The Common Good in a Divided World
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1. Between today and twenty years ago

The biggest mistake SID has made in the past may be the optimism which accompanied the start of the lecture series ‘Inclusive growth’. In the spring of 2008 economic growth seemed to be continuous and the central question was how to combine this unstoppable growth with at least a little improvement in the well-being of the poor. The closure of that cycle focused on something entirely different: how can poor and rich survive, and overcome the revealing and devastating financial crisis! Another important mistake was to invite the then recently appointed and outspoken Minister of Development Cooperation of the Blair Government, Clare Short, with the promising perspective of an audience of hundreds of people, only to eventually let her give an important policy speech in front of… five people. The President of the World Bank in the mid-nineties was given a three times bigger audience!

Fortunately, this has not been symptomatic for SID in the past twenty years. Especially since the cooperation with the Free University of Amsterdam – thanks to Nico Schrijver – the number of visitors, but in particular the coherence with an annual academic cycle, guaranteed relevance of the lecture series in the predictive, anticipating agenda of the changes in thinking and developments. Scenarios of terrorist attacks were unfolded in the months before 9/11 in our series on the international risk society; the outbreak of global infectious diseases and the questions around migration and development were discussed before they became the problem that is now dominating our society. In the series ‘Shaping the 21st Century’ we borrowed the concept of the MDGs from authors like Richelle and van Rij, long before this concept was as relevant as it is now. We borrowed, because SID’s work has been far from original at times. The choices resulted from preparatory brainstorm-sessions including dialogue with relevant policymakers from all over the world such as Mahbub ul Haq, Boutros Gahli, Enrique Iglesias, Richard Jolly, Jan Pronk and Malloch Brown. On the other side and closer to home advisors included Voorhoeve, Koenders, - all these years Loet Mennes – Helmich, Opschoor, Frerks, La Rive Box and last but not least Cor van Beuningen and Bernard Berendse. Selection of theme and elaborations were exercises which were, apart from their translation, more than worth it. In ‘The Big Move’ in 2002 this already resulted in a plea to replace development cooperation, and especially the concept of development aid, with globalization challenge and also relate the title of the Minister to this. The coming weeks this plea will be more important than it has ever been.

Sometimes you just have to be lucky. This year’s theme ‘Common Goods in a Divided World’ has become particularly relevant now it has become clear that we are facing the end of the unipolar world. The questions we have dealt with in the lecture series always have to be translated in concrete recommendations during annual events like the Senate Conference today, but the series’ recent questions have been underpinned by a recent set of piercing publications and reports. Two of these deserve special attention. In his most recent book “What Next?” Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong, Commissioner External Relations of the EU, President of the British Conservatives and current Chancellor of Oxford, elaborates on the big and sometimes oppressive challenges and opportunities that exist in a divided world, especially in light of the common interest or better yet: the public good. Might it be that the new British conservative-liberal government saved international cooperation from its incisive cuts, and announced to increase the development assistance budget to 0.7% on the basis of Patten’s considerations?
A second publication of interest is the report of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy. Especially its plea for a penetrating agenda in order to gain more returns on aid money on the one hand, and on the other hand a policy in light of the new global realities is interesting. In 1990 it became clear that the term ‘third world’ was outdated and in 2010 the entire North-South agenda is ready for replacement. It is no longer a mission of us towards them, with whatever motive – from solidarity to making amends and gaining political influence-, but a shared task, shared among rich and poor countries, emerging economies and especially non-state and state actors, civil society and religious movements, philanthropic institutes, multilateral organizations and, of course, companies. Only in a circle of well-informed actors who look towards the future and are ready to take their responsibility, we will be able to tackle the difficult questions of this century.

