

Is European Union the Right Actor for Implementing Human Security¹

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The focus of the global debate on international development has recently experienced a paradigm shift from the question of quality, targeting or the quantity of the official development assistance (ODA) to what should be the primary aim of such ODA. In the post 9/11 world security agenda has influenced all areas of international relations so much that some of the international consensus were revisited. The so called Washington consensus with a neo-liberal agenda is now transforming into the New Institutional Economics² where the primacy of governing institutions is now brought back into attention. The consensus among the international aid donors in the early 1990s to promote democracy and human rights in aid recipient countries now includes the promotion of good governance. Even the US policy-makers and thinkers, after a few decades-long scepticism, are reconsidering the importance of social engineering through development aid³. Also, of notable interest is the downgrading of the international development agenda from the goal of achieving sustainable human development to the goal of ensuring human security.

The United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) first initiated the concept of 'human security' in 1994, when it published its Human Development Report on this theme⁴. The report broadened the scope of both the concept of human development and security. Human security has been defined as both safety from *chronic* threats such as hunger, disease and repression and protection from *sudden and harmful* disruptions in the patterns of daily life – in homes, in jobs or in communities. The Report, however, draws a distinction between Human Development, which is a broader concept, and human security. 'Human Development', as the Report argues is 'a process of widening the range of people's choices', whereas human security means that 'people can exercise these choices safely and freely – and they can be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow'⁵. The concept of human security is thus different from traditional territorial security although the lack of the latter will also affect human security.

On European terms, the concept of human security has been summarised in one sentence: it is the 'freedom for individuals from basic insecurities caused by human rights violations'⁶. The proponents of the human security doctrine for Europe considered this definition mainly on three grounds: *moral, legal and enlightened self-interest*⁷. The doctrine was an immediate response to the Madrid Bombing. Although it was not included in the European Security Strategy⁸ as explicitly as the term *human security*, the Strategy indeed identified the threat that could arise from bad governance such as corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability. The Strategy hinted to the human security doctrine when it argued that 'conditionality and targeted trade measures' in the EU's development and trade policies should be *reinforced* so as to contribute to better governance through the EU's development assistance programmes⁹. The 2005 EU Counter Terrorism Strategy observes that the conditions in which an individual can become radicalised include 'poor or autocratic governance; rapid but unmanaged modernisation; lack of political or economic prospects and of educational opportunities'¹⁰. The Counter Terrorism Strategy, in its preventive measures advocates that, outside the Union, the EU 'must promote even more vigorously good governance, human rights, democracy as well as education and economic prosperity, and engage in conflict resolution' and 'must also target inequalities and discrimination where they exist'¹¹. The upshot of these developments within the EU policy-making arena is that the concept of human security is now incorporated in articles 11 and 87 of the *European Consensus on Development 2006*¹².

The question central to our present discussion is whether the EU is in place to implement the human security agenda. In its pursuit of addressing the global security, the EU's position is derived from two broad assumptions: EU is a global power and EU is a significant actor in global development. In the EU's foreign policy literature, it has become increasingly common to identify the EU as a *soft power* pursuing *normative* objectives in its foreign policy and development cooperation. Many believe that this *soft power* approach puts the EU in an advantageous position to pursue *human security* by going into the root cause of conflict. The EU is prone to believe that it is 'well-equipped' to respond to tackle the multi-faceted and complex nature of security problem¹³. This is contrary to the criticisms by some observers of the EU's political *dwarfism*. The EU's ability to bring in political reform in third country through its development cooperation has also been contested by a number of authors in the past¹⁴. If that is true then the ability of the EU to implement human security will be compromised.

The test for the EU's *actorness* in the international politics has been contested for a long time. Sjøstedt¹⁵ first introduced the notion of the EU as an international actor. His work outlined the qualities and prerequisites for international actorness¹⁶. Caporaso and Jupille¹⁷ identified that for actor capacity the EU needs outsiders' acceptance of its competence to *act*. In addition to the legal competence to act the EU also need to act in a unitary way with distinctiveness. Hill¹⁸ (1996) argues that true actorness also requires practical capabilities to have effective policies. On the other hand, some authors highlight the importance of *presence* of the EU for its actorness¹⁹, while Manners²⁰ describes the nature of the EU's *power* to become a normative actor in international politics.

