Global Governance as a Way of Balancing Sovereignty with Global Responsibility

Dong Hwi Lee

Professor, Korea National Diplomatic Academy

I. Sovereignty as Responsibility

The controversy surrounding "excessive intervention" in the Libyan crisis and the concern over "delayed intervention" in the Syrian situation have touched off a fresh debate on the legitimacy of intervention as the international community seeks to actually apply the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, which was endorsed at the UN World Summit in 2005.[1]

Lying at the root of this question is the collision between the traditional school of thought, which believes that sovereignty is an inviolable right that must be respected, and the theory that it is possible to restrict sovereignty – in short, that the international community's legitimate intervention should be allowed when necessary, in line with the changing times. Although academics differ on when exactly the concept of sovereignty came into being, the general consensus is that it began to lay the theoretic groundwork for a system of modern states following the Peace of Westphalia, which put an end to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in the first half of the 17th century.

Internally, the notion of sovereignty was used to remove states from the Pope's religious sphere of influence, which dominated the Middle Ages, and strengthen secular kings' powers. The crux of this idea was that the monarch would protect his subjects' lives and property by exercising absolute authority within his territory.

In a similar vein, what began to take shape was the principle of nonintervention – in other words, no outside intervention, be it religious intervention or an exercise of power by another

---

[1] Luke Glanville, "The Antecedents of 'Sovereignty as Responsibility'," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 2011, pp. 233-255.

state -- if a monarch's absolute political authority was to be guaranteed within the boundaries of his state.

The concept of internal sovereignty has since evolved in line with the changes of history. It started out as 'absolute sovereignty' that was aimed at defending absolute monarchy. Eventually, it became 'popular sovereignty' for building polities that reflect the views of the majority of the people.

In the meantime, the core value of the external aspect of sovereignty –negation of international intervention – has survived. State sovereignty even developed into national self-determination during the decolonization process in the 20th century.

Notwithstanding the respect for the principle of nonintervention in domestic affairs, there have been numerous cases of armed intervention in foreign countries or regions in the ages of imperialism in the name of spreading civilization, when the real underlying goal was colonization.

Protectorates, which were internationally recognized at one point, and the system of trusteeship under UN mandate – both of which were legacies of the 20th century – may also be interpreted as exceptions to the principle of nonintervention.[2]

These interventions, which appear to run counter to the principle of sovereignty, were justified by European states. With a sense of superiority of ones who had initiated the system of modern states, European powers justified their actions on the grounds that the polities of the subjugated countries had failed to protect the lives and property of their people. European states' argument of the olden days somewhat mirrors the logic behind sovereignty as responsibility, the basis for the ongoing debate over the R2P. For this reason, the theory of restricting sovereignty continues to be a subject of debate at present.[3]

In the course of the sovereignty debate, the call for the recharacterization of sovereignty as

---

[2] Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape," *Political Studies*, Vol. 47, Iss. 3, 1999, pp. 431-456.
[3] Amitai Etzioni, "Sovereignty as Responsibility," *Orbis*, Vol. 50, Iss. 1, Winter 2006, pp. 71-85.

responsibility has gained relatively more traction than the traditional concept of sovereignty. The reason can be tracked back to the spread of globalization, which has paved the way for rapid advances in means of transportation and information- communications technologies. The advances of globalization diminish the meaning of national boundaries and increase so-called transnational challenges. Hence, the international community's concerted efforts have become inevitable in resolving issues that cannot be solved by one country alone and require international coordination. This would not be possible under the traditional concept of sovereignty, given its rigid position on nonintervention in each other's affairs. Furthermore, the need for intervention in humanitarian crises in failed states to protect fundamental human rights has gradually won broader international support. Moreover, in the name of "the duty to prevent," the international community has begun to discuss the need for intervention to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The fundamental question in this debate is whether the concept of sovereignty is becoming obsolete. The general consensus is this: although there are certain limitations to the control power of sovereignty, and those limitations are gradually growing, those challenges have not fundamentally neutralized the concept of sovereignty. Rather, "independence" will continue to form the center of the concept of sovereignty and demonstrate resilience for a long time to come, not only theoretically but in real life.[4]

The realistic task, then, is how we can efficiently manage outstanding international issues in line with the changing times, such as advances in globalization, while adhering to the concept of sovereignty.

The ensuing sections will examine global governance, a mechanism for state and nonstate actors to seek solutions to transnational problems through cooperation in order to manage globalization in the midst of the changing distribution of power. In this light, global governance building inevitably translates into institution building whose prerequisite is to find a proper balance between national sovereignty and global responsibility. That is why it is suggested that global governance building will prove useful in strengthening nuclear security, a rising topic of interest.

