



The politics of poverty

Aid in the new Cold War

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Christian Aid/Simon Townsley

Above: Three boys sleeping in the Kitgum Government Hospital in northern Uganda, crammed into a corner for safety. They are among the thousands of 'night commuters' who flood into town at night to avoid attacks and child abductions by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Front cover: Children leave the Lacor Hospital in Gulu at dawn after another disturbed night sheltering from the LRA. The previous night, the hospital compound had been attacked and one person killed

Front cover photo: Christian Aid/Simon Townsley

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The politics of poverty

Aid in the new Cold War

‘If you’re not with us, then you’re against us.’

US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in response to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955

‘Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.’

President George W Bush, address to US Congress, 20 September 2001

Britain, the US and much of the industrialised world enter the summer of 2004 confronting the cold reality of a clear and present terrorist threat. For those countries with forces embroiled in Iraq, the menace is most keenly felt. In London, it is no longer ‘if’ a major terrorist attack will come – but ‘when’.

A chill wind, however, is also starting to blow across the developing world. It is being whistled up by the very people – rich aid-donor countries – who claim to do the most to alleviate strife and suffering in the poorest parts of the globe. For moves currently being made among members of the biggest and most influential ‘rich-country clubs’ betray a worrying shift in how they see aid commitments. Aid is viewed increasingly as a means of promoting and safeguarding the donors’ own interests, particularly their security, rather than addressing the real needs of poor people. Aid, in other words, is being co-opted to serve in the global ‘War on Terror’.

Aid has always, to some extent, been given with at least one eye on the self-interest of the giver – be it to secure influence, trade or strategic resources. But the past 15 years have seen a marked change, advocated for and applauded by Christian Aid, towards vital aid funds being far better targeted at alleviating poverty. Now, however, we seem poised to return to some of the worst excesses of the recent past, when whole nations and regions were blighted by the subsuming of their interests to a global crusade. Aid was then allotted on the basis of where a country stood in the great Cold War confrontation. Whether, indeed, a government was ‘with us or against us’.

Some nations did very well out of this. Europe was the recipient of the first great aid distribution – the Marshall Plan – which allowed the continent to work its way out of the devastation wreaked by the second world war. Even some countries given blatantly politicised aid used the opportunity to prosper, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Others, however, saw the irreducible logic of the Cold War blight their nascent futures. Proxy wars were funded and fought; corrupt and repressive regimes were installed and backed purely on the basis of whether the people involved were ‘ours’ or ‘theirs’. Particularly in Africa, the legacy of that period is with us still.

The language of ‘you’re either with us or against us’ used by President Bush in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, has an eerie, retro ring. Yet, as this report demonstrates, it is not just the language of the Cold War that is starting to return.

Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and with it the great divide that had dominated world politics for more than half a century, there was an opportunity to take stock and think again about the relationship between North and South, rich and poor. There was even a blueprint from the Cold War years to show the way ahead – the reports produced by the Brandt Commission in the 1970s and 1980s – and during the 1990s the language gradually swung away from rich nations pursuing purely selfish ends towards addressing the developing world’s pressing needs.

These changes were shadowed, and sometimes led, by an increasing public pressure to 'do the right thing'. Mass movements, such as Live Aid in the mid-1980s and Jubilee 2000 in the late-1990s, moreover, demonstrated that there was political advantage to be gained in democratic countries from taking the issues of world poverty seriously. Or, from a more politically jaundiced point of view, the cynical use of aid budgets became less and less of an option. Media exposure of some of the worst abuses of politicised aid – for instance, that given in exchange for defence contracts – meant that they were progressively addressed.

In Britain, the new Labour government in 1997 went as far as changing legislation to ensure that government aid money was expressly and exclusively targeted at poverty. As the end of the century approached, the then 189 member countries of the United Nations signed up to the Millennium Development Goals – which aim to half world poverty levels by 2015.

This was by no means a golden age. Self-interest continued to play a significant part in aid provision. But the tide was definitely moving in the right direction. In the aftermath of 9/11, many of these gains seem at risk. This report argues that the tide is on the turn, and looks set to start running in the opposite direction.

The past couple of years have seen the US, the EU and a number of individual governments starting to use the rhetoric of 'opposing terrorism' as a basis on which to allocate aid. There have also been worrying developments at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where the rules governing how member states give aid are being changed to include terrorism prevention and a range of military activities. Equally, 'humanitarian' language has been increasingly recruited to justify military operations linked to the War on Terror – particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The British government is also starting to make unwelcome connections. Aid to projects for poor communities in 'middle income' countries, particularly in Latin America, was last year overtly diverted to Iraq, despite previous assurances from none other than Prime Minister Tony Blair that this would not happen. In April, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was in Paris to garner support for his International Finance Facility – the only way, he said, that the Millennium Development Goals could still be met. He issued a 'call to action' to other international finance ministers, which Christian Aid can only support. In a deviation from his published speech, however, he also showed himself capable of singing from the War on Terror hymn sheet.

He said: 'We understand that it is not just morally and ethically right that developing countries move from poverty to prosperity, but that it is a political imperative – central to our long-term national security and peace – to tackle the poverty that leads to civil wars, failed states and safe havens for terrorists.'

Of course there is a genuine threat from terrorism and a duty on governments to do all they can to protect their citizens. But this should not and cannot be done by annexing the language and budgets of aid. This will not only fail to address the real issues of poverty. The risk is that if narrow security concerns are used to shape aid allocation, it could well lead to an intensification of terrorism. We have been here before.

We examine the case of **Uganda**, which illustrates how the Ugandan government's manipulation of the War of Terror has led to an intensification of the conflict in the north of the country and so to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Hopes of a peace deal have dimmed, while succour has been given to an increasingly repressive regime. Sound familiar?

We also look at **Afghanistan** – the last battlefield of the Cold War and first in the War on Terror – to show how the hopes for stability and reconstruction that followed the fall of the Taliban have stalled. Security is the key to rebuilding post-war Afghanistan. But the emphasis placed on the US-led coalition's goals – the hunting down of al-Qaeda and Taliban forces – has abandoned most of the country to lawlessness.

Here, the confusion between the roles of combat troops and peace-keepers, often under the same command, has also led to a shrinking 'humanitarian space' in which aid organisations can operate. For those, like Christian Aid and its partners, who are trying to build a better life for Afghanistan's people, the situation has now become more dangerous than under the Taliban. A rising toll of murdered aid workers in the country is a tragic testament to this situation. The result is that whole areas of the country have been placed off-limits and aid programmes abandoned.

The growing politicisation of aid, then, threatens to obscure the goal of poverty reduction. The allocation of military aid to those perceived to be fighting the War on Terror also has the potential to encourage human rights abuses and to sow the seeds of future conflicts.

In this report, Christian Aid is calling for a strong and robust reaffirmation of the principle that poverty reduction should be aid's primary driving force. The fortunes of the world's poorest people must not be held hostage to the fortunes of the War on Terror.

Among the recommendations of this report are that:

- the British government must use its leadership, weight and influence to halt and then reverse the trend towards linking aid to the War on Terror – starting by reinstating the funds it has already diverted from poor people in middle-income countries
- British ministers should actively lobby members of the OECD to ensure that the definition of aid is not extended to include military or security-related assistance
- the EU must stop the drift towards politicising its aid budget; the neutrality and impartiality of EU humanitarian aid must be maintained
- donor governments, belligerents and military forces in conflicts around the world must respect and uphold the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action.

In 2005, the British government has a unique opportunity to make its views heard. In the summer it will chair the G8 conference and then hold the EU presidency until the end of the year. Before that, the Commission on Africa, launched by Tony Blair this year, will have delivered its own blueprint for the future of the world's poorest continent. Christian Aid calls on the Prime Minister to use this opportunity to re-focus the world's richest countries on the plight of the poorest.

In this report we set out the mistakes of the past and show how they are already starting to be repeated. Our message, however, is that it is not too late to rekindle the noble, humanitarian aim of aid – to eradicate world poverty. It is also a warning: if the rich world fails in this endeavour, then our future security will also be undermined.

Already some of the world's poorest people are paying for the War on Terror. Programmes designed to help them have been cut, budgets reallocated and hopes dashed as donor priorities have switched to addressing the needs of 'global security'. This must not be allowed to continue. The needs of these people must not, yet again, be bulldozed by the contingencies of a global strategy in which they have no voice.

1 Aid in a cold climate

‘[We must not] abandon countless human beings to a despotism and Godless terrorism which in turn enables the rulers to forge the captives into a weapon for our destruction.’

John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State, in 1952 announcing America’s new policy to fight communist influence in the developing world

‘Every department of the British government must exercise its efforts and its talents to protect and to further the British interest.’

Dame Judith Hart, Minister for Overseas Development, in the 1975 White Paper, ‘The Changing Emphasis in British Aid Policies’

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In December 1961, the world’s 20 leading industrial nations met to sign up to an exclusive global club. Their aim was no less ambitious than to shape the economic future on a global scale. They would harmonise their markets, coordinate their development, expand free trade – and dispense aid to developing nations.

Thus was born the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

That aid to less-privileged countries should form a key plank of the OECD’s agenda was not surprising. After all, it was succeeding the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), set up to oversee US aid to Europe under the Marshall Plan which followed World War Two.

The Marshall Plan had not only helped save Europe, it had created a huge new market for US goods and helped boost US industry. So OECD member states needed no prompting to see the potential benefits for their own economies of raising the rest of the world out of poverty.

This was the inception of development aid as we know it today, and the OECD was there to write the rulebook.

The OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) became responsible for the organisation’s relations with developing countries. It began by writing guidelines on what form development aid should take and how it should be allocated.

The logic ran: if you just present emerging nations with tanks and guns, it might help you further your strategic aims, but it will not eradicate poverty or create wealth. And it will scupper any hope of new markets for your own country’s businesses to exploit. That has been the accepted wisdom. Until now.

Even through the darkest days of the Cold War, when strategic interest towered over the aid-donating landscape, OECD guidelines remained broadly consistent. Who you gave development and military aid to, and why, was a matter for each member state. But what you defined as development aid and military aid were two different things.

Military aid was hardware, training and money to security forces. But development aid was broadly defined as aid to a developing country, a quarter of which was a grant, that promoted welfare or economic development as its primary goal.

Although its guidelines are under continued review, that basic definition of what is called Official Development Aid (ODA) has not changed since 1972, and it has consistently excluded military aid.

However, since the US declared 'War on Terror', a number of aid agencies and non-governmental organisations have become increasingly concerned about the direction some of the DAC's regular research into the efficacy of aid programmes has been taking. Especially after it published a paper entitled 'A Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention' in 2003. It noted:

Development co-operation does have an important role to play in helping to deprive terrorists of popular support... and donors can reduce support for terrorism by working towards preventing the conditions that give rise to violent conflict in general and that convince disaffected groups to embrace terrorism in particular... this may have implications for priorities including budget allocations and levels and definitions of ODA eligibility criteria.

What exactly did that mean? In February 2004, there came an indication. The DAC held a workshop in Paris under the arcane heading 'ODA Eligibility Issues for Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Security'. On the agenda was the biggest hint yet that the OECD was pondering a seismic shift in its policy on just what should qualify as development aid.

Included in the debate was whether 'adjustments' were necessary to existing definitions. Options were discussed that would bring the funding of various new 'security measures' under the definition of ODA – including funding recipient countries' intelligence-

gathering and military-training programmes for 'non-combat... peace support operations'.

That the DAC was prepared to even discuss such options has serious implications for the future direction of development aid; implications that are only now starting to register with the aid community; implications that are posing serious questions about the stance of industrialised donor nations over the aims of aid, post 9/11.

Quite simply, the danger is that the line between humanitarian or development aid and military activity will become blurred. In the context of growing fears about terrorism, this could be open to serious abuse – with ODA funds being used to support military budgets at the expense of help to poor people.

In April 2004, a high-level meeting between OECD member-government representatives and the DAC discussed the Paris workshop proposals. Some uncontroversial 'adjustments' were adopted. But the rest, including those dealing with direct military or intelligence spending were deferred to a later meeting. The discussion continues.

And it is not just the OECD that appears to be in the throes of a fundamental policy change. The EU has been looking at its aid criteria, and individual nations, from Denmark to Australia and Japan, have already re-written their rulebooks.

The general direction is down a road we have travelled before. And leading the charge this time, as it did the last, is the US. The destination appears to be the politicisation of aid; where donors donate not to alleviate poverty or build nations, but to wield power and further their own strategic aims.

In short, we seem to be drifting back to the darkest days of the Cold War, to a time when aid was just as liable to prop up dictators and their regimes, as it was to build hospitals or drill wells.

The legacy of the Cold War

The modern concept of aid grew out of the wreckage of World War Two. The West and the Soviet Union might have been allies during that great conflict, but even before the dust settled in 1945 it became increasingly apparent that their differing ideologies were propelling them onto a collision course.

In this new post-war reality, US President Harry S Truman knew that to contain communism he needed partners. So the US threw its weight behind the creation of international institutions and treaties – the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO and eventually the OECD. And he presented the world with a new creed – the Truman Doctrine.

‘I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic stability and orderly political process,’ he told Congress in 1947.

The first challenge was stabilising Europe, where the devastation of war was driving many of its states to seek left-wing solutions. Post war, the UK returned a Labour government, and communist parties in France and Italy were flourishing. If Europe were to be ‘saved’, it needed the promise of something better. The vehicle for that ‘something better’ was the Marshall Plan.

The concept was simple. Europe would be allowed access to billions of US dollars, and to US skills and expertise. It would present specific regeneration programmes and the US would fund them. In all, US\$13 billion poured into Europe. This was not a purely philanthropic exercise. Europe might have been saved, but the US was also assured of a huge market with enough money to buy US exports.

The Marshall Plan worked for several reasons. It ran for a limited time; it was aimed at helping Europe’s people help themselves; and, most importantly, it

was effectively a rebuilding exercise. This was not a project that had to start from scratch, the template of an already sophisticated society was still there – it just had to be repaired. Also, there was never any question of creating dependency on aid. Once Europe was on its feet, it was on its own.

It was a policy the US would extend to the rest of the world. America’s thinking was outlined in a position paper by George Kennan, the then director of policy planning at the US State department, in 1948. He wrote:

Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity [US military-economic supremacy]... without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.

Here was the pragmatic edge to President Truman’s altruistic vision. For as well as benefiting US companies’ order books, the Marshall Plan opened up a new avenue of foreign policy – one that would play a vital role in containing communism. Aid would become another weapon in America’s strategic arsenal. Countries of strategic importance to the US could expect a bonanza in return for toeing America’s foreign-policy line. First would come military aid, reconstruction programmes would follow.

Between 1953 and 1975, Asia received about half of all US development assistance, and for the most part recipient nations prospered. This was especially true of Taiwan, where massive amounts of US aid was given to nationalist Chinese armies who had retreated there after the communists took power on the mainland in 1949. Likewise South

Korea following the Korean war in 1953, where western aid financed more than 68 per cent of the new democracy's total imports and 60 per cent of all its investment.

As Guy Arnold, a former director of the Overseas Development Institute, observed in his book *Aid and the Third World – the North-South Divide*: 'Aid is part of a hard-headed political bargain. [South Korea and Taiwan] would have received little assistance except for their positions in relation to China at the height of the Cold War.'

The Soviet Union also sought influence through aid, post-World War Two. In 1949 it formed Comecon, also known as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, and began offering subsidised oil, technical assistance, grants and loans, all tied to the purchase of Soviet goods and services. Military aid and the recipients' willingness to follow Moscow's strategic line also played a big part in these arrangements. After Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union progressively drew in Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and several African states.

