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# A Global Parliament: Essays and Articles

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# Introduction

## In Retrospect

**W**e wrote the first of our works included in this book as *Op Eds* for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *International Herald Tribune* in 1997. That year of our beginning marked the cresting of an era that had begun in the concluding days of the Cold War and that was uniquely both democratic and internationalist.

Its democratic character was made manifest by widespread regime change. From Eastern Europe to Asia and Africa authoritarian governments yielded to new democratic ones. Though many of the democracies born of this era were deeply flawed and some have not stood the test of time, they commonly represented the hope of the day that history was on the side of greater freedom.

The era's internationalist character was made manifest as well by a boom in the building of international organizations. Though the balance of the boom's affects on social and economic justice as well as the environment has been mixed, it too represented the spirit of the times, and in doing so transformed the global institutional skyline. To name but a few of the period's significant institutional developments, the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 gave birth to the European Union. The North American Free Trade Agreement came into force in 1994. The World Trade Organization was established in 1995, and the Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted in Rome in the summer of 1998.

These two great post-Cold War trends of democratization and internationalism came together in the emergence of what has come to be called the global democracy movement. Citizen organizations, no longer content to limit their political participation to the domestic arena, came of age in the 1990's as a global political force. Many human rights and environmental organizations, in particular, came to play a role that was different from, but at least equal in influence to, that of many states and international organizations. As part of their emergence, civil society organizations began to exert pressure for recognition of their right to participate directly in the formation of global policy. And, indeed they did participate in a much larger (if still unofficial and indirect) way than in the past. For example, all of the big thematic United Nations conferences held during the 1990s (Environment (1992); Human Rights, (1993); Population (1994); Social Summit (1995); Women (1995)) included robust parallel proceedings attended by thousands

of civil society representatives. These occasions gave civil society enhanced opportunities to influence inter-governmental debate and negotiations, engage in networking activities, and through accessing the media impact world public opinion. Symbolic of civil society's new status, the United Nations Secretary General capped this decade of participation in the year 2000 by inviting representatives of civil society to United Nations Headquarters for a Millennium NGO Forum, the purpose of which was to be an advisory forerunner to the Millennium Assembly of States.

Fortunately, the energy of global civil society could not be contained solely within the institutional confines established by global officialdom. Most dramatically, this activism spilled out into the streets of Seattle during the 1999 WTO Ministerial Conference when over 40,000 citizens protested the WTO's undemocratic procedures and policies in what came to be dubbed the *Battle of Seattle*. Other similar protests soon followed whenever and wherever those at the helm of the global system of economic governance were to meet, particularly the gatherings of the World Bank, WTO, IMF, and G-7.

As the first decade of economic globalization drew to a close in 2001, civil society itself channeled this energy into the founding of the World Social Forum as, at least in part, a symbolic counterweight to the World Economic Forum, the politically formidable and neoliberally oriented organization of business and political elites. In the years since the founding of the World Social Forum tens of thousands of representatives of diverse elements of civil society have met regularly in Porto Alegre and other non-Western cities in the hopes of advancing their varied agendas.

Paradoxically, despite all of the concern about global citizen participation voiced during this era, few observers gave consideration to whether a democratic role for citizens should and could be formally institutionalized within the international system. By 1997 we had come to conclude that thinking about global democracy had not kept pace with the new democratic and internationalist realities of the era. In particular, we believed that the times provided an opening for considering whether the central institution of national democracies — a popularly elected assembly or parliament — could be adapted to the global system. From our first *Op Eds* published in the popular press, to our later academic works, our goal for the writings contained in this book, has not been merely to provide a conceptual or normative analysis, but to contribute concretely to global democracy by making a politically compelling case for the institution of a popular assembly.

What had started as an ambitious proposal offered in 1997 during a time of great enthusiasm for democratization and internationalism became far more difficult to realize in 2001 following the contested election of George W. Bush as the new U.S. President and eight months later the attacks of Sep-

tember 11<sup>th</sup>. As al Qaeda became the most visible image of a non-governmental organization, the dramatic rise of civil society in the 1990s was to a great extent eclipsed by the revival of statist security concerns in the United States and elsewhere. Bowing to statist pressure, for example, the large participatory conferences held under UN auspices were largely phased out. As the reader will notice, our writings of this period respond to a political context where the loudest voices were those calling for what the Pentagon named the 'long war' and visions of global inclusion were for many people overcome by a Hobbesian mood of fear and tension, a dangerous development in a world where access to weapons of mass destruction was being universalized.

