Reforming global economic and social governance: 
a critical review of recent programmatic thinking

Introduction

This paper reviews recent contributions to the ongoing debate about the reform of global economic and social governance. In spite of deep resistance to and skepticism about the prospects for significant reform of existing institutional arrangements, and a general poverty of detailed programmatic thinking about what such reform would look like, a number of concrete and imaginative reform projects have been advanced in the past decade which are fueling discussion among scholars, policymakers and NGO advocates.\(^1\)

I review three main categories of proposal, each of which suggests a different direction and emphasis for reform efforts. First, I review proposals that seek to address the ‘leadership gap’ in the architecture of global economic and social governance today, ranging from relatively modest plans to modify existing institutional arrangements in the direction of greater inclusiveness and more effective coordination to more ambitious proposals for the creation of new apex bodies concerned with providing overall economic and social leadership within the UN system. Second, I review proposals whose main aim is to give non-state actors – citizens, NGOs or others – an institutionalized role in the international system, as a means of bridging the ‘democratic deficit’ in international organizations and increasing their accountability to ordinary people. In most of the forms they have taken, these first two reform projects have also been motivated by a desire to increase the overall role of the UN in global social economic and social governance relative to the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WTO and developed country forums such as the G8 and OECD.\(^2\) Third, I review the emerging reform project based on the

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\(^1\) The proposals reviewed here include a number of comprehensive reform studies, several of which were conducted in the mid-1990s to coincide with the 50\(^{th}\) Anniversary of the United Nations, as well as many more specific proposals advanced by scholars and international officials. The comprehensive reform proposals include the Commission on Global Governance (1995), perhaps the best known of the studies and the basis of later studies such as Childers and Urquhart (1994), Independent Working Group on the Future of the United Nations (1995), Idris and Bartolo (2000) and the Global Governance Reform Project (2000) and the Zedillo Report (2001).

\(^2\) This paper does not review the extensive literature on reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO. Such proposals also seek to address problems of inclusiveness, democracy and efficiency in existing governance arrangements and would be a key element in any overall institutional reform project. Several articles in the recent volume on governing globalization edited by Deepak Nayyar address these issues. You (2002: 209-237) offers a useful review of the major possibilities for institutional reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions and Shukla (2002: 254-283) considers the options for the reform of the WTO. Reform proposals for these institutions have also been made in several of the reform studies reviewed in this paper, including Commission on Global Governance and the recent Zedillo Report.
proliferation and codification of ‘networked’ governance – which center around the use of small, multisectoral mechanisms targeted at particular issues or at the provision of particular global public goods.

The main purpose of this paper is to review the reform proposals in their various permeations as a means of highlighting the different options available and the areas in which reform proposals could usefully be developed in more detail. At different points, I also point to some of the advantages and disadvantages and comment on the political feasibility of the different proposals. The concluding section considers the different views of global economic and social governance that emerge from the various reform projects and suggests some strategies for overcoming political resistance to the some of the more ambitious proposals.

1. Addressing the leadership gap in global economic and social governance

This section reviews reform proposals designed to address the lack of representative, coordinated and effective political leadership in the existing architecture of global economic and social governance. Proponents of reform have strongly argued that existing institutional arrangements, currently dominated by technical forums such as the Bretton Woods Institutions and political forums such as the G8 are failing to provide this kind of leadership, and not providing a political means of responding to the polarization associated with the current period of economic globalization. In the words of the Commission on Global Governance (1995):

> The international community has no satisfactory way to consider global economic problems in the round and the linkages between economic, social, environment, and security issues in the widest sense. The boundaries between issues of trade, competition policy, environment, macroeconomic policy, and social policy are increasingly blurred …global interdependence is growing, and traditional institutional arrangements no longer suffice. Political structures that can articulate a sense of common interest and mediate differences are not keeping pace … at a global level.

A new global apex body

The creation of a new global apex body within the United Nations to oversee and direct global economic and social policy-making has been the central idea around which several major reform proposals have been organized. Indeed, with one or two exceptions, all
reform proposals that have considered the overall institutional architecture of the system have converged around this concept.³

There are several rationales offered for the creation of a high-level ‘economic and social security council’ (ESSC) for economic and social affairs within the United Nations.⁴

First, the creation of such an apex body would provide leadership and promote greater coherence in the setting of overall global economic and social policies and addressing the linkages between key policy issues in a way that ECOSOC has been generally unable to do. Second, an economic and social security council would be in a position to develop and coordinate policy responses to acute economic and social crises as they emerged. As Falk (2002: 205) points out, ‘perhaps, the most compelling rationale for an economic security council relates to security dimensions of the world economy’, such as the massive human suffering and disruptions caused by financial crises. Third, such a high-level council could be used to build political momentum for the implementation of globally agreed objectives like the Millennium Development Goals and as a forum to agree on the definition, provision and financing of global public goods. A fourth motivation is that of restoring the coordinating authority and prestige of the UN in global agenda-setting, given the UN’s political legitimacy but the current weakness and ineffectiveness of ECOSOC and the dominance of the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WTO and various forums outside the UN system such as the G8, the OECD and the World Economic Forum in this area. Finally, such a council would be intended to be a more inclusive forum for high-level discussion of economic and social policies than the above mechanisms, giving a real voice to developing countries, even if, in order to be politically viable, it is usually envisaged as being less representative than the current ECOSOC.

The following discussion outlines the various permeations of this idea as it has been proposed, and identifies areas in which more detailed programmatic thinking is required to develop the concept.

**Main functions of an ESSC**

The Commission on Global Governance (1995) proposes an ‘Economic Security Council’ that would carry out the following main tasks: assessing the overall state of the world economy, the development of a long-term strategic policy framework, securing


⁴ When discussing the concept of a global apex body concerned with economic and/or social affairs I will use the term ‘economic and social security council’ but when examining specific proposals I will use the term originally employed by the author(s).
consistency of policy goals among major international organizations and promoting consensus building dialogue between governments on the evolution of the international economic system. This new entity would be comparable in stature to Security Council, but unlike the latter this body would not have the authority to make legally binding decisions. In other proposals, such a council would also assume explicit responsibility for social policy, and be constituted as an economic and social security council (Stewart and Daws, 2000). The Report of the Independent Working Group on the Future of the United Nations (1995) proposes a more complex structure, with the creation of parallel Economic and Social Councils. The Social Council would be charged with the promotion and coordination of all social development policies and programs associated with the UN, enhancing the effectiveness of the UN’s human rights apparatus; and alleviating the political and social disintegration of states in distress. The two councils would meet annually to form a ‘Global Alliance for Sustainable Development’, which would aim to promote holistic policy-making with a focus on sustainable development.

