

The West, the Rest, and Representativeness: Has 'the West' Made the Global Governance System Unrepresentative of 'the Rest'?

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Introduction

So pervasive is the concept of 'the West' that it is almost unquestioned in the literature surrounding global governance. Both overtly and subconsciously the Western model is contrasted with the 'non-West', whether with reference to cultures, political ideologies or models of the state, thus setting up a misleading binary that homogenises non-Western states and frames the 'Western way' as the 'teleological terminus', the standard against which all global actors ought to be compared.¹ It is in this inherently biased environment that the non-Western actors, at times crudely labelled 'the Rest', have been attempting to forge a more representative path for themselves in global governance.²

By examining the problematic conduct and structures of institutions in the arena of global governance, this essay will expose them to be clear manifestations of the Westernised dynamic under scrutiny. First, the two key causes of the chasm between the West and the Rest will be identified: the two entities' clashing interests (particularly where economic development among parts of the Rest has been undercut by the West's neoliberal policies), and the normative power enjoyed by 'the Western global hegemony'.³ Second, the ways in which the current global governance system is

¹Adrian Leftwich, 'Governance, the State and the Politics of Development', in *Development and Change*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1994), p. 372.

² Kishore Mahbubani, 'The West and the Rest', in *The National Interest*, Vol. 28, (1992), pp. 3-12; Miles Kahler, 'Rising Powers and Global Governance: Negotiating Change in a Resilient Status Quo', in *International Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (2013), pp. 711-729.

³ Kevin Gray & Craig N. Murphy, 'Introduction: Rising Powers and the Future of Global Governance', in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2013), p. 185.

unrepresentative of the Rest will be demonstrated by analysing the deeply Western-dominated nature of major global institutions. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with its permanent members and exclusive vetoes, provides a political case study, whilst the weighted voting and U.S.-led policies of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) show the relationship's economic dimension. Finally, the resilience of this system will be evidenced by demonstrating how the Rest's efforts to tackle its underrepresentation in global governance are constantly mired: the limited success of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the failure of the rising powers to translate their economic growth into representation on the global stage; and the rising powers' reluctance to accept global leadership. Through these arguments I shall demonstrate the way the West derives many exclusive advantages from its position in global governance at the expense of all other actors, regardless of their characteristics.

Definitions

In order to fully explore its implications, this essay will engage in the 'West-Rest' binary, focusing on the effects of a 'Westernised' global governance system on everything that falls outside the Western world and is thus a member of 'the Rest'. Although the term 'the West' is ubiquitous in global politics, it is seldom accompanied by a precise definition, with members of 'the Rest' united only by their exclusion from the Western cluster. Without wishing to reinforce the reductionist categories alluded to when one invokes the terms 'West' and 'Rest', I shall offer a definition of the former which can be used as a reference point when defining its inverse.

There is a lack of consensus on what 'the West' *means* as there is no clear set of essential characteristics – be they a shared culture, political structure or ideological orientation – common among *all* members of the West. Whilst certain features are often associated with the West, it cannot be argued that all Western members embody them equally: Francis Fukuyama mentions liberal democracy, the pursuit of universal freedom, and a consumerist culture, but these are clear generalisations.⁴ Similarly, merely listing the West's

⁴ Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', in *The National Interest*, Vol. 16 (1989), pp. 3-18.

component states is not satisfactory for the purposes of this essay because its members are not officially recorded, and the conformity of those members to the Western archetype will fluctuate over time as they and the idea of the West evolve.

Instead, reliance upon implicit ideas of what the Western world entails is the norm, making its true meaning something of an elephant in the global governance boardroom. In the absence of a proper definition and wishing to avoid a tautological description of 'those that dominate global governance' – the 'West' – as 'those that dominate global governance', some varying ideas about what 'the West' encompasses will be suggested.

