Negotiating Aid: The Structural Conditions Shaping the Negotiating Strategies of African Governments

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Abstract
This article presents a new analytical approach to the study of aid negotiations. Building on existing approaches but trying to overcome their limitations, it argues that factors outside of individual negotiations (or the ‘game’ in game-theoretic approaches) significantly affect the preferences of actors, the negotiating strategies they fashion, and the success of those strategies. This approach was employed to examine and compare the experiences of eight countries: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. The article presents findings from these country studies which investigated the strategies these states have adopted in talks with aid donors, the sources of leverage they have been able to bring to bear in negotiations, and the differing degrees of control that they have been able to exercise over the policies agreed in negotiations and those implemented after agreements have been signed. It argues that Botswana, Ethiopia and Rwanda have been more successful than the other five cases in leveraging negotiating capital from the economic, political, ideological and institutional conditions under which negotiations occur.

Keywords
development aid; World Bank; debt; PRSP; ownership; negotiation; conditionality

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Academic studies of aid to Africa have typically asked how ‘we’ in the West can get ‘them’ in Africa to adopt economic and political systems that look like our own. As a result, the negotiating strategies that African states have adopted to secure their own policy preferences have been largely neglected. To fill this gap, a research project was carried out to investigate the strategies that African states have adopted to identify and advance their objectives, the sources of leverage they have been able to bring to bear in negotiations, and the differing degrees of control that they have been able to exercise over the policies agreed in negotiations and those implemented after agreements have been signed. This research involved eight countries: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. These country studies explore the implicit and explicit negotiating strategies African negotiators adopt. This article summarizes the findings of the research carried out under the auspices of the Negotiating Aid project (2005–2007) based at the Global Economic Governance Programme, University of Oxford. The full findings and country studies are published in Whitfield (2009).

The cases focus on Africa because the continent houses more countries that rely on foreign assistance for a significant share of their central government income than any other continent. The governments’ task of securing preferences in policy and project negotiations is most challenging in these aid dependent countries. The selection of countries captures variation in negotiating strength, the levels of financial dependence and the historical and political context for aid relations. Botswana provides for contrast with the currently aid dependent countries as it successfully managed aid in the 1960s and 1970s and exited from dependence by the 1980s.

There is a tradition of research that has treated aid as involving a bargaining relationship in which donors offer finance as an inducement to recipients to adopt particular policies. However, since Robert Cassen (1994) asked Does Aid Work?, most literature has focused on ‘impact,’ considering whether aid achieves objectives that are assumed to be shared by donors and recipients, such as reducing poverty, building democratic institutions and promoting human rights (Sachs 2005). A co-operative relationship, even a partnership between donor and recipient is thus often taken for granted.

The international aid system recently embraced the goal of increasing the ‘ownership’ of aid receiving countries as a key to increasing aid effectiveness, as codified in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness signed by donor and recipient countries. However, this embrace of ownership disguises the fact that the concept is endorsed as an aspiration by actors with quite different views about how the aid system should be reformed, and it is used to describe quite different phenomena. On the one hand, ownership can refer to the control of recipients

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over the process and outcome of aid negotiations. Those using ownership in this sense tend to start from a point of acceptance that recipients currently have little control because donors have sought and achieved significant influence by attaching policy ‘conditions’ to aid and debt relief. Proposing ownership as control thus involves urging donors to end conditionality and encouraging recipients to identify their own priorities, to establish their own systems to coordinate donors, and only to accept aid that comes on their terms.

On the other hand, ownership is also frequently used to refer to the commitment of recipients to an identifiable set of economic reforms promoted by aid donors. Rather than worrying about the limitations of their own policy prescriptions, donors have increasingly diagnosed the failures of conditional lending as reflecting a lack of belief on the part of recipients in the policies they have adopted in order to access funding. Those encouraging recipients to ‘take ownership’ of reform policies might assess success according to the energy with which recipient governments implement conditions and face down domestic resistance to them. The term’s deployment in this way tells us nothing about how the policies were chosen and whose preferences they reflect, and thus enables the obfuscation of ongoing disagreements.

We adopt an understanding of ownership as the degree of control that recipient governments are able to exercise over policy design and implementation, irrespective of the objectives they pursue. Focusing on ownership as control follows from an understanding that over time recipients have lost much of their negotiating strength and that the subsequent loss of control over policy has had a malign effect. The defense of ownership is in effect a defense of the sovereign rights of African states. This research is designed to explore how a realm of decision-making can be protected from external influence, defending spaces in which African agents can struggle amongst themselves over the nature of appropriate political and economic processes. It does not take the next step of discussing whether and how greater ownership leads to better outcomes in terms of economic development, poverty reduction or democratic governance. We see ownership as an end, rather than a means, because the defense of a national realm protected to a large extent from external influence is a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition for such developments.

The first part of the article reviews the strengths and limitations of various approaches to conceptualizing and studying aid negotiations. It then outlines a new approach which builds on and combines elements of these existing frameworks but also adds new elements. It also discusses how this new approach can be operationalized, in particular how to assess a government’s degree of ownership as control, or negotiating strength, in contemporary aid relationships. The second part presents findings from the country cases. It explains the factors that account for the negotiating strategies attempted by each government, and the varying degrees of control they achieved. The article concludes by summarizing why some
governments have more negotiating strength than others, even in the face of aid dependence.

**Conceptualizing Aid Negotiations**

During the first decades of aid to Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, academics paid limited attention to the process of negotiating aid. The topic became an issue of significance only after the turn towards policy-based lending in the 1980s. Academic studies focused increasingly on the success of donors’ strategies to encourage recipient governments to adopt economic (and later political) reforms.

The main works on the political economy of reform in Africa draw on rational choice theory (Bates 1981; Hyden 1983; Callaghy & Ravenhill 1993) and on neo-patrimonial frameworks (Van de Walle 2001). The dominant texts on aid negotiations use game theory (Mosley et al. 1991), principal-agent models (Killick 1998; Dijkstra 2002), and new institutionalist approaches (Gibson et al. 2005). This article presents an alternative approach that builds on the useful insights of these approaches, but attempts to overcome their limitations. It does not present a new model of donor-recipient relations that can predict the outcomes of aid negotiations, but rather suggests a means to discuss issues in the political economy of aid that have been under-theorized.