---

[4] Stephen D. Krasner, "Abiding Sovereignty," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2001, pp. 229-251.

II. Changing Distribution of Power and Realigning Global Governance

The financial crisis that originated in Wall Street in 2008 has led to financial crises in the United States and Europe, and as of 2012, the global economy to remain in a recession. The current circumstances bolster the argument that the United States is on the decline. In short, although US power remains superior in an absolute sense, in relative terms, its gradual decline has become an undeniable fact.

The flip side of Washington's relative regression is the marked rise of emerging states, most notably China. Such shifting dynamics of national power, made possible by economic prowess, attest to the growing importance of the economy for international politics and have resulted in a newly realigned distribution of power.

The shifting distribution of power have called for change in global governance,[5] or how the international order is managed. Considering the changes in the international environment in recent years, the international community will rejuvenate its efforts to realign or build anew global governance across various fields.

The international community has sought to build a new form of global economic governance centered on the G20 (Group of 20) following the 2008 financial crisis which started in the United States. The eurozone's ongoing financial woes may be a speed bump for this movement somewhat in the short term. Over the medium to long term, however, the crisis will give impetus to the quest for new governance, as it will increase the need for strengthening global cooperation on economic policy.

In the meantime, the Kyoto Protocol, which aspired to protect the environment while maintaining sustainable growth, expires at the end of 2012, and the international community has looked for a new climate change accord that can replace the Kyoto Protocol. Related to

---

[5] For definitions of "global governance," see the Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood: Report of the Commission on Global Governance*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and James N. Rosenau and E. O. Czempel(Eds.), *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

this, the UN Climate Change Conference held in Durban, South Africa in December 2011 extended the Kyoto Protocol by several years and agreed to launch negotiations to hammer out a new climate change accord by 2020. As can be seen, global governance is being established quickly in the climate change arena as well.

Like this, the international community has endeavored to come up with response mechanisms in areas that have become all the more important in the face of rapidly advancing globalization, such as the economy, finance, and climate change. This leads to the projection that future international relations for the large part will be characterized by rivalry and cooperation among countries over the establishment of global governance.

III. Global Governance: Meaning and Status

1. Concept of Global Governance

Global governance can be defined in several different ways. A comprehensive definition, also the most generally accepted of them all, can be summed up as thus: "all collective measures taken by the international community, upon consensus, to respond to new pending international issues or threats that emerge as a result of the advances of globalization, given the lack of a world government."

With respect to "the lack of a world government," "government" and "governance" are different on seven accounts – geographical scope, functional scope, distribution of resources, interests, norms, decision making, and policy implementation.[6]

Global governance, with its broad range of meanings, has surfaced as a hot topic of discourse in the early 1990s, when the end of the Cold War and rapid advances of globalization gave way to new security threats, which in turn highlighted a need to conceptualize a cooperative system for responding efficiently to those issues. Yet, the academic and analytic use and aptness of global governance continue to be debated, and global governance has been proven

---

[6] Elke Krahmann, "Conceptualizing Security Governance," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 38, No. 1, p. 12.

more useful as a political program from policy and normative perspectives.[7]

There are two explanations for why global governance is focused this way.

First, global governance can be seen as a necessary condition. Some of the sea changes on the global level, namely democratization, globalization, and informatization, have 1) highlighted the importance of nonstate actors, 2) given rise to issues that have impact beyond national borders, and 3) raised the awareness that the *horizontal* approach, which considers the correlation among related issues, may be more effective than the *vertical* approach, which is based on the importance and priority of issues in problem solving.[8]

Others argue that global governance is a sufficient condition. According to their theory, the rapidly shifting dynamics of economic power since the end of the Cold War have led to an overall change in the distribution of power. As a result, order-maintaining mechanisms that had operated on the existing distribution of power are no longer applicable. That, in turn, led to calls for change in the status quo to allow emerging states to take the lead in finding new mechanisms for maintaining the global order.[9]

These situational developments have rendered cross-border cooperation necessary to deal with pending international issues of renewed importance, and global governance has taken on a new role as the mechanism for doing just that. Some recapitulate this as three functional goals of global governance: management power, promotion of common interests, and mediation of differences.[10]

2. G-X System as Global Governance

---

[7] Klaus Dingwerth and Philipp Pattberg, "Global Governance as a Perspective on World Politics," *Global Governance*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April-June 2006, pp. 189-196.

