Does the ILO Problematize the Governance-Resistance Dichotomy?

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Within the study of world politics, one of the ways in which theorists have transcended state-centric analysis has been to couch it in terms of the 'politics of Governance' and the 'politics of Resistance'[1]. Instead of thinking of politics in terms of the distribution of economic or military power, this new configuration loosely asks us to examine it in terms of the structures that constrain the shape of international anarchy through formal international institutions and the power of major western powers, or the 'politics of Governance'. The flip-side of this is the transformative, counter-hegemonic forces that challenge the dominance and orthodoxy of international Governance, namely 'the politics of Resistance'[2]. Thus the logic of politics within this context is the competition and conflict between these two 'blocs'.

If however, we add in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to this dichotomy, then many of the assumptions and certainties inherent within do not seem to add up. The ILO formally is an institution of governance; it has a UN mandate, creates international norms and laws and even has an office in Geneva[3]. However, instead of functioning to maintain the status-quo created by other governance institutions and power relations, it actively criticises them and assists 'resistance' group's collective action[4]. This essay will be looking into whether the ILO endorses or destabilises the governance resistance dichotomy. It will do this by analysing the mandate, activities and discourse that the ILO has. I will then look at the ILO's experience with regards to the liberalisation of global economic governance institutionalised in the Bretton Woods organisations. Then by tying the conception of the organisation to some of the theories on this dichotomy, it will look at whether the experience of the ILO confirms or rejects the differing theories on this re-conception of global politics. Looking through Bice Maiguashca's article 'governance and resistance in world politics, I will be analysing how each of the theories conceive of global politics in the age of globalisation. Starting with the Marxist-Gramscian accounts espoused by Rupert and Colas, then looking at Higgot and Brassett's theories of negotiation and finishing with Clark's analysis of legitimacy I will look at how each theory conceives of the dichotomy. The paper will answer the question about this dichotomy, contending that the idea of two closed 'blocs' does not represent the reality of a complex matrix of political and contingent relationships between the 'governance' and 'resistance'. Essentially, to be ignorant of the contestation of the future of globalisation within governance institutions and the political nature of their relations produces a caricature of modern global politics.

The ILO is not a global trade union, nor is it a confederation of different unions. It is a global institution, charged with the promotion of peace through social justice. Formed in 1919 alongside the League of Nations (LoN) and since then admitted into the United Nations Organisation (UNO), the ILO's original and largely unchanged remit was to dissipate social unrest through enhancing the rights of workers[5]. Poor labour conditions were seen as being part of an unrest that could potentially once again de-stabilise the world. The improvement of conditions through social justice would thus help prevent war and unrest[6]. In the preamble, the ILO talks about limiting the length of the working week, prevention of unemployment, worker safety, protection of children from work, a decent wage, freedom of association and old age provisions[7]. The real radical element to the ILO however was not so much what it does, but the *way* it does it. Central to the working of the ILO is the 'tripartite' function, of resolving issues and ratifying policy through talking to the state, workers and employers[8]. Unlike most organisations that make decisions only through states, the ILO's structure of action brings it into contact with actors and groups normally ignored in formal international political life[9].

The ILO serves its tripartite partners through "international standards-setting, technical cooperation, dissemination of best practices, training, communication and publications"[10]. It also runs the International Institute for Labour Studies and an International Training Centre of the ILO. Both of these organisations are committed to both the collection of statistical data, the training of advisors and visitors and general research and enquiry into the study of labour[11].

Viewing documentation from the ILO, a general picture of ILO activity seems to be one of fostering national and regional union cooperation and the promotion of collective action mechanisms to allow workers to collectivise and promote their rights adequately[12]. This process is aimed at a singular goal of 'decent work' and ensuring a greater accountability for multi-lateral organisations[13], including both multi-national corporations (MNCs) and the global finance institutions[14]. Thus the sense of prevailing 'neo-liberal' orthodoxy within governance appears to be counter to the reality of the ILO's functioning.

