

Comments on “Between Minilateralism and Universalism”

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The paper offers a robust historical and conceptual framework for navigating the unpredictable and fragmented world.

- Analyzes the role of "minilateral" groups for effective global governance.
- Suggests conceptual categorization of minilateralism and provides historical analysis, tracing failures from the League of Nations to the present.
- Policy-wise, it offers a pragmatic roadmap for an "unbalanced multipolar" world and explores measures to improve the current gridlock in global governance.



Current Global Landscape and Challenge

- Drifting away from rules-based cooperative system to power-driven, fragmented one.
- Major powers act unpredictably, harming weaker states—and ultimately themselves. Backlashes and erosion of intellectual leadership. Bigger share but smaller bites.
- Risks of returning to a 'jungle.' The weak fall prey to the strong. Should avoid post-WWI failures.
- **Challenge: How to enhance effectiveness of global governance and avoid a bad Nash**

Comments on “Between Minilateralism and Universalism”

1. Minilateralism vs. Multilateralism

The paper focuses on the role of minilateralism to fill the "effectiveness gap" currently plaguing universal institutions, without explicitly touching upon multilateralism

A couple of observations on between minilateralism and universalism

- Minilateralism must complement, not replace, multilateralism. The decline of multilateralism should not be treated as *a fait accompli*.
- Root causes of the decline of multilateralism need to be addressed
 - ✂ Globalization resulted in worsening global income inequality (Elephant Curve, 2016) and poorer-than-parents generations, which fueled nationalism and anti-globalization sentiment.
 - ✂ Need to continue efforts such as inclusive and sustainable growth strategy, SDGs
- Collectively respond to unfair actions: Role of IOs, Coalitions of nations under pressure.
 - ✂ Responding to a question about fairness from the press, the Korean Minister of Industry replied “Do you think anything in the negotiations was fair? We didn’t do this because we wanted to.”

2. Critical Elements for Effective Global governance

The paper emphasizes two critical elements for effective global governance: “reflecting power reality” and “constraining major powers.”

- Failure to reflect power reality will incur grievances and conflicts. Global powers’ adherence to rules is also crucial for effectiveness. Incentive-compatibility?
- Need to add **respecting national sovereignty** as an additional prerequisite.

3. Reflecting Global Power Reality: Correspondence between power and governance architecture

Creation of an overarching concert of major powers, greater use of G20, and a constituency system

- As flexible as possible. Strengthening the G20 seems to be a realistic alternative. The challenge is **how to translate a G20 decision into a global mandate without bypassing non-G20 countries?**

Institutional Reform of International Organizations

- There exists massive political inertia. Major powers benefit from status quo. How to overcome it?
✧ Limited but meaningful progresses in reforming IFIs' quota and governance
- Keep pushing reform of voting rules, leadership selection process, political independence

4. Constraining Major Powers

Normative and substantive measures to constrain great powers

- Explains “what” and “why,” but “how” remains to be answered. Need credible measures to enforce commitment to rules that these powers might otherwise violate tomorrow.

Notion of “Common Indivisible Security”

- This proposal of great powers (the US, China, Russia) to acknowledge each other's core interests risks codifying spheres of influence, giving them a veto over the sovereignty of smaller neighbors.
- Could violate the Westphalian principle of sovereign equality and non-interference.

5. Conceptual Issue: Distinction among Concert, Club, and Coalition of the Willing

- The functional lines often blur in reality.
- Practical benefits of categorization? When a concert is more effective than a club, and vice versa?