

TAMING THE CHAOS IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IDEAS

Global governance is clearly taking shape in complex and chaotic ways, with widespread dissatisfaction of present arrangements and numerous proposals for betterment—all at a time when many national governments are also being questioned, arguably due, at least in part, to deficiencies in global governance and international accords. But which proposals, if any, are heeded, and with what influence?

This biblio-essay covers most of the recent English-language books on global governance, arranged in a “frontier frame” of several categories. But it is only a rough introduction. If global governance is very important, attention should be paid to what Harlan Cleveland in 1990 called “managing” the “brainwork commons” and building what Yehezkel Dror in 2001 called “the capacity to govern.” As clearly and amply demonstrated here, this multi-faceted commons is huge and disorganized. Yet another book added to the pile will make little or no difference; what is needed is a visible, synthesizing framework to make sense of it all, and a better and hopefully synergistic balance between horizontal generalizing and specific analyses.

Next steps to tame the unruly Global Governance Information Commons should involve a Task Force dedicated to providing a neutral clearinghouse of ideas appearing in books, reports, and articles, with actions including any and all of the following:

- More extensive abstracting of items identified here, as well as proposals over the last two decades, with indexes by author and subject;
- Efforts to identify global governance thinking in non-English languages and/or by thinkers in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China);
- Analysis and critique of similarities and differences in proposals for managing the global economy, greenhouse emissions, human rights, migration, cooperative security, etc. to include both near-term cautious proposals and more far-ranging normative visions;
- Maintenance of a website to accommodate the latest thinking;
- Publication of an annual guidebook that surveys all global governance ideas, similar to the innumerable travel guides to countries and cities, with translation into several languages;
- One or more spokespeople writing magazine and newspaper articles and op-eds to promote improved global governance discourse;
- Creation of one or more feature-length documentary films on global governance issues (many excellent documentaries have been filmed in the past few years, appealing to an increasingly visual culture; this could greatly widen the appreciation of global governance issues, while expanding the underdeveloped market for related books).

This proposed Global Governance Clearinghouse seeks to accelerate learning about global governance issues, among both experts and the public, at a time when governance at all levels is a matter of great concern and discontent. The costs of this project are relatively small—far less than a single F-15 fighter plane, for example. The benefits in terms of national and human security and well-being could be huge. Taming the information commons to some degree could work. It is worth a try.