This realisation is clearest from Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, the director of International Labour Standards in the ILO. It sees itself clearly as a governance institution, but also sees that the current development agenda 'jeopardise[s] development for some and imposes adjustment for others'[15]. The biggest criticism however comes from the ILO's document, 'Fairer Globalisation'. During the preamble, it rigorously argues for the 'social dimension of globalisation' and ties social justice back into the context of world stability[16]. It argues for a more equitable, people based strategy for globalisation, focusing on 'empowering local communities and improved and more accountable national governance; fair global rules applied fairly; and global institutions that are more pro-people.'[17] During the rest of the document, the traditional focus of labour rights seems to be quickly moved into a set of principles that the entire globalisation project should be based on. It demands affirmative action for poorer countries and their ownership of development policies[18], cross border multilateral framework for migration issues[19], greater accountability for global governance institutions[20], the integration of a social chapter into governance framework and the formal representation of NGOs[21]. Fundamentally here, the ILO seems to be not only going past its general area of competency with this document, but also building a positive framework for globalisation and criticising many of the policies created by its 'brothers' (International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO)) in the global governance framework. This seems to be the interesting thing at work here; on one hand the ILO is a governance organisation, setting up international standards, collecting statistical data and training experts in its own brand of trade unionism. On the other, it seems more like a global justice movement, dealing with social issues, arguing for greater accountability for governance institutions, promoting a 'social dimension' for globalisation. What can be argued at this point then is whether the ILO's criticism of present governance structures represents a 'politics *in* governance'?

Essentially, if there is a political aspect to intra-governance relations then this would add another dimension to thinking about the governance/resistance dichotomy. In Rorden Wilkinson's article, *Peripheralizing Labour*, the rise to prominence of the Bretton Woods has not been accompanied with the development of a relationship with the ILO[22]. The creation of the WTO, as well as the building of the Bretton Woods organisations post-World War Two, set in process a project of trade liberalisation and economic de-centralisation away from state structures. However, in this process, the ILO was not afforded a role for setting labour standards to those comparable to the IMF or the World Bank's economic and trade standards. This omission of the ILO from the centre of decision making on the international trade regulations acted to malign workers rights, and also promote a neo-liberal brand of global economic governance[23]. The ILO's separation from the WTO and the lack of a linkage between trade and labour standards, illustrated by Wilkinson, shows a fundamental lack of integrated thinking between the whole of global governance institutions as well as the marginalisation of labour concerns from economic decision making[24]. What is clear here is not only is there a disjuncture between the ideological vision of governing institutions, but that relations within 'governance' are politically motivated and the normative and legal framework for globalisation is a site of contestation and power politics. The prevailing neo-liberal disposition of the Bretton Woods organisations, with its general distain for organised labour[25], has its own agenda that ILO's structure and normative basis cannot converge with. The promotion of worker rights, its desire for the limiting of the working week, full employment and desire for greater regulation of labour relations puts it at odds with general neo-liberal policy thinking. Thus the neat dichotomy of two cohesive groupings, governance and resistance, is ignorant to the reality of the political actions within these two factions. The ILO's differing normative agenda to the Bretton Woods organisation and its

subsequent marginalisation from an integrated international norm setting environment shows precisely how the political reality of the relations within governance is difficult to contain within discrete theories of two cohesive and competing political blocs, governance and resistance, that in turn structure the workings of international politics.

If the experience of the ILO is to teach us anything, it is that 'governance and resistance' as a mode of thought can miss much of the real political nature of global politics. At this point then, the best way to see if the ILO is truly unable to be characterised by the governance/resistance dichotomy is to analyse what one means by this. Do the theoretical conceptions of this dichotomy either fail to account for the ILO, or do the critical objectors of the dichotomy make a better account for it?

