The Most Significant Events in the Development of Global Governance and Which of Them Most Directly Impacted on the Human Rights Agenda in International Relations

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Abstract

Global governance is an undeniable reality but it was shaped by several events that had an impact on the international relations agenda that, at the same time, was translated into the development of global human rights policies. In this sense, events such as the establishment of the United Nations Charter, the Declaration of the Universal Human Rights, the end of the Cold War and the Globalisation era are analysed and linked to global governance tendencies and the improvements of human rights as a globally accepted value.

Keywords: Global governance; Human Rights; International Relations; significant events; United Nations Charter; Declaration of the Universal Human Rights; Cold War; Globalisation.

1. Introduction

The era of global governance has arrived and there are grounds to believe that things are not likely to change in the next decades since the times of cooperation, common standards of life, regulations and concerted goals seem to be a tendency to face global threats such as terrorism, environmental and human rights violations.

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In order to acknowledge global governance, the events that impacted them and have shaped international relations' policies in the international relations agenda, the first required step consists in exploring and defining the concept of global governance and from that starting point, introduce a few events that were significant to the development of the latter and then show how they impacted the human rights agenda in terms of international relations. The chosen events were the establishment of the United Nations Charter, the Declaration of the Universal Human Rights, the Cold War (more precisely, the end of it) and finally the unstoppable process of Globalisation. Finally, the presentation of the conclusions, which summarises the main events and their importance for the development of global government and the human rights, internal relations agenda, wise.

2. Discussion

2.1 Global governance

There is no other way to realise which events had an impact on the development of global governance **[1]** than first understanding the latter, which can be easily and wrongly used as an equivalent of "international governance".

In order to avoid this confusion, it is better to split `global governance´ and understand each component. In this sense, Weiss [2] points out that `global´ implies much more than `international´ since the latter is a concept thought under the logics of the nation-state, where there is a coincidence of identity and territorial division or space. Nowadays, those features are not necessarily together anymore. The same author takes the Kurds as example due to the fact that they are a group of people who own their own identity (cultural, religion, etc.) but do not have a unique territory where they can be gathered. On the contrary, they are dispersed across countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, etc. In a nutshell, had it not been for the term `global´, groups as the Kurds or any other facing a territorial issue, would not be included under the umbrella of this new emerging kind of government.

As for the term `government´, according to the World Bank [3], it can be defined as:

´The exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.´

From this definition we can highlight the presence of an authority, institutions and citizens with articulate interests that lead the country. These same structures can be found on a global level, where a particular country is replaced by a group of countries, national institutions to worldwide ones and citizens from a particular nationality to citizens of the world, no matter their nationality but their conditions of human beings since, one of the prerogatives of global governance is the development of human rights´ standards through several approaches. However, the simile cannot be applied to find a unique global authority that exercises power over other states. Thus, global governance procedures are related to agreements, treaties and conventions to regulate standards of life in several aspects as the ones provided by the World Bank definition.

In fact, the lack of an undisputable leadership can be considered detrimental to obtain certain results, global

governance wise. But, at the same time, the absence of a monopoly of power provides global governance with the required plurality to have all voices and tendencies heard and exposed, therefore, there is a better sense of legitimacy in global goals led by a discussion with several points of view than imposed aims established by a single and exclusive interest.

In fact, the advantage of global governance in comparison to a merely international order is the presence of non-governmental institutions that represent interests across countries since they do not depend directly on political issues, which allow them express the reality (for example, in terms of human rights) that countries may want not to be exposed. Indeed, United Nations takes the opinion of NGOs in order to analyse the status of each member as a procedure to review how human rights issues are developed.

In a nutshell, the main exercise of defining `global governance´ per se depicts a human rights dimension because, global is related to common goals, and there is nothing more common within countries, institutions, people, etc. than their own humanity, therefore, than the seek of human rights policies.

2.2 The establishment of the United Nations Charter (1945)

Undoubtedly a huge step in order to develop the idea of global governance was the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and its Charter, which is a treaty that indicates basic international relations principles.

The organisation of the United Nations and its global nature can be considered a starting point of what we currently understand as global governance due to its plurality in terms of members as well as the impact on national regulations. Even though, at the beginning the United Nations did not imply the imposition of legal duties, but common goals, it comes without saying that each rule, law or regulation is a consequence of a particular aim. Well, after the establishment of the United Nations, the aim of each country becomes part of something bigger and more important as a common goal across humanity.

