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## AMERICAN STRATEGY TOWARD GLOBAL GOVERNANCE. NEW LEADERSHIP OR CRISIS OF IDENTITY?

Contemporary American grand strategy must respond to a variety of changing contexts: the interconnectedness of various international actors, the fragmentation of economic systems, the diminishing ability to control international flows and the transnational threats permeating across borders. The United States, as a leading force of the international community, is now being forced to seriously address an emerging set of global problems. It seems that many areas are so inherently international that not only the American government, but all governments have to pool their vaunted sovereignties because the dangers of uninhibited enterprise are so great in a “global commons.” In these circumstances, the United States should take an active part in establishing the instruments and conditions for effective global governance, although sustaining American engagement in the maintenance of world order is likely to become a more difficult task in the twenty-first century.

The American nation was not only born free and proud, but as Robert Keohane remarked in one of his articles, it was also “born lucky.”<sup>1</sup> Behind the country’s rapid economic development stood values that supported risk-taking, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, a sense of mission and pragmatism. Furthermore, national creeds such as the pursuit of happiness and the freedom to shape the course of one’s life have strengthened many of these characteristics. The ideational factor of American identity – the nation’s sense of uniqueness – has also been a key factor in American political performance and this has determined how the political aims of the country have been defined and pursued. For these characteristics, alongside its efficiency and power, the United States has been as much admired as hated in the world.

Contemporary American grand strategy must, however, respond to a variety of changing contexts: the interconnectedness of various international actors, the fragmentation of economic systems, the diminishing ability to control international flows and the transnational threats permeating across borders. The United States, as a leading force of the international community, is now being forced to seriously address an

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<sup>1</sup> Robert O. Keohane. 1983. *Associative American Development 1776–1850*. In J.G. Ruggie (ed.). *The Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor*. New York: Columbia University Press, 90.

emerging set of global problems. It is no longer possible for it to concentrate on ad hoc political solutions and to focus on the immediate solutions to problems, instead of their underlying causes. It is to be expected that the new Democratic Administration will accelerate the process of building the capacities of the already existing architecture of global governance and promote U.S. leadership in sponsoring new, more effective initiatives around the world. The former Secretary of State and Nobel Peace Prize winner Henry Kissinger expressed these expectations, anticipating that President Obama would, "...give new impetus to American foreign policy, partly because the reception of him is so extraordinary around the world. I think his task will be to develop an overall strategy for America in this period when, really, a new world order can be created. It's a great opportunity, it isn't just a crisis."<sup>2</sup>

Phrases such as "a new world order," "global governance," and "management of global issues" are increasingly being used to describe how the world is dealing with fundamental changes in the international system. The considerations which have led to a desire to rethink the international order are breeding global problems: environmental concerns, challenges of population growth and world poverty. These issues have led to a search for a global rather than merely international or multinational solution. They also reveal both the drivers and the effects of what is now commonly called "globalization." It seems that many areas are so inherently international that not only the American government, but all governments, have to pool their vaunted sovereignties because the dangers of uninhibited enterprise are so great in a "global commons." In these circumstances, the United States should take an active part in establishing the instruments and conditions for effective global governance, although sustaining American engagement in the maintenance of world order is likely to become a more difficult task in the twenty-first century. The need for a reformed system of global cooperation has never been more urgent, although the concept itself is far from new. Global governance as a paradigm has been associated with the new shape of international relations in the post-Cold-War period. The development started with the work of the UN Commission on Global Governance, established in 1992, to analyze global changes in recent decades and to suggest ways in which the international community can better cooperate on global issues.<sup>3</sup> In 1995 the commission presented its proposals for improving the machinery of global governance in light of the major changes in the world since 1945 in a report entitled "Our Global Neighbourhood." The authors noticed: "At the global level, governance has been viewed primarily as intergovernmental relationships, but it must now be understood as also involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizens' movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market. Inter-

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KD3BqK-9ZiU/> Jan. 5, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The Commission is not an official body of the United Nations. It was, however, endorsed by the UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali. Chaired by Ingvar Carlsson, the former Prime Minister of Sweden, and Shridath Ramphal, former Secretary General of the Commonwealth from Guyana, the Commission is made up of 28 public figures from around the world, all of whom participated in or formally endorsed the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance. The Commission's membership list has included: Jimmy Carter of the U.S., Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Boutros Boutros Ghali of Egypt and Maurice Strong of Canada.

