

Global Public Goods: An Integrative Agenda for EU External Action - piecing together the UN High-Level Panel Report on Threats, Challenges and Change

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The best way of summarising the European Security Strategy (ESS), the ‘European way’, is through ‘*effective multilateralism*’- the last of the three strategic objectives the ESS outlines. Effective Multilateralism – ‘the development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order’ as the ESS defines it – concerns global networks, the world system itself. As such, it addresses the long-term, underlying factors determining peace and security, through multilateral means. It also acts as a progenitor to the recent *UN High-Level Report on Threats, Challenges and Change* presented to the international community in December 2004.

The UN report further made it clear that Chapter VIII solutions to international peace and security are a useful vehicle to delivering political ownership at the most appropriate level, in what are inherently complex threats and phenomena posed to the international community. Clearly, the EU has the means, and perhaps the responsibility, to directly play the leading role in promoting peace and security in its own neighbourhood, whereas at the global level it will primarily act through the United Nations and other multilateral bodies. ‘Addressing the threats’ demands a number of immediate measures in the politico-military field, but can only succeed in the long-term through the “root causes” approach of Effective Multilateralism.

Effective Multilateralism = Global Governance

Effective Multilateralism can best be understood as an effective system of *global governance*, a system that is able to ensure that every human being, at the global level, has access to the core public goods that the State provides at the national level– or is rightly expected to provide – to its citizens:

- physical security and stability – ‘freedom from fear’;
- an enforceable legal order;
- an open and inclusive economic order that provides for the wealth of everyone – ‘freedom from want’;
- wellbeing in all of its aspects – access to health, to education, to a clean environment, and to similar goods.

These are *global public goods* to which everyone is entitled, including future generations. Different global public goods are inherently related; they can only be fully enjoyed if one has access to them all. Too large a gap between haves and have-nots in terms of access to global public goods is the ultimate systemic threat to Europe’s security; at a certain level of inequality the resulting political instability, extremism and violence, economic unpredictability and massive migration flows will

become uncontrollable.¹ Although it is still very broad, the concept of global public goods renders it easier to operate, almost to visualise, global governance. It also allows for a clear delineation of policy priorities, which directly addresses the interdependent cluster of threats that the UN Report so lucidly identified. The ESS does not explicitly mention the concept of public goods, but its implicit presence is evident: ‘The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order’. Thus, the ESS and UN Report share a symbiotic relationship to provide for effective global governance at all levels, even it only giving *de facto* recognition to the heuristically attractive proposition of providing for global public goods.

Promoting Global Public Goods: Utilising different vehicles at the Global Level

At the global level, the EU can make a significant contribution both to the improvement of mechanisms and institutions for global governance and to the alleviation of specific conflict or humanitarian situations by supporting the UN and the associated multilateral bodies.

For Effective Multilateralism to be implemented, enhancing social, economic and environmental governance are equally important. An important field of action is the reform of the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The EU should step up its efforts to promote its reform so as to enable it to play a central role in crisis management in cases of financial crisis, economic stagnation or famine, and when a large number of different actors have to be brought together. Next to its traditional role of coordinating different spheres of economic and social development, ECOSOC would thus function as a sort of socio-economic Security Council. This would imply strengthening the links between ECOSOC and the Security Council, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. ECOSOC’s role as a portal for relations between the UN and the NGO and business communities should also be strengthened.

But next to reforming the global multilateral institutions, the EU must also reform itself. It is all too easy to forget that in the South the EU is seen as an aggressive economic actor, quite the opposite of the ‘benign’ way in which the EU perceives itself. Correcting that image requires an earnest effort on the part of the EU to take into account the South’s access to global public goods. The UN’s Millennium Development Goals provide an obvious beacon. This will demand changes in EU policy, in order to create an economic order that is truly inclusive. But the advantages work both ways: to promote citizens’ access to global public goods in the South implies raising their standard of living and setting minimal norms for wages and social security – and thus ultimately closing the wealth gap that is so destructive to the EU’s model of the welfare state.

In these fields, the EU is enhancing concrete cooperation with the UN. On 28 June 2004 the Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) announced a strategic partnership focused on governance, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, with particular attention on countries that are emerging from conflict. This is to be the first in a series of partnerships with the UN and associated agencies. On 19 July 2004 this was followed by a partnership with the International Labour Organization in the field of poverty reduction and improvement of labour conditions in developing countries.

¹ Rik Coolsaet & Valérie Arnould, ‘Global Governance: The Next Frontier’. Brussels, Royal Institute for International Relations, Egmont Paper No. 2, April 2004, www.irri-kiib.be/papers/egmontp2.U561.pdf.

Enforcing Global Public Goods?

The emphasis in Effective Multilateralism is on long-term stabilisation and conflict prevention. But unfortunately, prevention will not always succeed, while current politico-military challenges demand immediate measures. The use of coercive measures therefore cannot be excluded, yet it must follow a tight framework.