Meanwhile, former colonial powers, such as Britain and France, entered into numerous aid agreements with their ex-colonies. The donors' aim had a post-colonial element, compensating for previous neglect as well as seeking to maintain influence.

This was no unconditional reparation. In 1978, UK Minister of Overseas Development Judith Hart described her department's contribution to Britain's industrial strategy: 'There are two basic ways in which the aid programme helps British industry. By helping foster income creation, it increases the overseas markets for British goods. In the process it also provides opportunities for aid-financed exports both under bilateral and multilateral aid arrangements.'

Some donors, particularly the Dutch and the Scandinavians, took a more enlightened approach

to aid during the Cold War, and dispensed it with few commercial or geopolitical strings.

But for most western donors, the eye was still on the main chance. And there to determine common aid policies was the OECD, through the DAC.

The institutions set up to support this aid policy knew the role they were to perform. The World Bank, for example, was to provide recipient countries with loans to help them pay their share of development costs.

David Dollar of the World Bank described the guidelines to which it adhered: 'The direction of foreign aid is dictated as much by political and strategic considerations as by the economic needs and policy performance of the recipients.'

The framework was in place, and the future secure. Rich nations would donate and their economies prosper, emerging states would be helped to a better life and communism would be contained. The new world was to be hard-headed, but not hard-hearted. But as the old military adage goes: 'No plan survives first contact with the enemy.'

Here, the 'enemy' was the Soviet bloc, looking to extend its own influence; emerging states with ideas of independence that were out of step with superpower priorities; and countries simply in the wrong place, and too fragile to withstand the *realpolitik* steamroller about to hit them.

The cost of aid

Given the largesse on offer from the two superpowers, not to mention from other industrialised OECD members, developing countries must have thought that a golden age had arrived. And, for some, it had. But others were giving as much money back to donors in the form of 'loans' and contracts to buy donor goods as they were receiving in aid, often undermining any good done.

Then there were the strategic linkages: in some cases obeying the donor's political diktats, and in others, being coerced into fighting the donor's proxy wars. Mayhem often ensued when an emerging nation found itself caught in the superpowers' aid web – sometimes, downright catastrophe.

In Guatemala in 1950, a former army officer, Jacobo Arbenz, was elected president on a reformist ticket. On coming to power, he introduced new national labour laws, including a minimum wage and the right to collective bargaining. He also launched far-reaching land reforms. Unfortunately for Arbenz, chief 'victim' of these reforms was the United Fruit Company of America, whose board included the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, and the head of the CIA, his brother Allen.

Arbenz's refusal to remove communists from low-level government positions as part of a policy of tolerating political diversity would prove equally controversial. The Eisenhower administration eventually used it to link the threat posed by Arbenz's land reform to United Fruit to 'Kremlin subversion' in Central America. All aid to Guatemala was frozen and within four years of being elected to power, the CIA had orchestrated a coup against the democratically elected Arbenz government and installed an army colonel, Carlos Castillo Armas, as president.

The Castillo Armas government reversed all Arbenz's reforms, and embarked on a massive programme of violent repression. International aid again began flooding into the country, preserving the state apparatus and setting the stage for a civil war that would last 36 years (1960-96).

Africa was another story.

Both sides in the Cold War became obsessed with gaining influence in Africa, and it was the scene of some of the worst excesses of the ideological battle between America and the Soviet Union.

In 1960, elections in the former Belgian colony of Congo returned a leftist government under Patrice Lumumba. For both Belgium and the US, this was a worrying development. Belgium responded by fomenting a rebellion in the mineral-rich Katanga province. In a bid to hold his fledgling nation together, Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for assistance. It was a fatal error. Enter the CIA, who stoked the rebellion. In the blood-soaked turmoil that followed, Lumumba was murdered and out of the confusion arose a figure that would dominate west African politics for decades to come. Joseph Mobutu.

On coming to power, he changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko and re-named the country Zaire. (After Mobutu, it was again re-named. Today it is the Democratic Republic of Congo, or the DRC). Mobutu and Zaire were names that would become bywords for corruption and repression in Africa for almost 40 years.

The US and apartheid South Africa considered Mobutu a bulwark against Soviet-sponsored communism in Africa. And, as such, he could do no wrong. American support, including military aid, poured in. South Africans did the training. Mobutu was even fêted by American presidents at the White House.

Washington also leaned on the International Monetary Fund to continue lending Mobutu money, despite the doubts of IMF officials who had evidence of his corruption.¹ By the time he was overthrown in 1997, Mobutu had diverted billions into Swiss bank accounts; some to keep his cronies sweet and some for his own use, including to build a palace on the French Riviera.

In all, he stole almost half of the US\$12 billion in aid the IMF gave his country during his 32-year reign, recently earning him the title of the third biggest swindler of development aid in history, behind Mohammed Suharto of Indonesia and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines.

US officials have since acknowledged that there had been a downside to their pro-Mobutu policy. Nicholas Burns, a US State Department spokesman, admitted in 1997 that: 'Zaire has not had a democracy for the last 31 years. Its people deserve to have a representative government... some economic and political stability.'

Others, however, still reflect the thinking behind US aid at the time. It was a Cold War necessity in the face of Soviet ambitions in Africa, Chester Crocker, a former Assistant Secretary of State said recently: 'I think we have no apologies to make. We were in a state of global rivalry with a global adversary.'

There is no doubt how that rivalry played out in Zaire. Western aid was overtly used to keep a 'friendly' – no matter how hideous – regime in power. The fate that was to befall Zaire's neighbour, Angola, was no less terrible.

In 1974, the Portuguese armed forces, fed up after years of fighting African wars of liberation, overthrew their country's fascist dictatorship. The new military government in Lisbon announced its intention to grant independence to all of Portugal's colonies, including Angola.

In Washington, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was alert to the implications and set out to thwart the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which was the odds-on favourite in a three-way struggle for post-colonial power in the country. President Mobutu, with his eyes on Angola's Cabinda oil fields, was keen to play a role in Kissinger's plans.

The US opted to back the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), led by the charismatic if dissolute Jonas Savimbi, the one Angolan leader eager to fall in with America's interests. However, UNITA kept losing to the MPLA on the battlefield, despite massive CIA and South African military muscle – the MPLA had powerful

friends, too. Unable to secure a foothold anywhere else in west Africa, the Soviet Union had decided to make its stand in Angola, in support of its ideological bedfellows.

Over the next two decades, with help from the US and Mobutu, Savimbi sought to undermine successive UN-brokered peace accords. He even saw his star rise in the 1980s when the Reagan administration included him, along with the Nicaraguan contras and Afghan mujahedeen, in its pantheon of 'freedom fighters' – an honour that guaranteed a place at the top of the CIA's support list. Indeed, while acknowledging Zaire as a supply route for the shipping of equipment to Savimbi's forces, Reagan went on to praise Mobutu as 'a voice of good sense and good will'.

The DRC is still a shattered country, with little in the way of institutions or even basic infrastructure, despite more than three decades of western investment. Angola is also shattered, with a landscape dotted with anything between nine million and 20 million landmines. That is the price each has paid for the 'beneficence' of politicised aid.

Of course, not every aid-recipient nation allowed itself to be so steamrollered by Cold War politics. In 1956, when US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was spreading the message, 'If you're not with us, you're against us', Egypt's leader, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, was bidding for finance to build the Aswan High Dam.

The US and the UK agreed to supply US\$70 million of a US\$250 million loan deal to help fund the project. The World Bank saw fit to lend Egypt the remainder of the cost.

But at the time, Nasser's government was holding out against western attempts to corral the Middle East into an anti-Soviet pact. When Nasser persisted in his 'intransigence' to join this US-

sponsored alliance, the World Bank loan was frozen and the Anglo-US grants withheld.

In retaliation, Nasser nationalised the Suez canal, provoking the 1956 Suez crisis and the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt. The invasion was seen off and when the dust settled, Nasser simply turned to Moscow for his dam money – a classic illustration of how both donor and recipient were prepared to manipulate Cold War aid to achieve their aims.

The US would eventually lure Egypt back into its fold through the 1979 Camp David peace accords with Israel, which were underpinned by large bilateral security and economic-assistance programmes to both countries. To this day, both Egypt and Israel are two of the three largest recipients of US aid – the third, ironically, is Russia.

But not every western nation was happy with the way the aid juggernaut was rolling through the developing world. In 1958, the then Austrian chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, floated the idea of a 'Marshall Plan for the South' aimed at targeting aid towards need rather than as a reward for political allegiance. In the same year, the World Council of Churches called for rich countries to divert one per cent of their GNP to aid developing countries. Two years later, the General Assembly of the UN championed the 'one-per-cent policy', declaring the 1960s to be a 'decade of development'. The one-per-cent target has never been reached.

In 1968, Robert McNamara, head of the World Bank, called for the West to more closely target aid at the poorest 40 per cent of the world's population, rather than just linking it to strategic expediency.

Then, in 1969, in a bid to rescue some of the spirit of the UN declaration, Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson called for rich countries to divert just 0.7 per cent of their GNP – excluding commercial loans and military expenditure – to overseas aid. OECD members accepted the proposal unanimously.

But Pearson's call for a 'second decade of development' for the 1970s never really got started, and by 1973 OECD aid levels were still at only 0.29 per cent of donor nations' GNP, due in part to the OPEC crisis. 'Targeting the poor' had entered the rhetoric, but little else had changed.

Next along was the Independent Commission into International Development Issues, chaired by the former West German chancellor, Willy Brandt. Known universally as the Brandt Commission, its two reports, *North-South* (1980) and *Common Crisis* (1983), put forward a raft of strategies to rectify the imbalances in agriculture, energy, trade and international financial systems between rich and poor countries.

Brandt wrote in the foreword of *Common Crisis*:

This report is based on the most simple of common interests... [it] raises not only classical questions of war and peace, but also the questions [of] how can one defeat hunger in the world, overcome mass misery, and meet the challenge of the inequality in living conditions between rich and poor.

The reports were widely lauded but produced no significant move away from tying aid to strategic and commercial interests.

Then, in 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, the Soviet Union fell, and what had been the communist bloc was no more. Western donors that had been locked into a Cold War mentality for decades, no longer had to ask, 'Are you with us?' before they opened the aid coffers. The bogeyman had gone.

Here was a chance for a brave new world. One in which rich countries would lift emerging nations out of poverty and help them to stand on their own, equal partners on a new, more equal and more prosperous stage. After all, had not President Truman promised at the end of the second world

war to 'assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way', and to offer that assistance, 'primarily through economic stability and orderly political process'?

Alas, as the final decade of the 20th century dawned, it was becoming increasingly apparent that those fine words remained just that – words. Yes, aid had contributed to steady, albeit slight economic growth in most developing countries, but the vast majority of their people still lived in poverty. It was time to take stock.

'Do the right thing!'

From the start of the post-Cold War era, donors, especially the US, began to realise that targeting poverty could also deliver security benefits. In 1994, the Congressional Budget Office's paper, 'Enhancing US Security Through Foreign Aid', noted:

A brief survey of the world's trouble spots show[ed] a fairly striking correlation between economic malaise on the one hand and domestic unrest and political instability on the other. If the United States can address those problems by using its foreign aid to help to create economic opportunities and invest in human capital, then the chance of conflict may be reduced.

For the first time, the big donors were starting to re-write their definition of self-interest. Although the main industrialised nations began cutting their aid budgets after the end of the Cold War – the US aid budget fell by 32 per cent between 1985 and 1995, compared to an overall federal spending rise of almost 15 per cent during the same period – a new agenda was governing its allocation. The idea was to form new partnerships with recipients, based on promoting what the US Congressional Budget Office called, 'local solutions to local problems'.

The Clinton administration made considerable efforts to put a new and improved face on its relations with African countries. There were high-level visits to the region – first by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, then by President Clinton himself in the spring of 1998 and finally by US Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke in December 1999.

And not before time, according to William D Hartung, President's Fellow at the World Policy Institute in New York:

The problems facing Africa and her people – with 11 armed conflicts underway, political instability, and the lowest regional rate of economic growth worldwide – have been fuelled in part by a legacy of US involvement in the region.

Throughout the Cold War era, from 1950 to 1989, the United States delivered over US\$1.5 billion worth of weaponry to Africa. Many of the top US arms clients – Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo – have turned out to be the top basket cases of the 1990s in terms of violence, instability and economic collapse.

In 1998, he called on the Clinton administration to support the passage of a US Code of Conduct that would restrict US weapons sales to dictators and human-rights abusers. Hartung wrote:

In addition, all US military training programs should receive congressional oversight and approval, with effective mechanisms in place for reviewing and assessing their impact on human rights and democratic consolidation in the recipient countries.

In the place of military assistance, the administration needs to support sustainable development policies by increasing unconditional debt forgiveness to African

nations and encourage them to shift resources away from military build-up and toward human development.

The president and Congress should provide increased development assistance to Africa and encourage civil-society building by restoring the budget for development assistance to Africa to \$800 million for the next fiscal year and work to increasing funding to a more responsible level of \$2 billion by 2003.

Indeed, during his 11-day trip through Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal, Clinton promised action, telling his African audiences:

The Cold War is gone. Colonialism is gone. Apartheid is gone. Yet remnants of past troubles remain. We want to work with Africa to nurture democracy. My dream for this trip is that together we might do the things so that 100 years from now your grandchildren and mine will look back and say this was the beginning of a new African renaissance.

To observers in the developing world it appeared a wind of change was blowing. The rhetoric from the US and many of its leading allies was no longer, 'Are you with us?', but rather, 'How can we help?'. This new approach was now influencing the whole philosophy of where aid should go, and what it should fund.

It was a trend reflected in UK thinking. Prior to coming to power in 1997, the Labour party had been highly critical of the then Conservative government and its policy of using the aid budget to win overseas contracts for British business, as well as for strategic ends.

Indeed in 1994, the High Court hauled Tory ministers over the coals for permitting a deal to fund the Pergau dam project in Malaysia in return

for military contracts. The Court had ruled the deal was illegal because it was 'economically unsound' under the UK's Overseas Development Administration's own rules.

On coming to power, Labour issued a White Paper detailing changes to the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act, and abolished its Aid and Trade Provision which actually earmarked funds to assist UK companies in bidding for aid-related contracts.

The new 2002 International Development Act specified that the British government could only authorise development assistance when, 'the provision of the assistance is likely to contribute to a reduction in poverty'. This was the new orthodoxy, and it was being taken up by increasing numbers of aid-donating nations. Summit after summit banged the message home.

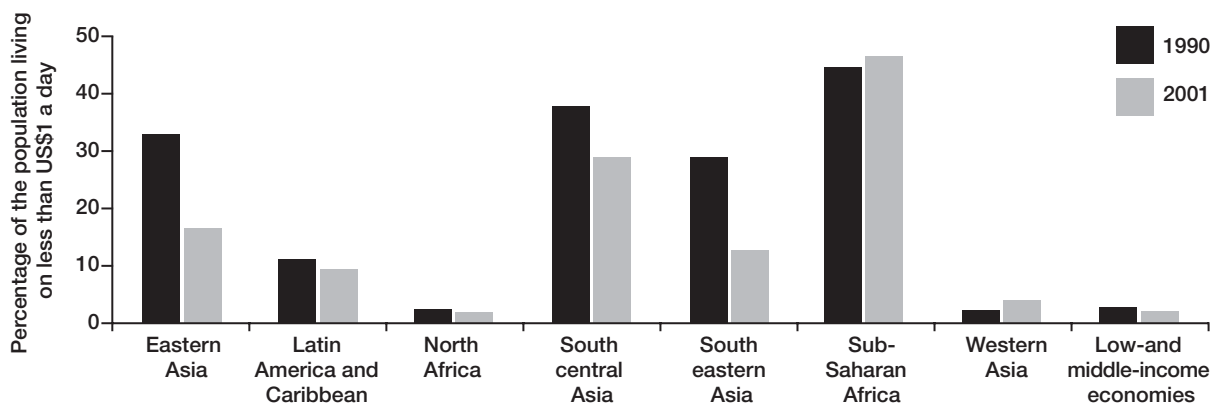
At a UN meeting in Davos, Switzerland, in 1999, the UN secretary general Kofi Annan said that the international community should enter the 21st century with a commitment to deliver 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' to all mankind.

