Aid Nothing More Than a Charity Bone Thrown:
Have Past Failures prepared us for Future Success?

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Abstract

This article investigates the complex issue of aid, and differs from other attempts at evaluating the outcomes and policies of aid since this evaluation is solely based on the policies of the donor countries. It investigates if, and how well, the world’s two greatest aid donors, The European Developmental Fund (EDF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) responds to recent research and the need for change in this policy area in respect to Sub-Saharan African states.

Keywords; Aid, USAID, EDF, Sub-Saharan Africa, evaluation.
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"Europe has a strong interest in a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Africa.

Our strategy is intended to help Africa achieve this.”

(Council of Europe Official Statement 2005)

“It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the democratic movements and institutions, I every nation and every culture with the goal of ending tyranny.”

(President George W. Bush Second Inaugural Address January 2005)

Both the US and EU has an extensive agenda on alleviating poverty and tyranny and replacing bad governments with democratic prospects. The European Union, through The European Developmental fund (EDF), is the world largest aid contributor (Resare 2008:3) and as a large part of the worlds bottom billion countries are situated in Sub-Sahara Africa a large amount of both the EDF:s and USAID:s (U.S Agency for International Development) budget are concentrated on this area. But with these massive aid donations from two of the world’s most powerful norm builders, can they really be said to work?

The question regarding whether aid is actually outdated in its current form has been heavily debated during the past couple of years. In my first master study I reached the conclusion that the decisive change necessary in these failing states needs to come from within and that aid is inefficient when promoting values of democracy. As stated above, the EDF is the world’s largest aid contributor but Europe also has a history of being the recipient of large amounts of aid as well. After the Second World War the US and their Marshall Aid Programme gave the region a chance to rise (Odén 2006:41). However, as Paul Collier states; that particular form of aid was heavily accompanied by trade and governance policies. Africa as a region does not receive much of any. Furthermore Moyo (2009:37) states; the Marshall Aid was merely a reconstructive effort since Europe had had functioning institutions prior to the war, hence all that was needed was a quick cash inflow to rebuild it, in African terms these institutions need to be built from scratch, the difference is huge and that kind of undertaking demands much more than just a mere cash flow.
In my previous studies I have also reached the conclusion that aid is by no means the most influential factor when promoting democratic ideals, on the contrary, it has little to no meaning at all. Recent studies made by scholars such as David Dollar suggests that aid can work, however not in the presence of poor policies (Dollar1998:43) and Dambisa Moyo and William Easterly take it one step further by claiming that aid is one of the reasons for Africa’s current hopeless situation (Easterly 2006:187; Moyo 2009:29-31) even though they both further outlines other ways for Africa. One can assume that neither the EU, here in shape of EDF, nor USAID led by the US Government are in agreement with these respected scholars. Money still pours into these African countries, hence these two doners are not considering a phase out of aid and their respective policies should therefore be evaluated with help of principles from scholars who still believe aid has a chance of working. However pessimistic Moyo might seem on the subject of aid, he will still be included into this evaluation since his work is highly controversial and also a direct antidote to Paul Colliers extensive research. In that way more than one point of view will lay as ground for this article.

If the policies in the recipient country has such a large effect on the outcome of aid, should we not then also take notice of the policies of donor countries, or in this case a country and a union? Are the policies of the two largest aid doners in the world actually plausible? Are they designed to prevent the last decade´s failure in aid distribution? And if, indeed, these policy goals are not coherent with the latest findings in what makes aid efficient then what needs to be done in order to make the policies more responding to the actual need of change? The foundation of the comparison and evaluation will be the EU:s Africa- EU partnership that has been drafted for many different areas, but here I will concentrate on the Democracy and Human rights, Trade, and Peace and Security documents. These partnership agreements regulate the goals and means to reach them in order to improve the situation for African nations. As ground for USAIDS policy evaluation will be “Policy Framework for Bilateral Foreign Aid” USAID:s formal paper on aid cooperation signed and ratified in 2006, from now on referred to as PFBFA.
What then, should aid cooperation look like?