Size, membership and structure

All the major proposals envisage a relatively small body of no more than 23 members, about half the size of the current ECOSOC, in order to facilitate quicker and more effective decision-making. The Commission on Global Governance (1995) proposes that membership of the council comprise a mix the world’s largest economies, who would be represented on the council ‘as of rights’, with the rest of the council selected on the basis of a rotating regional constituency system, in which strong regional organizations could in some cases substitute for individual governments. Such a structure would make the creation of such a body more politically attractive to industrialized countries, but has been seen as insufficiently democratic and representative of developing countries in other quarters.5 Stewart and Daws (2000) suggest a similar model to that of the Commission on Global Governance – half of their proposed ‘Economic and Social Security Council’ would be made up of the world’s ten largest economies in terms of GDP taking into account purchasing power parity, which would therefore include China, India, Brazil and Russia and six developed countries. The other ten members would be elected based on existing UN categories of regional representation. The result of such a scheme would be a council split evenly between developed and developing countries, positioning this new institution somewhere between ECOSOC (where developing countries control 65% of the votes) and the Bretton Woods Institutions (where developed countries control around 70% of the votes). Stewart and Daws also propose a scheme for decision-making in such a council, in which a two-thirds majority of the council would be required to pass a resolution, with no country holding veto power.

5 See for example the critique of the Commission on Global Governance’s economic security council by Isley (1999).
Level of representation and frequency of meetings

The council would need to attract a higher level of representation than ECOSOC in order to achieve the engagement of the Bretton Woods Institutions and major states, and to emerge as a genuine alternative to existing multilateral forums such as the G8. To this end, the Commission on Global Governance proposes that the council meet twice a year, once at heads of government level and the other at finance minister level (a crucial segment of national executives who are rarely involved in UN activities). The Working Group on Reform of the United Nations System, in contrast, proposes regular meetings of its Economic and Social Councils at the level of senior representatives of national missions to the UN, with occasional ministerial level meetings.

Relationship to BWIs, the WTO and the UN

There is some divergence in the proposals reviewed here over how much authority, if any, a new UN apex body would have over the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO. This is a key issue because such proposals are partly motivated by a desire to increase the accountability of these organizations to the UN, as well as to improve traditionally poor inter-agency coordination. The Commission on Global Governance resists the notion of one central supervisory body overseeing all international organizations in its jurisdiction. It sees an economic security council attracting credibility over time through it ‘competence and relevance’ (1995: 155), while working to increase communication within the system. The heads of the BWIs, WTO and other UN agencies would be ‘invited’ to report to the council on a regular basis. Russett (1996: 269) points out that there is an ‘in-built tension’ in proposals for an apex body which seek to integrate and consolidate the work of all UN agencies and international institutions which pursue very different approaches to economic policies. Russett’s concern is that the experimentation and ‘diversity of goal and doctrine’ might be lost with attempts to harmonize policy-making. On the other hand, the Working Group on Reform of the United Nations system’s proposal would ‘require’ such reporting. The Global Governance Reform Project’s (2000: 56-58) proposal goes further, proposing to give an economic and social security council a special summoning power, requiring the BWIs, WTO as well as transnational corporations and NGOs to appear before the council at a member’s request. The council they envisage would be supported by standing committees for particular issues, as well as ad hoc subcommittees formed to address specific issues (such as a financial crisis), which would function in a manner similar to that of a parliamentary committee, with the ability to call upon the testimony of officials and experts and produce non-binding policy recommendations and research and analysis. The summons power is seen as a way of increasing the accountability of international economic institutions through high-profile public hearings.

Within the UN Secretariat, the Commission on Global Governance proposes that the ESC be supported by a ‘small, strategically-minded secretariat’ that would be under the supervision of a proposed new Deputy Secretary-General for International Economic
Cooperation and Development. The Working Group on Reform of the UN System suggests that an advisory committee of talented and distinguished individuals drawn from a variety of fields, including the private sector, should support the activities of its two proposed councils.

Negotiation and implementation

Very little detail has been offered by the various reform studies as to how an ESSC might actually be negotiated or successfully implemented. The Commission on Global Governance envisaged the creation of an ESC through an amendment to the UN Charter. The Zedillo Report (2001) suggests a novel way to move quickly towards the creation of an ESC. It recommends that the United Nations convene a Global Economic Governance or Globalization Summit consisting of a small but representative group of heads of state to discuss institutional reform question, with the possibility of the summit deciding to perpetuate itself as an economic security council if its first meeting proved worthwhile. It is not clear whether the Zedillo Report envisaged such a council existing in this unofficial manner in perpetuity or whether, once the body had established its legitimacy and effectiveness, moves would be made to establish it as an official UN organ by an amendment to the Charter. It is also unclear to what extent such a council could function as a legitimate apex body in the first place if it had such only an unofficial or transitional status. Nonetheless, this suggestion offers a way to kick-start the creation of such a body, while initially avoiding protracted UN negotiations.

Politically, it would be very difficult to achieve the level of consensus required to create an ESSC. European governments are the most promising source of political support among the developed countries. At the recent UN Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, President Chirac of France, the German Development Minister Wieczorek-Zeul and a number of other national political officials supported the establishment of such a council (Langmore, 2002). However, it is still difficult to see how such a body would be more politically attractive to the major economic powers than the G8 or ad hoc mechanisms of their own creation, such as the G20. For the United States especially, the location of such a council within the UN system would likely be seen as limiting their room to maneuver and subjecting them to the rules, procedures and frustrations of that organization. That said, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which organized resistance to the current institutional architecture (such as that glimpsed in the wave of anti corporate globalization protests of recent years) or a major economic crisis would create pressure on the major economies to create a forum which seriously involved developing countries and which called upon the institutional legitimacy and imprimatur of the United Nations. It is in this space that proposals for an ESSC might flourish.

Reform of ECOSOC and other institutional reform
In most of the proposals discussed above, an economic and social security council would replace the current ECOSOC, and the creation of such a global council might also be the catalyst to consolidate or eliminate other UN institutions in the economic and social areas that are seen as ineffective.\(^6\) For the Commission on Global Governance (1995), ECOSOC’s membership is too large to be effective and it has never established credibility: ‘[f]ifty years is long enough to know what works and what does not work within any system. ECOSOC does not work’.