Though the last decade has been a difficult one for the global democracy movement, it has emerged with its fundamental goals and aspirations very much intact. Beneath the public radar of what may dominate the headlines of the day, the democratizing movement has continued to make impressive strides. In the academic world global democracy has become an important subfield of international relations and political theory. Leading scholars of cosmopolitan democracy such as Daniele Archibugi and David Held are cited far and wide,<sup>1</sup> and many others have contributed to working out the theory and practice of how application of democracy to the global order can extend beyond the liberal emphasis on elections and the rule of law.<sup>2</sup> During this period ideas have been developed, pondered over, and refined. For example, the reader of this volume will notice an evolution in our own thinking

<sup>1</sup> For some of their representative works, see *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order* (Daniele Archibugi & David Held eds., 1995); Daniele Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (2008).

<sup>2</sup> For one of many additional important works within the cosmopolitan democracy school see, Raffaele Marchetti, *GLOBAL DEMOCRACY: FOR AND AGAINST: ETHICAL THEORY, INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND SOCIAL STRUGGLE* (2008).

Many other scholars writing in the global democracy subfield have focused on the specific question of the extent to which intergovernmental organizations can be made more transparent and accountable to governments and other stakeholders. For two often cited and important works see, e.g., Ruth W. Grant & Robert O. Keohane, *Accountability and Abuses of Power in World Politics*, 99 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 29, 29-43 (2005); Robert O. Keohane, *Global Governance and Democratic Accountability*, in *TAMING GLOBALIZATION: FRONTIERS OF GOVERNANCE* 130, 130-59 (David Held & Mathias Koenig-Archibugi eds., 2003).

Other scholars have focused on participation by civil society organizations and epistemic networks in the international system. For some of the more influential works on participation by civil society organizations see, MARGARET E. KECK AND KATHRYN SIKKINK, *ACTIVIST BEYOND BORDERS* (1998); Jessica T. Mathews, *Powershift*, FOREIGN AFF., JAN./FEB. 1997, at 50; JACKIE SMITH, *SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR GLOBAL DEMOCRACY* (2008). While the impact of civil society networks on global governance has been the topic of considerable discussion, Anne-Marie Slaughter's consideration of their melding with inter-governmental networks has probably been most influential. See ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER, *A NEW WORLD ORDER* (2004).

from our early endorsement of a parliament or assembly created by civil society to our later advocacy of an interstate treaty created parliament.

This is not to say that there yet exists an academic consensus supportive of the need for and desirability of a global parliament or even with respect to democratic global reforms in general. Andrew Moravcsik, for example, in the title of a provocative article asks the question, *Is There a 'Democratic Deficit' in World Politics?*<sup>3</sup> He concludes that, at least with regard to the European Union, the answer is in the negative, and other international specialists remain similarly skeptical that global democracy is emergent or a natural sequel to domestic democracy.<sup>4</sup> Though there may not be agreement about answers or even questions, it is certainly the case that the academic debate about global democracy has been joined and is likely to continue, and perhaps will even intensify.

Likewise, civil society has sustained its efforts to overcome the international system's democratic deficit, and a determined, if somewhat inchoate, movement for global democracy continues to evolve. Important players in that movement such as the Montreal International Forum,<sup>5</sup> founded in 1998, and Building Global Democracy,<sup>6</sup> founded in 2008, have established themselves as inclusive *big tents* by broadly defining their missions as advancing the cause of global democracy generally. In contrast, the focused purpose of the four year old Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly<sup>7</sup> is to establish the institution of a parliament within the United Nations system. Under the leadership of its Secretary General, Andreas Bummel, the Campaign has obtained the backing of hundreds of parliamentarians from countries around the world.

### Looking To The Future

As this book goes to press in the second decade of the 21st century the world is again changing, this time in ways that may portend future progress in the struggle for global democracy. As when we first began our parliament pro-

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, *Is there a 'Democratic Deficit' in World Politics?: A Framework for Analysis*, 39 *GOV'T & OPPOSITION* 336 (2004).