There seems to be some form of consensus regarding what are “good practices” in distributing and implementing foreign aid (Easterly, Pfutze 2008:32). Even Collier agrees; saying that there are ways of making donors actions into the effective “big push” that is necessary to alleviate Africa’s poverty as well as their poor governance (Collier 2000: 203). Collier and Easterly are two of the most respected and achieved scholars on this subject and an incorporation of the research findings in policies might be highly desirable. Here I will outline these scholars’ main views of an ideal aid situation and what factors that needs to be taken into consideration when distributing aid and where current donors got so astray. These findings will later be the foundation of the comparison and evaluation of the donor’s aid policies.

Starting with William Easterly he begins by stating what does not work. He mentions three main kinds of aid that he claims are rendered useless. He begins with the so called tied aid. In tied aid the recipient countries are forced to spend a percentage of the donated money on purchasing imported goods from the donor country. This leads to a diminishing local production, which is in fact what these bottom billion states need to alleviate (Easterly, Pfutze 2008:32). Moyo is in complete agreement with Easterly saying that conditionality in aid has failed in large. Donors employ their own citizens instead of local abilities, which only further the problem with poverty and unemployment (Moyo 2009:39). He, as many other scholars in this field, claims that transparency in questions regarding aid is of the utmost importance. This transparency should however not only be in respect of the recipient country and the importance of making them account for what they have spent donated money on, but also in respect to the financiers of aid (in this case the people of USA and the EU) and their right in respect of the money actually reaching the poor and also their right of demanding accountability when the money do not (Easterly 2006:323 and 2008:32 and Chauvet, Collier 2006:126).

Easterly distinguishes four different features of aid distribution that needs to be a part of every donor’s policy agenda, regardless of whether it is an aid agency, a state donor or multilateral or bilateral forms of aid. He calls these the “Best Practices”. The first criteria he refers to is specialization/fragmentation by which he means that in all aspects of society, whether it is in the public or private sector there is always specialization. However when dealing with aid it is highly unusual for donors to specialize, instead they end up extremely fragmented, hence they
split their donations between too many countries, too many individual donors and too many sectors for each donor and recipient. According to Easterly this lack of specialization leads to the cost for administrative needs becomes higher than necessary, both in the donor as well as in the recipient country (Easterly 2008:39).

Furthermore the process of being selective when distributing aid is according to Easterly a potential way of destroying the good intention. Many countries continue to give aid to states that are 1) rather well off economically or 2) run by autocrats or with high levels of corruption. The first is an obvious mistake; if we do not wish the growing states to be trapped in aid dependency, we should probably try to diminish given aid. In the second case, donating to a state that has obvious problems with corruption is also quite obviously not a good idea. Aid will get caught in the sticky fingers of bureaucrats and far from the people or projects intended. In the case with autocrat regimes the money will instead be used to finance civil war or military interventions to be used against the people in need. The big catch 22 in this scenario is that the poorest countries, that should receive the largest amount of aid as has been stated above, is also often the countries run by autocrats or/and with a widespread culture of corruption (Easterly 2008:41).

Ineffective aid channels are also a threat against the success of aid. According to Easterly there are three main types of antiquated aid channels. One I have already spoken of: tied aid which he says are only “poorly disguised export promotion” (Easterly 2008:39). However he also claims that aid in form of technical assistance is a grave mistake when it usually reflects donor priorities and not those priorities set by the recipient country. Food and equipment aid is equally bad when the shipments of food reaches the recipient country could have been bought for half that price from local producers (Easterly 2008:41). Instead all it does is feed a minimum of people for a high cost as well as knocking over local farmers and producers. Moyo agrees saying that if local producers that make mosquito nets have ten employees that each has to support a family of fifteen, lives in an area that gets noticed for its high levels of child mortality from malaria, famous movie stars out of Hollywood sends shipments of 50,000 mosquito nets to aid the region. This only solves the problem under a short period of time since in a few years the mosquito nets will be damaged and rendered useless, the owner of the local factory has to close due to having been driven out of competition will have had to fire his ten employees leaving their families of a total of 150 people without income, and in addition there are now no one who makes the crucial mosquito nets and now the region is no
longer on the world map and have no hope of outside help (Moyo 2009:34). Talk about a good intention gone terribly awry.

The last criterion in need of consideration is the overhead costs. Some of the aid agencies included in Easterly’s research actually have higher administrative costs than the aid distributed (Easterly 2008:48). This is a factor quite obviously in need of change, since administrative costs almost always are signs of too much bureaucracy.

