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Does the mobilization of G-20 carry democratic implications in the international politics?



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The composition of world summits such as G-20 might deliver implications in the global politics from many perspectives. In one side, anti-globalization advocates would be those who in the first instance put their disagreement with any world summit like G-20. On the other hand, a policy-analysis of the Western foreign policy, from the G-20's composition context, addresses a well-grounded critique to the latter. The soundness of this critique is related with the new way that for instance China's empowerment is taking place, while the latter is becoming a constant and well-established member of G-20, as a leading world problems' summit. In that perspective, I analyze the democratization implications provided by a socialization of the West with China, in a G-20 context of world politics.

The globalization of world economy has brought thousands of effects in every sphere of global public life. With a view through that, every analysis of a policy impact, say in the economic field, should pay relevance to other fields as well. In that point, the globalization of world economy has brought a circumstance where not only democratic countries have good-standing economic power, but also many autocratic countries are worn with good-standing and powerful economies. The economic empowerment of many autocratic countries has brought situations that demand their involvement in global economic decision-making events. The G-20 is in fact a need, as many would say, of the today's global economy, meanwhile a G-7 or G-8, as opposed to G-20, might not be able to bring wide-dissemination effects, as many global economic policy analysts would argue. A political scientist would, of course, raise the issue of the tendency of world politics from an informal forum such as G-20. In addition to that, the political scientist

would be keen to ask whether there would be any political implication, which would be pulled out from a world informal economic event such as G-20!

And here in Pittsburgh, leaders representing two thirds of the planet's population have agreed to a global plan for jobs, growth and a sustained economic recovery.

Gordon Brown, Pittsburgh, G-20 Summit

At the outset, let me say that, the globalization of world economy has empowered a number of economies that might be dangerous for the idea of democratization in the international politics. It means that, even that economic growth is a key to development; it is also a key to legitimation of autocracy for many polities

in the world. Such a moment is to be analyzed carefully, given that the mobilization of the involvement of an autocratic country in international forums such as G-20, would instead, also, bring implicative processes to democratization from an international politics point of view. This is where the problem does usually stand, given that the involvement of an autocratic country, say China, in a G-20 summit does of course bring huge implications for the democratization as a moment in world politics.

A very short, but important question, would inquire whether G-8 would be a better solution for world problems, such as a financial crisis? First, G-20 must not be taken for granted, given that, the G-8 countries would have enough economic but also political power so as to bring decisions alone. That is not a contest. The contest, from a global political economist point of view, is whether the solution reached in G-8 would be as powerful and territorially-broad as the one in G-20? There is also a little to be contested here, given that G-20's decisions have a wider and more powerful dimension, than G-8's would have. Still, this is not all about the implications that might be brought from a G-8 or G-20 game.

From the root of the problem, in the perspective of international politics, democracy has been a regime promoted and influenced by the western part of the states. G-8 had a states' structure, made up of 7 democratic countries, whose role in the influencing of democratization in the international politics has been huge. Russia only was an exception. G-20 brings another way of looking at the problem, given that a wider range of countries, rather than simply 7+1, get involved in a world consensus-making process.

In this article, let me take the case of China representation into G-20, and the latter's position in the overall political interference in world politics, from the moment of democratization, as the key problem to have been generated by the G-20's composition in the 'new world order'.

At the G20, we've achieved a level of tangible, global economic cooperation that we have never seen before... We have learned, time and again, that in the 21st century, the nations of the world share mutual interests. That's why I've called for a new era of engagement that yields real results for our people -- an era when nations live up to their responsibilities, and act on behalf of our shared security and prosperity.

Barack Obama at the G-20 Summit speech

First of all, let's make an overview upon the G-20. It is worth-noting that G-20 is lately acting as a principal world body, to decide on global financial issues. In fact, G-8 summit is not declined, given that it will still meet to discuss and decide on global security and foreign policy issues. However, the 'discovery' of G-20, under a new multilateral form of building international relations, would of course bring more legitimacy to the decisions of G-20, than it would to the decisions of G-8. In that line, it is easily observable that G-20 is establishing itself as a new international informal summit, to decide firstly on global financial issues, however, due to the increased need for more power and legitimacy, it might shortly show involvement in security and foreign policy issues as well. This is just one part of the argument for the G-20's increasing visibility and power. The other argument is that, as the global financial flow is becoming the foremost important phenomenon for any country of the world,

You know, at home, I've often spoken about a new era of responsibility. And I believe strongly that this era must not end at our borders. In a world that's more and more interconnected, we all have responsibilities to work together to solve common challenges. And although it will take time, I am confident that we will rebuild global prosperity if we act with a common sense of purpose, persistence, and the optimism that the moment demands.

Barack Obama, London G-20 Summit

G-20 is essentially becoming more influential than it was before. In addition to all that, the Obama's foreign policy, is considering the world economic policy as the most important international issue, thus G-20 is taking another empowerment from the Obama's view of the world. In fact Obama's vision for a new world order, is legitimately taking into consideration that the majority of the people of the world, had missed representation into G-8 summits, while the G-20 moment is worn by means of rightness, given that the majority of the world people are getting represented into the latter.

A very basic distinction between the G-8 and G-20, is that G-8 was regarded as a western mechanism of the world, where Russia was the only exception. In the meantime, G-20 is establishing itself as a non-western model of world governance, given that most of the nations represented in G-20 do not belong to the western world of politics. Many critiques might follow the composition of G-20, as shown here, however still, Obama's view on the new world order, shows a more democratic and inclusive world decision-making model than G-8 had provided. Until here, none of the matters brought out as a result of the Obama's foreign policy, with a view through G-20, should be contested, given that democracy is seen by means of nations' participation in global events.