Within a year, 189 member states had signed up to the Millennium Development Goals – a set of eight goals and 18 targets aimed at promoting 'development and the elimination of poverty' – all to be achieved by 2015.

In April 2001, the OECD's DAC met to discuss a change in its guidelines for aid disbursement. At issue was whether recipient nations should be restricted to using aid packages for the procurement of goods and services from the donor country only – a practice known as 'tied aid'. Or whether recipients should be allowed to buy goods and services from any country – known as 'untied aid'. DAC decided to untie official development assistance to the least developed countries, freeing them to shop around for the deals that best suited

How targeted aid was working

Levels of extreme poverty in aid-recipient regions



Source: UN millennium indicators

their economies and development, not just the industries of donor nations.

Unfortunately, there was a reef in the way. And on the morning of September 11, 2001, she struck.

However, it must be pointed out that there was no universal rush by member states to embrace this enlightened departure from previous policy. Indeed some donors continue to impose conditions on aid.

But overall, in this new post-Cold War world, it seemed that the old attitudes were about to be swept away, and replaced by a more genuine commitment to poverty reduction.

During the Cold War, repressive and corrupt regimes, inappropriate developments and counterproductive injections of billions of dollars had created instability throughout large tracts of Africa, Asia and South America. Millions had had their aspirations for a better life thwarted, or in many cases all but destroyed, by the two superpowers' struggle for supremacy.

Now the top priority was targeting poverty, and it looked to many that instead of tinkering at the edges, serious long-term good was at last about to be done. Like some giant supertanker, aid appeared to be turning slowly on to a course full of promise.

2 Back into the cold

‘We will direct every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.’

President George W Bush, address to joint session of Congress, 20 September 2001

‘European assistance programmes, military and civilian capabilities from Member States and other instruments such as the European Development Fund. All of these can have an impact on our security and on that of third countries.’

Javier Solana, the EU’s head of common foreign and security policy, to heads of State at the European Council, 20 June 2003

The US reacted to the unprecedented and horrific events of September 11, 2001 with a declaration of war. President George W Bush called it a ‘War on Terror’.

The declaration was delivered just nine days after the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, in a presidential address to a packed US Congress. President Bush spelled out exactly what the declaration meant for the rest of the world. He said:

Americans are asking: ‘How will we fight and win this war?’ We will direct every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.

We are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we

bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

Since that speech, global security, and particularly US security, has dominated the global political agenda.

British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND), the umbrella body for more than 280 charities and aid organisations, including Christian Aid, was in no doubt what all this meant.

In the introduction to its July 2003 paper on global security and development, BOND noted:

At the end of the Cold War – during which foreign assistance to developing countries was regularly dependent on strategic political considerations – aid, and particularly ODA, became more poverty-focused.

Addressing poverty became a key criterion for aid allocation in the 1990s, a move largely welcomed by development advocates. However, the War on Terror has already begun to reverse this gain.

In some instances, aid is again being treated as a tool to achieve political rather than development ends. In the run up to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, aid was used as an incentive to support [the coalition's] military action.

The paper went on to observe that:

This international focus on security and terrorism is having an impact on development, not only by drawing political and media attention away from development concerns, but by influencing aid allocations and the nature of donor co-operation with developing countries.

The War on Terror is also being used to justify practices that undermine the achievement of development goals and run contrary to international commitments on human rights. Such trends are a cause for concern for those who want to see development remain poverty-focused.

In other words, the wind of change that seemed to promise a new focus for aid now appeared to be blowing in the opposite direction. The hopeful post-Cold War rhetoric was being qualified with ifs and buts, and different priorities were surfacing. It was starting to look like 'targeting the poor' was no longer the primary driver for aid, and the old Cold War rationale of linkage to donor security and strategic interests was creeping back. And nowhere is this more obvious than in the US

volte-face on arms sales and military aid. According to the US Center for Defense Information (CDI), a New York-based think tank:

The United States is more willing than ever to sell or give away weapons to countries that have pledged assistance in the global war on terror... [it is] clear that the United States has altered its relationships with a significant number of countries, many of which are now receiving military aid that would have been denied before September 11.

The revised list of countries that receive US military aid now includes several previously ineligible states, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, India, Tajikistan and Pakistan. Overnight, Pakistan went from being a nuclear pariah state, ruled by an unelected military dictator and languishing on the world aid blacklist, to America's closest ally in the War on Terror.

The CDI has reported that since September 11, the US has sold billions of dollars worth of arms to strategically important countries, including US\$1.2 billion worth of fighter jets and missiles to Oman and nearly US\$400 million worth of missiles to Egypt. Countries identified as fighting terrorist groups are also set to receive large shipments of military aid. The Philippines has been allotted US\$92 million in weapons for its fight against the Abu Sayyaf, a group claiming to want a fundamentalist Islamic state on Mindanao, but more widely seen as an organised criminal gang.

The US is providing other countries with military training. Indonesia, for example, which had been banned from receiving military training post-East Timor, is set to receive training through the Department of Defense's new Regional Defense Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program, which is not subject to the training limitations contained in the annual US foreign-operations legislation. Not since the days when containing communism was used to excuse the arming and training of

repressive governments has there been such a broad, catch-all rationale to provide military aid and arms to disreputable foreign militaries.

The CDI has concluded:

Having a new quasi-ideological theme to justify most security assistance is extremely convenient for the Bush administration. Policy

objectives that could not have been pursued in the pre-September 11 security environment can now be repackaged and sold as part of the counter-terrorism effort. In addition, wrapping new security assistance programs in a counter-terrorism cloak allows the administration to provide support for repressive regimes and aid to states verging on, or currently involved in, armed conflict.

Pakistan: from pariah state to preferred ally

Pakistan's decision to become one of America's key allies in the War on Terror marked a major change in the political fortunes of the country.

Economic aid from the US and UK to Pakistan was at a low level in the years leading up to 9/11. Its arms race with India, human rights abuses and finally the military coup in 1999 had all provoked furious diplomatic reaction and sanctions.

Pakistan's relations with the West were not helped by the fact that it was one of the few countries to recognise Afghanistan's Taliban government. In fact, it had arguably created the new fundamentalist regime, lending it material as well as diplomatic support. But confirmation that Afghanistan was the bolt-hole of Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind behind 9/11, would change that relationship forever.

President Pervez Musharraf knew Pakistan was of major strategic significance to the US if it was to go after bin Laden in his Afghan fastness. Musharraf either had to get 'onside' with the Americans, or have them roll over him. He opted to throw his full support behind the US.

The rewards for Pakistan have been remarkable.

In 1998, after Pakistan tested a nuclear weapon, the US imposed a raft of sanctions and clawed back more than US\$40 million in official aid, according to DAC figures. But just 11 days after September 11, President Bush lifted the sanctions imposed after Pakistan's nuclear test. The following month all remaining sanctions were lifted. At a press briefing on 24 September, State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher explained the reason for this dramatic change in US policy: 'We intend to support those who support us. We intend to work with those governments that work with us in this fight [against terrorism].'

This was no empty rhetoric. In 2000, US ODA to Pakistan stood at just under US\$88.5 million, but by 2001 the figure had jumped almost ten-fold to more than US\$775 million for that year.

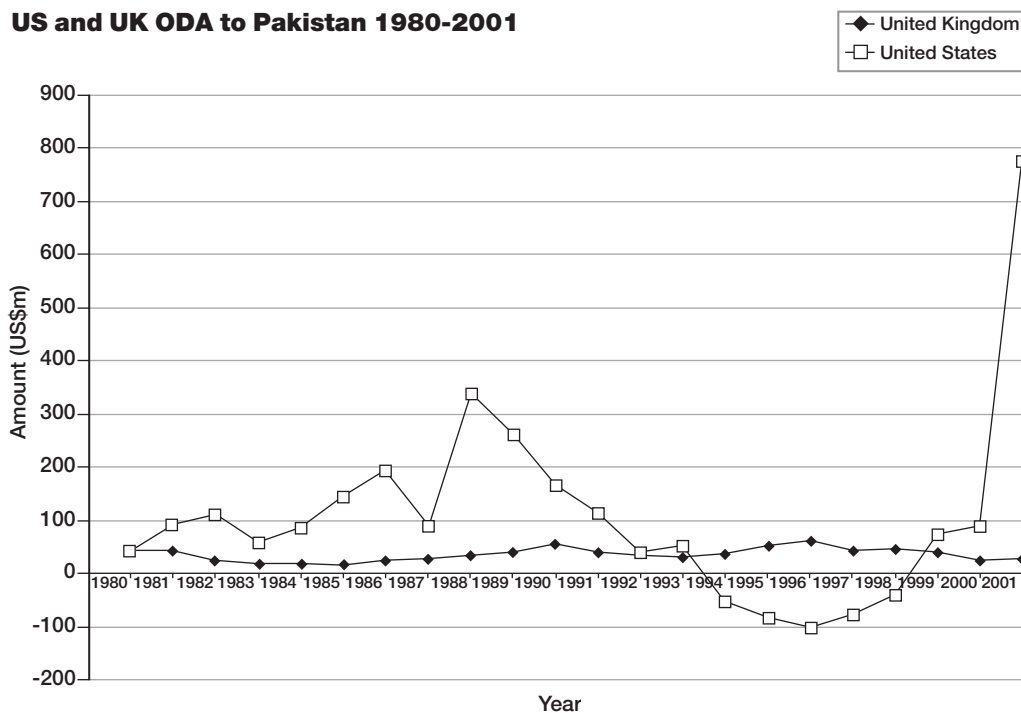
The British, too, have acknowledged their new comrade-in-arms against terror. Less than a month after 9/11, Tony Blair visited Islamabad, and in a joint press conference with Musharraf, announced: 'We have also agreed to restart UK-Pakistan defence cooperation on measures

for bilateral assistance and to help the work towards a new IMF programme for Pakistan.'

Whitehall's freeze on funds to Pakistan following the bomb test and the coup had seen annual ODA to Musharraf fall from more than US\$60 million at its height, to US\$23.7 million by 2000. But once Musharraf was onside, official aid jumped to almost US\$70 million in 2002, according to the DAC.

Pakistan has not just benefited financially from joining the War on Terror. Politically, it has secured indefinite US backing for President Musharraf's regime, even though Pakistan's 2002 elections were widely condemned as fraudulent.

US and UK ODA to Pakistan 1980-2001



Source: OECD DAC Destination of ODA and Official Aid – Disbursements

Note: the section of the graph which displays negative values indicates President Bill Clinton's withdrawal of aid following Pakistan's admission that it was capable of producing nuclear weapons.

Such unscrupulous regimes have a track record of manipulating the West's agenda for their own ends, rather than to further democracy and development. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's regime has mastered the intricacies of the aid game, making him something of a darling to the West. But the fact he is undermining Uganda's constitution to circumvent the democratic process and make

himself president for life should be attracting the West's opprobrium.

However, as we show in our Uganda chapter, by asking the US to place the quasi-criminal Lord's Resistance Army on the list of world terrorists, Museveni has effectively become a key US ally in the War on Terror and placed himself beyond reproach.

Cleaning up the mess

The post-9/11 bombing and then invasion of Afghanistan, the toppling of the Taliban, and the invasion of Iraq has opened a whole new Pandora's box of aid issues. The erstwhile refuge of Osama bin Laden is now the main base for operations to find him, and the country's new government has become a major US ally. Afghanistan has seen its banishment from the community of nations reversed overnight.

Security is the key to rebuilding post-war Afghanistan. Without it, work will grind to a halt. The US-led coalition, however, is struggling to secure the country. As a result, much of Afghanistan's US\$2.2 billion in aid for the 2004 fiscal year is being diverted to military projects and emergency relief, and not used for long-term redevelopment. As we show in the Afghanistan chapter, the result has been to make the country more dangerous.

Post-invasion Iraq is also now attracting huge volumes of aid. No one disputes that in this new age of pre-emptive strikes, those who make the mess should pay for cleaning it up. But aid for political purposes tends to deny support to equally necessary programmes in other countries.

Last April, Christian Aid director Daleep Mukarji wrote on behalf of the UK's five leading aid agencies to Prime Minister Tony Blair seeking assurances on how the Department for International Development (DFID) would fund the UK's commitments on Iraq.

Mr Blair replied, assuring him that aid for Iraq would come only from 'additional funding to DFID', adding, 'As you know, this has now happened... The Secretary of State for International Development has given public commitment that funds will not be re-directed from other... programmes supporting poor people elsewhere.'

Then in a hand-written postscript he added, '...and I assure you the programmes will continue. Yours ever, Tony.'

But in October, an internal DFID document entitled 'Resource Reallocation' was leaked. It warned: 'The burden of financing Iraq will have to be borne by the contingency reserve and reductions in middle-income country budgets. These plans will mean that a number of our current programmes in middle-income countries will close.'

DFID was going to have to 'find £267m over the next two years from within the budget by axing numerous anti-poverty projects in "middle-income" countries'. Among DFID-funded projects under threat are programmes providing drinking water in Guyana, health advice in Brazil and support for indigenous Indians in Bolivia. Though not the most deprived, 'middle-income' countries are still home to at least 140 million people living in poverty. They include swathes of Latin America, north Africa, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

Hilary Benn, the international development secretary, later assured the Commons that DFID's £544 million commitment to Iraq over three years would not 'involve any reduction in DFID's planned development expenditure for low-income countries'.

But while Iraq needs the money, the poor from 'middle-income' countries will have to wait.

Showing 'em who's boss

Another clear demonstration of the main donors' renewed willingness to use their aid muscle for political gain was the unseemly scramble at the UN in early 2003 over votes backing an invasion of Iraq. A second resolution backing military action was to go before the UN security council. In favour were the US and UK, against were a number of nations led by France and Germany.

While the issue was still in doubt, Africa's three non-permanent security council members – Angola, Cameroon and Guinea – became the target of a mixture of threats and blandishments.

In February 2003, the UK's Baroness Amos, then a junior Foreign Office minister, US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Walter Kansteiner, and French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin all lobbied the presidents of Angola, Cameroon and Guinea. It was an exercise which could not fail to be influenced by their aid relationships.

France is the largest donor to Cameroon and the second largest to Guinea. The US is the second largest donor to Angola and the third largest to Guinea. Britain, too, gives Cameroon and Angola aid.

However, when France announced its intention to veto the invasion of Iraq, the threats and bribes became academic. The vote was stopped, there was no second resolution and the US and UK launched a unilateral attack.

But while that incident had more of the vaudeville about it than the diplomatic, US conduct over the setting up of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been much more vicious.

The ICC was set up to investigate and bring to justice individuals who had committed the most serious violations of international law, including genocide and mass murder. It was created on the basis of the Rome Treaty at the UN's Diplomatic Conference in 1998 and came into existence on 11 April 2002 when it received the 60 ratifications it needed. The outgoing Clinton administration signed the treaty on 31 December 2000.