acting with these are global mass media of dramatically enlarged influence.”<sup>4</sup> It was also made clear that “global governance is not global government. No misunderstanding should arise from the similarity of the terms. We are not proposing movement towards world government, for were we to travel in that direction we could find ourselves in an even less democratic world than we have – one more accommodating to power, more hospitable to hegemonic ambition, and more reinforcing of the roles of states and governments rather than the rights of people.”<sup>5</sup> It is not the ideal of one global government which is being analyzed. The idea can be described as the capacity to order and steer international relations in desired directions and to manage international problems without recourse to organized violence. Since the 1990s, the debate about the global governance idea has continued, yet its definition still remains clouded in confusion. The phrase “global governance” is increasingly widely used, even though, according to the critics, the term is somehow connected with mapping which does not yet exist. They raise an argument that in public debate global governance “appears to be virtually everything.”<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, it must be an important kind of non-existing phenomenon, because the volume of literature dealing with the concept and its criticism is huge. Nevertheless, preoccupation with global change and the challenges emerging from this context have been major features in the field of international relations since the end of the Cold War.

The concept of global governance is used to describe certain developments and institutions beyond the state which try to regulate and control the new forces of globalization. Thoughts on global governance have also been driven by other theoretical concepts created in order to describe directions and possible consequences for the changing world, for example the global economic network, the global information/media system, intellectual technologies or the innovation factor. The global governance idea is, in a way, a response to the emergence of complex multilateralism. Some prophets of globalization argue that the international system is developing so as to create a “borderless world.”<sup>7</sup> In James Rosenau’s famous vision the word “fragme-grative” is used to describe the complex dynamism of world politics.<sup>8</sup> The word is a combination of “fragmentation” and “integration.” He made his statement in a very strict way, claiming that “we live in a messy world. (...) People are unsettled by the realization that deep changes are unfolding in every sphere of life, that events in any part of the world can have consequences for developments in every other part of the world, that the internet and other technologies have collapsed time and distance,

<sup>4</sup> *Our Global Neighbourhood*. 1995. The Commission on Global Governance, Oxford, <http://actrav.itcilo.org/actrav-english/telearn/global/ilo/globe/gove.htm> – 20.05.2009.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy J. Sinclair. 2004. *Global governance. Critical concepts in political sciences*. Routledge: Taylor & Francis, 238.

<sup>7</sup> Kenichi Ohame. 1990. *The borderless world: power and strategy in the interlinked economy*. London: HarperCollins; Matthew Horsman, Andrew Marshall. 1994. *After the nation state: citizens, tribalism and the new world disorder*. London: HarperCollins.

<sup>8</sup> James N. Rosenau. 2002. Governance in a new global order. In David Held, Anthony G. McGrew. *Governing globalization: power, authority and global governance*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 70.

that consequently national states and their governments are not as competent as they once were (...)"<sup>9</sup> In the aforementioned perspective the concept of global governance describes the efforts of the key international players, which try to regulate and control the new forces of globalization through international institutions, organizations and co-operative arrangements. Quite obviously the United States is one of the leading forces in creating the current shape of the international system. Therefore, whilst searching for the sources of global governance processes at the political level we cannot pass over the tremendous upsurge of idealism, much of it American, which accompanied the birth of a deeper transnational cooperation at the end of World War II and after the Cold War. It was motivation, hope and a specific political strategy that underpinned the reconstruction of Europe and Japan in the forties and an international help project for the CCE countries in the nineties. The end of the Cold War opened various possibilities for rethinking the international system. At the same moment "the old system of global governance," shaped by the global confrontation of the superpowers, fell apart. This old order was clearly dominated by the United States, which exercised its power in key functional areas, such as international trade and international security. After the end of the Cold War, unequivocal support for the *Pax Americana* resulted in the creation of an international economic order, in which liberal trade held pride of place and international institutions were broadly accepted. At a certain moment this system was partially replaced by more differentiated attitudes of Western countries. It seems, at least from a European point of view, that in 2003 – by starting the war in Iraq – the United States became a lonely superpower. Nevertheless, even today, despite heavy economic problems and growing anti-Americanism, the state of international order heavily depends on how America decides to project its power and influence. Thus it is perhaps lonely, but still a superpower. Now, after the unilateral moment in American foreign policy has passed, the attitude of the United States will be among the most important factors in determining the shape of the new international order. As Samuel Huntington evaluated in 1999: "The United States would clearly prefer a unipolar system in which it would be the hegemon and often acts as if such a system existed. The major powers, on the other hand, would prefer a multipolar system in which they could pursue their interests unilaterally and collectively, without being subject to constraints, coercion, and pressure by the stronger superpower. They feel threatened by what they see as the American pursuit of global hegemony. American officials feel frustrated by their failure to achieve that hegemony. None of the principal power-wielders in world affairs is happy with the status quo."<sup>10</sup>