Some scholars have used the words 'West' and 'North' interchangeably, referring to both as 'the industrial, affluent powerful countries'.⁵ The composition of the West has also been defined by more political criteria, with some taking the West to include the winners of the Cold War, classifying the 'concert of Western European and North American democracies' in this way.⁶ I would argue for an expanded version of the political categorisation and classify the West as those states in, or allied with, the Western European and North American countries and which also share a commitment to democratic governance. I emphasise the political over the economic because by extrapolating from Kishore Mahbubani's assessment of Western policy in the Third World, it appears that the West is guilty of prioritising in the same way: 'Today the West is encouraging, and sometimes demanding... democracy before economic development'.⁷

By contrast, the Rest is an infinitely more complicated category, spanning a spectrum of state and non-state actors, with little in common beyond their mutual underrepresentation in global governance due to their non-Western status. Testimony to the diversity of this category can be found in the descriptions of various

⁵ Mohammed Ayoob & Matthew Zierler, 'The Unipolar Concert: The North-South Divide Trumps Transatlantic Difference', in *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2005), pp. 31-33.

⁶ Mahbubani, 'The West and the Rest'; Mats Berdal, 'The UN's Unnecessary Crisis', in *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2005), p. 14.

⁷ Mahbubani, 'The West and the Rest', p. 8. Whether the values held by all members of this grouping are internally cohesive and in alignment with the example set by the West's most prominent members (namely the U.S.) is a contentious issue, but my definition is analytically useful nevertheless as it includes those leading Western states responsible for the topic at hand – the West's relative 'overrepresentation'.

sections within the Rest, ranging from 'the more recalcitrant, radical states in the South' to the 'poor Third World' and the East Asian states as 'the only non-Westerners already in, or poised to enter, the world of developed nations'.⁸

Global governance provides the broadest environment in which to examine the relationship between the West and the Rest, so much so that the term is sometimes criticised for being all-encompassing and thus 'deprived of analytical utility'.⁹ A definition of global governance that describes what *should* happen emphasises the 'collective effort to identify, understand and address worldwide problems that are beyond the capacity of individual states'.¹⁰ Supporting my thesis that global governance is not entirely 'collective' in practice is the Commission on Global Governance's allusion to 'universalising democracy' as a way to increase welfare: it is precisely this form of blanket policy that epitomises the West's propensity to mould the global arena to fit its own image, thereby wresting decision-making ability away from its constituent nation-states.¹¹

Causes of the West-Rest Chasm

The relationship between the West and the Rest provides the roots for the latter's disproportionate underrepresentation in global governance. Western nations aggravate a host of problems in this arena through their somewhat expansionist attitude, as reflected in 'effort[s] to export Western values to the non-West'.¹² Most prominently is the growing focus on democracy promotion that has emerged in U.S. and European foreign policy in recent decades, for instance the U.S. spending over \$18 million in electoral assistance in the run-up to Ukraine's 2004 presidential election.¹³ A more

⁸ Ibid., p. 8; Ayoob & Zierler, 'The Unipolar Concert'.

⁹ Thomas G. Weiss & Rorde Wilkinson, 'Rethinking Global Governance? Complexity, Authority, Power, Change', in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No.1 (2014), p. 207

¹⁰ Deborah D. Avant, Martha Finnemore, & Susan K. Sell, *Who Governs the Globe?* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 1

¹¹ Mark Laffey & Jutta Weldes, 'Policing and Global Governance', in M. Barnett & R. Duvall (eds.), *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 61.

¹² Mahbubani, 'The West and the Rest', p. 3.

¹³ Michael McFaul, 'Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the

aggressive example is that of regime change in Afghanistan, purportedly planned in accordance with the U.S.'s strategic preferences, rather than seeking to cater for what would be desirable for the Afghan people themselves.¹⁴ Thus, the self-determination of states subject to Western attempts to export democracy is threatened because they are denied the freedom to choose their own form of government – such is the nature of the U.S.'s sense of 'entitlement'.¹⁵ As a result, the chasm between the poles is consolidated.

The perils of this division and of the Western mindset it fosters also lay the groundwork for a major 'moral failure' of global governance as highlighted by Craig Murphy, who identified that the system is 'insensitive' to the concerns of the rural poor.¹⁶ This raises two issues. First, that global governance is a somewhat ineffective tool to help certain areas of the Rest no matter which groups dominate the process, because there is significant practical difficulty involved in trying to integrate such secluded, insular communities as those in poor rural areas into 'super-macro' initiatives.¹⁷ Second, that the actors most dissimilar to the West are those that are most disadvantaged by the global governance system as it currently operates. This is because in global governance, as in the example of regime change in Afghanistan, the reference point is the West. The multiplicity of objectives for global governance demands prioritisation among divergent and competing interests.¹⁸ Herein lies the reason the Western attitude is so problematic when applied to global governance: the Western powers that dominate global governance are industrialised and, by their own definition, developed, whereas the Rest of the world is extremely diverse, rendering the Western policy model generally inappropriate to non-Western economies. In the words of Alice Amsden, 'The Third World rejected the development model of rich countries because it did not

Orange Revolution', in *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2007), pp. 45-83.