However, if changing the approach of looking at this case, and dealing with the consequences that such kind of summits might bring to the domestic democracy of

We should make full use of the platform of the G-20... We should make great efforts to strengthen international cooperation in science and technology and fully depend on progress in science and technology to strengthen the intrinsic driving force of the world economy. At the same time, we should maintain vigilance against the possible negative impact of stimulus measures, especially the potential risk of inflation.

Hu Jintao, Pittsburgh, G-20 Summit

many hybrid regimes, there are things to be seen and argued differently. Let's say that, a state like China, is a very strong economic power of the world, and both Obama and the other part of the world is aware of that. However, the regime in China is absolutely autocratic. By means of political analysis, the involvement of China into a world decision-making summit, such as G-20, would imply the direct and deep involvement of an autocracy into world decision making politics. In that line, the American president's view on the new world order, being installed by him, judges the world economic policies as the most important international

problems, thus the involvement of China in a world economy summit such as G-20, would mean that

'China is becoming a world power on the

most important world problems'. This is in fact the message that the G-20's composition brings out, as a result of, say China's involvement into world decision-making summits.

At this juncture, the context of the world politics from the democratization point of view, is facing a real challenge, as we will argue below, due to the, for instance, China's involvement into world summits such as G-20.

The first argument to consider is that, the G-20's increasing power as a new world decision-making body, is involving elements such as China in the bargaining process. From that perspective, the involvement of China in the 'same club' with the other Western states, whose position is to demand democratization from China, is decreasing or minimizing the role of the Western countries in the democratization of China. Why? This first argument, says that, when China's involvement into a world decision-making summit, such as G-20, is representing the world goals from the West's position, given

And once again, I just want to personally thank President Medvedev, but also the Russian people, for the leadership that they're showing on the world stage. I'm confident that when the United States and Russia work on critical issues like nuclear non-proliferation, that the world rallies behind us and that we will be able to bring about the kind of international peace and security that I think we all want.

American President Barack Obama after a bilateral meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in the G-20 Summit

that world economic policies are being made, China itself is becoming a bargaining party with the West. Of course that, the West is not bargaining with China in, say human rights sphere, nevertheless given that the economic policies being made at G-20 are considered the world major bargaining events, China is automatically becoming a partner to the West, and vice versa. This partnership, between the West and China, is decreasing the potentiality of the former to put through obstacles to the latter, for fulfilling democratic conditions. At that point of view, G-20 is offering a bargaining model, where the West's interference and pressure towards China, in the context of democratization requirements, is decreasing enormously. Therefore, China is getting a world charge when it comes to world most important policies, and the West is losing potentiality for interfering to China by means of democratic requirements.

By another mean, G-20 is offering a moment of socialization of the West with China, and in the same time, an impossible terrain for penalizing China's undemocratic regime. Let's put through a hypothesis: what if China's position in world politics would be biased hugely, even that its growing economic power is making huge steps forward? Of course that in that case, China would seek routs for factorizing itself, and instead, it is more likely that it would bargain on democratic standards that it should reach as a trade off for its political empowerment into world mechanisms such as G-20. With a view through G-20, China does not need more power, at least

nominally, given that it is now taking its place as a world foremost power. Thus China cannot be constrained by means of democratic standards acceptance, given that it does not need more power, as the G-20's rationale is giving that power to it. And of course that, the final winner in this game, is autocracy, whose stability cannot be threatened so strongly, given the new world order that G-20 is bringing through.

Therefore, a basic question would be, whether G-20 is offering a bias to autocracy or democracy, from this perspective? The answer is tough to be seen at present; however an alteration in foreign policy of the West should not be seen as impossible.

In relations with that, there are two critical moments that seek answer, first, whether China's involvement into an informal world decision-making body such as G-20 could be conditional to democratic standards acceptance, and second, whether the West has failed while promoting the G-20 summit as the new, but most important, world informal decision-making body? I would like to draw two arguments on this, based in an ideal terrain. First, of course that China could have been conditioned while invited to enter G-20, however the global financial crisis might have not allowed that. There is a little contest on that. By contrast to the answer for the first question, the promotion of G-20 as the new world decision-making body is a failure, if seen from the democratization perspective in world politics. It is so, because, first of all, G-20 comprises of states like China whose

regime lacks basic standards of humanization, and secondly, in the form of a question, how can the world politics be transformed in such a way, where the autocrat's participation, like that of China, is becoming factorized globally and established powerfully? Of course that, making a place for China in G-20 due to the global financial crisis policy intervention needs, is not a big problem. However, factorizing this global informal body politically, at the current level, is making the role of China into world politics well-established and non-interfered, even that the latter was not an objective.

As a conclusion, there are six things suggested to be drawn by the foreign policies of the western states of G-20. First, and more generally, it is more than likely that the G-20 states' composition will provide a less democratization impact from the Western side towards the autocratic China. Second, the foreign policy of the Western countries should take into consideration that, the socialization with China, is in the same time a factorization for

China, therefore a soft power does not unreservedly mean 'share of responsibilities' with China. Third, the foreign policies of the West's countries part of G-8, should comprehend that the world leadership should not legitimize posts for countries like China, given that this will delegitimize the international community's search for democracy in international relations. Fourth, it should be made clear that, positioning China as a world power even formally would mean less bargaining power for the democratic forces in the world. Fifth, the foreign policies of the West's countries should redirect the efforts on making G-20 a simple global economic forum, whose negotiations will not interfere into political problems. Sixth, it should be made clear that, the foreign policies of the Western world will not accept China's position as a world power capable to address global solutions, given that the latter would legitimize China's position internally, and would simply strengthen its autocratic regime.