The approach developed here differs in three ways from the established texts. First, rational choice and game theoretic models posit the ‘players’ in the negotiation as bundles of interests and capacities, rather than as political agents partially constituted by the ideas and memories of the communities from which they emerge. In contrast, our approach assumes that politicians and bureaucrats as well as more complex corporate bodies such as ministries, cabinets and political parties identify their preferences not simply with reference to their own interests and not simply through rational calculation. Ideology, domestic politics and geopolitical factors all play important roles. Previous studies typically accept that these factors do influence the negotiating strategies of donors and recipients. However, they note them principally as external factors that limit the predictive power of the models adopted. Where game theorists make some attempt to engage with domestic politics they ‘disaggregate’ the interests within donor agencies and the recipient state machinery. Nonetheless, they continue to treat these interests as material, individualistic, and ‘given’ by the position each actor inhabits in an incentive structure. In contrast, our country studies demonstrate how the interests and preferences of the actors are shaped by the global and national, economic, political and ideological contexts in which each actor and the negotiations themselves are embedded.

Second, much of the literature is ahistorical. Identifying what is specific about any set of negotiations involves not only describing the contemporary aid system but also considering the ideological and institutional legacies of the systems over
which innovations are layered. The seminal works of Mosley et al. (1991) and Killick (1998) looked at the lending practices of the World Bank and IMF and the effectiveness of conditionality in the 1980s and early 1990s. As Mosley et al. pointed out, any negotiating game is bound to change significantly, not least as a result of the fact that after years of experience both sides of the bargaining table figure out ways to neutralize each other’s strategies. Indeed, much has changed since they wrote. Evolutions in the aid system, including recent emphases on debt relief, national and participatory planning, and institutional ‘capacity building’ have both affected the process and content of negotiations as well as the actors. They have also been driven by strategic moves by players on both sides seeking greater leverage. However, these changes are not simply evolutions in a game. They reflect the position of the aid system as an epiphenomenon of broader global political, economic and ideological developments, not least the end of the Cold War, increasingly rapid capital flows and an increasing focus in US and European foreign policies on the promotion of claimed ‘Western values.’ Only by situating changed donor and recipient priorities in light of these developments can we understand contemporary aid relationships.

Third, both neo-patrimonial and rational choice approaches recognize that conflicts of interest are at the heart of aid negotiations and of the hesitance of recipients to implement outcomes of those negotiations. They also recognize that these conflicts occur between different groups within the recipient government as well as within the recipient society. However, these conflicts are rarely discussed as resulting from compromises, trade-offs and consensus building within both society and government, and thus from the legitimate and normal stuff of politics. Rather, they are seen as deviations from an assumed rational-bureaucratic norm. In much of the neo-patrimonial literature, resistance by recipient governments to donor prescribed policies is understood as a ‘policy failure’ reflecting the nefarious motivations of elite network whose interests are threatened. Our research did not start with this assumption, but rather challenges the notion that a technocratic ‘best policy’ exists. Instead, our country studies sought to identify the bases of recipient policy preferences and the underlying motivations for their negotiating strategies.

The New Approach

Our approach understands outcomes of aid negotiations as the product of an encounter between representatives of recipient and donor preferences.\(^2\) However,
it posits that the shaping of those preferences in the first place as well as the ability of each actor to successfully achieve preferred outcomes is shaped by the conditions under which each actor faces the other, the negotiating strategies they adopt in response to those conditions and their expectations of each other’s behaviour.

A simplified model of this framework is illustrated in Fig. 1. It is simplified, because it represents an abstraction from reality: amongst other issues, the way in which recipients develop their strategies can themselves become aspects of negotiating capital. This diagram also represents just one iteration of a game that is played repeatedly. Behaviour and relations through the negotiation and implementation phase of any one negotiation have an impact on the prior conditions and strategies for any future talks. Furthermore, perceived successes and failures of any outcomes will reorient preferences and thus strategies for the next round.

The first step in analyzing an aid negotiation is to develop a clear understanding of the ever-changing global and national economic, political, ideological, and institutional contexts within which donors and recipients define their preferences and select their strategies. We call these contexts the structural conditions. Such conditions do not determine the outcome of any negotiation in a mechanistic sense. Rather, they present donors and recipients with constraints to consider in

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**Fig. 1. Simplified model of an aid negotiation.**

participation in the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which sets norms and standard practices and promotes peer pressure on members to adopt them.
deciding what they think can be achieved through the negotiation, and with resources to draw on to make their case in a compelling way so the other considers their preferences seriously. We use the term ‘negotiating capital’ to refer to the leverage that a negotiator is able to derive from these structural conditions. In sum, a recipient government’s negotiating strategy is chosen in the context of its given structural conditions and how it decides those conditions can be deployed in aid negotiations to meet its objectives.

This model is most obviously applicable to negotiations over the priorities, terms, and conditions of a particular financial transfer. However, the model is also useful in thinking about larger processes. Aid relationships are not established either by donors or by recipients simply in talks over particular transfers – both sets of actors establish systems, institutions, and broad approaches to the management of their relationships with each other. Both understand that the form and dynamics of these interactions have important impacts on the ability to control implemented policy outcomes. Whether in an individual negotiation or in a process to establish wider aid management systems, the strategies adopted by African governments are unlikely to be explicitly stated and may well never be written down or consciously designed. They may be implicit and be the result of several actions and choices by the government. They may never be clearly articulated by those engaged in the negotiations – they may only exist as personally defined tactics or as a general approach informed by previous experiences in the minds of the negotiators. This clearly presents difficulties for any researcher and explains the heavy reliance of our country case studies on post hoc interviews with African negotiators.

This analytical framework recognizes the aid negotiation process as including the full policy cycle: agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and revision. However, we focus particularly on the agenda-setting and policy formulation stages because these stages involve the strongest forms of recipient-government control over its national development strategy and policies. Recipient strategies of non-implementation of the negotiated policies or ones that focus on leveraging influence during implementation in order to alter the policies to meet the recipient government’s objectives or priorities are important because they illustrate recipient leverage over its policy agenda. At the same time, they are weaker forms of control.