Already in 1994 it was SID, in cooperation with FMO, who discussed the different money flows to the South, such as money from investments and remittances. Combined, these money flows are more important than aid money. This is only one example of the necessity to discuss and soak in last year’s theme ‘Common goods in a divided world’, because almost all themes of the last 20 years are combined in this latest lecture series. The global risk society, the role of other actors than donors, the links between development cooperation and security, migration, democracy and good governance, new scarcities, human rights, climate change, and the link between development and philosophy or religion that is shown in so many cultures. By the way, the series on development and the resurgence of religion was the most successful one of the last 20 years, at least when referring to the huge interest in our target group, including many young people and immigrants. We should not forget about the other core value of the past years: The Netherlands alone cannot make a tangible difference in development and globalization processes. It is all about coherence, even triple coherence, between the different aspects of government policy, from trade to security and aid, coherence between all those donors and between the different actors, from government and civil society to multilateral institutions and global funds, to consumer organizations and banks.

When I want to bundle this triple coherence in a useful way I inevitably end up at Europe and the need for European cooperation in the area of international cooperation. Otherwise at least two of the three coherence approaches are useless. The founding fathers of the European Community already defined their responsibility for world-wide poverty reduction in the Treaty of Rome. It was therefore an oppressive paradox that Europe was preoccupied with itself in the last twenty years and during the breakthrough of globalization, with expanding the internal market, introducing the Euro and new decision-making mechanisms. The road from Maastricht to Lisbon knew little exits. SID has asked systematic attention on different occasions for the potential of the EU to make the difference between a human and participatory globalization process and a process of exclusion and overruling. We cherish the hope that part of our worries and wishes are embodied in the policy compliance of the European Consensus.

Our strong European commitment was sometimes at odds with the old function of SID as “country club of the UN”, but this year’s theme has provided important stepping stones to rethink the classical architecture, in which this multilateralism is housed. Not only will the road from The Hague to New York and Washington increasingly run via Brussels, but the destinations will become more varied and determined by the question how we want to come to solutions for the different global challenges. The travel partners are no longer only states. The road from multilateralism to manyilateralism or maybe even messy multilateralism partly runs across terra incognita, but the destination should be simple: how can the common good
be looked after and secured in this divided world. After the largely failed efforts of five-six years ago to come to a workable international order by reforming the UN, we should now develop a problem related patchwork-approach to come to solvable formulas. That is the lesson of the 2009-2010 lecture series.

2. More than pragmatism

A patchwork-approach also asks for vision, and not the fairly simple logic of ‘first there was the family, than the tribe, than the nation, than the regional context, so now we need a world government’. Problem related multilateralism does not have a blueprint and is about much more than pragmatism. It is about responsibility, future involvement, expertise, trust and eventually about values. It already starts with the term development and development aid. Development of whom: of individuals, communities or nations? Development to what: Prosperity, economic independence, participation, self-realization, or the big post-modernist ideal? Or is the goal of development to fully live the ideal of human dignity? Is, like Charles Taylor said, development an atomistic term, my own development? It is all related to this year’s theme and next year’s theme, since we will come to the difference between public goods and common goods. I follow Deneulin and Townsend in their fascinating paper “Public Good, Global Public Goods and the Common Good”. Public goods are goods to which I should have access; common goods are values, earnings, achievements that need my contribution and my active cooperation. It is a difference that is similar to the difference of listening to music or joining the orchestra. It affects the image we have of man and society and it immediately affects the choices we make in development politics.

One of the biggest difficulties that exist within development policy is that relevant views and choices are not being made explicit. Do I follow Rousseau in his vision that human beings are good by nature, or Calvin with his tendency to evil? These are not obsolete theological or philosophical discussions, but extremely relevant for defining the role of government, market and society. The same applies to the term responsibility. The post-war tension between the concept of a welfare state and the principal of individual responsibility – according to many the real source of the development of the West – is the dominant fault in the political discourse in our countries. However, this also applies to development politics. The successful poverty reduction in the West in the 20th century was based on the idea of humanity and society and on values that were determining our economic, social and even cultural choices. This idea was embodied in the so-called Rhineland Model, its relevance being tested again after the financial crisis of the past two years.

