

Strategising development cooperation for the (rest of the) 2020s

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A moment of jeopardy for development cooperation

Development cooperation agencies will not, when the pandemic is over, be able to pick up as if nothing had changed. Of course not. The memory of over three million dead² and the living reality of perhaps 150 million additional people reduced to absolute poverty will make that impossible³. Policy-makers will not be able to forget the images of intensive care units overwhelmed with patients, or of families struggling to secure oxygen supplies.

But forward momentum is not guaranteed, and this is a moment of jeopardy. Development cooperation as an idea, as a 'project', may emerge from the pandemic in one of two ways. It will be strengthened if vaccines have been made available to developing countries in sufficient quantity, through COVAX⁴ and otherwise, and if enough money has been provided to support recovery, including through the issuance and reallocation of additional IMF quotas. It will be weakened if neither of these things has happened, and if rich countries additionally turn their backs on global responsibilities, concentrating instead on de-linking from the global economy and on an exclusionary vision of 'strategic autonomy'.

In the short term, there has been a large increase in aid spending on health, some new and some as a result of reallocation⁵. The COVID crisis has also seen an increase in spending on food security and humanitarian relief. COVID recovery responses by development finance institutions have led to increased funding⁶. In all these cases, middle income countries have been beneficiaries, alongside lower income counterparts. Climate and environmental spending will receive a boost in 2021, linked to the climate talks in Glasgow and the biodiversity conference in Kunming.

Beyond aid, the COVID pandemic has also demonstrated that policy coherence for development is not a luxury or an add-on. The pandemic has triggered a debate about the

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² See <https://covid19.who.int/>

³ See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021>.

⁴ See <https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/covax>

⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/covid-19-spending-helped-to-lift-foreign-aid-to-an-all-time-high-in-2020-but-more-effort-needed.htm>

⁶ On the IMF response: <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19>. On the World bank response: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are/news/coronavirus-covid19>. On the EIB response: <https://www.eib.org/en/about/initiatives/covid-19-response/index.htm>.

robustness of supply chains and about intellectual property regimes. It has also highlighted the importance of leadership and governance.

More generally, the pandemic has turbo-charged a debate about economic, social and environmental policy, under the overall rubric of ‘the global reset’ and ‘building back better’⁷. That conversation has been greatly influenced by rising inequalities associated with the pandemic, by new thinking on deficits and fiscal policy⁸, and by thinking on aspects of a ‘new economy’, including sustainable business, new approaches to accountable finance, and issues like a universal basic income⁹.

Finally, an additional element is the emphasis in Western political debate on gender and racial equality issues, triggered by the ‘Me Too’ movement and Black Lives Matter. These campaigns have encouraged further reflection and action in the development sphere, for example to ‘decolonise development’¹⁰.

Bringing many of these themes together in the policy space, the Communique from the G7 Summit in Carbis Bay in June had as its title ‘Our shared agenda for global action to build back better’¹¹. It contained approving references to COVAX, the issuance of new SDRs, and the importance of free and open trade. Gender was a prominent theme. The Communique said that ‘our agenda for global action is built on our commitment to international cooperation, multilateralism and an open, resilient, rules-based world order’¹². Paragraph 63 is unexceptionable in its commitment to developing countries, especially in Africa (Box 1).

Box 1

Extract from the G7 Carbis Bay Communique, June 2021

63. We acknowledge the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 on the poorest countries who already were grappling with the effects of conflict, climate change, socio-economic shocks and a chronic lack of resources and infrastructure. As we advance recovery plans to support our economies and build back better, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through innovative measures and massive budgetary support, developing partner countries, especially in Africa, cannot be left behind. We are deeply concerned that the pandemic has set back progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and continues to exacerbate global inequalities, and therefore recommit to enhance our efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030 . . .

