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Editorial

Dear Readers,

September 2021 will mark precisely 60 years since the group of Western industrialised nations formed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 1961, the OECD also established its Development Assistance Committee to coordinate its members' development *aid* (as it was generally known at the time). This autumn, Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will also commemorate its 60th anniversary.

These six decades have borne witness to many changes. We now tend to refer to development *cooperation* rather than development aid to stress the fact that it involves a mutually beneficial partnership with other countries. Development cooperation has long ceased to be the preserve of the Western industrialised nations and is now more diverse than ever. Countries that were among the largest recipients of development assistance just 20 years ago have now changed sides and become donors. However, not all of them share the view that successful development is linked to more democracy and rule of law.

The work of development cooperation has never been so complex. It is no longer limited to improving the lives of people in particular countries but has become a vital component of how we tackle global challenges such as security, migration, climate protection, and pandemic prevention. So, it is time to look at current trends and actors in development cooperation and ask ourselves how German development policy can hold its own in this environment.

It was against this background that the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development published its BMZ 2030 reform strategy more than a year ago. Its fundamental aims include making development policy more efficient and effective. Veronika Ertl takes stock of the reforms so far and highlights two issues that she believes deserve special emphasis in this reorientation of German development policy. First, Germany should forge alliances with other donor countries outside of the OECD. And second, it should raise its profile as a values-based donor country.

It is important to regularly scrutinise and document the effectiveness of public spending on development assistance. Therefore, many organisations have set up dedicated departments to deal with monitoring and evaluation (M&E). But Angelika Klein and Lukas Kupfernagel argue that M&E can and should do more, calling for an expanded understanding of its role with a stronger focus on consultation than control.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us keenly aware of the importance of global health. Ranging from pathogens that are transmitted from animals to humans (zoonoses) to the problem of antimicrobial resistance: many problems can only be overcome by taking a holistic view of human, animal, and environmental health in development cooperation, as explained by Martina Kaiser in her article on the One Health approach.

Development cooperation always reflects the interests and values of the donors. For example, democracy and human rights are often an integral part of Western development cooperation. The fact that these standards come into conflict with other interests and cannot always be enforced as a pure doctrine is highlighted by Carolin Löprich using the example of the EU's budget support for Ethiopia. However, not every donor country sets standards relating to democracy and the rule of law – not least because they themselves fall short of the mark here. But are countries like China, Russia, or Turkey explicitly promoting autocracy in Africa? Mathias Kamp explores this question in his article.

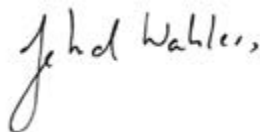
David Merkle turns his attention to East Asia, where Taiwan shows how even a small country with little diplomatic recognition can make its mark through development cooperation. Taiwan is deliberately using this area to expand its international influence and distinguish itself as an innovative and democratic counter-model to the People's Republic of China.

The example of the “pragmatic giants” – the term Fabian Blumberg uses to describe the Gulf states and their development cooperation – once again clearly demonstrates the extent to which self-interest shapes this policy area. Measured against their gross national income, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have ranked among the world's top ten bilateral donors in the recent past. However, the distinction between development cooperation and investment is often nebulous.

But one thing is clear: Germany and other Western donors are no longer the sole actors in international development cooperation. Over the next few years, faced with global challenges, it will be important to cooperate even with those players that do not share our values. However, it is equally important to adhere to our belief that the rule of law and democracy in partner countries are essential components of successful and sustainable development. As Mathias Kamp points out using the example of Africa, we generally have one strong ally on our side – the citizens themselves.

I hope you will find this report a stimulating read.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers is Editor of International Reports, Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department European and International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (gerhard.wahlers@kas.de).

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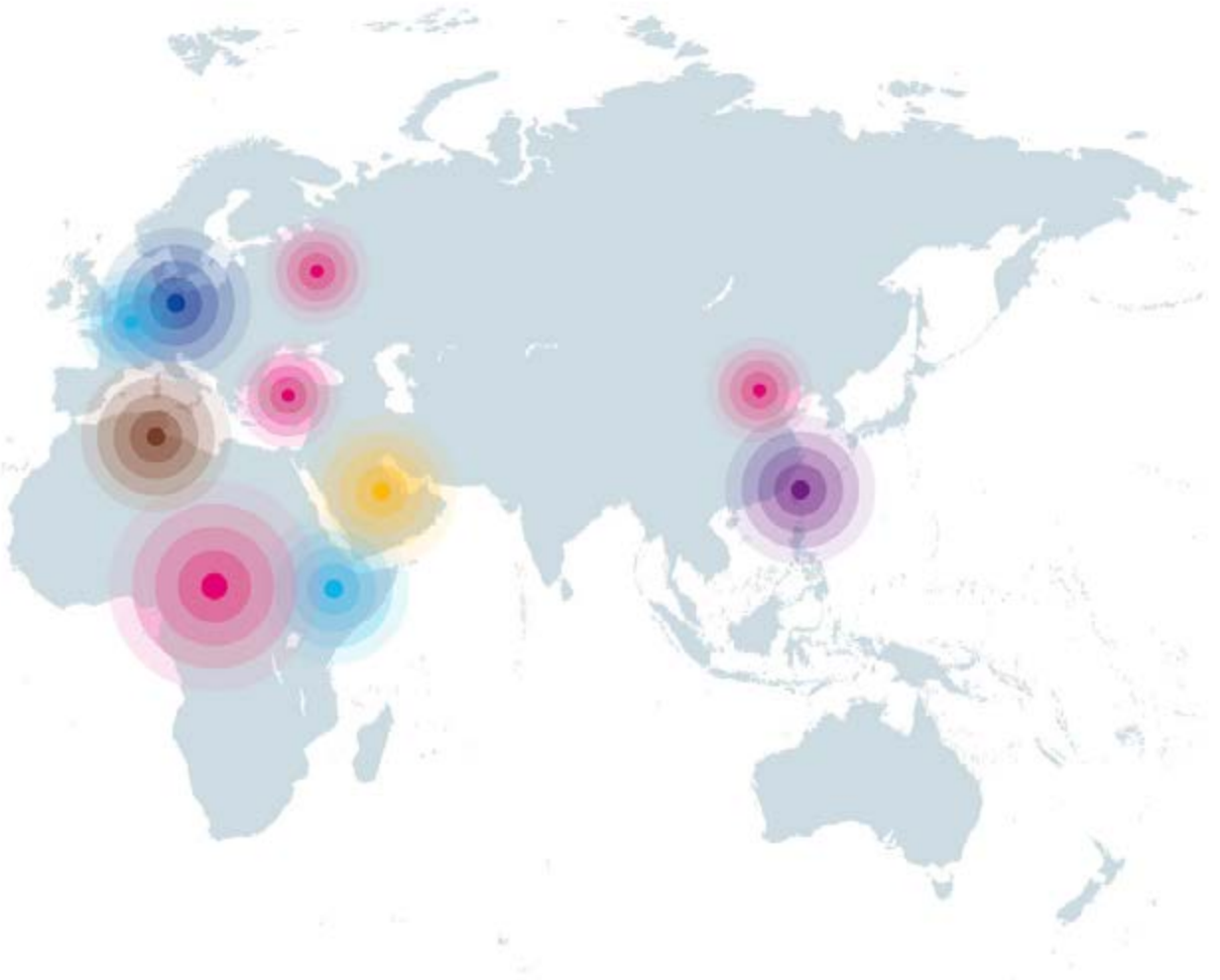
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The BMZ 2030 Reform Strategy

A Cornerstone for Increasing the Strategic Effectiveness
of Germany's Development Cooperation?

Veronika Ertl

German development cooperation finds itself faced with fresh challenges due to the increasingly complex requirements for sustainable development and shifts in the international donor landscape. In light of this, can the BMZ 2030 reform strategy enhance its effectiveness? And what strategic dimensions are needed to ensure the future viability of German development cooperation?

In April 2020, Gerd Müller, Germany's federal minister for economic cooperation and development, presented the BMZ 2030 reform strategy, a far-reaching programme for overhauling Germany's development policy. It aims to focus development measures and funding "more strategically, effectively and efficiently"¹ in order to find "answers to new challenges"². To this end, the reform is resetting the thematic focus, revising the system of partner countries for bilateral official development cooperation, adapting the planning and allocation procedures, and building capacities for data analysis and impact assessment. Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is currently implementing the reform strategy, so it is not yet possible to draw conclusions about its success. However, in view of the growing importance of development cooperation, both as a field of German policy and at the international level, it seems appropriate to examine the strategy more closely.

Against this backdrop, the article seeks to provide a preliminary assessment of the BMZ 2030 reform strategy. It begins by studying the current and upcoming challenges for German development policy and, based on this, develops a concept of strategic effectiveness that supplements the 'traditional' notion of effectiveness with considerations relating to strategic partnerships for sustainable development and raising Germany's profile compared to other donors. This concept of strategic effectiveness provides a frame of reference for examining the reform strategy.

More Complex, More Competitive – Challenges for German Development Cooperation

In addition to the 'classic' fields of development cooperation, such as poverty reduction and food security, new global challenges have emerged that greatly exceed the capacities of bilateral cooperation. They include tackling climate change, mitigating global health threats, and preventing and managing crises and conflicts. Since 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has provided a global framework encompassing these challenges and illustrating their numerous interdependencies.

The aim of building global partnerships for sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 17) as set out in the 2030 Agenda highlights a prerequisite for tackling these challenges: partnerships between a wide range of actors at the international, regional, national, and local level. In addition to bilateral cooperation, multilateral forums play a key role at the global level. However, for some years now, their ability to carry out their tasks of coordinating and setting standards has been restricted by the growing trend of countries retreating into nationalism.

Parallel to the weakening of multilateral forums, we can also observe their targeted instrumentalisation, especially by rising powers such as China. As the systemic competition increasingly plays out in the open, multilateral forums have become contested arenas in which actors try to impose their respective approaches and standards regarding international cooperation. In

the area of development cooperation, the lines of conflict in this respect include the differentiated responsibilities of industrialised and developing countries for sustainable development, along with questions of conditionality and transparency.

Besides the poles of global power in systemic competition, Germany also faces growing fragmentation of the international development landscape due to an accelerated rise of emerging economies and middle-income countries since the turn of the century. As more actors enter the arena, competition between different approaches to development policy becomes greater as these countries are themselves increasingly active in this respect. Admittedly, the term ‘new’ donors is misleading when used for countries like China and India, as they have been engaged in development cooperation in terms of South-South cooperation for many years. However, the volume, geographical spread, and influence that these forms of cooperation have on the development policy discourse are new in this form.

There is an urgent need to mobilise additional financial resources.

Another challenge arises from the breadth of the Sustainable Development Goals and the financing required to achieve them. By 2020, the estimated financing gap to achieve the development goals already stood at 2.5 trillion US dollars per year.³ In view of reversed development progress and a renewed rise in the global development needs owing to COVID-19, it can be assumed that the financing gap is now even wider. The financial resources provided by official development assistance (ODA) continue to fall short in this respect. There is, therefore, an urgent need to mobilise additional financial resources, including in the form of higher contributions by developing countries themselves and more private investment.



Given the continuously high development needs, official development assistance nevertheless remains an important component. As the second-largest ODA donor in the world, Germany has a vital role to play in this regard. It seems clear that expectations towards Germany will grow



Major challenges: The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed progress and further increased development needs worldwide. Source: © Francis Mascarenhas, Reuters.

in the years to come, partly because some other traditional donor countries are increasingly turning their gaze inward due to growing domestic needs in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. As Germany is expected to take on a more prominent international role, the transparency and

accountability of its development expenditure will, in turn, become even more important. If German development cooperation is to secure its continuing public and political acceptance and legitimacy, it must thus be able to demonstrate tangible results.

Strategic Effectiveness

The discussion about the effectiveness of development cooperation is not new. Dialogue on what needed to be done to increase effectiveness was already initiated with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. Four High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness were subsequently held to discuss the corresponding standards. These initially involved the industrialised nations and later on also incorporated developing countries. The fourth forum in 2011 eventually witnessed the launch of a new partnership: the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.⁴

The principles for effective development cooperation set out in the Busan Partnership include the following:

- increasing the ownership of development priorities and approaches by developing countries;
- ensuring all measures are focused on results based on development priorities;
- cooperation of all stakeholders based on openness, trust, mutual respect, and learning;
- making sure donor countries and cooperation beneficiaries are transparent and accountable to each other and to the public and parliament for their development policy actions.⁵

Germany is actively involved in international discussions on the effectiveness of development cooperation, including in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC).

In view of the challenges and changes affecting international development as outlined at the outset, however, a broader – strategic – understanding of effectiveness that goes beyond the traditional concept of the latter appears to be needed. This article, therefore, adds a further two elements to the components of effectiveness in development cooperation as outlined above:

1. Effectiveness through Strategic Partnerships for Global Sustainable Development

As a global framework for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda provides a starting point for sustainable reform of development cooperation. The thematic interconnections between the SDGs, along with their universal character, highlight the need to develop strategic partnerships to achieve the goals. These must be created at the local, national, regional, and international level and involve state and non-state actors. Much needed progress on fostering global public goods, such as environment and health, will require closer cooperation with influential emerging states. Working with the private sector is also increasingly important for shaping sustainable economic systems and financing sustainable development. Any reform fit for the future must thus identify relevant partners for achieving sustainable development and consistently work towards strategic cooperation with these partners. Germany can build on existing partnerships and approaches in this respect.

Germany has to communicate its cooperation interests and quality standards more clearly.

2. Effectiveness through Partner Orientation and Raising the Profile of Germany's Values-Based Development Cooperation

In light of increasing systemic competition and diversification of the actors involved in development cooperation, being perceived as an attractive and trustworthy partner is more important than ever. At first glance, donors who postulate more interest-driven cooperation seemingly not linked to conditionality, currently appear more attractive to many developing countries. This means that Germany ought to communicate its cooperation interests and values-based quality standards even more clearly while highlighting the value of its contribution in partner countries.

To this end, it is important to improve communication about the scope and tangible results of Germany's contributions. At present, these are often not portrayed clearly enough compared to other donors who are skillfully showcasing their activities. These efforts for better communication must be accompanied by reducing the obstacles to greater effectiveness, such as the burden of coordinating large numbers of small-scale projects. Germany should also harness its existing strong relationships with partner countries and its positive international perception as a values-based actor to help raise its profile.

Besides bilateral cooperation with partner countries, this is also a vital element at the multilateral level. As the world's second-largest donor of ODA and a major global player, Germany is expected to actively advocate the rules-based, values-based global order in multilateral forums in terms of both subject matter and finances. More than ever before, it is time for Germany to shape the agenda more actively and prioritise which multilateral forums offer the greatest opportunities for pursuing the German approach to sustainable development.

The BMZ 2030 Reform Strategy

Within this frame of reference, how can the components of the BMZ 2030 reform strategy be evaluated for their strategic effectiveness? The key objective of improving effectiveness, as elaborated in the reform announcements and documents, provides a good starting point. The stronger orientation towards development policy priorities and increasing the BMZ's capacity to act also require closer scrutiny in the context of strategic effectiveness.⁶

Of Facts and Figures: Impact Orientation, Measurement, and Communication

In the core area of 'traditional' effectiveness, the reform strategy stipulates a greater focus on orientation towards and measurement of impacts, particularly regarding data availability and processing, as well as communication.

The BMZ seeks to consolidate its portfolio and focus its activities more strongly on results in areas it perceives to be particularly important. It does so by drawing up a new list of priority areas (see table 1). In addition to the five core areas, each fleshed out by three areas of intervention, the new model comprises ten fixed-term initiative areas and six overarching quality criteria. The structure of this list of new priorities clearly highlights the broad range of challenges for sustainable development. This also means, however, that the sum of all core areas, including areas of intervention, initiative areas, and quality criteria, remains substantial, which could make it difficult to achieve desired improvements in effectiveness through consolidation.

The list of priorities clearly highlights the broad range of challenges for sustainable development.

The reform aims to mitigate this risk by linking the list of priorities with the new list of partner countries. It envisages focusing cooperation with bilateral partners on three core areas and two subordinate areas of intervention per country. In addition to this, it will be possible to work on up to two initiative areas. The main consideration when selecting the initiative areas is supposed to be that they significantly contribute towards their respective areas.⁷

Moreover, the new approach to managing via strategies as envisaged in the reform strategy should also be viewed in the context of improving effectiveness. The plan is to create fewer strategies that are more consistently and effectively used for management purposes. This includes a reduction from the current 35-or-so sectoral strategy papers to five core area strategies. Binding standardised indicators for all core areas will be used to improve the assessment of effectiveness. In addition, review instruments are to be enhanced to ensure that lessons learnt from strategies and programmes are more systematically applied.⁸

One question remains unanswered in this context: how to record the results achieved in thematic priority areas and countries that are no longer the focus of bilateral official development cooperation in the wake of the reform, and how to ensure their preservation? Along with a potential loss of reputation, any ‘white elephants’ would be extremely regrettable in terms of effectiveness, too.

The reform strategy points out a clear need to improve the availability and quality of data if the goals of greater effectiveness and improved

assessment are to be technically possible. To this end, the BMZ is introducing technical improvements and has made structural changes, including establishing a new department to deal with policy issues, data, statistics, and effectiveness.⁹

A quality system for measuring effectiveness also provides the basis for communicating the impact of German development cooperation with greater transparency. This applies to regular reporting, for example, within the ODA and IATI frameworks¹⁰, as well as parliamentary questions. Quantitative data is to be made tangible,

Table 1: Overview of the New BMZ Priority Areas

Core areas (the BMZ's DNA)	Initiative areas
Priority areas for development policy relating to the key issues of our time	Focusing development policy on specific areas for a set period of time
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peaceful and inclusive societies 2. A world without hunger 3. Training and sustainable growth for decent jobs 4. Responsibility for our planet – climate and energy 5. Protecting life on Earth – the environment and natural resources <p>→ Each supplemented by three areas of intervention</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marshall Plan with Africa 2. Health, pandemic response, and the One Health approach 3. Sustainable supply chains and the Green Button 4. Population development and family planning 5. Digital centres and digital technology 6. Returning to new opportunities 7. Development and Climate Alliance 8. Green people's energy 9. Synthetic fuels 10. Sport, media, and culture
Quality criteria	
Values-based, sustainable, and future-oriented criteria that apply to all measures	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human rights, gender equality, and inclusion 2. Anti-corruption and integrity 3. Poverty and inequality reduction 4. Environmental and climate impact assessment 5. Conflict sensitivity (Do No Harm approach) 6. Digital technology (Digital by Default approach) 	

Source: BMZ 2020, n. 1, pp. 9 f.

for example, by providing practical examples to communicate results to the public in a clearer and more meaningful way. However, communication is afforded low priority in the reform strategy when compared to other issues relating to effectiveness. The reform strategy should not make the mistake of wasting opportunities to increase public acceptance of development cooperation.

Aid and Accountability – Towards Greater Ownership by Partner Countries?

The reform strategy underlines that partners acting on their own initiative is “key to development”.¹¹ It calls on Germany’s partner countries to demonstrate even more that they are making progress in areas like good governance, human rights protection, and the fight against corruption.

There is a particularly strong focus on good governance in the reform strategy regarding the reorientation of bilateral partnerships. The BMZ’s previous country list is being replaced by a new system of partner categories (see table 2) with three overarching categories: bilateral partners, global partners, and nexus and peace partners.

The new direction for cooperation with partners has strongly shaped perceptions and discussions about the BMZ 2030 reform strategy. While most observers believe there is a fundamental need to consolidate the list of partner countries, there are also fears that withdrawal from certain countries could have a permanently detrimental effect on Germany’s influence and its perception as a global actor.¹² Particular criticism has been levelled against the selection of ‘exit countries’ (see table 2), which will no longer receive official bilateral development assistance in future. The BMZ stresses that cooperation with these countries is not coming to an end but will continue through non-governmental channels such as non-governmental organisations and political foundations, as well as European and multilateral formats.¹³ However, changed framework conditions resulting from an end to official bilateral development cooperation with the ‘exit countries’ should not be

underestimated and could potentially impede the work of non-state actors on the ground.

The comprehensibility and coherence of the country selection process, intended to reflect the stronger emphasis on accountability, has also come under fire.¹⁴ According to the BMZ, aspects such as good governance and willingness to pursue reform were taken into account when selecting the bilateral partner countries.¹⁵ However, critics note that this focus on good governance as a criterion for deciding whether to continue with official bilateral development assistance is not apparent in the case of Egypt and Tanzania, while reform-oriented and needy countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia have been removed from the list of bilateral partner countries.¹⁶ To avoid undermining the credibility of both the reform strategy and German development policy, the country selection needs to be explained in a transparent and comprehensible manner and systematically evaluated whenever the underlying conditions change.

The main criteria for selecting reform partner countries are good governance, acting on one’s own initiative, and a focus on private investment.

The criteria of fostering good governance and displaying a willingness to pursue reform play a particularly important role in the selection of the so-called reform partners. In 2017, the Marshall Plan with Africa ushered in this type of cooperation with its focus on particularly reform-minded partner countries on the African continent. The special quality of the cooperation is reflected not only in the level of financial commitment but also in an intensive political dialogue on mutual cooperation interests and requirements as well as in special instruments such as reform funding. The BMZ 2030 reform strategy now systematises these partnerships as a sub-category and the most intensive form

Table 2: The BMZ's New Country List

<p>→ Bilateral partners</p> <hr/> <p>Long-term pursuit of shared development goals</p> <p>Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia</p> <hr/> <p>↘ Reform partners</p> <p>Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia</p> <hr/> <p>↘ Transformation partners</p> <p>Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine</p>	<p>→ Global partners</p> <hr/> <p>Working together on tackling the issues defining our common global future and achieving cross-border goals</p> <p>Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, Vietnam</p> <hr/> <p>→ Nexus and peace partners</p> <hr/> <p>Commitment to stability, peacebuilding and tackling the structural causes of conflict and displacement</p> <p>Chad, Central African Republic, Iraq, DR Congo, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen</p>	<p>Non-governmental, European and multilateral cooperation</p> <hr/> <p>Exit countries</p> <p>Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Burundi, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Liberia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan</p> <hr/> <p>All other countries on the DAC list</p>
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Source: BMZ 2020, n. 1, pp. 7 f., on the status of Togo see n. 17.

of bilateral cooperation. The stated main criteria for selection are good governance, acting on one's own initiative, and a focus on private investment. The reform presents a good opportunity to learn from the experiences of reform partnerships and to remedy identified weaknesses, including how the criterion of willingness to reform is applied. This also seems opportune considering the planned expansion of this new partnership model beyond the current partners and the African continent.¹⁷

Your Partner or My Partner? The Role of Donor Coordination

In view of the new partnership model and the end of official bilateral development cooperation with more than 20 countries, the BMZ stresses the importance of coordinating with other donors. The scale of Germany's contribution has already been used as a criterion in the selection of the new bilateral partner countries. Countries, where Germany's contribution was deemed small and thus not significant compared to other donors, include Haiti, Laos, and Liberia.¹⁸

However, it is not quite clear to what extent agreements were made with other donors about donor coordination when preparing for the reform strategy. It certainly does not seem self-evident that thematic priority areas previously supported by Germany in the 'exit countries' will now be covered by other donors – particularly in view of a trend of declining official development assistance on the part of traditional donors. This risks creating a vacuum in the 'exit countries' – a vacuum that could lead to an increase in influence by donors who take a less values-based approach to development. This would not be favourable for Germany's development aspirations and German interests. Particularly concerning 'exit countries', it would thus make sense for Germany to coordinate more closely with like-minded donors.

With regard to coordination in partner countries, support for joint projects with other donors is also being discussed in the context of the reform. One possibility in this regard is the EU approach of joint programming, which aims to facilitate better coordination of the programmes of EU

institutions and Member States in the respective countries.¹⁹ This concept is by no means new. It has been on the table at the EU level for some years, albeit progress has been slow. Germany announced its intention to press ahead with this issue during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2020.²⁰ There have been no notable advancements however – the mammoth task of dealing with the pandemic is certainly one explanation for the lower priority afforded to this issue during the German presidency.

‘Better Together’: Strategic Partnerships for Global Challenges

As discussed earlier, strategic partnerships beyond traditional bilateral development cooperation – including with emerging economies and non-state actors – are needed to address transboundary challenges and to further global common goods.

The focus on Africa and the Middle East could lead to a loss of German influence in Latin America and Asia.

The new partnership model takes this into account with the creation of the Global Partners category. The eight global partners are emerging economies such as China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, which, in terms of their political weight and level of economic development, are able to make a significant contribution to achieving global common goods. They are, therefore, also important partners for the advancement of German interests worldwide. The BMZ 2030 reform strategy thus consolidates and systematises a component of German development cooperation that has already gained in importance over recent years. It is now important to better exploit the potential of cooperation with these countries, for example, through the strategic development of instruments such as triangular cooperation. This entails a traditional donor country such as Germany working with an emerging economy on a project in a developing country.