As elucidated above, the move away from a state-centric analysis of global politics allowed for a new theoretical configuration based upon global governance and global resistance. For this essay, I will be primarily focusing on Bice Maiguashca article 'Governance and resistance in world politics'[26]. In the article she examines many of the different ways that theorists have conceived of the dichotomy, and thus provides a neat framework for applying the ILO to the different considerations.

First though, it is pertinent to ask, why this dichotomy? Of course the simple answer is 'globalisation'. The rise of power and dominance post-cold war of the US, and the increasing penetration into markets and economies by global institutions based around an American neo-liberal orthodoxy shifted economic and social power away from states and towards a 'bloc' of western trans-national corporations, financial institutions and hegemonic cultural powers. Governments, even western countries like France, were threatened with the cultural and economic dominance from this new 'bloc'. Thus a state-centric account for global politics misses these new structural constraints upon state's behaviour. The boom in communications technology also opened up a new problem for states; they can no longer control citizen's access to information[27].

All these factors thus transfer, for certain international relations theorists, power, and sovereignty over some issues, from the nation state to what is to be known in this essay as 'governance'. On the flip side of this is 'resistance', that is the movement of those excluded from this 'bloc', be they counter-culture figures, global justice movements, third world movements, anarchists, socialists, western human rights groups, ecological movements, women's movements even right-wing nationalist movements. Maiguashca denotes this as the 'politics from below' and transformative in nature as opposed to the 'politics from above' from governance[28]. Thus on this basic account, the picture that has been painted of the ILO does not easily slide into either camp. It is an international institution, but it may not sit easily much of the ideological claims of the 'politics from above', or the organisational and ethical positions of the 'politics from below'. So at this point it is important to delve deeper into the article to see if a more nuanced configuration of the dichotomy allows us either to pin down the ILO into one camp or forces us to reject the entire dichotomy completely.

The first approach is the Marxist-Gramscian model offered by Mark Rupert that denotes governance and resistance as two historical blocs fighting it out in ideological terms. 'Governance' is the faction of capitalists, state managers, international bureaucrats, journalists and mainstream labour leaders. In this account, class politics and international politics are pretty much identical; the capitalists have the resources and power within global politics, and have built an ideological system around the accumulation and protection of these resources. Thus 'resistance' is not simply opposing this class, but requires "alternative normative visions"[29]. Allied to this model is Alejandro Colas's Marxian analysis of Governance as being shaped by "the capitalist drive to constantly and everywhere appropriate time – not just labour time, but care-time and recreational time too". Again, for Colas, governance and resistance functions as a dialectic between capital and labour. However, Colas's account firmly puts the state as the primary locus for resistance. Ironically for a Marxist, he rejects anti-sovereign, de-territorial forms of resistance and instead claims that the state is the only possible agent with the resources and agency to promote the interests of labour against the international forces of capital[30]; essentially rejecting Internationalism for statism.

In terms of the subject matter, the ILO, I feel that both of these approaches misses the ILO's function of both being explicitly 'governance' but also promoting the power of organised labour, and engaging with those who are outside the normal boundaries of formal labour, those in the informal sectors. The idea of two historical blocs slugging it out,

one for capital and one of labour, espoused by Rupert can not account for the ILO. Again, Colas's reliance on the nation-state as the only agent in global politics that can represent labour's interests again misses the functioning of the ILO. As shown above, the tripartite functioning of the ILO fixes the interests of labour into the process at all levels. As evidenced above both in the literature from the ILO and Wilkinson's account, the ILO offers an 'alternative normative vision' of global governance. With Rupert's account, this would equate it with 'resistance', despite the reality of it being a governing structure.