The Bush administration had other ideas. On 6 May 2002 it officially revoked the treaty, saying that the court would expose the US to politically motivated prosecutions.

To further protect US citizens from facing trial at the ICC, the Bush administration has been negotiating bilateral-immunity agreements with numerous countries around the globe. The goal of these agreements is to exempt US military and civilian personnel from ICC jurisdiction. To ensure that it is successful, the US is using its official aid budget to manipulate negotiations with numerous governments.

To date, 82 countries have signed such immunity agreements with the US and have had their aid protected. Those that do not sign are seeing their aid cut. A number of new democracies in Africa, including Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya have publicly rejected signing such agreements and are among those that are seeing the US slash their ODA by US\$90 million this year.¹

The backslide begins

As we recorded in 'Aid in a Cold Climate', in 2003 the OECD's DAC decided to review its position on the definitions of aid in the post-9/11 world. For all its fine words in the 1990s on 'un-tied' aid and trying to 'do the right thing' by emerging nations, it produced a document that showed it was prepared to support the use of ODA to prevent the rise of terrorism.

The document was entitled: 'A Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention'. And as we have also noted, it was followed by a DAC workshop in Paris in February 2004.

Parts of the report that came out of the Paris workshop could help legitimise the use of aid budgets for counter-terrorism.

Blurring the picture

The DAC Paris workshop meeting of February 2004 looked at widening the types of aid eligible for ODA status. Under discussion were proposals that would lead to a distinct blurring between military and civilian organisations, and their respective roles. The workshop discussed whether training should be ODA eligible when it is:

- offered as training to trainers of security forces, rather than directly to the forces themselves
- provided to loosely organised but armed forces (for example, militias) when they are being integrated into the regular army
- teaching the military the kind of non-combat skills required to participate in complex peacekeeping operations, such as mission planning and civil-military relations.

It also suggested that 'support to regional peace operations [should] be reportable [including] the additional costs of regional peacekeeping forces drawn from developing countries', and that ODA should include 'technical co-operation provided to governments towards implementation of security system reforms, including, where necessary, working with, but not financing, the military forces'.

There was a further draft ODA item under consideration: '[Technical] assistance to build capacity to gather intelligence on threats from terrorism'. Although there was 'broad agreement at the meeting not to proceed with this item', the fact that it was discussed at all is significant.

Following the DAC's 'Lens on Terror' document in 2003, alarm bells had begun to ring. Since the onset of the War on Terror, was the DAC seeking to shift aid priorities away from poverty reduction and towards counter-terrorism? And would this lead to ODA being directed towards the military rather than civilian organisations?

Christian Aid believes the DAC paper produced in Paris is yet more disturbing evidence of the trend in post-9/11 thinking. Whatever the original motivation for suggesting these changes, the fear is that they could now be exploited by those engaged in the War on Terror. The fact that they are still being discussed by DAC members reinforces this concern.

The DAC Paris workshop paper correctly identified that support for terrorism may be born out of exclusion and injustice. But it does not appear to recognise that by redirecting aid towards combating terrorism, instead of rebuilding underdeveloped countries, it will only serve to increase the sense of injustice and exclusion in many communities.

The DAC, however, is by no means the only player undertaking a radical review of its aid imperatives.

On 25 March 2004, EU foreign ministers met in Brussels to sign up for an entire raft of new anti-terrorist measures pushed by Britain, France and Spain. Most of the measures were straight security powers, such as accessing mobile telephone records, and email and internet data. With the horrors of the Madrid bombing fresh in their minds, the ministers even appointed a new counter-terrorism 'tzar', Gijs de Vries, a former Dutch interior minister and MEP.

Pursuing policy not poverty

The European Union (EU) is the world's largest donor bloc. It donates around £19 billion a year, of which £4.3 billion is pooled by EU member states and managed by the European Commission.²

It grants financial support to NGOs and other aid agencies, including Christian Aid, to help them run projects ranging from small-scale agricultural programmes to major infrastructure work, such as road building.

At present, the main objective of EU aid is the reduction and eventual elimination of poverty.

However, following the Madrid bombings, proposals from Brussels have explicitly linked the provision of EU aid to the War on Terror. NGOs across Europe are concerned that these proposals make aid conditional on recipient countries' cooperation in counter-terrorism programmes. This is bad enough in the context of long-term development cooperation. But in terms of the EU's humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, it presents a fundamental challenge to the internationally accepted principle of providing assistance on the basis of need alone.

Even before the Madrid bombings, some worrying trends towards the politicisation of aid were in motion in Brussels. Drafts for the new EU constitution could give whoever becomes EU Foreign Minister control of aid allocation as well as security.

This has led to the fear that any future EU Foreign Minister could divert aid towards the 'fight against terrorism' instead of allocating it purely to reduce poverty. In effect, future EU aid would then become a tool of EU foreign policy.

It is a policy that humanitarian NGOs say will risk compromising the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian assistance.

But included in this list of measures was a clause linking all aid donations and trade concessions to non-EU countries to their willingness to cooperate on security. The EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, championed the clause, describing its ratification as a 'significant step in the area of counter-terrorism and intelligence cooperation'.

Europe, too, is now stepping out down the road of aid politicisation.

The politicisation bandwagon

Already on the table is a proposal that all EU aid will be at the disposal of the new EU foreign minister. Until now it has been the policy of the EU to have separate directorates running foreign policy and

overseas aid. Another indication of the EU's willingness to politicise aid is member state Denmark's announcement that its own security considerations will play a key role in deciding its aid allocations. On the other side of the world, Japan and Australia have made similar announcements.

Denmark

Danida, the official development agency of the Danish government, announced that security would be its second most important criteria for deciding aid allocations for the period 2004-08.³

It said: 'Development assistance has to relate to a changeable world in order to ensure that the Danish assistance is focused, effective and up-to-date. The

Danida spending on Africa since 2001

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004
Amount (million kroner)	2,593	2,312	2,120	2,106
Percentage change from 2001		-11%	-18%	-19%

Source: Budget proposals for the financial year 2004

development policy is a central and integrated part of Danish foreign and security policy.¹⁴

As a result, much of Danida's funding for developing countries has now been reallocated to Middle East states that are strategically important in the War on Terror. The 'Arab Initiative', for example, allocates 145 million Danish kroner (£13 million) to various projects in the Middle East,⁵ while a further 300 million Danish kroner (DKK) aid and reconstruction package to Iraq comes out of the development budget at the expense of grants to Africa.⁶

Spending on projects in Africa has declined from DKK 2.6 billion in 2001 to DKK 2.1 billion in 2004, a fall of 19 per cent since September 11, 2001.⁷

Australia

Since 9/11, the Australian government's policy of reorienting its official development aid to incorporate combating terrorism and promoting regional security was reinforced by the Bali bombing in October 2002, when 88 Australians died.

According to AusAID, 'Australia's aid program is [now] involved in a number of long-term anti-terrorism projects in the Asia-Pacific Region. These projects are helping the region to understand and change the conditions that can foster terrorism.'⁸

Australia, contrary to DAC recommendations, is now using its official ODA to fund numerous long-term anti-terrorism projects in the Asia-Pacific region. In Indonesia, Australia is currently implementing a AUS\$10 million (£4.1 million) four-

year initiative to help the Indonesian National Police Force combat terrorism.⁹

This will bring total aid to Indonesia from Australia to AUS\$152 million for the period 2003-04.¹⁰ In the Philippines, Australia has agreed a three-year AUS\$5 million package of counter-terrorism assistance.¹¹ Likewise, a customs project with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is being funded to the tune of AUS\$1.45 million.¹²

Australia's commitment to Iraq, which now stands at AUS\$120 million, has been allocated from the official ODA development budget.¹³ However, the 2003-04 Australian ODA budget has risen by just AUS\$79 million from the 2002-03 figure of AUS\$1.815 billion.¹⁴ This suggests projects targeting the poor will suffer as a result of Australia's 'politicised aid' to Iraq.

Japan

Japan has also reviewed its official aid policy in an attempt to reflect the current climate of global instability. After the US attacks against the Taliban in Afghanistan, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yoriko Kawaguchi, proposed the 'consolidation of peace concept'.¹⁵ This effectively marked a turning point – Japan would now play an active role in providing aid to conflict-affected areas.

Tokyo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted: 'Since the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, there has been greater international awareness of the possibility of poverty [zones] becoming hotbeds of terrorism, and the role of ODA is being reconsidered.'¹⁶

In December 2002, Japan announced a 'support package for peace and security' in Mindanao and gave official ODA monies towards three programmes:

- a governance-improvement programme in the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao received 2.47 billion yen (US\$22.6 million)
- human needs programme was given 1.5 billion yen (US\$14 million)
- and, most significantly, projects including a peace-building and counter-terrorism programme received 40 billion yen (US\$369 million).¹⁷

In addition, in June 2003, Japan and the Philippines agreed to set up an automated fingerprint-identification system under the Mindanao project to fight terrorism, which cost 975 million yen (US\$9 million) and which directly supports the Philippines National Police Force.¹⁸

In 2004, the Japanese government committed itself to giving 164 billion yen (US\$1.5 billion) in grant aid towards the reconstruction of Iraq. This represents 70 per cent of Japan's total bilateral grant aid for 2004 and 40 per cent of its total multilateral grant aid.¹⁹

Within the official 2004 ODA budget, the funds allocated for peace building and conflict prevention have risen dramatically from 12 billion yen to 16.5 billion yen. Meanwhile, Japan has cut its total ODA budget from 857.8 billion yen in 2003 to 816.9 billion yen in 2004.²⁰ Again, the implications are clear. Targeting the poor is likely to take second place to security interests.

The humanitarian space

The car-bomb attacks on the UN and Red Cross compounds in Baghdad in August 2003, the killing of aid workers in Afghanistan in February and March 2004 and the targeting of civilian

workers in several parts of Iraq throughout Easter 2004, have dramatically demonstrated how the 'with us, or against us' mind set of the West has stripped aid workers of their neutrality in the eyes of those they are seeking to help.

Instead of being free to work openly among recipients, the West's new rhetoric and the increasingly common practice of using military personnel to carry out humanitarian tasks in the name of 'winning hearts and minds' has suddenly made the aid worker's role infinitely more dangerous. The distinction between humanitarian aid worker and occupying force has become blurred.

And it is all the more alarming since it represents a complete reversal of previous military doctrine. There had long been a consensus among military thinkers that armed forces are not best placed to provide aid. For example, the UK Ministry of Defence's operational principles concerning humanitarian activities state:

- If at all possible, do not get involved in humanitarian aid activities.
- If UK forces must get involved, this should be in support of a civilian lead agency, where the military stays in the background.
- Only as a last resort would the military get directly involved in aid delivery, namely if the humanitarian assistance process was failing.²¹

No more. The word 'humanitarian' is now used to describe the activities of military forces that have nothing to do with the impartial delivery of assistance, but are more properly described as military intervention in pursuit of a political goal. Pre-9/11, the most notable example was Prime Minister Tony Blair's description of the NATO intervention in Kosovo as a 'humanitarian war'. And alongside 'humanitarian', a new buzzword has emerged: 'coherence'. It describes the concept that

military, political and humanitarian action can be structured to form different parts of a common goal. A good example of this is the UK government's description of the 2001 campaign in Afghanistan as 'military... diplomatic and... humanitarian'.²² Similarly, Tony Blair described the Iraq invasion as 'political, military and humanitarian'.

As we show clearly in our case study on Afghanistan, all these new doctrines have achieved is to narrow what is known as 'the humanitarian space', and render what is left infinitely more dangerous.

Millennium development or distraction?

If international development goals and humanitarian principles become increasingly subordinate to foreign-policy objectives, international efforts towards global poverty reduction will be seriously weakened.

And nowhere is this more a matter for concern than in our own back yard. Such an approach would undermine the UK government's commitment to improving the poverty focus of EU aid, as championed by Chancellor Gordon Brown and both Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn and his predecessor, Clare Short, on numerous occasions.

It also compromises the UK International Development Act 2002, which insists that development policy operates on the basis of its own principles, objectives, institutions and instruments and the UK's commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Development cooperation and humanitarian aid must remain focused on the enormous task of reducing global poverty and injustice, and achieving – at a minimum – the internationally agreed MDGs.

On 23 January 2004, UN secretary general Kofi Annan spoke at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. He told it:

Five years ago, here in Davos, I asked you, the world's business leaders, to join the United Nations on a journey... I felt obliged to warn that global unease about poverty, equity and marginalisation was beginning to reach critical mass... Today, not only the global economic environment, but also the global security climate, and the very conduct of international politics, have become far less favourable to the maintenance of a stable, equitable and rule-based global order.

So I come before you again, asking you to embrace an even bigger challenge... International terrorism is not only a threat to peace and stability... It also has caused our attention to drift dangerously away from [the Millennium Development Goals]... It is time to re-balance the international agenda.

His call at Davos in 2004, makes his words at the opening of the United Nations General Assembly on 10 November 2001 all the more worth repeating:

Let us remember that none of the issues that faced us on 10 September have become less urgent.

The number of people living on less than one dollar a day has not decreased... The factors that cause the deserts to advance, biodiversity to be lost, and the earth's atmosphere to warm have not decreased. And in many parts of the world afflicted by the scourge of wars, innocent people have not ceased being murdered, mutilated, or dragged or driven from their homes.

We face two possible futures: a mutually destructive clash between so-called civilisations, based on the exaggeration of religious and cultural differences; or a global community, respecting diversity and rooted in universal values. The latter must be our choice.

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Ugandan People's Defence Force press briefing on its military operations in Sudan, Operation Iron Fist, May 2002

Beatrice Okot, displaced by war, living in Gulu, northern Uganda, with her four children

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Darkness is falling in Gulu, northern Uganda, and the roads leading to Lacor Hospital are choked with people. Most are carrying bed mats on their heads and bundles under their arms. Most are children, some walking alone – even the tiniest – others with a trail of younger brothers and sisters. But tonight there are also a large number of adults and there is a smell of fear in the humid air. Last night, when everyone was asleep, there was gunfire. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacked a small group of huts just outside the hospital walls and one man was killed. No one is taking any chances tonight.

The numbers are high – closer to 7,000 than the usual 5,000. But the phenomenon of 'night commuters', where people flock into town to sleep in safety, has become depressingly familiar in northern Uganda. Rebels from the LRA raid outlying villages at night, abducting children to fill its ranks or to become sex slaves and porters. After a recent government military operation, the kidnappings increased and children started to sleep in town, where it is more difficult for the rebels to attack. Parents usually stay behind in their villages to guard their possessions.

Pamela, a nurse at Lacor Hospital reporting for her night shift, sighs when she looks out over the verandas and the quadrangle crammed with people. 'It was pandemonium last night,' she says. 'It was two in the morning when we heard the gunfire, everyone woke up and panicked. People inside were running around, afraid the LRA was going to come in; people outside were trying to get in. After that no one slept, it was very difficult for our patients.'

It's an astonishing sight – mothers taking out pieces of bedding to make beds for their children on the cement floor, trying hard to maintain some semblance of normality in the thronged area. Thousands of unaccompanied children are running around, unable to settle down. The fear is real, everyone is jumpy – there are rumours that the LRA is back and outside the hospital walls.

In the pitch darkness, it's hard to know what exactly is going on.

As it turns out, the night passes without incident. In the dawn light the 'night commuters' stumble out, bedding on their heads and bundles under their arms. They are relieved but weary. The following night will see the same routine.