When looking at the aspect of strategic partnerships, the selection of countries for the new partnership model requires critical scrutiny. The combination of a technical and a strategic filter was intended to ensure a selection based on quantitative criteria such as the partner country’s level of need and strategic criteria such as geopolitical significance. In sum, these selection decisions result in a focus on Africa and the Middle East. This new orientation could lead to a loss of German influence in Latin America and Asia, something that could be exploited by countries already becoming increasingly active in these regions. To prevent a weakening of strategic relations with the ‘exit countries’, efforts should be made in coordination with other German ODA-spending ministries to maintain relations through these channels – no easy undertaking in view of the difficulty of coordinating different departments. The BMZ’s orientation also seems to run counter to the current foreign policy trend of greater German commitment in Latin America and Asia – embodied in the German Foreign Office’s Latin America and Caribbean Initiative and the Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific Region – and could thus erode coherence and strategic interests in Germany’s dealings with its international partners. If this is to be prevented, the relevant ministries need to work on improving their coordination, first and foremost the BMZ and the Foreign Office.

In addition to partner countries, the private sector also has an important role to play in strategic partnerships. The BMZ’s efforts to involve and promote the private sector in sustainable development are particularly evident in the Marshall Plan with Africa with its reform partnerships and in the Development Investment Fund.²¹ The BMZ 2030 reform strategy institutionalises the category of reform partners and offers the possibility of expansion. The new thematic priorities also include aspects of private sector development. Whereas the role of the private sector receives attention, the weighting of corresponding instruments in the reform strategy seems rather restrained compared to other BMZ discussions and concepts. The implementation of the reform offers an opportunity to integrate



Comprehensible selection? Countries like Sierra Leone have fallen off the list of bilateral partner countries.
Source: © Baz Ratner, Reuters.



these instruments into the portfolio more strategically, ensuring that activities are in line with the social, environmental, and economic aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

*Partner Orientation and Profile Building:
Germany as an Attractive, Values-Based Partner*

As explained above, the strategic effectiveness of German development cooperation depends even more than before on being perceived as an attractive, reliable partner. Its competitors in this respect are donors such as China, which pursue other development approaches and are skilled at marketing and showcasing their activities in partner countries. To remain relevant as a donor and partner in this situation, it is vital to carry out an evaluation of existing weaknesses in Germany's development cooperation compared to other donor models and make the appropriate adjustments. Potential starting points include clearly communicating mutual cooperation interests and financial commitments as well as the coherence of instruments and implementation structures. It is, at the same time, important not to fall into the trap of neglecting Germany's values-based approach and quality standards so as to compete with development policy approaches perceived to be more efficient. Instead, the added value of German development cooperation must be clearly implemented and demonstrated through the interaction of both these components to increase awareness and appreciation of German activities among political decision-makers and the public in partner countries.

The BMZ 2030 reform strategy addresses this issue in several ways. By dovetailing the lists of thematic priority areas and countries and the planned consolidation of bilateral portfolios, the BMZ seeks to reduce the large numbers of separate, small projects in the partner countries. This harbours potential for reducing transaction costs on both sides and strengthening the impact and significance of the German contribution in partner countries. This goal is also supported by the plan to develop the instrument of official government negotiations. In future, all commitments in the partner country,

i. e. including special initiatives, climate financing, regional and global projects, and KfW development loans, are to be communicated in a combined form that will emphasise Germany's contribution as a total package. The idea of reflecting the commitments of other German ministries in this context should be pursued further, particularly in light of the increasing ODA share of other ministries. However, experience has also shown that the at times divergent interests and procedures of individual ministries and German donor agencies make it difficult to bundle commitments in this way.

Furthermore, its values-based approach is a key component of German development cooperation. These values are embedded in the new list of priority thematic areas as "overarching quality criteria" to be applied to all measures. These include human rights, gender equality, anti-corruption, environmental and climate impact assessment, and conflict sensitivity. In principle, the idea of mainstreaming issues entails the danger that they will be side-lined. When implementing the reform, care should thus be taken to ensure that the quality criteria are consistently applied.

In addition to bilateral relations, the multilateral level also plays an important role in raising Germany's profile as an attractive development partner. Both the BMZ's Strategy Paper "BMZ Priorities for a Strong European and Multilateral Development Policy"²² and the BMZ 2030 reform strategy envisage making Germany's contribution to rules- and values-based international cooperation and sustainable development in multilateral forums even more strategic and effective – especially regarding setting a thematic agenda and strengthening Germany's development cooperation model. Germany's influence is to be further increased through the targeted secondment of personnel to strategically important organisations.²³

Implementation Is Now the Key

How effective will German development cooperation be in the future, considering the changing requirements? Based on the above analysis, does

the BMZ 2030 reform strategy help to increase its strategic effectiveness?

So far, the answer is mixed. First, the reform strategy's claim to actively shape policy should be welcomed. The BMZ is underlining its understanding of development policy as a key component of German foreign policy and strengthening its orientation towards strategic interests. At the same time, the global framework provided by the 2030 Agenda and its long-term sustainable development goals remains the point of reference for German development policy.

Based on its aim to actively shape German development policy, the reform addresses a number of aspects with a view to increasing effectiveness in bilateral relations with partner countries and at the multilateral level. Along with adjustments targeting traditional aspects of effectiveness, particularly in terms of a stronger orientation towards and better measurement of impacts, the reform provides a launchpad for building more strategic relationships with partners and raising Germany's profile as an attractive partner. Meanwhile, certain elements of the reform strategy still lack coherence and would benefit from re-evaluation and adjustment.

It is impossible to make a final assessment of the reform strategy at this early stage of implementation. This implementation now offers a vital opportunity to learn from existing weaknesses and build on approaches that work. It will also be important to monitor the reform's indirect effects on non-state actors, such as political foundations. Entirely in line with the results-oriented approach, necessary adjustments will have to be made in this process so that, in the end, the reform strategy can actively contribute to shaping a strategically effective, sustainable German development policy.

- translated from German -

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[New Approaches in Development Cooperation](#)

Accountability Is Only the Beginning

A Plea for the Strategic Use of Monitoring and Evaluation

Angelika Klein / Lukas Kupfernagel

Discussions about monitoring and evaluation in development cooperation still tend to revolve around justifying the use of funds – often taxpayers’ money – and proving their effectiveness. Of course, this is right and important, but monitoring and evaluation harbour the potential to do more. The goal must be a change in attitude, moving away from being “guardians of the indicators” to becoming “friends and helpers”.

“No policy area is scrutinised so closely for its effectiveness as development policy”.¹ This statement by German State Secretary Martin Jäger reflects the pressure for accountability exerted on development cooperation and overseas aid. This is completely understandable – after all, taxpayers need to know how much of their money is being spent overseas, for what purpose, and to what effect. Moreover, development cooperation can be a controversial issue. Since the early 2000s, experts like the US economist William Easterly have been criticising the development assistance efforts of international institutions, primarily from an economic point of view. He argues that setting the wrong incentives can lead recipient countries to follow counterproductive paths, saying that this has occurred more often than success stories in recent decades.² And the pressure is rising. Other actors are now focusing on many recipient countries’ growing dependence on development assistance.³ For example, populist movements insist that foreign aid is mostly a waste of money and should be cut. This is also happening in Germany, where discussions about budget cuts – similar to those that took place under former US President Donald Trump⁴ – are spearheaded in the Bundestag by the right-wing populist AfD parliamentary group in particular.

The inevitable financial and economic difficulties triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic will further ignite the debate, gradually shifting it from the political to the public arena. As it happens, the public is already sitting up and taking notice. Development cooperation is said to be expensive, inefficient, and can in fact cause

more damage than good to its target groups. Special emphasis is placed on the financial aspect regarding the use of taxpayers’ money as a reason for questioning the whole principle underpinning development cooperation. A survey commissioned by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) reveals that one in four Germans believes development cooperation to be ineffective, with only one in ten viewing it as effective. One complaint by the critics is that around half of all development aid fails to reach its intended recipients due to corruption.⁵

At the same time, there is growing pressure from international actors, too. Countries opposed to principles of the liberal world order attempt to entice Germany’s traditional development cooperation partners with lucrative, unconditional offers, thus creating “donor competition” in recipient countries. The fact that these tempting offers are not always guided by sustainability and the interests of the recipients but by the donor’s own financial and strategic advantages and interests, does not seem to stand in their way.⁶ There are growing fears about whether – and for how long – values-based development aid propagated by the “West” will be able to keep up in terms of their appeal.

In short, experts, politicians, and institutions engaged in development cooperation are facing mounting pressure to justify their activities. This article will now focus on the situation in Germany, where expectations placed on development cooperation stakeholders can seem somewhat utopian. Development assistance

should combine speed with maximum impact – along with low and fully traceable expenditure. This is normal in technical cooperation (TC) – measuring TC and disaster relief against this yardstick should be possible. In the governance sector, however, the situation is more complex not merely because it involves long-term commitments. Nevertheless, development cooperation can and must not evade the requirement to strive for effectiveness, while also documenting and communicating it to the outside world. How can this be credibly achieved? And what instruments can be used to not only deal with the – partly justified – pressure for accountability but also to put this pressure to good use?

Can Monitoring and Evaluation Act as an Internal Compass?

Going beyond ethical principles and values, data should be able to provide the best possible evidence that good use is being made of financial and human resources and that the rationale behind projects is guaranteed. There are two key instruments for keeping the development cooperation on course and away from danger: monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Until now, these terms have mainly been used for the purpose of accountability, but they have much more potential. They can proactively and purposefully help to steer programmes and act as their “internal compass”. Both are essential components of development cooperation but often fail to live up to their capabilities, particularly in smaller organisations, in the “tug-of-war between learning and accountability”⁷. Having said that, the internal and external pressures on development cooperation as a whole have led to the professionalisation of M&E. The achievement of objectives, impact, and efficiency all must be monitored under the German Federal Budget Code. What is more, most non-governmental organisations (NGOs), political foundations, and other organisations now have their own M&E units and structures. The accountability debate mainly focuses on financial and administrative procedures. However, modern management systems can now record financial flows with great speed and accuracy and thus reduce the

risk of money straying from its intended purpose. But it is more difficult to deal with objections about the effectiveness of development cooperation. This is also because, particularly in the area of governance, evaluating effectiveness is perceived as being both more difficult and more opaque than financial monitoring, making it of little use as an orientation aid. This means the results rarely find their way into strategies or policy debates and are correspondingly more difficult to retrieve.

The greatest challenge lies in understanding how to prove and document the “impact”.

There are manifold reasons for this. On the one hand, those who implement development cooperation often tend to reduce M&E mechanisms to accountability, while ignoring the potential and opportunities that they afford (such as for self-reflection and initiating learning and strategies). On the other hand, the use of excessively technical terminology and methods can be a deterrent and is usually unwieldy and inadequate for governance issues. This means that findings are often communicated in unappealing, even incomprehensible, ways that are not tailored towards their audience.

But the greatest challenge lies in understanding what needs to be proven, the concept to be documented – the “impact”. What is meant by “impact” and how is it defined?

Distinguishing Between Output, Outcome, and Impact

The renewed discussion about the concept of “impact” reflects a fundamental change in German development cooperation over the last twenty years. This is illustrated, for example, by the establishment of Germany’s largest and most well-known international development agency. In 2011, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) was created



through the merger of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Capacity Building International (InWent) and the German Development Service (DED). Even before the name was changed, a trend had begun that is not unique to GIZ: the tendency to embed technical cooperation, infrastructure development, and even emergency relief in overarching social and political levels and structures, bolstered by “good governance” measures, support for administrative reforms, and policy advice. In the area of good governance alone, GIZ has reported a

65 per cent increase in projects since 2008, and the financial volume has more than tripled in the same period.⁸

TC thus became IC (international cooperation), which posed the question of impact and how to measure it once again, but from a different angle. This is also against the background of changes to the international debate. Consequently, agreements and international commitments, which Germany has also entered into, are now more focused on impact.⁹ It may still be possible, at



Rarely so obvious: While the effect of a new irrigation system can be measured relatively well, it is far more difficult to prove causalities in the case of complex structural changes in society. Source: © Amr Abdallah Dalsh, Reuters.

least ostensibly, to establish causality between an action and the changes that ensue in the case of technical activities. However, this becomes even more difficult as the links between cause and effect become more complex. For example, a new well enables the irrigation of arable land, which yields better harvests and leads to improved food security in a region. But in the case of a project designed to bring about long-term changes in patterns of behaviour, it is far more difficult to prove or even identify causal links. Have consultancy services in local authorities and workshops with civil servants resulted in improved budgeting in the municipality? Does this in fact reduce corruption, initially at local level and later at national level?

It is more difficult to measure impact when it comes to civic education and policy dialogue programmes.

The task of evaluators and M&E experts initially became more difficult when technical cooperation was accompanied by measures in the political sphere and public administration. Where interventions such as the above-cited wells or seed bags had a tangible, direct impact on the recipients that could also be proven through observations or traditional quantification, complex structural changes are much more difficult to measure, and the description of their impact is correspondingly broad. And it is even more difficult to define and measure impact when it comes to civic education, policy dialogue programmes, and similar initiatives.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the debate surrounding effectiveness in development cooperation has become more differentiated, but also more diffuse. Depending on their mandate, internationally active organisations measure their work against different benchmarks. For example, the World Bank – as a development bank – sets itself narrower criteria and defines impact as “the indicator of interest with and

without the intervention: $Y_1 - Y_0$ ”¹⁰. According to this approach, impact is only achieved if the difference triggered by a certain intervention can be measured beyond doubt, although this cannot be attained without the costly inclusion of control groups.

Whereas the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) defines impact as “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended”¹¹. This second definition is broader and also forms the basis for the approach taken by most German development cooperation organisations. This is understandable and appropriate for a multilateral organisation such as the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). The assumption is that impact can take place at different levels. The English language makes a basic distinction between output, outcome, and impact. Output is the direct result of an intervention, such as a workshop. It is typically easy to measure, whereas the other two categories are more difficult to pin down. Outcomes should include behavioural changes among specific target groups, i.e., effects at the target group level, or changes in status (e.g., malnutrition in a target population has been reduced by a factor of X), while impact goes beyond this and encompasses a macro level, e.g., society or some of its parts.¹² These levels are described accordingly as “sphere of control (output)”, “sphere of influence (outcome)”, and “sphere of interest (impact)”¹³. Against the background of these differentiation options, English has become the lingua franca of German development cooperation because of its ability to differentiate more precisely between the various levels of impact and hence the changes that have been achieved.

Considering the difficulty of defining and measuring what has been achieved, it is not surprising that justifying and proving a project’s “meaningfulness” in terms of its “effectiveness” poses quite a challenge. This is made even more difficult given that terminology is not understood equally or uniformly by all parties involved in

development cooperation. This is something that hampers communication with target groups in Germany. So even the terminology presents an obstacle – but this is just one among many.

Problematic Perceptions

Growing pressure for accountability over recent years and the increasingly complex terminology have led M&E units in virtually all German development cooperation organisations to take on more staff and professionalise their operations. The demand for postgraduate courses in this field has also increased in recent years and many consultancy firms focus exclusively on evaluations for development cooperation organisations worldwide.

The professionalisation of M&E units enables data to be aggregated with greater speed and accuracy and provides the prerequisites for a wide range of enquiries – such as from ministries or parliamentary groups in the Bundestag – to be answered more fully and, if necessary, more quickly. However, the pressure for accountability experienced by M&E units may also make them join others in viewing themselves as oversight panels. This means the urgency of monitoring impact in their day-to-day work may supersede the benefits of M&E measures, which could be of use in other areas: such as in supporting strategic decision-making, identifying niches where they have unique strengths compared to competing institutions, and much more. They also play a key role in the institutional learning process. Even though projects may be set up differently depending on the region or topic, there might still be similarities in the project processes. A body with an insight into all projects across the world could be of great value for the institutional learning process, but it is often inadequately exploited as a resource.

Theory versus Practice

Monitoring and evaluation are carried out at all levels in development cooperation: at the micro level (the activity), the meso level (the project), and the macro level (the programme or sector

programme). For example, a workshop may already have a direct and demonstrable impact on its participants. We can assume that these participants go on to influence those around them, which, in turn, leads to behavioural change at a broader, higher level – but this is more difficult to prove. It is true that these are different aspects with differing requirements of M&E, yet they still derive from the lowest level and are interrelated. If data is gathered incorrectly at the micro level, it is difficult to gain the best possible picture at a higher level and becomes even more difficult the further one goes.

Data collected in the field often fails to meet the standards expected of M&E units.

Sophisticated monitoring and scrupulous data collection at the micro level provide a fundamental framework for all future data collection. A well-thought-out system with milestones and opportunities for redirection and intervention is essential but requires human resources in the field backed up by financial resources. What is more, everyone involved needs a clear understanding of the issue at hand. However, these resources are often inadequate, so it is hardly surprising that data collected in the field fails to meet the standards expected of M&E units in most cases.¹⁴ Surveys asking participants about their levels of satisfaction or impressions tend to contribute little to impact evaluation. It can also be challenging to monitor complex structural changes, the effectiveness of “track 2 formats” (informal discussion channels, often in diplomatically or politically sensitive contexts), and networks since it takes time to survey participants and observe project managers – both requirements that can be difficult to meet. In addition, the (usually written) impact indicators might not be in line with reality or particular characteristics of the project. Obviously, this makes it even more difficult to carry out evaluations at programme level. Evaluators often have to deal with anecdotal evidence and rely

on the gut feelings of project managers and their superiors, making it hard to quantify their findings. Added to this is the long-held belief that the main role of M&E units is for control. This makes it difficult to be transparent about missing or undesirable results, even if it is nobody's fault. This additionally hampers the acceptance and potential impact of M&E measures.

Evaluation in Practice - What Are the Consequences for Projects?

In practice, how often are negative results dealt with transparently? Do evaluations also reflect when projects are unsuccessful? And what about the validity of the evaluations, how close do they come to reality on the ground? These are legitimate questions, as sometimes evaluators must accept that they only have a limited understanding of the general framework (and thus of the project). They collect their own data over a limited period and only analyse previously collected data. That is why evaluations are “merely” assessments and deliberations based on (albeit well-founded) assumptions. Depending on available data, these may be closely aligned with the project realities but can never fully reflect them. However, evaluations never claim to do this, and thus rarely tend to make radical recommendations. Both internally and externally, they should be viewed as just one of many elements involved in management and strategic processes. Nevertheless, the fear that an overly negative evaluation could determine the project's future and their own career makes project managers defensive (and evaluators worry that they may not get any more assignments).

Still, it is not uncommon for evaluations to be critical, though they usually take a constructive tone and focus on what has been achieved. Even in a country like Afghanistan, where, despite significant efforts in the area of peace and state-building by multiple stakeholders, any successes are often stymied by the volatile security situation and a resurgence of groups such as the Taliban or local cells of the so-called Islamic State, evaluations such as those carried out by the German government have concluded that



“Afghanistan's economic and social development [...] has already made remarkable progress since the overthrow of the Taliban” and that “Germany [...] has contributed to this development over the past 18 years – especially through its development cooperation – and, together with the Afghan government and the international



Hard hit: When the framework conditions in a partner country deteriorate massively, as here in Yemen, this does not remain without consequences for development cooperation. Source: © Abduljabbar Zeyad, Reuters.

community, has laid vital foundations for the country's social and economic progress".¹⁵ This is just as true as the statement that in principle "the political will, the political assertiveness, the political values and the design of the economic system in the partner country"¹⁶ impede or facilitate the work.

Handling Failures and Mistakes

It is regularly observed that development projects' success or failure mainly depends on their basic conditions. Other than tactical issues, it is these conditions (rather than evaluations) that most often decide whether projects can

continue or whether development work in the particular country can even carry on at all. For example, the chaotic situation in Yemen following the overthrow of the then President Ali Abdullah Saleh forced most international development cooperation organisations, including GIZ, to withdraw their staff and work remotely with local groups. Obviously, the cooperation with Yemen has had to be adapted considering the difficult conditions since then.¹⁷ However, this does not mean the projects are inevitably less effective, provided the adaptation is appropriate and well thought-out. Evaluations can be helpful in this respect. In the end, however, the organisation must decide whether and how to proceed with a project. The same applies to how it handles failures and mistakes. There is no blanket response to the question of whether the criticisms and recommendations of evaluators are adequately addressed, for example in follow-up projects. At the end of the day, it is the organisation that makes the decision in this respect, taking all the above-mentioned points and other relevant issues into account.

A constructive error culture would help to ensure that lessons learnt from mistakes could also benefit other projects worldwide.

It also applies to the handling of data obtained and the findings based thereon. Data is dry, so it is vital to present it in the right way for each target group.¹⁸ But this is usually limited to an evaluation report, which often provides the sole basis for all types of communication – whether with management, the funding organisation, or when handling requests under the Freedom of Information Act. If the communication is to be “heard”, it needs to address the extremely varied needs and interests of different groups.¹⁹ In this respect, the evaluation units in particular have an obligation towards the various stakeholders. They must be able to interpret and prepare

findings in such a way that the benefit of evaluations is clear for recipients to see – as well as ultimately the benefit of the project work itself. After all, they provide the link between the organisation and the – mostly external – evaluators and can best assess which routes are worth pursuing and which not. This is also the only way to initiate internal learning processes or be involved in higher-level strategic consulting.

A Change of Image – From Monitoring to Consulting

Several steps are required to address the above-mentioned challenges. Firstly, there needs to be a change of **perception**. M&E units have to master the balancing act of performing their monitoring function without being “guardians of the indicators”. They (also) need to act as consultants and offer solutions. Rather than simply looking back and making judgements, they must look ahead in a constructive way. An approachable manner is part of being a “friend and helper”. Conversely, “being evaluated” tends to erect barriers because it always entails being judged. A positive error culture and the will to learn and change is the only way to ensure that evaluations are viewed as helpful instruments that can be used in a profitable way. The question of accountability should not represent an obstacle to the learning process: “Evaluation serves two main purposes: accountability and learning. Development agencies have tended to prioritize the first, and given responsibility for that to centralised units. But evaluation for learning is the area where observers find the greatest need today and tomorrow.”²⁰ In particular, the results of monitoring and evaluation processes should be used to build on projects and, where necessary, avoid deficiencies that have already arisen in similar situations. The importance of learning from M&E and acting on its findings was noted in the latest OECD Peer Review.²¹

Discrepancies between theory and practice are difficult to overcome, as professionalism in the field cannot always be expected or put into practice in equal measure. It is not always possible to ensure that monitoring corresponds to

requirements, particularly due to a lack of personnel in many cases. Even if data can be collected and evaluated (which is not always fully successful in view of diverse and challenging tasks faced by project managers), analysing and processing the data usually presents another difficulty. It is not possible to assess medium and longer-term effects at the political or economic level on an ad-hoc basis. One option would be to focus on sampling, especially for smaller organisations that have to manage without a monitoring officer, and to work with qualitative data collection methods in lieu of quantification. While these may be easier to manipulate, they are more meaningful than data that is not consistently collected in a correct manner. The focus should be more on the positive effect of learning from mistakes and less on the fear of admitting to failure. A constructive error culture would help to ensure that lessons learnt from mistakes could also benefit other projects worldwide, provided that the findings are recognised, addressed, and communicated. Apart from this, circumstances outside one's control (such as conflicts or natural disasters) may also torpedo projects and render them ineffective. Here, too, dealing with mistakes, if communicated, could be a help and stimulus, but without any compulsion to change course in subsequent projects.

Communication is therefore a vital prerequisite for learning processes and the key to increasing the relevance of M&E measures at the micro, meso, and macro levels, while also being essential for documenting and sharing the findings: Who receives what information, and what do they expect? How well-versed are they in methodology and what time resources are available? It is important to prepare data and communicate it such that it is appropriate for the target group. After all, different data or ways of preparing it are needed for a parliamentary question or ODA statistics than for communicating impacts to the press and public.

Just like management consultants, M&E units should ask themselves these and similar questions before communicating the results of evaluations. Especially on strategic and political

issues, they must be able to extrapolate, prepare, and anticipate potential effects at policy level in order to anticipate transfers to other actors. However, in the political and governance sphere they should also exercise caution and ask themselves which aspects they should perhaps not communicate. Faced with undemocratic or authoritarian societies and structures, too much transparency could prove to be counterproductive or even dangerous in some cases. This is why the applicable maxim should be that normative requirements should be openly communicated, while operational information (e.g., protecting sources) should, in some cases, be treated as confidential.