In this sense, according to Taylor and Curtis [4], the United Nations had four main purposes:

`(…) to maintain the international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to cooperate in solving in international problems and in promoting respect for human rights; and to be the centre of for harmonizing the actions of nations.´

The cited text clearly contains a strong human rights statement to the extent of introducing the term `human rights´ instead of the any other such as natural rights that was used in the past with no success as the World War II could prove. In fact, the establishment of the Union Nations meant an attempt to avoid the events occurred in the Nazi era, by gathering different views of the world to find common points and create common interests.

In addition, the existence of the United Nations implied a unified search of peace and security as a global priority, therefore, as a global governance decision due to the UN structure. In fact, interventions at a United Nations level occurred when an agreement to do so was reached and the veto of the permanent members of the Security Council was not activated. As a consequence of such an extreme decision at global governance,

sovereignty started being subordinated to the accomplishment of human rights policies. In other words, sovereignty was not anymore a valid excuse to stay away from the human rights based principles that are part of the UN Charter. Nevertheless, there is still a strong political component when it comes to use this tool, which reminds us that any level of global governance cannot get rid of political contexts. In fact, that is why there are countries that have the privilege of the veto and others do not, which, at the same time, reminds us that global governance is not absolutely politics context-free.

2.3 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Once the Charter of the United Nations was established, according to the main UN[5], a document that complements this new view of the world, in terms of human rights, was required. In this sense, since the very first General Assembly of the United Nations in 1946, there were efforts to write the document. Finally after two years, the draft was ready and therefore, the moment to vote arrived. For the very first time, human rights were approached in a global level instead of being only part of national constitutions or regulations. Despite the fact that the document is not a binding one, its thirty articles guarantee a new standard of expectations, human rights wise. In other words, this instrument can be considered result of a global government policy. There is no doubt that this Declaration shaped the concept of global governance since it ruled more than one country at the moment of its promulgation and it also became a parameter for future regulations. It is vox populi that had it not been for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, conventions such as the ones related to torture, rights of women, children, etc. would not be part of international regulations, which means that states would not be able to adopt them into their own national laws. In fact, the international relations agenda was revolutionised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights due to the fact that the latter seeded ideas of development, good governance and democratic practices through the empowering of the human at a global level.

2.4 The Cold War

As it has been said the global governance cannot escape from the political context, therefore, the latter shapes it. In this sense, the political and economic division of the world into the eastern (basically the Soviet Union and its allies) and the western bloc (The United States of America and its allies) had an impact on the developing of global governance and, at the same time, on human rights policies within the international relations arena.

Despite the fact that the rivalry between the eastern and western bloc did not trigger a direct war, it exposed the world to nuclear disaster and an unprecedented weapon rally, so to speak. It also, implied difficulties in the understanding and usage of the veto within the United Nations Security Council since more than using the veto considering the real purpose of such a global governance organisation as the UN, the United States of America and the Soviet Union took advantage of their permanent Security Council membership to use the veto based on political ideologies instead of the presence of human rights needs.

Once the Cold War was over, the world was reconfigured and therefore, the global context that impacts on human right policies too. According to [6] , there were changes due to the Cold War in the United Nations approach, human rights wise. The first main change was an upgrade of importance of human rights for the UN,

which does not mean that before this event human rights were not considered a serious issue, however the end of the cold war was an opportunity to the Charter to `*promote fundamental freedoms for all´*. The second addition to human rights was the fact of defining them as an indivisible whole, which means that civil and political rights where not divorced from the economic, social and cultural ones since they are two faces of the same coin.

Finally a third change, following the understanding of the same authors, is the increasing scope of action of the UN due to the end of the Soviet Union that allow a real all human rights for all´ policy.

The interesting thing about these three changes in the United Nations policies is how it is linked to the shaping of global governance and, at the same time, to impact the human rights agenda in the international relations arena. As for shaping or developing the global governance concept, these three changes depict an opening to the world without the barrier of the division of eastern and western. In other words, it represents a global view of the world instead of a regional (eastern or western bloc) one, therefore, global government mist be understood across blocs, divisions or any other division of the world in order to be seen as global as one. When it comes to whether this event (end of the Cold War) directly impacted on the human rights issues agenda within the international relations arena, the answer is positive but not in the same extent as the establishment of the United Nations. In fact, if it were not for what happened in 1945, there would be no chance to upgrade the attitude of the UN. However, this is undeniable that the world changed after the end of the cold war because the binary eastern- western was over and therefore, countries from the eastern bloc were back to freedom and were able again to rule themselves and take part of the UN procedures in order to recover and exercise the rights they have lost years ago. For example, Lithuanians recovered their own identity, which is a very basic human right, by having their original nationality back. In addition, the fact that many countries recovered their status of independence from the Soviet Union allow them to be part again of this massive global governance organisation called the United Nations. In a nutshell, the end of the Cold War not only represented the reinforcement of the United Nations purposes, in terms of making human rights universal, but also the reconfiguration of the members of this international organisation, which with no doubt, put the ex-Soviet Union countries again on the map of global governance and human rights by themselves in a human rights arena that claims the equal importance of the civil and politics rights in comparison to the economic social and cultural ones to the extent of cannot considering ones without the others and vice versa.

