



WORLD GOVERNANCE INDEX (WGI)

Why Should World Governance Be Evaluated, and for What Purpose?

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Translation of the Table of Contents is provided for information.*

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CHAPTER 1 – WHY SHOULD WORLD GOVERNANCE BE EVALUATED, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

The question of evaluating and measuring world governance begs three other questions:

First, there is the general question of indicators. What is their definition? What are their features? What is their purpose?

This then raises the question of the need to evaluate. Can we abstain from measuring world governance? Or is it on the contrary indispensable to do so?

The third question is about the purpose of this sort of evaluation. What should be done with its results? What consequences might they have on world-governance actors?

1. Reflections on Indicators

Generally speaking, indicators can be said to enable a representation of complex reality. They play three main roles: a scientific one (in our case, by describing the state of world governance), a political one (by identifying priorities and evaluating the performances of actors involved in world governance), and a social one (by facilitating communication and pointing actions in the right direction). Indicators, by aggregating data that is sometimes abundant and incongruous, quantify information; they also simplify it, especially when illustrating complex phenomena. Indicators must meet a certain number of quality criteria, among which: political relevance and usefulness for users; robustness, reliability, and precision (they must effectively reflect the variations of what they are supposed to be summarizing); quality and availability of the data (data must be indisputable and easily accessible); comparability (year-on-year); legibility; and transparency.

Indicators are also evaluation tools and are meant to assist in decision making (guidance, adjustments), thanks to which a situation, an activity, or a trend can be measured in a relatively objective light, at a given point in time or in space. In a way, they constitute a summary of complex information offering different actors (scientists, administrators, policy makers, and citizens) the possibility of dialog with one another. Indicators, whether qualitative or quantitative, generally describe a situation that cannot be apprehended directly. There has to be a causal relation between the measured (*indicated*) fact and the indicator.

Rather than trying, however, to give a specific theoretical definition, it is probably more useful to consider some specific data: this will allow a quicker and more operational approach to the concept. An indicator can be considered as a signal in a system, or in a part of a system. This signal is to provide information about the system itself—its state or its evolution. This example provides three important terms about indicators: signal, system, and information.

Signal: this is data that is sought and judged to be important. System: both within and outside the system; indicators can be external or internal. There are self-indicators,

managed by the actors themselves, or indicators provided by outside observers. In all cases, what is being approached is the system. Finally, information as measure or indication.

Indicators or sets of indicators have a threefold role: to inform, to alert, and to enable guidance and action.

i. Indicators provide information

An approach relying on indicators provides information within a system, as well as outside it, because a good policy of indicators, therefore of evaluation, must indeed be a transparent policy. All the information provided by the indicators, whether internal or external, is to be returned to the actors of the system, who are directly concerned by what the indicators reveal regarding the state of the system for which they are responsible. Indicators must also, especially in a democracy, be used to inform citizens and public opinion in general. Furthermore, a policy of indicators or evaluation must be designed from the start as responding to a social demand. Such demand is indeed enormous with regard to the evaluation of world governance, and will do nothing but grow. This very high demand for evaluation and for the indicators needed to perform it comes, quite paradoxically, with some reserve and skepticism, which reinforces the need for a rigorous approach, as much in the development of indicators as in how they are used.

ii. Indicators issue warnings

Beyond the information that they provide explicitly, indicators issue warnings. In this capacity, the information they supply can then lead to two results: deepening and action. After a set of indicators is applied to a system, the actors of the system should be induced to take things deeper, because self-evaluation is the necessary complement to a system of indicators. The world, as it is today, is a complex organism and its governance is complicated. An exhaustive description of its reality is unattainable, no matter the quality of the set of indicators developed to do so. When all is said and done, a system of indicators should be seen as an outline with one role to play: to alert. It provides indications, on the basis of which the actors who are directly involved and know the system well will be able to deepen their observations and get efficient answers to their questions: "Is it correct to say that ...?" "Is it true that ...?"