The term subsidiarity is also extremely relevant in the debate on global common goods, because common good refers to different layers of communities in which the common interest should come to its full advantage. The state has been the institution in which the common good was embodied, but it should be recognized that there is something like a global community. This colours terms like justice, solidarity, and sheds a different light on self interest, because it is not about the vertical North-South relationship. Human being, human communities, society, market, government, global common good are terms in a domain traditionally strongly dominated by the economy and economic science, and which deserves much more research, discussion and reflection. They are the key concepts for our new international commitment, with development being part of it.

Maybe we should even dare to question the term development, because it overly suggests a linear movement from point A that should be left behind, to point B, something
that other people, preferably us, have already achieved. Here lies the source of the fruitless discussion to link aid in all its varieties to development. Aid-development-economic growth and thus investment is unmistakably a precious and essential triad, but it is not only that. We keep searching for connections between efficiency and effectiveness at every intervention, and the question what these interventions would yield; the connection between the treatment of a child with diarrhoea versus national income-growth. Half a century ago Sartre wrote about a couple that had the wish to have children. Only after the macro-economic prognosis of the coming forty years were analysed, including the expectations of development in agriculture, the demographic trends and the geopolitical power shifts, it was decided to take the next step in the desired direction! We should connect the public good, of access to health, to the common good of the circle wherein this is experienced; in this case the family, village or city quarter.

If the concept of development must be maintained, I choose, as many of you know, for integral authentic development, with a personal, social and cultural dimension and respect for the already mentioned point A, with its individuality, history and existing community as starting capital, and not something that should be left behind.

The name of Prince Claus is not only closely associated with the biggest part of the history of Dutch development cooperation, but also with this broader approach. The Fund that is named after him gives rightfully and in an excellent manner attention to this cultural dimension and the power of people in development processes. As a travel companion of the Prince for so many years, sometimes in the literal sense, I wish to say that the broad social-cultural dimension and the discussion on what is human development should receive more attention in the debate on modernization and change in our country. I believe that this is the legacy of the Prince, who had such an eminent role in SID. We need integral, authentic development, with the view of developing countries themselves and with inclusion of the often so important and stimulating dimension of spirituality and religion.

If it is time to say goodbye to this one size fits all approach for developing countries, whether it is the post-war planning model of the social democracy, the Anglo-Saxo model of the free market, the social market thinking in the Christian tradition or the Washington Consensus, it does not mean that reflection on human development has become redundant. People in developing countries will have to make their own decisions, now more than ever. On the other hand, we ourselves will have to test whether our 19th century ideologies are still useful in the 21st century and in our societies with its current radical changes. Together we have to ask ourselves what the basic values, ideals and interests are on which we want to build a global community.

Although the report of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy focuses on the relation between aid and growth, and does not engage deeply in discussions on concepts, one of its biggest merits is the attention for the necessity to use the starting capital and the recognition of the uniqueness of every people that wants to continue on the road towards change and modernization. Thus, the report also pays attention to the necessity for intervening donors to know and understand this uniqueness and partly letting it determine their policy. One of the shortcomings of SID in the past twenty years has been our lack of attention for these basic questions, due to pressure coming from the more action-oriented development discussions and the dominance of economists from and around the multilateral institutions. I feel at least partly responsible for this.
Fortunately, both the concluding and upcoming lecture cycles offer space for this different and broader approach, with possible more input from European scholars. More voices are being heard, that ask attention for a dimension aside the economic one and plea to replace the North-South paradigm with the necessity to work on the global common good in the coming years. Surely with the intermediate stage of Inge Kaul and the global public good, but always with a gradual bonding to institutional arrangements wherein the reality of globalization is captured in an order of non-exclusion, rights and humanity.

At the moment we have to conclude that a blueprint approach of multilateralism no longer works and there is no clear road ahead, we will need landmarks and barriers and especially orientation stars to avoid getting lost and bogged down. I am glad SID will open this discussion in the coming lecture series.