Conclusion and Outlook

In any case, the “right” communication will become increasingly important due to the recent trend for government spending – particularly on development assistance – to be subject to ever closer scrutiny by politicians and sections of the public. Above all, the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the German economy will further intensify the debate on development spending. In turn, this will increase the pressure on development cooperation actors to document and communicate – or even market – the effectiveness of their activities. Not to mention the challenges posed by systemic rivals such as China, the Gulf states, and Turkey, which exploit every conceivable means to gain influence, and not only on the economic front. Accordingly, attractive concepts and documented impacts are selling points for German development cooperation organisations that should not be overlooked.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is also aware of this and has added issues such as effectiveness and data availability to its agenda as part of the BMZ 2030 reform strategy.²² This reflects how the BMZ clearly understands the growing need for accountability. Thus, the concept of impact – and hence impact documentation and communication – will become even more important and less of a niche aspect when designing

internal processes. It is essential to anticipate this development and proactively take steps to move towards one other. Only in this way can M&E experts and policymakers turn strategically effective monitoring and evaluation into an internal compass for development cooperation – a compass that steers the ship towards success and acceptance, even in turbulent waters.

– translated from German –

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[New Approaches in Development Cooperation](#)

A Holistic View of Health

The One Health Concept in International
Development Cooperation

Martina Kaiser

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned the spotlight on how global health risks can arise from interactions between humans, animals, and the environment. Consolidating the One Health approach is vital if we are to adequately counter this threat. The approach focuses on these interdependencies to reduce the resulting health risks. Governments and multi-lateral organisations also increasingly incorporate this approach into their development strategies.

Health Challenges at the Interface of Humans, Animals, and the Environment

The end of 2019 marked the emergence of SARS-CoV-2, a previously unknown virus in humans. The origin of SARS-CoV-2, which was first observed when cases of unexplained pneumonia were noted in the city of Wuhan, China, and how it was transmitted to humans is still not fully understood. However, according to a recent study by experts at the World Health Organization (WHO) and Chinese scientists, it is “likely to very likely” that SARS-CoV-2 jumped from bats to humans via another animal.¹

This spillover led to the emergence of COVID-19, a new infectious disease that is life-threatening to humans. This is not a new phenomenon – some two thirds of all infectious diseases occurring in humans are so-called zoonoses, diseases that are transmitted reciprocally between humans and animals by pathogens such as bacteria, parasites, fungi, or viruses.² There are over 200 diseases of this type, including Ebola, tuberculosis, and rabies.

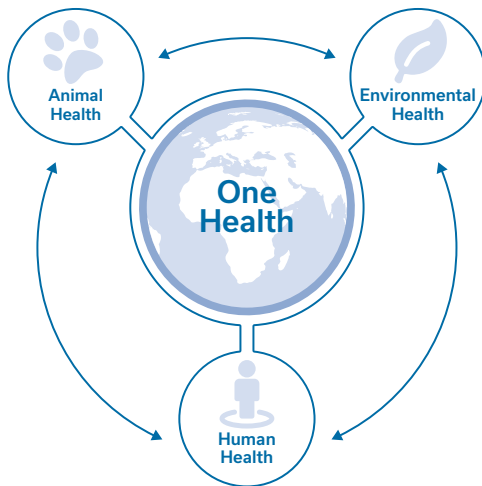
One of the factors that favours zoonoses is the increasing contact between humans and animals, such as that resulting from human encroachment into previously untouched natural environments. One reason for this increased contact is due to population growth, with its associated demand for food and intensified agriculture. Other factors favouring the occurrence of zoonotic diseases are poor hygiene, for example in food production, trade with wild

animals, and the increasing impact of climate change.

Zoonoses are one of the symptoms of a complex interplay of factors affecting the health of humans, animals, and the environment and can lead to global health threats such as epidemics and pandemics. Another health challenge at the human-animal-environment interface is the growing worldwide problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). AMR is mainly caused by the improper use of antibiotics, for example in human and veterinary medicine and in livestock farming, and harbours the risk that dangerous infectious diseases will one day no longer be treatable.

Experts are calling for the One Health approach to be expanded to adequately address these interactions, build global health resilience, and reduce the risk of pandemics owing to zoonotic disease outbreaks. This concept was first formulated in 2004 in the Manhattan Principles on “One World – One Health”³ and updated and expanded in 2019 by the Berlin Principles on One Health.⁴ The concept focuses on the interactions between people, wildlife, farm animals, plants, and their environment so as to identify and mitigate health threats posed by zoonoses and AMR at an early stage. It pursues a holistic, interdisciplinary approach: One Health aims to align and integrate programmes, research, and policy guidelines across different sectors to achieve better public health outcomes.⁵

Fig. 1: The One Health Approach



Source: Own illustration based on German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development: Entwicklungspolitik. Gesundheit. One Health, in: <https://bit.ly/3f5PLYQ> [21 May 2021].

The core idea underpinning the One Health approach is that human health depends on the integrity of ecosystems and a healthy planet. Therefore, when seeking solutions to human health challenges, their impact on animal health and the environment must also be considered.⁶ With regard to health threats posed by zoonoses, the integrated One Health approach aims to improve epidemic and pandemic prevention.

Health as a global public good is a key issue for international development cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the dangers that can arise when zoonotic outbreaks are detected too late and cannot be effectively prevented. It has also illustrated the need for integrated approaches to understanding the complex relationships between humans, animals, and the environment. As a result of the growing incidence of zoonoses

such as SARS, MERS, Ebola, and, most recently, COVID-19, One Health has grown in significance over recent years and has increasingly found its way into national governments' and multilateral organisations' development programmes. As a result, countries such as Germany and the US have subsequently adapted their One Health strategies and taken steps to incorporate the One Health approach into development cooperation. This article will examine why One Health is an issue for development cooperation, what role it plays in the development strategies of these countries and relevant multilateral organisations, and what contribution development cooperation can make to mitigating health threats through the One Health approach.

One Health as a Focus of Development Cooperation

Health represents the basis for a self-determined life. The possibility to lead a healthy life is an expression of human dignity. Health is inextricably linked to sustainable development. Low-income countries in particular face numerous health challenges, which pose an obstacle to their social and economic development. These problems include poor health care systems, lack of preventive measures, and infectious diseases. Promoting health as a prerequisite for sustainable development in low-income countries and as a global public good is, therefore, a key issue for international development cooperation.

Development policy goals in the health sector are inextricably linked to developments in other sectors, particularly regarding climate change and the environment, agriculture, and nutrition. If health threats emanating from zoonoses or antimicrobial resistance are to be contained and lasting improvements made to public health, it is vital to pursue holistic approaches such as One Health as part of development cooperation. This is not only because infectious diseases pose a threat to people's health, but they can also threaten and even unravel progress in other vital areas, such as fighting poverty and hunger. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated this all too well.⁷

The basic principles of the One Health concept are also reflected in the 2030 Agenda, initiated by the United Nations in 2015 as a global framework for transforming every area of our lives. Like the One Health approach, the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for an interdisciplinary approach and cross-sectoral ways of addressing global challenges.

Although the approaches and overarching goals of One Health and the 2030 Agenda are closely linked – sustainable development for the benefit of people, animals, and the environment, taking into account economic, environmental, and social dimensions – the 2030 Agenda makes no direct mention of the One Health approach in its wording. However, the connection to it is clear when we examine Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and its associated health-related SDGs.

Parallels with the One Health approach also become clear in interdependencies with SDG 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all). Aside from having severe consequences on health, contaminated water pollutes the environment and affects animals and plants, which in turn undermines agriculture and the human food supply.

Achieving SDG 3 on health also increasingly relies on making progress on SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts). Like One Health, the 2030 Agenda highlights the impact of climate change on human, animal, and environmental health.

There are many other parallels between the 2030 Agenda and One Health regarding the role of sustainable agricultural and food systems in ensuring the health of people, animals, and the environment.

On the one hand, the agricultural sector is essential for providing people with a balanced diet while also contributing towards numerous environmental and health problems. Its vital role at the interface of people, animals, and the environment, and as a priority of development strategies, makes this sector a key area for implementing the One Health approach.

People and animals live cheek by jowl, which can lead to the transmission of potentially dangerous pathogens and zoonoses.

Agriculture dominates the economies of many developing countries. It is vital for ensuring food security as a basic element of human health and economic development. As the world's population grows, the agricultural sector must be able to meet the growing demand for food. This requires sufficient agricultural land and innovative approaches, such as adapting plant breeding to a changing climate. Agricultural and food systems must be made sustainable to prevent agriculture from having negative repercussions on the planet or animal health, such as through extinction, soil degradation, and the destruction of natural ecosystems. This is the only way to avoid undesirable side-effects while working towards health goals.

When implementing One Health in agriculture, particular attention must be paid to animal health and food hygiene, since a large proportion of farmers in development cooperation partner countries keep livestock. An important lever in this context is the responsible use of veterinary medicines such as antibiotics. Their improper use promotes the spread of antimicrobial resistance, in turn making it difficult to deal with infectious diseases that were easy to treat

in the past. Today, AMR poses one of the most serious threats to global health. It is estimated that 700,000 people die each year because of multidrug-resistant pathogens.⁸

Along with synergies, the aims of agriculture and environmental protection can also be conflicting.

It is also important to put the One Health approach into practice in the sustainable management of agricultural land. Expanding agricultural land through large-scale deforestation or draining wetlands destroys wildlife habitats. This means people and animals live cheek by jowl, which can lead to the transmission of potentially dangerous pathogens and zoonoses. Unsustainable soil management, such as the excessive use of chemicals and fertilisers, also leads to the loss of agricultural land, which again puts pressure on food systems and human health. This problem is further exacerbated by the effects of climate change, as illustrated by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as heat waves and floods.

The Difficulties Involved in Implementing One Health

The above-mentioned interdependencies highlight difficulties inherent in implementing the One Health strategy. There is no doubt that the holistic approach can create synergies, but conflicting objectives between individual sectors, such as agriculture and environmental protection, may also arise. These cross-sectoral conflicts and diverging interests need to be addressed and overcome if One Health is to be truly effective. Policymakers need to create appropriate framework conditions to ensure the interests of all sectors involved are considered and to reduce existing disparities in the balance of power.



Regarding One Health, scientists and experts need to abandon the silo mentality and work in an interdisciplinary way to find solutions to challenges arising at the interface of people, animals, and the environment. The same applies to the political sphere, where information and



Risky proximity: Due to human intrusion into wildlife habitat, the threat of disease transmission from animals to humans rises. [Source: © Ricardo Moraes, Reuters.](#)

knowledge should be regularly exchanged and a coordinated approach adopted towards the implementation of One Health at both the national and the international level. Finally, programmes to implement One Health should be viewed as active preventive measures, not just

against the backdrop of future health threats such as epidemics and pandemics but also as a means of preventing ecological disasters like extinction and climate change. These programmes should receive adequate funding not just at the national but also at the multilateral level.

Multilateral Initiatives for Implementing One Health

It is essential to find global solutions to the aforementioned health challenges, which are caused and exacerbated by global megatrends such as population growth, urbanisation, and climate change. Multilateral organisations have an important role to play here by creating synergies and ensuring knowledge about One Health is fed into policy and transferred to the public.

Tripartite Alliance for One Health

The WHO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are making a vital contribution to implementing the One Health strategy. These three organisations joined forces in 2010 to form the Tripartite Collaboration. The aim of this initiative is to combat health risks at the nexus of humans, animals, and the environment in a targeted manner by creating synergies and pooling expertise. Its focus includes the early detection and prevention of human and animal diseases, research into zoonoses, capacity building in national health care systems, promoting food safety, and combating antimicrobial resistance.⁹ In 2019, the three organisations jointly published a comprehensive guide to addressing zoonotic diseases to support member states develop a multi-sectoral One Health strategy.¹⁰

To strengthen One Health as a holistic concept, the three organisations extended their cooperation to the environmental sector in late 2020 and incorporated the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as an additional partner. As part of the Paris Peace Forum in November 2020, the alliance also agreed to convene a multidisciplinary One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP). This is intended to address health risks at the human-animal-environment interface more effectively by providing data and research findings. Along with representatives from all four agencies, it will also bring in experts from human, animal, environmental, and social sciences. One of the

Panel's main tasks will be to keep the public informed and to feed reliable scientific evidence relating to One Health into public policy.¹¹

In 2018, the European Commission presented a programme that specifically follows the One Health approach.

A tangible result of the work undertaken by WHO, OIE and UNEP in the area of pandemic response and addressing One Health challenges such as zoonotic diseases is the publication of an interim guidance document on “Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets”.¹² This contains a set of recommendations for how national governments can reduce risks emanating from the transmission of zoonotic diseases in food markets and wild animal markets.

EU Initiatives to Strengthen One Health

As the world's largest donor of development aid, the European Union has set up the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – a well-funded programme for promoting sustainable development in its partner countries.¹³ The One Health approach is not specifically mentioned in any of the three underlying NDICI pillars. However, the One Health-related issues of health, food security, and climate change are defined in the thematic pillar and described as “global challenges” that “are best addressed at a supranational level”.¹⁴ The “crisis response” pillar also seeks to strengthen resilience and link humanitarian and development actions in a more effective way.¹⁵ Although it does not specifically refer to One Health as an overarching concept, the NDICI is aligned with this approach.

In 2018, the European Union already launched the One Health European Joint Programme

(OHEJP) within the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. The OHEJP specifically follows the One Health approach. It was set up to facilitate collaboration between European research institutions in the fields of human and veterinary medicine and consumer health protection in the food sector.¹⁶ The three main focus areas of the five-year project are: foodborne zoonoses, antibiotic resistance, and emerging hazards. One of the programme’s overarching goals is to generate scientific data, methods, and software and make them available to national and European institutions for the assessment of health risks and potential preventive action.¹⁷

One Health in German Development Cooperation

German development cooperation has harnessed the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to adjust its priorities in global health and to strengthen its commitment to One Health. At the institutional level, this increased focus on One Health finds expression in the creation of a new unit at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to tackle global health, pandemic prevention, and One Health. All the individual measures involved in the One Health approach will be bundled in this new unit, which will also coordinate international cooperation and launch new initiatives in areas such as human and animal health.¹⁸ The Ministry has also set up the One Health Advisory Board, an interdisciplinary body that will advise the BMZ on priorities relating to One Health.

Global health and One Health are also embedded in the “BMZ 2030 reform strategy”.

In April 2020, shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BMZ presented an emergency response plan, whose aim was to help developing and emerging countries tackle the health, economic, and social impacts of the

pandemic.¹⁹ This includes working with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) to establish the One Health Research, Education and Outreach Centre in Africa (OHRECA), based in Kenya, to promote interdisciplinary exchange on human and animal health. The approach behind this project is to build structures for monitoring disease outbreaks among humans and animals to be better prepared for future pandemics. Together with the World Bank, the BMZ is also working to improve agricultural and food systems to prevent the emergence of zoonotic pathogens in food production and improve their early detection.²⁰

Global health and One Health are also embedded in the “BMZ 2030 reform strategy”, which was published in April 2020 as well. The BMZ has consolidated its portfolio and incorporated health, pandemic response, and One Health into its new strategy as one of ten initiative areas that will be focused on for a set period of time.²¹ The aim of this initiative area is “to systematically anchor One Health as a holistic and trans-sectoral approach in international cooperation, and in relevant core areas and fields of action of German development cooperation”.²² In its strategy paper “One Health in Development Cooperation”²³, the BMZ sets out its approach to implementing One Health and defines four strategic fields of action.

- The first area of action envisages anchoring the One Health approach more firmly in German bilateral development cooperation and helping partner countries to draw up national One Health strategies and emergency plans for epidemic and pandemic prevention.
- The second area of action focuses on promoting cooperation between international organisations and supporting research alliances and networks in the field of One Health. It particularly focuses on strengthening the mandate of the WHO as the lead coordinating body for global health and the role of the Tripartite Collaboration, including its potential expansion to include other UN agencies such as UNEP and possibly UNDP.

- The third area of action focuses on capacity building and strengthening health infrastructure in both human and veterinary medicine. It also emphasises the need to train interdisciplinary personnel on the One Health approach and to improve risk communication and public information campaigns on preventing zoonotic diseases and AMR.
- The fourth area of action addresses the particularly relevant topic of political agenda setting, i.e. embedding One Health in development cooperation and the development policy debate. This includes raising awareness among decision-makers and the public of health risks posed by zoonoses and AMR and the importance of preserving pristine habitats and sustainable forms of livestock



Key role: German Development Cooperation seeks to strengthen the mandate of the World Health Organization.
Source: © Laurent Gillieron, Reuters.

farming in minimising these risks. This component also aims to feed the One Health approach into EU strategies such as the NDICI.

One Health in US Development Cooperation

Global health represents a distinct area of US development cooperation, which pursues the fight against infectious disease outbreaks as one of its three strategic objectives.²⁴ Since 2009, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the agency responsible for development assistance, has invested more than 1.1 billion US dollars in this priority area. The funds are used to ensure systems are in place in partner countries to detect and prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases at an early stage and respond quickly and effectively to emergencies.²⁵

USAID aims to train health workers in the area of One Health.

For example, regarding One Health, USAID focuses on promoting and implementing projects that support partner countries to address zoonotic and AMR-related health risks, building laboratory and surveillance capacity, and improving risk communication to inform the public and health workers about infectious diseases.²⁶ Another objective is to train the next generation of health workers in partner countries in One Health capacities. To this end, USAID is supporting the One Health Workforce – Next Generation (OHW-NG) project, which intends to help regional university networks in Africa and Southeast Asia develop a cross-sectoral workforce for effective disease surveillance and control.²⁷

Another focus of the US' commitment to One Health is research into zoonotic diseases and their causes. The PREDICT project was set up in 2009 as part of the Emerging Pandemic Threats

research programme (EPT). Its primary aim was to investigate the most likely sources of zoonotic disease and the places and practices most likely to expose people to pathogens.²⁸ This should make it easier to identify dangerous pathogens at an early stage and reduce the associated risks. Interdisciplinary research teams have discovered over 1,000 previously unknown viruses, including a new strain of Ebola.²⁹ Shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, the regular funding period of ten years expired, and the project was not extended at first.

However, in September 2020, USAID launched Strategies to Prevent Spillover (STOP Spillover), a new programme designed to build on its predecessor project, PREDICT. STOP Spillover has a budget of 100 million US dollars for a period of five years. Based on data and knowledge collated by the previous project, the project now aims to develop measures for strengthening national capacities in selected but yet undefined partner countries to reduce the risk of dangerous pathogens being transmitted from animals to humans.³⁰

Building Back Better with the One Health Approach

Development cooperation focuses on removing obstacles to social and economic development in partner countries. Along with combating poverty and hunger, priority goals are the promotion of health as a fundamental human right and the basis for an independent life.

Since the turn of the 21st century, we have increasingly witnessed the emergence of infectious diseases that originate in wild animals, such as SARS, MERS, Ebola and, most recently, COVID-19. This is mainly due to human intervention in wildlife habitats. Development cooperation seeks to achieve its aims by focusing on several key sectors, such as agriculture, which have an impact on the emergence of health threats like zoonotic diseases and AMR. Development cooperation can make a sustainable contribution to reducing the health risks arising from zoonotic diseases and AMR. It can do so

by incorporating One Health into its strategic planning and the implementation of its development agendas in these sectors; by promoting cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration; by fostering research cooperation; and particularly by political agenda setting and feeding the One Health approach into policy discussions in partner countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has long since triggered a debate on how we can rebuild our economic and social systems to be more sustainable and future-proof in the wake of the pandemic. But it is not only about economic recovery. COVID-19 should be seen as a wake-up call to develop sustainable strategies for the benefit of humans, animals, and the environment in order to reduce the risk of pandemics and build global resilience. Integrated concepts such as the 2030 Agenda and One Health point the way forward in this respect.

- translated from German -

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[New Approaches in Development Cooperation](#)

Political Conditionality

The EU's Attempt to Align Democratic Norms and Foreign Policy Priorities in Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict

Carolin Löprich

Deteriorating levels of democracy worldwide are once again intensifying calls for increased political conditionality in European Union development policy. Against the background of violent conflicts and human rights abuses in Ethiopia, the EU's diplomatic approach to tackle democratic backsliding is being put to the test. Criteria for financial support and suspension must be better communicated to send coherent signals to both recipient countries and domestic audiences alike.

Reignited Discussions about Increased Aid Conditionality

Global democracy is on the decline. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already stagnating state of democratic conditions in a plethora of developing and emerging countries that are recipients of European Union external aid. Over the past year, we have witnessed a marked increase in the curtailing of parliamentary oversight and pressure on political opposition, censorship and intimidation of independent media, challenges for electoral integrity, and targeted disinformation campaigns.¹ In light of this, the debate on the effectiveness of using EU external funds to tackle democratic backsliding is regaining momentum.

With several major policy developments relevant to EU funding and their implications for democratic policy reform, it is not surprising that the debate on conditionality has been reignited. In March 2021, following years of inter-institutional negotiations, the text for the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) was formally endorsed. Encompassing virtually all world regions and totalling 79.5 billion euros for the period 2021 to 2027,² this instrument combines several former EU funding schemes under one global roof. It serves as the EU's funding architecture for long-term developmental challenges while also being intended to reinforce other key thematic aspects of EU external policy, including democracy and human rights. The negotiations on NDICI

signalled a critical juncture for the EU to reflect on the long-term political goals of its external action. By deciding how to allocate the available funds and balance their geographic and thematic allocation, each earmarking decision harboured a risk of trade-offs in other areas.³

Furthermore, the recent approval of a European Parliament report that advocates making EU development aid conditional upon recipient collaboration on migration management has attracted much attention.⁴ The decision marked a shift in the Parliament's position on development policy and was met with great controversy. While the report's initiators argued that linking development aid and migration management will enhance the effectiveness of development,⁵ its opponents criticised that making migration cooperation the core of EU decision-making on funding allocation leads to ineffective and untransparent development practices.⁶ The debate triggered by the Parliament's decision suggests that policy considerations, political convictions, and normative arguments have an important role to play when discussing conditionality.

At the same time, the EU introduced a new internal sanctions mechanism called the “rule of law conditionality”. Under this new scheme, EU budget payments to member states' governments can be cut or frozen if the European Commission establishes a legal breach. This attempt to protect EU resources from funding democratic backsliding within the Union has been positively received among most policy circles in

Brussels. It has, however, led some commentators to conclude that the EU's internal efforts to condition funds should be used as an incentive to rethink the conditionality of external development aid funds.⁷

Solidifying Democracy through Political Conditions

With Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounting to 75.2 billion euros in 2019, the EU, together with its member states, represents the largest aid donor in the world.⁸ The overarching objective of European development policy is “the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty”⁹. All major EU development policy documents convey that sustainable development is only possible through democratisation. Democracy is one of the EU's founding values, pursued by all of the Union's external policies,¹⁰ as well as a strategic interest.¹¹ The EU often exploits political conditionality as a means to use its development funding for promoting democratic reform in recipient countries. It is a set of universal norms and values guided by the concepts of democracy, human rights, and good governance. The allocation of funds, therefore, depends on a recipient regime's degree of plural democracy.¹² When a recipient displays deepening authoritarianism, practices human rights violations, or shows other signs of democratic regression, the donor can use punitive sanctions in the form of full or partial withdrawal of aid assistance. Conversely, in the case of positive conditionality, the donor rewards the recipient when progress towards democratic reform is made. This “more for more” principle is applied in relations with EU neighbouring countries in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In both scenarios, the recipients' willingness to undergo political reform becomes a decisive variable in how much capital is allocated to them. In this respect, the EU approach fundamentally differs from other development actors – most notably China – whose financial support is not conditional upon democratic conditions for recipient countries. The option for partner regimes to cooperate with aid providers indifferent to democratic and human rights

developments considerably weakens the EU's ability to exert pressure on democratic reforms through aid funding.

So long as the path towards democracy is an external agenda, political conditionality cannot trigger a change of heart.

The EU engages in political conditionality practices with the assumption that aid is more effective in democracies than in autocracies. Enhancing democracy in a recipient country has a positive impact on economic development, as well as more inclusive education and health care systems. By default, policymakers in democratic settings must engage in inclusive political competition to win majorities if they are to stay in power. Their economic incentives must therefore be geared towards providing public goods to all citizens, while authoritarian leaders usually only need to secure the support of a small group of elites.¹³ The EU thus assumes that under democratic settings, development aid is more likely to reach the neediest target groups.