However some of those concerned with achieving the objectives of an ESSC, especially that of creating an inclusive and powerful leadership forum for economic and social governance within the UN system, have proposed instead more modest institutional reforms based on the reform of ECOSOC or the upgrading of other UN organs. These reforms are seen either as an interim strategy to provide enhanced leadership given the political difficulties of creating a wholly new UN organ, or because they see the creation of a wholly new UN organ as unnecessary or a reflection of ‘avoidance reform’ (the creation of a new institution instead of improving the existing one created for that purpose). For Childers and Urquhart (1994: 60-61) creating an ESSC would be redundant because ‘ECOSOC was given precisely the mandates that are now mooted for such a council… ECOSOC’s original commissions were to be precisely the kinds of high-calibre bodies that would do the necessary high caliber bodies that do the necessary committee work, serviced by a world-class Secretariat that would also draw upon the expertise of the specialized agencies’. Their vision is of an upgraded ECOSOC with the UN Secretariat itself playing a key role in terms of coordination and policy development.\(^7\)

Behind many of the proposals to reform ECOSOC is a demand, expressed or implied,

\(^6\) Proposals have been made to eliminate some UN organizations concerned with economic and social policy on various grounds. Not all of them are premised on the creation of an ESSC. The Commission on Global Governance (1995) and Gordenker (1996) argue that UNIDO and UNCTAD should be abolished because they overlap with other activities inside and outside the UN, have failed to achieve their missions and have reputational problems. The Commission’s recommendation assumes both the existence of an ESSC supported by a strong supporting Secretariat to fulfill the functions UNCTAD and UNIDO now play. In contrast, some reform proposals, such as those of the South Center (1995), have proposed strengthening UNCTAD and UNIDO by expanding their mandates or increasing their financial support because they are seen as more representative of developing countries than some other instruments in the system. Others have proposed the elimination of the regional economic commissions, which Gordenker (1996) describes as ‘organizations that have neither convincingly approached their goals nor stood the test of time’, and which have been overshadowed by other regional organizations such as ASEAN. In contrast, Jeong (1998: 240) proposes the strengthening of the regional commissions and regional banks as a means of decentralizing international economic policymaking and facilitating the easier involvement of local NGOs.

\(^7\) To achieve this, Childers and Urquhart (1994:194) propose establishing the post of Deputy Secretary-General for International Economic Cooperation, who would be second only to the Secretary-General in seniority (this position, of course, has been superceded by the position of Deputy Secretary-General, who has a broader mandate). The Deputy would have overall responsibility for all UN economic and social research, analysis, policy development and programming. The Commission on Global Governance (1995) made a similar proposal. Such a position was first envisaged in the 1970s, resulting in the creation of a Director-General for International Cooperation who was quickly marginalized and had little sway over UN Secretariat activities, let alone those of the Bank and Fund.
that the organ be ‘allowed to do its work as mandated by the Charter of the United
Nations, considering it was preempted from performing its tasks … with the
establishment of the Bretton Woods Institutions’ (Idris and Bartolo, 2000: 149).

There are several aspects of the current proposals to upgrade ECOSOC. First, the General
Assembly and the UN Secretary-General have in recent years urged that ECOSOC
assume a role in responding to financial crises and other urgent global economic and
social problems by meeting immediately and formulating policy responses (the Bretton
Woods Institutions and the G8 are currently the focal points for this kind of rapid crisis
response). ECOSOC could also meet more regularly, for two or three days at a time,
whenever economic or social circumstances seemed to demand it (Langmore, 2002).
Second, proposals have emphasized ways of improving coordination with the Bretton
Woods Institutions and the WTO who, until the recent establishment of an annual
meeting between ECOSOC and these organizations, did not meaningfully interact with
this high-level meeting be a vehicle around which ECOSOC can strengthen its hand and
increase its relevance. It proposes that a ministerial-level working group on economic
cooperation be established to set the agenda for these meetings, which would identify and
prepare one or two major topics for discussion each year. The Bretton Woods Institutions
would be key participants in this process, but ECOSOC ‘would have overall control: ‘If
the major economic powers wish to have a significant role in ECOSOC’s coordination,
they should do so by seeking election to the Working Group on Economic Cooperation
rather than using the IMF or World Bank as their proxy’. Third, proposals to upgrade
ECOSOC have recognized the importance of engaging with civil society and the private
sector at a high level and in more structured ways. This would include institutionalizing
arrangements for the participation of non-state actors in the high-level segment of
ECOSOC and in the joint meeting of the international trade and financial institutions and
ECOSOC.

All of the above proposals are relatively modest. If implemented, they would contribute
to restoring the UN’s role in global economic and social policymaking, provided that this
was accompanied by the participation and substantial engagement of the political leaders
of the world’s major economies. In the current political environment, even given the
improvement in ECOSOC’s political standing in the past few years, that still seems a
fairly remote prospect. More radical proposals for the reform of ECOSOC seem still less
plausible. Idris and Bartolo (2000: 149-151) have proposed altered or new agreements to
bring the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO in conformity with the mandates of
the General Assembly, which would give ECOSOC a much larger role in their
supervision, even though those institutions would remain under the direct management of
their governing boards. The Nordic UN Project has proposed the expansion of ECOSOC
to make it a universal body in parallel with the General Assembly, while abolishing the
Second and Third Committees of the GA (Alger, 1998: 232), although such an expansion
would be unlikely to attract any significant support because it would work to reinforce
one the major criticisms of the body – that is too large to facilitate a productive dialogue
or quick decision-making.
Adapting the General Committee of the General Assembly

Given that ECOSOC’s size is seen as one of the major barriers to its effectiveness, but also considering the political difficulties associated with the creation of an ESSC, Kaul et al (2003: 35-6) have recently proposed using an existing body within the UN system – the General Committee of the General Assembly – to perform the functions of a global apex body. The General Committee would be an attractive venue because of its relatively small membership of 28, and because each of the permanent five members of the Security Council is a member, guaranteeing a seat to some of the world’s major economies and most powerful states, including the United States. It is also regionally representative. Kaul proposes that the 28 members of the General Committee and the President of ECOSOC form a G29 that would meet annually at the level of heads of state for a day at the beginning of the General Assembly session in September. This proposal is a politically adept response to the difficulties of reform or the creation of new institutions, and its size would allow for more decisive discussion, although it would still be somewhat larger than the proposed economic and social security councils. However, unlike the major proposals for an Economic Security Council, the composition of the General Committee would still favor developing countries, which is likely to make it a less attractive instrument for the governments of the major economies. Its location within the UN institutional apparatus would make the upgraded General Committee more politically legitimate than ad hoc bodies like the G20 for some countries, but would also be a political negative in others, most notably in the US. The proposal is an intriguing one deserving of more detailed consideration.