3. The road towards a workable international order

Who witnesses together with Chris Patten – in his landmark publication ‘What Next’- an enumeration of global challenges in the 21st century, can only come to one conclusion: the magnitude and urgency is such that it asks for a mobilization of all reasonable powers, private and public, business and civil society, religion and science. We need mobilization for an answer, content-wise and institutional. Almost all previous generations lived in worse times than we did: war, poverty, suppression, low life-expectancy and especially no chance to develop given talents. But our achievement of peace, health, prosperity and self-realization has a price. It is the price of sharing and looking ahead.

Whether it is about climate change and biodiversity, dealing with scarcities as food, energy and water, nuclear proliferation, local conflicts, human rights violations, poverty and exclusion of large parts of the population, the fight against drugs, penetration of dirty money in politics and society, the hopelessness of millions new young people who lack work or are imprisoned by a regional conflict or the snatching away of savings and taxes in a global unclear financial system: who is inactive now, and does not share or look forward, is partly responsible for what Lester Brown calls not saving our civilization. These are big words, but they can be translated in concrete political choices, by us, but also by the three gentlemen in the next room, who have been debating with each other for weeks to form a new cabinet.¹

Who is realistic, sees an inevitable agenda for the coming four to six years, in particular around the theme that brings us together today:

1. The Bretton Woods institutions need to reflect current relationships instead of those of 1945, or they will lose relevance.
2. The UN needs a second circle around the permanent members, consisting of members of the Security Council, members of the BRIC countries and some other countries, now that the political realities could not be translated in new decision-making mechanisms. The platform and mandate function of the UN will be the core instead of all kinds of operationalities.
3. A succession protocol needs to be developed, before the Kyoto protocol ends in a few years
4. The IAEA needs to be able to deal with the need for enriched uranium on a multilateral basis, to avoid the risks that come with development and storing uranium in sixty countries.

¹ The speech was held at the premises of the Dutch Senate, which was at the same time used as a negotiation space for the new, rather contested government.
5. Doha should be pulled from its rigidness
6. The Diplomatic Quartet will have to detonate the ticking time bomb of the Middle East.
7. Regional organizations need to be strengthened for economic development and for safety and peacekeeping.
8. Lisbon should make the EU a third partner in global relations on the basis of burden sharing, with responsibilities for safety and peacekeeping elsewhere, which will enable the NAVO to intervene when it is mandated by the United Nations
9. The MDGs need to be reached, or there will be a total loss of credibility.
10. Finally, the post-MDGs era will not be about combating shortages, but about tapping and mobilizing the potentials of developing countries: bio-diversity, tropical forests, renewable energy, water extraction, labour productivity, food production and their purchasing power. It will thus be about goods and services that are also in our interest.

Many issues can be added to this list, but it is foremost a sketch of necessary and feasible political objectives to ensure the common goods in a divided world. Feasible in this divided world? Yes, maybe even especially when we renounce that certain blueprint, and when we complement the traditional multilateral approach with:

1. A problem-related strategy with connected institutions and coalitions of the willing;
2. The activation of many other actors besides states: consumer organizations, action groups, the private business sector, religions, the new philanthropic institutions, media and the new international civil society organizations;
3. The use of new platforms that have proven their usefulness, like the G20 immediately after the banking crisis, but also Davos, the World Social Forum and the Earth Charter;
4. Last but not least, let us not underestimate the importance of the so-called soft law in multilateralisation processes. By appointing Anne Marie Slaughter as the new Director of Policy Planning, the Obama administration has brought in a very strong advocate for soft law as an essential incentive for combining globalization and law. She repeated her stand on this issue in her recent speech for SID Washington.

With complementing the traditional multilateral approach with these points the ten-point agenda can become realistic and feasible.