Yet, the legitimacy of political conditionality to achieve meaningful and lasting democratisation in recipient countries is often subject to scrutiny. The general assumption is that attempts at exogenous reform can only have an ostensible impact on the democratic opening of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. In some cases, the suspension of funds may even contribute to further destabilisation and hence thwart wider EU development ambitions.¹⁴ Although the recipient governments might agree to certain political conditions, they are not incentivised to initiate drastic institutional and administrative reforms. So long as a (semi-)authoritarian government perceives the path towards democracy as an external agenda, political conditionality cannot trigger a change of heart. Postponing or suspending funds introduces further complexity, as it may be interpreted as an intervention in the internal affairs of another sovereign state. That

is why the suspension of funds is the EU's last resort, and the formulation of conditions in official documents is often nebulous so as to leave room for interpretation in its implementation.¹⁵

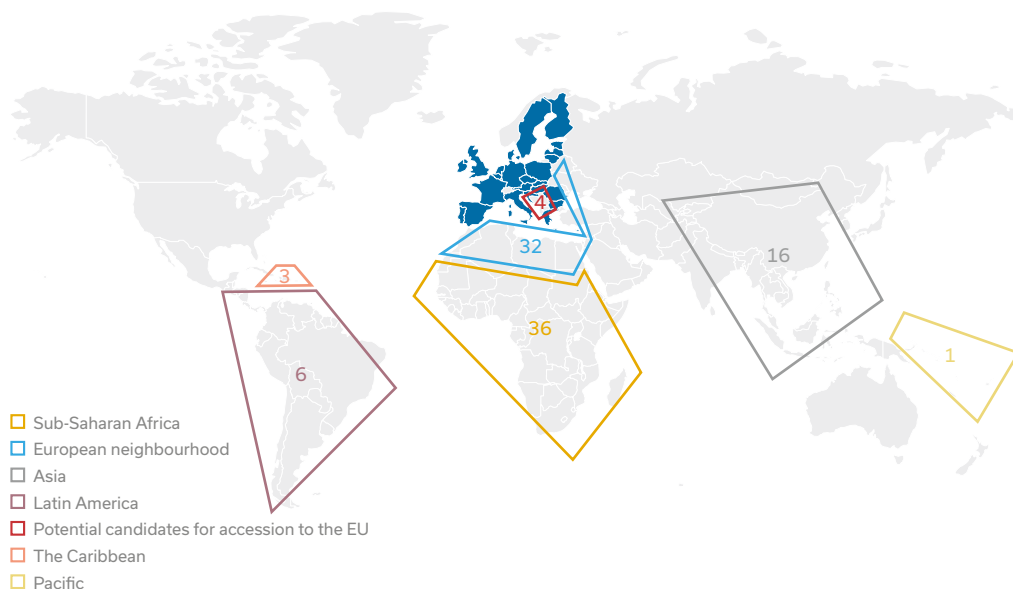
Budget Support as the Aid Modality of Choice

Budget support remains an important tool for EU global development cooperation with the aim of increasing recipient countries' ownership in development policies and reforms. Through direct financial transfers to the recipients' national treasuries, the objective of this aid modality is to better harmonise development assistance and increasingly align it with the priorities of recipients. It is, thus, intended to promote recipient ownership while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of development cooperation.¹⁶ Budget support is based on policy dialogue, performance assessments, and capacity building intended to initiate reform progress in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It currently accounts for around 40 per cent of national cooperation programmes with partner countries worldwide.¹⁷ To qualify for

direct payments, a recipient country has to present a credible strategy for national development or sector reform, maintain a stable macroeconomic outlook, demonstrate progress in public finance management and domestic revenue mobilisation, and allow for budget transparency and oversight.¹⁸ Democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are considered essential pillars, too. With 215 contracts implemented in 89 countries or regions and a total of 1.6 billion euros of budget support paid out in 2019, this type of development assistance continues to provide the EU with high added value. When a recipient country breaches its commitments to these "fundamental values"¹⁹, the EU has several options. It can suspend or adjust available tranches to the respective government, reallocate funds to sector programmes or channel them to non-governmental target groups instead. An immediate suspension of budget support regarding deteriorating levels of democracy is still another option.

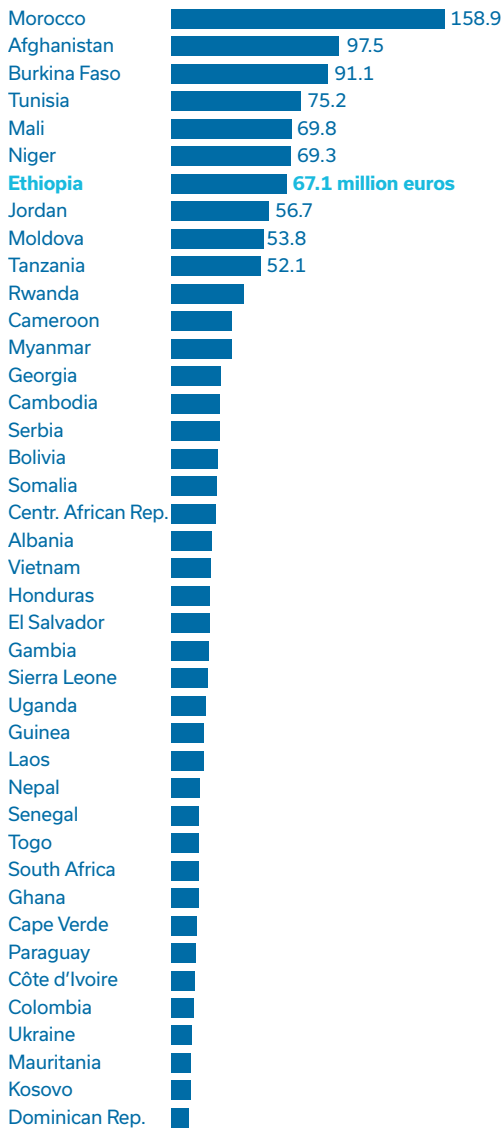
Although the grounds for such decision-making are often criticised as ambiguous, the selectivity indicates priorities that vary across relationships with different countries. A closer look at why

Fig. 1: Geographical Distribution of EU Budget Support in 2019 (in Per Cent)



Overseas countries and territories (OCTs) receive two per cent of EU budget support and are not shown individually. Source: Own illustration based on European Commission 2020, n. 17, p. 39.

Fig. 2: Recipients of EU Budget Support in 2019



EU Budget Support in 2019



The figure shows countries with a budget support of more than ten million euros. Source: European Commission 2020, n. 17, pp. 45–52.

the EU provides budget support to governments with seemingly little interest in democratisation efforts reveals a focus on other foreign policy goals, including security and stability, migration, and economic policy.²⁰ While foreign policy interests are highly specific in the country context and therefore need to be flexible, we can observe an overall prioritisation of security issues in EU foreign policy.²¹ This suggests a credibility issue: while the EU tries to incentivise norms and values through political conditionality, it undermines and discredits its position through contradictory application.

The Case of Ethiopia’s Tigray Conflict

In January 2021, EU High Representative Josep Borrell announced that in light of the ongoing violent conflict in the Ethiopian region of Tigray, EU budget support would be postponed due to humanitarian aid operators having a lack of access to the region. He further voiced concerns about reported “ethnic-targeted violence, killings, massive looting, rapes, forceful returns of refugees and possible war crimes.”²² Since the order for a military offensive on the country’s northern region by the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on 4 November 2020, the conflict has given rise to gross atrocities and a humanitarian crisis that displaced over two million people. The Ethiopian government said that the regional ruling party, Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), had attacked a government military base in an attempt to steal weapons and artillery.²³ The notion underlying the conflict is a struggle for power and clashing visions on Ethiopia’s political future. As part of the ethnic federalist ruling coalition (Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF), TPLF has dominated Ethiopian politics since the early 1990s. In 2019, the coalition of four parties was remodelled into a single party, the Prosperity Party, under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. It incorporated three out of the four ethnic-based parties, with TPLF being the only one not to join the coalition and openly criticising its formation. This sparked tensions between Tigray regional authorities and the ruling party in Addis Ababa.²⁴ When the highly anticipated general elections



Trying to find the right balance: When allocating development funding, the EU takes into account a variety of – sometimes conflicting – interests and values. Source: © Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters.

planned for 29 August 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TPLF held regional elections in Tigray in defiance of the government’s decision to delay.²⁵ Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed described the offensive on Tigray as “defensive operations to restore law and order in the Tigray Region”²⁶, in reaction to a perceived undermining of his administration.

The EU has never openly questioned the Ethiopian government’s intervention in Tigray itself, but rather its consequences for Ethiopian civilians’ humanitarian situation. The EU takes a diplomatic approach to the escalating conflict, seeking to maximise consultations with Ethiopian authorities in cooperation with partners from the G7 group of countries and the UN. In addition, Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto was appointed as Special Envoy. He has been mandated by the EU’s High Representative to convey four principal EU requests; namely to cease hostilities, to grant humanitarian access to everyone in need in all areas, to carry out investigations on human rights abuses, and to immediately withdraw Eritrean troops currently fighting in Ethiopia.²⁷ On the basis of Haavisto’s report, the EU’s 27 foreign ministers will decide on how to proceed in engaging with

Ethiopia. The currently postponed budget support is likely to be resumed once the EU believes that the four above requests have been fulfilled.

Although the EU openly condemned the violence, budget support was merely postponed rather than suspended. To understand the hesitation about deploying more drastic foreign policy tools, we need to consider three main focal areas of EU-Ethiopia relations.

1. Ethiopia’s Geostrategic Position and Regionalisation of the Conflict

Ethiopia is the second-most populous nation in Africa. Its location at the Horn of Africa and proximity to several conflict-ridden Eastern African countries and the Arabian Peninsula give the country a special geostrategic significance as a security ally. The region is also prone to extremist influence from neighbouring sub-regions due to the fragility of surrounding states, including weak governments and economies, poor governance, and numerous internal and cross-border conflicts.²⁸ With the persisting conflict in Tigray, the EU fears a spill-over effect to neighbouring countries, such as Eritrea and Sudan, which would threaten the entire

region's stability. Ethiopia, the second largest refugee-hosting nation in Africa, is increasingly becoming a source of migration itself, with thousands fleeing the surging violence.²⁹

In over 40 years of bilateral relations, the EU has experienced little enthusiasm for democratisation from previous Ethiopian administrations.

2. Maintaining the Momentum of Abiy Ahmed's Reform Agenda

When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018, he openly criticised his predecessors' track record on governance and democracy and even declared to pursue a "multiparty democracy supported by strong institutions that respect human rights and rule of law"³⁰. His reform agenda included releasing political prisoners, legalising forbidden opposition parties, introducing full gender parity at cabinet level, and appointing a former dissident as chairperson of the Electoral Commission.³¹ His landmark achievement was initiating peace talks with northern neighbour Eritrea, effectively ending two decades of hostility and winning him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019. Notwithstanding the violent conflict in Tigray, the EU remains positive that it has found a cooperation partner with an equal interest in opening the country to democracy. In over 40 years of bilateral relations, the EU has experienced little enthusiasm for democratisation from previous Ethiopian administrations. Within donor circles, Ethiopian government officials are known to be explicit and to directly communicate their red lines for international engagement.³² Even though there are no clear roadmap and concrete policy recommendations, the EU remains hopeful that Abiy Ahmed's reform agenda will revamp domestic and regional dynamics. In order to maintain the relationship with the Prime Minister, who is set to win the postponed election, the EU will not

risk offending his government by suspending development funding. Still, relations are strained after the EU cancelled its Electoral Observation Mission due to disagreements with the Ethiopian authorities on the terms of deployment.

3. Showcasing Effective Poverty Reduction

Despite being one of the poorest and most heavily dependent countries on food and aid support in the region, Ethiopia is also the fastest-growing economy in East Africa. Before the COVID-19 pandemic shook global economies, Ethiopia recorded a strong and broad-based growth averaging 9.4 per cent a year. This, in turn, had a positive impact on poverty reduction in both urban and rural areas.³³ Should Ethiopia achieve its aim to secure lower-middle-income status by 2025, the EU could use it as a showcase for successful poverty reduction and argue for the effectiveness of its development strategies in the country. Since the ultimate goal of EU development aid is long-term poverty reduction, continued cooperation with Ethiopia is necessary even in times of crisis.

While Ethiopia has attracted significant foreign policy attention, we should not forget that the country's democratic track record has continued to fall short of the mark despite high levels of EU development funding in recent decades. The EU+ group's³⁴ annual disbursement of one billion euros of ODA constitutes almost one-quarter of total external aid to Ethiopia and has occasionally accounted for up to ten per cent of the country's annual federal budget.³⁵ Given these volumes of financial aid, the lack of more substantive EU engagement on issues of democratisation and human rights in recent years stands in contrast to its declared core values. After citizens took to the streets in 2005, contesting the result of the general elections, the government imposed a ban for demonstration and freedom of assembly and a harsh crackdown on opposition leaders, activists, and domestic protestors. Condemning the violence, the EU suspended its budget support to the government in December 2005 for one year.³⁶ Meanwhile, the ruling EPRDF coalition won 99.6 per cent of parliamentary seats in 2010

and 100 per cent in 2015.³⁷ Irrespective of Ethiopia's democratic record, budget support has continued and has even increased despite Ethiopia's reservation towards cooperating with donors on governance reforms.³⁸

Meaningful democratic reforms cannot simply be imposed on recipient governments.

Ethiopia's complex political, socio-economic, governance, and development challenges put the EU's diplomatic approach on reacting to violence and human rights abuses to the test. While the Union wants to ensure that its development funding does not contribute to subsidising warfare, it also wants to prevent jeopardising future partnership-based cooperation; ultimately leading to a loss of ability to exert influence in Ethiopia. That

is why democracy promotion cannot be identified as a priority. Current decisions on funding allocation, including the recent decision to allocate new humanitarian aid funding of 53.7 million euros,³⁹ tend to follow the logic of greater security and stability concerns as outlined above. If the EU wants to implement a coherent foreign policy, it must clearly communicate its differing views on engagement with various partners and exert pressure for political reform more strategically.

Political Conditionality as a Means to an End

For a normative actor like the EU that engages in budget support with numerous (semi-)authoritarian states around the world, political conditionality remains an important policy tool to retain leverage. It can be used to underline values and priorities when engaging with development partners as well as to prove to domestic audiences that development funding serves its purpose. It is necessary and legitimate for politicians and citizens to raise questions about the



Maintaining the reform agenda: With his moves towards democratisation and peace with neighbouring Eritrea, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (to the left) has sparked hope among EU leaders. Source: ©Tiksa Negeri, Reuters.

use of European development aid funding in third countries, especially when serious human rights abuses take place.

Political conditionality, however, can at most be a means to an end. The rekindled debate on more conditionality in European development policy is, at its core, about development effectiveness – and about the prioritisation of foreign policy goals. In this context, political conditionality should not be exploited as an instrument of political paternalism but rather as a trigger for constructive cooperation focused on country-specific challenges and shortcomings. Meaningful democratic reforms cannot simply be imposed on recipient governments. Instead, they are a result of long-term processes generated by a tailored mix of political and financial instruments carefully developed in collaboration between the donor and recipient. Current debates around political conditionality often erroneously equate aid with development.

Whereas the EU is determined to maintain budget support as an important component of its development cooperation, it must carefully consider how the criteria for financial support are communicated. The lack of official reporting on the underlying reasons for past disbursement behaviour has sent contradictory signals. It is therefore imperative for the EU to structure realistic and long-term political development trajectories for recipient countries with clear indicators for joint priorities. If it is to prove the credibility of its values-based foreign policy agenda, the EU should follow these trajectories with more determination. The EU can encourage reform through well-communicated incentives of political conditionality. When making use of political conditionality, the EU also needs to carefully assess whether recipient governments lack the political willingness or ability to engage in democratic reform. Creating a democracy that is nothing more than an empty shell must be avoided at all costs. To effectively implement democratic reforms, it will also be crucial for the EU to increasingly engage with other actors in a country, including civil society and youth. Such engagement could not only better inform the EU

about social, economic, and political contexts but also raise public awareness of the advantages associated with democratic reforms.

The current crisis in Ethiopia highlights the EU's determination to continue its path of diplomacy with a focus on protecting civilians and granting humanitarian access. Finding a solution to the violence requires an approach that takes account of the various visions on legitimacy and of an inclusive process for negotiating a common vision of the country's political future. The EU's political support in close cooperation with its member states, as well as other international and multilateral actors, will be critical for achieving progress towards a long-term political solution.

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[New Approaches in Development Cooperation](#)

Authoritarian Donor States and Their Engagement in Africa

A Focus on Strategic Power and Exporting Political Systems?

Mathias Kamp

As the world shifts into a new geopolitical phase, Africa is gaining importance – as a trading partner and investment destination, a contender in addressing global challenges, but also as an arena for external actors to flex their military and strategic muscles. These actors include China, Russia, and Turkey, three authoritarian regimes with regional and great power ambitions. From a European perspective, their activities in Africa are viewed with scepticism and concern. Not only because they are economic competitors, but because they also embody competing values and social models.

Europe is confronted with three “re-emerging empires”. This is how Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, referred to China, Russia, and Turkey at the European Parliament in September 2020.¹ In a guest editorial for the newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche*, he wrote: “Over and above their specificities, Russia, China and Turkey share three common characteristics: they are sovereignist vis-à-vis the outside world and authoritarian within their own borders; they are intent on having their zones of influence recognised and are determined to shield them from all outside eyes [...]”²

Borrell’s statements were prompted primarily by Russia’s position in the Belarus crisis, China’s handling of the Hong Kong issue, and Turkey’s activities in the Mediterranean region. But it is also worth focusing on these three countries as external actors in Sub-Saharan Africa. All three have recognised the strategic importance of the continent and are intensifying their activities there. While China’s involvement has been monitored and debated for many years, the increase in Russian and Turkish activity in the area is a more recent observation and has received less attention to date.

Africa through a Geopolitical Lens

The three countries are in good company: global interest in Africa and the engagement of external actors on the continent have never been

greater. As early as March 2019, *The Economist* reported on a “New Scramble for Africa”.³ This is not just a race to gain access to the continent’s raw materials and markets and open up opportunities for its own investors, products, and technologies. It is also about security threats and migration flows, geopolitical spheres of influence and strategic alliances, the 54 African votes at the United Nations, and joint efforts to address global challenges.

This involvement of other countries in Africa challenges “traditional” Western donors in many ways. The attractive alternatives offered by other donors mean that Western development aid has lost much of its potential as an incentive and lever for instigating reform and good governance. Ultimately, more is at stake than competing economic interests. The West has always viewed development cooperation as an instrument for promoting its values and marketing its own social model. Now, however, authoritarian countries like China, Russia, and Turkey have arrived on the scene with some fundamentally different values. Will the donor’s engagement in Africa become the vehicle for a new systemic competition? Let us take a closer look.

China: The Big Player in Africa

From a European perspective, the massive engagement of its “systemic rival”⁴ China in Africa has been a matter of controversy for many



years. And changes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have once again turned the spotlight on this issue.

Over the past two decades, China has become one of Africa's most important investors and trading partners. Cooperation with Africa has been institutionalised through the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which has taken place every three years since 2000 and at which China regularly announces new, steadily increasing funding packages. These packages grew from five billion

US dollars in 2006 to 60 billion US dollars at the last summit in 2018 (50 billion US dollars of which was government funding). China's trade volume with Africa has also multiplied. From merely ten billion US dollars in 2000, it recently passed the 200 billion US dollar mark.

Since 2013, the New Silk Road initiative has formed a central pillar of Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. The aim is to build a comprehensive trade network between Asia, Africa, and Europe – but also ultimately to expand China's global influence. African countries, too, are



All roads lead to Beijing? Chinese involvement in infrastructure development, as here in Kenya, closes a gap left by Western donors. Source: © Thomas Mukoya, Reuters.

being lured by investment and development projects under this economic and geopolitical mega project. Most of the money flows into large infrastructure projects and the exploitation of raw materials. However, Europe is also particularly concerned about China's dominance in the IT and communications sector and the huge dependence of African networks and systems on Chinese technology.

For some time now, more and more voices, including in Africa, have been warning of a new debt trap.

Many African governments find the Chinese proposals very appealing. The emphasis on large-scale infrastructure development closes a gap also caused by the Western donors' focus on poverty reduction, education, and health. They also like the speed and simplicity of the Chinese projects. China's economic aid is mainly in the form of cheap loans, usually without conditionalities, and does not ask questions about democracy and human rights. Beijing emphasises strict adherence to the principle of sovereignty and, unlike Western donors, presents itself as a "true friend of Africa" without a colonial past or paternalistic intentions.⁵ However, critics are sceptical of China's engagement, with some even viewing it as a new form of "colonialism".⁶ China's own economic and strategic interests are paramount: it is about opening markets for Chinese companies and products, securing (long-term) access to vital resources, expanding the geopolitical sphere of influence, and mobilising support for Chinese concerns in multilateral institutions.

China's engagement has afforded new opportunities to African nations, but it also threatens to create new dependencies. For some time now, more and more voices, including in Africa, have been warning of a new debt trap. There are growing concerns that China could seize control of key infrastructure if African countries are unable to pay their debts.

In addition to economic investment, China's engagement in Africa has taken on an increasingly military and strategic dimension over recent years. In 2017, China opened a military base in Djibouti. This first, and to date the only, permanent troop base outside China is located close to the existing US and French bases. Beyond this military presence, China is the largest contributor to financing and equipping UN peacekeeping troops in Africa. It is increasing its bilateral engagement in training and equipping the armed forces of its African partners.

Russia: A Latecomer with Big Ambitions

After around 25 years of ignoring the continent, Russia has made something of a comeback in Africa in recent years. When the Cold War drew to a close, Russia had largely withdrawn from its geostrategic ventures in Africa. But over the last five to six years, Russia has been noticeably ramping up its engagement on the African continent. The first Russia–Africa Summit in Sochi in October 2019 represents a milestone in this respect. At least as far as the media was concerned, this summit catapulted Russia to the forefront among Africa's donors and strategic partners. It was attended by 43 heads of state and government. President Putin announced 20 billion US dollars in debt relief to African countries and signed bilateral investment agreements totalling 12.5 billion US dollars. Since then, Russia has become much more aggressive and visible in Africa and is steadily expanding its engagement. It should be noted, however, that in terms of financial aid and trade volume, Russia appears somewhat dwarfed by Africa's largest partners in quantitative terms – the US, China, Europe, and India. Europe does not so much view the extent of Russia's engagement with concern but rather the way it is being conducted.

The Russian narrative on Africa sounds similar to that of China. In an interview ahead of the Sochi summit, Putin declared that he wanted to step in where Europe and the US have disappointed. He claimed that Western countries were resorting to "pressure, intimidation and blackmail against sovereign African governments".



Largest arms exporter to Africa: Russia is responsible for nearly half of all arms exports to the continent.
Source: © Sergei Chirikov, Reuters.

Russia, on the other hand, was helping them without any preconditions.⁷ But it goes without saying that Russia – like the other countries – is not acting altruistically in Africa. Economically, the focus is on access to resources like oil and gas, plus rare earths, and diamonds, and expanding export markets in the key sectors of agriculture, energy, and defence. Visible, formal cooperation often overlaps with informal or even clandestine

ventures. Russia has no qualms about working openly with despots, or about entering legal grey areas and conflict zones. As a result, Russia's engagement in Africa is extremely varied, ranging from bauxite mining by state-owned Russian corporations in Guinea, offshore gas extraction in Mozambique, diamond mining in Angola, and gas liquefaction in Congo to mining in Zimbabwe and nuclear energy for Egypt, to

name just a few. The key to the door is often Russia's willingness to not only give their political backing to authoritarian rulers but to equip their armed forces, too.

Observers believe that hundreds of mercenaries from Russian security firms are active on the continent.

Russia delivers more arms to Africa than any other country, and indeed is responsible for nearly half of all arms exports to the continent. 21 African states signed military cooperation agreements with Russia between 2015 and 2019. The largest Sub-Saharan recipients are Angola, Nigeria, and Sudan. Beyond the arms trade, Russia exerts significant influence on the security sector through training and the deployment of military experts and advisors. Observers believe that hundreds of mercenaries from Russian security firms are active on the continent.⁸ The precise way in which these companies operate is largely shrouded in mystery, but they must be understood as part of Russia's overall strategy. The security firms are known to have close ties to the Kremlin. On the ground, they contribute towards securing Russian interests, provide centralised security services to local governments – such as in the Central African Republic – and are particularly active where access to valuable mineral resources is at stake.⁹

Turkey: Africa as a Playing Field for Erdoğan's Strategic Ambitions?

By dint of its geography alone, Turkey sees itself as an interface between Europe, Asia, and the African continent. But it is only over the last 15 years that Turkey has emerged as a significant player in Sub-Saharan Africa. Until around the turn of the millennium, Turkey's foreign policy engagement was largely limited to the Mediterranean region and Gulf states. Turkey's Africa policy only really took off in 2003 under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the then prime minister. The

first Turkey–Africa Cooperation Summit in 2008 was a landmark event in this respect. The African Union has listed Turkey as a “strategic partner” since then. Under Erdoğan's leadership, political and economic relations with African countries have gone from strength to strength. The Turkish Foreign Ministry defines relations with Africa as a key foreign policy objective. Erdoğan has personally made more than 40 trips to the continent to date. The increased interest is reinforced by further statistics: in 2003, Turkey had twelve embassies in Africa, whereas now there are 42. Trade volume between Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa increased from one billion US dollars in 2002 to 7.6 billion US dollars in 2019. Ankara has become a hub for flights to and from Africa. The partly state-owned airline Turkish Airlines flies to 52 destinations in 34 African countries. The “Turkish footprint in Africa is getting larger than most European countries”, as tweeted by Carlos Lopes, former head of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), in March 2021.¹⁰

Initially, Turkey's Africa policy was dominated by trade, humanitarian aid, and development cooperation. Somalia plays a key role in Turkey's engagement in Africa. It is no coincidence that the world's largest Turkish embassy has been located here since 2016.¹¹ Back in 2011, when the country shaken by civil war was largely shunned by the rest of the world, Erdoğan travelled to the capital Mogadishu and promised a comprehensive aid package. As a result, Turkey became the largest donor there beyond the OECD DAC countries. Yet, if we look behind the facade of benevolence, Turkey's military and strategic agenda becomes increasingly apparent. Whereas many other international actors – including the US, China, and France – have concentrated their military bases in neighbouring Djibouti, Turkey has exploited its engagement with Somalia to establish a military presence in the country. Turkey's largest overseas military base has been at Mogadishu airport since 2017. Along with historical and religious ties, Turkey's focus on the Horn of Africa can be largely explained by its geopolitical interests and regional competition with the Gulf states in

a struggle to control the “Red Sea arena”. Turkey’s military engagement should also be viewed against the growing importance of its arms industry, which is being expanded as part of an increasingly aggressive foreign policy. In 2020, Turkey signed important agreements with Nigeria to equip and train the military there.