An ongoing dilemma for U.S. policymakers is to find a good balance between America's historic ambivalence towards multilateral cooperation and its need to establish a new model for global distribution of power. Joseph Ney uses the chess metaphor to express the complexity of the matter: "...distribution of power in politics today as analogous to a three-dimensional chess game. On the top board – military relations

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, 71

<sup>10</sup> Samuel P. Huntington. 1999. The Lonely Superpower. *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, vol. 78, no. 2, 37.

among states – the world is, indeed, unipolar, and likely to remain that way for decades. But on the middle board of economic relations, the world is already multipolar, and the United States cannot obtain the outcomes it wants without the cooperation of Europe, Japan, China and others. And, on the bottom board of transnational issues outside the control of governments – including everything from climate change to pandemics to transnational terrorism – power is chaotically distributed, and it makes no sense at all to claim American hegemony.”<sup>11</sup> Given the role that the United States plays in the main spheres conceptually and practically connected with the idea of global governance, its involvement in current changes is absolutely necessary. American-generated culture is globally pervasive and the engines of economic and technological development are mainly American. Much of the world’s population can be said to subscribe to a basic American concept of a constitutional government, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Elements of American identity are now global in their reach, and the country plays a leading role in areas crucial for global government. To name just a few of the spheres:

The concept of a global village – a concept which captured popular imagination as early as the sixties.<sup>12</sup> The idea has been co-opted over the course of a few decades by politicians, businesspeople, and academics to illustrate their particular worldviews. In the core of this intellectual trend there is a conviction that the increased cross-cultural contact facilitated by computer networks will reduce cultural distance, making the world an “electronic global village.” The USA, being indisputably the world’s number one technology exporter and media trend creator, stands in the centre of this profound technological and information change. The headquarters of the world’s largest media conglomerates are located mainly in the United States. The American Cable News Network is the most commonly cited example of the new era of global information. American formats of television have literally set the frame for media production in other countries and information is not only presented in the American way but also interpreted in accordance with American viewpoints. Even though the era of American cultural imperialism has passed, its influence over the world’s information system remains. Technology is bringing cultures and journalism styles closer together. Even in the development of free Internet communication and information networks, events connected with American political life are considered to be milestones. The Clinton–Lewinsky scandal in the late 1990s marked the birth of online journalism, and the terrorist attack in 2001 started a real wave of political commentary in blog form.<sup>13</sup> In the second case especially, the Internet provided a uniquely immediate, decentralized, interconnected channel for the communication of images, comments and information. Millions of Americans, alongside citizens of other countries, debated emerging

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph S. Nye. 2007. American Foreign Policy after Iraq. *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, [http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi\\_0199-4364819/Managing-the-global-problems-created.html](http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-4364819/Managing-the-global-problems-created.html) – 21.05.2009.

<sup>12</sup> Term invented by Marshall McLuhan, who noticed that “the world has become compressed and electrically contracted, so that the globe is no more than one village,” M. McLuhan. 1964. *Understanding Media*. New York: Mentor, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Tremayne. 2007. *Blogging, citizenship, and the future of media*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, XIII.

political, ethical and security concepts through this channel. It is worth noticing that the modern information system is designed for the needs of the main group of users: international professionals who base their opinions on CNN, *Newsweek* and other mainstream media. Their world views and behavior are somehow created according to a common pattern. They are participants in a global liberal economic culture, whose lingua franca is English, and the symbols of which, trademarks, are recognizable everywhere in the world. The United States, as the leader of communication technology, has strongly influenced the shape of today's information channels and the quality of its information content.

Global civil society is one of the most potentially influential ideas that is on the rise today. It is the vision of a transnational forum for debate and an action-oriented network able to influence the framework of global governance, strictly connected with the information revolution. The Internet era has empowered networks and private institutions to play direct roles in world politics, both as complements to international institutions and as substitutes for them. The development of communication technology has enabled the existence of a global public sphere, where noninstrumental communication can take place. With the changing subject matter of global politics come changing goals and governing models, thus the twenty-first century is shaping up as an era in which citizens, social entrepreneurs, and volunteers join forces to solve problems. The new media, communication technology and governance models are transferring unprecedented power to a variety of transnational social organizations and movements.<sup>14</sup> The number of non-governmental organizations operating internationally (INGOs) has grown rapidly in recent years (see Table 1).