Although international development aid always bears some political implication as being a financial *transaction* between the aid donor and the recipient, the EU's actorness within the global aid régime has not been qualified. It is often argued, mostly by European NGOs²¹ but also by the EU officials²² that a coherent development cooperation from the EU and its Member States, policy coordination and resource pooling could offer an alternative model for partnership with developing countries, thus maximizing the potential for the EU to be a global player. Clearly, the EU envisaged development policy forming an important aspect of the EU's international role, which often be conceptualized within the broader intention to establish international 'presence'. Indeed, improvement of the EU's 'presence and influence in international forums' has been prioritized in the EU development policy too²³. The presence of the EU in the international development regime is but one of many criteria to become a global development actor. In fact, borrowing from the studies on the EU's actorness in foreign policy dimension, we can outline the six criteria: **presence, recognition, autonomy, cohesion, authority and power** that the EU needs to fulfill to become a global development actor.

The presence of the EU can be easily predicated. Through the Commission, the EU is in charge of 130 delegations in third countries and provides €6 billion for external assistance every year. Historically the EU's presence and role have been recognized in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and in the EU's neighbourhood. Before the Maastricht Treaty, the EU's global outreach was limited although the EU still had development cooperation with countries outside the ACP countries. Since the 1970s, the EU development cooperation employed two main instruments: direct aid and trade preferences — graduated according to the interests that the EU had in the countries with which it wanted to cooperate *economically* or *politically*²⁴. In today's terms, this can be expressed as 'combining politics, trade and development'²⁵. Through a range of multilateral and bilateral cooperation agreement, the EU sought legal competence to act towards the development needs of the developing countries. In the third generation cooperation agreements between the EU and third countries, the respect for human rights clause is included by default, a breach of which can give the EU a legal right to take punitive actions on aid measures. That most of the EU aid came as grants also made it financially attractive to many developing countries. A pledge to link trade and aid towards development, multilateralism without any direct hegemonic agenda and, above all, the

predominant grant element in the aid instrument made many to consider the EU as an important global development partner.

In the pursuit of cohesion and effectiveness, the EU adopted in 2000 its development policy with an overarching emphasis on global poverty reduction. The European Consensus on Development²⁶ is now replacing this in the backdrop of a complete overhaul of the EU aid management initiated by the Prodi Commission. This is a result of the emergence of a consensus among the donors on poverty reduction as a main goal of development aid²⁷. The EU also participated in a number of UN conferences organised mainly through the initiatives by the OECD and the World Bank in the 1990s that created a broad ranging international support for a range of development aims²⁸. Most important of these is the UN Declaration on the Millennium Development Goals, which obliged the EU to contribute 0.7% of its GNP as ODA with the ambition to halve the global poverty by the year 2015.

The emergence of security agenda in global governance has reinforced the EU's stance on the political conditionality. The aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the 11 September 2001, the Madrid Bombing of 11 March 2004 and the London Bombing of 7 July 2005 has created both external and internal pressures on the EU's development policy. The EU has already incorporated human security in its development agenda. Addressing to the EU's heads of States at the European Council on 20 June 2003, the EU's head of CFSP, Mr. Javier Solana said: European assistance programmes, military and civilian capabilities from Member States and other instruments such as the European Development Fund- all of these can have an impact on our security and on that of third countries²⁹. On 30 March 2005, the EU has expressed its support to the nomination by the US of the Deputy Secretary of Defense as the incumbent Head of the World Bank. European NGOs³⁰ feared that such incorporation would only mean the erosion of an already scarce resource meant for global poverty eradication and a reversal to the past aid practice during the cold war, when political considerations preceded in aid allocations to facilitate proxy wars and support corrupt and repressive regimes. Concerns were also raised from the development professionals in particular regarding the neutrality of humanitarian aid and increased militarisation of aid delivery in certain conflict regions³¹. While, aid has always, to some extent, been given with at least one eye on the self-interest of the giver³², the post cold war aid was better targeted at alleviating poverty although an efficient utilization could not always be guaranteed. The present pledge of counter-terrorism has provided unprecedented momentum to address political issues. A strong degree of overlap between aid, development and counter terrorism agenda has begun to emerge, particularly in the US but also in the EU³³.