2. Proposals to enhance the role of non-state actors in global economic and social governance

In the proposals discussed above, states are the only officially recognized participants, and NGOs, individual citizens and other non-state actors would play a fairly peripheral role. However, another set of proposals sees the reform of global economic and social governance as being advanced through the creation of permanent institutions within the UN system to facilitate the participation of citizens and other non-state actors in dialogue and policy-making. Proponents of such bodies view them both instrumentally as a means of producing policy outcomes which are more consistent with the interests of the people of the world, as part of a project to make the existing intergovernmental organizations more accountable to ordinary citizens, and as an end in itself to increase the level of democracy at the global level, by narrowing the democratic deficit which characterizes the institutions of global economic governance. This section examines the various proposals to create new global assemblies or plenary bodies to achieve these ends. Two main types of assemblies have been proposed: global citizens’ assemblies and assemblies comprised of NGOs and other associations.
Citizens’ assemblies

Main functions of a popularly elected people’s assembly

Falk and Strauss (2000, 2001), Childers and Urquhart (1994), and the Global Governance Reform Project (2000: 28-29), among others, have proposed popularly elected assemblies as a voice of the global citizenry with broad responsibilities to act as a kind of house of review of other UN institutions and activities, but with few formal powers. Childers and Urquhart’s (1994: 176-81) proposal for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, for example, would have the following main responsibilities: to express citizens’ views on major international problems and crises, and on the UN’s response to them, influence governments’ formulation of UN policies, watch over the management and financing of the UN and enhance the collective accountability of its member governments. It would need to be consulted by the General Assembly, could hold reading on major decisions before ECOSOC, convey opinions to other UN organs, hold question times with the Secretary General and the Presidents of the UN organs, request amendments to policies but would lack budgetary powers. Such an assembly could adopt its own program of work, and part of its brief would be to work on issues requiring innovative, citizen-led solutions to global problems.

In contrast to the proposals for world parliaments made by the World Federalists8, none of the proposals reviewed here would give legislative powers, including budget control, to such an assembly. However, the experience of the European Parliament, as the world’s first popularly elected transnational body, is seen as a model of how the influence and powers of such an assembly could expand over time. The European Parliament was initially regarded as a very weak body, but has gained expanded legislative powers since direct elections to the Parliament were instituted in 1979 and with successive European integration treaties over the past two decades. Falk and Strauss (2000) imagine that their Global People’s Assembly would be subject to a ‘socio-political dynamic of empowerment’ in which the assembly would gradually acquire prestige as a popularly elected global body which governing elites and international institutions ‘could not afford to ignore’. Falk and Strauss’ vision raises the possibility that such an assembly might, in the longer term, begin to usurp some of the intergovernmental processes that they regard as the source of the ‘democratic deficit’ in global policymaking, in which ordinary citizens (and especially the world’s poor) are far removed from the possibility of influencing the activities and decisions of international institutions.

Structure and method of election

8 See for example Harris and Yunker, eds (1999)
The question of how representatives to a global citizens’ assembly would be selected presents enormous political and logistical challenges. The ultimate aim of all the proposals reviewed here is for representation to be based on direct elections with universal suffrage in all participating countries. The challenges this would entail would include generating global electoral rolls, the creation of electoral constituencies around the world, the establishment of a system of campaign finance and some process to monitor or supervise elections. The Global Governance Reform Project (2000) proposes that a UN election commission could take on these kinds of responsibilities, though none of the proposals address these issues in detail, other than to acknowledge the size of the task. The difficulties involved in analogizing between national and global electoral democracy also become apparent from these proposals. For example, operationalizing the principle of one person, one vote at the global level, which is an important part of the concept of democratic equality, would give China and India in particular huge influence over the assembly, presenting both political and practical problems. Among other things, this would lead to an assembly of unworkable size if every country was to be represented (constituencies of six million, as proposed by the Global Governance Reform Project, would mean an assembly of 1,000). For this reason, Childers and Urquhart (1994) suggest that a sliding scale requiring increasing numbers of citizens for each additional representative could be agreed. Moreover, maintaining the democratic quality of the assembly itself, considering the unevenness of democracy around the world, would simply not be possible in the short-term if membership was universal.

Negotiation and implementation strategies

In recognition of the political and practical difficulties involved in securing universal agreement on the creation of a popularly elected people’s assembly along the lines described above, various provisional institutions and strategies have been suggested in order to build the basis for full implementation later.

In a view of the possible need for an internationally agreed treaty to establish a popularly elected assembly, Falk and Strauss (2000), most radically, challenge the notion such a body would have to formally or legally constituted in the first place. They argue that the legitimacy of international institutions is no longer exclusively reliant on state consent, and so they propose that civil society, aided by willing states, simply go ahead and create such an assembly anyway: ‘because the citizenry rather than the sovereign is the fundamental source of political authority’ they argue, ‘citizens can bypass their sovereign intermediaries and act directly to create an international organization’. Falk and Strauss suggest that the political impetus to do this would come from a concerted campaign by NGOs, and that these same organizations would be key players in its implementation. They point to the key role played by civil society in the 1990s in advocating on issues such as climate change and the creation of the International Criminal Court as evidence that this is possible, although they do not explain how the advocacy skills of NGOs could be harnessed to undertake the quite different task of designing a new institution and
conducting national elections, even with government help. Recently, Falk and Strauss (2001, 2002) have further argued that a group of as few as twenty geographically and economically diverse countries could lead the effort to establish a global people’s assembly in a pilot form, with other countries joining later in response to pressure from civil society if the experiment seems to be working. This could be achieved in a way that bypasses the traditional inter-state treaty mechanism altogether, or through the implementation of a treaty negotiated using the ‘single negotiated text’ method used in the development of the land mines convention, in which countries would use a single text as the basis for negotiation, with the ratification of a certain number of countries required for it to take effect.