Several million people are engaged in numerous projects of this sector, which disburses more money than the United Nations.<sup>15</sup> These networks are concentrated within a few areas, such as the environment, human rights and progress in the developing world. All of these spheres are truly global, influencing people's lives today and the future of nearly all societies. NGO and advocacy networks represent the new quality of transnational actors: they act as diplomats who, in contrast to government members, represent constituencies that are not bound by territory but by common values. The rise of transnational threats necessitates new forms of international cooperation and the realm of formal, interstate politics is widening. As the problem-solving capacity of existing international institutions is in many areas not effective, accountable or fast enough to resolve global dilemmas, they are handled partly and increasingly by civil society's many operating agencies (see Table 2).

Global civil society, although still uncoordinated and divided, is likely to strengthen its position in the hierarchy of the world's influential powers. Seen as an international public interests network, it can be surprisingly effective in managing global actions, but on the other hand it still faces many challenges. As a UNDP report pointed out: the global governance mechanisms are "too geographically unbalanced, dominated by the

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<sup>14</sup> A corollary to advocacy networks and social movements is the rise of transnational illicit organizations motivated by political goals (Al Qaeda) or simple international crime networks (Mara Salvatrucha).

<sup>15</sup> John Keane. 2003. *Global Civil Society?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 5.

largest economies (...). The structures and processes of global policy-making are not representative (...). There are no mechanisms for making ethical standards and human rights binding for corporations and individuals, not just governments.”<sup>16</sup>

The “institutional channel” is the architecture of international decision-making which must address the most pressing threats and take advantage of opportunities, and is based on regional and global institutions and multilateral arrangements. Some critics argue that global governance is a product of elite Western interests, corporate standards and institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the World Bank. Others point out that despite the commonality of interests of its members, most of them remain quite passive and ineffective. The only truly global organization – the United Nations, a noble symbol of human concern and international solidarity – is considered today to be weak and lacking in legitimacy. Other crucial institutions of global governance – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have remained largely unchanged since the end of World War II. In face of growing economic, legal and environmental concerns, almost all the major international players are actively searching for any possible mechanisms of cooperation. In fact, many functions provided by international organizations are now being conducted by NGOs and INGOs, constantly growing in numbers (see Table 3). In order to deal with particular problems, states and others actors can also create an ad hoc arrangement. Another interesting form of cooperation is represented by the World Commission on Dams, gathering representatives of governments, private industry and NGOs for the aim of establishing guidelines for decision-making on large dam constructions. In fact, apart from the main international regimes based on international organizations, a rise of other forms of cooperation can be noticed on the international stage. These various efforts at public, public-private and global governance are not well-organized, but they are all based on regular interactions across national boundaries of governmental and nongovernmental actors. As World Bank Vice-President for Europe Jean-Francois Rischard argues: “One thing is sure: global complexity [is creating a] global governance crisis, that will have to be solved through new ways of working together globally, and bold departures from old, trusted concepts.”<sup>17</sup> States and organizations must relocate their power and bring old rules in line with new realities. Such needs and great hopes for a new model of global cooperation have been expressed in international power circles since the end of the Cold War. They have also been strictly connected with the American leadership and the country’s will to spread its political values across the world. It soon became clear, however, that although the United States was the first to create international organizations, it was also the first to forsake them.<sup>18</sup> “Angry isolationism,” “unilateral

<sup>16</sup> *Globalization with a human face*. Human Development Report. 1999. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Charles W. Kegley, Eugene R. Wittkopf. 2008. *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning EMEA, 162.

<sup>18</sup> The history of America’s involvement in building international governing bodies dates back to Woodrow Wilson, who thought up the idea of the League of Nations (although the United States never joined). After World War II the United States was deeply involved in the United Nations initiative. However, at