Both account's entrenched view of what 'governance' is and what 'resistance' simply misses the more complicated and nuanced reality of these institutions. The idea that governance is a 'bloc' that functions purely for the interests of capital and only capital does not account for the ILO's work in promoting the interests of labour. The strict split between capital/governance and labour/resistance either means that the ILO is a pure façade created to entrench labour's subordination to capital by giving a 'lip-service' to the needs of organised labour or that it occupies a strange, transient position between governance and resistance. Essentially, the ILO as a real functioning organisation charged with promoting the interests of labour within an international, institutional basis cannot function in this conception of the dichotomy. Either one takes a deeper look into the functioning of the ILO to uncover the 'bourgeois' imperatives, or we look at a different, more flexible account.

James Brassett and Richard Higgot, instead of viewing governance and resistance fighting for 'globalisation', claim a more neutral conception of it. Essentially, there is a process of 'contested globalisation'. Instead of the total rejection of capitalist globalisation, the two authors look at ways of 'humanising globalisation'. The neo-liberal, Washington consensus brand of globalisation espoused by certain groups is not the entire collective voice of 'governance', but a particular conception. Essentially, at the heart of their theory is a belief that within governance and resistance there is a level of contestation and negotiation about the right trajectory of globalisation. There is an 'ethic of pragmatic reform' at work, with different groups and interests converging with small experimental changes in the status quo. These different groups may include not just the institutions of governance, but also civil society, NGOs and states themselves. The boundaries between governance and resistance seem much more fluid than in the Marxist-Gramscian account, and seem to imply an ethic of reformism, implying that each group has a stake in 'globalisation', with a desire to make it function as well as possible[31].

The ILO functions in a much better way with this account. Unlike the intransigence of two blocs bent on undermining each other for supremacy, this model offers the possibility for the reform and negotiation of globalisation. The ILO as a force for reform and 'humanising globalisation' comes to the fore here. As the trajectory of globalisation is left open in this account from any pre-determined outcome (either a neo-liberal or socialist future), then the process of change, negotiation and reform takes precedence. The ILO's desire for a 'social dimension' of globalisation thus neatly plays into this. By emphasising the way that governance and civil society interact and negotiate reformist strategies for globalisation, one can view this dichotomy not as two units colliding against each other, but as two malleable agents changing and shifting in small ways to accommodate each other. Again, the tripartite structure of the ILO allows it to communicate with a variety of actors, including states, business and labour. Through this wide communication, the ILO can create a discourse that differs from other governance institutions that may only communicate with states and capital, or in many cases, only rich states and capital. However, the categories of governance and resistance still appear, albeit not with the intensity that Rupert and Colas afforded it. The ethic of negotiation implies that there are two parties (governance and civil society) that converge to create a contingent brand of globalisation. There does not seem to be an account of intra-group discourse and difference. From the point of the ILO, a lot of its rhetoric is exacted against the other institutions of governance while Higgot and Brassett seem to imply a discourse between governance on the one hand and civil society/resistance on the other. While their conception of the dichotomy is more malleable and changeable than the Marxist-Gramscian account, it still does not account for the politics within 'governance'. What this account misses is the different competing claims of groups within this territory of 'governance', and the different normative claims and power bases that each institution has. Again, the tripartite functioning and the commitment to social justice normatively put it at odds with institutions whose commitments may lie elsewhere.

Ian Clark's rejection of the dichotomy is based on an idea that "there is no simple tug of war between governance and resistance, but instead of multifaceted interaction involving a complex array of actors". Again, rejecting the idea

of 'governance, bad; resistance, good' Clark shows how each group or institution can function in an independent manner, not necessarily performing a role of governance and resistance. At the centre of this is Clark's assertion that there is no separate ontological category for governance and resistance. As both categories are somewhat the same, the idea of two opposing blocs does not function. Legitimacy is key for Clark, as the logic of legitimacy emerges from a political process of bargaining between states and non-state actors. Legitimacy thus forms the practical point for analysing institutions. It is, for Clark, an 'outgrowth of a political process in terms of power, calculation and compromise'. Thus the construction of governance is based upon a goal of legitimacy, and of course legitimacy is bred through a relationship with civil society. Essentially, the success and legitimacy of institutions is based on their relationship to this broad idea of civil society, and the more legitimate institutions have the deeper relations. Through this bargaining process between institutions and civil society with regards to inclusion and exclusion, in a similar way to Brassett and Higgot, fairer and more legitimate forms of globalisation are produced[32].