[8] For more on the role of global governance in the globalization age, refer to Joseph S. Nye and John D. Donahue(Eds.), *Governance in a Globalizing World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

[9] For observations on the increased demand for global governance following changes in the distribution of power, see National Intelligence Council-EU Institute for Security Studies, *Global Governance 2025: At a Critical Juncture*, September 2010, NIC 2010-08, pp. 9-16.

[10] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 35.

In fact, how global governance could join hands with the realities of international politics and be applied has long been a subject of debate, and frankly, the interpretation of this question has evolved overtime.

A simple interpretation of global governance would be to view it as a mechanism for maintaining the international order. Preserving an order necessary for rule that resorts to force – for example operating an empire on a global scale, sustaining a colony, or maintaining a camp under a bipolar system – may be construed as global governance. Some call this model "global governance 1.0." In this situation, power politics aimed at actual dominance would be the driving force behind international relations.

On the contrary, universal multilateralism – a system in which every country takes part on an equal footing and makes decisions with the common goal of creating international public goods – is also categorized as a form of global governance. This model can be named "global governance 3.0," and under these circumstances, international relations will be driven by cooperation among nations.[11]

The current situation, however, does not fit the mold of the bipolar structure (1.0) of the bygone days of colonialism and imperialism or the Cold War era. Nor are international relations in an ideal state where cooperation is all that is needed (3.0). In other words, the world is now in a transitional phase where "power politics-based competition among nations" and "cooperation among nations for creating international public goods" coexist.

In this context, the current form of global governance may be named "2.0" – or something between the 1.0 and 3.0 models. The "2.0" translates into a "G-X" model where major countries form a club to discuss pending global issues and make necessary decisions. The G7 was the starting point. A good example of the G-X model is the G20, which is expected to replace the G7. Should the Nuclear Security Summit become a regular forum, it would make up the center of global governance that deals exclusively with nuclear security in a G-47+ setting.

---

[11] For an attempt to classify the different forms of global governance in line with the trend of the times, refer G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order," *Perspectives on Politics,* Vol. 7, No. 1, March 2009, pp. 71-87.

Over the medium to long term, the G-X system, which is transient by nature, will be characterized by both rivalry and cooperation. Each participating state, driven by power-politics instinct, will attempt to use the G-X as a mere forum of discussion for maximizing its own national interest. At the same time, they will seek to advance goodwill cooperation with an eye toward creating international public goods.

IV.   Need for Introducing Concept of Nuclear Security Global Governance

1.   Usefulness of Nuclear Security Global Governance

It remains unclear whether there will be another Nuclear Security Summit after the 2014 meeting in the Netherlands. The international community needs to keep discussing nuclear security while maintaining a certain sense of direction. In this light, the new concept of global governance has been introduced into the realm of nuclear security. By doing so, the nuclear security discourse could be advanced. It was to this end that the term "nuclear security global governance" was coined, and it was added to the agenda of the experts symposium held in the lead-up to the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit in 2012. Accordingly, a discussion on "nuclear security global governance" will likely follow, starting with whether the term will be used officially, and, if so, how it will be used.   All in all, the nuclear security global governance discourse has begun. We just have to watch how much progress it can make by the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in the Netherlands.

Global governance, as examined above, is a complex topic that can be approached from various angles. One simple description of global governance is this: it is a way of maintaining order. In that connection, global governance is being established in areas of key importance to the international community. The reason is that the global changes we have been witnessing are different from those of the Cold War era on three accounts.

First, states are not the only form of actors; diverse types of actors are now at play on the world stage. Second, there is no rigid concept of territoriality anymore. The majority of issues are transborder and transnational in nature. Third, the hierarchy of issues – where military issues take precedence and remaining issues are lower on a list of priorities – has disappeared. All issues are of equal importance and are interrelated now, thus making the world a more

complicated place than it ever was.

The next question, then, is whether these three characteristics could be aptly reflected in the concept of global governance when it is applied to nuclear security.

First, it is true that nonstate actors, such as civil society and expert groups, have a growing influence on nuclear security-related issues. Second, the origin, spread, and impact of nuclear security issues are definitely transnational. Third, issues themselves are interlinked. Nuclear energy safety, for example, is an economic issue. Nonproliferation relates to military security. Safety and security issues overlap. As such, different issues come together to make up a complex web, and the world needs to take a more comprehensive approach to address these challenges.