The district of Gulu was once known as the breadbasket of Uganda; it is now one of the poorest in the country. Three-quarters of the population has fled the land; these people now live in so-called protected villages, far from their fields or any means of supporting themselves. More than 900,000 people in the Acholi – the predominant tribe in the north – districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader are displaced, living in camps and dependent on food handouts from the World Food Programme (WFP). Recent research shows that half of the population is surviving on one meal a day and 41 per cent of children under five are stunted as a result of malnutrition.

Vast tracts of the district lie empty, without people and without life. The only bright spot for the local economy is the presence of the army. Northern Breweries, which delivers beer to the north, has seen turnover rise from 4,000 crates a month in 1997 to 16,000 a month in 2004.

From rebels to terrorists

The war with the LRA has been dragging on for 18 years, but recently there has been a dramatic escalation. September 11, 2001 and the ensuing War on Terror has changed the equation for both the government and the people of northern Uganda.

The government was quick to cash in on the new climate. On 5 December 2001, at the request of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, announced that he had designated the LRA as a terrorist organisation and placed it on the Terrorist Exclusion List. In March

2002, emboldened by this move, government forces launched Operation Iron Fist, which was meant to root out the LRA by taking the war into southern Sudan, the LRA's military and logistical base. This was done with the explicit support of the government of Sudan.

At first sight this appears curious, because the LRA has received political and military support from the Sudanese government. In the past, Khartoum claimed this was in retaliation for the Ugandan government's support to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The two governments' assistance to each other's rebel movements has meant that wars in southern Sudan and northern Uganda have increasingly become one complex conflict.

However, the War on Terror also changed Khartoum's priorities. Back in August 1993, the US placed Sudan on its list of states that sponsor terrorism. In the mid-1990s, Dr Hassan Turabi, the chief ideologue of the National Islamic Front government of Sudan, was regarded as an Islamist zealot, who would try to spread fundamentalism through the LRA.

Osama bin Laden had used Sudan as a base of operations until mid-1996 when he was expelled and went to Afghanistan. Fearing American retaliation after September 11, Sudan was anxious to be seen taking anti-terrorist measures. So, allowing the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) to go in hot pursuit of the 'terrorist' LRA deep into Sudan clearly created the desired impression.

The LRA, led by the self-styled mystic Joseph Kony, is fighting this brutal war with the stated objective of overthrowing President Museveni's government and ruling Uganda in accordance with the Ten Commandments. Critics of the government say that, in the past, it has dismissed the LRA as a ragtag bunch of rebels and allowed the war to drag on, as long as it did not threaten

Museveni's electoral heartland. His successful bid to have the LRA elevated to the status of a 'terrorist' group, they say, was intended to give him added leverage with donors and establish himself as a key ally in the War on Terror.

A statement issued by the Ugandan government's Special Operations-Northern 'Operation Iron Fist' clearly illustrates the LRA's change of status:

The bombing of [the] World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 in New York by Al Qaeda terrorists had far reaching consequences for world security. Several organisations including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony, that use massive indiscriminate lethal military force, and barbaric force against defenceless and innocent civilians in any civilisation with no respect to humanity were thus targeted and condemned as opponents of peace. This time round, we joined our neighbour, the government of Sudan in condemning Kony and his LRA as terrorists. Kony was no longer a threat to only defenceless Ugandans but also to the Sudanese people.¹

Operation Iron Fist has been a catastrophe for the people of northern Uganda. Kony evaded capture and the fighting shifted from Sudan back into Uganda. The Uganda Human Rights Commission estimated in its 2002 annual report that close to one thousand civilians, rebels and UPDF troops had been killed since the LRA was pushed back into Uganda. It said that the civilian death toll was 'unacceptably high and an extreme violation of the right to life'. People in the north had suffered more terror than in the whole of 2001 and the operation had led 'to increased human rights violations and atrocities against the people of northern Uganda'.²

The Lira massacre

On 21 February 2004 the LRA attacked the Barlonyo camp for displaced persons in Lira district. The UN estimates that more than 350

people were killed or burned alive in their huts, although the government maintain ‘only’ 84 died. The massacre attracted huge international attention. The local militia, the Amuka, which was lightly armed and no match for the rebels’ superior firepower, was incapable of defending the camp. Questions were raised as to why the UPDF failed to respond and how it hadn’t noticed the movements of large numbers of rebels.

Museveni was quick to pre-empt any criticism. He blamed donor countries for the UPDF’s inability to protect Ugandans, calling them ‘so-called donors who were interfering in our budgets, who were saying we could not spend more on defence’.³

Uganda is heavily dependent on donors – which provide more than half of its budget – for its survival. Uganda is the third largest recipient of aid from the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) – £68.5 million in 2002/03.⁴ It would be logical to expect the donors to demand an end to the war, which saps Uganda’s economic prospects and its reputation as an African success story. It is estimated that the conflict costs Uganda US\$100 million annually in lost production capacity.

But already, in 2002, Uganda had diverted 23 per cent of its social services budget to fund Operation Iron Fist. Given the scale of the UK’s support it can be argued that some of this money must have been British aid. If so, this would be in direct contravention of the International Development Act 2002, which states: “‘Development assistance’ means assistance provided for the purpose of furthering sustainable development... or improving the welfare of the population.’

Stung by Museveni’s attack, donor countries put out a statement condemning the loss of life in the Barlonyo camp, but reminding the government that: ‘Donors agreed to exceptional increases in defence spending last year that were related to

combating the LRA.’⁵ This huge diversion of funds, although sanctioned by the donors, prompted the UK government to insist on a defence review to ensure this would not happen with future development budgets. The Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn, expressed his confidence in the process. ‘It will provide the basis for making well-informed and affordable decisions on the defence budget in the future... We will monitor this issue very closely, especially in the context of our budget support.’⁶

Benn’s confidence is not shared in Kampala, Uganda’s capital. There, the defence review is regarded with derision; members of parliament are furious they were not involved. They call it a sham and say it is yet another government ploy to hoodwink donors. Reagan Okumu, MP for the northern constituency of Aswa, says the UK government is being misled: ‘The UPDF is a whole complex of institutions under... one man. The statistics used in this review are wrong, how can they be serious about monitoring if they cannot even check the facts?’

Africa specialists in the Foreign Office have a saying that African armies stand for three Ps: Protect the president, control the Population and provide opportunities for Patronage. It seems unlikely the defence review will change things in Uganda. And it is reasonable, given this view, to question why the diversion of funds was given the go-ahead.

Meanwhile, the US is increasingly keen to beef up its friends in Africa. Following the attacks against its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, it earmarked US\$15 million for Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia ‘as frontline states to fight Sudan’, which was still seen as a safe haven for al-Qaeda. The fund was scrapped because of Uganda’s controversial military adventure in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In a similar move, the UK government withheld £5 million of an allocation of £35 million in direct budgetary support to Uganda to show its displeasure.

However, just before his whirlwind trip to Africa in July 2003, President George W Bush announced a US\$100 million aid package for Uganda and four other east African countries to fight terrorism. 'We will work with Kenya and Ethiopia and Djibouti and Uganda and Tanzania to improve capabilities... Many African governments have the will to fight the War on Terror and we are thankful for that will. We will give them the tools and the resources to win the War on Terror.'⁷

The US is increasing the number of its military facilities across the continent. General Charles Wald, head of US operations in Africa, also cautiously admits that the US is directly involved in the fight against the LRA.

'It's not just moral support,' he says. 'But some things need to be kept a bit more private.'⁸

The US is undoubtedly providing the Ugandan government with equipment, resources and money in its determination to win its own War on Terror. But the question is: at what cost?

Better off in Sudan

The Ugandan government's Amnesty Act of 2000 has been completely undermined by the War on Terror. The act was passed as a result of pressure from non-governmental organisations, many supported by Christian Aid, which were concerned about the plight of the conflict's victims. Many of them are also the perpetrators. The act was intended to grant any combatant who surrendered voluntarily immunity from prosecution.

It initially ran for six months, but has been extended six times – most recently on 17 January 2004 for an additional three months. The whole process, however, has been plagued by a lack of resources for adequate resettlement packages. The World Bank has promised US\$3.6 million to help resettle 15,000 former rebels. But, according to Justice Peter Onega, the chairman of the Uganda Amnesty Commission, it

is demanding proof of the government's commitment: 'One of the conditions of the World Bank is that the commission must be in existence at least for the next two years.'

Of more concern to those involved in the amnesty process is the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002 – another of the Ugandan government's moves following September 11, 2001. While the Amnesty Act grants amnesty for those engaged in 'war or armed rebellion', the Anti-Terrorism Act provides for the death sentence for someone 'influencing the government or influencing the public... for a political, religious, social or economic aim'.⁹ Furthermore, the Anti-Terrorism Act designated the LRA a terrorist organisation, membership of which is a criminal offence.

Thus, anyone attempting to establish a dialogue with the LRA is immediately branded a collaborator. This has particularly affected the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARPLI), a multi-religious organisation, which advocates communication with the LRA. Members of ARPLI, which is a Christian Aid partner, are under surveillance and have been threatened by the military.

Loud public statements by the government advocate a military end to the war and so directly contradict the concept of amnesty. President Museveni has repeatedly said that the amnesty does not apply to the top LRA commanders. As one man in a camp for displaced people in Kitgum asked, 'Museveni has agreed [to] the amnesty, but then he starts to talk of killing the rebels, of wiping them out. How can Kony know which one is true?'

Predictably, very few LRA rebels – only 3,848 – have taken advantage of the amnesty law and been resettled.¹⁰

Peter Olowa, in the Kitgum office of the Uganda Amnesty Commission, says that without money the whole amnesty process is doomed to failure. The

commission's annual report shows a backlog of 5,763 former fighters who are waiting for resettlement. The resettlement packages are meant to contain non-food items and cash payments of anywhere from between Ush 250,000 and Ush 500,000 (US\$135-US\$270).

'It is difficult to convince people it is safe to come out,' says Olowa. 'Neither the LRA nor the government has a real commitment to the amnesty. The senior commanders don't trust the government enough to come out and if we cannot offer any hope to the fighters, why would they come back?'

Olowa is especially discouraged when even child fighters who return tell him that life in the bush was better. 'If you are a soldier and hungry, you go and raid a village and take what you want. If you are stuck in a camp here, you can't even steal, no one has anything,' he says.

John Onen (not his real name) wishes he was back in his LRA base in southern Sudan: 'I was better off in Sudan, there at least I had a full bag of sugar and a full bag of clothes. Here I have nothing.'

John spent eight years with the LRA. After he was kidnapped, he was forced to march to Sudan with his elbows tied together. But eventually he rose to the rank of second lieutenant and was an escort for Joseph Kony, the LRA leader.

He smiles as he remembers what he calls 'the good life' – four 'wives', four children and a big hut. Operation Iron Fist marked the end of his easy life. Forced back into Uganda, facing uncertainty, John heard about the amnesty and decided it was time to lay down his weapon. Now, unable to support his family and worried about his security, he wonders if he has done the right thing.

Protected villages

More than a million people in the north of Uganda – more than 80 per cent of the Acholi population – are displaced and living in so-called protected

villages. The government first resorted to ordering the population into these camps in 1996, asking the United Nations to help it set them up in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles. These principles impose a duty on the government to defend the camps so that the interned civilians can speedily resume a normal life. The government has failed to fulfil these international responsibilities. More than 80 per cent of people in these camps are totally dependent on WFP handouts for their survival – the result of being denied access to their lands to grow crops.

Displacement rates grow with every escalation of the conflict. When Operation Iron Fist failed to eliminate the LRA, attacks against civilians increased sharply – Unicef estimates there was 8,500 abductions in 2003 alone. The government responded by ordering those still in their villages to report to the camps under the threat of military action.

Some blame the high death toll of the Barlonyo attack on the very existence of these camps. 'This was a disaster waiting to happen,' says Betty Amongi, the MP for the northern district of Apac. 'If you force people into camps, this is what will happen. Before people were living scattered in their own villages, at least they could flee when the LRA attacked.'

Life in the Labuje camp for displaced people is grim. Just on the edge of the dusty, small town of Kitgum near the border with Sudan, it houses 12,923 people – all from four parishes less than ten miles away. The roughly made mud-and-wattle huts are crammed together, with barely room to walk between them. All the huts have thatched roofs and there is firewood for cooking stacked everywhere. It is easy to see how these camps become infernos when the LRA attacks. And they do attack. In spite of the government's stated objective of herding people together for protection, there is little protection. In fact, the camps are prime targets for LRA rebels searching for food and recruits.



Children studying under one of the few lights at the Kitgum Government Hospital. They come here to sleep in safety. They are known as 'night commuters'. The LRA abducts children and uses them as porters, soldiers or sex slaves. Their parents send them to town at night while they sleep at home to protect their possessions

Ediza Aya and Opobo Jackson, both in their 70s, sit in front of their hut, staring vacantly. Opobo feels emasculated – in his home village he owns land and grows enough food for his wife and their six children. 'I am not happy,' he says. 'For a man like me it is a humiliation to accept hand-outs. But I have to accept it, I have no choice.'

Labuje, like most camps, lacks adequate shelter, sanitation, safe drinking water, and healthcare or education facilities. Although the camp leader says there are some UPDF soldiers guarding the camp, there are none in sight.

Opobo, along with the other camp residents, has little confidence in the government's ability to protect them. The camp has already been attacked. So his son, Ronaldo, has volunteered to join the local militia, the Frontier Guards. 'The LRA attacked our village and my uncle was abducted and killed,' says Ronaldo. 'The UPDF did nothing.'

The growing number of local militias concerns leaders in the north. John Baptist Odama, the Archbishop of Gulu Archdiocese, has warned the government that the creation of these militias could be 'dynamite'. 'We have consistently warned the government that the local recruitment with an ethnic tendency will lead to a terrible situation, like the one in Ituri province in the Congo where two tribes massacred each other,' he said.

Ronaldo's training so far has been minimal. There is little food and no weapons so it is hard to see how Labuje's Frontier Guards will hold back a concerted LRA attack. But Ronaldo is pleased just to be doing something: 'For me it is good, because I feel pain, my people are dying.'

Three young men hanging around listening to Ronaldo have a more pragmatic view of the situation. Richard, Kenneth and Patrick have all escaped from the LRA. Richard and Kenneth are both 19 and were abducted just a year ago. Patrick is 16 and was abducted when he was just seven.

All have refused to join the Frontier Guards; they say it is the UPDF's duty to protect them. 'Why should I join the Frontier Guards, I would just be going from one problem to another,' says Richard.

Patrick has seen the UPDF in battle and is not impressed, 'They are not serious, they pretend to attack but they don't do anything. Why should I do their job? I want to go to school.'

Ghost soldiers

So how serious is the government about combating the LRA? It is true that UPDF efforts to destroy the LRA have been hampered by the shadowy nature of the enemy. The vast majority of LRA combatants are abducted persons, many still children, including those who have been born in captivity. Accounts of combat in northern Uganda and southern Sudan speak of women fighting with children strapped to their backs and the sound of babies crying in battle. The LRA tends to operate in small groups, emerging from the bush to raid villages.

But there are many in Uganda who question the government's commitment to ending the fighting. The war has become the livelihood and means of political survival of those who hold the weapons and the power. It is widely believed that top UPDF commanders, for instance, gain materially from 'ghost soldiers' who are on the pay register but

don't exist. Meanwhile, actual UPDF troops are demoralised and have little incentive to fight. One local peace group claims the UPDF intervened in only 33 out of 456 attacks between June and December 2002.¹¹

In July 2003, President Museveni ordered an inquiry into the 'ghost soldiers'. A leaked copy of the report estimated their numbers stood at 10,000. In Otwal, in Apac district, for example, there are payments going to 40 per cent more soldiers than are actually stationed there.

