther, Roland eds.: *Cosmopolitan Citizenship.* New York, St. Martin's Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-14623-9_3

20. Morrison, Bruce ed. (2003): *Transnational Democracy: A Critical Consideration of Sites and Sources.* Aldershot, Ashgate.

21. Rosenau, James N. (2005): Illusions of Power and Empire. *History and Theory,* Vol. 44. No. 4. 73–87. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2005.00343.x

22. Saward, Michael (2000): A Critique of Held. In Holden, Barry eds.: *Global Democracy. Key Debates.* London, Routledge.

23. UK Political Info (2010): *General Election Turnout 1945–2010.* Available: www.ukpolitical.info/Turnout45.htm (Downloaded: 01.03.2018).

24. Wolf, Martin (2004): *The Case for Optimism: a Response to David Held.* Open Democracy. Available: www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision_reflections/article_1964.jsp (Downloaded: 02.05.2018).

Ruslan Seitkazin is PhD student of the Doctoral School of Public Administration Sciences at the National University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary. He has more than nine years of practical hands on experience in the local government field. His last position was Head of Internal Policy Department at the Mayor's Office of Pavlodar city, Kazakhstan. His research interests focus on civic-engagement through e-government and other online services with a specific emphasis on local government. He published in the conference proceedings of the Transylvanian International Conference in Public Administration: The Role of Knowledge Management in the Public Sector: New Digital Perspectives (Romania, 2017) and the second article in the volume "The Future of Administrative Sciences": Centralization for Effectiveness – The Impact of Urgent Problems on Decision-Making (Hungary, 2018).