While Falk and Strauss’ suggestions are designed to make the realization of such an assembly more politically plausible, their proposal would seem to require that such a body exist outside the UN system, at least initially. If created by a coalition of states and NGOs without recourse to a treaty, the body would initially have the same kind of status in the international system of organizations like the Red Cross. This might make it difficult for such an assembly to establish its initial political legitimacy or, on the other hand, if it attracts considerable attention, there is a risk that it would undermine the activities of the UN. The GPA’s relationship to the UN would ‘eventually have to be resolved’, argue Falk and Strauss, with one possibility being the eventual joining of the GPA with the General Assembly to create a bicameral legislature.

In contrast, Childers and Urquhart (1994) are concerned to ensure that their assembly has legal status as a UN body (‘for its political legitimacy’) and that its functions do not ‘abridge or confuse’ the UN’s intergovernmental processes, (as such a body might), but rather that it would complement the ‘knowledge and perspectives brought to intergovernmental organs by government delegations’. Their assembly would require a UN charter amendment and involve lengthy political negotiations, both of which would significantly reduce the political appeal of their plan. They propose that the General Assembly would establish the UNPA under Article 22 as a subsidiary body made up of delegates selected by the national parliaments of member states (which would itself be a difficult political task). This body would then develop proposals for converting itself into a popularly elected world assembly, which would be followed by a period of ‘several years’’ discussion at the national and international level, centered in the General Assembly, at the end of which agreement would be reached to amend the UN charter to establish the body as an additional Principal Organ.

Some political support for the concept of a global people’s assembly has already been expressed by the European Parliament and the Canadian House of Commons but, as Falk and Strauss themselves argue, it is difficult to see the political impetus for the creation of such a body coming from governments. Serious arguments against such an assembly would be made if a concerted NGO campaign for a global body was initiated, including that it would encroach on the mandates and legitimacy of elected governments, that it

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9 Falk (2002) has argued elsewhere that such a body could also be created as a UN organ in parallel with the General Assembly.
would be the harbinger of a larger and more threatening project to turn global governance into a kind of world government, and that it would in any case be impractical because, as Nye (2002) has argued (echoing Habermas), no shared global identity currently exists, which would be a pre-condition for the peoples of the world to cooperate effectively in this way.

**NGO assemblies**

The proposals for popularly elected people’s assemblies emphasize the role of individual citizen-legislators and are based on an attempt to mirror national political processes at the global level. As Falk and Strauss (2000) ask: ‘If democracy is so appropriate in the nation-state setting, why should not democratic procedures and institutions be extended to the global setting?’ While these scholars recognize the importance of NGOs as transnational actors and as potential allies in the construction of their projects, they are more attracted to the possibilities of directly elected, parliamentary style structures as the organizing principle for introducing greater democracy and accountability in global governance. For Childers and Urquhart (1994), for example, NGOs’ ‘best service in connection with the United Nations is to inform their particular constituencies and add voice through their particular professional, technical, or humanitarian concerns’, but they are not seen as political representatives in themselves. In contrast, proposals for assemblies of civil society envisage NGOs (and possibly other non-state actors), not elected representatives, as the principal political units and instruments for grass-roots participation.

Such assemblies would perform the same basic consultative and monitoring functions envisaged by the proponents of popularly elected assemblies. For the Commission on Global Governance (1995: 258-60), however, ‘an assembly of parliamentarians is not the answer to the need for involving new actors in global governance’. They see more promise – and political appeal – in harnessing the voice and legitimacy of NGOs. The Commission advocates the creation of a Global Forum of Civil Society, based at the UN, which would comprise accredited representatives of NGOs to the General Assembly. The Forum would meet once a year and would be an opportunity for civil society to influence the intergovernmental debate at the General Assembly and provide an entry point for NGOs into the UN system. It would, like the global people’s assembly proposals, be of parliamentary proportions, consisting of about 300-600 organs of global civil society.

Other proposals advocate the participation of broader set of non-state actors, including the private sector. The Global Governance Reform Project (2000) suggests that, in addition to a people’s assembly modeled along the lines discussed earlier, a second consultative assembly be established to be made up of representatives of the private sector (represented through regional and international umbrella organizations), the trade union and professional sector (also through their umbrella organizations) as well as NGOs relevant to UN activities. Edwards and Zadek (2003: 215) propose ‘a series of non-representative bodies ‘designed to provide a space for debate on particular international institutions or regimes’. As examples, they suggest the establishment of a
World Financial Forum for nonstate actors to complement the work of the IMF, to provide a space for a range of nonstate actors to debate the Fund’s policy and performance every two years, and a mutlistakeholder forum for the WTO along similar lines.

**Selection of representatives**

Selecting representatives to NGO-based assemblies would raise the kinds of questions about the legitimacy and accountability of NGOs that have accompanied their growing influence in world politics. None of the proposals outlined above make detailed suggestions as to how non-state actor representatives to these assemblies would be selected. Because such bodies are envisaged as large, formally constituted assemblies (and not the kind of loose networks of experts described later in this paper), the methods used to select the participants in such assemblies would be especially crucial to their legitimacy and political viability.

The Commission on Global Governance, in its proposal, essentially passes the responsibility of selecting representatives onto NGOs themselves: ‘civil society itself would need to have a key role in determining the character and functions of the forum, including how representatives to the forum would be selected’. The Global Governance Reform Project (2000: 28-29) suggests that the General Assembly determine the membership of the Assembly on the recommendation of the UN Secretariat. This seems curious given that one of the justifications they offer for creating such forums is that ‘many member states have tenuous or poor democratic credentials and questionable legitimacy’. Edwards and Zadek (2003) acknowledge the difficulties inherent in selecting representatives through mechanisms such as elections across diverse constituencies, and so simply suggest that the multistakeholder bodies they are proposing be ‘non-representative… with participants selected according to expertise or material interest’.

**Implementation and negotiation strategies**

Assemblies of NGOs and other non-state actors could have more political appeal than popularly elected people’s assemblies both because they would tap into the current popularity of NGOs and the idea of multisectoral governance, and because they would bypass the practical difficulties associated with holding elections.

The Commission on Global Governance’s proposal envisages only an annual forum of civil society, which would not require any formal status in the UN system and so would be relatively easy to implement (indeed the Secretary General advocated such a forum for the United Nations Millennium Development Summit). A more permanent body with
status as a parallel organ to the General Assembly would require an amendment to the UN charter, with the attendant political difficulties. The General Assembly would determine the membership of the Consultative Assembly on the recommendation of the UN Secretariat (2000: 28-29).