iii. Indicators enable action and guidance

Action and guidance are the result of an *instrumental* vision of indicators. Indicators do not constitute scientific work, even when they are high-quality. Otherwise, there would be more than just skepticism about indicators, they would be rejected. This being said, the quality requirement must not cloud the fact that indicators are designed mainly to help organizations to clarify and deepen their thinking, and to act. This is where their political dimension comes into play, where indicators become instruments, or guidance tools. There are two main requirements to all modern democratic societies: evaluation, which is possible with a good set of indicators, and public debate on the quality and perfectibility of world-governance actors. The debate around the concept of world governance has been growing in scope over the years. The way world governance is viewed by

different players, whether they are diplomatic or economic players, or civil-society representatives, expresses just how much is expected from it. Like public service, which must be at the service of the public, world governance, to remain world governance, must truly be governance of the world, at the service of the world. More than simply an easy play on words, this is actually the core of the matter. If world governance does not fulfill this basic role, it runs the risk of bringing about a damaging setback or of accelerating into a road block on a path made of uncertainties.

In addition to feeding the public debate, systems of indicators also have an even more fundamental role, which is to provide guidance. World governance cannot be limited to circular letters or top-down directives. Its success depends on the initiatives of actors. Having responsibilities, at whatever level, in the area of world governance, means giving rise to initiatives, framing them, and evaluating them, all at the same time. It is therefore useful for world-governance actors to have tools at their disposal that will allow them to take initiatives. Among such tools, indicators are indispensable.

2. *Why Should World Governance Be Evaluated?*

i. Evaluation is necessary for understanding

The first explanation that comes to mind is that when a living organism—be it a human being or a society—suffers from significant deficiencies, whatever is wrong needs to be diagnosed. The first reflex should logically be to use the appropriate instruments, whether the most basic, such as a thermometer, or very elaborate ones, such as a medical-imaging instrument. This initial measurement, this first image is what will make it possible to observe whether there is improvement or regression after some form of treatment has been implemented. World governance has become a current topic of interest that cannot be ignored. Everybody agrees that the world is in bad shape, and that this is because world governance is in bad shape. Before even defining a medical protocol, it is essential to know exactly what the patient is suffering from. Indicators, or systems of indicators, given their role of informing, seem to be the tools best adapted to get a clear picture of what world governance is afflicted with.

Over the years, all modern economies have taken up indicators as measuring instruments to allow them some form of definition in space (by comparing the respective performances of different countries) and in time (by tracking year-on-year evolution). Long the undisputed champion in all weight classes, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has had absolute power over all the indicators produced since the 1960s. Although the GDP, which measures a country's production of economic wealth (goods and services), has remained the reference to assess economic health, economists are now acknowledging that it simply does not reflect national "well-being." Even in his time, Robert Kennedy said, shortly before his assassination in 1968, "GDP measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile." The GDP indicator is no longer the main compass used by policy makers: a true "political economy" is emerging, focused on the human factor, rather than on the production and consumption of countries and individuals.

GDP growth, the be all and end all of political discourse that is so widespread, is a flawed and misleading thermometer.

The world today is obviously no longer the world of the 1950s: its dimensions have changed (distances have been considerably shortened), as have its potentials (natural resources are at risk of depletion), its breathing space has been reduced (CO₂ emissions are threatening the very balance of the planet), its sense of what is real is altered (the immaterial and the virtual have broken into our perception and our models), its technological capacities have grown, and its goals have shifted. It is no great gamble to state that our societies are going to have to cope, in the coming decades, with mutations comparable in magnitude to those that pushed them from the Middle Ages into the modern era. These mutations will not occur in just one area: they will involve values, forms of production, consumption, and trade, governance, and the relationship between humans and the biosphere. The present system of indicators can understandably be seen as unable to reflect these four main areas, and can hardly be expected to be of any use in appreciating the magnitude of these foreseeable mutations nor in tracking their evolution. Today's social model—hence the one (or those) toward which we are moving within a lifetime—is no longer that of the 1950s. Its evolution can therefore no longer be calculated with just the instruments developed in the 1960s. For new social models, we need new thermometers.

ii. The stakes are democratic and social

Indicators and indexes are increasingly a part of public life and should become more so in the coming years, at least if the commitments made at the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development by our countries—in fact most countries of the planet—are complied with. Agenda 21, adopted at the conference, repeatedly underscores the need to embrace sustainable-development indicators to guide and evaluate policies in this area.

