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'Regional Leadership: The Role of the EU' Panel

Rapporteur Report,
First Annual
Conference

Toni Haastrup



First GR:EEEN Annual Conference
14 February 2012, Milan, Italy

Summary of Papers

EU as a Security Actor

The panel opened with the first presentation, which set the scene through theoretical and empirical insights from the previous EU-Framework 7, EU-GRASP, *Changing Multilateralism: the EU as a Global-Regional Actor in Security and Peace*. The presentation contributes to the debates around the EU's role in the global security architecture by evaluating its capabilities, its potential and others perceptions of this regional actor as a global security actor. Luk Van Langenhove, the Director of UNU CRIS presented a theoretically innovative framework with empirical relevance on how to best understand the EU as a global and regional security actor. Using the concept of *security governance* as an analytical tool and applying various theories of security, EU-GRASP designed a foresight exercise to explore future scenarios of EU policies in various security issues. These scenarios were formulated as

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a result of the various findings and are a collaborative outcome of inputs from scholars, policy experts and practitioners.

In Scenario 1, *the US Empire strikes back*, we see the US emerge as the centre of gravity for cosmopolitan values with an Atlantic or Pacific orientation. Security governance will be centred on “coalitions of the willing”, with increasing influence of non-state actors including NGOs and private security firms. In Scenario 2, *China rules the waves* unipolarity is also a possibility albeit dominated by China. This scenario however sees the low influence of non-state actors, the collapse of the UN Security Council P5 veto system, and a marginalisation of Europe. Scenario 3 foresees a *Colder War*, characterised by a multipolar distribution of power of state-led alliances including the BRICs. The international system would be fragmented with conflicting poles mostly based on economic relationships. This scenario also sees the rise of new regional actors with veto powers within the Security Council, and the exclusion of non-state actors in international security governance. The 4th Scenario is characterised by multipolarity, the influences of non-state actors and the intersection of cosmopolitan cultures value. Importantly, this scenario sees increased regionalism and region-to-region cooperation that renders the UN irrelevant. To determine the best possible scenario for the role of the EU as a global-security actor, the central argument of the EU-GRASP research findings is that there are three determinants to strengthening the EU’s roles as a security actor. These determinants include **capability**, **willingness** and **acceptance**.

‘**Capability**’ as a determinant of the EU’s security actorness is taken from Christopher Hill’s concept of the *capabilities-expectations gap*. Capability is evaluated on the basis of the EU’s *institutional, material, human, operational and financial* capacities. **Willingness** to act concerns the “power that member states entrust upon the EU.” Essentially then, the EU’s security actorness depends on the political dedication of the 27 states to all the five capacity areas. Finally, **acceptance** is highlighted as a crucial and often overlooked factor. The presentation contended that **acceptance** has two dimensions: internal and external. Concerning *internal acceptance*, the EU must have the support of its citizens to leverage the EU at the global level. Similarly, the EU must gained external acceptance from third party actors and organisations to be recognised as a global leader. In the presentation, it was argued that external acceptance would depend on the EU’s effectiveness and consistency in global security issues. The identification of these three determinants of the EU’s security actorness signals an innovative model for the EU’s role in international security, and the role of regional actors in the global order. The presentation concluded by arguing that for the EU to be purposeful it will have to be *flexible* to the needs of specific contexts, *focused* on specific security issues in which it has the strengths and *fast* in responding to crisis.

Assessing Regional Leadership

In the second presentation, Marieke Zwartjes a researcher at UNU-CRIS builds on the first presentation. In *Conceptualizing Regional Leadership*, Zwartjes reiterates the importance of regions, the proliferation of regional

organisations in the global political order. This presentation placed special emphasis on the conditions under which regional leaders emerge arguing that states still matter in organising regional groups and therefore constitute an important unit of analysis in assessing the role of regions in the world. The presentation went on to make a critical conceptual distinction between regional hegemony, regional power and regional leadership. Zwartjes argued that while the reference to a state as a regional power is vague and imprecise, the idea of a regional hegemon tends to connote supremacy and dominance. In using the terminology of regional leader in reference to a state that shapes the regional integration process and external actorness of a region, the definition offered suggests a position which has been attained through common goals, in the first instance. The theoretical argument of this presentation was that, positioning theory is best placed to help determine who constitutes a regional leader. In essence, positions are determined by clusters of rights and duties determined by speech acts, and specific narratives or storylines.