It should be noted that the proposals outlined here are much more ambitious versions of other proposals designed to increase the role of NGOs in the activities of international institutions in the short term. They would be in keeping with recent efforts to do just this within the UN system. Edwards and Zadek (2003: 218) outline some of the possibilities, including meetings with non-state actors on particular topics the day before official intergovernmental meetings, as in the committee process used by the OECD and the solicitation of ‘alternative reports’ from non-state actors to be considered alongside country reports from governments.

### 3. Networked governance

Both categories of proposals discussed above rely either on the creation of new international institutions or substantial reform of existing institutions. In recent years, however, much of the energy in the debate about global economic and social governance has turned away from this kind of ambitious institutional reformism and focused instead on the possibilities of ‘networked governance’ as a means of addressing the inadequacies of existing arrangements and institutions. As Deacon (2003: 27-28) observes:

> Because significant global institutional reform seems check-mated … and because there are now so many loci of action and initiatives on global social issues we may be witnessing a shift in the locus and content of policy debate and activity from those more formally located within the official UN policy making arenas … and focussed on UN/Bretton Woods institutional reform such as the establishment of an Economic Security Council to a set of practices around Networks, Partnerships and Projects which in some ways bypass these institutions and debates and present new possibilities for actually making global change in particular social policy arenas.

This emerging reform project seeks the proliferation and institutionalization of a new set of transnational governance mechanisms that are generally referred to as policy or issues ‘networks’. Although definitions vary, such mechanisms have a number of common characteristics. First, they are multisectoral, in that they involve the participation of some combination of national governments, multilateral agencies, non-government organizations and the private sector. Second, they are usually designed to address very specific issues or problems, rather than address a general set of issues within a broad

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10 Under Articles 108 and 109, a UN Charter amendment requires the approval of a two-thirds majority of member states as well as the approval of all five permanent members of the Security Council. As Kapur (2002: 348) points out, ‘the circumstances under which such a majority can be mustered are truly exceptional and certainly is not the case at present’. 

mandate. Because of this, ‘experts’ or epistemic communities often play a major role in them. Third, they tend to be much smaller in organizational terms than broad-based international institutions and their governance structures are likely to be more ad hoc or informal.

Global networks of this kind may carry out a number of functions such as placing particular issues on the international agenda, setting standards and international norms, gathering and disseminating valuable knowledge (Reinicke and Dang, 2000) or mobilizing and distributing international financial resources. Some prominent examples of such networks are the new Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a major new financing mechanism based on these principles and one of a growing number of ‘multisectoral global funds’ (Heimans, 2002) such as the Global Environment Facility and the Vaccine Fund. Others include the World Commission on Dams, a multisectoral commission which set global standards for the construction of large dams; and the Medicines for Malaria Venture, a global partnership designed to create incentives for pharmaceutical companies to develop new anti-malarial vaccines.

The increasing popularity of networked governance as a mode of reform is a reflection both of the difficulties of implementing institutional solutions to address urgent global problems and the comparative advantages of these new mechanisms. Rischard (2002: 31) speaks to the political difficulties: ‘In effect, global issues networks are supplements in leveraging the best out of the existing international architecture. This alternative is far better than creating entirely new institutions from scratch or endlessly working to reform existing ones – each option requiring the kind of time the world does not have’. Second, there is a strong perception that networked governance has certain advantages that traditional institutional solutions lack. The most commonly claimed benefits of global networks are that they are non-bureaucratic and fast-acting, facilitate innovation through their size and flexible governance structures, able to mobilize diverse opinions, skills and increased cooperation by including non-state actors as equal partners and have a results-orientation because they are focused on specific issues.

There have been as a yet only a few significant attempts to think in detail about how such networks should be operationalized and what their place should be in broader efforts to reform the architecture of global economic and social governance. Rischard (2002: 24-29), for example, imagines that a web of global issues networks would deal with each of a list of twenty ‘inherently global issues’ that he identifies as requiring immediate action. Networks would finally evolve into rating agencies, monitoring standards and relying on reputation concerns to ‘enforce’ the norms that the network has established through its deliberations. Ratings for each issue could be aggregated to produce overall country ratings.

11 The growing interest in the concept of global public goods is another manifestation of the same trend, especially in terms of the disaggregation of key governance tasks. Indeed, proponents of a global public goods agenda have generally embraced networked governance as an important means of producing and in some cases financing these goods (see for example Kaul et al, 2003).
For Rischard (2002) and Reinicke and Dang (2000) international institutions would support this web of networks by acting variously as convenor, platform, networker or in some circumstances as a provider of seed funding. International organizations would become a ‘policy entrepreneur’ assembling or facilitating global networks in response to global problems, in the way that Secretary-General Annan provided the initial impetus for the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria and moved to establish the Global Compact, in part as a location for dialogue between the private sector, civil society and the official sector. The UN could also use international conferences to kick-start global networks. There could be a particularly important role for the UN as a legitimating actor in these networks.

A project to reform global economic and social governance based on the proliferation of networked governance raises two major problems. The first is the lack of policy coherence and structural thinking resulting from the development of a series of issue-based silos. For this reason, Deacon (2003) warns that policy-making in these disaggregated networks might be taking place in a vacuum, with actors lacking a set of policy principles against which they can assess their proposals for action. The result of the proliferation of such networks could be the undermining, downgrading or under-funding of those international institutions which are concerned with long-term, holistic policymaking, a shift Kapur (2002) has already identified in the context of the operations of existing international organizations. The second is the lack of clear lines of democratic accountability in such networks. Unlike agencies within the UN system, there is often no supervisory body or constituency to which networks as corporate entities, or the individual actors in them, are accountable. Like international institutions, such networks may not be inclusive of developing countries and their interests, and the involvement of the private sector and NGOs in decision-making within these mechanisms raises the potential for conflicts of interest.

In response to these concerns, a set of proposals are emerging which seek to make such networks subject to some codification and systematization, while retaining the spirit of entrepreneurship and experimentalism which is seen as key to their success. Kaul and le Goulven (2003: 394-6), for example, have set out the contours of ‘second generation’ partnerships. Their proposals include grounding partnerships in multilateral agreements to enhance their legitimacy, ensuring broad stakeholder representation on the supervisory boards of these mechanisms, including a close relationship to a multilateral agency serving as the secretariat for that international agreement and making clear contractual arrangements setting out what goods a partnership would produce, over what period and in consultation with whom. Such partnerships should be led by ‘issue-focused CEOs’ who would act as policy entrepreneurs given broad scope to lead and innovate, including ‘anticipating, coordinating and linking, planning and restructuring, providing incentives, purchasing inputs, and accepting responsibility to shareholders in the venture’.

