
JAVIER SOLANA

International Institutions are Key to Guaranteeing Public Goods



Good global governance hinges on well-functioning, credible, international institutions that can guarantee global public goods, says the former European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Javier Solana, Senior Fellow at the Hertie School of Governance.

“Our concern is that we need to provide global public goods, like stability—but who is going to provide them?” he asks. Merely hammering out bilateral treaties to govern trade and economic interests between countries will not suffice. Additional, broader instruments are needed to manage issues like rising demand for food and natural resources, energy requirements and climate change.

Solana says the institutions we have relied on in the past need to renew their agendas and their structures to meet the profound challenges posed by globalization. The institutions of the 20th century are simply not equipped to meet the demands of the 21st. For example, the voting systems of the United Nations, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank need to reflect the changes in the relative importance of countries.

“Of course, economic ties and trade agreements are an important agenda point, but beyond the economy, we must also cooperate to establish mechanisms better suited to managing the globalized world,” says the foreign-policy expert, who in the

course of his career dealt with many crises—not least the Balkan conflict, which the EU confronted together with NATO.

Finding solutions to foreign policy crises, such as the recent dispute between Russia and Ukraine over Crimea, may lead to a renewed role for institutions like the European Union in solving such disputes, he says. “People will recognize once again how important political action and coherence are to the EU,” Solana says.

The EU itself is an example of good governance, he says. “It is a sophisticated institution endowed with mechanisms to organise the provision of public goods. The EU is rooted in the rule of law, which is absolutely fundamental: it is a basic ingredient in good governance policies.”

Those mechanisms have fostered greater integration among the member states and enabled new members to join, buttressing political stability in the region. This model can provide a template for other regions seeking to foster better relations among neighboring countries and trading partners.

Javier Solana is a Spanish physicist by training and Socialist politician with an extensive political career, including thirteen years as a cabinet minister in the Spanish government and four years as NATO Secretary-General. He serves as a Senior Fellow at the Hertie School.