Beyond the above-mentioned case of GDP, what is of interest here is the more general question of the status, both scientific and democratic, of indicators, whether they are meant to produce a World Governance Index (WGI), a Human Development Index (HDI, developed by the United Nations Development Programme—UNDP), a Genuine Progress Index (GPI), or any other type of index. These are all scientific objects built and circulated to be used in policy making. Their construction is submitted to three requirements that are sometimes hard to make compatible: scientific rigor, political efficiency, and democratic legitimacy. To form an opinion on them, it is important to first examine how, concretely, these indexes are built and on what foundations. These building operations pose sometimes delicate technical problems regarding, for instance, how to translate abstract concepts into observable data or how to aggregate variables of different nature and metrics.

Even if indicators and indexes were exclusively scientific constructs—which seems impossible, at least in the fields of world governance, human development, or any other social field—their use and interpretation would still be political, and the social processes in which the beliefs, values, and strategies of the different actors would play a major role.

Politics is therefore implicitly or explicitly at the core of the construction and use of indicators. How, then, can both the reliability and relevance of the tool, and its democratic legitimacy be guaranteed? For the specific issue of sustainable-development indicators, this is the question all countries have had to, or are having to grapple with. A quick review of practices in the area of systems of indicators shows that the participatory nature of this process is most often limited to no more than consulting with institutional advisory councils. Sometimes, in the best of cases, “the people” are also called upon to express themselves. Should this be taken further, and above all, can it be? Some do not think this would be a good idea because of people’s excessively individualistic nature, which would push them, out of selfishness, to not worry about the well-being of future generations and the means to guarantee it. Others believe it might be a good idea, but an unrealistic one because the issues would be out of the reach of “ordinary” citizens, who would be plainly unable to make a useful contribution.

Nevertheless, the broadest possible involvement of the population in the construction of sustainable-development indicators seems both desirable and possible. Desirable, because such involvement constitutes a central element in world governance or sustainable development insofar as these concepts require democracy to be deepened in order to achieve greater authenticity. Possible because, through the virtues of deliberation, citizens can express real and informed concern for the common good, including that of the future of humankind.

To illustrate this with a recent example, it seems useful to turn to the OECD Metagora project and its Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21). Based on a North-South partnership, the aim of this project is to study methods, tools, and areas of measurement in democracy, human rights, and governance. Its strategic goal is to enable improvement in observation and evaluation in these fields. Its main goal is to develop tools based on well-established statistical methods to develop, on the basis of the collected data, indicators on which national policies can be formulated and evaluated. Their findings speak for themselves:

Measuring human rights and democratic governance is technically feasible and politically relevant: data on human rights, democracy, and governance can be collected and analyzed using statistical tools. On the basis of this information, it is possible to provide indicators that are relevant and useful for political decision and action. Quantitative data and qualitative information can and should be interrelated to properly inform assessment of human rights and democratic governance. Official statistical agencies can be involved in the measurement of human rights and democratic governance. Statistical analysis and quantitative indicators bring a significant value added to the work of national human-rights institutions. Statistical methods can substantially enhance the research and advocacy of civil-society organizations in the fields of human rights and democracy.

3. Evaluating World Governance: For What Purpose?

i. In order to act upon the actors ...

This past decade has been the stage of a huge proliferation of systems of indicators and publication of indexes, many of which are directly related to the concept of governance. In 2003, there were nearly 50 projects in progress or published works. In the 2007 edition of the *Governance Indicators Users' Guide*, written jointly by the European Union and the UNDP, there are no less than 100 of them.