Kapur (2002: 352) compares the funding given to intergovernmental humanitarian response organizations within the UN in with those that are focused on long-term development. The World Food Program, for example, has dramatically shifted the focus of its work to humanitarian response in response to donor pressure.
Benner et al (2002: 2) also argue that partnerships should be closely tied to overall, globally agreed priorities as reflected in the outcomes of international conferences and the action agenda of intergovernmental organizations. They advocate setting up a multisectoral negotiation framework (possibly convened by the UN) to set basic rules of the game for partnerships, with a role for intergovernmental organizations (such as the UN’s newly created partnership office’) in developing systematic monitoring and evaluation of partnerships. Deacon (2003), along similar lines, argues that issue-based networks need to be accompanied by broader global political alliances composed of governments, intergovernmental organizations and international NGOs concerned with spelling out a coherent reform agenda and articulating a broader set of principles to guide policymaking by these mechanisms.

Rischard (2002: 26-30) suggests that accountability concerns about networked governance could be overcome if each network developed its own ‘code of conduct’ and shared best practices about how to ‘organize, operate and communicate’ with other global networks. This would be supplemented by a system of consultative electronic voting by the public about issues facing the network and an independent advisory panel that would provide technical advice. For Rischard, these initiatives would together ensure a level of popular participation and expert advice sufficient to create a kind of ‘horizontal accountability’ that would complement the ‘vertical accountability’ of elected officials to their constituents. None of these suggestions, however, would in themselves do much to prevent a network from being captured by a few powerful actors or, as Woods (2001) warns, by a group of experts with no democratic accountability.

Despite the emerging efforts to think about networked governance as a coherent reform project with potentially major implications for other forms of global governance, there remains a great deal more work to be done to map this out in detail.
Conclusions

Three faultlines in the reform debates

The proposals reviewed in this paper reveal several markedly different images of the future of global economic and social governance. A first issue raised by the proposals is the relative role and influence of states and non-state actors in governance arrangements. The economic and social security council proposal is based on the promise of intergovernmental cooperation and leadership. States are at the center of the various comprehensive reform proposals of the mid-1990s, which recognize the growing importance of NGOs but still view them as agitators and advocates outside the international system, to be consulted by decision-makers, but as too unaccountable and disaggregated to be decision-makers themselves. Proponents of multisectoral governance, in contrast, conceive of fully integrated multisectoral institutions (as well as smaller, ad hoc arrangements) in which non-state actors share decision-making responsibilities with governments. By this logic, there is no reason why an economic and social security council could not be conceived of as a multisectoral institution (a precedent, the ILO, already exists). For Edwards and Zadek (2003), ‘in the future the very notion of non-state actors may seem outdated and unhelpful as today’s emerging coalition of business, nonprofit organizations, and public agencies become tomorrow’s permanent institutions – blending different forms of accountability that have historically separated state, civil society, and business’.

Those different forms of accountability raise a second issue arising from this review – the conceptions of democracy that underpin the different reform projects. The proposals for an economic and social security council employ the traditional notion of democratic legitimacy used by intergovernmental organizations, emphasizing the role of national governments as the link between decision-making in international institutions and accountability to the citizens who (in some cases) elect them. The strength of this link has been widely challenged by democratic theorists such as Dahl (1999) who argue that the distance between ordinary people and the technocratic elites who represent their governments in international institutions is too great for genuine accountability to exist. The argument is further weakened by the fact that many governments in the world are not, in any case, democracies. The proposals for a global people’s assembly hope to close this ‘democratic deficit’ by aspiring to replicate national democratic politics at the international level’. The accountability relationship of the citizen-legislator to his or her constituents in a popularly elected global assembly is purposely modeled on that of a national parliamentarian. In contrast, the proposals for NGO-based assemblies or the principles underlying networked governance assume a less formalized and more diffused notion of accountability and democracy. NGO or private sector representative in a mechanism such as the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria is not popularly elected, does not derive his or her legitimacy from an elected government, and may not have a clearly defined constituency. As Woods (2001: 6) points out, ‘the democratic legitimacy of ‘network governance’ relies on a new way of conceiving democracy which … shifts the focus from the inputs of the decision-making system (ie elections and representative
government) to the quality of the outputs of the system’. In this conception, formal systems of representation might actually impede governance outcomes because they would encourage factionalism rather than an unimpeded deliberative process among experts. Indeed, in their current form, most manifestations of networked governance have given low priority to questions of formal representation, accountability or ensuring democratic process. Held and McGrew (2003: 194) would respond to this by introducing more rigorous conceptions of democracy into networked governance in ways that would make them more compatible with other forms of national and international organization: ‘basic democratic institutions and democratic law can in principle, be entrenched and drawn upon in diverse, self-regulating associations [including global networks]’. More experimentation needs to occur to see if this optimism is justified.

Third, there is a distinction between reform projects that emphasize the creation or modification of broad-based institutions, like the ESSC and global people’s assembly, and the forms of organization that networked governance promotes. The former tend to be centralized and would be general-purpose institutions with broad mandates (reflecting the modernist, institutionalist thinking that prevailed at the time of the creation of the United Nations, what Emmerij et al (2001: 2002) describe as the ‘good old days’ of state-centric authority), while the latter are decentralized, generally smaller (explicitly aiming to be ‘non-bureaucratic’) and focus on specific issues or provide a particular global public good. That said, the two projects are not mutually exclusive. As Kaul and Le Goulven (2003: 398) argue in the context of global public goods production, looser partnership structures tend to be appropriate for projects with concrete, measurable outputs and definite time horizons, while certain goods which need to be provided on a continuing basis, or for which a high level of legitimacy is needed (such as with an International Criminal Court), existing intergovernmental organizations, or the creation of new ones, might be more suitable.

