
FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENCE

Integrating Peace, Security and Environmental Priorities in EU Development Cooperation Policies

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New challenges for the EU development cooperation policy in the global context

Development, peace and security are at the top of the EU's external agenda. The EU and its member states have long constituted a critical mass in the field of development cooperation. Solidarity and cohesion are declared aims both within the Union and globally. As such, the EU and its member states constitute the world's largest development assistance and humanitarian assistance donor. The investment that has been made – in terms of resources, human capital and political involvement – renders European development policies highly relevant in advancing the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

In the current global context, development, peace and security need to be approached in dynamic, flexible, inclusive and participatory ways. The challenges to the triptych – development, peace and security – come from a number of directions. The most disconcerting ones can be grouped into three core categories: the consequences of climate change; the implications of situations of 'state failure' or 'state fragility'; and the effects of the global financial crisis.

Climate change

Environmental degradation and climate change have been identified as development challenges, particularly as their adverse effects will disproportionately affect poorer countries with economies predominantly based on natural resources and related economic sectors (agriculture, forestry and fisheries). Environmental sustainability is identified as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), yet prospects for a global framework within which to address climate change – one that will be workable and will have impact – are still grim.

State fragility and the poverty trap

Fragile countries that do not possess the capacity or legitimacy to govern effectively account for a third of the world's poor. Fragility – combining underdeveloped infrastructure, widespread food insecurity, low levels of human capital – severely affects the development prospects of these countries, as well as their security. There are serious repercussions for the countries' citizens, for neighbouring states and for the global community as a whole.

The global financial crisis

The global financial crisis has been exacerbating the situation for the poorest of the poor. In a period where financial resources are scarce it is vital that the EU maintains its development commitments to the more vulnerable regions of the world in order to contain – and eventually break – vicious cycles of poverty. Increasingly restrictive migration policies, falling remittances, shrinking aid budgets and a shift of political and administrative focus to other policy priorities are each posing significant challenges to the global development goals.

In this context, the commitment that the EU has demonstrated to the development of the world's poorest and most vulnerable needs to be maintained. Ideally, it needs to be further improved. Moreover, the security-development nexus which has been at the core of the EU's foreign policy and its steady emergence as a global civilian power needs to be expanded. This contribution therefore attempts to elaborate on some of the relevant dimensions of integrating and addressing security and peace-related priorities in order to contribute to sustainable development. It also notes the role that regional cooperation initiatives on environmental issues can play in assisting sustainable development and peacebuilding.

The current state of affairs

Development has been at the core of EU external action for decades, and cooperation policies have defined a significant portion of EC / EEU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries since the 1960s.

The European Community and the member states are the largest Official Development Assistance (ODA) donors representing over 55% of total ODA and more than two thirds of grant aid, while the European Community's share is more than 10% of total ODA worldwide. Through DG ECHO, the EC is also the largest donor of humanitarian aid in the world, with grants covering emergency aid, food aid and aid to refugees and displaced persons which worth a total of more than €700 million per year. The share of European aid managed by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) has gradually increased to just under 20% today.

Without a doubt, the EU has been pivotal in framing global development priorities. Poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including the achievement of the MDGs, has been among the overarching objectives of the EU's development policy. The EU's Policy Coherence for Development Initiative aims at reinforcing the EU's assistance to developing countries pursuing the MDGs. It made an essential contribution to the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), aimed at improving aid effectiveness. Meanwhile, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, promotion of peace, democracy, good governance, gender equality, solidarity and justice have been placed at the centre of EU partnerships and dialogue with developing countries.

In this context, it is worth considering two dimensions in particular that are interconnected with development cooperation: security and climate change.

To take security first, the European Report on Development (2009) placed the security-development nexus at the core of the EU's distinctive approach to foreign policy and its ambitions as a civilian world power. There has been much rhetoric, over decades, about the importance for development of individual security, sustainable security, the need to address the root causes of 'state failure' or 'state fragility', and the moral and practical imperatives of the need to address security challenges – real and potential – arising from climate change and environmental degradation. There remains, however, an exasperating gap between declared intentions and the implementation of policies building security and sustainable development 'on the ground'.

There is already wide acceptance across the EU and its member states (see EU Council Conclusions November 2007; European Report on Development: 2009, *Overcoming fragility in Africa – Forging a new European approach*) of the need for development policies and security-building activities that are holistic in scope, people-centred, transparent, locally appropriate and locally owned. However, there are significant implementation gaps and challenges in trying to translate EU policy commitments into actions – particularly into actions that have impact and results.