**Structural Conditions: Some Hypotheses**

How do we understand the effects of the structural conditions on a recipient’s negotiating capital, and a recipient’s negotiating capital on its ability to negotiate effectively with donors? Outlined here are hypotheses about the relations between these factors based on the existing literature, which formed the basis of the enquiry in the country studies.
Economic conditions may include the degree of the recipient’s dependence on markets in the donor country or the degree of the donor’s dependence on access to resources being offered by the recipient. Other important economic conditions include the degrees of indebtedness and of aid dependence, measured, for example, in terms of the shares of state-government expenditure sourced from donors. A caveat on the limits of the aid-dependence argument was already noted in the Aid and Power study: the World Bank’s disbursing dilemma reduces the credibility of conditionality. However, this does not necessarily enable recipients to press for their own preferences. It simply keeps the Bank from enacting sanctions against recipients who do not implement these conditions and thus allows non-performers to keep acquiring loans. The degree of aid dependence is broadly a function of the availability of alternative sources of funding. We might expect recipient governments who have access to sources of finance such as foreign direct investment, the domestic tax base, and private lending to have more negotiating capital. The increasing role of non-traditional donors such as China may provide another alternative source of funding that can be used to gain leverage in aid negotiations.

The ideological resources on which both donors and recipients are able to draw in their negotiations vary across time and place. For donors, the purposes of their aid and the content of their policy preferences change over time in relation to developments in donor societies, in the developing world, and in internationally set norms and agendas. This presents a shifting challenge to recipients who might seek to appeal to donor prejudices in order to attract funding or to make links between currently favoured priorities and the recipients’ own preferences. Whether or not a recipient’s ideological proclivities agree with those of donors, the ability of a recipient government to express a clear vision about where the country is going and about the contribution of public policy to achieving that outcome affects their ability to defend individual policies within a negotiation. Donors typically find it hard to challenge a recipient’s priorities that are constructed within a coherent framework, particularly one that draws strength from links to a wider international discourse that might contradict donor preferences.

Political conditions include a range of contexts. Every recipient government’s negotiating mandate flows to some extent from donors’ recognition of its unique ability as a sovereign authority to rule a particular territory and to mediate competing interests and views. Recipient governments that have a high degree of political legitimacy at home may thus have more negotiating capital. On the other hand, recipient governments that are understood by donors to be constrained by domestic political considerations, such as a finely balanced coalition, powerful interest groups, or a weak electoral mandate, may also be able to use this constraint to gain leverage in negotiations. They may be able to do this if the existing government is seen as more committed to donor-sponsored reforms than the dominant political opposition or if the alternative to rule by the current
government might prove destabilizing. However, donors may not always be swung by domestic political arrangements in their assessments of whether a particular country’s sovereign authority should be respected. Donors’ understanding of the legitimacy of governments is also constructed in the international realm, through diplomacy, civil society, and media representations of particular governments. Certain recipients may be favoured for ideological or geo-strategic reasons, or simply because donors need to showcase a successful example of their prescribed reforms or aid interventions working. Where recipients manoeuvre themselves into the position of being a key ally of a major donor or a donor darling, they may gain negotiating strength.

Lastly, there are a number of institutional conditions that affect the ability of a recipient government to negotiate effectively with donors. These include the effectiveness of state institutions in devising and defending development strategies and policies and the condition of the civil service, which runs these institutions. The condition of the state bureaucracy affects the aid management structure that emerges in a recipient country as well as the ability of the recipient government to shape its aid-management structure according to its wishes. The aid system itself can negatively affect the institutional conditions in aid-dependent countries. Externalizing policymaking has undermined the development of state institutional capacity and has arrested processes of policy learning within the civil service. Another institutional condition is the impact of existing political and administrative systems on achieving political buy-in across government ministries, departments, and agencies.

**Assessing Ownership**

How then do we measure the degrees of control achieved by different governments? Mosley et al. (1991) looked at the policy agendas with which donor and recipient arrived at the negotiating table, the final policy design, and the degree of implementation. This suggests a basic metric for assessing the amount of control recipient governments achieve:

- what proportion of the implemented policy agenda was decided by the recipient government without factoring in what donor preferences might be;
- what proportion resulted from a compromise between recipient and donor with each taking into consideration thoughts of what the other’s preferences might be; and
- what proportion was accepted reluctantly by recipient governments as a necessary price to pay to access financial aid in spite of conflicting policy preferences.
The task of discerning these proportions is more complicated now than during the early phase of structural adjustment lending considered by Mosley et al. (1991). The aid talks of the 1980s involved a mission team from each donor agency flying into a country briefly to bargain head-to-head with national officials. In their place, we now typically find multi-annual, multi-sectoral, multi-donor planning exercises that bring together in-country donor staff, local officials and a class of middle-men (consultants and NGOs) sometimes all paid for by a range of different donors. In some cases, most of a country’s donors agree to be bound by the outcomes of mega-negotiations, such as those over debt relief packages, and all sign off on the same policy matrix or planning document. The location at which policy is contested shifts under these circumstances among micro-level negotiations over projects and programs, mezzo-level negotiations over sector policy and strategies, and macro-level negotiations over the aid management structure and objectives of the national plan. Thus, contemporary aid relationships make it much harder to identify the positions adopted by either actor ‘prior to’ the negotiation. To understand aid now, we must understand who defines the process of negotiating aid as well as the content of the talks.

Given this evolving situation, the authors of the country study were charged with digging into the details of each country’s specific experience of aid relations. Their tasks included:

- To examine the material, ideological, political and institutional contexts of any country’s aid relationship, tracing them from the past to the present;
- To outline changes in the government’s formal and informal practices of negotiating aid and dealing with donors, as well as changes in aid practices driven by donors and how the government responded;
- To put together a picture of recent government strategies for dealing with donors and managing aid generally;
- To use strategic cases of negotiations over specific policies to interrogate the general picture;
- And to form a conclusion about the current government’s degree of control over the policy agenda and implemented outcomes based on all of this.

The country studies provide ‘thick descriptions’ that reconstruct decision-making processes as far as possible by accessing the perspectives and strategies of the actors. Their conclusions on the degree of ownership are subjective but draw on a wide range of academic and policy literature. They were combined with either extensive experience working on or researching these issues in the country or intensive ethnographic field research. This approach was adopted because the question of recipient control cannot be turned into a series of quantitative indicators. However, the experiences of the eight countries can be compared and the strengths and weaknesses of their negotiating strategies, and the factors accounting for them, can be discussed in relation to each other.
Experiences and Strategies of Eight African Countries

Based on the assessments provided by the country studies, the eight countries can be arranged on a scale ranging from strongest to weakest in their ability to control implemented policy outcomes, as illustrated in Fig. 2.