Besides his four points, Easterly also mentions a key problem in aid policies: a utopian agenda in the policymaking. According to Easterly this utopian agenda leads to a collective responsibility for multiple goals for each individual aid donor. Another contribution that we can attribute to utopian policies is the vision that aid is going to change entire political systems. This simply leads to a sentiment of patronizing the recipient countries, since the west are proclaiming that they indeed know best how to solve everyone else’s problems. Easterly’s recipe for resolving this issue is a larger focus on individual aid rather than governmental aid (Easterly 2006:321-323), something that would also have a diminishing effect on his third point, selectivity in the distribution process.

Paul Collier states that the bottom billion countries are in risk of ending up in one or more out of four traps. But have aid donors taken these traps into consideration when formulating their policies? Well, that remains to be seen.

The first trap he refers to as “The conflict trap”. This trap is quite similar to Easterly’s selectivity theory, since Collier states that aid in these countries has a low success rate since donated money usually is used to finance rebellion recruitment and weapons. He found a high statistical connection between low income and high risk of civil war. Low incomes make people bound to look for a way of economic support through other channels than through the government. But he also found that a civil war decreases income levels. An anticipated conflict scares international investors and hence makes the country more prone to the outbreak of conflicts. If a country has the three attributes that makes them most prone to civil war (low income, slow growth and a dependence on natural resources) it is according to Collier inescapable that they will end up in a conflict, due to personalities and mistakes. This would not have happened in a country with a stable market economy (Collier 2007:18-21). There is of course no easy solution to this problem but it could be possible for our major donors to take this into consideration when writing policies and agreements with recipient
countries. Being selective in the process of distribution is apparently something much desired from both scholars.

Furthermore the natural resource trap has been known to scholars ever since the Dutch disease\(^1\) back in the early 60’s. Many are of the opinion that aid decreases chances for export, many times due to the decreased incentive of building a functioning industry when the government still receives money through the aid channel. But in a resource rich country there are always price booms, especially if the resource consists of oil, and when this happens the public spending increases but once the boom is over it is hard to go back to the original level (Elliot 2009:270). Oil and other types of natural resources also have a diminishing effect on democracy, since taxes are the largest means by which citizens gets a say (Dahl 1971:65). In these states however, there is no need to tax, since they receive incomes from other sources hence the citizens are powerless regarding transparency and accountability (Collier 2007:39-51). When agreeing upon policies, donors might want to address this problem with a clear definition of natural resources rich countries as well as attempting to support these countries with other means than a mere cash flow. Assistance in developing functioning economic policies and institutions and helath assistance with necessary skills when developing a fair and equal taxation system in these countries so that democratic values might have a chance to grow (Brodin 2000:113). Here it is a question of trying to specialize aid to help a certain policy development in a certain country, instead of dividing aid along a large spectrum of issues.

The third trap is bad governance in a small country. An economy cannot grow by more than 10% no matter what policies a government ratifies. However a bad government can quickly sink an economy. Why then are bad governments so lasting in certain areas? One cause is that no one really looses on the current situation, many of the leaders in the world’s poorest and least developed countries are themselves part of the world’s richest and since they enjoy their position there is really no need for education for the people, which in turn leads to a chronic lack of educated citizens with skills to pull a nation out of severe poverty through economic policy reforms. There are however three preconditions that makes a country prone to positive turnarounds; an educated people (which is difficult to achieve in these circumstances), the larger the population the better and finally if the country has recently emerged from a civil war. This creates a window of opportunity for democratic and economical change, and an

\(^1\)Natural Resource exports makes a country’s currency rise vis-a-vis other currencies which makes the country’s other export unable to compete, even if they might have been better channels for technologic progress.
improvement from a state of civil war is not hard to achieve (Collier 2007:64-75). Again the problem with Easterly’s selectivity appears. How can aid be distributed to the poorest countries but still not fall into the hands of bad governments?