Foreign diplomats in the capital Kampala resort to double speak when questioned about the government's commitment. 'We cannot dispute that there are senior commanders around who would prefer to see the war continue,' says one. Another claims: 'Let's say the UPDF and the LRA have agreed to avoid each other.'

Militarisation and the spread of HIV

If post-Idi Amin Uganda is famous for anything, it is for its stand on HIV/AIDS. But the most damaging blow to its international image may yet lie with the virus, with devastating results for the people of Uganda. President Museveni was one of the first African leaders to speak out on HIV and make the issue one of national importance. HIV prevalence has fallen to eight per cent in Kampala. This is a dramatic achievement, considering that prevalence among pregnant women in two urban antenatal clinics in the city was stated to be 30 per cent a decade ago.¹²

However, these rosy statistics should be viewed with a certain amount of scepticism. Data based on urban clinics is hardly representative of a nation where about 87 per cent of the population live in rural areas. And claims that there has been a positive change in sexual behaviour and increased use of condoms sit uncomfortably with statistics showing that Uganda has the world's second highest fertility rate.¹³



Christian Aid/Simon Townsley

‘Night commuters’ sleeping in Kitgum Government Hospital

Major Rubaramira Ruranga, an HIV-positive activist and a serving officer in the UPDF, says the government has been very good in terms of communication and education, but that there has been little real action.

‘The government is entirely dependent on the donors for money to fight the disease and Museveni is very smart in terms of sweet-talking the donors. But we are not what we claim. I cannot see an iota of change in behaviour.’

Major Ruranga thinks so much talk with little real follow-up has resulted in complacency: ‘This is the real problem. If you tell them about the problem, but give them no way to deal with it, it is like preaching in church – it doesn’t stop people from sinning.’

The Uganda Aids Commission is under the office of the President, not the Ministry of Health, and Major

Ruranga says it sets the tone: ‘If you want any funding you have to sing their tune. No one here is going to say things are not what they seem.’

A few voices in the West have begun to question the Uganda success story. According to Justin Parkhurst of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine:

The notion of donor fatigue... combined with an overall reduction in development funds available to Africa, can produce political pressure to present an image of success to maintain funds. Such pressures can lead to the proliferation, and quiet acceptance, of statements of Ugandan success that are not, in fact, based on any conclusive evidence.¹⁴

The war in the north and the militarisation of the region is the biggest current threat in terms of HIV

infection. Even Museveni has acknowledged the connection. 'President Yoweri Museveni has warned the biggest threat to the UPDF is not war but the AIDS pandemic which has claimed more lives than armed combat.'¹⁵

Richard Opio of Christian Aid partner ACET, based in the northern town of Kitgum, says the war is to blame. 'The camps where most of our people live are a big mistake. They are the basis for the virus to spread. There is no work and the only people with money are the soldiers,' he says. 'The worst are the UPDF mobile units. When they come to town they pay a lot – it is open day for sex.'

Teaching people who have been herded into camps about the dangers of HIV, Opio says, is difficult. 'If you talk to them about risky behaviour and say they may die in ten years they tell you "I need food now, I need to survive. I may die in a year".'

Dr Origa Martin, the acting superintendent of the Kitgum government hospital, claims the insecurity in the area has led to a breakdown of health services. 'Only 40 per cent of our preventative health programmes are working,' he says. 'We have had five health workers ambushed and no one wants to go out of town.'

'My reading is that a lot of noise is made about AIDS, but there is a lack of commitment. In Kampala it is business as usual. There is no sense of urgency about what is happening here. We are a time bomb – everything here in the north will affect the rest of the country.'

The Aids Support Organisation of Uganda (TASO) is just one of the many Ugandan organisations fighting the epidemic. This year, TASO decided to open an office in Gulu – its first in the north. TASO budgeted for 500 patients for the entire year. The office opened on 5 January. Two months later it already had 990 patients. At this rate it will have almost 6,000 patients by the end of the year.

TASO offers its patients counselling and medicines for AIDS-related diseases. But there are no anti-retrovirals available. One of the key areas of concern is the growing number of AIDS orphans.

Jacky Akongo is typical of the AIDS orphans who are left to fend for themselves. She is just 16 and responsible for three younger sisters and two brothers. She lives in one room in Gulu with two sisters and one brother. Her other siblings live with their grandmother in a village five miles away; they walk into town every night to sleep in safety with Jacky.

The six children sleep in a room measuring not more than 12 feet by ten. There is a mat on the floor, a charcoal burner for cooking, school uniforms hanging on a nail, piles of schoolbooks and a mug containing toothbrushes.

'After our father died in 1999, my mother told me she was also ill and that I would be responsible for all of us. I cried. It was too much.'

Jacky is determined to finish school and study law at university. She pays for her schooling by talking to young people about HIV for a local NGO. She wishes life was different: 'If there was no war we would all live at home and there would be nothing to disturb us. We would also have enough to eat; sometimes we go for a whole day without eating. It is difficult to study when you are hungry.'

A conspiracy of silence?

Uganda has long been held up as the success story of Africa. Museveni is seen as the new breed of African leader hailed for embracing western-style economics and for his open championing of the fight against HIV/AIDS. Indeed, after the bloody years of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, Uganda has enjoyed a period of relative calm and prosperity. The economic record of the government in rescuing the economy, following a protracted period of political instability, is significant.

Museveni was, at first, reluctant to accept the structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The government experimented with various economic measures including barter trade arrangements. Later, the economic-policy reforms of the IMF and the World Bank were implemented, including exchange-rate devaluation, trade liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation.

The performance of Uganda's economy at the macro level has been impressive. Since 1995, GDP growth has averaged 6.7 per cent and inflation has fallen from more than 33 per cent in 1990 to two per cent in 2001.

Human development advances have also been impressive. Infant mortality has dropped from 100 per 1,000 in 1990 to 79 per 1,000 in 2001. The Universal Primary Education Programme, providing free primary education to a maximum of four children in every family, was introduced in Uganda in 1997. When the programme started, the country had about 5.3 million primary school pupils. By 2003, that figure had risen to well over seven million.

But taking the medicine prescribed by the IMF and World Bank has done little to alleviate poverty in Uganda – it remains one of the world's poorest countries. Uganda ranks 60 out of the 94 developing countries in the latest human poverty index. A vast 96.4 per cent of the population, virtually the entire country, lives on less than two dollars a day.¹⁶ Per capita income in 2003 was estimated at about US\$259. Life expectancy dropped from 47 years in 1990 to only 43 years in 2001. The percentage of the population with reasonable access to clean water remains relatively low – 52 per cent in 2000 (45 per cent in 1990).¹⁷

Sam Tindifa, the director of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Makerere University in Kampala, puts the blame for this lack of progress squarely on the country's major donors (especially the UK and the US) and international financial institutions. He



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Drawing by soldiers who have returned under the Amnesty Act, displayed at a reception centre run by the Concerned Parents Association, in Kitgum

also says that a major part of this failure is due to their unwillingness to acknowledge Uganda as a country at war.

'Museveni has been a guinea pig for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Of course no one will say it is not working, it will dent their success story, and they have to have a success story.' He points to his bookshelf, with its row of World Bank reports on countries in conflict: 'Uganda is never mentioned as a country in conflict.'

A consultant who asked to remain anonymous was contracted by the World Bank to write a report, *From Conflict to Sustained Growth and Deep Reductions in Poverty*, for its May 2004 Shanghai meeting. He insisted on writing a section on the conflict in Uganda, maintaining that Uganda could not be classified as a 'post-conflict country'. When this section was deleted, he asked to have his name removed from the report.

Zachery Lomo of the Refugee Law Project says the donor countries have too much invested in Uganda to admit things have gone wrong. 'They are desperate for a success story for the economic theories they flog,' he says. 'But it is difficult to ignore the stark reality of our poverty. Museveni has



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Beatrice Okot, 38. She has been displaced by the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government and is living in two rooms with her two children. She is HIV positive, so was her husband who died in 1994. She had two brothers, one was killed by the LRA, the other died of HIV/AIDS. She fears she will die before her children are grown. 'If there was no war, life would be better. We had land and a free house, no shortage of food. I always tell my children to be aware of HIV, they know I am positive'

the Marxist knack of knowing what buttons to push. He is supposed to be the new breed of African leader, but it is a sham.'

Even the US, Uganda's biggest supporter, admits, off-the-record, things have gone badly wrong: 'The success story has been overblown, the potential for reversal is real. There is a general willingness, even eagerness, to gloss over the real story. Progress is imperilled by establishment-based corruption.'

President Museveni, the supposed new breed of African leader, is showing other disturbing symptoms of the old version. He is pressing for a referendum to change the constitution, which would allow him to run for a third term in the elections scheduled for 2006. The opposition is looking to the international community for support in opposing the proposed referendum. So far, foreign diplomats in Kampala will only say in private they would not support Museveni's plan.

Most agree that the war will not be ended militarily – the US has recently put out feelers to the LRA to see if dialogue is possible. Quite how the LRA will respond to peace initiatives from the country which is aiding the Ugandan government militarily is difficult to say. Museveni has not exhibited any enthusiasm for the new US role as peacemaker. In the words of one US official: 'It would be inaccurate to say the president welcomes our initiative. He has a "comfort zone" which means he does not have to respond.'

Museveni has carefully cultivated his 'comfort zone'. He has positioned Uganda on the frontline of the War on Terror. It is the only east African country and one of just eight in Africa as a whole that openly supported the war on Iraq. In August 2003, in a move that provoked disbelief and mirth in the Ugandan capital, the country's Foreign Minister announced he was willing to commit Ugandan troops to Iraq. The US embassy in Kampala then issued a statement that it had not requested troops.

Museveni has also signed Article 98 of the Rome Statute under which Uganda would not hand over US soldiers accused of war crimes for trial in the International Criminal Court (ICC). Uganda, like other countries that receive US military aid, was given a July 2003 deadline to sign the exclusion clause or risk losing the aid.¹⁸

Museveni then asked the ICC to investigate the LRA. This request, made in January 2004, is viewed as cynical in the extreme by Barney Afako, a human rights investigator in Kampala: 'Why has he asked for this – the mandate of the ICC says it should only step in where countries are unable or unwilling to intervene. Museveni cannot claim to be a great defender of international justice – he was among the first to sign up for the US's exclusion clause!'

Sam Tindifa of Makerere University says that, although the LRA is guilty of grave human rights violations, political crises are seldom resolved by criminal investigations: 'If it works, it will be the first time a judicial body has brought an armed conflict to an end.'

Museveni's request only concerns the LRA, but both sides have committed crimes. The UPDF stands accused of human rights abuses, recruiting child soldiers and forced displacement. Critics of the government say President Museveni is trying to immunise himself from prosecution simply by referring a case against his opponents.

Museveni has manipulated the War on Terror as skilfully as he has managed his donors. Labelling the LRA 'international terrorists' and thereby effectively ruling it out of negotiations, has made the situation in northern Uganda even more intractable – US officials admit 'we put ourselves in a corner' by agreeing to add the LRA to their terrorist list. Museveni is taking full advantage of his new status as a guardian against terrorism.

Abused generation

Grand geo-political machinations are a world away for Concy Lamwaka who is 22 and was held by the LRA for ten years. She remembers the day she was taken – it was Independence Day, 8 October 1994. She escaped two years ago while pregnant with her third child, but worries that the LRA will track her down. Concerned Parents Association, a Christian Aid partner, is still helping her come to terms with her ordeal. At first, she was forced to fight. ‘When you are in battle, it is difficult to know how many people you have killed,’ she says.

At the age of 13 she was given to a rebel as his wife. He was good to her, says Concy, because ‘he had also been abducted, he knew what I was going through’. In order to make her escape she was obliged to leave her first-born behind. ‘I miss my first son so much. I don’t know how to contact him,’ she says.

Beatrice Okot, 38, has seen her entire life destroyed by the war. She is displaced, living in two small rooms in Gulu with her four children and struggles to earn a living. She is also HIV positive; her husband died ten years ago because of the virus and she is constantly ill. ‘My one fear,’ she says, ‘is that I may pass away before my children are grown.’

Beatrice keeps turkeys and rabbits to sell to her neighbours so she can pay her children’s school fees. She longs for her past life: ‘If there was no war, life would be better. We had land and our house, we never had a shortage of food.’

The future of the Acholi people, like Concy and Beatrice, is not promising: a generation of children have been abducted and brainwashed into committing acts of brutality or are living in camps, which provide little protection. They will continue walking for up to three hours every night to sleep in comparative safety. Children, such as 13-year-old Okenno David. Last year he was abducted and held for a month before he

escaped. He sleeps on the pavement outside a shop in Kitgum. But he doesn’t feel completely safe: ‘I am still frightened that they will take me again, there are no soldiers in town to protect us.’

Dr Martin at Kitgum Government Hospital hopes the world realises that even if the war ends, the consequences will last. The story of a boy who escaped from the LRA haunts him: ‘He would just sit and watch water coming out from a standpipe. If you turned it off he would turn it back on. Finally he told us it reminded him of watching blood pouring out of a slashed neck.’

In Uganda:

Christian Aid calls on the Ugandan government to fulfil its constitutional duty to protect civilians.

We want the Ugandan government to adopt new tactics for its army that makes the protection of civilians its priority. Also, we call on the UPDF to be made more accountable to the people, in terms of protecting the human rights of civilians. The arming and training of civilian militias should be halted and a full disarmament process launched.

Christian Aid calls on the Ugandan government to re-activate moves aimed at finding a non-military solution to the war.

The Ugandan government must first amend the Anti-Terrorism Act, which makes contact with the LRA a criminal offence. Then it must renew the Amnesty Act for two further years – as requested by the World Bank – to allow for the proper resettlement of those requesting amnesty

The funding of ‘resettlement packages’ for LRA soldiers coming out of the bush must also be addressed, especially the current delays in providing them with valid indemnity certificates

Uganda must increase spending on HIV/AIDS education.

HIV/AIDS education must target the displaced persons’ camps and UPDF troops. The Ugandan government must also improve access to counselling and testing services – especially where the militarisation of the region is directly responsible for the spread of the disease.

Christian Aid calls on the UK government to work with other donor governments in the EU and with the US government to promote a coherent approach to addressing the conflict in northern Uganda.

Together, Uganda’s donors must use their financial leverage to ensure that development aid is not channelled into military expenditure, and to encourage the Ugandan government to open a dialogue with the LRA.

Donors should also speak out against statements by the Ugandan government which damage the prospects of finding a non-military solution to the conflict. This includes threats to those pursuing dialogue with the LRA and to journalists who report LRA responses.

Pressure must also be brought on the government of Sudan and the SPLM to use their influence with the LRA to promote a negotiated solution. All military support to the LRA should cease and free movement of the LRA across the Sudan/Ugandan border should be stopped.

4 Afghanistan: caught in the crossfire

'I would simply say to the people of Afghanistan today, that this time we will not walk away from you. We have given commitments, both on the humanitarian side and in terms of rebuilding Afghanistan. We are with you for the long term.'

Prime Minister Tony Blair, 13 November 2001

'The more they help us find the bad guys, the more good stuff they get.'

Lieutenant Reid Finn, US Army – a combat soldier delivering blankets to destitute Afghans in Dwaranda. Quoted in the *New York Times*, March 2004



In March this year, international leaders gathered in Berlin for the second big donor conference on Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president, came with ambitious bids for a total of US\$27.5 billion in aid to be given over seven years to rebuild his country. He got just US\$8.2 billion.