Since the UNDP's first publication in 1990 of its report on human development, the HDI, which not only includes indicators for income and material well-being but also indicators for education and health, has contributed considerably to changing mind sets and ways of acting among the actors and international observers of human development. The best tribute to this considerable work could only have come from Amartya Sen, the distinguished economist who inspired the UNDP's pioneering work. Initially, Sen was not favorable to publishing an HDI, which he deemed to be too "crude" and "summary" to reflect the enormous wealth of available information. In 1999, he changed his position and wrote, in reference to his previous discussions with the other "father" of UNDP reports and indicators, Mahbub ul Haq: "Mahbub got this exactly right, I have to admit, and I am very glad that we did not manage to deflect him from seeking a crude measure. By skilful use of the attracting power of the HDI, Mahbub got readers to take an involved interest in the large class of systematic tables and detailed critical analyses presented in the Human Development Report. The crude index spoke loud and clear and received intelligent attention and through that vehicle the complex reality contained in the rest of the Report also found an interested audience."

Similarly, the Corruptions Perception Index produced by Transparency International is now taken into consideration as much by financial backers and other international players as by governments and civil-society groups. The same is true for many other indicators or indexes. Even the World Bank, whose work on governance indicators has often, and rightly, been criticized, has integrated into its indicators, since 2007, data and indexes on the perception of governance provided by about 30 civil-society organizations. This is remarkable progress, and it needs to be underscored, especially as the World Bank had refused for nearly 10 years to communicate on how it elaborated its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) index.

Through the publication of indicators, the debate on governance has enabled and favored significant progress: the idea of legitimacy entered into the debate and became more important than the idea of efficiency. For many, if not all civil-society organizations, the World Bank cannot and should not lead the governance crusade. First, because its status as international institution "frees" it from direct control by the United Nations. In addition, its absence of transparency disqualifies it from leadership. Rising criticism, conveyed in September 2006 by the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, forced the World Bank in 2007 to review its corruption-related requisites for developing countries to be granted loans. The EU and civil society, represented by many

organizations, by putting the debate to the floor drove the World Bank to consider governance from a much more political than a merely technical standpoint.

ii. ... and to make the actors react

To illustrate the need for reaction and how urgent it is, here is an edifying, and unfortunately symptomatic testimony on a certain type of governance, or rather of *non-governance*. The scene is set in 2000, in Burundi, in the province of Karuzi. A team of 7 expatriate volunteers and 180 local staff of the Belgian branch of an internationally recognized French nongovernmental organization (NGO) was taking 150 persons into care at a Center for Nutrition and Treatment (CNT) and about 500 persons under a weekly food-ration distribution program at a Center for Nutritional Supplementation (CNS). The team was supported from the capital of Burundi, Bujumbura, by a coordination group (head of mission, logistics coordinator, accountant, and administrator, the latter two of which were on their very first mission). The administrative pair, entangled in wage calculations complicated by a complex system of bonuses, decided to suppress the bonuses and to level all wages to the top, which amounted to an average 40% wage increase for the local staff, and had a janitor, who was lowest on the wage scale, earning as much as a government-employed provincial physician. The raise was far from enough to unbalance the local economy of the province, with its 300,000 inhabitants.

In late November of that year, a huge malaria epidemic broke out in the province. The epidemic, combined with a period of very poor harvests, triggered a major humanitarian disaster. Four months later, the number of persons taken into care per month at the CNT had grown to 5,000 and to 30,000 at the CNS. The resources put to work by the NGO had become astronomical: 45 expats, 54 vehicles, 8 of which were trucks, 5 CNTs, 10 CNSs, 21 million Belgian francs in own funds, not to mention funding from the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission, ECHO, and from the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA, 150 tons of freight per week, and above all, a staff of 1,500 local employees, 1,000 under contract and 500 day workers. The mass of local employees began to pose serious problems. Everybody wanted to work for the NGO. Positions had to be distributed between Hutus and Tutsis. With such enormous staff, however, things got out of hand. The wages were so attractive that many of the country's civil servants abandoned their government jobs and concealed their status to get hired by the NGO. Schools and public administrations were soon in trouble and the local economy was completely unbalanced. Price monitoring, organized by the NGO itself, showed a weekly increase of nearly 10%. Relations with the crippled local administration quickly deteriorated, which hindered the smooth running of aid operations. The end of the emergency mission was especially delicate and painful, with expats being held hostage by local employees who did not want to lose this important source of income. When all was said and done, there was no doubt that thousands of lives had been saved, but with much collateral damage: an atomized economy, a profoundly disorganized education system, a local administration depleted of resources, and greater suspicion of humanitarian missions.