Politics and the future of reform

Where should those of us who are interested in improving global economic and social governance direct our reformist energies? The current politics of reform strongly suggest that the creation of major new institutions within the UN system such as those canvassed in this paper, or even the comprehensive reform and upgrading of existing institutions such as ECOSOC, face huge obstacles in the short to medium term. The deep skepticism of multilateralism currently prevailing in the United States alone guarantees this, and the US attitude remains the single most important barrier to ambitious reform. Some of this can be understood in terms of the policy settings of the present US administration. As the lead-up to the conflict in Iraq demonstrated, the administration’s hostility to the UN runs deep, and its political leverage there may be weaker than in other international institutions. Therefore it is unlikely to support proposals that would shift the institutional balance of power away from the Bretton Woods Institutions and towards the UN, as the proposals for an economic security council appear to do. Future administrations may be more open to multilateralism, but recent history suggests that even those, like the Clinton administration, who have been relatively sympathetic to the UN are almost reflexively
opposed to proposals for major institutional overhaul and are in any case not especially engaged in debates about global economic and social governance reform of the kind discussed in this paper. Even an administration coming from the liberal internationalist tradition in American politics might judge the political costs of seeking congressional support for institutional reform as being too onerous to attempt.

There are some areas of reform which future US administrations, and to some extent the present one, are more open to. The US has supported networked governance initiatives like the new Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria and pushed for a greater role for non-state actors in their governance arrangements. As the fund’s negotiation process showed, the US was initially attracted to the idea of the global fund as an innovative and non-bureaucratic mechanism in which NGOs (mainly from the North) and the private sector would play major roles, rather than relying on the UN and developing country governments as the key actors (Heimans, 2002). Even under these circumstances, however, the present administration has expressed a preference for acting unilaterally, as demonstrated by its decision to allocate only a small fraction of the $10bn in new money it has promised for global AIDS to the GFATM. The administration can be excepted to support or even initiate certain kinds of experiments with networked governance and other efforts which give a very substantial role to non-state actors, but only when it is able to retain substantial control and ownership over these processes, which it ultimately felt it was unable to do in the case of the global fund.

Other barriers to the advancement of institutional changes, such as path dependency, the impact of organizational characteristics such as an institution’s articles of agreement and decision-making rules requiring super-majorities or allowing for vetoes have been well documented.13 Richard Falk (1999) has predicted that the Commission on Global Governance, the flagship of the 1990s reform studies, will be the last commission of its kind to offer a comprehensive investigation into institutional reform in the ‘liberal internationalist’ mould. For Falk three factors make the Commission on Global Governance’s recommendations seem ‘out of synch with the manner in which … the world is drifting’:

[T]he discrediting of utopianism and all forms of social engineering in reaction to the collapse of the Soviet Union; the profound postmodern distrust of metanarratives, including universalizing programs of reform; and the mood of disillusionment surrounding the United Nations in relation to global security and well-being’.

In contrast, networked governance seems more in synch with the political sensibilities of the first decade of the 21st century, with its emphasis on decentralization and rejection of bureaucracy, its orientation towards specific issues and tasks in support of a focus on ‘results’ and the notion of partnership, in which non-state actors are key players and international organizations are seen as stakeholders playing narrower, targeted roles. For this reason, experimentation in the form of global networks is likely to proliferate, and we can expect some promising and effective forms of governance to emerge from this. There is also clearly much work to do in thinking through how such networks can be

13 See, for example, Kapur (2002)
regularized in a way that maximizes their potential as agents of change while addressing the concerns that have been raised about their democratic accountability and their overall place in the international system. There is also particular need, as Woods (2002) emphasizes, ‘to bring to light whose interests [these new forms of governance] further’.

Yet the focus on networked governance should not come at the expense of the continuation of detailed and politically relevant programmatic thinking about the institutional architecture of global economic and social governance, and the development of reform projects that consider the system as a whole. As the Zedillo Report (2001) argues, ‘to demand that the world work permanently with the set of institutions that it happens to have inherited from the past is to allow the forces of inertia a quite irrational weight in decision-making’. The need for better and more inclusive leadership at the global level, and the ambition of making global governance more democratic and accessible to ordinary citizens, are unlikely to be addressed solely by informal arrangements and networks. Moreover, the history of international organization demonstrates that major institutional reform is possible, if not probable. The past ten years has, among other developments, witnessed major international agreement on climate change embodied in the Kyoto Protocol and the creation of a new international legal institution, the International Criminal Court. As Kapur (2002: 339) points out, crises are often a key agent of change in international organization. Recent events have already resulted in some shifts in global financial governance for example: ‘financial crises have … forced an acknowledgement of the growing economic and financial importance of the larger developing countries and have resulted in some efforts to engage them in hitherto closed groups’, such as the OECD and through the creation of the G22 and the Financial Stability Forum in the wake of the financial crises of 1997-98.

There are several ways in which more ambitious agendas might be advanced politically. Rather than attempting to build consensus for the creation of major new institutions from scratch, proponents of institutional reform could adopt a number of interim strategies along the lines suggested by some of the proposals reviewed in this paper. For example, new institutions could be initiated by a small coalition of countries, with the expectation that other countries would join if the institution proved viable and attractive. Or an even larger coalition of countries could choose to go ahead even with certain kinds of institutional reform even without the support of certain powerful states, where possible. Given the current lack of engagement by the United States, this seems an increasingly promising route. The Kyoto Protocol and the ICC have been advanced without US support. It has already been muted that the ambitious British proposal for an International Finance Facility to help finance the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals might evolve into a European Finance Facility if the US does not endorse the plan. Ad hoc bodies, international partnerships and networks or an international conference could all be seen as precursors for more permanent institutions, and their governance arrangements could be constructed to maximize this future possibility. Reform proponents could also look for ways in which existing institutions or bodies could be upgraded or adopted to fulfill a different purpose. It is also politically important that proposals for new institutions also be accompanied by a realistic analysis of the current
institutional architecture, including which institutions are not working and should be replaced or phased out. Finally, proponents of institutional reform such as an economic and social security council may need to relax their state-centered assumptions and look for meaningful ways to represent non-state actors in such bodies, while retaining a focus on overall democratic accountability. Politically, such an approach would tap into the current enthusiasm for multisectoral governance and would also attract civil society advocates, who are able to exert powerful pressure for change.

Experimentation and diversity in institutional forms are an important part of the process of improving global economic and social governance. For that reason, there is much to gain from the continuation of scholarship and debate, such as that reviewed in this paper, which engages current realities but also the programmatic imagination.

14 In doing this, a balance needs to be struck between preserving a range of institutions as a means of generating choice and useful competition and the benefits of consolidating the number of institutions.
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