For the ILO, this configuration meets nicely with its structure and goals. Tripartite deliberation structures allowing input from civil society as well as states and capital gives the ILO a good legitimacy score. The issue here with inclusion and exclusion is prescient. The ILO within its field functions to be as inclusive both in its constitution (the representation of states, employers and employees) and in its field of activity (engaging both formal and informal workers). Thus within the context of a multifaceted interaction involving a complex array of actors, the ILO is freed from this straight-jacket of purely governance, and thus plays into the general environment of power and contestation about the nature of globalisation, joining states, NGOs, other international institutions and radical groupings. The firm dichotomy of governance and resistance fails to see the contested nature of globalisation between all the relations between the actors. There is not this firm boundary of governance at the top which consists of all the various international institutions and other dominant powers, and resistance at the bottom consisting of NGOs, trade unions and environmental groups, to name a few. Each of the units constituting these two 'blocs' interact and function in many different and inter-related ways, belying their place and functions. The ILO is systematic of this more complex nature of global politics. The inclusion of those normally excluded from global governance, the criticism of present structures and the normative vision for globalisation show that governance is not a homogeneous bloc with a continuity of interests and motivations. However it still manifestly is a governing institution. It sets standards, collects data on them and polices activity. What, if anything, the ILO signifies is the *political* nature of global governance as eluded to above. There is not a singular ideology or common goal for all the institutions and, although globalisation is generally a 'good thing', it has a contestable nature. The ILO sees the preoccupation with markets, inflation and adjustment as ignorant of the human costs of globalisation. This 'humanising' doctrine puts it generally within an opposing camp to the organisations interested in the 'non-human' aspects of globalisation. In this context generally it would see itself as a counter-weight to those drives, and would aim to facilitate a more 'humanistic' conception of globalisation, either through direct engagement with these institutions or the empowerment of groups that could counter that weight.

The point being made here is that governance is a site of political contestation as much as any other area. Thus does this require us to ditch the dichotomy of governance and resistance? In some ways the dichotomy can help us demarcate organisations in purely formal terms, but assigning normative categorisations is more difficult. One only has to think of Colas and Rupert's Marxist-Gramscian theory about opposing historical blocs. If this were in any way true (and this is not the purpose of the study) then the normative basis of the ILO would be very much different, and its assertiveness over labour rights, criticism of present structures and contestation of globalisation would be fed in to assuring the status-quo.

To conclude, this essay has been looking at whether the International Labour Organisation problematizes the dichotomy of governance and resistance. It has looked at the organisation's constitutional make-up, its normative and legal goals and its vision for globalisation. It has shown that the ILO's goals and vision differ to other actors within 'global governance'. It is this differentiation that was explored through Bice Maiguashca's article 'Governance and resistance in world politics'. Looking at first the Marxist-Gramscian conception of the dichotomy associated with Rupert and Colas, then Brassett and Higgot's followed by Clark's, the functioning of the ILO was used as a means to critique the different theories. Essentially, the ILO's criticism of the present mode of globalisation and liberalisation presided over by the major financial institutions of Global Governance and its goal for a 'social dimension' to globalisation problematizes much of the thinking based around a solid dichotomy, and favours the more nuanced,

multifaceted conception of global politics. Also, by showing the Bretton Woods organisation's subordination of the ILO and the lack of a social dimension to the liberalisation of trade rules, I uncovered the political aspect at play within the divergent fields of 'governance'. Thus, while the dichotomy of 'governance' and 'resistance' may be useful to denote the institutional and operational nature of different groupings, to ascribe normative and ideological natures to the two groups misses the inherently political and diverse nature of visions, relationships and goals that each institution or organisation has.

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