

Smart Talk No. 20

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This product presents a policy-oriented summary of the Smart Talk.

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The Dark Side of Global Governance: Unresolved Issues in Theory and Practice

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On November 7, 2011, the East Asia Institute invited Friedrich Kratochwil, of the European University Institute, to present his ideas and thoughts on international politics under the title of “Dark Side of Global Governance: Unresolved Issues in Theory and Practice.” The following are some of the main points of his presentation and the subsequent discussion with South Korean experts and scholars.

Summary of the Seminar

Since the global financial crisis began in 2008, governments have made efforts to search for a solution to the major issues deriving from the economic crisis through international institutions such as the G20. Debate on the scope and limits of global governance received yet more attention following the international intervention in Libya and the efforts to respond to the European debt crisis in late 2011.

Friedrich Kratochwil began his presentation by looking into the question of why there are well-constructed international regimes but not a good outcome. His focus in the presentation was more on the conceptual issues rather than on the distributive outcome of global governance. In this respect, he focused on three main issues 1) collective goods, 2) regulation, and 3) human rights.

Public goods: Public goods have been traditionally defined in the economic sense as being excludable and non-rivalrous in consumption. Professor Kratochwil though challenged the concept of public goods defined in this narrow way. For example, air which has

been long considered a public good is now traded on the pollution market. Public goods are also not simply allocated exclusively for the public. In any case, the discussion on public goods misses the crucial issue of who is the public. Such an important question in this issue has still not been properly addressed.

Regulation: Developing regulations in international organizations has been about greater transparency and involving all the different stakeholders. The participation though of different stakeholders have been limited, mainly due to the fact that is difficult to identify who exactly these actors are. Even when people are involved, the deliberations in international organizations are restricted to the agenda and unable to address broader issues in global governance.

Human Rights: Finally, Professor Kratochwil examined the notion of human rights in global governance and the way it is defined. The debate on this issue has merged two different concepts of “having a right” and “it is right” which has made it more difficult to characterize human rights in international politics. In prioritizing human rights then, it is crucial to understand which are more important than others and not to treat all in an equal fashion deserving of the same commitment. For example, having the right to internet access and alleviating hunger cannot be both treated in the same way by global governance. Furthermore, the human rights debate needs to focus on who claims these rights and who has the authority to address these rights.

During the discussion, Professor Kra-

tochwil elaborated further the central argument of his thoughts on global governance. He criticized the usual dichotomy on global governance which is usually too simple as it is based on a theory and then extends that (theoretical) model to a policy area without considering the particular circumstances of the problem involved. For example, the democratic peace theory has now become an established thought despite some obvious inconsistencies. This process shows that the wrong questions are being asked and then therefore the wrong theory is accepted and from that the wrong debate emerges.

Building on from this, the participants raised questions about the European Union, its response to the debt crisis, and the implications this has for future global governance. Professor Kratochwil noted again that the wrong approach went into forming a single monetary union in Europe. No thought was given to forming sufficient warning signals that some countries may be living beyond their means.

In a sense this goes back to the core argument that in forming global governance, the right questions are never asked. The solution is always applied without considering the situation first or what the needs may be. Symptomatic of this approach is the lack of vision from many political leaders as they no longer articulate what they want. In absence of any clear vision from the leaders, many people are now increasingly turning to the streets to engage in protest movements. To avoid this growing disillusionment among the population, future approaches to global governance must define the politics involved when leaders ask the right questions. ■

About the Speaker

Friedrich Kratochwil

Friedrich Kratochwil studied Classics, Philosophy and Political Science in Munich and received as a Fulbright scholar an MA in international Politics from Georgetown University (1969) and a PhD from Princeton (1976). He taught at Maryland, Princeton, Columbia, Denver and Pennsylvania, before returning (1995) to Germany and taking the chair in international Politics at the European University Institute in Florence. He has published widely on International Relations, social theory, international organization and international law in US and European journals. His latest book (2011), just published by Routledge, is entitled *The Puzzles of Politics*. Presently he is working on a manuscript entitled *The Practice of (inter)national Politics*. Prof. Kratochwil was appointed to the Chair of International Relations, and joined the department on 1 April 2003.

Moderator

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