Source: <https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Carbis-Bay-G7-Summit-Communique-PDF-430KB-25-pages-3-1.pdf>

⁷ See e.g. <https://odi.org/en/delivering-the-global-reset/>

⁸ See <https://www.publicaffairsbooks.com/titles/stephanie-kelton/the-deficit-myth/9781541736184/>

⁹ See, for example, the work of organisations funded by Partners for a New Economy: <https://p4ne.org/>

¹⁰ See, for example, these reflections by Eyob Balcha Gebremariam at LSE:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/2021/05/25/reflections-from-teaching-african-development-using-decolonial-perspectives-at-lse/>

¹¹ <https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Carbis-Bay-G7-Summit-Communique-PDF-430KB-25-pages-3-1.pdf>

¹² <https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Carbis-Bay-G7-Summit-Communique-PDF-430KB-25-pages-3-1.pdf>

On the other hand, ‘the proof of the pudding’, as they say, ‘is in the eating’. Campaigners were mostly critical of the concrete outcomes of the G7. For example, the commitment to deliver only 870 m vaccine doses to poor countries ‘over the next year’ was widely criticised. The ONE campaign calculated that the pledges made would lead to a vaccination rate in low- and middle-income countries of only 5.4% by the end of 2021¹³. The lack of financial commitments on climate and recovery were also called out. Overall, Crack the Crises, an NGO consortium, concluded that ‘too many leaders arrived at the summit with good intentions, but without their cheque books’¹⁴. Oxfam commented that “never in the history of the G7 has there been a bigger gap between their actions and the needs of the world’¹⁵.

The baton has passed to Italy, which has the Presidency of the G20 in 2021, with the opportunity not only to lead a wider group of countries, but also to deliver concrete commitments at the summit in Rome in October. Italy also has a key role as partner to the UK in leading the climate change conference in November 2021. Can statements of principle be converted into action?

In search of a new narrative for development cooperation

In principle, development cooperation should continue to receive a boost from the extraordinary events of the past year and a half. The case for altruism as a driver of cooperation is, of course, unarguable. However, the pandemic has surely demonstrated the interdependence of economies and societies, and thus the importance of self-interest as an additional driver of international cooperation. Is there a political leader or member of the public who dissents from the view that ‘no-one is safe until everyone is safe’? In that respect, COVID has incentivised a commitment to global cooperation, which will transcend geopolitical rivalries. The argument can easily be extended to climate change and the loss of biodiversity. The rules-based international order may feel somewhat shaky, but the mutual benefit from cooperation has never felt more obvious.

The European public, at least, is positive about development cooperation. In the latest survey by Eurobarometer¹⁶, conducted at the end of 2020, almost nine in ten respondents think it is important to partner with countries outside the EU to reduce poverty around the world, and a similar share think it important to tackle climate change and its effects in developing countries. The share of those thinking it important for the EU as an institution to have tackling poverty in developing countries as one of its priorities has risen from 66% in 2013 to 77% in 2020. Young people are more supportive on these issues than older people.

¹³ <https://www.one.org/us/press/g72021/>

¹⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lelef9EitNB27Hv1Fb9SZRydyHQo5vph/view>

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/13/johnsons-g7-after-all-the-hype-what-was-actually-achieved>

¹⁶ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2267>

But will an enthusiasm for development cooperation be sustained? That depends on having a persuasive and well-communicated narrative about what development cooperation will be about in what remains of the 2020s.

From this perspective, a focus on the SDGs is necessary but not sufficient. The advantage of the SDGs as a framework is that they are (a) universal, (b) holistic, and (c) comprehensive. They are well suited to thinking about challenges shared by both rich and poor countries, like reducing poverty and inequality, preventing pandemics and tackling climate change. But their weakness has always been that they provide no guidance as to priorities. The road to 2030 was never a straight line, and even before the pandemic, there were major disruptions underway, including climate change, automation, and issues related to globalisation¹⁷. The pandemic has shown, as just one example, that it is more important than before to think about strengthening global health systems. But is there anything that should be moved down the list of priorities to make this possible? The SDGs describe the destination, but do not provide a roadmap.

A revised roadmap for the 2020s will need careful sector-by-sector analysis. For example, in the case of climate change, it might be thought that rich countries can satisfy their responsibilities simply by meeting, and if possible exceeding, the commitment of \$US100bn p.a. for mitigation and adaptation, as agreed at the Paris climate talks in 2015. But this is far from the case. Climate action reaches into every aspect of inter-country relations: from shared technological missions on topics like solar power, to the greening of private sector finance, to complex negotiations on how to account for and act on greenhouse gas emissions embedded in international trade. To help countries make just transitions and reach net zero targets by 2050, development cooperation programmes will have to invest more in science and technology capacity, more in greening supply chains, and more in social protection and adjustment programmes. This could mean more multilateral aid, more budget support, more blended finance, more support to productive sectors, and so on. More humanitarian aid is also likely to be required¹⁸.