'The poor performers agenda' outlined in the 2003 OECD/DAC paper on aid and counter-terrorism fits within this new security framework in a number of ways and there is pressure on the EU to reaffirm its security agenda too. Addressing the problem of state collapse, and more broadly state failure, is seen to be a key element of counter-terrorism strategies³⁴. It is however not to say that a broad consensus has already been reached and there are advocates of 'soft security' approaches to address the *root causes* – economic, social and political – that engenders conflict and violence, in part by increasing aid allocation. The low tone of the security agenda in the *European consensus on Development 2006* highlights the victory of the advocates of the *soft* approach.

The militarisation of humanitarian assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan, and institutionalized assistance within the EU through the so-called 'Petersburg Tasks', provide examples of the increasing linkage between 'hard' and 'soft' security approaches³⁵. Some advocates that the EU takes the soft approach by focusing on civilian power³⁶. This is because Europe has gradually turned away from traditional *power approach* to a world of laws, rules, transnational dialogue and cooperation. Soetendorp³⁷ observes that 'while all EU member states support the building of a European military intervention force, at the same time most member states resist military

intervention. In fact they lack the willingness to use military power as an instrument of coercive diplomacy and have a clear preference for conflict resolution through diplomatic negotiations'. Such an approach also helps the usual policy mix that the political decision makers at the DG-RELEX are tasked to find for any given situation. Brandtner argues that 'in conflict situations, long-term development assistance is impossible' thus the need for 'humanitarian aid and conflict resolution intervention' both arises³⁸. Once this phase is completed, a move to 'classical' development assistance, and to concessionary trade arrangements is possible. Whatever the approach may become, there is no doubt that a strong new element has entered in the global development agenda regarding how to maintain and make effective international aid strategies in very poor and high risk environment and will affect the EU's future development actions.

To further strengthen the idea of normative power of Europe, Manners observes that the EU has made its external relations 'informed by and conditional on' a catalogue of norms as per the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) than most other actors in world politics³⁹. Therborn, however, argues that even to become a normative power, Europe needs the 'backing of force and a willingness to use it... telling other parts of the world what political, economic and social institutions they should have'⁴⁰. In contrast, Manners identified six non-coercive ways to exercise the EU's normative power to shape norm diffusion: *contagion, information, procedure, transference, overt-diffusion and cultural filtration*⁴¹.

The eminence of the EU as a normative power, however, does not necessarily mean that all its norms can or will be diffused successfully. At the end, the success of norm diffusion will depend on i) the EU's institutional machinery behind the diffusion i.e. is the diffusion implemented by the Directorate General (DG) External Relations, Trade or Development, ii) the party at the receiving end of the diffusion i.e. whether it is WTO or China or Ghana, iii) the norm itself i.e. whether it is a trade liberalisation issue or the issue of controlling green house gas emission, or it is the abolition of death penalty⁴². There is also no reason to believe that the recipients will receive all these norms considering them as '*altruistic*'. Recipients can consider some norms as just benign and hence unnecessary to comply with. At the same time they can consider some norms as harmful and refuse to comply with. The question of *effective* use of normative power will then become an issue. These considerations are quite important in understanding the actorness of the EU in global development cooperation.

That development is one of the major *aspects* of foreign policy and not an *instrument* poses a fundamental dilemma in the EU's *soft approach* in bringing *human security* through its development cooperation programme as the European Security Strategy envisages development as an instrument to address global security. Since the fall of Berlin wall, the EU has seen its importance growing in international politics. At the outset, poverty reduction remained the EU's main agenda, although in practice many other issues have been seen to receive priorities. It should not be forgotten that the genesis of the EU defines that self-interest be its driving force. When it comes to the question of development cooperation, many of the Member States works on the basis what can be called 'enlightened self-interests'⁴³. It is difficult for the EU, perhaps due to its supranational character, to always encourage such enlightened interest, and the reality is that the EU can become inward looking. There exists, however, a difference between how 'Europeans think of themselves and how the EU thinks of itself' and how the developing countries 'think of Europe and the EU'⁴⁴. Perhaps this is not immediately apparent, but the EU is an international set of institutions and its decisions have international implications. As it stands now, in thinking of the EU's 'multiple identity and international presence' the best way the EU can be described is in terms of 'its generosity and its mean spiritedness, its progressive role and how much more it could do'⁴⁵. This takes us back to the EU's capability-expectations gap in its actorness, well known in the field of European foreign policy analysis⁴⁶. To what extent this gap has been narrowed in the field of

ensuring human security in third countries will be examined with the help of a case study in the following section.

