

ing halted. Julian Oram, head of policy at the World Development Movement, condemned this rearticulation of aid spending stating,

What we are concerned about is the focus on a smaller number of countries, which actually takes money away from some of the world's poorest countries, like Niger, Angola and Cambodia, and channels it into countries where there is deemed to be a higher security risk to the UK. The securitisation of aid is a real concern under the outcomes of this review. (Woodcock and Tapsfield 2011, np)

Consistently drawing on naturalising language (which suggests that, just as with a river flowing between two places, particular forms of violence will inevitably follow poverty), the linkages drawn between development and poverty are normalised in an attempt to depoliticise this relationship:

It's very much in our national interest to tackle these effects of dysfunctionality and poverty, such as piracy, migration, terrorism and disease in Somalia. [...] *Tackling the causes of poverty upstream is much less expensive than sending in troops.* (Quoted in Watt 2011, np; emphasis added)

Žižek insists that the only way of instilling passion into post-politically managed populations is through the creation of 'fear' within which a central right emerges as the 'right to remain at a safe distance' (2008, 35). The Coalition government has articulated an approach to development that insists that the 'War on Terror' and the 'War on Poverty' are intricately related, and seems designed primarily to keep danger at a distance from the domestic population.

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## From Green Paper to Government: the Coalition's record on international development<sup>1</sup>

The Conservative Green Paper on international development was a serious statement of intent (Conservative Party 2009). It built upon years of engagement with international development by some within the party, as it watched New Labour make considerable political (and for Blair and Brown, personal) capital out of the launch and visibility of DFID. It was written at a point when there was a good chance that the Tories would be elected, and was intended to be taken seriously. Many British development NGOs, think tanks and private-sector organisations certainly did so, offering formal responses to it that ranged from appreciative to more mixed reactions. More robust criticism tended to come from right-wing think tanks and commentators. What then has been the outcome of a year in office, and moreover within the context of coalition with the Liberal Democrats, and what issues are appearing on the horizon?

The most high-profile debate within the Party and within the media has been whether aid levels should be going up, in line with the Green Paper's commitment to raising UK contributions to 0.7% of Gross National Income. The Green Paper was written when the economic recession was already biting, so this question was addressed directly – taxpayers feeling the pinch were assured that aid would be spent effectively, and that it would continue to contribute to British national interests. The moral case for continuing to support aid was also made explicitly: '[Domestic budget] cutbacks must not cost lives' (p. 5, parentheses added). Since coming to power, David Cameron has, to date, continued to insist that the UK should achieve the UN target, despite increasingly vociferous opposition from within his own party and declining public support. This is therefore quite a substantial political risk, and indicates a genuine commitment to foreign aid. Given internal party dissent, this may be one area where Liberal Democrat support for Cameron is essential.

Ironically, these internal debates might not be a bad thing. While the centre-left is uncritical about aid, regarding it as an unalloyed good, the Tories have a deeper appreciation of the dependency dynamics of aid, and of the problems that can

accompany it (Glennie 2008). As many states now seek to move away from a passive recipient aid system (often preferring the idea of establishing development partnerships), the Tory desire to end aid dependency could have some chance of success. A critical step in this process is to ensure that aid is seen as a lever for other economic forms of investment and not an end point in itself (Kharas *et al.* 2011).

Although the quantity of aid is always likely to catch the public's attention, it should not distract from the other, arguably more important, aspects of international development policy. There has, for example, as promised within the Green Paper, been a renewed emphasis on the potential role of corporate contributions to international aid. While the private sector clearly has an important role to play in facilitating international development, care must be taken to ensure that this renewed emphasis on corporate partnership does not exclude unprofitable or undesirable locations from aid opportunities. While Labour had a somewhat ambiguous relationship with the tenets of the neoliberal canon, the Conservative Party is a more naturally neoliberal creature. The dangers of the over-marketisation of international development thus remain very real.

A key theme within the Green Paper is captured in the word 'results'. Results-based development management is one of the core concepts of the 'new aid paradigm', and here the Conservative Party is in step with a new global drive to focus on outcomes rather than inputs, and improve the measuring and monitoring of projects and programmes. Results and value for money are crucial objectives, but still generate unease among professionals concerned that progress in international development may be subject to political expediency. A key insight of recent development research is that development strategies must attain a sense of local ownership if they are to have any chance of success. A results-led approach could marginalise the drive towards country ownership of development strategies. How this impacts in practice is a key area of interest for DFID, the Conservative Party, aid practitioners and observers alike.

While many would welcome a more results-based focus, there is ongoing concern about the Conservative Party's characterisation of aid as a Victorian form of charity. This characterisation tends to circumvent more nuanced debates about the nature of justice and responsibility. While many elements of the Green Paper and the Conservative's record of international development in practice do seem to demonstrate a real revolution in attitudes, this is one continuity: whether supportive of foreign aid or in opposition to it, Tories appear to have no other way of understanding international cooperation. Other countries (including China, the US, Australia and Japan) are much more open about the role that international aid plays in furthering their economic interests, foreign policy objectives, and spheres of political influence. Despite the charitable framing of international developing funding, this government has clearly, if disingenuously, allowed security concerns to influence its aid programme – Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, for example, saw big increases in their aid allocation in the last year.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the Tories' international development programme is its failure to develop a clear approach to human rights. British High Commissions have routinely been told to promote Britain's economic interests, but rarely wed such statements with prerequisites on human rights. While most strik-

ing in relation to the arms trade, such ambiguity can be just as problematic in relation to the activities of the petrochemical and mining industries.

To conclude, it is clear that the Conservative Party's philosophies of international development have matured. There remains, however, the lingering concern that the neoliberal penchant to place market-based measures of profitability and value for money at the forefront of aid assessments may still derail their best intentions when it comes to international development.

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## Note

- 1 This review is based on a piece written by the author on his blog, 'Poverty Matters' for the *Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/jonathan-glennie+global-development/poverty-matters>

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## Postcolonial leadership: a discursive analysis of the Conservative Green Paper 'A Conservative agenda for international development'

### Introduction

This article conducts a discursive analysis of the Conservative Green Paper, 'One World Conservatism: A Conservative agenda for international development'.<sup>1</sup> It compares the framing of development presented in the Green Paper with that of the 1997 Labour White Paper, which marked the establishment of the Department for International Development (DFID), before briefly concluding with the tonal shift this implies for British development practice.

### From Labour White Paper to Conservative Green Paper: re-framing postcolonial Britain

There are many continuities between the Conservative development agenda and Labour's, in part because development is a terrain significantly governed by international agreements (Woods 2005). However, following a wider trend within the tightly-fought election campaign, the emphasis in the Green Paper is on presenting Conservatives as more effective than Labour in relation to the handling of development aid, with repeated use of the word 'hardheaded' (p 5) to describe Con-