What all this implies is the need for a new, more disaggregated narrative about international development. It is important to hang onto the idea that the various challenges are linked. As Crack the Crises emphasise, COVID, the climate crisis, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality and injustice cannot be taken in isolation¹⁹. These interconnections underpin the call for a 'new economy', with new financial and social policies. For example, a paper by Buchs and others proposed 10 principles for a well-being approach to recovery, including environmental, social and governance policies (Box 2)²⁰. Are there elements that can be lifted here into a new policy for development cooperation?²¹ An approach based on 'doughnut

¹⁷ Taming Cerberus: <https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/taming-cerberus.html>

¹⁸ For a discussion on what it means for a development agency to take climate change seriously, see <https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/a-dfid-response-to-the-climate-cataclysm.html>.

¹⁹ See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xybUT0ueZR51Wh4kXWgm-Ld70Dpl6wc/view>

²⁰ https://wellbeingeconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Wellbeing_Economics_for_the_COVID-19_recovery_10Principles.pdf

²¹ Other sources on rethinking capitalism include Collier (<https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/the-future-of-capitalism-facing-the-new-anxieties-by-paul-collier.html>), Stiglitz (<https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/people->

economics', as pioneered by Kate Raworth, focusing on how to meet both environmental and social goals, certainly has many attractions; and can be seen to have its roots in human development thinking within development studies²².

Box 2

Ten principles to build back better

[power-and-profits-progressive-capitalism-for-an-age-of-discontent-joseph-stiglitz.html](https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/power-and-profits-progressive-capitalism-for-an-age-of-discontent-joseph-stiglitz.html)), and the IPPR Commission on Economic Justice (<https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/prosperity-and-justice-a-plan-for-the-new-economy.html>).

²² <https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/doughnut-economics-seven-ways-to-think-like-a-twenty-first-century-economist-kate-raworth.html#comment-347>

2. Principles

We have developed the following ten principles for a COVID-19 recovery, based on the doughnut economics framework which combines theories of planetary boundaries and universal human needs (Doyal & Gough, 1991; Max-Neef, with Elizalde, & Hopenhayn, 1991; Raworth, 2017; Rockström et al., 2009; Trebeck & Williams, 2019). The ten principles are organised into an overarching principle, and environmental, social and governance dimensions.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| ENVIRONMENTAL | 1. New goals: ecologically safe and environmentally just
Prioritise long-term human wellbeing and ecological stability in all decision-making; degrow and divest from economic sectors that do not contribute to ecological and wellbeing goals; invest in those that do; facilitate a just transition for all that creates jobs in and reskills for environmentally friendly and wellbeing focused sectors. |
| | 2. Protecting environmental standards
Protect all existing climate policy and emission reduction targets, environmental regulations and other environmental policies in all COVID-19 responses. |
| | 3. Green infrastructure and provisioning
Develop new green infrastructure and provisioning, and sustainable social practices as part of the COVID-19 recovery. For instance, transform urban space towards active travel and away from car use; scale up public transport, green energy, environmentally sustainable food production, low carbon housing; attach environmental conditionality to bailouts of high carbon industries. |
| SOCIAL | 4. Universal basic services
Guarantee needs satisfaction for everyone, including through health care coverage for the whole population free of charge at point of access; universal free provision or vouchers for basic levels of water, electricity, gas, housing, food, mobility, education. |
| | 5. Guaranteed livelihoods
Ensure everyone has the means for decent living, for instance through income and/or job guarantees, redistribution of employment through working-time reduction. |
| | 6. Fair distribution
Create more equal societies nationally and globally through a fair distribution of resources and opportunities. E.g. more progressive and environmentally orientated income and wealth taxation; public/common ownership of key resources and infrastructure. |
| GOVERNANCE | 7. Better democracy
Ensure effective, transparent and inclusive democratic processes at all levels; end regulatory capture from corporate interests and corruption. |
| | 8. Wellbeing economics organisations
Prioritise in all businesses and organisations social and ecological goals; implement circular economy principles to minimise resource use and waste; ensure economic and organisational democracy. |
| | 9. Cooperation
Ensure cooperation and solidarity at all levels, including in international politics and the global economy; across industrial sectors and government ministries; across scales (global, national, regional, local). |
| | 10. Public control of money
Introduce public and democratic control of money creation. Spend newly created money on investments that promote social and environmental goals and avoid post-recovery austerity. |