At the end of 2003, Kofi Annan established the High-Level Panel with the aim of recommending, by the end of 2004, measures to enable the Security Council to take swift and effective collective action in the face of threats to peace and security. This chimes resolutely

with an earlier exercise by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS),² published in 2001, under the semantically innovative title of *The Responsibility to Protect*. The High-Level Panel has sought to reforge a political consensus for a policy framework outlining the types of situations that demand action by the international community. This is the case when states harm their own populations, when national sovereignty must yield to ‘the responsibility to protect’ on the part of the multilateral system – (which draws its direct heritage from the ICISS report) – but also when States do not live up to their commitments towards their neighbours and the international community, for example by violating non-proliferation agreements, by actively supporting terrorist groups or by the illegal use of force.

By creating a framework that outlaws these activities, the High-Level Panel has thus extended the scope of application of the principle first launched in the ICISS report, beyond purely humanitarian based concerns, to the “*six clusters of threats posed to the international community*”. The consistent use of such a framework to judge situations should ensure that they come to the attention of the Security Council at an early stage – and the earlier the intervention, the smaller the need for military action and the greater the chances of success. Furthermore, in the face of public opinion such a framework would make it more difficult for the Security Council not to act. It would thus also deprive those that prefer to act unilaterally from the excuse of UN inaction.

In a May 2004 contribution to the High-Level Panel, the EU supported this line of action.³ The Security Council, the paper states, must provide for ‘early and determined multilateral engagement with the government or regime in question, initially on issues of governance, economic management and human rights, and then, should it prove necessary, through coercive means, including, as a last resort, the legitimate authorisation of military intervention’. This contribution to the High-Level Panel is, in effect, much more unambiguous on the use of force than the ESS; in light of the implementation of Effective Multilateralism, it deserves the EU’s unequivocal support.

In the end, of course, the political will of the members of the Security Council and of the UN Member States in general will determine whether action is taken or not. On the part of the EU, political will has clearly been expressed to launch UN ‘subcontractor’ operations, making use of the ‘battle-group concept’ providing for the creation of 1500-strong rapidly deployable force packages. The EU should also be prepared to make more substantial numbers of troops available, and provide for long-term operations. While it is viable to empower local actors like the African Union, until they are fully capable and willing, the EU must share the burden. The EU and the UN already closely cooperate in conflict prevention and early warning – a necessary tool for the implementation of the approach outlined above – and in September 2003 a joint declaration of cooperation on crisis

² ICISS, ‘The Responsibility to Protect’. Ottawa, International Development Research Centre, 2001, www.dfaif-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise.

³ ‘Paper for Submission to the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change’. <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/EU%20written%20contribution2.pdf>.

management was signed. The ongoing development of ESDP enables the EU to assume its part of the responsibility for international peace and security.

Mainstreaming Global Public Goods in EU External Action via Institutional Architecture

As Effective Multilateralism requires the integration of all fields of EU external action, at the global and regional level, under the common agenda of the promotion of global public goods, it is a very demanding project for EU policy-makers. For the elaboration of integrated policies to be at all possible, the bridge between all fields of external action inherent to Effective Multilateralism must be reflected in EU institutions and decision-making. Therefore the single External Action Service that is provided for in the draft Constitution should comprise all the relevant directorates from the Commission and the Council Secretariat, in order to unite all services dealing with aspects of external action in one body under the EU Foreign Minister; this will effectively surmount the pillar system that has often obstructed cohesion. The Foreign Minister should act as an effective driving force in this regard. The implementation of the ESS is thus closely linked to the institutional reforms in the draft Constitution.

The ESS as such is not an operational document: it provides general guidelines that serve as a framework for the elaboration of more detailed strategies for specific issues or regions and for day-to-day decision-making. In order to maintain overall cohesion, partial strategies and external action decisions should always state how they contribute to the implementation of the ESS. The European Council could take a decision to that end, in order to unambiguously define the status of the ESS as the overall framework for the whole of external action. Thus an *ex ante* check would be provided so as to ensure the mainstreaming of the conceptual framework of the ESS. In order to provide for an *ex post* evaluation, existing mechanisms like the annual report on the CFSP and the annual Council debate on the effectiveness of external action could be reoriented and focused on the implementation of the ESS, which by implication would serve to reinforce the UN High-Level Report, thus mainstreaming public goods onto a global canvass.

Conclusion: Redefining Security

The promotion of global public goods is a very positive agenda. Earnestly pursuing it, and mustering the political will to make concessions when required, will greatly enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the EU as an international actor – legitimacy that is necessary for the EU to put demands on others that do not live up to their commitments.

The question could rightly be asked whether the very diverse dimensions of Effective Multilateralism still fit under the title of ‘security’. On the one hand, a number of observers from the development sector and the peace movement, and from countries in the South, fear ‘securitisation’, i.e. the EU’s external policies, would be driven by ‘hard’ security concerns and would thus see the use of politico-military instruments. On the other hand, it is feared that by widening the notion of ‘security’ too much, it becomes meaningless.

Perhaps the solution is to turn it around. The ‘EU way’ is to see security concerns through the more benign prism of issues of good governance, development, environmental issues and human rights. It is only when they pose a credible politico-military threat to the local population, to a region, to the EU or to the international community itself, that they get viewed as malignant security threats. ‘European Security Strategy’ was not such a good title after all – a Comprehensive Strategy for External Action is what it should be, and what it will be if Effective Multilateralism is effectively implemented. Meanwhile, the 38th floor of the UN Plaza, can sit back and watch Effective

Multilateralism in action as a latent expression of meeting the *Threats, Challenges and Change* of the twenty-first century.

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