Botswana demonstrated the strongest degree of control in the contemporary period, having moved beyond financial dependence. This shift was achieved on the back of a strategy developed by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) upon taking power at independence. The strategy was designed to secure the integrity of Botswana’s domestic planning, democratic oversight and bureaucratic systems and to prevent institutional and financial dependency. The central plank of the strategy involved all aid being processed within constraints imposed by pre-existing national plans. With planning still internationally fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s, the government negotiated with individual donors, asking them to select projects to support from the national plan and to specialize in specific sectors. It did accept some projects initiated by donors, but only after scrutiny that they met with government priorities. The government also refused projects where recurrent costs could not be managed by the country alone after the donor stopped giving and insisted that projects and personnel be located and integrated within ministries, resisting the creation of donor-led project enclaves.

Ethiopia is placed next in terms of the degree of control achieved. Unlike Botswana, Ethiopia remains aid dependent and receives an increasing share of its state finances from donors. Yet, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government is in control of its development strategy, negotiating with donors only at the margins. The EPRDF government’s negotiating strategy, since it came to power in 1991, has been to adapt those policy prescriptions of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it finds acceptable to its own development agenda and to reject others. It has largely succeeded in controlling the pace and degree of reform. As in the Botswana case, part of the Ethiopian strategy has been to insist on the sovereignty of pre-existing political
and administrative systems, particularly regional and local government structures. Rwanda is placed in the middle of the spectrum.

Although Rwanda’s policy space is constrained by its acceptance of heavy donor involvement in social and economic policy-making processes in order to access aid, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) Government has repeatedly transgressed donor preferences (suspending democracy and invading its neighbouring state) without losing access to external finance. The state has established ‘red-lines’ across which donor comment, let alone pressure, is not welcomed. It has also established policies and programs without donor support in areas that it defines as affecting social stability or state security. Donors play a role in pushing for and shaping reforms in areas that the government is concerned with addressing. However, where donors and the government disagree, the government has persevered with its policies and approaches at its own pace, trying to keep donors on board but also continuing without donor support. This raises the question, ‘How does Rwanda get away with it?’ A severe rupturing of post-colonial relations between Rwanda and its historic donors following the 1994 genocide, strategic use of the legacies of genocide, and the development of closer relations with the US and UK all play explanatory roles.

The remaining five countries belong at the weak end of the spectrum. Although there is variation among the countries, they are grouped together because each has attempted broadly similar contemporary strategies for managing donors, adopting internationally recommended systems of participatory planning and consensus building, and seeking the harmonization of donor inputs to fund the resulting policies. Nonetheless, each country’s weak control is characterized by donors taking the initiative in designing new systems for aid management and introducing new policy areas for discussion. Recipient governments spend most of their time responding to donor demands, rarely introduce their own policy innovations, and rarely have the upper hand in talks.

It is clear therefore, that certain negotiating strategies have been more successful than others. However, to claim that differing strategies explain different outcomes, would be to assume that African negotiators have a free hand to make history, without reference to the circumstances in which they try to do so. On the other hand, to assess outcomes from circumstances would be to treat African negotiators as helpless victims of economic circumstance or of the coercive power of an international aid system. African governments have always had implicit strategies for negotiating aid and usually seek to maximize both funding and policy autonomy. The question is which strategies have worked best in which circumstances. We then need to consider the differing economic, institutional, ideological and political circumstances in which the various strategies were attempted before we can start trying to explain differences in the degrees of control achieved.
Economic Factors

The first clear conclusion from the country cases is that the degree of control achieved by different recipient governments is not determined by their levels of aid dependence, measured in terms of aid as a percentage of gross national income (GNI). As Table 1 shows, in the most recent years for which data was available when the research was carried out, two of our ‘stronger’ cases, Rwanda and Ethiopia, rank second and third, respectively for the highest aid dependency among the case countries, just behind Mozambique.\(^3\) Our strongest, Botswana has been omitted from Table 1, because aid contributes less than 1% of gross national income during these years. However, in the early years of independence as Botswana developed its strategy, aid as a percentage of GNI was 20%.\(^4\) Nonetheless, the historical perspective gained from the cases alerts us to the fact that economic factors have been important in explaining weak control. In particular, two oil crises and Western recessions in the late 1970s led to debt and balance of payments crises in the early 1980s in all our cases except Ethiopia and Botswana.

Economic conditions were central to Botswana’s success. Despite high dependence on aid after independence in 1966, the BDP government significantly decreased its dependence in the 1970s as a result of economic growth and prudent macroeconomic policies. The country’s newly discovered diamond mines

\(^3\) The figure for total official development assistance to Ethiopia is misleading because it includes a high level of food and humanitarian relief which does not go to the government. However, non-relief aid was still 27–30% of total government spending between 2002 and 2005 (World Development Indicators, April 2007).

\(^4\) The comparable figures for Botswana would be the period when it was aid dependent after independence in 1966 until the early 1980s. Aid as a percentage of GNI averaged 22.7 % from 1966–1970, 14.4 % from 1971–75, and 11.4% from 1975–80. The government maintained strong ownership through the period. After Botswana gained middle-income status in 1992, total aid declined and now forms a negligible percent of total government revenue (World Development Indicators, April 2007).

### Table 1. Aid Dependence of Country Case Studies

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brought a substantial net inflow of foreign exchange, which was used in such a fiscally conservative way that the country became an exporter of capital. Since the early 1980s, the government has not really needed the monetary value of aid and thus achieved strong leverage in aid negotiations.

Although Ethiopia is often cited as one of the poorest countries in the world, like Botswana, Ethiopia did not experience a debt crisis or a balance of payments crisis in the 1980s. First, the Derg government (1974–1991) was excluded from Western lending. Second, the balance of payments was kept in check through import controls and, remarkably, the currency remained close to its international exchange value (unlike in most African states that implemented import controls). After overthrowing the Derg, the EPRDF thus entered negotiations in 1993–94 with the World Bank and IMF to back its reform agenda without the need for massive debt relief that so weakened other African countries. Although the country went through the debt-relief process described below, the absence of a legacy of long-term adjustment meant that it entered the process from a much stronger position than other heavily-indebted countries.

The debt crises in the weak states and Rwanda placed recipients in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the Bretton Woods institutions at just the moment that these institutions were developing a more ambitious agenda for influencing policy in borrowing countries. The drawn-out nature of the adjustment and debt-relief programs that these countries embarked upon for two decades had a profound effect on their negotiating capital, on their state institutions, and on the ideological orientation of state elites. They thereby institutionalized the routine presence of donors and their ideas at every phase of decision-making.