But the conference was not dominated, as one might expect, by wrangles over aid. It was overshadowed by the question of security. Since the defeat of the Taliban, security has deteriorated in Afghanistan to such an extent that the reconstruction process in many areas has completely stalled. So while Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest countries, in desperate need of assistance, its long-term future remains in doubt until insecurity is tackled. It is not, to put it mildly, a safe place to work.

Delegate after delegate in Berlin insisted that security must come before aid. In particular, there were numerous calls for the expansion of an international peacekeeping force. Japan's envoy to the conference, for example, said: 'The presence of [UN] security forces in the provinces would augment the rehabilitation and construction efforts throughout the country.'

On 31 March, the conference's opening day, representatives from the UN and aid agencies, including the Red Cross/Red Crescent, held a parallel meeting in Geneva. Their discussions were also dominated by the lack of security in Afghanistan and how it was hindering their work there. But they also highlighted concern about a blurring of the military, political and humanitarian roles of the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan.

In a joint statement at the end of the conference, a Red Cross spokeswoman said: 'We... have a problem when many states involved in places like Afghanistan and Iraq no longer draw a clear line between military and humanitarian activities and

objectives. We're not saying there is something wrong with their military or political objectives, but they have got to be kept distinct.'

This goes to the very heart of the problem in Afghanistan. It also provides a timely warning to those grappling with the deteriorating situation in Iraq.

Humanitarian action as a political weapon

In this report, Christian Aid highlights how the US-led coalition is using humanitarian action as a political and military weapon in Afghanistan. In pursuit of its own political ends, the coalition is blurring military and humanitarian roles that have traditionally, and for very good reasons, been kept separate. At the same time, by committing its resources in this way rather than towards the stated objective of bringing peace and security to the whole country, it is making the lives of many poor Afghans worse, not better.

There are also direct and tragic consequences for those trying, against the odds, to make Afghanistan a better place to live that again resonate gravely with the situation in Iraq. Between February and March this year, 11 Afghan aid workers were murdered. Five of them worked for a Christian Aid partner organisation. Three surviving staff members said that their Taliban attackers had accused them of being US agents.

The politicisation of aid is exemplified by the actions of US combat patrols in the south of the country, as reported in the US press. Lieutenant Reid Finn led one such patrol searching for Taliban insurgents. To do so, he used force against civilians – demanding information on his quarry with menaces, tying up suspects and raiding family homes. At the same time he used inducements in exchange for information – showering the same communities with 'humanitarian' gifts, such as blankets and food. Lt Finn was disarmingly blunt about his methods. He said: 'The more they help us find the bad guys, the more good stuff they get.'¹

Cold War, hot war

Afghanistan was the theatre of the last Cold War conflict, where Leonid Brezhnev and his successors tried to shore up a failing Afghan communist regime to protect the Soviet Union's southern Asian border. The ten-year campaign, which finally ended in 1989, bled the USSR dry and arguably led to the fall of the Iron Curtain.

It was also, of course, the first battleground of the new War on Terror. Osama bin Laden, the self-confessed mastermind behind the 9/11 atrocities, was based in Afghanistan. Hence, on 7 October 2001, the US-led coalition launched operation Enduring Freedom to capture the terrorist leader and oust the Taliban regime, which gave him sanctuary.

Afghanistan has always been the plaything of other nations' strategic interests – the British, the Chinese, the Iranians, the Russians (and later the Soviets), the Pakistanis and now the Americans have all tried their hand at controlling, directly or indirectly, what happens within its borders. The so-called Great Game, when Great Britain faced Russia in Afghanistan in the 19th century, continues to this day. But the US should study the history; no power – not even the mighty Soviet Union – has emerged from Afghanistan without a bloody nose.

Arguably, the US also has other interests in Afghanistan than dealing with bin Laden and the Taliban. The US administration's eye has turned inexorably towards Iran and the fear that it is developing weapons of mass destruction. Afghanistan borders Iran to the east and controlling it could, at some stage, be invaluable as a potential marshalling yard for US troops.

Furthermore, Afghanistan could provide territory through which to drive an oil pipeline from the Caucasus and central Asia (in particular, Turkmenistan), through Herat, in the west of the country, to the Indian Ocean in the south. The US is heavily dependent on imported oil and needs to

secure future supplies. Turkmenistan already supplies Herat with electricity, and US oil interests might well follow the same north-south route.

Even before military action began in 2001, Tony Blair and George W Bush promised to use political and humanitarian means to secure Afghanistan's long-term future. To put an end, finally, to the legacy of 23 years of conflict, persistent food shortages, poverty and misery that have all beset the country's recent past.

Tony Blair claimed: 'This time we will not walk away from you. We have given commitments. We will honour those commitments, both on the humanitarian side and in terms of rebuilding Afghanistan.'²

Yet, sadly, the early signs are not good. US spending to date on the military operation in Afghanistan is estimated to be as high as US\$40 billion. Total international aid spending, on the other hand, is so far only US\$4.5 billion.³ The priorities are obvious.

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest nations on earth, basic infrastructure, such as roads, schools, healthcare facilities, housing, power and water supply are either in tatters or, in many places, non-existent. The average life expectancy is 43 years,⁴ fewer than one in four Afghans have access to safe drinking water, one in four children die before their fifth birthday and it is estimated that more than three in five adults are illiterate.⁵ More than half of Afghans live on less than US\$2 a day – the internationally recognised poverty line.

However, insecurity is seriously hampering efforts to rebuild the country. There are several elements to this violence. There is factional fighting between local commanders, or warlords, and between warlords and government troops in the north and west. The Taliban is infiltrating communities all over the country, but particularly



The high prevalence of weapons in Afghanistan is a continuing cause of insecurity, especially in remote regions

in the south and east – threatening them and attempting to destabilise the current Afghan administration.

There is also growing violence associated with the expansion of the drugs trade. Drugs barons fight for control of the trade – and, at the same time, the trade funds the violence. This is leading to a vicious circle of poverty, violence and drugs production. People with insufficient money or food are more likely to grow opium poppies, which can produce a significantly higher income than other forms of agriculture. A lack of money and jobs can also provide a fertile recruiting ground for bandits and warlords looking for armed men to join their ranks.

In so far as insecurity hampers development, a lack of aid and development adds to poverty and, in turn, contributes to further insecurity. Christian Aid supports programmes which are designed to break

this spiral of decline, for example, sustainable rural livelihood projects which are geared to helping communities provide for themselves with no need to resort to drugs production or to taking up arms for a local warlord. It is a crucial enterprise.

Hanif Atmar, the Afghan Minister for Rural Development and Rehabilitation, summed up the problem: ‘I know a former communist soldier who then joined the Mujahedeen and then the Taliban – that was his only means of employment. I asked him, “Can you do anything else other than fight?” He said he could drive – could I get him a driving job? He said his commander could feed him and clothe him. What could I do for him?’⁶

No one doubts that security is the country’s priority. The argument revolves around how peace and stability should be pursued – and in whose interests Afghanistan should be made secure. The hunt for bin

Laden is being carried out to satisfy the needs of US justice and to end al-Qaeda operations across the world. Yet, the pursuit of bin Laden is not leading to peace and stability in Afghanistan itself – far from it.

On 21 March this year, the western city of Herat, where Christian Aid has its Afghan headquarters, was thrown into turmoil by fighting that erupted after the country's Minister for Civil Aviation, Mirwais Sadiq, was shot dead. An attempt was apparently also made on the life of his father, Ismail Khan, the province's governor. This is a city that was considered relatively stable.

Between 70 and 150 people were reported killed in the fighting between irregular forces loyal to Ismail Khan and the recently appointed local military commander, Zahir Nayebyzada. Mirwais Sadiq was the third minister to be assassinated since the Afghan Transitional Authority came to power. There have also been a number of attempts on the president's life.

Since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom, the best estimates are that almost 4,000 Afghan civilians have been killed. Since the collapse of the Taliban, hostile forces in Afghanistan have killed 22 aid workers, the majority in recent months – 11 were murdered between 14 February and 6 March this year, in four separate incidents. In February, five Afghan aid workers of the Sanayee Development Foundation (SDF) – a Christian Aid partner organisation, which undertakes peace-building and education projects – were murdered while travelling between villages near Kabul.

Such attacks lead development and humanitarian organisations, including the UN, to curtail or suspend their reconstruction programmes, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. For example, on 29 March this year, an improvised bomb was placed close to the office of an international NGO (which prefers not to be named for security reasons) in Logar province, near Kabul. The explosion injured five of its employees. As a result, the NGO has

suspended its extensive operations in the area. Christian Aid staff also witnessed violence during the Taliban era. In 2001, for example, staff of the isolated Ghor provincial office, in the mountains east of Herat, had to spend a night in the compound's bomb shelter. They were caught in the crossfire between the Taliban, who were stationed next door, and attacking Northern Alliance troops. But the incident was exceptional, and staff were rarely unable to travel to any of the partners' projects or carry out monitoring work.

But now, more than two years after the Taliban were defeated, the security situation in the five provinces in which Christian Aid works is such that access is severely curtailed. Parts of the provinces of Herat and Badghis are out of bounds, and the whole of Farah is often too dangerous to visit. Some of these areas have been inaccessible to staff since October 2002. This is the worst situation Christian Aid has experienced in almost two decades working on the ground in Afghanistan.

Even as this report was being written, the power struggle in northern Afghanistan between Marshal Rashid Dostum's militia and forces loyal to the Afghan government forced Christian Aid's Afghan staff in Faryab province, working on an EU-funded rural livelihoods programme, into 'hibernation'.

This financial year, Christian Aid has been forced to suspend its work on five projects in areas too dangerous to visit. The projects affected include a health scheme and immunisation programme which would have helped about 64,000 people in Badghis province. So also, ironically, was a peace-building project in Farah, designed to break down mistrust between divided communities and bring real security to approximately 38,000 people.

Of course, after 23 years of conflict, Afghanistan was always going to present huge problems that could never be resolved in a matter of a few months. However, Christian Aid maintains that the



Christian Aid/John Davison

Food-aid distribution by Christian Aid partner CHA at Sharak Bazar, Ghor province. Food distribution is gradually being replaced by sustainable-livelihood projects

coalition's military strategy is making the security situation worse for those trying to rebuild the country. Coalition troops are blurring the once distinct line between aid worker and combatant by undertaking humanitarian work themselves.

Bush and Blair have assimilated the humanitarian agenda. It has become part of the political drive to stabilise and pacify Afghanistan – humanitarianism has become part of the War on Terror. Thus, the Taliban and other elements hostile to the US see it as legitimate to attack anyone who is carrying out humanitarian work, whether they are coalition forces or independent aid workers.

Not only was this situation entirely predictable, Christian Aid actually saw it coming. The agency is on the record as saying, in December 2002, that this situation would arise exactly as it has.

Military confusion

There are two major military missions in Afghanistan. First, there is the US-led coalition of more than 15,000 combat troops in the country itself, with about 35,000 support troops in surrounding states. This is the pro-active, fighting element of the Afghan theatre – currently engaged in the latest offensive, Operation Mountain Storm. Primarily US forces, they also include British troops, and are tasked with hunting down the Taliban, al-Qaeda and anyone actively and violently opposing the coalition or the Afghan government.

Then there is the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which was set up under UN Security Council Resolutions 1386, 1413 and 1444. The NATO-run ISAF was established to help the Afghan Transitional Authority maintain security in

the ISAF's area of responsibility, which is largely restricted to the capital, Kabul.

So there are both combat troops on the ground, and those that are supposed to be keeping the peace. Into this mix come the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) – small groups of soldiers (some supported by civilian workers), which vary in size but can comprise anything from 100 to 300 personnel. At the time of going to press, there were 12 in total with seven more on the way.

NATO has repeatedly stated that PRTs will become the main plank of the ISAF operation. But their command structure and role are shrouded in confusion. Are they combat troops? Are they peacekeepers? Are they reconstruction workers? The disturbing answer is that to locals they can appear to be all three. On any given day they could theoretically be shooting at people in the morning and then distributing aid in the same area that afternoon. The teams can even call in coalition air strikes if a local situation deteriorates.

The key point is that while all the PRTs are supposed to support the ISAF mission, all except one (a German team) are under coalition command – that is the same command as troops fighting in Operation Mountain Storm. More teams are expected to come under ISAF control in the future. But there is no timetable for this and it seems unlikely that the five US teams will ever switch command.

When asked exactly how the command structure for PRTs works, a colonel at NATO headquarters in Belgium responded: 'That's a good question.'⁷ No wonder the Afghans are confused.

When you add reconstruction work to this picture, the confusion becomes complete. Quite simply, PRTs are supposed to be all things to all people. According to official guidelines, they are expected to:⁸

- facilitate reconstruction and development
- establish government functions, systems and civil service
- facilitate the expansion of the Afghan government
- facilitate security
- establish a professional civil police force
- set the conditions for law and order
- support judicial reform
- establish infrastructure that supports government functions
- improve quality of life in the supported provinces through the focus and execution of aid projects
- create enduring security.

This huge list of tasks is wholly unrealistic, not least because the PRTs' tours of duty last months, not years. For 19 small teams of soldiers to impose peace on a lawless, highly armed and remote country the size of France, seems impossible as a single task. Yet on top of this, PRTs are responsible for overseeing reconstruction projects, rebuilding infrastructure and supporting the government. Again, Christian Aid fears not only that the PRTs' mission is impossible, but that they are actually making the security situation worse.

It is impossible to tell PRTs apart from US special forces, as they wear identical uniforms. PRT troops turn up in villages in unmarked cars, not identified as military units, and then sub-contract local organisations to work for them. Immediately, the line between the military and aid workers is breached. Often, of course, the local communities are pleased with the quick results. But PRTs do not undertake the work as part of any long-term

strategy. Building a random school here and a road there with no master plan and no commitment to sustaining the projects can lead to quick decay and deterioration. Communities are not involved and therefore have little control. It does not work.

There are plenty of prior examples of this. When the security situation broke down in Somalia in 1994 and aid workers pulled out, many new projects collapsed. The ones that survived were those that had full community support from the outset and where those communities had designed their own systems to manage and maintain the projects.

For the envisaged reconstruction effort in Afghanistan to have any hope of success, trust between the coalition forces and Afghans is vital. Yet all the evidence is that any trust that did exist has steadily eroded away.

Even as Operation Enduring Freedom began, Masoom Stanekzai, then head of Christian Aid partner organisation the Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan, raised suspicions about US motives. 'The war-ravaged people of Afghanistan are sick of fighting. For years they have experienced nothing but devastation, brutality, severe drought and the loss of their loved ones,' he said.

'They see the Americans' intervention as a golden opportunity for bringing stability and peace, putting an end to 23 years of destruction which started with the Soviet invasion of 1979. But after that invasion they fear foreign troops. And many wonder whether American involvement will open another chapter of deepening poverty, war and loss of further Afghan lives.'

Some Afghans feel that the PRTs are intelligence-gathering units, used to relay information back to coalition combat units, compounds the atmosphere of suspicion. Even those in charge of the PRTs seem confused about their role.



Christian Aid/Dominic Nutt

Hanif Atmar, the Afghan Minister for Rural Development and Rehabilitation: 'I know a former communist soldier who then joined the Mujahedeen and then the Taliban – that was his only means of employment'

On 4 March this year, PRT staff made a presentation to aid workers in Herat. Major Richard Marks, a senior PRT commander, told them: 'What we are not: spies – civil-affairs soldiers are not allowed to collect intelligence.' At the same meeting, Anne Bodine, a US State Department political analyst and senior advisor to the PRT in Herat, said: 'We are the eyes and ears of the US government.'⁹

Agents of America

At about 6.30pm on 26 February 2004, five staff of Christian Aid partner SDF were murdered in cold blood near the village of Ozbin, about 50km outside Kabul. The staff were all working for the SDF National Solidarity Programme and were on their way back to their office in Sarobi district after a day's work on a 'community capacity-building project'.