Bangladesh's development partnership with European donor countries dates back to its war of independence against Pakistan in 1971, when a number of European donor agencies were engaged in relief work. Although a formal cooperation agreement between the EU (then European Economic Community, EEC) and Bangladesh had started being negotiated in 1973, Bangladesh received EU food aid since its pre-independence period. For a number of years, the EU-Bangladesh cooperation was dominated by the EU's food aid. It is only during the 1990s when the EU gradually moved from food aid and focused on socio-political sectors. In its early years of independence, Bangladesh remained politically volatile and economically fragile. In 1974, Bangladesh faced a state of famine, which was aggravated due to the embargo by the US to release its food aid under the PL 480 scheme on the ground that Bangladesh agreed to import sugar from Cuba. In 1973, Bangladesh held a democratic election, which transpired the country as a democracy. Within two years, Bangladesh Parliament voted for a one-party Presidential system, which caused severe destabilization in the governance and followed by a number of military coups and counter coups. Between 1976 and 1990, Bangladesh has been ruled under military or pseudo-military regime. In 1990, the pseudo-military rule was brought to end by a mass-upheaval led by the students but supported by the civil society. Since 1991, Bangladesh has been a democracy. Political power changes every five years through a free fair election held under the auspices of an interim caretaker government, the purpose of which is to organise the election and smooth power hand over.

Despite over fifteen years of democracy, Bangladesh's governance did not improve. On many occasions the governance has rather eroded at an alarming rate, often to a dangerous level. The law and order situation has deteriorated sharply and corruption is endemic. Democratic political system has contributed to crony capitalism and has failed to address the issue of income redistribution. This can be evidenced by the recent labour unrest in the country's ready-made garments manufacturing sector, which earns 80 percent of Bangladesh's export revenue. Increasing inequality has contributed to a slow pace of poverty reduction in a decade when Bangladesh experienced a robust growth in its gross domestic product. The rise of political right with the help of Islamic fundamentalists working at the grass-root levels has become another woe for the country. On August 17, 2005, Islamic fundamentalists blasted bombs at the same time in 63 out of 64 districts in Bangladesh. It is alleged that many Madrasah (school for Islamic education) has now become active recruiting sector for young Islamic radicals. Abject poverty in the rural areas, ignorance and lack of access to education, social inequity and overall patronage from party political system has aggravated the situation. According to one observer: '[T]he causes of violence in Bangladesh range from economic factors to structural, intellectual and political variables. They seem to be deeply political and social in character and require complex political solutions. But the key factor in the dynamics of violence is relative *deprivation* and *inequity*. The magnitude of violence in Bangladesh is often induced by relative deprivation where *frustrations* and *discontents* of the societal groups and younger generation can be easily politicized'⁴⁷.

The EU's development intervention in the political arena of Bangladesh has on three major areas: democracy, human rights and good governance. Between 1987 and 2001, a total of 7.7 m Euros were planned for what can be termed as aid in the political arena. Of this, approximately 3.5 million Euros were committed thus amounting to less than 48 percent of the planned budget. Such a commitment compares favourably with the overall EU aid commitment of 27 percent of the planned or approved budget⁴⁸ and indicates a strong commitment of the EU to intervene into the political arena. The plan however did not match what had actually happened the reality: less than 13 percent of the budget that had been planned for political intervention was actually disbursed, with a disbursement to commitment ratio of 26 percent. This represents a dismal situation in the EU's political intervention when compared to the average disbursement to commitment ratio in other EU

intervention sectors for the period in question was approximately 71 percent. The amount of aid that had been disbursed between 1987-2001 was only 19.3 percent of the overall approved budget. In other words this means that Bangladesh could absorb only one-fifth of the budget that was planned for Bangladesh. In the political arena, the absorption power was even less — one-eighth of what had been planned for the political domain. Among the 18 approved projects, funds were committed for only 10 projects, only 5 of which did receive funding during 1998-2001. Four projects were moved over to the third strategy. There were no budget approved for two projects, notably both of them addressed governance issue. For at least six projects, no funds were committed despite of a budget approval.