African governments facing fiscal crises developed a range of strategies in the 1980s to access capital and resist conditionality. Back-sliding on policy commitments accepted as the basis of conditioned loans and playing donors against each other were both common strategies that were attempted with varying degrees of success in each of the weak cases. Incentives facing the World Bank and IMF to maintain disbursements and to retain influence meant that they were willing to allow some policy slippage. However, these strategies of evasion were increasingly closed down after the end of the Cold War as alternative sponsors receded and Western donors coordinated their own activities, increasing their ability to keep African economic policies under surveillance and to punish non-compliance.

In the 1990s, donors sought not simply to shrink the state but also to transform the administrative and political systems in recipient countries through ‘governance conditions’ (Williams and Young 1994; Harrison 2004). As anti-corruption, human rights, and a cast of quasi-autonomous accountability institutions were layered on top of shrunken African state structures, recipient governments’ ability to plan independently and to express coherent visions for national development were further weakened.
At the turn of the twenty-first century, donors announced that the debt burdens that kept many recipients beholden to donors would be substantially reduced under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative. This incentive seems to have been so powerful that governments in all of the most indebted countries more or less acquiesced to donor demands. These included that, as a condition of debt write-off packages, they formulate and implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and stay on track with an IMF arrangement. With the hope of an escape from the debt escalator, the PRSP period perhaps marked the single weakest moment of recipient negotiating capital. Western donors appeared to be the only significant potential sponsors of African development and PRSPs to be the only game in town.

Institutional Factors

A significant aspect of the negotiating success enjoyed by Botswana and Ethiopia appears to result from their maintenance throughout the period of professional civil services, capable state institutions, strong planning institutions, and centralized aid management systems. In Botswana these were all aspects of the state infrastructure developed in many post-colonies, in an age when Keynesian planning remained popular in both West and East. The BDP government has since resisted the creation of aid negotiation mechanisms when it felt that they could undermine government priorities. It has been able to do this because of the high calibre staff in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning which controls the planning and budgetary processes. These strong institutions have been assertive in setting the policy agenda, keeping donors in line with national priorities, and instilling credibility in the eyes of donors concerning domestic systems. In contrast to post-colonial African governments that rapidly ‘Africanized’ the civil service, the BDP government retained colonial administrators, only replacing them gradually with nationals as they acquired skills and experience.

The EPRDF government in Ethiopia also operated in favourable institutional conditions. As one of the few African countries to evade long-term colonial imposition, Ethiopia has a deeply entrenched tradition of the state: the idea of government and the importance of a structure of effective public order. The creation of a functioning modern bureaucracy derives from the post-war Haile Selassie era (1941–74), and though it was strained by the revolution that overthrew Selassie, the civil service survived the Derg regime. Ethiopia’s effective civil service allows the government to develop and pursue its own development vision and gives the government credibility in the eyes of donors, who are hesitant to override what they perceive as low corruption and effective service delivery systems.

In contrast, although the official aid management structure in the group of weak countries may stipulate that aid should be negotiated centrally and in line
with nationally defined policies and plans, the country studies show that the reality is quite different. Negotiations have fragmented as donors negotiated directly with a range of line ministries, preferably outside of any political or bureaucratic oversight.

There are good reasons why the weak countries have been unable to resist these tendencies. As the World Bank and IMF initially sought to promote adjustment, they typically sided with a section of the ruling party or regime whom they identified as supportive and described as ‘reformers.’ Adjustment policy processes and reform packages were designed to strengthen these groups and insulate them from democratic pressure, and sidelining groups identified as blocking reforms, including those associated with parastatal companies. Under the auspices of civil service cuts, the World Bank and IMF pushed for the dismantling of planning departments in countries where they still functioned, such as Mali and Zambia, and tried to prevent the re-establishment of a planning department in Ghana. Ghana’s civil service had been decimated by economic decline and politicization and there, as in other weak countries, the government itself also failed to improve public administrations during the adjustment period. The sometimes secretive nature of the adjustment process also tended to exclude bureaucratic and representative institutions and to avoid public debate on the objectives of reform.

African governments sometimes used the idea that they were bound by external conditionality to achieve their domestic aims, where they accorded with World Bank and IMF objectives. However, where donors and recipients differed in their preferences, African governments pursuing this strategy were unable to make a convincing case to donors, to win popular support for their positions, or to articulate alternatives. ‘Policy dialogue’ arenas started to multiply as the absence of central planning meant donors needed to make contacts across all ministries in order to implement sector-specific reforms and projects.

This fragmentation of aid management systems made it difficult for recipient governments to manage aid donors during adjustment era negotiations. However, as donors started to reform their aid practices in the 1990s, it also became a problem for them. Frustrated in their efforts to push new aid priorities in recipient countries and amongst recalcitrant donors, some donors began emphasizing the need for a coordination mechanism. Towards the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, fragmented policy dialogue arenas became more organized and interconnected. Still, in the absence of effective states, there was little to hold the fragments together.

The acceptance of the World Bank’s PRSP approach across donors presented a new opportunity to get a grip on the aid system. PRSPs extended conditions from the content of policies to the process of policy-making itself. ‘Participation’ of donors and international and local ‘civil society organizations’ in planning processes became a condition for access to debt relief, formalizing pre-existing trends to generate a new model of negotiation which can be described as ‘joint-planning.’
Dialogue at the sector level became more systematized and began to feed into discussions of a national plan negotiated as part of the PRSP process. For example, in Mozambique there are twenty-nine sectoral/thematic working groups which meet regularly and include donors.

This transformation of the fragmented aid system of the 1980s into a joint-planning system by the 2000s took place against the backdrop of a continued failure (of both recipient governments and donors) to rebuild public administration systems. Fragmentation thus remains despite the claim that the PRSP approach should help governments develop their own long-term, coherent development strategies. Indeed, donors themselves criticized PRSPs on exactly these grounds, describing most as shopping lists. The studies of the weak countries suggest this outcome results not from a failure of recipients to ‘take the lead’ in aid relations, but from incentives created by donors who urge their favourite projects to be included and who must approve the final document before funding is released. This typically leads to an aggregation of existing sector strategies and projects which donors have been heavily involved in drafting. A typical negotiating strategy attempted by the weak countries is to include in the PRSP (as well as in sector plans) all aspects for which they expect to secure donor support and to write in some ambiguity, hoping to protect some room for manoeuvring once the finances are released.