The fourth and final trap in Collier’s research is “landlocked with bad neighbors”. A country caught in this trap is, according to Collier, more dependent upon the neighboring countries’ policies and state stability for economic survival. The definition of landlocked is of course that you have no access to a coastline, and if you on top of that have bad neighbors then the vital access of the coastline might be jeopardized. When a landlocked country is experiencing a growth it can quickly be rendered a failure if all neighbors’ infrastructure is bad or if they are currently in a situation such as the conflict trap. For the growing country this means less opportunities for export and import as well as a problem gaining international investors when shipping to the country in question is utterly connected with dangers such as pirates on sea or rebellious groups on bad infrastructure roads once on solid land. This problem however, does not apply to natural resource rich countries, when the perceived danger is much less than the anticipated profit which makes investors willing to take the risk. The prerequisite for this trap is however landlocked with bad neighboring governments, it is not as if Switzerland has had a hard time with import and export due to their landlocked status, but their neighbors are rich developed and industrialized. Uganda on the contrary does not have that luxury with neighbors such as Sudan, plagued by long term civil wars and conflicts (Collier 2007:53-63). This issue is however not easy to resolve. If a country has a vastly growing economy but is trapped in this fourth predicament, efforts should be redirected to the neighboring countries in order to help growth develop in the original country as well as aiding economic policies in neighboring countries.
Evaluating Formulated Aid Policies: A Task that Needs to Precede the Evaluation of Aid Outcomes

During my last thesis I reached the unfortunate conclusion that aid has no to little impact of the process of democratization.

Table 1: Bivariate regression analyze; the effect of aid on the process of democracy. Civil Liberties as the dependent variable (1 most free – 7 least free) and aid as the independent variable measured in US Dollars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>B- Coefficient (standard error)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid (US Dollars)</td>
<td>-.002* (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary: * is significant at a 0.20 level. (Buhlin 2009:33)

As stated this result is unfortunate, since so much money gets poured into this region, and apparently not much has happened in regards to democratic development or human rights. But where should we start if we want to change these miserable results? The kind of goals formulated in key policy documents are of the utmost importance if implementation is to be successful. As Easterly chooses to put it, a utopian agenda can lead to a collective responsibility for multiple goals for each individual donor. Easterly continues by stating that it may also lead to a belief that aid can change entire political systems, which contributes to a sentiment of patronizing recipients by saying that the west knows best. Without properly formulated goals, how can an outcome be properly evaluated?

USAID:s Strategic Coordination Plan: Plausible and manageable?

USAID:s strategic coordination plan is a paper that outlines goals for each region that receives aid from the US. In other words there are special plans formulated for, in this case, Africa. The EDF also has a special papers regulating aid with the African countries in many different areas, the Africa – EU Partnerships. Something that needs pointing out is that the EDF has a special agreement regulating aid with Africa, USAID has a policy ratified by the
proper institutions however it is not a full agreement signed with each country to function as a binding consensus. That is why the EDF has a slightly longer and more articulate formulation of goals.

There are five overarching goals for USAID:s aid cooperation. It begins with the promotion of transformational development, in short; the promotion of long-term changes in government as well as in institutions. Emphasis is also put on the fact that this goal is meant for already reasonably stable states with a desire to rule democratically and “investing in people”. What that last part in reality is supposed to mean is beyond me, but since the rest of these goals forget to mention the need for support of education one can hope that it is a reference to schools. Furthermore the programme is based on “emphasizing country ownership and participation as well as prioritizing policies, institutions and absorptive capacity and taking advantage of partnerships and complement other donors”. The evaluation is built on “progress in ruling justly, economic freedom and investing in people”. The graduates of this programme no longer “need development resources, though assistance toward other goals in the framework could continue” (PFBFA:11). Easterly’s most severe criticism against aid donors today is the lack of real goals, and the obvious preference for formulating utopian goals with little to no actual relevance or hope of success. Promoting participation is definitely utopian and a more diffuse way of articulating goals is hard to find (except for in other aid programmes) and furthermore the evaluation of these utopian goals are close to impossible. How does one measure the progress of participation when the goal itself was so utterly blurry? Furthermore was it, in this case, even justified to donate aid from the start? These states are relatively well off and might be pushed back developmentally by becoming dependent on aid and therefore not focusing hard enough on establishing functioning industries of their own, at least if Moyo and Easterly are right. And to add insult to injury USAID speak of continuing the aid cooperation even after these states have “graduated” by technical assistance which has been rejected by Easterly as poorly disguised value promotion and a patronizing way for western countries to reform their way.