Source: [https://wellbeingeconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Wellbeing Economics for the COVID-19 recovery 10Principles.pdf](https://wellbeingeconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Wellbeing_Economics_for_the_COVID-19_recovery_10Principles.pdf)

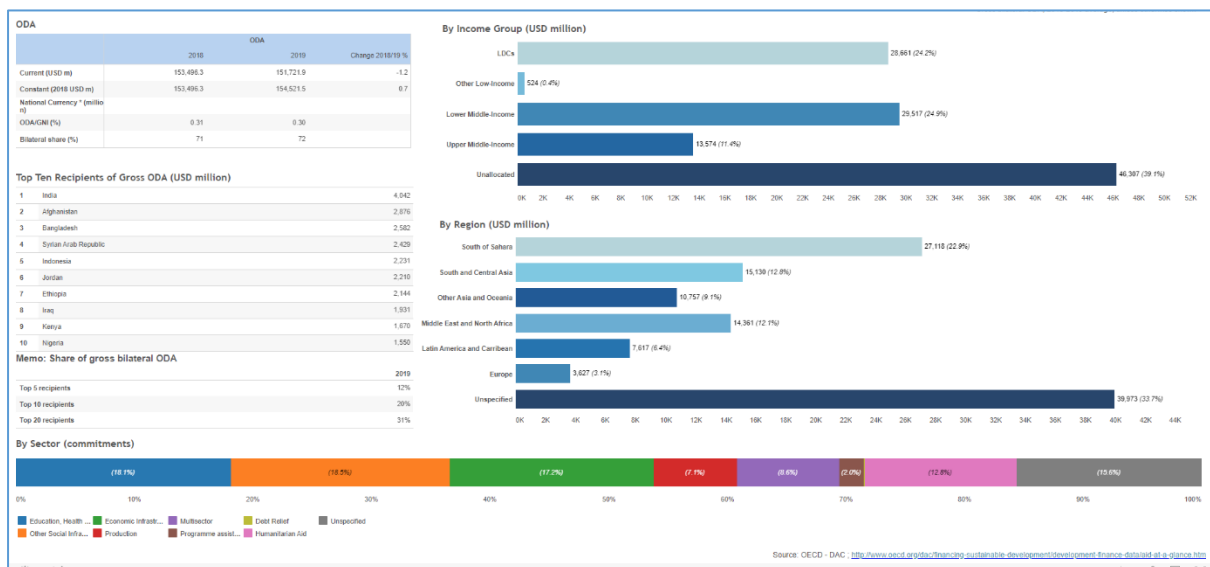
Where do donors go next?

ODA data provide a kind of ‘revealed preference’ view of what donors as a collective think the roadmap looks like today – and a challenge for them is to identify what it might look like after the pandemic, both collectively and individually. Figure 1 summarises how official development assistance was allocated before the pandemic: about \$US 150bn a year, of which 70% bilateral, and with approximately 20% spent on education and health, and a further 20% on other social infrastructure. Least developed and low income countries

received about a quarter of funding, middle income countries nearly 40%. Total ODA amounted to 0.30% of donor GNI in 2019, and rose slightly to 0.32% in 2020; this is, of course, far below the UN target of 0.7. The EU-27 collectively provided €66.8 bn in 2020, equivalent to 0.5% of GNI. This is a shortfall of €27 bn from the 0.7 target.

Figure 1

The global picture of Official Development Assistance



Source: OECD/DAC²³

Individual foreign ministries and development cooperation agencies will need to ask themselves what contribution they will make to an updated development cooperation architecture. All too often, when preparing a strategy paper, most attention is paid to the foresight section: the chapters at the beginning which offer a *tour d’horizon* of the world and development landscape. Much less attention is usually paid to the next sections, which should: provide a careful assessment of the institution’s strengths and weaknesses, in relation to others; set agency priorities; and commit to specific actions.

In other words, the key strategy question is not, or not only, ‘what should the world be doing differently on Monday morning?’, or ‘what should the development cooperation sector be doing differently on Monday morning?’, but rather, ‘what are we ourselves going to do differently on Monday morning?’. To focus on the first two questions and not the third is one way to fall into the trap of ‘bad strategy’²⁴.