What is left in many countries are multiple new arenas for decision-making, but no clear accountability or leadership. Donors tend to divide labour into sectoral groups, nominating ‘lead-donors’ to take responsibility for policy initiation and to support drafting of early versions of sectoral plans. These processes co-exist as a parallel system to the country’s official or constitutionally endorsed policy processes, often including weak planning structures and moribund parliamentary systems struggling to (re-)assert themselves. The group of weak countries has often ended up folding one process into the other. Whether it is substituting the PRSP for constitutionally required social and economic programs (as in Ghana) or nominally stating that the country’s domestic planning system is paramount but then following the same procedures of the PRSP (as in Zambia), the result seems to be the same: the domination of a joint policy process in which donors are extensively involved in decision-making institutions and processes.

These joint policy processes at a sectoral level give the government little room to reach policy decisions independently before negotiating with donors. Once a ‘consensus’ is reached through the joint process, it is harder for the government to change its policy position (than it would be through domestic policy processes alone), partly because of the number of actors involved. Increasing coordination between in-country donor representatives from different agencies, while sometimes presented as an aspect of ‘harmonization’ with recipient governments’ own plans, typically reduces the flexibility that governments have to seek alternative sources of finance.
The proliferation of donors and their agendas to which many African governments must relate means that discussions over the fine details of policies, programs and projects are almost continuous. This has itself become a key constraining factor explaining the weak control achieved by some states. Permanent negotiations leave governments with little time and intellectual space to develop coherent policies independent of donors, to bring to the negotiating table. Rolling agendas of built-in items-for-review mean that although donors may ultimately give up on a condition on a particular loan, or choose not to punish non-implementation, the issue will surely come up again. This makes it difficult for recipient governments to win a decisive victory on any issue, let alone keep up with all of the new demands.

As a result, ministers and civil servants in the weak cases pick only the most important battles. Relationships have become so routine that negotiators know what different donors want to see in national plans and sector strategies and may pre-empt donor preferences in order to be seen as willing reformers and to gain maximum finance and favour. This is particularly true of ministries of finance which see their central task as maximizing resources and may encourage line ministries to compromise. In Zambia, for example, individual staff units in the Ministry of Finance have been designated to ‘service’ each major donor. The clear incentive for staff in each unit is to keep the relationship friendly and to maximize the flow of resources.

Into the gap left by the collapse of planning systems there has emerged an institutional entanglement between donors and recipients, such that in many cases it is difficult to identify two separate actors in a negotiation. The devolution of decision-making authority from donor headquarters to in-country offices brings donor agencies inside recipient bureaucracies. This process includes the promotion of ‘technical assistance’ (donor staff and consultants working within or seconded to the civil service of the recipient countries) and the practice of conditioning aid on the establishment of special ‘project units’ attuned to the objectives of specific donor interventions. In the weaker cases, donor-employed or donor-contracted staff have often become instrumental in preparing and implementing programs on behalf of the recipient state itself. This increased contact enables more intimate surveillance of the political and bureaucratic scene within African states and thus more pervasive influencing by donors.

It was only with the establishment of formalized joint-planning systems that the focus on ‘ownership’ and the harmonization of donor initiatives with recipients’ own national plans (or rather with PRSPs) came to the forefront. The cases suggest that ownership, joint-planning and harmonization agendas are thus premised on a subset of recipients responding to new donor incentives and prioritizing maximum aid and debt relief over the objective of policy control. They thus accepted as unchangeable, and willingly institutionalized, trends likely to undermine negotiating strength and perpetuate weakness. These include fragmented
development planning, the entanglement of donor and government institutions and a state of permanent negotiation. These can be contrasted with the strategies in the more successful cases of maintaining domestic planning capacity and securing the integrity and dominance of domestically-rooted policy processes and institutions.

Having discussed economic and institutional factors, Rwanda clearly resembles the weak group of countries more than it does Ethiopia and Botswana. However, the country has had significantly greater success than our ‘weak’ group in resisting donors. The following sections suggest that ideological and political factors explain this outcome. Rwanda’s ‘success,’ while it arises from very specific circumstances, suggests that indebtedness and the acceptance of joint-planning processes may offer more wiggle-room than many recipients are currently making use of. PRSPs, for example, clearly include a formal acceptance by donors of a concept of ‘ownership’ that relates in some way to an idea of recipient control. This offers some rhetorical leverage to recipients which most of the weak states have not thus far made much use of, and perhaps have not really tested.

**Ideological and Political Factors**

The debt crisis in 1980 changed the economic conditions under which donors and recipients met and negotiated. But it was far from obvious that this would herald a twenty year process of structural adjustment. That outcome can only be understood with reference to a confluence of political and ideological developments in rich and poor countries. In leading donor nations the grip of colonial guilt was loosening and monetarist and Cold Warrior politicians were taking power (e.g. Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl). At the same time, African nationalist projects were exhausted. Many African governments appeared to donors to be increasingly detached from their populations and unable to identify, let alone pursue, projects of national development that donors felt any moral pressure to respect.

At the end of the Cold War, the heated ‘policy dialogue’ that adjustment occasioned became less confrontational as ideological polarization between African governments and the World Bank and IMF eased. African Ministries of Finance increasingly accepted the importance of macroeconomic stability. Western donors increasingly recognized the failure of austerity to drive economic growth. Although there were still substantial disagreements on economic policy and spending priorities, especially around privatization and the pace and sequencing of reforms, donors increasingly found themselves facing less government resistance. They also concluded that their policies were uncontroversial and lost further respect for the sovereignty of African countries. The balance of negotiating capital between donors and recipients has thus always involved political and ideological elements.

Domestic political calculations within African states are also important. African governments have, to some extent, been politically dependent on aid since
independence. Many initially needed external finances to try to meet the developmental aspirations of newly ‘free’ populations and thus retain power. At the same time, donors needed interlocutors in Africa as geo-strategic allies and to meet where possible (and moderate where not) those same popular aspirations that seemed poised to overflow into support for communism. This aid ‘partnership’ between Western and African elites, identified as early as 1971 in Teresa Hayter’s *Aid as Imperialism*, has of course altered somewhat over the decades. The fluctuations of the Cold War and its conclusion altered the balance between geo-strategic imperatives encouraging unconditional support for dictators and development objectives to manage the political and social order within African states.