2.4 Globalisation

Until now it is difficult to be accurate when it comes to have an exact day that contents the beginning of this unstoppable process called globalisation. There are any many ways to understand it depending of the approach we decide to take. However, technology improvements and a revolution in terms of communications are the main elements that trigger this change in the world. It is possible to cite Marshall McLuhan [7] and his description of the `Global Village´ as a prediction of the times we are living now but it would not enough to understand the new context in the arena of human rights, which took advantage of the useful tools of communication developed by the globalisation. In this sense, we need to acknowledge that the revolution of information is a consequence of globalisation and the latter is an opportunity and a challenge to the human

rights agenda in the international relations arena. There are grounds to believe that globalisation is changing every field of knowledge due to the speed of the transmission of information and thereby the impossibility of hide realities, and on the contrary to gather them without the need to travel. In other words, the distances are everyday shorter and `*the medium is the message´* as McLuhan [8] said. So, the question is, why is globalisation a significant event in terms of global government? The answer is related to the ease globalisation provides global government with, integration wise. In other words, the study of human rights does not depend on an elite anymore. The meetings, sessions, statements, doctrines, etc. are now available to whoever wants to have access to them, which means that more people will have the chance to be aware of their existence and, therefore, of the rights they are entitled of, and that is one side of the integration. Another one is based on the possibility of discovering violations of human rights that were not likely to be known worldwide if it was not for the technology revolution. For instance, in 2012, the world realised the atrocities committed by Joseph Kony in Uganda and the media was wisely used to spread the information of how terrible were the violations of human rights in that country. In fact, there was a campaign looking for Kony in order to take him to the International Criminal Court (ICC) due to all his crimes. This campaign in the media needs to be understood as the emerging power of the latter (due to globalisation) in the issues that are discuss at the global government level and, at the same time, it shows how globalisation has arrived to include new human rights [9] issues in the international relations agenda.

3. Conclusions

The global governance has experienced several events that have shaped and still shapes it, which is why it is constantly changing positively opening new spaces to new understandings of regulations in a global level. The most important event that has an unquestionable impact of global governance was the establishment of the United Nations Charter that together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, were a first successful manifestation of a global governance exercise to the extent of being capable of influencing the international relations arena, human rights wise. Not as important as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the end of the Cold War, also played an interesting role in the global governance scene because it depicted the end of blocs (eastern and western) and the difficulties it features to a global governance that pretended to avoid being divided as it was until 1990. As a consequence of the dissolution of the eastern bloc, the global governance acquired more representativeness since the countries that were part of the Soviet Union were independent again and therefore were able to submit their own interests, which, in terms of the international relations agenda, means an advance in human rights policies due to the presence of these new countries and with them the understanding of the equal importance of the civil and politics rights and the economic social and cultural ones. The last chosen event was globalisation, which is a process that is not already finished but that is revolutionising the world in every single imaginable aspect. Despite the fact that it started as a communication-based phenomenon, its effects are the cornerstone of an integration process, global governance and human rights, international agenda wise. In fact, the integration provides with hope for the future of global governance ruling human rights due to the advantages education can take from globalisation and also because of the ease the latter provides people with when it comes to access to information and knowledge regarding human rights at any level. In a nutshell, the establishment of the United Nations Chapter with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were the most significant events that had an impact on the development of global governance

and, at the same time, had a clear and direct impact on the human rights issues agenda in International relations. However, still important but not in such a fundamental degree as the UN existence, the end of the cold war played a key role to modify a restricted exercise of global governance and human rights within the international relations arena due to the presence of two blocs. As for globalisation, it is one of the most impressive changes that humanity and communications is experimenting and it has a huge impact on global governance because there is no information that can be absolutely hidden and therefore, transparency is a new characteristic of global governance that is changing its rules as well as the future of human rights debates and information due to the ease information can be shared at any level, including the human rights issues in the international relations agenda.

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