¹⁴ Stephen Biddle, Fotini Christia & J. Alexander Thier, 'Defining Success in Afghanistan: What Can the United States Accept?', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (July/August 2010), pp. 48-60.

¹⁵ Frederic L. Kirgis, 'The Degrees of Self-Determination in the United Nations Era', in *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (1994), p. 307; Richard K. Betts, 'The Lost Logic of Deterrence: What the Strategy that Won the Cold War Can- and Can't-Do Now,' in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (2013), p. 96.

¹⁶ Craig N. Murphy, 'Global Governance: Poorly Done and Poorly Understood', in *International Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (2000), pp. 789-803.

¹⁷ Weiss & Wilkinson, 'Rethinking Global Governance?'

¹⁸ Avant, et al., *Who Governs the Globe?*

have their stupendous assets to compete. How could it be expected to play on a level field?’¹⁹ Nevertheless, a very narrow definition of a ‘good’ policy environment based on the ‘Washington consensus’ has been applied as a model for development in a ‘blueprint’ fashion.²⁰

This behaviour is most pronounced in the promotion of neoliberalism, a policy model directed towards economic liberalisation, the reduction of state involvement in the economy, and mandating fiscal austerity and macroeconomic stabilisation.²¹ Mike Raco observes that ‘neoliberalism does shape and dominate the policy activities of Western governments’, but its effects span far beyond the Western states that propagate it.²² Although the neoliberal argument is that ‘absolute gains for all are bound to outweigh relative gains if only the market is allowed to determine economic outcomes *unhindered by political and governmental interference*’, implementing the neoliberal ideology has taken a hypocritically interventionist character whereby global governance institutions have actively enforced reforms designed to achieve the Western neoliberal ideal.²³ The case of Venezuela, the inflation rate of which the IMF predicts will hit 1 million percent in 2018, suggests that neoliberal reforms such as those recommended to it by the IMF in 1987 are myopic at best and counterproductive at worst.²⁴ The Washington Consensus, being the economic model preferred by the U.S., has also changed the way development problems are framed by applying a market-focused lens to policy, as opposed to the state-led

¹⁹ Narcís Serra & Joseph E. Stiglitz (eds.), *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered: Towards a New Global Governance* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2008), p.96.

²⁰ A. Wood & M. Lockwood, ‘The “Perestroika of Aid”? New Perspectives on Conditionality’, Report (Bretton Woods Project, Washington, D.C., 1999), [online](#) (Last visited 15 October 2018.); Stefan G. Koeberle, ‘Should Policy-Based Lending Still Involve Conditionality?’, in *The World Bank Research Observer*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2003), pp. 249-273.

²¹ Taylor C. Boas, and Jordan Gans-Morse, ‘Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan’, in *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2009), pp. 137–161.

²² Mike Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-Out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’, in *Antipode*, No. 37, No. 2 (2005), p. 328.

²³ Ayooob & Zierler, ‘The Unipolar Concert’, p. 34 – emphasis added.

²⁴ Reuters Staff, ‘IMF Projects Venezuela Inflation Will Hit 1,000,000 Percent in 2018’, in *Reuters*, 23 July 23 2018, par. 1; [online](#). (This and subsequent link were last accessed on 23 October 2018.); Edgardo Lander & Luis A. Fierro, ‘The Impact of Neoliberal Adjustment in Venezuela, 1989-1993’, in *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1996), p. 52.

approach typical of the countries outside the West.²⁵ Consequently, the bespoke policies that would be most conducive to sustainable development are not explored in global governance, leaving the requirements of underrepresented countries out of the narrative.