According to the three survivors, the attackers accused the SDF workers of being 'agents of America' and of gathering intelligence and passing it on to US troops.¹⁰

Raz Mohammed Dalili, SDF's director, argues that this confusion between aid workers and the coalition is played out in the streets and fields of Afghanistan. 'In Ghazni province [south-west of Kabul], there was a project to rebuild a 12km stretch of road, from a village where SDF was working to the nearest city,' he explained.

'When it was finished, within two days the PRT came and rented houses and offices right at the end of that road, giving the impression that the NGOs had just built the road for the benefit of the PRT. Whenever the PRT comes to Ghazni, security becomes worse than before. Locals think that when the American soldiers come, they are just there to capture people and are the enemy of Afghanistan.'

Since the deaths of his staff, he has stopped SDF teams working in 72 villages, previously earmarked for projects. Other NGOs have followed suit, banning their staff from working in isolated areas. United Nations staff are also forbidden to operate in vast swathes of Afghan territory. In March 2004, only around half the country was regarded as fully 'permissive' while the other half was either only accessible with an armed escort or was fully out of bounds.¹¹

The fact that aid workers are now seen as part of the coalition military effort is no unfortunate

accident. It is stated US policy. At the outset of the battle for Afghanistan, US Secretary of State Colin Powell indicated how he viewed aid agencies. Talking at the National Foreign Conference for Leaders of Non-governmental Organisations on 26 October 2001, he said: 'I am serious about making sure we have the best relationship with the NGOs who are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team.'¹²

Nor was that an isolated comment. The US government has attempted to strong-arm aid charities into being agents of American foreign policy in Iraq. In May last year, Andrew Natsios, administrator of the US government's Agency for International Development (USAID)¹³ stated that non-governmental organisations should publicise the US government's financial contribution to their activities. 'This is an issue that we feel very strongly about,' a senior USAID official told Reuters news agency at the time.

Natsios had told a meeting of NGO leaders that aid agencies in the field should identify themselves as recipients of US funding to show a stronger link to American foreign policy. 'If this does not happen more often, Mr Natsios threatened to personally tear up their contracts and find new partners,' said the NGO consortium InterAction. 'NGOs... are an arm of the US government,' it quoted him as saying. According to Reuters, USAID did not dispute this account.

The story is now all the more chilling, following the targeting of civilian workers by insurgent groups in Iraq.

Christian Aid had long predicted these dangers. On 20 December 2002, Roger Riddell, Christian Aid's international director, wrote to Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, about the proposal to use joint regional teams (the pre-cursor to PRTs) in Afghanistan. In the letter, Mr Riddell expressed Christian Aid's 'grave concerns' about the JRTs'

ability to provide security and drew attention to the consequences of blurring military, political and humanitarian lines.

The letter stated:

Direct contact and collaboration with military forces jeopardises existing long-standing relationships with local communities and Christian Aid's neutrality... the JRTs [are part of] the ongoing conflict and military operations. The use of the military in any developmental context endangers the work of Christian Aid and the relationships it has built up with the local communities. The JRTs... will therefore compromise not only our position and standing with local communities [but] our security, as people find it difficult to differentiate between military humanitarian projects and solely humanitarian projects.

In September 2003, Christian Aid was asked to give evidence to the International Development Select Committee Enquiry on Afghanistan, when all these concerns were clearly and forcefully reiterated.

Many aid agencies, including Christian Aid, have signed up to the Red Cross Code of Conduct. It is a charter that guides how agencies give assistance to those in need, particularly in conflict situations. The bottom line is that aid is given on the basis of need – and for no other reason. Neither political persuasion, religion, race nor gender can determine who gets what.

The code states: 'When we give aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such.'

Aid agencies need to access people in war zones and this is clearly dangerous. If combatants think aid workers are feeding and sheltering the enemy they are put at risk. Aid workers then, must be seen to be impartial – helping everyone in need, on all sides of any conflict. It is only then that warring parties are more likely to accept their presence.



Christian Aid/John Davison

Communications are hampered by winter conditions, as well as insecurity. This road in Ghor province was built and maintained by Christian Aid partners through an EU-funded project

Raz Mohammed Dalili reiterates that the PRTs are not the answer to Afghanistan's development needs:

Afghanistan is entering the post-emergency period, between reconstruction and the longer-term needs of development. Both reconstruction and development need good and coordinated planning, especially to move from one to the other. PRTs, however, do not engage in good local needs assessments, but set up projects on an ad-hoc, 'pick and choose' basis with no coherence.

When other NGOs come, people get tired of the lengthy selection process for projects, and the two approaches become confused. PRTs are not humanitarian, they are political. It is not a War on Terror, but a battle for US interests.

People are intelligent now about politics. From the Russian experience onwards, to the Pakistan-backed Taliban, people are suspicious of external invaders who come claiming to be their friends. The Americans think that if they get involved in local communities it is good for propaganda, but in fact the opposite is true. Everyone knows that it is an American idea and not for the benefit of Afghans.

PRTs, then, do not and cannot provide anything like adequate security for the people of Afghanistan – even if they are expanded over the coming months. They are a confusion, they are too small, too few, too weak and their many tasks are incompatible. If they are not to set back the cause of humanitarian relief and future long-term development, they need to be brought under a unified command, such as NATO's, away from the command structure of the War on Terror, and be deployed in a purely peacekeeping role.

Electoral challenge

The lack of security is having another tangible and negative effect on the country. Afghanistan was due to hold presidential elections in June this year, but they were delayed until September because the UN teams tasked with registering voters have been confined to barracks in many areas. By the end of February, only around nine per cent of the eligible electorate had signed up to vote, according to the NATO commander in Afghanistan, Lt Gen Rick Hillier. He accepted that more troops were needed to ensure the registration process could take place and that low voter registration would hamper the creation of a stable Afghanistan. 'You can't do an election if you don't have the right ethnic and racial mix and balance,' he said.¹⁴

There is a view, which is gaining currency among commentators,¹⁵ that President Bush is pushing for the elections in Afghanistan to take place no later than the autumn – even if they are unlikely to be safe or to return a president who holds a countrywide mandate. Bush, the theory goes, needs a foreign policy 'success' before he himself faces presidential elections in November. With the situation in Iraq going from bad to worse, he is thought to consider Afghanistan a better bet.

At this stage, the problems seem intractable. The UN information service (IRIN) has reported the story of an Afghan farmer, Murad Khan, who queued patiently in a long line of people in the north-eastern city of Konduz to add his name to the electoral roll. He believed that, even if people in his area did register, many would be unlikely to vote for their preferred candidate. 'They would not dare to vote against the wishes of the local commanders [warlords] and authorities,' he explained.

With an inadequate Afghan police force and an army in which soldiers are deserting almost as quickly as they can be recruited, it is little wonder that the writ of the Afghan Transitional Authority does not extend far beyond the capital. But the UN peacekeeping mandate needs to be extended beyond Kabul so that electors feel safe to vote, free from intimidation by warlords and the Taliban.

The head of an Afghan organisation, whose projects are part-funded by Christian Aid, describes it as a chicken and egg situation. 'Without security, little reconstruction can take place: construction workers do not want to get shot. But without reconstruction, there is little hope for security.'

He says there needs to be 'security before there is peace, justice and stability, which are the preconditions for security. But the international community needs to see a peace dividend before it provides security.'

It is an eloquent description of the conundrum facing Afghanistan. Only the international community can cut this Gordian knot. But it will only be done when the needs of the Afghan people are, finally, given precedence over the political interests of those who

invaded the country with such grand promises. Unless those promises are to be broken, and the invaders once again 'walk away', real security for all Afghanistan's people must be established so that the real job of reconstruction can begin in earnest.

In Afghanistan:

Christian Aid calls on the UN to extend its peacekeeping and security role.

Until capable and competent national security forces are in place under the command of a legitimate national government, an international force should be responsible for peacekeeping and security with the same UN security council mandate that created the ISAF, and its mission should be extended beyond Kabul and Kunduz.

The peacekeeping mission should focus on disarmament, de-mobilisation and rehabilitation, and the reconstruction of Afghanistan's own security capabilities in the form of a national army and police force.

Christian Aid calls for all provincial reconstruction teams to be brought under the unified military command of an international body such as NATO, working to a UN Security Council mandate (see above).

We believe that coalition-commanded provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) are an inadequate vehicle for providing security in Afghanistan.

In areas where the humanitarian agencies already have a presence, PRTs should limit their role to local security.

Reconstruction efforts by PRTs should be restricted to infrastructure projects, such as building police stations, roads and bridges, that the humanitarian agencies generally do not participate in.

PRTs – including US-led PRTs – should all come under a unified, UN-mandated military command. This would distinguish their role from that of coalition forces deployed in the War on Terror.

If the PRT model is to continue, the teams should be renamed provincial stabilisation teams (as recommended by UNAMA) to reflect their primary purpose.

Christian Aid calls for a return to more poverty-targeted development assistance.

Security is an urgent concern. But donor countries must at the same time heed the calls of the Afghan government and intensify their efforts to address the economic factors that contribute to instability. Funding should be allocated to programmes that give Afghans access to long-term jobs that do not depend on the war or drug economies.

Recommendations

In February 2004, Prime Minister Tony Blair launched his Commission for Africa. Its aim is to reverse a trend that has seen millions of Africa's poorest people grow even poorer over the past 25 years.

He appointed a team of top-level international politicians and economists, together with Live Aid founder Bob Geldof. He gave them 12 months to produce a report that will place Africa at the top of the agenda during Britain's year as chair of the rich nations' club, the G8, and during the UK's presidency of the European Union.

It is an ambitious undertaking. At the launch, Blair said that he wants 'specific solutions' on development, conflict resolution, governance and economic issues, as well as proposals on trade and debt. His aim, he said, is 'to re-galvanise the international community to act'.

He concluded: 'I have said on many occasions that I believe Africa is the scar on the conscience of the world. And I think it is right that we continue to treat this as an absolute priority over the coming years.'

Christian Aid, together with other aid and development agencies, gave the initiative a cautious welcome. Certainly, we believe that it confirms Britain's place at the forefront of the push to lift developing nations out of poverty. We hope that it proves to be an important step in targeting aid effectively at some of the world's poorest countries.

But we also warned against 'yet more targets, plans or strategies that fail to deliver'.

Much has been made of the parallels between the new commission and the Brandt Commission which, during the 1970s and 1980s, set the template for relations between the rich and poor worlds in the Cold War era. Indeed, Blair's initiative is often referred to as 'Brandt II'.

The trouble with the Brandt report was that it achieved little. Its ground-breaking proposals informed a generation about the iniquities and injustices of the gulf between North and South. Those in power, however, did little to change the situation.

The reason was that their horizons were limited by the overriding strategic reality of the time – the Cold War. This was the prism through which all international views were distorted. It was against this background that Brandt's proposals were praised, and then largely ignored.

There are real fears that the new commission, too, will be just another talking shop, producing another dust-gathering report. Tony Blair refutes this. 'It's up to us to make sure it isn't,' he says.

In this report, Christian Aid issues both a warning and a plea – to Blair and other world leaders. It charts a dangerous backslide into the mind-set of the Cold War, when donors' own strategic and commercial agendas determined who got what from aid. It argues that this must not be allowed to happen again.

We have shown that dark clouds are already gathering over the ideal that aid should be exclusively directed towards those that need it most. Selfless aid, given with the sole aim of alleviating poverty – in Africa and across the world's other poorest nations.

That is the vision on which the world now needs to re-focus. World leaders must ensure that aid is not hijacked by the imperatives of the War on Terror, as it was by the Cold War. The poor people of the world are, nervously, watching.

1. The British government must remain focused on poverty reduction as the core objective of its Official Development Aid (ODA). It must also use its influence to halt, and then reverse, the trend towards linking aid to the War on Terror.

Today, Britain leads the world in targeting aid to the poorest and most vulnerable. The UK government is unique among the major donor nations in having a single department with cabinet-level representation, wholly focused on international development. Britain alone legally binds its government – through the International Development Act 2002 – to direct aid specifically towards poverty reduction.

There must be no retreat from this position.

The British government must resist any pressures created by the War on Terror to use its own aid budget to fund counter-terrorism projects or any other security programmes.

And the UK itself must stop diverting funds from middle-income countries to pay for the reconstruction of Iraq and reinstate the funds already diverted.

Indeed, we also call on the UK government to exert pressure on Australia, Japan and Denmark to abandon their current policies linking aid provision to countering terrorism.

2. British ministers should actively lobby members of the OECD to ensure that the definition of aid is not extended to include military or security-related assistance.

The UK government should move to block proposed changes currently being considered by the OECD's DAC. It is Christian Aid's belief that the DAC proposals to make security programmes eligible for ODA could serve to legitimise a creeping militarisation of humanitarian action.

As stated above, Christian Aid believes that ODA should be used for the sole purpose of poverty reduction. Peacekeeping operations and military training should be funded from defence budgets, and not ODA budgets.

3. As the world's largest aid donor, the EU must stop the drift towards politicising its aid budget.

Christian Aid believes that the EU and its member states must not grant aid based on whether or not a country is perceived to be fighting terrorism. Such policies hinder the impact of aid on poverty reduction.

We call on the UK government to oppose current proposals that make aid the responsibility of a new EU Foreign Minister, and any other moves to make EU development and humanitarian assistance a tool of future EU foreign, defence and security policy.

4. The neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action must be upheld.

Our report from Afghanistan, and events over Easter 2004 in Iraq, show just what happens when humanitarian agencies have to work alongside military forces trying to win 'hearts and minds' by dispensing their own brand of aid.

The distinction between international humanitarian NGOs and the military becomes blurred and this has already led to NGO workers being seen as 'onside' with the armed forces – and therefore legitimate targets for belligerents. In turn, this means that fewer and fewer humanitarian agencies are able to operate, and less aid reaches those who really need it.

We believe it is essential that politicians, military forces and belligerents around the world refrain from adopting policies, strategies or language that blur the distinction between humanitarian efforts and their pursuit of military and political objectives. A failure to do so will undermine longer-term reconstruction and development.

Notes

Aid in a cold climate

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Back into the cold

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Uganda: the 'Pearl of Africa' and the War on Terror

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Afghanistan: caught in the crossfire

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- 6 In conversation with the author, 13 August 2002
- 7 In conversation with the author, 24 March 2004
- 8 Combined Forces Command, 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan,' Afghanistan Kabul Compound, 21 February 2004
- 9 Anne Bodine quickly backtracked when challenged. However, her statement compounded the suspicions of many present at the meeting
- 10 Private email correspondence between the author and Raz Mohammed Dalili
- 11 Information taken from a UN map: Afghanistan Low, Medium and High Risk Areas (Permissive, Uncertain and Hostile Operation Environment) for UN Movement, 22 February 2004
- 12 The term 'force multiplier' is a military one and refers to small elements (pieces of equipment and/or personnel and units) that make a significant difference to capability, usually out of proportion to their size. Therefore, Colin Powell was using military language to ascribe a seemingly military role to independent NGOs in Afghanistan
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Christian Aid/Simon Townsley

Dawn sees the 'night commuters' leaving the Kitgum Government Hospital. Some must walk for as long as three hours every day to reach the relative safety of towns in northern Uganda. Much of the surrounding countryside is now deserted, frightened families having moved into camps

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