Furthermore, bringing Paul Collier into the picture, his Conflict Trap is hardly being respected or adhered either, even though it is difficult to discern any of his traps since they are highly defined and as stated above, the policies are not. However conflicts leads to lesser income as well as lesser income leads to conflict. In other words; stop stuffing money into already reasonably functioning states and concentrate on those in real need, those without other options. Another argument from Collier that needs to be revised is that countries that are
landlocked with bad neighbors there is no way of salvaging them with aid. There needs to be a concentrated aid flow into the neighboring countries so that they can break their traps, whether it might be natural resources or conflicts, in order for the landlocked country to escape theirs (Collier 2007:179). In other words both Collier and Easterly recommends a much higher degree of selectivity when donating aid than what can be found in policies today.

Judging by Easterly’s findings the approach to aid those states that are already reasonably well off is a mistake. Given that these states already have the necessary economical means to make a significant difference by themselves, the risk of further trapping them in a spiral of aid dependency becomes a real issue. One might think this isn’t something that is supposed to have to be stated when it is obvious that this is the case. A more productive kind of “aid” for these types of states would be to open trade barriers in order to establish a more sustainable export and hence economy. Furthermore the goal of investing in people, that first of all is poorly specified and in addition to that can be said to be utopian for the complete lack of both specialization and implementation strategies.

The second goal is for strengthening fragile states, “reduction of fragile states and establishing foundation for development progress by supporting stabilization, security, reform and capacity development in countries characterized by instability and weak governance” (PFBFA:10). The ending of that goal is formulated as such “when and where US assistance can make a significant difference”. The support for “stability, security and reform” is the priority goal and this is to be achieved by the “enhancing of security and the improvement of security” and furthermore the “development of basic infrastructure and capacity for essential institutions” (PFBFA:10). The evaluation of the success rate of these programmes is said to be built on “how well they enhance stability, improve security and develop capacity”. The next step is graduation which will happen when all of the above stated goals have been achieved according to a threshold set using different measurements and indicators of fragility and these graduating states move from this programme to other aid programmes, mostly to transformational ones (PFBFA:10).

Yet again the complete absence of an important specialization makes this goal both difficult to implement and even more so to evaluate. USAID fails to be specific when outlining goals and ways of implementation as well as evaluation methods. If paying attention to Easterly one could claim that USAID has spread their focus on too many areas for aid to be effective. Infrastructure, stability, institutions and security are the main focus but to lessen the threat of
ineffective and perhaps even damaging aid they need to be more adherent to specialization. One of these areas should be enough and contain enough difficulties to still keep donors at their toes and which one of these areas that need to be the focus should be decided on a recipient to recipient basis, all in the name of selectivity and specialization.

The EDF:s way of formulating policies; step up, step down or status quo?

In the Africa- EU partnership papers there are five different categories drafted; objectives, expected outcomes, activities, actors and finances. So far so good, these categories are much less diffuse than USAID:s and they also include which actors are to be responsible for each project and through which institution it will be funded, which points to a much higher level of specialization and cost efficiency according to Easterly’s research than in the case of USAID. It is also more responsive to Colliers demands of being more selective when determining what recipient countries actually should receive if anything at all, however now to the contents of said categories.

Within the evaluated papers (Democratic Governance and Human Rights, Peace and Security, Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure) there are key priorities and in the paper for Democratic Governance and Human Rights there are three. The first priority is the enhancement of a dialogue on a global arena and the first objective is to try to reach “Common positions and specific initiatives on key aspects of the governance and human rights” and the following objective “Co-operation in the prevention of international terrorism, drugs and organized crime” (Africa- EU Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights:1 from now on referred to as Africa- EU DGHR). Even though the categories in themselves seems to be more specialized than USAID:s the contents of them lack orientation. These objectives are utopian and therefore, more or less useless when dealing with this complex issue. Once again the objectives are far too blurry and diffuse to actually understand what is to be done. When moving on to the expected outcomes of these (unrealistic) objectives the apparent problem is to determine what outcomes can be plausible from these far to stretch out objectives, just as Easterly has pointed out earlier in this article.