Neoliberalism is not an issue only when it is directly imposed. The fact that rising powers are 'located within Western-centred neoliberal order' means that in their attempts to reclaim power and representation they encounter structural hurdles because the entire system of global governance is angled towards neoliberalism.²⁶ Rising powers seeking a stronger position at the global governance table are hence tasked with either challenging the Westernised system, or becoming complicit in it as in the case of South Africa, which acts as a regional platform for the U.S.-centred world order despite providing a 'faux critique' of the North and West.²⁷

The power of the neoliberal policy model emanates from the hegemonic position of the West. The West is attempting, and will continue to attempt, to sustain its preeminent position and to defend its interests by defining them as the interests of the 'world community'.²⁸ This behaviour qualifies as hegemonic according to Robert Wade, who problematises the dominant group's ability to make others' wants match its own²⁹. Western normative power in the form of agenda-setting is evident here, affording the West the 'ability to initiate and shape public discourse', and therefore to shape others' interests.³⁰ By deduction, the genuine concerns of the Rest are not accurately portrayed in global governance, since they are manipulated by Western influence in this way. Thus, even when the Rest is included in discussion, it is not represented authentically. By a similar token, if Michael Barnett is correct in saying that global institutions 'evaluate strategies and actions according to the needs of

²⁵ Charles Gore, 'The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries', in *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (2000), pp. 789-804.

²⁶ Gray & Murphy, 'Rising Powers and the Future of Global Governance', p. 183.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 184

²⁹ Robert Hunter Wade, 'US Hegemony and the World Bank: The Fight Over People and Ideas', in *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2002), pp. 201-229.

³⁰ Jurgen Ruland, 'Balancers, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builders? International Relations and the Study of Regionalism', in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 8 (2010), p. 1277; Felix Berenskoetter & Michael J. Williams, *Power in World Politics* (Routledge, 2007), p. 10.

the bureaucracy', then the West, by virtue of being the dominant force in the administration of global governance, is able to skew the definition of success.³¹ As a result, the frame of reference in which both Western and non-Western actors perceive their interests is tilted in favour of the former. Nevertheless, Foucauldian logic may point to a less bleak future for the marginalised Rest, given its assertion that international order is shaped by the domination of one group over another: history has witnessed fleeting dominant groups rising, falling and switching place, suggesting that Western hegemony in global governance is impermanent and open to eventual substitution.³² Gideon Rachman insists that the next actor to assume this role will be China, a rapidly growing nation providing the momentum for an ongoing process of 'Easternisation'.³³ However, Donald Trump's series of sanctions on China from March 2018, amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of investment restrictions and tariffs, consign the East to a reactionary role while the Western leader dictates the battles in their trade war.³⁴

Sites of Unrepresentativeness

A look at the world's most expansive international institutions reveals the extent to which Western control is enshrined in the operation of the global governance framework, as implied in Barnett's claim that international organisations can become a locus of authority removed from those affected³⁵. The BRIC economies take a yet more damning view of international institutions, broadly branding them as 'frozen configurations of privilege and bias'.³⁶ This situation is most clearly observed in the UNSC, the World Bank and the IMF, and in the embedded economic inequality between the West and much of the Rest that is entrenched through these organisations.

³¹ Michael N. Barnett, 'The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda', in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1997), p. 575.

³² Steve Smith, 'Is the Truth out There? Eight Questions About International Order', in T.V. Paul & John A. Hall (eds.), *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 99ff.

³³ Gideon Rachman, *Easternisation: War and Peace in the Asian Century* (Random House, 2016).

³⁴ Katie Lobosco, 'Trade War: The US and China Just Slapped New Tariffs on Each Other', in *CNN Politics*, 23 August 2018, [online](#).

³⁵ Barnett, 'The UN Security Council'.

³⁶ Ruland, 'Balancers, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builders?', p. 1278.

The domination of the U.S. in these sites of unrepresentativeness is apparent. A cynical view such as that of Murphy would state that the U.S. has even attempted to block the 'strengthening and democratisation of global governance' in order to uphold its political and market interests.³⁷ Accounts of the contrasting experiences of the U.S. and rising powers are testimony to the latter's exclusion from the global governance system. Mats Berdal claims that the support of the U.S. is so integral to the functioning of the UN that its commitment to the organisation is vital to its future health³⁸. Conversely, the rising powers possess no such prestige as they are faced with 'international norms and rules that had been too often developed without their participation'.³⁹ This outcome is symptomatic of 'executive multilateralism', the products of which are a lack of accountability and democracy in global governance: the term refers to the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of government representatives who coordinate multilateral policies without parliamentary control or public scrutiny.⁴⁰ This phenomenon provides a further layer of asymmetry in the global sphere of governance.