There is no doubt that the condition of Human rights in Bangladesh can cause concern for the EU, but the scope of EU intervention focused only on its social dimension. In the social context of Bangladesh, domestic violence, violence against women, rights of vulnerable groups such as street children, women in prostitution and their children are indeed serious concerns. With the extreme right and Muslim fundamentalist elements in the ruling party the state of political and religious tolerance has also attracted considerable attention from the European Parliament. The EU, on many occasions raised its concerns using a number of channels: parliamentary delegates, donor consortia, debate in the EU Parliament to mention some but few. What is significant is the absence of any systematic intervention through the development cooperation mechanism that will work in partnership with the government.

The human rights issue is not just a donor agenda but it is of serious concern for Bangladesh too. The structure of the legal and judiciary system, policing and other law enforcement, did not undergo any reform ever since they were formulated during the British colonial period to aide the colonial power to subjugate people. The EU focused on mainly advocacy campaigns through NGOs, which only served the awareness raising purposes. In Bangladeshi context, this can even be counter-productive, especially when the government is not particularly favourably disposed towards politically aware NGOs. In the absence of any intervention that can address the deep-rooted structural problems related to human rights and works in partnership with the government, the human rights issue has often been considered by Bangladeshi ruling élite as more of a pressure-mechanism to bring the government to international disrepute and an attack to the sovereignty of the state.

That the EU implemented a significant portion of its intervention through NGOs created problems in the relation between the EU and Bangladeshi government. It appeared that the EU wanted to shy away from getting involved with the government of Bangladesh, mainly on the grounds of inefficiency and corruption. In 2003, a delegate from the European Parliament has made allegations against government of Bangladesh of undue political interference with EU-funded projects and lack of interest from Bangladeshi politicians for real achievements of development projects⁴⁹. The government of Bangladesh counteracted such allegations by showing reservations about increasingly political nature of development aid, the EU stance against the government of Bangladesh's handling of NGOs, human rights and religious minority issues.

In the 1990s, Bangladesh experienced robust economic growth and a slight decrease in poverty. Economic growth and reduction in poverty has however been overshadowed by an increase in inequality. Rising inequality rather than population increase is held responsible for the slow reduction in poverty in an environment of relatively higher economic growth⁵⁰. It has been increasingly realised that reducing inequalities need an explicit and deliberate strategy with the aim to reach the *poorest of the poor*. It is useful to recall the discussions of the Local Coordinating Group (LCG) on Poverty that the key to reaching the poorest is to: combine resources with local social mobilisation and capacity building, and, to create conditions conducive for empowering the ultra poor through a partnership of all stakeholders (government, donors, NGOs, the civil society and local communities)⁵¹. In the context of Bangladesh, this indicates a possible linkage between

the country's governance situation and poverty reduction, which has serious implication for the country's security agenda as well. A failure to achieve human security, especially in a country where economy is growing with a rise in inequality, can cause this *weak* state transferring into a *fragile* state. As a local academic observes: '[D]emocracy in this society of ours has lost all essence and positive meaning. This country will simply sink into a state of uncontrollable anarchy and societal break-down, given the inability of successive governments to undertake reforms in the power sector, communications, integrity of bureaucrat selection, and a host of welfare related public works that continue to be vulnerable to alarming levels of corruption. Terrorism is only an ultimate consequence of deliberate indulgence in such practice that offers no hope to clean up the perpetuation of social evils which only go on to reward corrupt people instead of punishing them'⁵².

Within this context, the EU's third strategy focused on governance as an important crosscutting issue. At the implementation level, the EU, however, concentrates its efforts to promote democracy and human rights. In the democracy sector, the assistance builds on the experience gained in election observation and assistance in the context of the Bangladesh Parliamentary Election October 2001. Subject to an agreement with the Government of Bangladesh, the EU has earmarked 6 million Euros in order to provide technical assistance to the Election Commission and to support an NGO-led civic awareness campaign⁵³. The EU delegation, however presently remains occupied in clearing the backlog of projects that have been carried through from the second strategy. In 2004, the EU funded five projects in the human rights and democracy sector with 3.5 million Euros in total. This was only a third of the originally committed allocation of 9 m Euros in the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2003-2005. For the year 2005, 12 m Euros have been allocated in the Democracy and Human Rights sector, for which, the trend suggests that only a fraction of this money will be utilised.