This example, deliberately taken at the bottom of the world-governance scale, clearly shows, like the aforementioned World Bank example, that it is necessary, indispensable, and vital for world-governance actors to collect their wits. Deep soul searching, questioning their working methods and ways, i.e. their own governance, is something they simply cannot avoid if they expect to acquire a new legitimacy more in agreement with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Fortunately, there are now many encouraging cases of ambitious questioning. Humanitarian aid is the area in which such experiences seem to have progressed the most. This questioning-based reaction usually follows a relatively simple process, which can be summed up into three main rules: *understanding, evolution, and innovation*. These three rules are aimed at reinforcing the competence of actors, at promoting the improvement of practices, at drawing lessons from experience, at capitalizing knowledge and circulating it, and at inventing methods and tools intended to encourage a "quality approach." The goal of this overall approach, involving recipients, actors, and donors in humanitarian aid, is to put humanitarian aid back in what is its *raison d'être*: to help populations afflicted by crises. The guidance and the evaluation of an action also aim to give an NGO credence and reinforce trust. Responsibility and accountability cannot simply be decreed: they need to be shown and proven.

That NGOs should have been the first to react is not surprising, as their structures allow it. On the other hand, there is no denying that in large international organizations, thinking is slower and reactions even slower than that. The United Nations, having become aware of its weaknesses, has launched since 1997 a vast program aiming to make it a more effective instrument to achieve important goals, in particular those set out in its Millennium Declaration. The questioning process regarding certain practices is similar, overall, to the process followed by NGOs. It has placed the accent on useful action, reorganizing the means of information, better service to the benefit of Member States, better coordination of actions, funding priorities, and seeking excellence in staff hiring.

In September 2002, the acting UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, noted that progress had been made on many fronts:

The reforms begun in 1997 were aimed at adapting the UN's internal structures and culture to new expectations and new challenges. Since then, there have been some important achievements—not least the Millennium Declaration itself, which includes a clear set of priorities including precise, time-bound Development Goals. These now serve as a common policy framework for the entire UN system. The UN has been in the forefront of the battle to eradicate poverty and fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The implementation of the Brahimi report [of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations] is improving the Organization's capacity to deploy and manage peacekeeping and peace-building operations, and it has responded well to novel and unexpected challenges in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor. The UN is showing greater coherence, and its disparate elements are working better together. Fruitful partnerships have been built with a wide range of non-state actors. In short, the Organization is evolving with the times. It is more efficient, more open and more creative. But more changes are needed. This report suggests a number of improvements aimed at ensuring that the Organization devotes its attention to the priorities fixed by the Member States, and that the Secretariat gives better service. But the

intergovernmental organs must also change. The General Assembly and ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] both need to adapt in order to realize their potential, while the stalled process of Security Council reform needs a new impetus. The work program of the Organization as a whole should be better focused—with fewer but more productive meetings, and fewer but more useful documents.

Obviously, the task is challenging and ambitious. It will take time to accomplish and will need to overcome the formidable inertia due to the size of the UN or that of the other large world-governance organizations. It will also have to overcome the many difficulties that will necessarily emerge from having to question certain habits. This is the price to pay to acquire the capacity essential for managing change in a rapidly evolving world. If the UN and, by extension, all large organizations with a *universal* vocation—*international* institutions and *multilateral organizations*, and *regional organizations*—do not modernize and develop their capacities in this area, they are likely to be outstripped and no longer be in a position to play a key role on the world stage.