United Nations

The UNSC claims to be representative of the international community; however, this highly influential group bears closer resemblance to an echo-chamber than a microcosm.⁴¹ Its members, although not drawn solely from the West, have unrivalled power to determine UN actions that affect parties absent from the decision-making process; indeed 'the Security Council has the primary responsibility, under the U.N. Charter, for the maintenance of peace and security'⁴² For the UNSC's five permanent members, the ability to veto policies codifies their ruling position and epitomises the weighted voting processes favoured by global governance

³⁷ Murphy, 'Global Governance', p. 807.

³⁸ Berdal, 'The UN's Unnecessary Crisis'.

³⁹ Kahler, 'Rising Powers and Global Governance', p. 716.

⁴⁰ Michael Zürn, 'Global Governance and Legitimacy Problems', in *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2004), pp. 260-287.

⁴¹ Barnett, 'The UN Security Council'.

⁴² William N. Gianaris, 'Weighted Voting in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank', in *Fordham International Law Journal*, Vol. 14 (1990), p. 932.

institutions in their most extreme form. The exclusivity of this group was demonstrated when Japan campaigned for permanent UNSC membership and faced resistance from China, which led to a souring of relations between the two states.⁴³ Whether China's resistance was primarily motivated by a desire to protect its regional dominance or by an attempt to pander to the wishes of its Western peers is uncertain, although both are indicative of a Chinese struggle for power on the global stage.

From the perspective of a non-Western party, these features of the UNSC may appear as flaws contributing to a legitimacy deficit in the Council. Rectifying this might involve increasing other states' visibility by expanding the number of permanent UNSC members, however this could make the organisation 'unwieldy' in practice, with a reduced probability of consensus and a heightened susceptibility to defection, especially by the U.S.⁴⁴ The UNSC compares especially unfavourably to the United Nations General Assembly in which all 192 member nations have equal voting rights, and in which developing countries' membership is preponderant.⁴⁵

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

'Most authorities support the conclusion that the IMF, the World Bank, and the regional development banks have been extremely effective in fulfilling their intended purposes'.⁴⁶ What this statement fails to consider is *who* defines success in international financial governance. Even if a superficial assessment of an IFI's narrow transparency deduces that it is legitimate, it may fail to acknowledge the internal mechanisms that lend themselves to pro-Western outcomes.⁴⁷ The continued centrality of the U.S. in the IMF and the World Bank, combined with the leading role it played with the United Kingdom in planning both, guarantees a level of institutional bias, automatically determining the major IFIs' collective policy trajectory.

Through its application of loan conditionalities and its

⁴³ Berdal, 'The UN's Unnecessary Crisis'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Gianaris, 'Weighted Voting'.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 971.

⁴⁷ Allen Buchanan & Robert Keohane, 'The Legitimacy of Global Governance Institutions', in *Ethics & International Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2006), pp. 405-437.

weighted voting system, the IMF preserves the U.S.-led status quo, allowing ideas shaped by the IMF's bureaucratic structure and powerful members' interests to flourish.⁴⁸ The conditionalities the IMF enforces on its loan recipients, although broadly regarded as 'intrusive' and 'ineffective', are not uniform.⁴⁹ Rather, they are tailored to the domestic circumstances of the recipient country and account for their relationship with U.S. foreign policy: whether the conditionalities hinder or support the recipient depends on how far they align with U.S. interests.⁵⁰ The pronounced effect of loan receipt on voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly is such that the IMF will set conditionalities – almost like bribes – in the knowledge that it can induce the recipient to vote in line with the U.S.⁵¹ Conditionalities are also used to manipulate the political landscape by either constricting or enhancing a recipient's ability to pursue fiscal and monetary expansion in the run-up to elections, depending on the appropriateness of the existing government according to U.S. calculations. A poignant example of similar behaviour is the IMF's suspension of finances to Pakistan when it conducted a nuclear weapons test, only to be restored in 2001 when Pakistan agreed to co-operate with the intervention in Afghanistan led by the U.S.⁵²

The marginalising effect of these conditionalities is compounded by the IMF's wholly unrepresentative weighted voting system which, amongst other factors such as gross domestic product and export variability, privileges the absolute size of a country's capital contribution to the IMF.⁵³ This criterion in particular reinforces the present hierarchy as observed by the IMF, which places the U.S., the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan and most West European nations at the top as 'industrial countries', with 'backward', formerly colonial zones such as the Middle East to non-Communist Asia at the other extreme.⁵⁴ Located between these two

⁴⁸ Manuela Moschella, 'Seeing Like the IMF on Capital Account Liberalisation', in *New Political Economy*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2012), pp. 59-76.