To avoid the trap, a realistic assessment of strengths and weaknesses is central, note ‘in relation to others’. Drawing on literatures in economics and management, this can be thought of in different ways, as: comparative advantage; dynamic comparative advantage;

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https://public.tableau.com/views/AidAtAGlance/DACmembers?:embed=y&:display_count=no?&:showVizHome=no#1

²⁴ See Richard Rumelt on ‘bad strategy’: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-perils-of-bad-strategy#>

competitive advantage; unique selling point; or distinctive competence. Research on comparative advantage in development cooperation has focused on the kinds of issues listed in Figure 2, ranging from technical competence to alignment with recipient priorities and mutual respect.

Figure 2

Sources of agency comparative advantage in development cooperation

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale • Technical expertise • Efficiency • Speed • Finance • Consultation • Flexibility • Transparency • Cost-effectiveness • Multiple instruments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concessionality • Conditionality • Mutual respect • Orientation to national priorities (alignment) • Predictability • Untying • Bureaucracy • Accountability • Field presence • Engagement with/opportunities for CSOs and other partners |
|---|--|

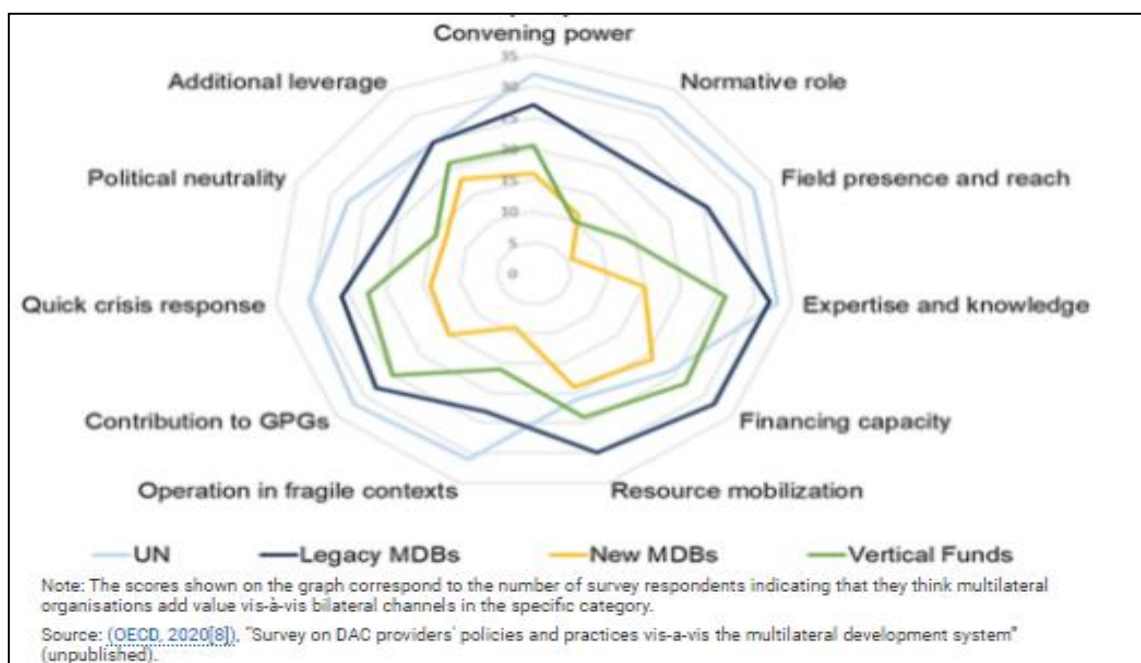
Sources: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9522.pdf> ;
<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/892.pdf>

An application of this kind of approach is illustrated in Figure 3, which summarises DAC member views of UN strengths, taken from the 2020 Multilateral Development Finance Report²⁵. UN entities are especially valued for their convening power, standard-setting role, and ability to react quickly to crises. MDBs and vertical funds, on the other hand, are seen as better at resource mobilisation and have greater financing capacity.

²⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/multilateral-development-finance-2020-e61fdf00-en.htm>

Figure 3

DAC member views of UN strengths



For an individual donor, comparative advantage can be more narrowly defined: by specific sector or sub-sector, by country, by form of assistance, or by deep knowledge of some part of the multilateral system. There is path dependence to this, as expertise may have been acquired over many years. However, there is also scope to change the direction of travel over time, building new areas of specialisation: this is the idea behind thinking of 'dynamic' comparative advantage. It is also relevant that different countries face different situations, greater or less migration pressure, for example, which may shape development thinking.

The UK provides an example of setting priorities. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy²⁶, published in March 2021, did not explicitly address the issue of comparative advantage²⁷. However, there are hints throughout the report:

- '(The UK's) (is) a Science and Tech Superpower' (Preface)
- 'We (are) at the heart of a network of like-minded countries and flexible groupings, committed to protecting human rights and upholding global norms.' (Pg 6)
- 'The UK will continue to be renowned for our leadership in security, diplomacy and development, conflict resolution and poverty reduction. . . . a model for an integrated

²⁶

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global Britain in a Competitive Age- the Integrated Review of Security Defence Development and Foreign Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf)

²⁷ And was criticised for that reason: <https://simonmaxwell.net/aid-and-aid-management/uk-comparative-advantage-the-missing-chapter-in-the-uks-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy.html>

approach to tackling global challenges, integrating our resources for maximum effect.’ (Pg 7)

- ‘Our diplomats and legal experts will maintain their significant contribution at the heart of multilateral institutions. And the UK will play an important convening role on issues of consequence to our shared security and prosperity.’ (Pg 45)
- ‘A soft power superpower’ (Pg 49, referencing media and culture; education; sport; and people-to-people links.
- ‘The UK is a global leader in financial services’ (Pg 51)

Most of that rings true, discounting the hyperbole. It is valuable to the world that the UK has what Robert Zoellick has called a ‘full service capability’²⁸ of diplomatic, development, defence and security resources. The UK has been fully engaged in the multilateral system. Soft power is a great asset. Science and Technology strengths for sure, including social science. The depth and competence of the NGO sector are also worth noting, in delivery of development and humanitarian aid, but even more important in policy analysis, campaigning, and the people-to-people links celebrated in the IR.

In terms of geography, the Integrated Review does not claim unique competence in any region, but does reference historic links with the Commonwealth. A tilt to the Indo-Pacific is a notable illustration of setting out to build a new (or stronger) area of competence.

Have other donors carried out a similar exercise?

There are echoes of this overall approach in work by the EU on Division of Labour, notably in the Communication from the Commission in 2007, proposing an EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy²⁹. The case was made in terms of the cost to developing countries of donor proliferation, viz

‘Over the last decade, the multiplication of development aid activities and structures has led to a complex and expensive aid industry. In each developing country there are, on average, 350 donor missions per year. Too many donors are concentrating on the same countries and the same sectors. In Mozambique, for example, there are no less than 27 donors fighting HIV. As a result, developing countries can often hardly cope with the many missions, the unnecessary administrative costs, the overlaps and duplications, and the differences in donor requirements, rules and conditionalities. . . .

A consensus is emerging that this opaque and complex situation is not sustainable . . . ‘Who does what?’ is the essential question the EU needs to address if it is to make progress in implementing the EU's new development policy.’

The resultant Code of Conduct was based on 10 principles, summarised in Box 3.

²⁸ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3133/documents/40215/default/>

²⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0072&from=EN>

Box 3

Guiding Principles of the EU Code of Conduct on the Division of Labour in Development Policy

- Guiding principle 1 - Concentrate their activities in-country on focal sectors • Guiding principle 2 - Redeploy their other activities in-country.
- Guiding principle 3 - Ensure an adequate EU presence in strategic sectors
- Guiding principle 4 - Replicate practices in the cooperation with partner regional institutions
- Guiding principle 5 - Establish priority countries
- Guiding principle 6 - Address the "orphan" countries of aid allocations
- Guiding principle 7 - Analyse and expand global areas of strength
- Guiding principle 8 - Pursue progress on the vertical and cross-modality/instruments dimensions of complementarity EU donors commit themselves to advance on the other dimensions of complementarity primarily in the context of relevant international fora and partnerships.
- Guiding principle 9 - Promote jointly the division of
- Guiding principle 10 - Deepen the reforms of aid systems

Source: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0072&from=EN>

The Code of Conduct generated quite a debate at the time³⁰, but is less visible today. However, the latest European Consensus on Development³¹, agreed in 2017, contained a section (3.1) on 'Working Better Together'. It covered global and country-level cooperation, with a particular focus on 'joint programming' and 'joint implementation'. There are now said to be 79 countries with active joint programming, including 22 joint strategies³².