It is difficult to unpick Ankara’s economic, political, humanitarian, and military objectives.

Turkey still plays a minor role in Africa compared to China, and although it seems to be following China’s example in terms of making larger investments in African infrastructure projects, it does not shy away from positioning itself as a direct competitor. Turkey has prevailed over its Chinese competitors with a number of contracts, including the construction of a railway line in Ethiopia, a conference centre in Rwanda, and the parliament building in Equatorial Guinea.

As with other external actors in Africa, it is difficult to unpick Ankara’s economic, political, humanitarian, and military objectives. In its rhetoric, however, the Turkish government emphasises the charitable nature of its engagement and its “brotherly” ties with African countries. It also likes to bring up historical references and push an anti-colonial narrative. Unlike the major Western donors, it stresses that Turkey has no “colonial baggage”.¹²

But while Erdoğan presents himself as the “true friend” of Africa, critics underscore how Turkey, too, is ultimately driven by its own interests.¹³ Its engagement in Africa must be understood in the context of the struggle for regional supremacy, and particularly with its adversaries in the Middle East. Regardless of how realistic Erdoğan’s fantasies of being a great power – the dream of a “new Ottoman Empire”¹⁴ – may be considering Turkey’s economic and political problems

at home, he has understood that a stronger presence in Africa – including Sub-Saharan Africa – will help Turkey to be perceived as a global player. Besides geopolitics, however, there are also domestic concerns, such as the demand for natural resources and energy. By early 2020, Turkey had signed 17 mineral exploration and extraction agreements with African nations.

Interests and Values: Promoting Autocracy as a Countermodel?

Despite all the differences between the three actors, they have certain common features:

- their rhetoric actively distinguishes them from “traditional” donors, and they present themselves as a countermodel to the alleged paternalism of the West;
- their clear focus on large-scale infrastructure projects and systematic development of access to raw materials;
- their deliberate linking of economic, military, and diplomatic objectives and the creation of corresponding dependencies, while at the same time emphasising the sovereignty of their African partners;
- the relinquishing of political conditionalities and minimum standards of democracy and human rights.

Even though Western donors may often exhibit inconsistent demands, they always give centre stage to their values in terms of democracy and the rule of law as part of development cooperation. In contrast, China, Russia, and Turkey embody an authoritarian countermodel to liberal Western democracy under their current leaders. They seek to create the impression that their foreign and economic policy is pragmatic and largely free of ideology. In reality, though, it is easy to see through this facade. On closer inspection, the supposed non-conditionality is an illusion. The assistance provided by authoritarian states is still tied to conditions, even if they are not explicitly articulated. The

geopolitical conflict is not only about markets and raw materials but also about values and the donors' own concepts of state and society – and thus ultimately about systemic competition.

The development of democracy in Africa is mired by setbacks, despite occasional glimmers of hope.

So, is there a countermodel to the Western approach of democracy promotion in the context of development cooperation? Do authoritarian donor countries have a common approach to promoting autocracy? It is not possible to discern a clear leitmotif, let alone a set of principles, analogous to the Western model, which is based on clearly defined principles of democracy, the rule of law, as well as universal human rights. In a 2017 study, researchers at GIGA in Hamburg concluded that “genuine promotion of autocracy in the sense of actively supporting and strengthening a ‘positive’ ideological project – of any kind – is almost non-existent in the 21st century”.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the commitment of these states should be viewed with concern by the defenders of liberal democracy. A glance at current political developments worldwide reveals that this model is increasingly on the defensive. The development of democracy in Africa is also mired by setbacks, despite occasional glimmers of hope. Autocracies are becoming entrenched, hybrid regimes are sliding ever closer towards authoritarianism, and very few democracies can be described as consolidated. Against this backdrop, the proposals of authoritarian donors can place a key role in setting the course for African countries.

Even without explicitly seeking to promote autocracy, the engagement of the three above-mentioned actors reveals a range of activities that directly or indirectly undermine the efforts of Western partners or are intended to sell their

own ideas of state and society and embed them in those countries. These include:

1. *Discrediting the Western Political Conditionalities and Abandoning Democratic and Human Rights Standards*

The availability of seemingly “unconditional” offers from authoritarian donors is probably the main factor impairing the West’s efforts to promote and uphold democratic and human rights standards. African governments with dubious track records here are offered “convenient” alternatives for funding their vital development projects and thus compromising the potential of Western donors to leverage such funding.

2. *The Deliberate Acceptance and Instrumentalisation of Opaque Procedures and Corrupt Practices*

Not only do authoritarian donors waive political conditionalities, but they also accept the absence of rule of law, lack of transparency, and corruption or deliberately use them for their own ends. For example, many of the unconditional loans undermine the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which aims to combat patronage and corruption in the oil industry, for instance. Transparency, fair tendering, and binding rules fall by the wayside. Deals offered by China, Russia, and Turkey often deliberately exist in grey areas or are designed so opaquely that it is almost impossible for them to be monitored by the judiciary, the media, or civil society. There are also repeated accusations that they do not merely tolerate corrupt practices but actively exploit them to eliminate international competitors. Whether through active participation or passive tolerance, the practices undermine the efforts of other development partners to strengthen the rule of law, fight corruption, and build strong administrative procedures in the recipient countries.

3. *The Export of Authoritarian Instruments*

Autocracies learn lessons from each other. African autocracies and hybrid regimes can learn a great deal from China, Russia, and Turkey. They can tap into their wealth of experience in the repression of the media, civil society, and the opposition. Many African countries are experiencing a trend towards shrinking spaces for civil society, opposition movements, and freedom of expression. It is striking that instruments used in this process – whether it be stricter laws, the abuse of executive power, or the instrumentalisation of the security apparatus – are often modelled on the examples of authoritarian donors. Recommendations for action may be accompanied by the practical means to carry them out, such as equipment for security forces and the provision of surveillance technology so that governments can spy on their own citizens. But it is also possible to discern a quasi-ideological component when African governments point to the “success stories” of authoritarian donors and deduce that the democratic standards demanded by Western donors are “unnecessary”.

Authoritarian donors and many African partner countries have in common the lack of distinction between state and ruling party.

4. *Direct Influence on Policymakers*

The toolkit also includes influencing policymakers at the national and the local level outside formal negotiation channels. Decision-makers – from mayors to senior civil servants and ministers – are specifically targeted via training courses or delegations to foster personal ties and communicate the donors’ own values.

A key common feature between authoritarian donors and many African partner countries is the lack of distinction between or fusion of state and ruling party. For some time now, China, in particular, has been focused on providing direct support for political parties in Africa. The networks range from old links to socialist parties to more recent, pragmatic links to ruling parties, irrespective of their ideological stance.¹⁶ Critics see the training offered by China to cadres and officials of African political parties as another vehicle for ideologically entrenching the authoritarian Chinese model of society and development among Africa’s political elites.¹⁷

5. *The Weakening of Democratic Processes through Disinformation and Manipulation*

In the digital age, the instruments of authoritarian regimes also include the targeted manipulation of public opinion through disinformation and direct attacks on the integrity of electoral processes using digital means. Accusations against Russia in this regard made headlines not only in Europe and the US, but also in Africa. There is evidence of Russia’s deep involvement in training and equipping authoritarian states in digital election manipulation, the operation of bots and troll factories, and the targeted dissemination of fake news.¹⁸ China’s propaganda machine also has enormous reach and a major impact on public opinion in Africa through both traditional and social media.¹⁹

A recent report by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa reveals the wide range of instruments employed by China, Russia, and Turkey. These include investment in African media houses, technical equipment, journalist training, and inserting their own formats and content in order to exert a huge influence on the African media landscape and disseminate their own narratives.²⁰

6. *The Use of Soft Power to Communicate Values*

As instruments of soft power, culture, language, and education also help countries to gain influence and communicate their values. China, Russia, and Turkey are also progressively incorporating this aspect into their Africa strategies. The state-funded Confucius Institutes, with close ties to the Communist Party, promote Chinese language and culture abroad. There were no Confucius Institutes in Africa until 2004, whereas now they number more than 50. Russia is also venturing into this area with its equivalent, the Russkiy Mir Foundation.

All three countries are also expanding their scholarship programme in Africa. China has become the largest provider of scholarships for African students and the number one destination for education and training. Russia tries to exploit its historical ties by reviving alumni associations and building on the loyalty of politicians and officials who studied there during the Soviet era.

In the case of Turkey, there is another key element of soft power: religion. Under Erdoğan, the country also consolidates its influence by investing millions in the construction of mosques in the Sahel and from the Horn of Africa to South Africa. In Africa, religion is seen as an effective way of gaining influence, and mosques are particularly useful for spreading one's ideology.²¹

A Challenge for Western Democracies

The involvement of actors such as China, Russia, and Turkey poses a major challenge to Western donors. Increased competition makes it more difficult to gain access and influence. There is a risk of falling behind in the race for

crucial resources and of missing out on important investment opportunities. The programmes and practices of authoritarian donors also undermine efforts to foster democratic progress in Africa, something that is seen as a key factor



Religion as an element of Turkish soft power in Africa: Somali Koran students await President Erdoğan in Mogadishu. Source: © Feisal Omar, Reuters.

for ensuring economic development and stability on Europe's neighbouring continent.

Germany and other European donors – plus the US, with its new stance on Africa under

Joe Biden – would be well advised to face this challenge head-on while questioning their own practices and strategies in the process. This is not a matter of watering down standards and expectations regarding aspects that can be



lumped together under “good governance”. For Western donors, giving in to their authoritarian counterparts’ false narratives about paternalism and relinquishing their own principles and conditionalities would set the wrong tone and be tantamount to abandoning their core values. Instead, they should be even more consistent in setting these preconditions as a basis for strong cooperation with African countries. In the fight for democracy and human rights, we should not overlook the strongest ally: the African people. Most people in Africa are unhappy with their political situation and long for more democracy. It is, therefore, vital that Western donors continue to actively promote democracy through actions such as strengthening a free and independent media and an active civil society – precisely in the knowledge that other actors are committed to doing the opposite.

It is important to take a resolute stance against the way Beijing, Moscow, and Ankara exert their power and present themselves as a “benevolent friend”. If they are to have success with their African partners, Western donors need to find better ways of communicating the attractiveness of their programmes. Alongside official development cooperation, this must also involve the private sector. German companies, in particular, are still strongly reluctant to invest in Africa. Greater commitment on their part would not only present economic benefits, but also strengthen Germany’s voice in the partner countries. However, it is all too often the European protagonists themselves who do not succeed in exploiting the whole package that Europe can offer; hence they fail to convey how various sectors involved in the engagement are interlinked and to emphasise Europe’s overall weight. The EU’s engagement in Africa is stymied by the problem of perception and visibility. While China et al. are pushing ahead with prestigious infrastructure projects and, for example, have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic both diplomatically and in the media to promote themselves as strong supporters, Europe’s far more comprehensive engagement tends to be obscured by convoluted procedures and complex constellations of actors. When the

contributions of all the member states and the various joint instruments are added together, the EU provides more than half of all foreign investment in Africa (57 per cent in 2018, compared to around ten per cent from China). The public – and particularly the African public – is largely unaware of this obvious discrepancy. In this respect, it is important to take stronger joint action, such as the “Team Europe” approach to providing special funding in the context of COVID-19.

The draft Joint Africa-EU Strategy presented by the EU Commission in early 2020 has a stronger focus on mutual interests and offers a range of approaches for providing a new, robust foundation for relations with the neighbouring continent. Unfortunately, the EU’s much-heralded Africa Year in 2020 was overshadowed by the pandemic, and a planned EU-Africa summit did not take place. Europe must act quickly and make tangible progress in this respect, otherwise, the major summits organised by China and Russia will once again take centre stage.

- translated from German -

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[New Approaches in Development Cooperation](#)

A Dynamic Player in East Asia

How Taiwan Takes Responsibility in the
Shadow of the International Community

David Merkle

Although diplomatically recognised by scarcely more than a dozen countries, Taiwan still pursues an active, values-based foreign and development policy. Taipei deliberately counters Beijing's hard power with its "warm power". Whether it is health, the economy or disaster management, creativity and innovation are the common threads that run through Taiwan's approach to development cooperation.

Taiwan on the International Stage – Between Isolation and Healthy Pragmatism

Confronted by intensifying political, diplomatic, and military pressure from its neighbouring giant, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan has little visibility as an international development actor in its own right. Under the One-China policy, any country maintaining diplomatic relations with the PRC cannot have official relations with the government in Taipei. Beijing understands the One-China principle to mean that Taiwan is an integral part of China, which in turn is represented solely by the People's Republic.¹ Beijing is doing its utmost to ensure the international community is following this interpretation. In turn, those states that maintain official relations with Taipei recognise Taiwan as the legitimate representative of China under the One-China policy, even if this interpretation is gradually evolving towards recognising Taiwan as a separate political entity, detached from the shackles of a Chinese unitary state.

Today, 15 countries maintain full diplomatic relations with the Republic of China – Taiwan's official name. These encompass certain Caribbean islands, several countries in Central America and a few Pacific Island nations.² Despite having so few diplomatic partners, Taiwan, with a population of 23.5 million, is committed to international engagement. It shares its ideas and innovations with the world and – particularly during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic – has emerged as a country that managed the pandemic with huge success through

technology and an effective containment policy based on trust.³ The fact that 170 countries and territories worldwide allow Taiwanese citizens visa-free or simplified entry also bears testimony to the fact that relations with Taiwan can be shaped beyond de jure recognition.

Since coming to power in 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) changed the direction of Taiwan's foreign policy by launching the New Southbound Policy (*xīn nán xiàng zhèngcè*), with a view to reducing the country's economic dependence on mainland China (the PRC, including Hong Kong, currently constitutes around 40 per cent of Taiwan's foreign trade). The aim is also to improve relations with countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australasia. Another key component of this policy is to present Taiwan as a reliable partner in the Asia-Pacific region. This includes development cooperation with a plethora of small Pacific Island states, promoting a free and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and not least providing medical and technical support to many partners throughout the region.

In this way, Taiwan is breaking new ground that far exceeds the traditional understanding of development cooperation. For example, Taiwan is taking practical steps to strengthen the health sector in the countries of the region. It is also providing technology to improve disaster preparedness in partner countries (including island states that are regularly exposed to typhoons and earthquakes) and is specifically focusing on helping partner countries develop sustainable policies on energy and resources. These are all

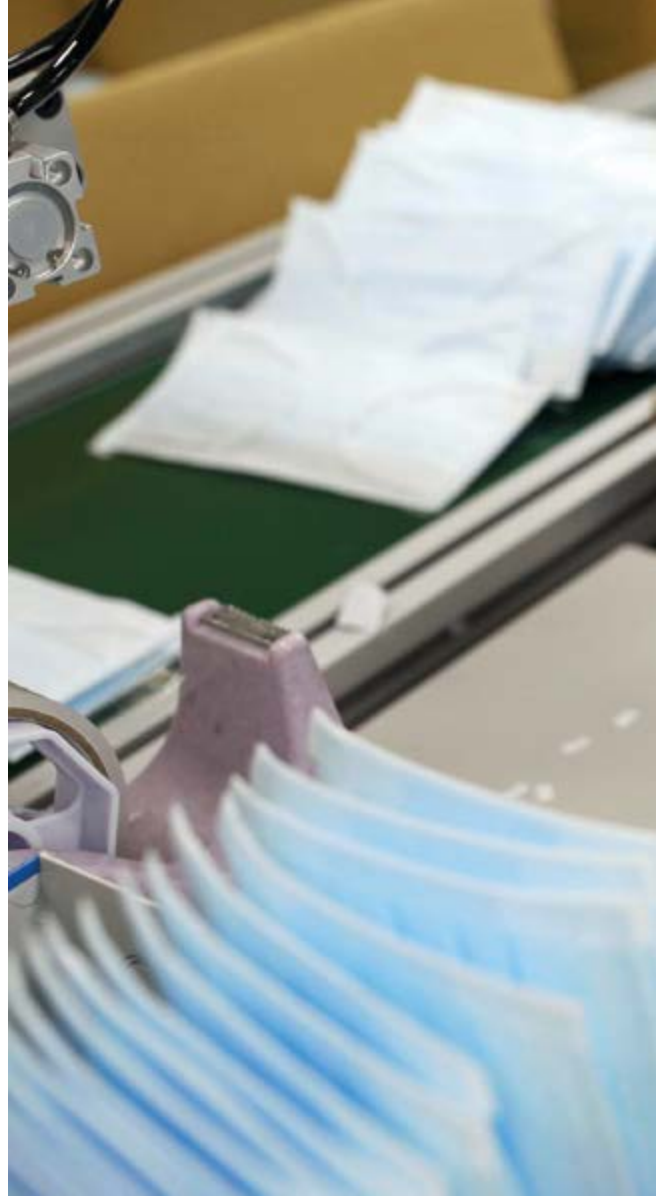
issues that lie at the heart of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although it is not a member of the United Nations, Taiwan is keen to make an active contribution in this respect.

During the pandemic, the world was made aware of what an important partner Taiwan is.

The purpose of this article is to take a closer look at Taiwan's role in development cooperation and to introduce its mechanisms, actors, and focal points. Not least, the article sheds light on those elements in Taiwan's approach that provide important lessons for our discussions in Germany and Europe, particularly in view of many countries' growing dependency on China.

Taiwan's Foreign Policy – Restrained Pragmatism Combined with “Warmth”

Already in spring 2020, when the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic had Europe firmly in its grip, Taiwan was preparing to send shipments of masks around the world. Within a matter of weeks, Taiwan ramped up its mask production and was soon able to meet domestic demand. After ensuring that its own people were well supplied with masks, Taiwan turned its gaze outwards with the message: “Taiwan can help”⁴. The country has long used this slogan to highlight how it believes its future to be firmly embedded in the international community. But now it supplemented this message with words that stressed Taiwan's visible commitment to other countries in their time of need: “Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping”⁵. President Tsai Ing-wen was re-elected in the presidential and parliamentary elections of January 2020, and her Democratic Progressive Party defended its majority in parliament. Upon the outbreak of COVID-19, she gained public trust with her clear strategy for managing the pandemic. Even more, the world was made aware of what an important partner Taiwan is.



History of Taiwan's Development Cooperation

Taiwan in the Post-War Period

It was after Japan's surrender in World War II that Taiwan was formally assigned to the Republic of China (*zhōnghuá mínguó*) and became its headquarters and sole remaining bastion when Chiang Kai-shek and his troops fled mainland China for the island in 1949. It received official development assistance for the first time at the end of the



Essential support in the beginning of the pandemic: Within a matter of weeks, Taiwan ramped up its mask production and sent shipments of masks around the world. [Source: © Ann Wang, Reuters.](#)

Korean War in 1953 and enjoyed ongoing support from the US. The Kuomintang ruled Taiwan under martial law and received US loans to build and develop the country's economy. In return, the government promised to build up reserves that it would later make available to other countries.⁶ Structures established on the island during the Japanese colonial period had left behind an efficient timber and agricultural sector – the launchpad for Taiwan's subsequent rise to become a “tiger state” and for the desire of well-educated young people to gain a foothold in the burgeoning

business sectors. The first project to improve agricultural productivity was initiated in Vietnam back in 1959, followed by the first agricultural missions to Africa in 1960. Until 1971, Taiwan, the Republic of China, was a member of the United Nations. A vote in the General Assembly, however, led to the passing of Resolution 2758, which recognised the People's Republic of China (established 1949) as China's only legitimate representative in the United Nations. This led to Taiwan losing both its seat at the UN and many of its diplomatic allies to Beijing.

Economic Engagement as an Initiator of Development Assistance

When the PRC initiated its reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, most foreign direct investment in mainland China derived from overseas Chinese communities (*huárén*) in China's immediate neighbourhood, particularly Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. The economic boom that it unleashed attracted countless Taiwanese businessmen (*táishāng*) to the PRC. During its peak in the 2000s, up to one million Taiwanese are estimated to have been living permanently in mainland China. Initially, this was mainly because production was relocated from Taiwan to mainland China, but later they became drivers of innovation in the Yangtze Delta metropolitan regions around Shanghai and the provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu. They also kick-started industrialisation in Guangdong in the Pearl River Delta, thus significantly contributing to the myth of China as the “workshop of the world”. Along with their economic engagement, many Taiwanese who had returned to work in their homeland or that of their ancestors also ramped up their charitable commitment. They poured their own money into educational initiatives and promoted cultural exchange across the Taiwan Strait.

Development Policy as the Coherent Face of Liberal Taiwan

In 1989, at a time of gradual political and economic liberalisation (martial law was not suspended until 1987), Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs set up a development fund whose primary aim was to provide loans and technical assistance to countries with which it had diplomatic ties.⁷ In 1996 – by which time Taiwan had already transformed itself into a full democracy, holding its first free presidential elections that year – there was also a growing awareness of the need for a more effective external communication. The establishment of an aid organisation specialising in development assistance, the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), was intended to improve the coordination of all overseas development

projects while at the same time helping to raise Taiwan's international profile and expand its external influence.

The involvement of civil society organisations has become a strategic focus of Taiwan's development engagement.

In the 1990s, non-governmental organisations in Taiwan began to take a more international approach to their work. The impetus for this came from the Taiwanese government's official development cooperation, which initially provided the orientation for NGO projects.⁸ Since the 2000s, the involvement of civil society organisations has become a strategic focus of Taiwan's development engagement. For example, in 2000, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up the NGO Affairs Committee to promote the international activities of Taiwan's NGOs.⁹ This improved coordination between NGOs at home and helped establish a framework that removed obstacles to Taiwanese NGOs networking with their international counterparts. This also enabled NGOs to gradually develop their own international engagement agenda, which is seen as complementary to government initiatives. In turn, this strengthens Taiwan's international profile, especially at the grassroots level, thus contributing towards “mutual dialogue, cooperation, and coalitions”¹⁰.

In 2009, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs published its first white paper on foreign aid, which primarily emphasised Taiwan's contribution to achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals and targeted a more coherent, measurable approach to development cooperation.¹¹ Over the years, an increasing number of programmes have been set up to provide established formats for dialogue and practical assistance based on technical cooperation. Since 2016, Taiwan's development cooperation has been systematically embedded in its strategic orientation towards the countries of South Asia,

Southeast Asia, and Australasia. The framework of the New Southbound Policy has given rise to a holistic approach, which also includes funding outside of traditional development cooperation.

Development Cooperation in the Context of the New Southbound Policy

Despite its lack of diplomatic relations with the ASEAN countries and other neighbouring states, Taiwan has gradually strengthened ties with these countries over the years. This has included increased investment by Taiwanese businesses, which grew by 16 per cent in 2019 compared to the previous year.¹² After the PRC, the countries of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) are cumulatively Taiwan’s second largest trading partner. What is more, Taiwan’s rise from an agricultural economy to one of the Asia-Pacific region’s key innovation hubs serves as a role model for other countries seeking to transform their economies. This particularly applies to those that are themselves growing and keen to make the leap to become innovative economies with high levels of employment and an equitable distribution of wealth.¹³ This is why Taiwan has prioritised knowledge-sharing and training programmes (particularly for young people) in its cooperation with the countries of South and Southeast Asia.

The private sector and academic institutions also have a key role to play here. The government in Taipei has specifically placed promotion and exchange in the field of innovation at the heart of the New Southbound Policy. In this respect, solutions based on the Internet of Things – such as for health care, toll systems, or smart school campuses – can be key drivers for creating efficient, networked services.¹⁴ Beyond purely bilateral cooperation mechanisms, the focus has been set on identifying synergies, primarily through the involvement of Taiwanese businesses and civil society organisations, which also lend themselves to joint strategic initiatives with third country actors. Taiwan is aware of the limits of purely state engagement due to the One-China policy, and deliberately encourages expert dialogue in certain policy areas. The focus is on joint projects that seek solutions to existing problems in the countries involved and are designed to expand Taiwan’s foreign policy scope, for example, through technical cooperation.¹⁵

Priorities and Actors in Taiwan’s Development Cooperation

It is no coincidence that Taiwanese politicians deliberately refer to its “warm power”,¹⁶ which characterises the country and its relations with the rest of the world. More specifically, it is

Table 1: Distribution of Taiwanese ODA in 2018

Area	Per cent of total ODA	Amount in millions of US dollars
Social infrastructure and services	49.19	148.39
Economic infrastructure	16.42	49.54
Support for specific economic sectors (agriculture, fisheries, etc.)	12.73	38.39
Other, including humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery	19.50	58.81
Sustainable development	2.16	6.52
Total	100	301.65

Source: MOFA 2018, n. 17.

based on a shared understanding with democracies worldwide and intergovernmental relationships characterised by trust. It consciously creates the space for non-state actors to work alongside state actors in development cooperation. In this way, Taiwan seeks to pursue its foreign policy goals based on shared values and maximising its cultural soft power.

