

Conflict, Security & Development >

Volume 12, 2012 - Issue 5: The challenges of effective development cooperation in fragile states

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Aid effectiveness: bringing country ownership (and politics) back in

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Pages 537-558 | Published online: 26 Nov 2012

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Abstract

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, reaffirmed in Busan in 2011, grew out of a consensus on the importance of 'country ownership' for the success of

development aid-recipient countries. This article considers the role of country ownership in assisting countries to take ownership of their development process, and the challenges that most aid-recipient countries face in doing so. This article argues that country ownership has a key role in ensuring that aid is effective, and that most aid-recipient countries have a role in ensuring that aid is effective. This article argues that country ownership has a key role in ensuring that aid is effective, and that most aid-recipient countries have a role in ensuring that aid is effective. This article argues that country ownership has a key role in ensuring that aid is effective, and that most aid-recipient countries have a role in ensuring that aid is effective.

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Acknowledgements

I have received helpful comments on drafts of this article from numerous colleagues and friends, the guest editors, two journal referees and participants in the workshop 'Unpacking Aid Effectiveness' convened by Nilima Gulrajani at the London School of Economics on 21 June 2011. The work received support from APPP, a consortium research programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and Irish Aid for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are my own and not to be attributed to DFID, Irish Aid or any of those acknowledged above.

Notes

1. [OECD](#), Paris Declaration. The evidence base was large and diverse but was captured in the literature of the period by, among others, [van de Walle and Johnston](#), Improving Aid; [Killick](#), Aid and the Political Economy; [World Bank](#), Assessing Aid; [Booth](#), Fighting Poverty; and Koeberle et al., Conditionality Revisited.

2. Unfortunately, some aid practitioners have fallen into the habit of referring to the Paris commitments, including those on ownership, as ‘principles’ or treating them as behavioural imperatives to be observed regardless of context. In the worst case, ‘respecting ownership’ translates as ‘don't question the motives or performance of the government’. This is a fundamental error. A good example of country ownership thinking applied wisely to a fragile country situation would be [Englebert and Tull](#), ‘Postcon



4. The tendency for political competition to give public policy-making an extremely short-term orientation, and therefore a limited ability to address the real challenges of national development, is a standard theme in political science work on the majority of sub-Saharan African countries. Two of the most telling examples of the modal pattern are treated in depth by [Lewis](#), *Growing Apart*; and [Mutua](#), *Kenya's Quest for Democracy*. The much discussed recent improvements in economic growth rates and some social indicators across the region do not justify a revision of this basic diagnosis, partly for the reasons given by [Amoako](#), 'Transforming Africa'; and [ECA and AU](#), *Economic Report on Africa: African economies need transformation, not just growth, and the politics of transformation are very demanding*.

5. From [Morss](#), 'Institutional Destruction' to [Blundo](#), 'Une administration à deux vitesses'.

6. [Booth and Fritz](#), *Good Governance*, 28–31; [Tavakoli and Smith](#), *Insights from Recent Evidence*.

7. [Molenaers and Nijs](#), 'From the Theory'; [Molenaers](#) and Renard, *Budget Support*.

8. [Joint Venture](#), 'Report on the Use'; [Knack and Eubank](#), *Aid and Trust*.

9. The case for regarding PRSPs, or even the new generation of National Plans, as a true expression of the policies which govern what the state and politicians actually do has been dead for some while ([Booth](#), 'Missing Links'; [Dijkstra](#), 'PRSP Approach'). For a good sectoral example, see [Cooksey](#), 'Marketing Reform?'.

10. In the... aid books
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different

11. [Moss](#)

12. [B](#)

13. That... d decisions.

14. [Gibs](#)

15. [Putz](#)



16. [Lindemann](#), Do Inclusive Elite Bargains Matter?; [Dijohn and Putzel](#), Political Settlements; [Parks and Cole](#), Political Settlements.
17. [Andrews](#), 'Good Government'; , 'Moving the Governance Agenda' and Development Trajectories; [Pritchett et al.](#), Capability Traps?.
18. [Glennie](#), Trouble with Aid.
19. [Moore et al.](#), 'Assuring our Common Future'; [Brown et al.](#), 'Addressing the International Drivers'.
20. [Rodrik](#), One Economics.
21. [Gray and Khan](#), 'Good Governance'; [Khan](#), 'Governance and Growth'.
22. [Grindle](#), 'Good Enough Governance'.
23. Shivakumar, Constitution of Development; [Future State](#), Upside Down View.
24. [North et al.](#), Violence and Social Orders.
25. [Faust](#), 'Policy Experiments'.
26. [Levy and Fukuyama](#), Development Strategies; Levy, Development Trajectories.
27. Levy, Development Trajectories, 5.
28. See the previously referenced blog site (Levy, 'Moving the Governance Agenda').
29. Amo
30. [Boot](#)
31. [www](#)
32. [Kels](#) and the State.
33. The wealth of the state is a function of the degree of ownership of the state's institutions.
34. Disc and Politics; [Dawson and](#)



[Kelsall](#) 'Anti-developmental Patrimonialism'.

35. [Whitfield](#), Growth without Economic Transformation; Kelsall, Business, Politics, and the State, Ch 4.
36. [Cooksey and Kelsall](#), Political Economy.
37. [Booth](#), 'Getting Governance Right'.
38. [Unsworth](#), 'What's Politics Got to Do With It?'.
39. This is a central theme of the training course on applied political economy analysis in which I am one of the facilitators with Alex Duncan and Samantha Wade of The Policy Practice (see [PP and ODI](#), 'PEA in Action').
40. For chapter and verse, see [Sandler](#), Global Collective Action; Gibson et al., Samaritan's Dilemma.
41. [Frenken and Müller](#), Ownership and Political Steering; [Rauch](#), 'Multiple Ownership'.
42. As emphasised earlier, ownership of development efforts at the national level is hardly settled by the mere adoption of a strategy document national development plan; so it is not just the multitude of actors at sector level that creates the need to build ownership by addressing collective action problems.
43. <http://www.propcom.org/> [Accessed 7 November 2012].
44. , What Fits Best? and What's Really Happening?
45. [Shiv](#) .
46. State (<http://w> discussion of equivalence and Coal
47. <http:>
48. <http:>
49. Of co action, notably when attempting to impose governance conditions in a consistent way on



recipient countries. That might suggest that they would be unlikely to be good at solving those of others. However, the kinds of interventions illustrated above are alternatives to conditionality and other devices that depend on direct and coordinated donor action. That is one of their advantages.

50. See [Eyben](#), ‘Hiding Relations’.
51. Glennie, *Trouble with Aid*, 105–106. That is, it costs relatively little and involves less conflict with powerful interest groups than measures in the fields of trade, small arms and financial regulation that could contribute more to poverty reduction.
52. For a fuller account of these issues which differs from mine only on details, see Unsworth, ‘What's Politics Got to Do With It?’.

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