Nonetheless, there are also strong continuities through the entire period. In some cases, contemporary relations between donors and particular parties and leaders are themselves decades long. How successful have our country cases been in using ideological and political conditions to build negotiating capital?

Mozambique and Tanzania both transitioned from one party systems to multiparty systems in the 1990s, with the same party remaining in power in spite of elections. In each case, factions and networks within ruling parties which have been in power since independence have, since adjustment, used their position in government to benefit from economic liberalization and the aid industry. They have in return become strong supporters of the donors’ agendas. In both countries, donors have turned a blind eye to corruption as long as their reforms continue to be implemented. With strong emphases within the ruling parties themselves on unity, this has the effect of buttressing pro-donor factions against potential challenges from within their own parties.

Zambia is also a former one-party state, but in this case the ruling party (UNIP) lost in 1991 in the first round of multiparty elections to the MMD. The MMD party leadership decided, upon taking power, that the only way to rebuild the country was in partnership with donors. Donors clearly welcomed the move and offered massive financial rewards to try to make the ‘dual transition’ to market economics and liberal democracy work. When the economic impacts of the reform program decimated the MMD’s urban support base, the government turned initially to repression and vote-rigging to stay in power, severely straining the partnership with donors. In 2006, however, a potential new interdependence emerged. Under pressure from donors for free and fair elections, the MMD narrowly survived the total collapse of its old urban base by winning big in rural areas. Successful famine relief programs and delivery of rural development programs, both heavily dependent on donor support, appear to have played a large role in saving the MMD from rising populist opposition forces in urban areas. Donors and the MMD thus find themselves again in partnership, this time with the main objective of keeping the opposition out.

In contrast, Ghana returned to multiparty rule after military rule and against a backdrop of historical political instability. Consensus building across the political
The elite encouraged all parties to play by the new rules of the electoral game. A strong tradition of two rival parties since independence, produced a highly competitive multiparty system with a credible opposition and the real prospect of alternation of power. This political context increased the political risks for a ruling party of trying to change the country’s relations with donors. The ruling party and individual politicians need increasing budgets financed by aid to deliver visible public expenditures and election campaign promises in order to get re-elected. The party (NPP) that came to power in 2001 supported the status quo aid relationship because it wanted to secure debt relief and did not want to risk losing aid. Only when the economy improved and other sources of finance became available did the NPP government begin to take more risks and to pursue its own policy agenda. However, it still depends on official and private aid agencies to deliver development projects.

President Traoré in Mali is also politically dependent on access to aid resources to maintain patronage relationships that underpin the ‘consensus’ political system which he established in 2002. The consensus system is based on an oversized coalition in which all the main political parties share executive power. No party is willing to be in opposition for fear of marginalization from political power and resources, both monopolized by the executive. Donors nonetheless keep the resources flowing, investing in making Mali the Paris Agenda success story in francophone West Africa.

These relationships all include important elements of interdependence. Not only do donors still need African states to achieve their objectives, they are in some sense committed to the particular regimes in these countries. Where donors want to retain their ‘partnership’ with existing administrations, this should give governments increased negotiating capital. In cases such as the period after the 1991 and 2006 elections in Zambia, where the ruling party is seen as a bulwark against an economic or political agenda to which donors are particularly hostile, ruling parties are also aware that they gain negotiating leverage from being the ‘best bet’ or the ‘least worst option.’ However, this interdependence also undermines governments’ negotiating strength. It does this in the sense that the ‘special treatment’ and vital aid governments are receiving are at least implicitly conditional on the maintenance of a donor-friendly agenda and a demonstrated willingness to mobilize domestic public support around it. On the other hand, charting an independent development strategy and foregoing aid would involve justifying any decrease in public spending to their populations or maintaining ruling elite coalitions with access to fewer resources that might support patronage networks. Although the weak cases exhibit different internal political dynamics and types of interdependence with donors, they share a common outcome: their governments are not particularly confident of the stability of their position in power and rely to a large extent on foreign aid to secure it. In the strong cases, governments are more clearly ‘the only show in town.’ In these conditions, donors
have much less discretionary power to endorse or reject partnerships with the regime due to the absence of realistic alternatives. Donors here are typically more concerned with protecting their ‘access’ to decision-makers.

Botswana’s uninterrupted democratic governance based on multiparty elections has given it high domestic political legitimacy, even though the same ruling party has won these elections. Donors were keen to be associated with a democratic success story during the period when military and one-party regimes emerged around the continent, and the government keenly portrayed itself as a model of political and economic liberalization for the rest of the continent.

Ethiopia also had very favourable political conditions. The long history of an independent Ethiopian state, the absence of extended colonial rule, and the resulting ‘illegibility’ of Ethiopian cultural and political life from the perspective of many outside actors lent Ethiopia negotiating capital. This capital enabled it to keep donors at arm’s length and to play off Cold War rival sponsors without allowing any too close. Upon coming to power after the end of the Cold War, the EPRDF government aligned Ethiopia as a key geo-strategic ally of the United States. The Horn of Africa has only increased in interest to the US, especially under the US administration’s War on Terror since 2001. Aware of its strategic importance, the government knows that it had and continues to have significant room to manoeuvre. For example, the US, which currently accounts for close to 30% of Ethiopia’s total aid, continued to give assistance and did not join widespread condemnation of the Ethiopian government after the apparent rigging of the May 2005 elections and repression of protesters and opposition parties. Donors’ responses to the elections and aftermath diverged to the extent that the effect on aid flows was neutralized.

Political and ideological conditions are crucial to the partial success that the government in Rwanda has had in controlling its policy agenda, despite having encountered economic crisis in the 1980s and having inherited devastated state structures after the genocide in 1994. The RPF-led government switched Rwanda from the Francophone to the Anglophone sphere of influence. Association with the defeated Habyarimana regime after the genocide placed France and Belgium, its former sponsors, in a difficult position. The decrease of French support was more than compensated for by increases in support from the UK and the US, which became the country’s major donors. These new allies provide relatively unconditional support to the RPF-led government, partly for geo-strategic reasons and partly due to proximity to the Islamist government in Sudan. This appears to have secured the partnership in spite of differences over the constitution, military incursions into the Democratic Republic of Congo, and numerous technical issues on aid implementation.