Since 2010, Taiwan has documented the annual priorities of government institutions involved in international development cooperation in an Official Development Assistance (ODA) overview. It is conducted based on criteria defined by

the OECD DAC. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of Taiwanese ODA allocation in 2018.¹⁷

The focus here is on the development and support of social infrastructure and services. It is particularly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 1 (ending poverty), 6 (water and sanitation), 7 (access to reliable and sustainable energy) and 9 (sustainable and inclusive industrialisation and promoting innovation).¹⁸ For the year 2018, total expenditure amounted to 302 million US dollars, representing 0.051 per cent of gross national income (GNI). The figures were slightly lower compared to the previous year



Clearly positioned: The Taiwanese government deliberately supports calls for democracy and participation and promotes a regional order based on equality and freedom. Source: © Ann Wang, Reuters.

(0.056 per cent) and, at first glance, fall far short of the UN's target of 0.7 per cent of the GNI of donor countries. However, in addition to bilateral projects and grants, Taiwan is also involved in regional and multilateral initiatives, including as one of 68 members of the Asian Development Bank (where it is referred to as "Taipei, China" due to its lack of recognition as a state actor), and it most recently contributed around 1.1 per cent of the organisation's total budget.¹⁹

Example: Healthcare

Taiwan's healthcare system is deemed to be one of the most modern and effective in the entire Indo-Pacific region. Accordingly, Taiwan's New Southbound Policy makes health one of its five key areas.²⁰ The risk of epidemics in the region (even long before COVID-19) means that best practices for delivering high-quality healthcare remain particularly important for many countries. Taiwanese hospitals are making their own contribution to development assistance through the Taiwan Health Centers and Mobile Medical Mission projects. For example, the renowned Taiwan University Hospital has been training Vietnamese healthcare professionals since 2005, while the Mackay Memorial Hospital has been sending doctors and hospital administrators to underserved communities in Southeast Asia for many years.²¹

Example: Sustainability and Disaster Management

Specialised agencies in Taiwan also have an important role to play in development cooperation with partner countries. For example, the Enhancing Agricultural Adaptive Capacity to Climate Variability project aims to improve Caribbean nations' capacity to respond and adapt to climate change by providing digital solutions that generate meteorological data for use in key areas of agricultural production. These have been developed based on the experience of the Council of Agriculture (COA) and the Central Weather Bureau (CWB) in Taiwan.²²

CWB staff also support island states that are acutely threatened by climate change, whether through the installation of observation

instruments and information systems for seismic early warning systems or the scientific evaluation of generated data.

It is precisely the social dimension of its development assistance that distinguishes Taiwan's approach from that of China.

Civil Society Initiatives

The role of non-state actors such as foundations and classic NGOs in the field of environmental protection and social care in Taiwan's development assistance, which has expanded over the years, reflects the skill with which the country has filled niches left for small and internationally marginalised countries to raise their international profile in different ways.²³ Taiwan's strategy was long one of diplomatic competition with China, also known as "chequebook diplomacy". It focused on countries with whom it had diplomatic ties, such as in Latin America, but this has now given way to an approach that primarily addresses the core issues of international development cooperation. In particular, anthroposophical foundations like the Taiwan Asia Exchange Foundation are essential bridges to academics and non-governmental actors abroad, while religious organisations such as the Tzu Chi Foundation are on hand to provide humanitarian aid in many of the world's trouble spots. It is precisely this social dimension of its development assistance that distinguishes Taiwan's approach from that of China and dovetails with the current priorities of international cooperation.²⁴ Today, more than 40,000 NGOs are registered in Taiwan, more than 2,000 of which are affiliated with international NGOs.²⁵

Frameworks for Generating Expertise and Skills

Taiwan joined forces with the US to set up the Global Cooperation and Training Framework

(GCTF) in 2015, which aims to address common global challenges with a particular focus on public sector experts and representatives across the Indo-Pacific.²⁶ Events and training sessions are held in areas such as public health, law enforcement, cybersecurity, media literacy, e-commerce, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief. These are all areas where Taiwan can make a vital contribution by sharing its knowledge and expertise. 32 training courses and workshops have been held as part of this framework.²⁷ Japan is an official partner of the framework and countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands are involved in joint projects.

Can Taiwan's Approach Serve as an Example for Germany and Europe?

Taiwan's approach shows how closely a values-based foreign policy can be reconciled with a clearly formulated interest in gaining greater visibility and international leeway. Especially in recent years, closer cooperation with like-minded partners has become an important feature in international relations. This also needs to go hand in hand with a consistent and effective public image. Taiwan's engagement in the world is based on public consensus and a political culture that deliberately aims to achieve practical value for the actors in the target countries, in line with social, economic, and democratic-pluralistic ideas.

Faced with a massive increase in pressure from Beijing over recent years, including a growing military threat, social media disinformation campaigns, and attempts to win over Taiwan's business elite, the Taiwanese government has made a clear strategic shift by identifying the countries in the Asia-Pacific region as key economic partners. This also provides an alternative to the growing dependence on China. In this way, the Taiwanese government deliberately supports calls for democracy and participation and promotes a regional order based on equality and freedom. It is also not afraid to clearly state its position, as demonstrated recently in Thailand, Myanmar, and Hong Kong. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy is a values-based response

to Chinese hard power in the region. Taiwan maintains close civil society ties in the region, focuses on its own experiences in specific areas and incorporates them as strategic themes in its development cooperation.

What Germany and Europe can learn from the example of Taiwan is the belief that development cooperation should also provide partner countries with attractive programmes that provide practical solutions to existing problems. In the case of Taiwan, an island located in one of the most seismically active regions of the world, this particularly relates to its experience in disaster management, healthcare (also in rural areas) and, as a pluralistic society with ethnic minorities, valuable experiences in setting up integration programmes. To summarise, Taiwan's "warm power" derives from a consistent political culture that has become interwoven with the country's view of itself; despite all current and future issues that continue to challenge the political landscape in Taiwan. Taiwan's message to the world has perhaps never been conveyed more strongly and coherently than during the current pandemic: Offers of assistance to other countries must be coherent and benefit the recipient. And, above all, the people of these countries need to embrace this message.

- translated from German -

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[New Approaches in Development Cooperation](#)

Pragmatic Giants

On the Development Policy of the Gulf States:
Motives, Priorities, and the Potential for Collaboration

Fabian Blumberg

It is many years since the Gulf states were the “newcomers” to development policy. However, their motives and approach to development assistance differ from those of their Western counterparts. Despite this, there are areas of common interest that make it possible to collaborate with the “giants” of the Gulf.

In terms of development assistance, the Gulf states are often called the “silent giants”.¹ This description highlights how they have been quietly, but very actively, going about their business as aid donors. In a 2017 conversation with analyst and author Peter Salisbury, an unnamed development policy actor said: “In the Middle East, Africa, and in Islamic countries in Asia, the Gulfies have been there as long as they have had oil money. [...] The more recent phenomenon has been that they have been entering the same space [as the OECD countries], and they are often not as experienced or sophisticated in that space, so they are seen as these newcomers.”²

These “newcomers” from the Gulf – mainly Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – have had numerous bilateral and multilateral organisations dedicated to development assistance since the 1970s and spend huge sums in this area compared to other countries. It is true that there are still some yawning data gaps with regard to the development assistance provided by the Gulf states.³ Nevertheless, a 2020 report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides some interesting clues to the amounts spent by Gulf donors.⁴ According to the report, in 2017, the UAE and Saudi Arabia were among the world’s most significant bilateral providers of development assistance (in 7th and 8th place). Qatar and Kuwait are also classified as “significant” donors by the OECD (ranked 20th and 22nd, respectively). With regard to the target of spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on development assistance (Official Development Assistance ratio, ODA ratio), the UAE has been above 1 per cent since 2013 and, in 2017, had the highest ODA ratio in the world. Kuwait ranks 9th, Qatar 11th,

and Saudi Arabia 20th in the corresponding OECD survey. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Saudi Arabia was the fourth largest humanitarian aid donor in 2018, and the ninth largest in 2020; the UAE was the third largest humanitarian aid donor relative to its gross national income in 2016. In 2013, the UAE became the world’s largest humanitarian aid donor after providing 5.89 billion US dollars, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.⁵ So it seems legitimate to describe them as “giants”. But it can no longer be said that they are “silently” going about their business. In terms of development assistance, they are particularly active in education and training; support and empowerment of women, children, and young people; as well as health, electricity, drinking water, and sanitation, for example, through the provision of microcredits and budgetary support.

Policy Interdependence in Development Assistance – Zakat, Security, Stability, and Economic Prosperity

The image of today’s Gulf monarchies is one of glittering skyscrapers, air-conditioned shopping malls, globe-spanning airlines, a Mars mission, and rentier systems that provide citizens with their basic needs for a good quality of life – so it is hardly surprising that they are also in a position to spend huge sums on development assistance. It is easy to forget that, in the experiences of the stakeholders and of Gulf citizens, their own countries were still “underdeveloped” in the 1970s. In 1979, in a special issue on “Arab aid” of Saudi Aramco World, the company magazine of oil company Saudi Aramco, a representative of the Abu Dhabi Fund is quoted as saying:

“You have to have been here 10 years ago to know how we feel. [...] Then, we did not have any streets, any schools, any kind of infrastructure at all. People walked around barefooted. Life was very poor. All this is still very fresh in our minds, so we feel it is our duty to help other people now that we are in a position to do so.”⁶ This awareness of their own past, combined with the religiously motivated emphasis on charity, mercy, and generosity (the obligation for Muslims to donate 2.5 per cent of their personal wealth to the poor, known as *zakat*), has also created a culture of helping others in the Gulf: “A desire to help the less fortunate and be generous with wealth is [...] embedded in the cultural consciousness of the region. Shared religious and cultural affinity may partially explain the observation that Gulf aid tends to be concentrated in the immediate region, with a demonstrable preference of Arab and Muslim countries.”⁷

The development policy of the Gulf states has a particular focus on the neighbouring region, Arab and Muslim states.

The Gulf states target their development assistance at different recipients, also depending on political motives. For example, Qatar’s strategy in Egypt is different to that of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and Saudi Arabia has a more pronounced interest in Yemen, which is reflected in the fact that the majority of Saudi funding is allocated to the country. Overall, however, the Gulf states prefer to focus their aid on Arab and Muslim countries. This has always been the case with Gulf donors. For example, they have been sending aid to the Palestinian territories since the 1960s. Between 1975 and 1990, aid flowed to Lebanon in an effort to stabilise the civil war-torn country. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Saudi Arabia was particularly keen to bolster other monarchies in the face of Arab nationalism and Soviet influence. In the 1980s, Saudi Arabia was the world’s largest per capita donor, directing

aid to its allies in the region (mainly Jordan, Morocco, North Yemen, Iraq, and Syria). Finally, reference should be made to the assistance provided by the Gulf states to Iraq after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 to build Iraq up as a bulwark against Iranian influence.⁸ It is against this backdrop that Saudi Arabia’s so-called export of Wahhabism, a very conservative form of Islam, has occurred. For many years, this was one of the motivations behind the country’s development policy: spreading this understanding of Islam through development assistance, religious education at home and abroad, and financial support for corresponding religious schools and mosques. However, this changed since the 9/11 attacks (15 of the 19 attackers were Saudi citizens) and the subsequent criticism of the Kingdom’s religious policy, as well as eventually due to Saudi Arabia’s new stance under King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The clergy and religious police have had their wings clipped, and new, stricter rules have been put in place governing religious organisations, their activities, and financial flows. This is in line with Mohammed bin Salman’s policy of a “return to moderate Islam”.⁹

The regional focus persists and reveals a second motive behind the development policies of the Gulf states: stabilising their neighbourhood and consolidating their own systems of government. For example, after the “Arab Spring”, financial support in the sense of the rentier model¹⁰ was initially expanded at home, but large amounts of financial aid also flowed to countries like Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman – and later also to Egypt.¹¹ The aims were: to stabilise other monarchies of the region and the neighbourhood as a whole, including Egypt; secure the status quo; empower countries that could be considered as security partners; and contain Iran’s regional influence. These interests also prompted Saudi Arabia to adopt a policy of military intervention while, at the same time, pouring humanitarian aid into Yemen. Development, stabilisation, and security policies are thus intertwined. These policy overlaps are reflected in data published by the OECD. Between 2013 and 2017, Gulf donors spent 68 per cent of their financial aid





New Great Game in the Horn of Africa: Development aid and security interests of Gulf states are sometimes intertwined. Source: © Feisal Omar, Reuters.

on development activities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Egypt, Yemen, and Morocco were the main beneficiaries, receiving 60.3 per cent of that total.

However, funding earmarked for MENA countries fell by 11.2 per cent between 2013 and 2017, while funding for Sub-Saharan Africa increased by 46.6 per cent over the same period.¹² Here, the main recipients are countries in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and West Africa, and a glance at the focus of this aid reveals three more drivers of the Gulf states' development policy: food security, economic prosperity, and geopolitical co-determination.

Although the Gulf states (especially Qatar) have worked hard over recent years to build up their own domestic food infrastructures, they are still highly dependent on imports.¹³ This is why they are supporting and investing in the agricultural economies of other countries (especially in Africa),¹⁴ as well as in the transport, infrastructure, and logistics sectors,¹⁵ in order to help secure their own food supplies – a need that was once again underlined by the temporary disruption of supply chains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The above-mentioned regional priorities and areas of investment also point to the geopolitical interests that are being pursued in competition with each other, and with other

countries. As a result, a new “great game” is developing in the Horn of Africa. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey are expanding their presence in Africa, as indeed are Russia, China, and the United States. The Gulf states are pursuing several interests in this respect: food security, access to Africa, securing sea routes and their western borders.

The Gulf states are demonstrating their willingness to assume more international responsibility and play their part in shaping international politics.

The Gulf states are also pursuing a strategy of exporting elements of their own economic reform models. They are seeking to generate economic benefits from their activities in the recipient countries and to support their strategies of economic diversification. For example, the UAE has made direct investments in real estate and industry in Egypt. This is in line with its own economic and development model at home, which focuses primarily on infrastructure and real estate projects. It has forged development partnerships to open up markets, secure follow-up orders, build its own attractiveness as a location, and create (economic) networks between donor and recipient countries. In this way, development and economic policy have become intertwined.¹⁶

Since decisions on the volume, type, and recipient countries of development aid are made by the royal houses, this aid becomes highly personalised. This suggests that prestige-seeking and nation-branding are also motives for development assistance. Today, the Gulf states are more inclined to publicise their aid efforts than in the past, either through appropriate cross-media communications or by hosting development forums and major conferences. This also demonstrates a willingness to assume

more responsibility internationally, to be seen as trusted partners, and to play their part in shaping international politics.¹⁷

Pragmatic Donors

The Gulf states’ aid engagement is carried out by bilateral and multilateral organisations that have joined forces in the Coordination Group of Arab National and Regional Development Institutions,¹⁸ founded in 1975, as well as by other organisations in the various Gulf states.¹⁹ The financing instruments used are loans, grants, budget support, debt relief, and (religiously motivated) donations. Additionally, there are in-kind supply deliveries in the form of oil and gas, some of which are subsidised, as well as investments in construction and real estate. Contributions to international organisations are lower by comparison, but the Gulf states support specific programmes that they deem important (such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East and humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees); development assistance from the Gulf remains, however, predominantly bilateral.²⁰

This bilateral development assistance is particularly pragmatic in the way that it is tailored to the recipient countries. The Gulf states are more likely to respond to requests than to implement pre-formulated aid packages or strategies that they have developed themselves. Moreover, they rely on consultants, expertise, and government representatives in the recipient countries themselves.²¹ Conditionality – in the sense that financial assistance is tied to reforms in the areas of finance, the economy, or governance – is not only impossible to discern, but actively rejected. Development actors in the Gulf states are sceptical or even opposed to providing development assistance within the framework of international institutions or multilaterally if it entails political conditions. They have always argued in favour of non-interference and state sovereignty. Aid – said the former chairman of the Arab Fund in 2003, with regard to the Coordination Group – must be given free of political or economic conditions.²²

Giants under Pressure

It remains to be seen whether the Gulf states will be able to maintain their relatively strong commitment to development assistance. In the past, aid spending by the Gulf giants has generally mirrored changes in oil prices, the economic situation, or political priorities. In the 1970s, for example, oil prices rose at such a rate that the countries represented in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) were able to spend an average of 12.48 per cent of gross national product on development assistance. In the 1980s and 1990s, Gulf donors were more cautious because oil revenues were declining and, in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Gulf states' political priorities shifted towards their own security. During the oil boom of 2003 to 2008, they built up financial reserves of up to 514 billion US dollars, but development assistance was increased only moderately and tended to remain at the level of the late 1980s. This is also explained by the consequences of the 9/11 attacks, when financial contributions by the Gulf states to countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the activities of Islamic charities, were viewed particularly critically. During the oil price boom of 2010 to 2014, national budgets generated huge surpluses, which opened up more funds for development assistance.²³

A number of developments suggests that the Gulf states may scale back their development activities in future.

This brief history of the Gulf states' development assistance shows that it can be very volatile – depending on the economic situation and current political priorities. A number of developments suggests that the Gulf states may scale back their development activities in the future. Oil prices have been low since 2014 (partly due to the shale gas revolution, a general shift away from fossil fuels, and weaker global growth). As a result, government revenues have declined, and

the pressure on budgets is growing.²⁴ Moreover, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of a multifaceted crisis for the Gulf states: oil revenues continued to decline, international transport of goods slowed down, and tourism as well as air traffic collapsed. These are the sectors on which the Gulf states are pinning their hopes as they prepare for a post-oil era. In response to the pandemic, governments have increased public sector pay, lowered key interest rates, postponed loan repayments, and launched support programmes for the private sector. Budget deficits are rising and fiscal reserves declining. A drop in gross domestic product is predicted for all the Gulf states. These problems have not been resolved in early 2021. They add to the pressure that the Gulf states were under even before the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning their economic outlook is, at the very least, uncertain. The fact that the Gulf states have traditionally been rentier states makes it reasonable to assume that they will cut back on overseas aid in order to expand their domestic programmes. This assumption is supported by the observation that the Gulf states have provided material and financial emergency aid to many countries in response to the pandemic (particularly Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Iran, Jordan, and Yemen), but have also shifted some of their development funding to focus on their domestic needs.²⁵

The volatility is not only caused by economic factors. Politics also plays a role – for example, providing political and financial support to the Palestinian territories has been part of the Gulf states' reason of state for decades. But even here, cracks seem to be appearing. The core of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative – normalisation of relations with Israel in return for a peace agreement that is acceptable to the Palestinians – is no longer applicable to the UAE and Bahrain. They are both normalising their relations with Israel, showing that cooperation with Israel now outweighs the Palestinian cause. The performance of the Palestinian Authority has attracted criticism in all the Gulf states, and it is possible that they will either use development assistance as a means of exerting pressure for reform, or will impose further cuts.²⁶



New priorities: The rapprochement of some Gulf states with Israel could also have consequences with regard to development aid for the Palestinian territories. Source: © Ronen Zvulun, Reuters.

The Potential for Collaboration

Since the 1970s, there have been various modes of cooperation between the Gulf states and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). So far, according to the OECD, this collaboration has three main dimensions: firstly, the DAC encourages Gulf countries to show

their commitment to the OECD by submitting data and statistics to help map the global development picture. The DAC also urges them to improve the accuracy, timeliness, and transparency of the data. Secondly, it promotes regular policy exchange and collaboration (through the Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development and joint Arab-DAC Task Forces on specific topics, such



as education, energy, and water). Thirdly, as DAC-participants, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait can attend all DAC meetings and participate in DAC Communities of Practice discussions on issues such as statistics, evaluation, the environment, conflict, fragile states, and gender equality. The DAC and the Coordination Group of Arab National and Regional

Development Institutions meet regularly for the Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development, most recently in February 2021. According to the OECD: “All in all, the collaboration provided a better understanding of Arab development co-operation activities to DAC members and globally. [...] By engaging in policy dialogue with the DAC and its members, Arab countries and institutions benefit from the sharing of knowledge, experiences and good practices on a range of development co-operation themes.”²⁷ Since 2014, Gulf organisations have also been involved in “triangular cooperation” projects²⁸ in development cooperation and have committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Assuming greater responsibility internationally, participating in the international dialogue on development policy, increasing transparency by publishing data on development assistance – these are all areas where the Gulf states have made great strides in the direction of the OECD countries.

Dwindling financial resources could lead the Gulf states to seek ways of increasing regional and international synergies.

Nevertheless, the bilateral approach continues to prevail. The basic principle of non-conditionality is not questioned. The Gulf states are committed to ensuring the autonomy of their own development policies while prioritising stability, security, and the success of their own reform policies over development policy.

However, the aforementioned imperatives of the Gulf states’ development policies, coupled with dwindling financial resources, could lead them to seek ways of improving regional as well as international coordination and synergies. The decline in financial resources available for foreign aid could also make them adjust their priorities: less large-scale investment in infrastructure and logistics, and more development aid for small and medium-sized businesses, male

and female entrepreneurs, start-ups, education, training, capacity building for young people and women in particular, and gender equality. These areas are also at the heart of the Gulf states' own visions and reform programmes. These seem to be aimed at greater diversification based on their own experience and economic networks, and at mitigating the risk to regional stability engendered by unemployment and social discontent. These are also the areas that are likely to be congruent with other countries' interests, such as those of German development policy. Energy and the environment are other potential areas where the DAC and Gulf states could work together. In recent years, the Gulf states have built capacity in preparation for a post-oil era. For example, they have ramped up research into alternative energies and energy efficiency while promoting corresponding programmes and initiatives at home and abroad. Triangular cooperation would be an appropriate instrument in these areas, for example, with a German development organisation and a Gulf organisation. This would also allow the development policy coordinated by the DAC to benefit from the expertise that the Gulf states have built up in their key sectors, and from the trust they enjoy as Arab donors in the Arab and Muslim region.

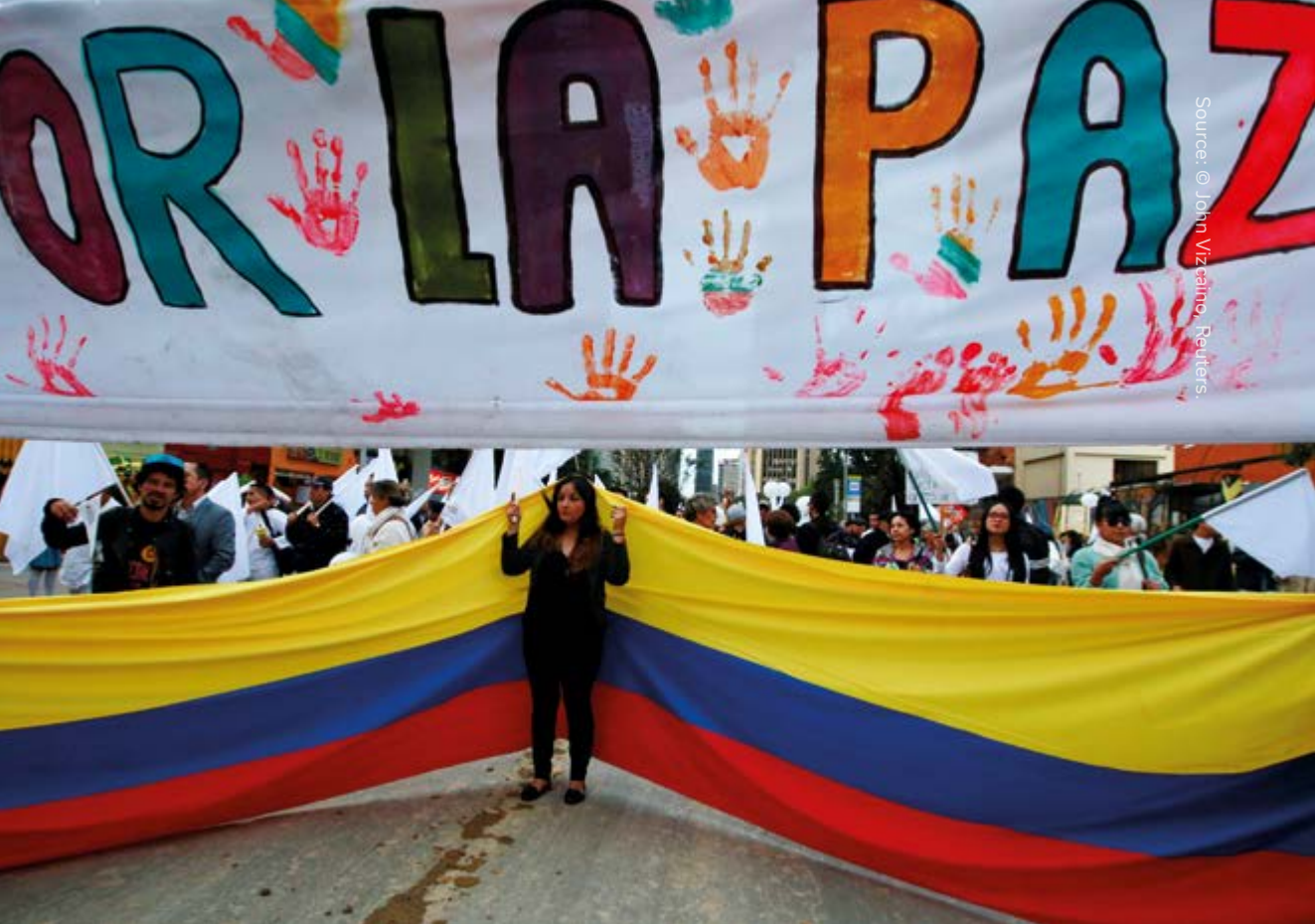
Areas of common interest exist in these sectors, and some joint projects are already underway. Germany is a key player when it comes to collaboration with Gulf states on development, for example through the GIZ programme Cooperation with Arab Donors (CAD), along with partnership agreements and co-financing.²⁹ This shows that – despite all the differences in motives and approaches – it is possible to work together in a spirit of partnership. The combination of dwindling financial resources and increasing global challenges makes this collaboration essential.