moment,” and “go-it-alone policies” have been the phrases defining the American strategy towards international cooperation over recent decades. The unwillingness of the former administration to be bound by any international treaties which might produce judgments unfavorable to American interests has led to the withdrawal of the United States from key international agreements.<sup>19</sup> Although U.S. national interest will remain at the core of foreign policy under President Obama, his foreign policy strategy emphasizes diplomacy, multilateralism and cooperation. It seems that his vision of the world’s affairs is in accordance with global governance ideas provided that American leadership remains: “America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, and the world cannot meet them without America. We can neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission. We must lead the world by deed and by example.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite such political rhetoric the level of American involvement in creating a new model of global governance still remains uncertain. The United States is likely to adopt a more multilateral image in the years ahead, but the concept of global governance from an American perspective is still just a mere fantasy. On the other hand, American political concepts and identity have often been ahead of their time, and Americans are good at transforming fresh visions into reality. In the case of global governance, however, there are many reasons to suppose that the United States will not easily accept the necessity of subordination to any new global norms or supranational institutions. First of all, despite its recent declarations of intent, the United States is not a team player on the international scene. It is likely to remain an extraordinarily powerful country that perceives itself as both necessary to preserve world order and privileged to act ‘above’ world rules if necessary. The country’s longstanding tradition of exceptionalism has emerged from its vigilance in guarding its sovereign prerogatives from the perceived incursions of international bodies. In addition, many approaches which have emerged in the area of global governance do not fit easily into the conventional American view of its leading position on the world’s political stage. America, the global empire in a changing international system, somehow understands itself and its relations with the world in terms of assumptions formed at the end of the Cold War. Its behavior is determined less by imperial considerations than by concerns about its own domestic public opinion.

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the end of the twentieth century, the United States was almost \$1.8 billion behind in its U.N. dues. In Western Europe, the United States both encouraged and was pulled into the enduring NATO alliance as the key instrument of containment in Europe. Multilateralism was America’s preferred strategy for the reconstruction of the world economy. See: Edward C. Luck. 1999. *Mixed Messages. American Politics and International Organization, 1919–1999*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>19</sup> Such as the Kyoto accords, the land mines treaty, and the International Criminal Court. On the other hand, concerning world economy, the Bush administration was as committed as prior U.S. administrations to a multilateral approach to international trade negotiations (e.g. the Doha round) and to U.S.-led multilateral institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. There are also some signals suggesting that the US is increasingly adopting a more practical approach towards the International Criminal Court by acknowledging its role in the overall system of justice.

<sup>20</sup> Barrack Obama. 2007. Renewing American leadership. *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070701faessay86401/barack-obama/renewing-american-leadership.html> – 20.05.2009.