5) Aid flows to Ethiopia increased threefold over the period from 2000 to 2005, just over 50 percent of which is accounted for by increased aid from the US and the World Bank.
The RPF also de-legitimizes external interference in the country's domestic affairs through skilful use of the moral authority that flows from being the one force that stopped the genocide. The RPF does not hesitate to point out that some donors are tainted by their support for the Habyarimana government that sponsored the genocide and others by their failure to halt it. Partly as a result, donors take different positions on policy issues limiting their ability to collectively push or punish the government. Lastly, domestic political conditions may play a role in shaping the government’s negotiating strategy. The RPF’s secure position in power, until national elections were held for the first time in 2006, reduced the risks of pursuing its own strategy and hoping that donors would come on board. This was because it did not have to worry about the political fallout from reduced aid if the RPF gambled and lost.

The case of Rwanda shows that, despite an economic crisis and financial dependence on foreign aid with conditions attached, a recipient government can get away with ignoring a large portion of those conditions when it knows that, for political or geo-strategic reasons, a particular set of donors (usually the most important) will not withdraw aid. This finding concurs with the observation of Mosley et al. (1991) that the degree of economic crisis and dependence on the World Bank could explain the toughness of the conditions imposed. However, it could not explain their implementation and the related issue of the Bank genuinely punishing non-implementation of conditions.

The governments of Botswana, Ethiopia, and Rwanda have also all expressed a clear vision about where their countries are going and about the contribution of public policies to achieving that outcome. It does not appear that the content of these development visions matters in securing donor partnerships. The development strategies in Botswana are decidedly more conservative and pro-private sector than those of the EPRDF in Ethiopia which are more socialist and emphasize state management and parastatal corporations. Rather it is the ability to translate it into a coherent development strategy and project it which increases these governments’ ability to defend their policies in aid negotiations and to argue against some donor policy preferences.

Conclusion

In sum, the differences between the most successful, the partially successful, and the least successful country cases result principally from the differing structural conditions facing these countries, rather than from the differing strategic choices they have made. Chosen strategies seem to have been heavily influenced by structural conditions. In particular, the negotiating capital of governments in Mozambique, Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia was very weak principally because all these countries faced debt and balance-of-payments crises in the 1980s. The debt
crisis presented an opportunity for donors to expand their influence over macro-economic policies in the early structural adjustment period to a wide range of policy areas in the 1990s and then to the process of policymaking itself by the early 2000s. This generalized pattern did not apply so clearly in the other cases. Botswana and Ethiopia (after 1991) maintained more favourable political, economic, ideological, and institutional conditions, having avoided biting debt crises. Rwanda’s partial success since 1994 in controlling its policy agenda, despite economic and institutional conditions similar to the weak group, seems to us to result largely from the rather unusual political and ideological conditions that emerged in the aftermath of the genocide.

Economic conditions are critical, but what marks our more successful cases is the confidence to translate a country’s conditions into negotiating capital and deploying it effectively in aid negotiations. Confidence can come from different sources, such as ideology of the government, the background of the ruling political party and political leaders, and the degree of popular legitimacy and support that a government enjoys. Finally, institutions for managing aid matter. Those countries that have been most successful in negotiating aid have kept donors at arm’s length while formulating their own policy positions and have largely kept them out of their domestic administrative systems. Thus, while the structural conditions within which governments must devise their negotiating strategies largely explain variation in recipient control across the country cases, a significant degree of variation is due to the confidence of recipient governments to turn their conditions into negotiating capital. In other words, our argument emphasizes the intersection between structural conditions and recipient agency.

The strategic adaptations of the weak group to the situations they found themselves in show marked similarities and have been typically highly defensive. These governments have, for more than twenty years, desperately needed foreign exchange and seem to have felt compelled to negotiate the terms of structural adjustment credits and debt rescheduling with the Bretton Woods institutions from a subordinate and vulnerable position. Recently, the imperative of accessing debt relief seems to have driven all of the governments in the weak group to more or less acquiesce to donor demands during the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative process. This involved formulating and implementing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), staying on track with an IMF arrangement, and meeting a series of other conditions negotiated with the IMF and World Bank (at least on paper).

However, the ineffective negotiating strategies adopted by the weak set of countries do not simply result from their economic dependence. Rather, the political, ideological, and institutional legacies of continuous engagement with the World Bank, IMF, and other donors since the 1980s have created a set of common characteristics. These characteristics include: a state of permanent nego-
tiation with donors, the gradual entanglement of donor and government institutions alongside the limited (re)building of the recipient’s public administration, and the political dimensions of aid dependence. These have become key factors shaping the incentives facing many African governments. They help explain why governments in these countries often strive to maximize aid flows without necessarily maximizing control over the policy agenda.

The most common negotiating strategy adopted by the weaker group of countries was non-implementation, which involves hoping that it will be possible to get away with not implementing, or reversing, policy commitments made during negotiation, and still getting the money from donors. Without access to alternative sources of finance or political will to risk losing aid resources, this strategy does not allow governments to set the policy agenda. However, it gives them some control over what aspects of the donor-driven agenda get implemented and when. More recently, a number of these countries have been attempting a different strategy based on embracing donor interest in ownership and fully committing to new aid modalities. They may be hoping that playing along with the ownership game will bring in less heavily conditioned assistance and will lighten the administrative burden of negotiating with a wide range of donors.

There are exceptions to this generalization, where even the African governments in the weak group show an offensive, strong negotiating strategy: asserting their policy position, rejecting donor views which disapprove, or pursuing the initiative with or without donors. These exceptions tend to occur when a policy or initiative is perceived as extremely important to the economic project or ideology or to the political strategy of the ruling party or leaders for staying in power, which are often connected.

The country cases do not provide evidence that would allow us to conclude that any one of our categories of structural conditions determines the success of African negotiators in securing control over policy. Rather, the explanation of outcomes in each country relies on an analysis of the intersection of the structural conditions (generated by international and national contexts) facing recipients and their own subjective engagement with that context.

The dominant discourse on aid suggests that progressive change in donor-recipient relations will be driven by developments internal to those relationships themselves, and specifically by widening acceptance of the proposals to increase recipient ownership codified by the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Our analysis challenges that assumption. By demonstrating that aid relationships are not partnerships but rather retain important elements of negotiation, we argue that change is much more likely to flow from changes in the wider context in which those talks occur, and thus in the relative negotiating capital on which recipients and donors draw.
References