What is the responsibility of The Netherlands in this respect? The advantage of the concept “common good” is that it is not something that is simply handed over to or ensured by others. It is a product of our combined effort, not only of the global community, but also of societies, the communities under the global community. It is a product of the combined efforts of individuals, municipalities, states and the EU. Global common goods that are not supported by a broad range of national efforts are like planes that suddenly fall out of the sky in air pockets. The Netherlands will have to contribute to the global public good in a diplomatic sense but also scientifically, in line with our best traditions from Hugo Grotius to Jan Meijer. For many this entails our mandate of solidarity with the recognition that a firm and reliable international order is in our best interest. We cannot simply endorse our actual contribution to others, under the guise of ‘for now we have done enough’.

In this context it is about our decision to help formulate new necessary international treaties and agreements as well as help maintain existing ones: from the Refugee Convention to monitoring financial institutions and the restriction of trade in armed weaponry. It is also about maintaining the capacity and our willingness to carry out peacekeeping missions. Of course we can address the free riders behaviour of some neighbouring countries like Belgium,
but do we really want the United States, for example during the elections in November 2008, to traverse the careful attempts to return to multilateralism by referring to the parasitism of European allies? We have to follow up on our promise to earmark 0.7 to 0.8 percent of our GDP for development and poverty reduction.

A core task for the new cabinet will be to maximally use the possibilities that the EU gained after Lisbon in order to promote the global common good. Now we are talking about the triad of diplomacy, security and global poverty reduction. Sometimes we will have to leave advocacies and presences at international forums in the hands of the new European-level authorities; sometimes we will have to deal with the inefficiencies in the purchase and the workload of our defence mechanisms, by strengthening European coordination.

I know there is much opposition to a stronger European role in the field of development cooperation, but I am not talking about simply transferring funds to Brussels. I am talking about task division, specialization and even premiering. When Indonesia needs support in the water sector, The Netherlands can help them, and the Baltic States could carry the responsibility to assist certain Central Asian Republics in their transition to a market economy. And why should these efforts not be doubled or tripled by funding from Europe as a whole? Not the size, but the sense of development aid is under discussion. The previous made clear that I also think development work should be changed and improved, even though there have been great successes. In twenty years I have been a witness: from Chile to Peru, from Indonesia to Vietnam, from Ghana to Mali; trial and error and eventually success. They certainly did it themselves, but aid was often the means to rise up again. The poverty map has changed drastically and people and governments were able to colour the map themselves, thanks to given paint. Nevertheless, things should change, especially because the common good in a divided world need a different approach.

The report of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy has set much in motion and hopefully the new government will develop the recommendations with creativity. Dutch society has much to offer, from agriculture to the development of civil society, but in order to customize our practices for these other societies, and in order to mobilize our strengths we need professionalization of the executive power. In my opinion a separate office is possible, without it leading to erosion of the coordinating task of ambassadors in receiving countries. Especially the strengthening of the relation between science, research, policy development on the one hand, and the practice of development cooperation on the other, is needed. The World Connectors try to complement and develop these recommendations from two sides. The first side is about the role of non-state actors which is explained in the Mulder-Kleiterp report on the role of business in new relationships and new appreciations, and in the Grotenhuis report on the non-profit sector. The other side concerns the bridge to globalization via the recognition that generating global public goods is in our own interest. The clear link between development cooperation and security, climate, migration and peace, offers us a way to a humane globalization process, in our own common interest.

There is more. In the years around the healing of Europe, around the year 2004, praising reports appeared in the US on the new strength of Europe. A Europe that would make a, if not the, difference in the world and would even surpass the US on many terrains. It was the example of what visionary politicians could accomplish with a mandate from an electorate, and a view that surpasses that short term. However, the writer of The End of the American Era, Charles Kupchan, published a new story last month, on the tired and introvert
continent that refuses to understand the signs of new power relations and does not have the courage anymore to bring sacrifices and take risks, let alone put their own lives at risks.

In my opinion, this will be SID’s mission for the coming years, to connect the reality of here and now with the responsibility for our common future, overtrumping the demons of fear, cynicism and populism. Just as I am thankful for the enthusiastic and inspiring companions of the past twenty years, I wish my successors perseverance, expertise, creativity and sufficient cooperation to carry out this crucial mission.