EU support for Regional-Global Cooperation

The paper upon which the third panel presentation was based was written by Stephen Kingah and Aliya Salimzhuarova, and presented at the conference by Kingah. The paper examined the issue of legitimacy in the international development government regime through an assessment of the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks (RDBs). The authors attempt to answer the question of how enhanced coordination between the World Bank and the RDBs can ultimately address inequalities around the world. The paper offers an analytical history of the WB as well as the process that has necessitated its reform. In the second section the paper addresses the criticism around the operation of the World Bank especially its legitimacy to represent the interests of the poorest countries within the global political economy regime. Subsequently, the authors further their argument that the inclusion of RDBs into the global economic and financial system through greater coordination with and integration into the World Bank could mitigate some of the criticism levied against the multilateral loaning agency. The WB has often been criticised for being unrepresentative to the diversity of interest in the global system. Thus, further coordination would make the banking system more legitimate. In linking assessing the added value of RDB inclusion into the global economic and financial system, the authors present a succinct description of the four existing regional development banks in Africa, Europe, the Americas and Asia.

The authors further argue that the increased coordination between the RDBs and the WB would enhance efficiency by avoiding duplication of services and it would also help to manage competition for scarce resources. In time, this would lead to greater organisational and substantive alignment amongst the RDBs.

Questions and Answers

Panel Discussions

The model established by these first two presentations was praised as “ambitious”, telling us something even beyond leadership. Rather, it was suggested that the project on the emergence of regions in the global political regime be acknowledged as a transformative process.

Another participant noted that the public goods approach to regionalism had not been used in identifying how regional leaders emerged. The relevance of this approach was noted by both Van Langenhove and Zwartjes. Both conceded that it could help to elucidate on the negative and positive aspects of regional leadership, as is relevant in the context of GR:EEN WP3.

One of the criticisms levied against the underlying model of regional leadership is what was termed “phony correlation.” Essentially, one of the conference participants noted at length that in using speech acts as a determinant of a potential regional leader for example, this model cannot determine real power or leadership but rely on “media” interpretations of who a regional power is. This has implications for policy making. Indeed, one of the questions posed was how does the model reconcile competing understandings of acceptance in a specific issue area within a given region? This was taken as one of the issues that will be further probed as WP3 continues.

Another intervention which came up during the discussion asked how regional leadership was determined i.e. are regional leaders identified and then the model applied, or does the model point out the regional leaders? This was a particularly pertinent question in light of the fact that several participants identified the contestation within regions regarding who is ‘accepted’ as a leader. In addition to this, the presentations did not clarify on how to assess leadership from elsewhere, which had marked influence on a particular region. Concerning the third presentation, one of the issues raised during the panel was whether increased coordination amongst the RDBs could render the World Bank less relevant in the Global Political Economy; however, Kingah noted that the multilateral nature of the World Bank and its extensive technical experience will continue to have a “global added-value” on the Global Political Economy. While the substantive role of the EU is not fully elucidated in the paper, the panel discussion yield more details about the EU’s support of WB and RDB integrations including areas of cooperation, shared capabilities, infrastructure development and budgeting.

Conclusions and Significant Considerations and Criticisms Raised

Conclusions

This panel was a good basis for work conducted under GR:EEN WP3. Further research on the regional leadership/EU as a global-regional actor model ought to consider the inclusion of precise definitions of what constitutes a region. Are they geographically contiguous spaces (material dimension) as in Africa, or socially constructed models as in the BRICs? Further, how does one classify none members of the region who significantly impact regional politics? In addition to these questions, while effectiveness and consistency are

identified as conditions of external acceptance, what constitutes effectiveness is unclear. Indeed, this final dimension of acceptance is critical to the legitimacy of the EU as a global-regional security actor, and to the legitimacy of emerging regional governance structures.

Going Forward

The theoretical model presented at this panel will be refined as the basis for GR:EEN WP3. Workshops will be held in Warwick and Bruges on the themes around regions within the global political economy including the Crisis and security issues. The panel papers will be added on as GR:EEN working papers.