⁴⁹ Koeberle, 'Should Policy-Based Lending Still Involve Conditionality?'

⁵⁰ Axel Dreher & Nathan M. Jensen, 'Independent Actor or Agent? An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of US Interests on International Monetary Fund Conditions', in *The Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2007), pp. 105-124.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Randall W. Stone, 'The Political Economy of IMF Lending in Africa', in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (2004), pp. 577.

⁵³ Gianaris, 'Weighted Voting'; Dreher & Jensen, 'Independent Actor or Agent?'

⁵⁴ Kwame Nkrumah, 'Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. 1965', in Rosa Esman & Henry Geldzahler, *New York: International* (Tanglewood Press, 1966).

poles are the BRICS, which despite covering 40% of the global population, have only 14.18% of the vote between them, whilst the comparatively small U.S. has 16.52%.⁵⁵ Rather than attempting to fight these global inequalities, the system is perpetually reinforced by the IMF: the countries that require loans most desperately are those which lack the funds to contribute to the IMF, meaning that by accepting a loan, they must not only accept the conditions attached to it but also the rules associated with the system and their limited voice within it. The institution's bias towards its creditors is particularly harmful to the African and Latin American countries, the economic and political circumstances of which are far removed from those of the IMF's major lenders, obligating them to 'fit in' with a global governance system that is poorly suited to them, if they are to acquire funds.⁵⁶

Members of the World Bank suffer from similar forms of underrepresentation because the Bank's voting system is based on that of the IMF.⁵⁷ In addition to its large voting quota, the U.S. has some veto power and all World Bank presidents have been of full or partial American nationality; descriptions of the World Bank as 'a source of funds to be offered to U.S. friends or denied to U.S. enemies' therefore come as no surprise.⁵⁸ This blatant form of discrimination is inextricably based on political, ideological, tactical and cultural factors, thus reproducing an already unrepresentative system by punishing non-conformity.

Attempts to Increase Non-Western Representation: UNCTAD

Following a wave of 'Third Worldism' originating in the 1960s, attempts have been made by underrepresented nations to advance their position in global affairs.⁵⁹ Another branch of the UN, the UNCTAD, has a non-Western mission focus, seeking to enable

⁵⁵ Ian Bremmer, 'The Mixed Fortunes of the BRICS Countries, In 5 Facts', in *Time Magazine*, 1 September 2017, [online](#); IMF Website, 'IMF Members' Quotas and Voting Power, and IMF Board of Governors', [online](#).

⁵⁶ Devesh Kapur, 'The IMF: A Cure or a Curse?', in Karen A. Mingst & Jack L. Snyder (eds.), *Essential Readings in World Politics* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

⁵⁷ Gianaris, 'Weighted Voting'.

⁵⁸ Robert H. Wade, 'US Hegemony and the World Bank: The Fight Over People and Ideas', in *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2002), p. 217.

⁵⁹ Ayoob & Zierler, 'The Unipolar Concert:'.

'developing countries to participate equitably in the global economy', without the IFIs' political and operational restrictions.⁶⁰ The existence of this organisation is promising: the one-vote-per-country system represents a step towards more equal representation for the UNCTAD's predominantly developing membership.⁶¹

But despite the limited successes of the UNCTAD, its achievements have 'failed to produce the results developing countries want'.⁶² This is partially attributable to Western influence: most advanced economies and multilateral organisations have made efforts 'to systematically, and at times aggressively, undermine the UNCTAD and its work', whilst voting (which empowers the developing world) has been a rarity, and the principles devised by the Conference have often been breached.⁶³ These shortcomings led Joseph Nye to dub the UNCTAD a 'Poor Nation's Pressure Group' which, far from being the decision-maker its more ambitious members would have it be, is a mere rule-taker in global governance driven by the Third World's 'desperation' for investment.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, concerns arose that a 'structural conflict' might occur whereby the states of the 'South' would use their greater numbers to collectively push through agendas unfavourable to the industrialised 'North' – however this prediction falls victim to the Western tendency to homogenise the Rest, and attributes the 'South' with ideological, economic and strategic cohesion that it does not possess.⁶⁵

Rising Powers and Associated Organisations

⁶⁰ United Nations Conference for Trade and Development, 'UNCTAD at a Glance', [online](#), par. 1

⁶¹ Gianaris, 'Weighted Voting'.

