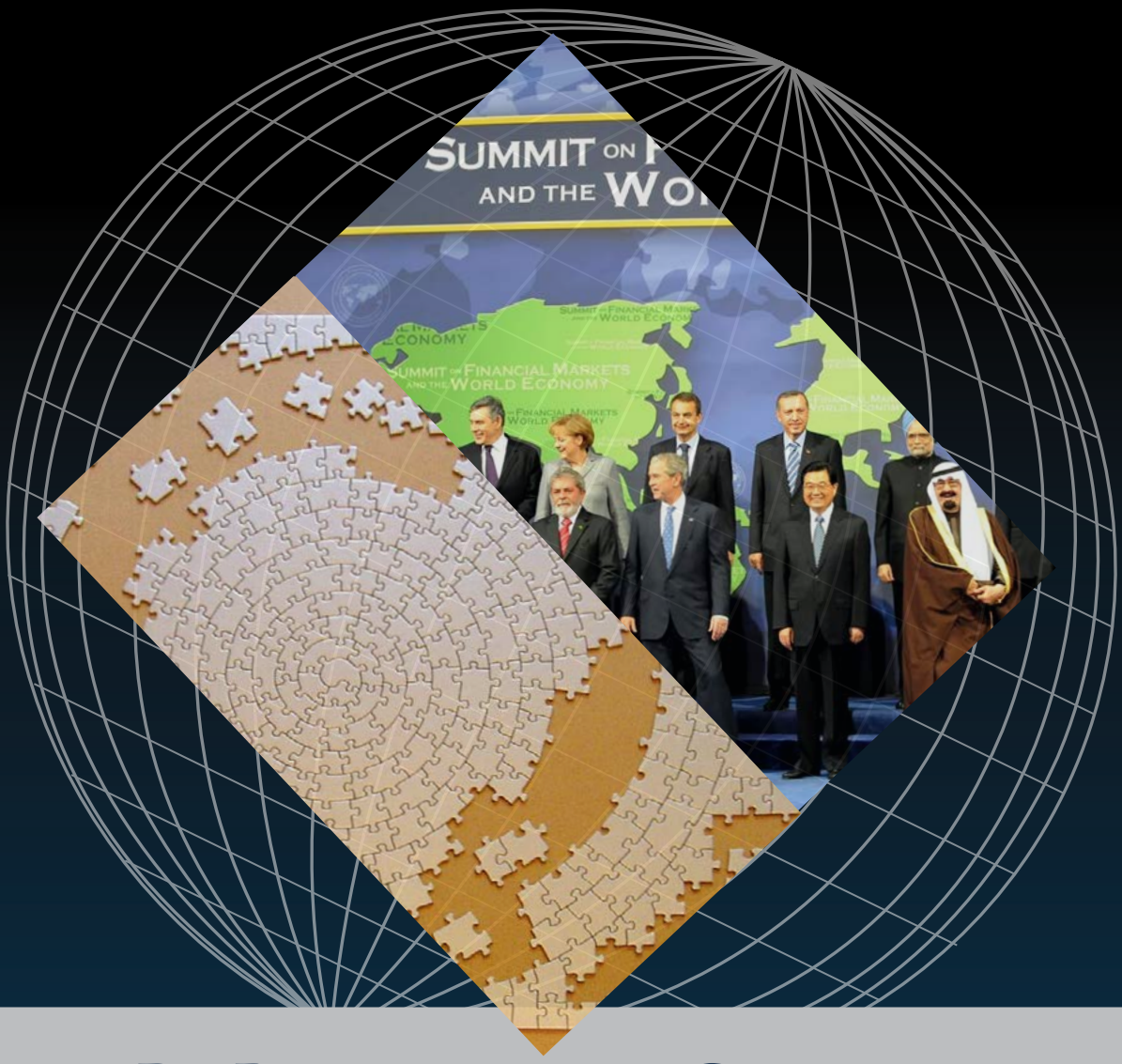

Re-Balancing the G-20 from Efficiency to Legitimacy: The 3G Coalition and the Practice of Global Governance

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Peace Through Governance

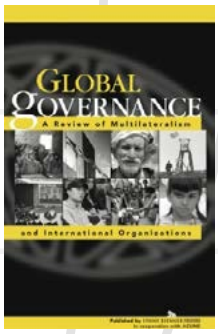
a One Earth Future Policy Brief

Lessons from the Global Governance Group (3G) on structuring large multilateral institutions

Re-Balancing the G-20 from Efficiency to Legitimacy: The 3G Coalition and the Practice of Global Governance

Background

Research by Professors Andrew F. Cooper and Bessma Momani published in Global Governance focused on the evolution and impact of the Global Governance Group as a mechanism for linking G-20 and non-G-20 states and enhancing the legitimacy and potential effectiveness of the G-20 on the global stage. This research provides valuable insights on questions of how the workings of international institutions can be improved and also on how small states can gain influence in these institutions both symbolically and instrumentally.



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The OEF policy brief series provides distillations of research lessons into practical recommendations for policy and practice.