– translated from German –

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A Mixed Picture

Five Years of the Colombian Peace Agreement

Stefan Reith

2021 marks the fifth anniversary of the historic peace agreement between the Colombian government and the guerrilla organisation Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The international headlines focus on the delays and setbacks obstructing the path to a stable, lasting peace. However, despite the widespread scepticism fuelled by these ongoing difficulties, positive steps are being taken to increasingly consolidate the peace process and make it irreversible. Colombia deserves the solidarity and support of its international partners as it continues this journey.

The Long Road to a Peace Deal

By signing the peace agreement on 24 November 2016 at the Columbus Theater in Bogotá, the Colombian government and the FARC officially declared an end to an armed conflict that had led to almost one million deaths and more than seven million displaced people over five decades. Key points underpinning the comprehensive deal were land reform, political participation for the former guerrillas, a ceasefire and disarmament on the part of the FARC, reducing drug production and trafficking, compensation for victims, transitional justice, addressing the past, and remembrance. In October 2016, however, Colombia's then president and subsequent Nobel Peace Prize laureate Juan Manuel Santos held a referendum on ratifying the final agreement. Surprisingly, it resulted in a narrow victory for its opponents. Supporters of popular ex-President Álvaro Uribe (2002 to 2010), who had massively weakened the FARC with his policy of "democratic security", were particularly critical of the agreement. They argued that the concessions made to the guerrilla leaders were too far-reaching and demanded that they be held legally accountable for their crimes. With a turnout of just 37 per cent, the opponents of the peace agreement won a very narrow majority over those in favour (50.21 per cent to 49.79 per cent). This result highlighted both: the Colombian people's indifference towards a key decision on the future of their country and the extreme polarisation and social division

existing between opponents and supporters of the peace agreement.

Following renegotiations and adjustments, particularly on rural development, compensation for victims, political participation of the FARC, and the reintegration of former guerrilla fighters, the agreement was not put to another referendum but was simply ratified by Congress. This undermined the legitimacy of the peace agreement from the start and is denounced by its opponents to this day. Although recent polls reflect how most of the public is in favour of implementing the agreement, the peace process remains the subject of fierce controversy and polarises Colombian politics and society in the run-up to the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2022.

Violence against the Civilian Population

One of the greatest challenges for the peace process is ongoing violence in many regions across the country. The Colombian government is only slowly managing to fill the power vacuum left by the FARC and guarantee public security. Particularly in peripheral areas beyond urban centres, criminal groups old and new are engaged in a bitter struggle for control of territory, drug smuggling routes, and illegal economies. The withdrawal of the largest guerrilla movement, which controlled huge swathes of the country, led to a fragmented conflict and large numbers of civilian casualties. In particular, the Ejército de

Liberación Nacional (ELN) movement exploited the peace agreement to expand its own influence. Then there are the splinter groups of the former FARC that either refused to join or abandoned the peace process. The most prominent example is known by the alias “Iván Márquez”. As the former number two in the FARC’s high command, he was a signatory to the peace agreement. Márquez was in fact supposed to take one of the seats in the Senate designated for the FARC’s political successor organisation, but he went into hiding in 2019 and has since formed a group of former FARC guerrillas under the name Segunda Marquetalia. Apart from the ELN and the dissident groups of the former FARC, there are at least a dozen other armed groups, but unlike the first two, they do not generally have a nationwide presence.¹

262 former guerrillas have been murdered since the final peace agreement was signed.

In the regions, the situation is extremely complex. Tactical and temporary alliances alternate with bloody turf wars. The state does not have the capacity to maintain a permanent presence in every region of the country, so the military and police usually conduct targeted operations to remove the leaders of the criminal groups. However, this often simply escalates the violence by triggering competition among would-be successors, or successors turn to violent acts in an attempt to consolidate their power. It is civilians who bear the brunt of this violence, along with the representatives of local people who dare to speak up and oppose the armed groups’ illegal activities. Human rights defenders, environmentalists, journalists, and representatives of ethnic groups are particularly often victims of assassination attempts. In Colombia, these people are called *líderes sociales* (social leaders). However, this generic term is not clearly defined, leading to deviations in the murder statistics provided by government institutions and civil society organisations.²

However, all the statistics reveal a similar trend. After a sharp decline in violence over the preceding years, there has been a dramatic increase in assassinations of *líderes sociales* since 2018. In its report for the first quarter of 2021, the United Nations Peace Agreement Verification Mission in Colombia recorded over 400 murders since the peace agreement was signed.³ The Colombian non-governmental organisation Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz (INDEPAZ) claims there were more than 1,000 murder victims during this same period.⁴ Most of the murders follow a similar pattern. According to the UN, 77 per cent of murders in 2020 occurred in rural areas. 96 per cent of murders were recorded in communities with illegal economies, particularly drug production and illegal mining. 45 per cent of murders occurred in the special development regions agreed in the peace deal. Geographically, the worst-affected regions are Chocó, Valle del Cauca and Cauca on the Pacific coast, Putumayo on the border with Ecuador and Norte de Santander on the border with Venezuela. The high incidence of murder and violence is thus geographically confined to peripheral regions strongly characterised by poverty, informality, illegal economies, and a lack of state presence. These regions are of particular importance when it comes to building a sustainable peace process.

In addition to the assassinations of the *líderes sociales*, the safety of former FARC fighters is also a major concern. Since the signing of the final agreement, the UN Mission for the Verification of the Peace Process has recorded the murder of 262 former guerrillas, 59 attempted murders and 21 former combatants who are missing.⁵ These are often caused by conflicts of interest between former FARC fighters and dissidents or attempts by criminal gangs to recruit the former combatants. The precarious implementation of the security guarantees under the peace agreement constitutes a particularly sensitive issue. This is because lack of personal security threatens the economic and social integration of former combatants. Despite their best efforts, the security agency responsible for protecting them has insufficient capacity to protect





Historic moment: The former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader Rodrigo Londoño sign the peace treaty in Bogotá in November 2016. Source: © Jaime Saldarriaga, Reuters.

everyone who is at risk. According to the UN, there are currently more than 1,000 outstanding applications for personal protection.

The critical security situation in parts of Colombia is also reflected in the increasing number of “massacres” – a highly controversial term in Colombia since it has no legal definition. Government institutions avoid the term and speak of “collective murder”, whereas the non-governmental organisation INDEPAZ defines massacre as the simultaneous murder of more than three unarmed persons. In the pandemic year of 2020, the national police recorded 162 of these

acts of violence, up 42 per cent on the previous year (114), and the highest number since 2011 (171). There is a myriad of reasons for this. The murders are often linked to drug trafficking, illegal economies, and attempted forced recruitment, or are intended to serve as a deterrent to consolidate control over a territory. Until the beginning of April 2021, INDEPAZ has already recorded 43 assassinations of *líderes sociales* and human rights defenders, 14 of former FARC fighters and 26 massacres.⁶

These overwhelming figures need to be viewed in the context of decades of violence and conflict.

For example, the peace agreement led to a drastic reduction in the high numbers of dead and injured in fighting between the FARC and the Colombian security forces. Military hospitals are now comparatively empty as a result. The Colombian government also points out that murder rates have been falling for years. For example, last year the authorities registered the lowest murder rate in 46 years, at 23.8 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. However, this is not distributed equally across the country. In the 170 municipalities in the special development regions, known as PDETs (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial), the rate is over 50, while it is 18 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in the rest of the country. Thus, one of the key challenges of the peace process remains

guaranteeing public security and enforcing the state's legitimate monopoly on the use of force in peripheral, rural areas. There can be no basis for a stable and lasting peace unless violence comes to an end in these regions.

Rural Development and Social Reintegration

Security and development are mutually dependent, so security is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Conversely, social and economic development also leads to greater stability and security. Therefore, the peace agreement defined 16 regions comprising 170 municipalities as PDETs. These territories, which are especially marked by violence, poverty, illegal economies, and a lack of state presence,



Demobilised FARC fighter in the department of Caquetá: That most demobilised combatants have managed to return to a civilian life is one of the most successful chapters of the peace agreement. Source: © Luis Jaime Acosta, Reuters.

represent 36 per cent of the national territory and approximately 13 per cent of the whole population. According to the government, more than 200,000 citizens were involved in planning development projects as part of a broad consultation process aimed at reducing glaring disparities between urban and rural areas and initiating sustainable development processes in rural Colombia. More than 32,000 proposals and initiatives were collected and subsequently translated into concrete action plans with a 15-year timeframe. The latest report from the United Nations Verification Mission notes that 1,274 development programmes have already been completed and 151 are currently being implemented. These include infrastructure projects such as road building, electricity and water supply, and the construction of schools and clinics. Expanding the transport infrastructure to improve connections between Colombia's remote regions and urban centres is of crucial importance. After all, lower transport costs and times as well as improved market access make agriculture more profitable and build local value chains. This makes it more attractive and competitive to cultivate legal agricultural products compared to illegal coca cultivation. The voluntary substitution of coca plants with crops such as cocoa, coffee, avocado, and oil palm is a key element in the fight against cocaine trafficking and the associated violence.

Although visible progress has been made, critics point to the slow rollout of development programmes and serious underfunding of the PDETs. The Peace Commission of the Colombian Congress has stated that implementation will take forty years at the current rate. Emilio Archila, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilisation and Consolidation, responded by pointing to the government's massive investment to alleviate the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic. If we look at international examples, such as the slow process of creating equivalent living conditions in East and West Germany – which is still incomplete more than 30 years after reunification – Colombia still has a long road ahead after achieving the first milestones in the fifth year of the peace process.

Land is a key issue for sustainable rural development and a stable peace. The extremely unequal distribution of land and social injustice emanating from this, was one of the main reasons for the emergence of the FARC and other guerrilla groups as early as the 1960s. The conflict forced tens of thousands of small farmers off their land and land ownership became even more concentrated in the hands of a few large landowners. Studies show that one per cent of the population currently controls 81 per cent of agricultural land. The peace deal stipulated that the Colombian government should set up a fund to distribute three million hectares of arable land to displaced people, victims of the conflict, and landless small farmers. The fund currently holds 1.2 million hectares, with around 100,000 hectares having been distributed to 8,000 families.⁷ Critics bemoan the fact that a large part of the land registered in the fund is theoretically available but, in reality, has been settled and farmed for many years. Land ownership in Colombia is often not formalised because of its poorly developed cadastral system. The establishment and expansion of an integral cadastre is, therefore, an important element of rural development, and is gradually developing with international assistance.

13,500 demobilised FARC fighters are currently being reintegrated into the economy and society.

Progress has also been made in returning displaced families to their land. According to official reports, close to 400,000 hectares have been returned to the legal ownership of over 73,000 people dispossessed during the conflict. Another 3.5 million hectares have been registered for return to individual or collective landowners, such as displaced ethnic groups. Agricultural projects involving former FARC combatants are also receiving support. For example, the government is purchasing agricultural land for areas that have been provided for job training and reintegrating



demobilised FARC fighters (Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación, ETCR). The ETCRs were originally intended as a temporary solution, yet almost one-third of the former guerrillas have settled permanently. This means that 24 former ETCRs around the country have now become permanent village communities. The restitution, distribution, and legalisation of land ownership is a lengthy and complicated process, but it is vital for achieving stable peace and development in the regions. Although good progress has been made, the land issue remains an urgent challenge.

The most tangible success in the peace process is the 13,500 plus demobilised FARC fighters, including more than 3,000 women, who are currently being reintegrated into the economy and society. Government figures state that 94 per cent of FARC members who have laid down their arms are complying with conditions under the peace agreement. According to Emilio Archila, when their families are included, a total of 55,000 people are directly or indirectly benefiting from government reintegration programmes and support services. The UN estimates that 47 per cent of former combatants are now involved in collective or individual business enterprises, along with 44 per cent having received support services stipulated in the peace agreement. The economic projects create legal, sustainable alternatives for earning income, and the government supports them with funding as well as technical advice. 135 cooperatives and production communities have been set up that play an important role in collective economic and social integration. The successful return to legality is also reflected in the fact that, according to government figures, 99 per cent of former combatants now have a bank account and are in the public health insurance scheme. What is more, 85 per cent also make pension contributions. That most demobilised combatants remain committed to the peace agreement, have developed stable businesses and income-generating opportunities, and have thus managed to return to a civilian life with prospects, is one of the most successful chapters of the complex peace process to date.

Special Justice, Reconciliation, and Historical Reappraisal

An important chapter in the Peace Agreement negotiated in Havana is the establishment of a “holistic” approach to achieve justice, truth, reparations, and non-recurrence. This is divided into three institutions: the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz, JEP), the Truth Commission, and the Special Unit for Searching for Persons Deemed Missing (Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas dadas por Desaparecidas, UBPD). The latter searches for and identifies mortal remains with the help of DNA samples to provide families with closure over the fate of their missing loved ones. It is possible to reunite living family members who were torn apart by displacement and expulsion in some cases. The UBPD is currently processing some 9,000 search requests and attempting to determine the identity of approximately 25,000 people whose remains have been found.

Former combatants who acknowledge their guilt and actively cooperate in resolving their crime may benefit from more lenient penalties.

Public discourse mainly focuses on transitional justice. The right-wing camp, and particularly supporters of ex-President Álvaro Uribe, level strong criticism against the JEP. They claim that judges sympathise with former guerrillas and give perpetrators of serious crimes lenient sentences such as house arrest or community service. They believe that the transitional justice system focuses more on the crimes committed by state security forces in the fight against guerrillas than on the crimes of those who in fact initiated the conflict. By contrast, the horrific crimes committed by paramilitary groups against alleged FARC supporters and civilians, and the well-documented tolerance or even

coordination between military and paramilitary groups, are treated as a mere side effect.

In theory, the JEP is to investigate and pass judgement on all crimes committed in connection with the armed conflict in Colombia from the 1960s until the peace treaty. However, it tends to focus on serious human rights violations. Former combatants who acknowledge their guilt and actively cooperate in resolving their crime may benefit from more lenient penalties. In January 2020, following three years of work, the JEP presented its investigative report on Case 001, the kidnappings committed by the FARC, and charged the guerrilla leaders with war crimes and crimes against humanity. This serious charge was quite a bombshell, as up to then, the FARC had always tried to legitimise the over 20,000 documented kidnappings between 1990 and 2016 as “arrests” and to downplay or deny committing torture (sometimes over many years) and the inhumane conditions in which people were held hostage. The JEP’s surprisingly clear and tough position on the issue of kidnappings initially increased acceptance of the special justice system, even among right-wingers in Colombian society. But, merely a few weeks later, another storm of criticism erupted when the JEP in Case 003 provisionally put the number of so-called *falsos positivos* – murdered civilians passed off by military personnel as guerrillas killed in combat – at 6,402. This was significantly more than the 3,259 victims recognised by the Ministry of National Defence and refutes the oft-touted claim among military circles that a few “rotten apples” in the troops were responsible for these serious crimes. Instead, the new figures from the JEP indicate a systematic practice of exaggerating military successes in the fight against the guerrillas. The finding that the majority of the *falsos positivos* were murdered between 2002 and 2008, i.e., during Uribe’s term, and coincided with his policy of “democratic security”, was a particularly bitter pill for supporters of ex-President Uribe to swallow. Because it is not only Uribe’s supporters who believe this is how Colombia avoided becoming a failed state, gradually pushed back the guerrillas and regained

government control over large parts of the country. Cases 001 and 003 highlight how the meticulous legal processing of crimes committed by all parties to a conflict is a lengthy, painful, and emotional process for all involved. Further judgments and social controversies will follow; but this process is indispensable for achieving lasting peace.

At the beginning of his final year in office, President Duque took two key steps towards advancing the peace progress.

The same applies to the work of the Truth Commission under Jesuit priest Francisco de Roux, whose report for November 2021 is awaited with bated breath. The Commission is conducting nationwide hearings with victims of the conflict, civil society organisations, and government representatives to establish a detailed picture of the conflict and contribute towards national reconciliation. In March 2021, the announcement by Rodrigo Londoño, former head of the FARC, and Salvatore Mancuso, former leader of the paramilitaries (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC), that they would jointly give full testimony at a public hearing of the Truth Commission, attracted much public interest. We can assume that these testimonies and the Commission’s report will have an explosive impact on Colombian society and politics because they could lead to reappraising the Colombian government’s role and that of its security forces in the conflict. And the relationship of government and business with paramilitary forces is likely to come under even closer scrutiny.

Challenges and Prospects

Colombia’s next parliamentary election is scheduled for March 2022 and the next presidential election for the end of May 2022. President Iván Duque cannot run again because the constitution does not allow presidents to stand for a second term. Political parties and



candidates are already jockeying for position in preparation for next year's democratic power struggle. The balance of political power and the new president will have a major influence on the progress of the peace process.

The record of the Duque administration is a mixed one. Its critics at home and abroad accuse it of paying lip service to the Havana Agreement and being sluggish with its implementation, for example by failing to adequately finance key

elements such as the JEP and PDETs. It is true that the Duque government, under its national plan for *Paz con Legalidad* (Peace with Legality), has invariably focused on dealing with crimes committed by guerrillas and on victims of the conflict, for example by not classifying kidnapping and drug trafficking as political offences. The government has also stressed that FARC representatives who fail to declare illegally acquired goods or hand them over to compensate the victims should not benefit from more



Coca plantations near the city of Tumaco: Drug trade remains the main trigger for conflict in Colombia. Source: © Luisa Gonzalez, Reuters.

substantial funding and paid for integration programmes for former guerrillas that exceeded obligations laid down in the peace agreement; for example, by continuing to pay monthly allowances and finance house building. Remarkable progress has been achieved in compensating victims and reintegrating more than 13,000 former guerrillas. On the other hand, the PDET special development zones have had mixed results to date. Despite visible progress having been made, five years after the peace agreement, major challenges remain. This is particularly regarding security and fighting drug production and trafficking, as highlighted by a comprehensive survey recently conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).⁸ 18 per cent of respondents said the conflict was still continuing despite the peace agreement. And 30 per cent said that one or more armed groups are still in charge in their community. Considering that some 6.6 million Colombians live in the PDETs, this means more than one million people still do not live in peace, despite the agreement, and nearly two million have to live under the control of armed groups. Future administrations will continue to face the ongoing task of guaranteeing public security and ensuring the long-term development of these regions.

lenient penalties under the JEP. Government representatives have also put pressure on JEP judges through public announcements that leave the JEP and international partners feeling constantly obliged to repudiate these statements as attacks on judicial independence.

However, the Duque administration has also made enormous efforts to promote the peace process. Even during the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic, the government provided

Recent polls show that a majority of the public is in favour of implementing the peace treaty.

In the first months of his final year in office, President Duque took two key steps towards advancing the peace process. First, in January 2021 he sent a letter to the UN Security Council asking to extend the mandate of the UN Verification

Mission. And second, at the invitation of the UN, in March he met with Rodrigo Londoño, former head of the FARC and president of Comunes, the new name for the FARC party, to discuss the future of the peace process. Well-informed sources later reported that Duque had stressed his government's firm commitment to the peace agreement. It was said that Londoño voiced his concerns about the precarious security situation of the ex-guerrillas, while also acknowledging the progress that had been made. The fact that the meeting took place is a positive sign for the future of the peace process.

The remaining armed groups have ceased to pursue ideological goals. They are primarily concerned with maximising profits from drug trafficking.

It is not yet clear who will take the reins in Colombia in mid-2022. In view of President Duque's low approval ratings and the declining popularity of his political mentor Álvaro Uribe, it seems unlikely that it will be a conservative candidate who could fundamentally challenge key elements of the peace process again, such as the JEP. This chimes with recent polls reflecting how the majority of the public is in favour of implementing the peace treaty. Despite all ongoing challenges, peace with the FARC seems to have reached the point where it has become "irreversible", as is regularly emphasised by Emilio Archila.

Nevertheless, the path to a stable, lasting peace remains rocky and will take many more decades. Although the FARC, one of the main protagonists, has withdrawn from the conflict, many other violent groups are still active alongside ELN and FARC dissidents. The current conflict is largely fragmented, regionalised, and no longer ideological. Political negotiations with the ELN, with a strength estimated at up to 5,000 fighters by security experts, hold

little chance of success. The Duque government broke off peace talks that began under President Santos after the ELN bombed a police academy in Bogotá in January 2019, leaving 21 dead and many injured. It seems unlikely that substantive talks will ever recommence. The various fronts of the ELN are entangled in extortion, drug trafficking, and other illegal activities and have long since ceased to pursue ideological goals; even though they try to preserve this narrative via their social media propaganda. The same applies to the FARC dissidents and other armed groups. They are primarily concerned with maximising profits from drug trafficking and exploiting the people and natural resources in the areas they control.

The government has still not found an effective strategy for combating the drug trade, which remains the main trigger for conflict. Despite vehement criticism, the Duque government has announced that it will resume aerial spraying of coca plantations with glyphosate. Studies show that this practice only has short-term effects, while it leads to replanting and cultivation being moved to new areas over the medium- and long-term. Critics also refer to the environmental and health costs for local people, along with the huge financial cost involved. They believe the money could be better invested in programmes to promote alternative agricultural products, transport infrastructure, and subsidies for farmers willing to give up coca cultivation. Close to 100,000 families are currently participating in the Integrated National Programme for the Substitution of Illicitly Used Crops (PNIS). Official figures for 2020 show a slight reduction in the land under coca cultivation, but also an increase in the production and export of cocaine. Curbing the drug trade remains a key challenge for future governments, whereas there seems to be no panacea if global demand and profits continue to soar.

The international context is also vital for achieving stable, lasting peace in Colombia. Nicolás Maduro's criminal regime in Venezuela maintains close ties with the Colombian drug mafia, provides the ELN with support and safe havens, and does its utmost to destabilise the situation

in Colombia. It also acts as a gateway for the region's organised crime and for authoritarian powers. The protests that erupted in Colombia in late April 2021 were an expression of the country's deep economic, social, health and refugee crisis. If a lasting political solution is not found, they threaten to destabilise a country that has long been a bastion of democratic stability in the region.⁹ Addressing the structural causes of conflict such as poverty, extreme inequality, corruption, and drug trafficking requires staying power and urgent support from its international partners.

As an OECD member and NATO's only "global partner" in Latin America, Colombia is an important ally for Germany and the EU because of its shared democratic values. Latin America's third largest country in terms of population and economy – after Brazil and Mexico – affords enormous future potential. Colombia's key geopolitical location on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, abundant natural resources, and an agricultural sector ripe for development makes it a sought-after international partner. China's economic influence is not yet as pronounced as in Colombia's Latin American neighbours but is clearly gaining momentum. Against this backdrop, Germany and the EU should continue to support the peace process and sustainable development in Colombia. They should view the financial cost of this as a wise investment in a partnership that is vitally important to the alliance of liberal democracies in a world where systemic competition is intensifying.

– translated from German –

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Ten Years After the “Arab Spring” – What Does the Region Think Today?