⁶² Ron Sanders, 'An Assessment of UNCTAD'S Effectiveness as an Instrument to Promote the Interests of the Third World', in *The Round Table*, Vol. 78, No. 311 (1989), p. 272.

⁶³ Ibid.; Alfredo Saad-Filho, and Joanne Tomkinson, 'Walking the Tightrope: UNCTAD, Development and Finance-Driven Globalization', in *Development and Change*, Vol. 48, No. 5 (2017), p. 1168.

⁶⁴ Joseph S. Nye, 'UNCTAD: Poor Nations' Pressure Group', in Robert W. Cox & Harold K. Jacobson (eds.), *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision Making in International Organization* (Yale University Press, 1974); Sanders, 'An Assessment of UNCTAD'S Effectiveness'.

⁶⁵ Ayoub & Zierler, 'The Unipolar Concert'.

As their economic development wins them progressively more political leverage, what determines rising powers' potential to integrate into the global governance infrastructure is the Western reception provoked by their shifting place in the world order. Some regard rising powers as players in an era of power transition, arguing that the status quo is being uprooted to the detriment of incumbent leaders facing relative decline and the reconstruction of their global institutions.⁶⁶ Others view the 'rise' more pessimistically, claiming that the extent to which non-Western powers are 'rising' is overstated since their emerging position is 'firmly located within the Western global hegemony'.⁶⁷ Proponents of the more positive view may stress that the establishment of the 2014 BRICS Development Bank heralds a new dawn for co-operation among similar non-Western economies because they offer an alternative source of capital for developing countries that would otherwise resort to such Western organisations as the World Bank.⁶⁸ However, substantive change to this Westernised dynamic is not forecast in the short or medium terms while the Rest's strongest economies continue to grow: rising powers are 'risk averse' and favour a conservative approach over radical reforms, making them unwilling to challenge Western hegemony whilst their own identity is unstable⁶⁹. Equally, the history of the UNCTAD does not bode well for modern development organisations and suggests that the fears embodied in the pessimistic view may plague rising powers for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

The idea that the West dominates global governance is not new, and its central role in both establishing and administering the world's most influential multilateral institutions is widely known. It is no secret that those institutions are fundamentally biased toward their progenitors, and that the non-Western majority is left to grapple for

⁶⁶ Gray & Murphy, 'Introduction'.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁶⁸ Adriana Erthal Abdenur, 'China and the BRICS Development Bank: Legitimacy and Multilateralism in South-South Cooperation', in *IDS Bulletin*, Sp. Issue: China and International Development: Challenges and Opportunities, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2014), pp. 85-101.

⁶⁹ Kahler, 'Rising Powers and Global Governance'.

justice in the face of policies curated to maintain the Western-led world order. A structuralist approach reveals the most important ways in which underrepresentation occurs as illustrated by this essay's exploration of global governance.

The way the West handles the clashing interests between itself and the Rest is informed by its hegemonic position, which allows it to define interests, set the global agenda and orchestrate the way the Rest is viewed within the arena of global governance. The effects of this carry over into concrete and visible displays of this dynamic, the most noteworthy being the UNSC and the major IFIs, which are U.S.-dominated and therefore embody its prejudices and serve its desire for self-preservation. By intertwining itself with these institutions, the U.S. has eliminated the possibility of being usurped, effectively ensuring that increased non-Western representation remains off the table. This is played out clearly in situations that supposedly challenge the Westernised status quo: the UNCTAD is undermined and its recommendations openly ignored, while the rising powers are trapped within a Westernised paradigm. Whether rising powers will come to take charge of, or at least exert greater influence over, global governance in the long term is an area of fierce debate, although the arguments that stress the rising powers' lack of desire to accept authority are still tainted by the very Western lens that branded them as unsuitable leaders in the first place. Global governance can thus be said to have been made unrepresentative of the Rest by the West, but neither the non-Western states nor the institutions they created appear to have an ascent to global leadership on their horizons – not according to the West, at least.