It appears that the leverage of EU political intervention has either been miscalculated, or never been taken into account when designing project interventions. When aid contributions to Bangladesh from the US, Japan, the EU, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB) between 1995-2000 are compared, the World Bank dominates the contribution. The combined contribution from the EU and its Member States compares favourably with these International Financial Institutes, when one considers that most of the formers' contribution comes in grant form. The World Bank's dominance, however, does not arise only from its financial involvements. Since the early 1960s, the World Bank has funded numerous studies and research on Bangladesh, its society and the polity. The ADB has also funded similar activities. In contrast, the EU was prone to follow the leads from World Bank's research. The EU simply could not harness the advantages of multilateralism to acquire such *intellectual strength*. This is rather antithetical to the European Commission's huge investment in seminal research on the understanding of poverty inside the EU⁵⁴.

It is prudent to remember that the later part of the 1990s is known as a period when donors suffered from what has been named as an 'aid fatigue'. It is also the period when Bangladesh slowly started moving from an aid based to trade based economy. Understandably enough, the influence of the international financial institutions was even stronger during the eighties. At the bilateral level, the US was the most influential donor in the 1980s⁵⁵. As a multilateral donor, the share of the EU aid is rather small (3.62 percent on average) but comparable to that of the US (4.83 percent). When the contribution from the Member States are taken into account, the share at 17.4 percent is comparable to that of Japan, Bangladesh's largest bilateral donor in the 1990s⁵⁶ and slightly lower than individual share from the World Bank. So, the EU could have stronger position on various Bangladeshi issues. The influence of the EU might have been more significant, at least on political terms, when one considers the colonial tie of Bangladesh with Britain. That most of the EU aid and a significant portion of the Member States' aid comes in grant form definitely adds to the EU's leverage since most of the aid from international financial institutions come in the form of loans. These advantages had not been reverberated to the EU's voice in Bangladeshi affairs. Until very

recently, the EU, as a donor to Bangladesh, always had a visibility problem. In most of the donor consortia for Bangladesh, the EU representation was merely a symbolic one and could be warranted as walking on the shadows of the World Bank, which is the most influential donor of Bangladesh. However, due to its own charter, the World Bank cannot explicitly address political issues such as democracy or human rights or political aspects of good governance⁵⁷. This is a clear advantage of the EU that it can draw on political interventions and still can maintain the virtues of a multilateral donor. So, the EU is in a better position than the World Bank in addressing deep-rooted issues pertaining to governance e.g. political governance.

Bangladesh is slowly moving from an aid-based economy towards a trade-based economy⁵⁸. This transformation of Bangladesh's economy has mainly originated from the steady growth of its ready-made garments industry, which enjoys preferential entrance to the EU market. Today, more than half of Bangladeshi readymade garments export goes to the EU. The EU market access is thus crucial not only for the economy but also for the *nouveaux riches* that have mushroomed as a result of the booming garments industry in the country. In Bangladeshi democracy, this has defined the structure of the upper echelon of the society, who directly or indirectly depends on the EU for their existence. The ruling élite is now aware of⁵⁹ the implications of maintaining good relations with the EU and thus giving way to perhaps 'a carrot and a stick' approach to induce many of the reforms which would otherwise prove difficult to implement⁶⁰. The recent extension of the EU GSP to Bangladesh RMG until the end of 2008 can be utilised to the EU's favour when pressing for political reform in Bangladesh.

The EU thus failed to see its comparative advantage to act as an actor in the Bangladesh's political arena. The experience gathered from the process of European integration and the leadership that the EU provided in various international fora in negotiating global issues such as trade liberalisation in various WTO meetings, the Kyoto Protocol and intellectual property can be an added advantage. The complexity of the politics and governance in Bangladesh suggests that the reform of governance is not going to be achieved in the short term, and since the EU has decided to re-emphasise its partnership with the Government of Bangladesh on a number of its development endeavors, it is reasonable to fear that most of the EU programmes and projects are going to be liable to the governance problems that prevail in Bangladesh and in turn the scarce resources that has been mobilized for the purpose of poverty reduction will be, at best, underutilised.