A Survey of Public Opinion in the Middle East and North Africa

Thomas Volk / Malte Gasseling

Ten years after the start of the uprisings that swept through the Arab world, the region's socio-economic disparities remain a key challenge. Trust in political parties and parliaments is low, but civil society organisations are highly respected. A proper civil society of engaged citizens seems to be emerging in many countries. While traditional external actors, such as the US and France, are losing influence in the region, China, Turkey, and Russia are assuming a more important role. Meanwhile, Germany enjoys high standing in the region.

Bread, dignity, and freedom – ten years ago, these were the core demands of the mainly young protesters who took to the streets all over the Arab world. The self-immolation of vegetable vendor Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 in the small Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid was the spark that turned the simmering dissatisfaction with social conditions into violent protests. Bouazizi, then 27, had complained of harassment by local authorities who confiscated his vegetable stand and refused to give him a permit. The constant injustice and mistreatment that he experienced at the hands of the police led him to commit his final, desperate act of self-immolation. This act has now come to symbolise the start of the “Arab Spring”, and represents the social inequality, rampant corruption, and sense of helplessness in the face of arbitrary state power.

The outrage unleashed by this act triggered a nationwide wave of protests against the autocratic regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who had been in power since 1987. As the mass protests intensified, Ben Ali fled Tunisia for Saudi Arabia on 14 January 2011. The swift overthrow of the kleptocratic regime in Tunisia galvanised disaffected people in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and other countries in the Arab world to protest against their own governments. Largely coordinated through social media, these protest movements took the region's rulers by surprise, and revealed the dire need for reform and change after decades of mismanagement and repression.

While the ruling powers were overturned in Tunisia (January 2011) and Egypt (February 2011), Syria and Libya sank into civil wars due to their rulers' repressive use of force and the deployment of the military. However, despite a series of reforms following the 2011 uprisings, discontent in the region persisted and the merely cosmetic promises of reform failed to assuage calls for fundamental structural change. In 2019, a second wave of protests swept across the region, including the *Hirak* movement in Algeria¹ and protests in Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan. In the latter, they led to the ousting of dictator Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power since 1993.

The region was already struggling with weak economic growth, but this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is estimated that the regional economy has contracted by 5.2 per cent.² Nearly a third of the region's youth are unemployed and, particularly in Tunisia and Jordan, these rates have remained consistently high for the last decade. The Middle East and North Africa region has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world.³ The region faces many common challenges, but the different systems of government and disparate social realities of each country should always be taken into account.

In the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and to mark the tenth anniversary of the start of the uprisings across the Arab world, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Regional Programme for

Political Dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean (KAS PolDiMed) conducted a representative survey in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, and Lebanon. A total of 10,841 people were interviewed by telephone between October and December 2020.⁴ The main results of the survey are presented below.

The Majority are Optimistic About their Economic Future

Economic conditions were and remain a key challenge in the region, and this is one of the reasons for the protests that have occurred since 2011. Whereas ten years ago, one third of the citizens surveyed in the region said their personal economic situation was good or very good,⁵ this perception has actually deteriorated since then. Today, 39 per cent of people in Morocco and 26 per cent in Algeria and Libya rate their economic situation as good or very good. The lowest figures are seen in Tunisia (three per cent) and Lebanon (one per cent). In Tunisia, the figure has fallen by a quarter compared to 2011.⁶ This points to a sense of disillusionment because the revolution failed to bring the hoped-for prosperity and job opportunities. The region seems, thus, to have experienced a lost decade in terms of economic growth. This has been exacerbated by a failure to diversify the economy, or to undertake far-reaching labour market reforms.⁷

Lebanon finds itself beset by multiple crises, including ongoing financial and economic challenges. High (youth) unemployment, currency collapse, hyperinflation, and rampant corruption among the political elite are creating a growing sense of resignation among the Lebanese people, and this is also reflected in the country's gloomy economic forecasts. The deepening financial crisis since 2019 has led to renewed protests with calls for a fundamental restructuring of the state, and the end of the sectarian political system. In the eyes of many Lebanese, this system has fostered systematic clientelism and corruption since the civil war ended in 1990. The devastating explosion at the port of Beirut in the summer of 2020 also consolidated the image of a self-serving, unscrupulous elite that has lost all

sense of the common good and of overall social development.

According to some sources, half of the Lebanese population now lives below the poverty line.⁸ The respondents in Lebanon are correspondingly pessimistic about their personal economic future. Only 14 per cent are hopeful about the years to come. And it is depressing to note that the younger generation is even less optimistic about the future than the over-30s.⁹ This is also reflected in the strong desire of young Lebanese to leave their country. 53 per cent of Lebanese people under 30 say they have considered emigrating in the past twelve months.¹⁰

In most countries in the region the respondents are generally optimistic about their economic future, despite the global pandemic.

However, with the exception of Lebanon, respondents in the region are generally optimistic about their personal economic future, despite the global pandemic. In Jordan, Morocco, and Libya, more than 60 per cent of respondents believe the country's economic fortunes will improve. In Algeria, the figure of 59 per cent is significantly higher than in Tunisia, at just 47 per cent.¹¹ In Jordan, job creation in particular is perceived as a major challenge – 30 per cent of respondents say this should be made a government priority.

Morocco's economic policy has been strongly oriented towards Sub-Saharan Africa for many years, and it has opened up new markets, particularly in francophone West Africa. Tunisia is also keen to strengthen its South-South cooperation, while at the same time seeking to boost its faltering economy by reviving its economic relations with Libya. Given the difficult economic situation of the countries surveyed in the region, the respondents' generally optimistic view of





A symbol: The circumstances that led to the explosion at the port of Beirut in August 2020 consolidated the image of an unscrupulous elite that has lost all sense of the common good and of overall social development in the eyes of many Lebanese. Source: © Mohamed Azakir, Reuters.

their economic future may come as a surprise. One of the reasons for this is their strong belief (also with religious connotations) in a better tomorrow. A glance at the 2019 Global Competitiveness Index also reveals that the competitiveness of Arab countries is higher than that

of other developing regions and only surpassed by two regions: Europe/North America and East Asia/Pacific.¹² The potential of the region is obvious: the countries of North Africa and the Levant have an excellent geostrategic location, and benefit from export agreements with

EU countries. They also have a young, fairly well-educated population that is prepared to be mobile and keen to improve their lives.¹³ China has recognised this potential and is taking a growing interest in the region.

Democratic Institutions are Faltering

Right from the start, the Arab protest movements were not only calling for economic reform, but above all for an overhaul of the political system. Demands have included greater accountability of those in power, more transparency, and social justice. Decades of authoritarian rule have led the region to consistently be classified as undemocratic in the Freedom House rankings.¹⁴ Since 2015, Tunisia is the only country to be deemed completely free.¹⁵ However, minority rights are also a controversial issue in Tunisia. The rather hesitant and superficial desire for reform across much of the region after 2011 eventually led to more protest movements, culminating in the overthrow of the governments of Algeria and Sudan in 2019. Renewed protests have also led to the promise of more reforms in Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan.

Trust in parliaments and political parties is low across the whole region.

However, the changes of leadership did not always bring the hoped-for transformation. In Algeria, the prolonged protests of 2019 may have led to the resignation of the country's long-time president, 82-year-old Abdelaziz Bouteflika, but the election of his 74-year-old successor, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, hardly signalled the advent of a generational change at the head of the country. Algeria's fortunes are still directed by "the deep state" – a complex network of elite politicians dating back to the time of the independence movement. However, Algeria's predominantly young population is no longer prepared to accept this situation; they are calling for radical change and for a renewal of the political class. To

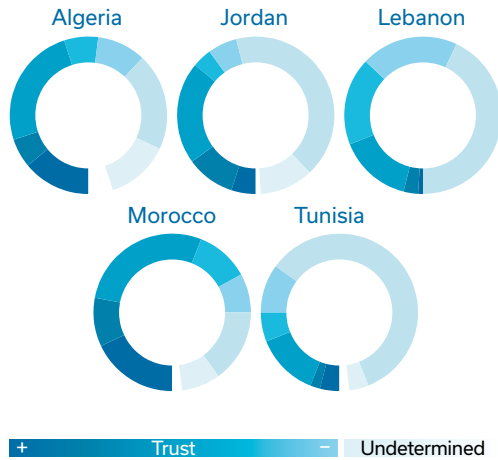
appease popular discontent, it was announced in March that the Parliament would be dissolved, and that early parliamentary elections would be held in June 2021.

One of the key findings of the PolDiMed regional survey is that trust in parliaments and political parties is low across the whole region. A worrying trend is that fewer and fewer citizens have confidence in their governments' performance. Between 2013 and 2018, this confidence fell by more than 20 percentage points.¹⁶ This trend indicates that many citizens believe their initial hopes of better governance and more transparency have not been fulfilled.

Trust in parliaments and political parties is low in all the countries surveyed. Since the majority of political parties in these countries are dominated by personalities rather than policies, and have a strong focus on their leaders, their reputation is directly tied to the personal integrity of their protagonists. Corruption scandals and the pursuit of personal career ambitions over the common good do lasting damage to parties and their role in a parliamentary system. Consequently, trust in parliaments is declining across the region – whether they play an important legislative role, as in Tunisia, or a lesser role, as in Morocco and Jordan.

With the exception of Morocco, where 56 per cent of respondents take a positive view of parliament, less than half of those surveyed overall say they trust their parliaments.¹⁷ It is particularly striking that in Tunisia and Lebanon – the two most democratic countries in the region – only 19 per cent of respondents express confidence in their legislature. In the Kingdom of Jordan, just 37 per cent trust the parliament, and only 23 per cent trust political parties.¹⁸ This figure also suggests that the new parliament, which emerged from the general election on 10 November 2020, has no clear mandate. The fact that 99 of the 130 deputies won a parliamentary seat for the first time suggests that the country is seeking to renew its political class. Only about 20 per cent of the deputies are affiliated with a political party.¹⁹

Fig. 1: Trust or Distrust in Parliament



Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n. 4.

In Tunisia, which was portrayed as a model for democracy in the region after 2011, only 18 per cent of respondents have confidence in the work of political parties.²⁰ Despite the fact that the country’s parliament was freely elected, the institution enjoys little confidence among its people. One reason for this could be the perception that it has failed to respond to the economic challenges, combined with relatively weak support for political parties. Observers also argue that the introduction of a parliamentary system in the wake of the 2011 revolution may have been too rapid, and that people were not adequately educated about the importance of civic responsibility and strong parties in such a system.²¹

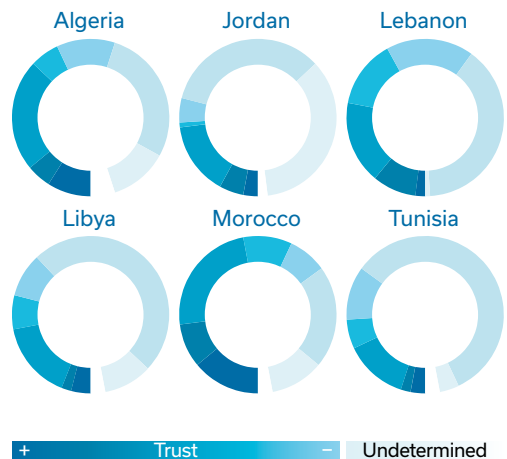
At the time of the revolution, Tunisian citizens had high hopes of a multi-party political system. The result, however, was political stagnation that failed to bring the radical change they sought. Today, the political party system is dominated by the Islamist Ennahda party, which holds a majority in parliament. At the same time, there is no consistent, politically effective opposition. Former law professor Kais Saied, a political outsider, was elected president in October 2019. He is popular with the public but does not have the backing of the country’s political class.

He repeatedly comes into conflict with Rached Ghannouchi, the influential parliamentary speaker from the ranks of the Ennahda party.

In general, throughout the region there is a marked reluctance to join political parties.

While trust in governments varies across the region, it is evident that governments are more popular when they are perceived as having done a better job in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Seventy-six per cent of respondents in Morocco, 71 per cent in Jordan and 70 per cent in Algeria say they have full or partial trust in their government.²² These approval ratings correspond with findings that 61 per cent of respondents in Jordan, 60 per cent in Morocco, and 50 per cent in Algeria say their governments have responded well or very well to the COVID-19 pandemic.²³ Although, or perhaps because, the two monarchies of Morocco and Jordan, along with Algeria, allow less freedom of expression and press freedom than Tunisia and Lebanon, the governments’ crisis management

Fig. 2: Trust or Distrust in Political Parties



Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n. 4.

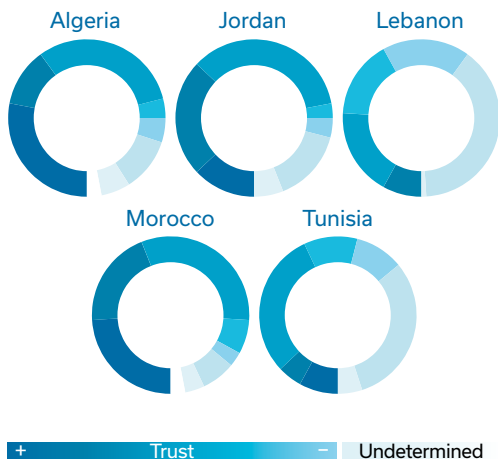
in these last two countries – and hence trust in them – is assessed more negatively. Only 15 per cent of respondents in Tunisia and 18 per cent in Lebanon say their governments have responded well to the health crisis.²⁴ Accordingly, trust in the government was lowest in Tunisia (42 per cent) and Lebanon (26 per cent).²⁵ Once again, it is striking that the two countries in the region that are generally described as democratic have the lowest levels of trust in their governments.

In general, throughout the region there is a marked reluctance to join political parties. Only 30 per cent of respondents in Lebanon, 25 per cent in Morocco, and 20 per cent in Libya and Algeria say they could imagine joining a political party. In Tunisia, the proportion is even lower, at just 16 per cent of respondents.²⁶ This reveals a deep scepticism towards the existing system of political parties across the region, and highlights the need for a fundamental debate on alternative forms of modern party work, and the need for party reforms.

High Levels of Trust in Civil Society Organisations and Local Government

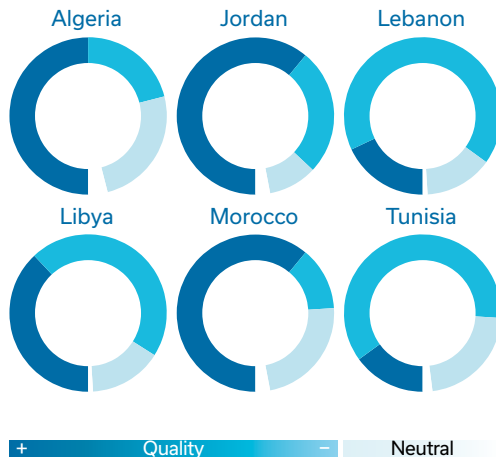
Although trust in political parties and parliaments is weak, the high level of trust in civil society

Fig. 3: Trust or Distrust in the National Government



Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n. 4.

Fig. 4: Opinion on the National Government's Crisis Management in the COVID-19 Pandemic



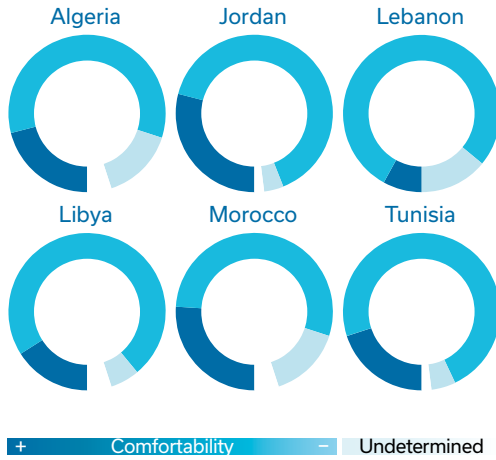
Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n. 4.

organisations speaks for the emergence of an active civil society. In every country covered by the survey except Lebanon, civil society groups are highly regarded and given positive ratings by more than half of respondents. Their approval rating is highest in Morocco at 76 per cent, while in Lebanon it is lowest at 38 per cent. Sixty-five per cent of respondents in Algeria, 62 per cent in Tunisia and 51 per cent in Jordan say they trust non-governmental organisations, which also include religious communities such as mosques.²⁷

The high approval ratings for civil society organisations and non-state actors might reflect, in part, the great scepticism about the performance of political institutions and the underlying distrust of politicians, as described above. This lack of trust in the effectiveness of state institutions could lead to a further erosion of trust in the basic components of democracy, and to a corresponding withdrawal from political participation. The high level of approval for non-state actors is all the more significant, as they could act as key partners for state institutions and help government policies to gain greater acceptance.

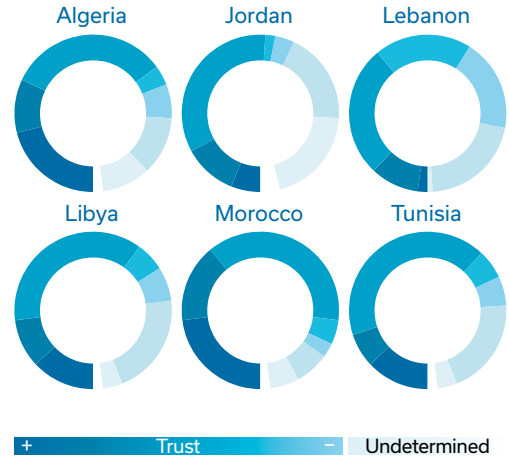
The survey results also underline the importance of local authorities in fragmented societies.

Fig. 5: Comfortability Regarding Joining a Political Party



Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n.4.

Fig. 6: Trust or Distrust in Civil Society Organisations



Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n.4.

In Lebanon and Libya, local and municipal authorities enjoy a far higher level of trust than national institutions.²⁸ Devolving power to local and municipal authorities could yield significant benefits for increasing government legitimacy. For Libya in particular, this could be a way of regaining trust after nearly seven years of dysfunctional government. Libya, which became the scene of a proxy war between foreign powers and has been administered by two parallel governments since 2014, began taking steps to restore national unity in the autumn of 2020. In February 2021, with the help of United Nations mediators, a Government of National Unity was designated to prepare for parliamentary and presidential elections on 24 December 2021, Libyan Independence Day. In this process, tribal representatives and local elected officials can make an important contribution to achieving reconciliation between the conflicting sides, and to restoring the country’s institutional unity.

A New Imbalance in International Relations

External actors have traditionally had a major influence on developments in the region. In Libya, it is unlikely that the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011 would have happened so quickly without the UN-backed, NATO-led intervention

in March 2011. Regional actors have also always had a major influence. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stepped in early on to support the region’s monarchies and prevent them from being overthrown. They were themselves fearful of being drawn into the maelstrom triggered by the uprisings.

Under President Obama, the US began to shift its focus to the Indo-Pacific region, and has gradually withdrawn from the Arab world – apart from the Gulf states, where it still maintains military bases. Russia, on the other hand, has been stepping up its activities in the region for years – most recently in February 2021, when it conducted a joint military exercise with the Algerian navy in the Mediterranean. In Libya, Russia also emerged as a key player on the side of self-proclaimed field marshal Khalifa Haftar. And, in 2019, alongside Egypt and the UAE, it supported the military ambitions of Libya’s internationally unrecognised eastern government with mercenaries from the Wagner Group. Russia also plays a dubious role in Syria as a supporter of the Assad regime.

Russia’s current activism in the region is nevertheless appreciated by many people in the countries surveyed, possibly also because Russia is



Welcome guest: Turkey's President Erdoğan enjoys great popularity in the region. Source: © Zoubeir Souissi, Reuters.

perceived as a global player that counteracts the US. Algerians have the most favourable view of Russia at 66 per cent, and Jordan the least at just 22 per cent.²⁹ The US, on the other hand, which has increasingly lost prestige since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, is viewed most favourably in Morocco with 49 per cent, and least favourably in Lebanon with 25 per cent. Among the other countries, only one in three gives the US a positive rating.³⁰

Support for China, on the other hand, is growing across the region. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents in Algeria, 61 per cent in Morocco and 59 per cent in Tunisia say they have a favourable view of China.³¹ China's Belt and Road Initiative involves all of these countries.

Russia and China have recently scored additional points in the region by distributing COVID-19 vaccines. Morocco began using the Chinese vaccine Sinopharm at the end of January.³² There are also plans to use Moroccan factories to produce the Chinese vaccine for the African continent. Tunisia and Algeria are using the Russian vaccine Sputnik V. In the medium term, this is also likely to improve the reputation of Russia and China in the region. The EU-supported COVAX initiative to distribute vaccines around the globe only delivered its first vaccines to Tunisia in mid-March 2021.³³ By then, the Russian and Chinese vaccines had already been in use for weeks, which has provided their respective governments with a great deal of media attention and political credit.

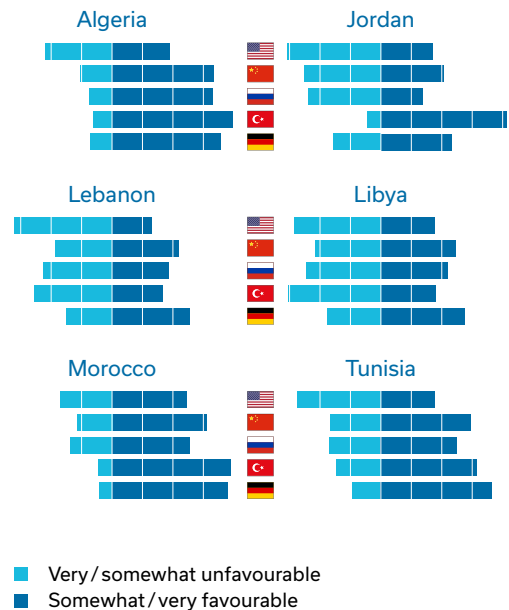
Germany Enjoys Good Standing in the Region

The two countries that enjoy the highest approval ratings among the countries in the region are Germany and Turkey. The strong focus of Turkish foreign policy on improving relations with Muslim-majority countries in the Arab world since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took office seems to be paying off. 79 per cent of respondents in Morocco and Algeria, 65 per cent in Jordan and 63 per cent in Tunisia say they have a positive or very positive view of Turkey. This perception is particularly strong among the under-30s. Only Germany is mostly viewed more favourably in the region, with approval ratings of 76 per cent in Morocco, 73 per cent in Tunisia, 71 per cent in Algeria and 55 per cent in Libya.³⁴ Germany has traditionally enjoyed a good reputation in the region. The country's economic strength and high quality products are admired throughout the region, along with the fact that it welcomed many refugees during the migration crisis of 2015. Germany is also an important partner for development cooperation in the region, quadrupling its annual spending from 750 million euros in 2011 to some 3.4 billion euros in 2019.³⁵

Angela Merkel is by far the most popular European leader in the region.

So while Russia, Turkey, and especially China are increasingly viewed favourably in the region, traditional powers such as the US and France are increasingly coming under pressure. Although Germany is the most well-regarded country in the region, it remains to be seen to what extent this is also linked to the popularity of Chancellor Angela Merkel. She is by far the most popular European leader, though regionally she is surpassed by Turkey's President Erdoğan.³⁶ Both have displayed strong leadership on issues affecting the region. Merkel was instrumental in welcoming refugees to Germany and the EU

Fig. 7: Favourability towards Various Countries



Source: KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, n. 4.

in 2015 and 2016, while Erdoğan has championed the Palestinian cause and played identity politics by presenting himself as the defender of Islam in the region. In future, Germany's high approval ratings in the region should continue to be used proactively in the resolute defence of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. This seems particularly important given the equally high approval ratings for authoritarian or illiberal states such as China, Russia, and Turkey.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Action

Ten years after the uprisings began, the moods and expectations of citizens vary from country to country. People in the kingdoms of Morocco and Jordan seem to be happier with the political and economic situation than those who live in Tunisia and Lebanon, countries with parliamentary systems that are on the road to democracy. Due to the fact that these monarchies exercise a certain degree of repression and restriction

on freedom of expression, it is possible that the recorded answers are not fully identical with the respondents' actual opinions. Criticism of the royal houses rarely goes unpunished. Freedom of opinion and the press are strong in Tunisia and Lebanon, but there is a high level of political frustration. Trust in parliaments and political parties is worryingly low, and in Lebanon trust in civil society organisations is also weak. Although the survey method chosen may have led to a slight distortion of results, the sobering conclusion remains that ten years after the start of the uprisings, high levels of frustration exist about the ineffectiveness of the political class – particularly in Tunisia, the country where it all began. Most countries have failed to implement the desperately needed economic reforms, leading to great scepticism about the performance of political institutions and further distrust of politicians. In some places, this has also led to an increased desire to emigrate.

Creating jobs for young people, diversifying the economy, boosting private sector initiatives, and a consistent approach to tackling corruption and nepotism remain key challenges for the countries of the region. It seems that only sustained improvements in the economy will restore people's trust in their state institutions. To this end, non-state actors could be more closely involved in legislative processes in order to benefit from their high levels of trust. The broad support for China, Russia, and Turkey reveals that authoritarian and illiberal systems are gaining influence in the region. Germany's strong reputation should be used to continue promoting a liberal democratic order and the advantages of parliamentary systems.

– translated from German –

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