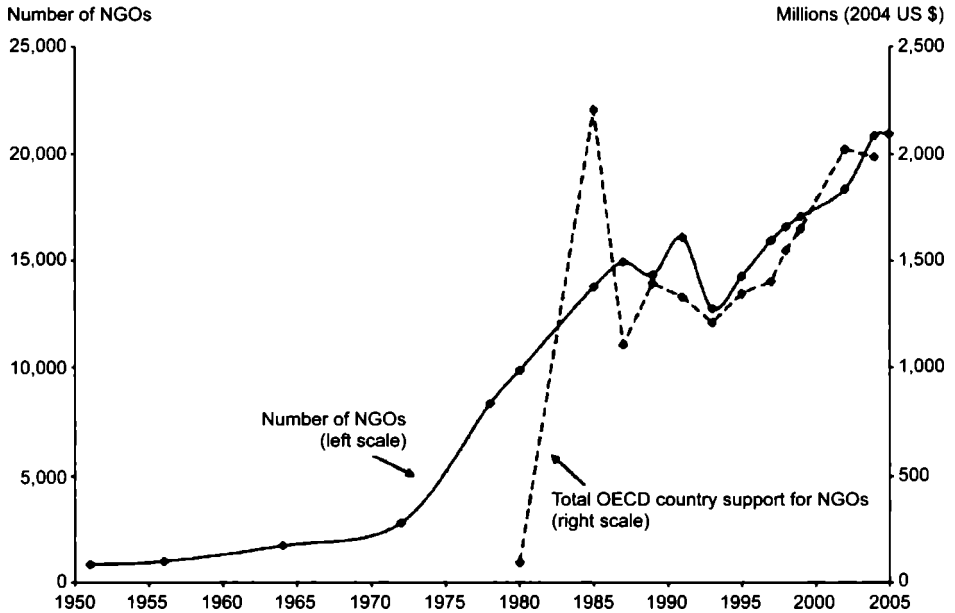


In fact, the global governance project is seen as America's "leadership" mission only among Americans and its supporters. The "unilateral moment" in American foreign policy over the last twenty years has resulted in the significant erosion of American soft power in most areas of the world. The world is still attracted to American values, but not American policy. Nevertheless, due to economic causes in the future, the international power order will probably be divided between great leaders such as China, India, Russia and the United States. The creation of a more effective framework for global governance will depend on a common agreement and an advanced level of cooperation among the world's leading nations. The United States, however, despite its leading position in the global networks of wealth, information and power, shows growing concern regarding the preservation of its national identity in the changing system. American visions and actions have helped to create an interdependent world, but the United States very strongly retains its sovereignty. However, in the emerging global governance system, nearly all nations, including the United States, have to voluntarily forfeit some historic freedom of action to manage transnational threats and exploit international opportunities. It is not clear, however, what the American view on this matter is. Americans faced a severe crisis of identity after September 11<sup>th</sup> and the growing anti-American sentiments that followed the "War on Terror" campaign.<sup>21</sup> The terrorist attacks sharply punctuated the end of the American century. American identity, today more than ever, is one of clashes and disagreement over what the USA is and what it should be. In spite of current concerns, the world needs American leadership and its involvement in drafting the basis of the new model of international cooperation. It is now certain that without global cooperation, an effective, coherent mechanism of global governance, none of the universal issues can be tackled.

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<sup>21</sup> In his last book entitled *Who Are We?* Samuel Huntington asserts that American identity has become increasingly more obscure. He addressed the question in terms of what he calls "the American Creed," which encompasses the values present in the debate that shaped America's founding – "the essential dignity of the individual human being, of the fundamental equality of all men, and of certain inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and fair opportunity." In Huntington's view, America is undergoing an identity crisis in which the long-term trend points squarely towards national disintegration. See: Samuel Huntington. 2004. *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Table 1. Growth of NGOs, 1950–2005



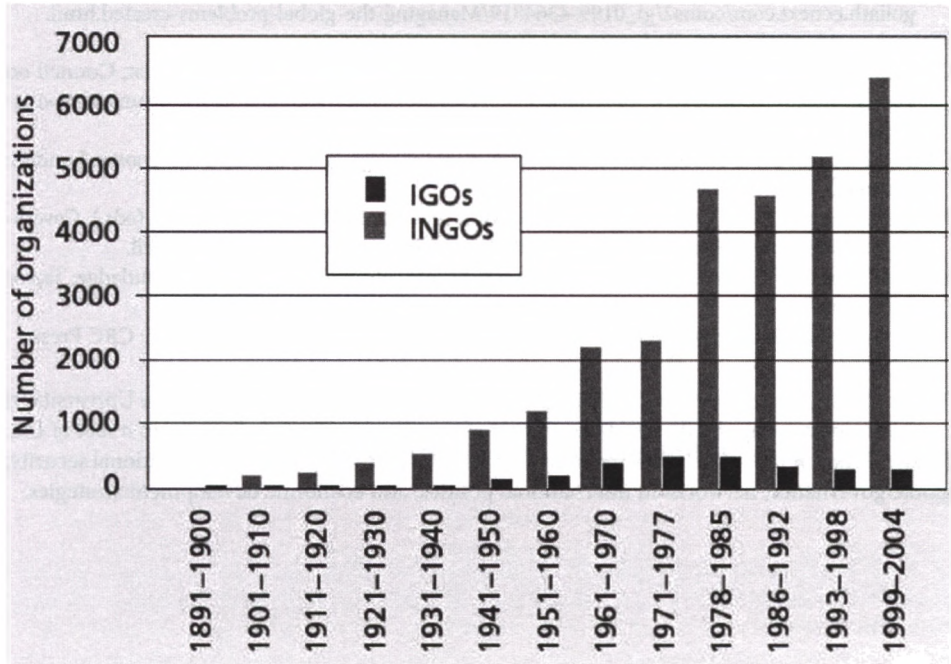
Source: Union of International Associations and the OECD 2006a.

Table 2. Types of institutional NGO actors

AGO	Antigovernmental organizations
TRANGO	Transnational organisations
GONGO	Government-organized NGOs
GRINGO	Government regulated and initiated NGOs
BINGO	Business and industry NGOs
DONGO	Donor organized NGOs
DODONGO	Donor dominated NGOs
ODANGO	ODA (official development aid) financed NGOs
FLAMINGO	Flashy-minded NGOs (rich countries representatives)
PO	People's organizations
ONGO	Operational NGOs
ANGO	Advocacy NGOs
TSMO	Transnational social movements
GSM	Global Social Movements

Source: Margaret P. Karns, Karen A. Mingst. 2004. *International Organizations: the Politics and Processes of Global Governance*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 18.

Table 3. Growth Patterns of IGOs and INGOs, 1891–2004



Source: *Yearbook of International Organization 1985–1986, 1992–1993, 1998–1999, 2003–2004*. Brussels: Union of International Associations.

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