In this context, it seems possible to take a general approach to these three facets of present-day global issues by applying global governance to the nuclear security issue. The bottom line is, global governance has the advantage in that it could integrate the various international arrangements and universalize them. In short, it would collect the diverse forms of agreements, such as regimes, protocols, standards, and initiatives, and create consistent universal norms out of them.

The role of global governance can be broken into two. First, it can design a structure. Designing a structure – be it architecture, framework, or complexity – provides an opportunity to create a useful mechanism. Second, global governance can manage process. In short, it can formulate certain procedures that link communication, interaction, and networking.

As can be seen, building a structure and operating a set of processes themselves become one system. Building global governance, therefore, may be viewed as being identical to the process of establishing a single system. In this light, creating an international system fit for changed circumstances translates into global governance building. Specifically, we may envisage the advantages of introducing nuclear security global governance, which would make it possible to create a system that gives a structure to nuclear security issues and allows the process to function better.

2. *Comparison With G20 Governance*

The application of global governance to nuclear security issues should be preceded by an examination of how best that can be done. To that end, this section shall review key distinctions between G20 governance and nuclear security global governance.[12]

First, the G20 deals with more global issues, whereas nuclear security addresses issues that are, to a large extent, sovereignty conscious.

Second, while some may view the G20 as a complexity in and of itself, most see it as a channel of discussion about financial mechanisms that really boil down to one issue. Nuclear security, on the other hand, has numerous different aspects to it, as was demonstrated by the 11-point agenda of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit in 2012.

Third, while the G20 is a crisis-response mechanism, nuclear security is a crisis-*prevention* mechanism. For a financial mechanism like the G20, crises occur with high frequency, but their direct consequence is not of deadly serious importance. On the other hand, nuclear security issues occur with low frequency, but when they do break out, they have fatal consequences.

In the light of these differences between the G20 and nuclear security issues, we can surmise how the Nuclear Security Global Governance building should proceed.

First, even though the civilian sector's clout has grown in recent years, the initiative must stay at the government level for the summit process to have impact, for nuclear security is sovereignty conscious.

Second, nuclear security is highly complex. Hence, in a sense, an incremental approach will have to be accepted as a reality.

---

[12] For a study on G20 governance in the context of how the G20 and the G8 compare in various areas, see Dong Hwi LEE, "From Toronto to Seoul: Evolution of the G20 Process," *Studia Diplomatica*, Vol. LXIII, No. 2, 2010, pp. 35-52.

Third, crisis prevention is a matter of foremost priority in the realm of nuclear security. Hence, building a system for reinforcing monitoring and surveillance will be crucial.

Fourth, fostering a security culture will be important. Nuclear security crises rarely occur, and naturally, it is easy to neglect warning signs concerning nuclear security.

In sum, as opposed to the G20, nuclear security attaches importance to sovereignty, an incremental approach, regulation, and a security culture.

President Obama laid the groundwork for building a more comprehensive nuclear governance by proposing, in his "Prague speech," to deal with disarmament, nonproliferation, peaceful use of nuclear energy, and nuclear security in one package. To move toward this end and create a long-term vision, we should look to 'global nuclear governance' – not merely 'global nuclear security governance' – as the ultimate goal. With this in mind, the international community should broaden the consensus on nuclear security global governance for the time being, so that the Nuclear Security Summit may continue even after 2014.

References

Barnett, Michael. and Duvall, Raymond. *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Dingwerth, Klaus. and Pattberg, Philipp. "Global Governance as a Perspective on World Politics," *Global Governance*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April-June 2006.

Etzioni, Amitai. "Sovereignty as Responsibility," *Orbis*, Vol. 50, Iss. 1, Winter 2006.

Glanville, Luke. "The Antecedents of 'Sovereignty as Responsibility'," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 2011.

Ikenberry, G. John. "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order," *Perspectives on Politics,* Vol. 7, No. 1, March 2009.

Jackson, Robert. "Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape," *Political Studies*, Vol. 47, Iss. 3, 1999.

Krahmann, Elke. "Conceptualizing Security Governance," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 38, No. 1.

Krasner, Stephen D. "Abiding Sovereignty," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2001.

LEE, Dong Hwi. "From Toronto to Seoul: Evolution of the G20 Process," *Studia Diplomatica*, Vol. LXIII, No. 2, 2010.

National Intelligence Council-EU Institute for Security Studies, *Global Governance 2025: At a Critical Juncture*, September 2010, NIC 2010-08.

Nye, Joseph S. and Donahue, John D.(Eds.), *Governance in a Globalizing World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

Rosenau, James N. and Czempel, E. O.(Eds.), *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood: Report of the Commission on Global Governance*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).