A current incarnation of the approach is 'Team Europe', born particularly out of the COVID crisis. It is described in a recent review³³ as 'a united EU and member state approach that begins to respond to a number of pre-existing needs and ongoing processes . . . (but) far from a finished product'.

The Brussels institutions have focused on coordination between themselves and the Member States, but are not absolved from thinking about their own comparative advantage in relation to other donors. As a large donor in its own right, the EU is able to range quite widely. Current priorities are identified as (a) green alliances and partnerships; (b) science, technology, innovation, and digital; (c) growth and jobs; (d) migration and mobility; and (e) a catch-all

³⁰ See e.g. <https://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/46859449.pdf> , <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2008-code-conduct-European-Division-Labour-development-cooperation.pdf>, <https://odi.org/en/publications/global-governance-of-the-aid-system-and-the-role-of-the-european-union/>.

³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf

³² <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/joint-programming-tracker/>

³³ <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Team-Europe-Up-To-Challenge-ECDPM-Briefing-Note-128-January-2021.pdf>

category labelled as ‘human development, peace, and governance’³⁴. Geographical priorities for the period 2021-27 are indicated in the framework for the single development instrument, NDICI, notably sub-Saharan Africa, the Neighbourhood, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and the Caribbean, in that order³⁵. Note that humanitarian priorities are set separately by ECHO³⁶.

It is up to each individual donor to make its own assessment of the international landscape, to assess its own strengths and weaknesses, to set its own priorities, and to identify the specific commitments that will result from the strategy process.

Conclusion: making change happen

To conclude, there is a strong case to be made for re-launching development cooperation for the remaining 2020s – recognising mutual inter-dependence, as well as an altruistic commitment to ending poverty and inequality in the world, and building on the wealth of new ideas circulating about a ‘global reset’³⁷.

However, no-one should pretend that ‘ought’ translates automatically into ‘will’. Not everyone can see the writing on the wall. And even those who can, face conflicting demands and difficult choices.

In these circumstances, it is important to understand how policy can be shaped, globally, regionally and nationally. In the policy world, change happens when three things come together³⁸. The first is leadership. The second is civil society action. And the third is the power of a good idea. Civil society, in particular, can be a powerful agent of change, ‘dancing with the system’, as Duncan Green describes^{39, 40}.

These three circles are inter-connected. Leaders are more likely to commit when they are personally inspired by good ideas, and when they can see political support. Civil society can thrive in a collaboration with researchers. And the pressure to be practical and useful can drive better research.

A step towards closer collaboration is a shared mission around which different interests can coalesce. One such might be the idea of transforming debate about a ‘green deal’ or a ‘green new deal’ into one which is genuinely global. The EU has developed an action plan for its

³⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/our-work_en

³⁵ Specifically, €19.32 billion for the Neighbourhood, at least €29.18 billion for Sub-Saharan Africa, €8.48 billion for Asia and the Pacific, and for Americas and the Caribbean €3.39 billion.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1267

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en

³⁷ See <https://odi.org/en/delivering-the-global-reset/>.

³⁸ See <https://cdkn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Simon-Maxwell-How-to-win-the-argument-on-climate-change.pdf> and <https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/motivate-mobilise-manage-repeat-further-thoughts.html>.

³⁹ <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/how-change-happens-consultation-draft-581366/>. See my review at <https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/how-change-happens.html>.

⁴⁰ A new book by Ben Jackson and Harriet Lamb contributes further ideas to the activist playbook: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538141328/From-Anger-to-Action-Inside-the-Global-Movements-for-Social-Justice-Peace-and-a-Sustainable-Planet>

Green Deal⁴¹, most of which is concerned with domestic policy and with the spending of funds allocated to the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan⁴². Would it be possible for researchers, civil society activists and policy-makers to agree on the outlines of a Global Green New Deal⁴³? And then turn it into reality?

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

⁴² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en.

⁴³ See <https://simonmaxwell.net/blog/principles-for-a-global-green-new-deal.html>