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Volume 12, 2012 - [Issue 5](#): The challenges of effective development cooperation in fragile states

5,696 79

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

David Booth

Pages 537-558 | Published online: 26 Nov 2012

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2012.744184>

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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.

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.

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impossible (and controversial) to measure. Even in these narrow terms, however, most countries get a medium to low rating ([OECD](#), Aid Effectiveness 2005-10, 30).

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

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15. [Putzel](#), Do No Harm.
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](#), ...
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34. Discussed respectively by [Vaughan and Gebremichael](#), Rethinking Business and Politics; [Booth and Golooba-Mutebi](#), 'Developmental Patrimonialism?'; and [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 so... development plan; so it is n... to build ownership
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49. Of course, donor agencies face their own severe problems of collective action, notably when attempting to impose governance conditionalities 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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