The first is the “ratification and implementation of the international and continental legislative framework “UN convention on the right of a child…”. This seems to be a good way of achieving many of the objectives concerning human rights, however the pure ratification and implementation of said conventions is in no way a guarantee of it being pursued on a regular basis. Many countries have adopted this UN charter but do little in order to actually follow
through on them. The following expected outcome can be seen as an answer to my previous criticism however it is formulated as follows; “Progress in the compliance with international obligations in the field of democratic governance and human rights”. This can hardly be said to actually make a statement on how they foresee this outcome to take place. Obviously if the ratification and implementation of these conventions may lead to progress in complying with them as well, a more thought-out and well defined outcome is to be desired. When dealing with the activities listed in these papers on how to achieve these objectives the EDF writes; “Develop a platform for dialogue on all governance issues of mutual interest...”. Of course this needs to be an activity judging by their first objective, but in all honesty this is self-explanatory. What needs to be pointed out is the actual route, what in reality needs to be done in order to achieve this “enhanced dialogue”, real measures that can be taken to ensure that a mutual dialogue can take place. The same objective but in the formulation of an activity is simply not good enough. The rest of the activities can be said to be just as informant. They all begin with the word enhancement and are really just different ways of formulating the goals.

Moving on to the paper on Peace and Security we find the same categories as has been stated on the paper above. Their first priority of objectives is “to reach common positions and implement common approaches on challenges to peace and security in Africa, Europe and globally” (Africa- EU Partnership on Peace and Security: from now on referred to as Africa-EU PPS). First and foremost this can be understood as a slightly patronizing attitude towards the African nations. It is just as both Easterly and Moyo says, that the west does not always know what works best for others (Easterly 2006:321-323 and Moyo 2009:119) however when reading objectives formulated as such one can only assume that they do. Of course, a common position on how to deal with Africa´s peace and security issues is not a bad concept in itself, however the implementations of common approaches can be rendered dangerous. The west in the past (as well as in the present) has had a way of forcing their approaches on Africa when the situations are radically different.

In the expected outcomes section of this paper the EDF writes; “Deepened common understanding on the causes of conflict and their resolution” (Africa- EU PPS:2). The understanding of causes of conflict are not that difficult to grasp for the EDF and for the African nations either and so this expected outcome is purely a self evident statement. When reading the activities listed to achieve these objectives and expected outcomes there are a few
pleasant surprises. “Hold consultations in an appropriate format, between the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) and the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC)”. This implies an actual action from the EDF in order to resolve issues that arise in the African nations. Of course the slightly patronizing attitude remains, however this can be seen as a way for African nation themselves to receive advice on resolving conflicts and both at a technical as well as a political level. However there are other activities that render a few questions. “Raise awareness through campaigning involving African and European NGO:s on mainstreaming human rights, gender issues and children effected by armed conflicts”. To who are they suppose to raise awareness? Most people have a perception of the effects of said violations of human rights and hence there is a need for more than “raising awareness”.

Now for the last paper due to be evaluated here, Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure. Trade is self evidently an important way of building a functioning industry and hence economy and a well known fact is that a functioning infrastructure could possibly help turnover a low export and import level, since if there are no functioning roads, railroads or air traffic alternatives, shipping to these countries would be highly difficult. A good infrastructure can even help to cure the Landlocked with bad Neighbors trap spoken of by Collier. So what then will be the focus of the EDF:s work in this area?

“Enhanced competitiveness of African agriculture and agri-food industry through particular attention to sanitary and phyto- sanitary standards (SPS)”. Furthermore another objective formulated in this paper is “The socio economic and political integration of the continent in line with the treaty establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty)”. These objectives are the first in these evaluated papers that does not seem to be utopian. However good as that might be judging by Easterly´s criteria, these objectives don’t really tell us much about what is to be done. There has to be a middle-way between too utopian and insignificant.