Five core challenges can be identified in this context:

- Development cooperation projects and security-building initiatives have little (if any) impact and result in conflict-ridden regions if they do not involve local communities and actors at all stages of the policy formulation and implementation process. Even though there is wide-spread recognition of the importance of participatory and people-centred projects, there is still limited public / local participation in many EU projects, which restricts their impact and legitimacy.
- Donor governments and agencies involved in security projects rarely exchange information and communicate with donor governments and agencies involved in development projects, or with the respective, relevant agencies and actors of the recipient countries. Development and security actors fail to coordinate their agendas: they are frequently oblivious of each others' priorities and actions leading to missed opportunities for synergies and wasted resources.

- Actors involved in security-building programmes tend to rely on weak analyses and evidence and are rarely informed by adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- There has been a growing effort to mainstream gender issues in Security Sector Reform practices and to bridge this with gender mainstreaming in development policies, however, this is still hap-hazard and treated more as an *ad hoc* consideration rather than a core issue to address.
- Development and security programmes frequently stumble due to widespread lack of trust and a culture of impunity and lack of accountability in conflict-ridden societies, and due to recurring outbreaks of violence. A sense of justice is necessary for security: restoring the rule of law contributes to re-engaging all segments of society. The reform of the justice sector is key in this and is frequently overlooked as Security Sector Reform efforts overwhelmingly focus on reforming and democratising the military / paramilitary / police forces.

Second, global climate change has its place on the agenda for sustainable development and has been at the core of EU development policies since the late 1990s. Although the EU is undoubtedly the leader in this area, it needs to further upscale its efforts and integrate environmental concerns more comprehensively into its development projects. There is potential for more.

Managing natural resources and addressing the effects of climate change are both clear opportunities for regional cooperation (including among rival populations and countries). They offer the platform for working across conflict divides in order to address shared problems for mutual benefits (Commission Communication, COM(2003) 85 final – *Climate change in the context of development cooperation*). Water cooperation initiatives in the Middle East and biodiversity protection in the South Caucasus can serve as confidence-building efforts in spite of the political and military tensions in both regions. Similarly, energy cooperation in the Great Lakes Region can also serve as a peacebuilding potential. Yet, significant obstacles hamper the potential that these challenges offer for tackling both sustainable development and regional peace and security.

Asymmetric power relations between involved parties hamper efforts to meaningfully pursue regional environmental projects. Asymmetry may apply to different levels of capacity between the stakeholders; different levels of political will; different sorts of resources available and invested in a project; and different benefits – or even rival / diverging interests – for the various partners involved. These asymmetries need to be taken into consideration from the outset of any development, peacebuilding, conflict resolution or confidence-building initiative on behalf of the EU. It is important, and so far it has been quite rare, to include needs-and-interests assessments of all concerned parties from the preparation of regional cooperation initiatives. The needs and interests of all parties must be acknowledged and addressed in order for local actors to have a stake and an interest in motivating cooperation across dividing lines, and in investing (usually very scarce) resources in environment-protection objectives that will also contribute to longer-term development plans.

Thus, there is frequent confusion about what needs to be prioritised in development planning, with little if any attention given to synergies and complementarities with conflict prevention / peacebuilding projects and environmental protection projects (particularly regional ones).

Proposals

Development, peace and security interdigitate and are mutually reinforcing. Improved coordination and coherence are needed not just between donors and between donors and receivers; they are also needed between security, peacebuilding and development strategies. This must be translated into policies that respond to both security and development needs on the ground.

The Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency can constructively contribute to these efforts, given the priorities that they have identified in common and individually.

Spain has declared its intention to attribute renewed attention to the MDGs and to Europe's relationship with the ACP countries. Similarly, Belgium wishes to play an important role in the reform of the European Development Fund (EDF) and the EU's Development Cooperation policies. In the context of the 2010 third EU-Africa Summit, Belgium has declared its intention to concentrate on Africa – where development, security and peace are core priorities. The follow-up to the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit (December 2009) constitutes another cornerstone of the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies' priorities.

Thus, this Trio Presidency can concentrate efforts on three areas:

- Encourage developing partner countries – and especially the ACP – to pursue comprehensive development policies that branch out to include Security Sector Reform (SSR) strategies and environmental considerations;
- Strengthen EU commitment to development cooperation projects that take into consideration security-building activities and conflict-prevention priorities in their planning, formulation, funding and implementation phases;
- Identify areas where regional cooperation on the environment and natural resources can contribute to specific environmental protection goals and wider security implications (i.e. feed into wider peacebuilding efforts).

Finally, Hungary has decided to attribute a major role to NGOs during its Presidency. It can ask NGOs and research networks that have partners both on the ground (and are therefore aware of the local constraints and vulnerabilities) and in the policy-making centres (and are therefore aware of the policy and resource constraints and political concerns and balances) to develop tool-kits, handbooks and training seminars for EU policy-makers and state officials in the recipient countries.