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Research Summary

Professors Andrew F. Cooper and Bessma Momani examine the role of small states in informal institutions vital to the advance of global governance. Their point of entry is an examination of the G-20, a self-selective but central group of 20 world economies which was elevated from a forum of financial ministers and central bankers created at the time of the Asian Crisis in 1999 to a leaders' summit as a response to the global financial crisis that hit in 2008. The G-20 took a leading role when it became clear that existing institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, the G8, and the UN, "could not coordinate an effective response to the crisis." Although the G-20 is widely hailed as having helped to stabilize the global economy, concerns over its lack of oversight and participation from the wider international community "elicited a strong counter-response from the states left out of the G-20." While efficiency was paramount in the early days of the crisis, legitimacy came to be a more pressing concern for small states that were excluded from this decision-making forum.

Vanu Gopala Menon - United Nations multimedia

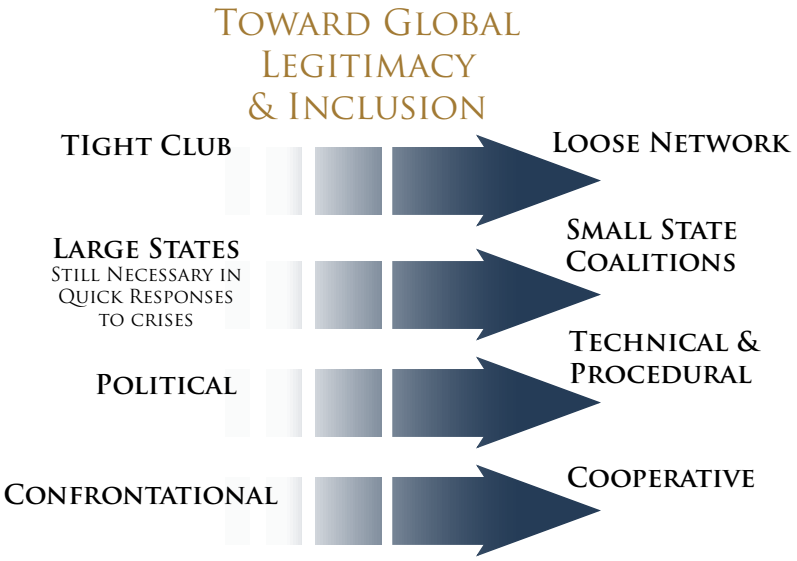
In response to the shift in emphasis toward greater legitimacy, Ambassador Vanu Gopala Menon, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the UN, offered a way to respond to the exclusion of most of the world's countries. According to the authors, "rather than simply accepting, rejecting or ignoring the G-20 process [Menon] sought to build a more equitable relationship between G-20 and non-G-20 countries." The new group he helped to establish was called the Global Governance Group (3G). Its aims are threefold:

1. to confer greater legitimacy to the G-20 process;
2. to act as a bridge linking the G-20 and UN membership; and
3. to ensure that the G-20 hears the voices of non-members.

The 3G provides legitimacy by acting "as a forum that allows the G-20 to respond to the concerns of non-members without, notably, requiring significant changes to current institutional arrangements." Consequently, the 3G was able to push some of its goals for inclusivity. For example, it adopted the idea of "variable geometry," meaning that the G-20 would invite countries to participate in discussions that directly affected them or when their insights would be helpful for creative problem solving. Finally, the authors find that by "engaging in a reconfigured form of informal multilateralism…the 3G has been and is capable of shaping the global agenda with respect to the G-20 in a way that is both more inclusive and more connected with existing institutions, especially the United Nations."

Policy Implications of Research

New informal groups such as the 3G, made up of coalitions of small states, signal a shift, however subtle, in global governance. 3G shifted from a "tight club to a loose network of states. Instead of the centralization that appeared to be the mode of operation from the outset, one of the major impacts of the 3G was in recalibrating the image of the summit process to a far more decentralized model in a multi-functioning environment." Such decentralized and looser models may generate less resentment from the wider international community than more tightly defined and constrained groups.



In times of crisis, the ability of large/powerful states to coordinate and execute policy may be necessary in order to quickly respond to developing crises. However, the experience of the 3G suggests that ***over the long term, the inclusion of small state coalitions provides necessary legitimacy to organizations.***

> "Despite the inclusion of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) as members, the impression that the G-20 was a group of powerful countries that formulated and imposed rules on all others persisted largely as a result of the overrepresentation of European countries as members."

For states that feel excluded from international processes, the best approach for influencing the system may be via engagement rather than confrontation. By focusing on solving the perceived issues with the G-20 and assisting with the execution of the G-20's collective goals, Singapore and the 3G were able to have a significant impact on the G-20.

> "By then taking the high road…the 3G became an agent for solutions, especially with respect to legitimacy of the G-20 process."

In addition to the cooperative approach, the experience of the 3G suggests that there is significant utility in framing the engagement in technical and procedural terms rather than political ones. The 3G's focus on an "innovative and pragmatic approach" that emphasized providing solutions to the G-20's legitimacy challenges appears to have been a key element supporting the impact of the 3G.