In the expected outcome section in this paper there seems to be little to no focus on infrastructure, something that has already been mentioned as a crucial prerequisite for successful trade. However “Enhanced African capacities to implement the integration agenda” and “progress towards the elimination of intra-regional non- tariff barriers to trade” seems to be an important point for the EDF. Surely it is, but it is in no way responsive to set out objectives with this project. Furthermore the elimination of trade barriers might not be the best way for the EDF to plead their case. What happened to the extremely restricted trade

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2 The African Union, an intergovernmental organization that works towards a united Africa.
barriers into Europe? Only the absolutely worst off countries in Africa are allowed to export goods to Europe. Would it not be a better solution to establish a functioning export and hence the start of a functioning economy than aid?

So, the EDF has gotten off to a better start than USAID, mainly due to their clearly articulated categories within each area which leads to believe that there is a higher level of specialization as well as of selectivity in used policies. Their downfall is though the same as for USAID, it doesn´t matter how good the categories are if the content is just as blurry, undefined and utopian as in any other aid policy document. But if the EDF can work on building more plausible objectives and more effective actions, they could potentially have a real and progressive view on aid policy.
Conclusions and lessons for the future

So what can be said in conclusion of today’s aid? I will not waste time debating whether or not aid is successful when this article is built on research, both my own as well as others, consolidating the fact that it is usually ineffective and unsuccessful. William Easterly’s extensive work “The White Man’s Burden; Why the West’s efforts Has Done so Much Ill and so Little Good” is a future classic. Aid in shape of pure donations of cash or technical assistance is rendered useless and his cure is to focus on giving the poorest people healthcare and medicine; an intervention that does not risk throwing countries into aid dependency. Dambisa Moyo’s work “Dead Aid; Why Aid is not Working and how There is Another Way for Africa” completely damns aid and claims it has sent African nations into a state of ”child like beggary” and how aid during the last 50 years has destroyed Africa. Collier has a slightly more positive image of the effects of aid, if it is used in the right time, hence one has to wait for a window of opportunity, and donate aid on a recipient to recipient basis, then it could be useful. But even according to Collier this is not the way aid is distributed today.

However, what I immediately notice when studying these policy documents is that the words promotion and prevention is used so many times that I do believe it to have lost all meaning. The overarching goal for USAID is to promote, whether it may be gender equality, a just democratic rule, or a personal favorite of mine, “fundamental changes in government”. Furthermore an important point on their agenda is to ensure that economic growth and development is being prepared for the alleviation of aid, so that it can continue to blossom after the intervention of foreign bilateral aid, which is said to be the best way of reducing poverty.

A more timid and less frightening policy formulation can achieve a more real sense of evaluation of outcomes. This due to the fact that if goals are impossible to attain and the authors of the policy framework are well aware of this, why would they want to condone an evaluation that is truly unbiased and truly effective if they know that the results will be their failure? However if a policy is formulated attainably, that is more realistically written and more specialized in it’s wanted achievements then an evaluation in respect to the set out goal would also be gentler, which in turn might reduce the feeling of failure. If one of the goals are, as they happen to be both for USAID and for the EDF, to alleviate poverty and replace bad governments with democratic ones, well then an evaluation that says they failed is to be expected. Had they instead chosen to formulate the goal specialized country by country and
an actual plan of what is to be achieved over for example a period of five years, an evaluation would be able to tell us an actual result stemming from the formulated policy goals.

A change in the formulation of these aid policies and goals requires a change in implementation and evaluation as well. I necessitates a clear evaluation plan that isn´t made to confirm preconceived notions of what donated aid results in but an actual realistic and objective evaluation that is based on a desire to find the root of the problems and then trying to correct them based on the evaluation results. To be coherent to scholars such as Collier and Easterly, signifies a radical need for change within distributing aid as well as when formulating policies. This process would surely be costly both in terms of time and money; hence it is easier for politicians to stick their heads in the sand and continue on a 50 year old aid track that has proven unsuccessful. For as long as we can continue to believe that our efforts actually make a difference, what does it matter if it´s all an illusion?

So as a final insight, the political power elites adherence to recent research is weak if even existing. The presence of an adherence for recent research both in USAID:s and the EDF:s working papers is painfully absent. But what then is the purpose of these new lessons that scholars are learning if no one is being responsive to them? In other words it is about time for politicians to learn to listen to experts in this area as they do on almost every other area. And by experts on this area I mean scholars from all kinds of educational background, but with explicit knowledge on the process of aid. An expert on pure economy or purely political or social science is hence not equipped to deal with such complex issues as aid.
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