<sup>4</sup> See Robert O. Keohane, Stephen Macedo, Andrew Moravcsik, *Democracy-Enhancing Multilateralism*, 63 *INT'L ORG.* 1 (2009); Philip Pettit, *Two-Dimensional Democracy, National and International*, (N.Y.U. Sch. L. Inst. for Int'l L. & Just., Working Paper No. 2005/8, 2005), available at <http://www.iilj.org/publications/2005-8Pettit.asp>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fimcivilsociety.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unpacampaign.org/>.

ject in the 1990's, democracy is again on the march. This time, it is the inspiring Arab Spring revolts that stand as testament to an expanding consensus among the world's citizens that societies should be democratically constituted. Likewise, as in the 1990's, the trend is toward internationalism. In particular, in contrast to the period following 9/11, the United States is less likely to commit its oversized diplomatic weight to steadfastly opposing global solutions to the world's common problems. Perhaps of even more fundamental importance to the future of internationalism, the world seems headed toward an era where power will be more evenly balanced between the United States, the European Union and Japan and such rising regional and global actors as China, India, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa.

It is the meeting of these revitalized trends toward democracy and internationalism with the ever growing practical need for democratic reforms of the global order that gives us the greatest confidence that the future may be conducive to global democracy. While globalization continues to integrate the world's economies, the international system has exhibited its inability to respond well to the greatest period of financial instability since the Great Depression of the 1930s. And, even more distressing, existing institutions of global governance have shown themselves unable to deal effectively with either of the apocalyptic challenges of global warming and the possession and proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. While various interests may promote schemes to give the international system authoritarian powers to deal with these challenges, such schemes are not morally acceptable nor, for that matter, are they likely to be problem-solvers. In a world where the democratic spirit is increasingly taking hold, citizens are not likely (short of force) to accept despotically imposed solutions to contentious global issues.

By this assessment we do not wish to understate the significant obstacles that remain to galvanizing a critical mass of support for a global parliament. Certainly, many powerful institutions of the global order perceive such a body as contrary to their interests. Even certain civil society organizations (including some proponents of increased civil society access to global institutions) seem to perceive a need to guard jealously their claim to the mantle of *voice of the global citizenry* from being taken over by the seemingly superior claim to representativeness of a popularly elected body. Likewise, many democratic governments seem far from enthusiastic about relinquishing a portion of their current control over global political institutions and procedures to a popularly elected chamber that might favor policies that are at odds with their own preferences. Perhaps most paradoxical are the evolving attitudes toward a global parliament by the world's non-democracies. Certainly most absolutist rulers would rather not be forced into choosing between the reputational costs of precluding their citizens from participating in

global elections and the political threat of acceding to the introduction of democratic practices into their countries. On the other hand, many of the world's constitutional oligarchies, such as China, appear to be gradually warming to the possibility that a globally representative institution could help break the West's disproportionate influence over global institutions without necessarily threatening their internal political structures.

Beyond the difficulty of negotiating the labyrinth of formidable institutional interests is the challenge of popular appeal. Can the theoretical case for a global parliament be formulated so that it resonates widely with the peoples of the world and their leaders? To be sure the nature of the project does not easily lend itself to a simple mobilizing message such as that put out by the Coalition for an International Criminal Court's: *the Milosevics of the world should not be allowed to get away with it*, or the Campaign to Ban Landmines', *children should not lose their limbs to landmines*. In addition, any message with a hope of reaching a large audience must be responsive to the worldview of a global public that vacillates between the poles of universalism and tribalism, and that, while generally preferring democracy to tyranny, is often made cynical about electoral politics by corruption in domestic democracies and by economic priorities that do not favor the common person. Finally, many in positions of global influence who understand the need for global democratic reform and a global parliament have not freed their political behavior from deference to short-term priorities, believing that their future depends on resolving current crises, rather than bringing about long term structural change.

Despite these challenges, we continue to believe as strongly in the democracy project to which this book is devoted as we did when we began in 1997. The proposal for a global parliament — as we emphasize repeatedly in the chapters that follow — is not utopian. Indeed, since the 18th Century the forward march of the democracy idea has consistently beat the odds in transforming country after country. There is no law of political nature which says democratic change cannot come as well to the international system. Today, as the publishers of this book, the Committee for a Democratic United Nations, and the International Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly stand as testament to, much of the organizational infrastructure is in place. What awaits is for a critical mass of those who continue to believe in the twin values of democracy and internationalism to mobilize behind this project. It is to these as yet dormant persons that we address this book in the fervent hope of awakening their latent sense of mission.