



MERCURY

Multilateralism & the EU in the Contemporary Global Order

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University of Köln, Germany

Charles University, Czech Republic

Institute of International Affairs, Italy

Sciences Po/CERI, France

University of Pretoria, South Africa

Fudan University, China

SIPRI, Sweden

University of Cambridge, UK

MERCURY is a consortium of academic partners formed to examine critically the European Union's contribution to multilateralism. It explores multilateralism as a concept, an aspiration, and a form of international order. MERCURY is funded through the EU's Framework VII programme, with a total budget of €1.963 million. It includes nine institutional partners in Europe and beyond and will run for 3 years from February 2009.

Multilateralism is defined in many ways, but common to all are the importance of rules, institutionalised cooperation and inclusiveness. Demand for multilateralism increases as new international challenges arise. Globalisation connects the world in ways both positive and negative. Trade, capital, ideas, people, technology, information, diseases and crime all flow more freely. Patterns of interaction between world regions are changing. New powers are rising. Alternative development paths and models of capitalism are being debated. International terrorist networks constitute a new and profound security challenge. New sources of conflict, over global warming, migration and resource scarcity, are emerging.

The EU itself has recognized the importance of multilateralism in (for example) the 2003 European Security Strategy and Lisbon Treaty. It claims actively to promote multilateralism in all of its policies, especially those with an external focus. MERCURY's primary research questions flow from the EU's commitment to multilateralism:

- 1) *how should we understand multilateralism, both historically and in contemporary terms?*
- 2) *does the EU live up to its ambitions to contribute to effective multilateralism globally?*
- 3) *what lessons can be drawn from Europe's experience of promoting multilateralism?*

MERCURY is emphatically interdisciplinary, drawing on expertise in law, politics, economics, and international relations. It advances a clear intellectual agenda – to explore, explain, and evaluate different conceptions of multilateralism – but also seeks maximum, practical policy relevance.

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