Indeed, very little attention was paid from the part of the EU on the state of governance in Bangladesh when designing the projects. This has cost the EU severe delays in a number of important projects and holding up disposal of its funds to two of its recipient NGOs. To make it worse, blatant support to one of the NGOs in question just for the sake of releasing fund has caused diplomatic embarrassment as the Government of Bangladesh, on several occasions, refused to comply with the EU's call for an international audit. For development intervention to succeed Bangladesh administrative structure and governance need reform. For this reform, a proper understanding of the power structure is essential so that the donor can properly address the national power broker, either in a *hard* way in the case of a hegemonic international donor or in a *soft* way when the international donor is a normative power.

It has been argued that for greater aid effectiveness a move towards greater selectivity may improve the situation. The EU itself proposed a self-styled approach of slow/fast aid delivery in this regard in preference to the old stop/go approach. It is, however, another form of political conditionality in disguise, and if not applied with caution, will follow the same fate as the other conditionality. It appeared to be symptomatic for most of the EU-funded projects in Bangladesh that they usually suffer slow disbursements. For example, the Promote project, which aimed at promoting female employment and enhanced labour productivity by supporting gender equity, took eight years to finish. *Selectivity* in the form of slow/fast aid delivery may cause further unnecessary complications

in an already complicated aid delivery system⁶¹. Recent experience from Bangladesh also shows that, in the extreme case, the state may reject conditionality and can even risk of losing the aid, making the whole idea of conditionality counterproductive. It is now essential for the fourth Bangladesh country strategy that the EU shows more engagements on political issues and acts upon its comparative advantages as a political actor to address the political issues in Bangladesh.

In addressing the rising global security concern the EU Security Strategy and the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy envisage promotion of better governance and human rights through development cooperation as means of achieving human security. This *catch-all* type remedy for a complex problem such as human security has been proposed on the basis that the EU has been a global power and it is a global development actor. While the EU has slowly emerged as a *soft power* and the outreach of its development cooperation has become global since the 1990s, the EU still is a new player both as a power and as a development actor.

Within the international development regime, the EU is uniquely set to ensure human security through its global presence, focus on policy coherence, especially with respect to trade, promoting development best practice, facilitating coordination, economy of scale and the legitimacy to promote political agenda such as promoting democracy, human rights or good governance. The Bangladesh case study reveals that despite the EU's presence, autonomy, cohesion and authority, the EU is limited in its normative power and hence lacks recognition as a powerful development actor to bring in political reform. This perhaps due to that, as an aid agency, the EU is a relatively new player acting in the political arena and its complex financial mechanism is not familiar to relevant Bangladeshi actors.

The rhetorical emphasis of the EU's intervention in promoting good governance does not often reflect at the implementation level. This poses a fundamental dilemma as the EU sees the promotion of good governance both as a means and as a goal. In particular, pursuing political goal through development cooperation does not only depend on the EU's intention or donors' consensus. It also depends on how the political elite of the recipient country responds to such agenda. Unless the EU engages in explicitly addressing the political conditions in a given country, the achievement of better governance and hence human security will remain a far cry.

¹ I wish to acknowledge advices and suggestions from my PhD supervisors Professor Nicholas Rees, Dean Graduate Studies and Professor Bernadette Andreosso, Dept. of Economics, University of Limerick.

² Chang, H-J. (ed.) (2003) *Rethinking Development Economics*, London: Anthem Press.

³ Fukuyama, F. (2006) *After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads*, London: Profile and Radelet, S. (2003) Bush and Foreign Aid, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 5, pp. 104-17.

⁴ UNDP. United Nations Development Programme (1994), Human Development Report: New Dimensions of Human Security, UNDP, pp.22-46.

⁵ *ibid* p. 23.

⁶ Barcelona Report (2004) A Human Security Doctrine for Europe: The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on European Security Capabilities, London, p. 5.

⁷ *Ibid* pp. 9-10.

⁸ Council of the European Union (2003) *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, Brussels.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 4 and 10.

¹⁰ Council of the European Union (2005) *The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, Justice and Home Affairs Council Meeting, Brussels, 1 December 2005, p. 8.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

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