Both a photograph and an means to induce action/reaction, the WGI thus has a twofold dimension. An analytical dimension—it must provide as true a reflection as possible of the situation of world governance—and an operational dimension—it must enable actors, whatever their level, to act or to react in the direction of a more efficient, more democratic world governance, more in phase with the environment. On first impression, the first dimension seems relatively easy to measure, but the operational dimension seems more delicate to quantify. A study of this twofold dimension should make it possible to determine the constituent elements of a WGI that will respond to both the analytical and the operational need.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of this study on the WGI is part of a long-term process. On the basis of the situation described by the WGI and of its diagnosis, it must enable actors in charge of governance to raise the right questions in order to think about solutions. In the end, the idea is to materialize a world governance that is capable of taking on the world challenges of the coming years in compliance with the big principles defined in the *Guide to the Development of Proposals for World Governance*.²

Producing the WGI is a first step in that direction. The indicators, sub-indicators, and indexes used for this study point exactly in the direction of these principles. The indexes that constitute the Peace and Security, Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Participation indicators, for instance, clearly refer to the **Legitimacy of the exercise of power** principle and to that of **Conformity with the democratic ideal and with principles of citizenship**. The deep consent of peoples to the way in which they are governed, the trust they place in those exercising authority, the importance given to the necessities of the common good, and an organization of society based on an ethical foundation that is recognized and respected are concepts that the indexes surveyed illustrate and evaluate. Those of Sustainable Development point to the

² <http://www.world-governance.org/spip.php?article152&lang=en>

principle of **Competence and efficacy** and survey public and private institutions in their design, their way of working, as well as the competence, the pertinence, and the capacities of those in charge of their operations. As for the indexes of the Human Development indicator, they underscore the principle of **Cooperation and partnership**.

This survey is not exhaustive. The choices made led to picking five areas of survey and to limiting their field of application to only nation-states as actors. Nation-states constitute a legal framework and a form of political and social organization inherited from a history and culture sometimes thousands of years old. It is hence in this capacity that they are among the most important actors in world governance and it is for this reason that the result of the present survey provides a good indication of the current state of world governance.

Nonetheless, a number of other actors will also need to be surveyed. Identifying these actors is not a problem in itself: Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), NGOs, and enterprises of world dimension. The more delicate aspect will be to determine what criteria to use. From the simple point of view of nation-states, it is relatively easy to define a number of general criteria common to all nation-states. Given their general and common character, there is plenty of easily exploitable data.

The challenge will be different when it comes to other actors. In France, the recent and significant malfunctioning of a French NGO accused of trafficking children early in 2008, amply conveyed by the media, has contributed to rekindling the debate on the governance of non-state actors. It is therefore natural to raise the question of governance within this fuzzy mass of organizations.

In the same way that the five indicators of this survey make it possible to assess the performance of nation-states in the area of governance, other indicators should be able to make it possible to evaluate the impact of IGOs, NGOs and enterprises of world dimension. Evaluating the "responsibility and accountability" of these actors should not stop at theory. The idea is to assess the way in which these actors commit to factoring their recipients' needs into their decisions, and the way in which they fulfill this commitment.

One of the perverse effects of indicators is that very often their purpose is eclipsed by a final ranking that for some becomes obsessive, whereas for others, it seems to have no value. The point is not, therefore, when this survey is complete, to establish a ranking of countries or actors, or to use the results to hand out good or bad points. What is essential is to show the state of world governance through the selected survey criteria and to rouse the actors into taking advantage of the educational value of the WGI in order to raise the questions that are fundamental to their governance. Beyond the ranking, what is of the essence is the questioning that ensues. The ranking, or rather its constituent elements, should lead to in-depth thinking on the strengths and weaknesses of this or that nation-state. This should then lead in turn to implementing measures, seeking initiatives, and changing behavior in order to achieve, in the end, a world that is better because it is governed better.

At the end of this survey, it would be pretentious and dangerous to state that the WGI is finished and perfect. The WGI, as defined here, is the result of an initial approach. The process was not simple. Between compiling reliable data, comparing it, and

studying its relevance, there were choices to be made. These choices are not final. With the exponential growth of communication means and information sharing characteristic of today's world, it is more than likely that, in the near future, new, even more relevant data will be available. Any suggestion or observation is welcome, because it is from confronting ideas that an even more effective WGI will spring.