

Toward a Networked Aid Architecture:

Why development assistance should be routed through transnational networks of government officials from donor and recipient countries

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Paper prepared for workshop on Politics and the New Aid Modalities

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January 2006

I

With a few notable exceptions, official development assistance has a pretty dismal record at increasing economic growth and improving governance in poor countries. This is not a reason to disband or even to scale back development aid. For many poor countries, to withdraw aid would be to remove the only hope of a better future. Tens of millions of people rely on development assistance for basic necessities, and a large number of states need continued funding if they are to remain functioning entities.

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But the mechanisms for designing effective development policies and delivering foreign assistance – the aid architecture – require a fundamental rethink. Aid donors know this as much as anyone. Agencies of donor countries and multilateral institutions are currently overhauling the structure of international development assistance to poor countries. They are responding both to past failures and to the likelihood of large increases in aid over the coming decade. The willingness to revisit basic assumptions about the objectives of development assistance and the relationship between donor and recipient governments is welcome. Many elements of what now constitutes the ‘new aid consensus’, such as streamlining the procedures aid-recipient countries must follow to account for donor funds, are commendable. But on the larger structural question of how external actors can help to promote sustainable economic and political change in poor countries, the international aid community is heading in the wrong direction.

II

The Paris Declaration of March 2005, issued under the auspices of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, committed donor governments and multilateral institutions to increasing the proportion of resources channelled through the national budgets of aid-recipient governments.¹ The objective is to reverse two longstanding aid trends: the conditioning

¹ The Paris Declaration was an outcome of the ‘High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness’, held in Paris from 28 February through 2 March 2005, which included representatives of donor and recipient countries, multilateral institutions, and civil society organizations. The Forum was the culmination of a deliberative process undertaken by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices, established in 2003

of aid on the implementation of reform measures prioritized by donors rather than recipient governments; and the emphasis on shrinking developing country states instead of augmenting their capacities. These are worthwhile aims, which represent a refreshing candour about the ruinous impact of more than twenty years of externally imposed market reform. That government-to-government arm-twisting seldom yields the desired developmental results,² and that it is possible to reduce the scope of state activity while still increasing the state's ability to undertake essential tasks,³ are important insights.

Unfortunately, the 'modalities' underlying the new aid consensus – 'direct budgetary support' for national governments (rather than off-budget funding for standalone projects managed by donors) and 'harmonization' of donor reporting procedures – are out of step with profound changes in the nature of global governance. In particular, the notion that aid donors must engage with aid-recipient governments as a whole, through common-pool funding of national budgets, rather than through targeted reform programmes undertaken in collaboration with discrete parts of these states, runs directly counter to the defining characteristic of what Anne Marie Slaughter has called a

by the OECD's DAC. The text is available at <http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/Paris/finalparisdeclaration.pdf>.

² The failure of conditionality-based development programs became an increasingly prominent theme during the 1990s, closely documented and analyzed, successively, in Paul Mosely, Jane Harrigan, and John Toye, *Aid and Power: The World Bank and Policy-Based Lending* (London: Routledge, 1991); Nicolas van de Walle and Timothy A. Johnston, *Improving Aid to Africa*, Policy Essay No. 21 (Washington, DC: Overseas Development Council, 1996); and Craig Burnside and David Dollar, 'Aid, Policies, and Growth', Policy Research Working Paper 1777 (Washington, DC: World Bank, Development Research Group, 1997).

³ This finding has been elaborated with considerable elegance in Francis Fukuyama, *State-building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

'networked world order'⁴: the tendency for transnational governance to be effected through networks of government officials representing components of states, such as regulatory agencies, ministries, and even judges. Confronted with problems that span national jurisdictions, officials increasingly organize themselves into function-specific 'government networks', through which they coordinate with their counterparts from other countries.

The most well known examples of government networks are in the financial sector: clubs of central bankers, finance ministers, and securities regulators. But as Slaughter convincingly demonstrates in a fully elaborated version of a thesis previewed in *Foreign Affairs* almost a decade ago,⁵ transnationally networked officials can be found in almost every field, collectively formulating shared strategies in response to common problems, such as international terrorism, illegal immigration, and environmental degradation, that result from the increasing porousness of national borders. The growing phenomenon of transnational government networks represents a kind of decentralization, or informalization, of foreign policymaking, with officials in almost every corner of government engaging with their counterparts from other countries.

Rather than waiting for their respective foreign ministries to conclude binding treaties that specify international legal obligations, officials enmeshed within transnational government networks jointly agree to immediate practical measures and use their domestic authority to undertake necessary policy and enforcement action. Government

⁴ Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁵ Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'The Real World Order', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 1997).

networks have no status in international law, except when they solidify into a formal multilateral treaty. But for this reason, Slaughter convincingly argues, they are also more nimble than conventional diplomacy, and have enforcement mechanisms that are arguably as effective as those found in most treaties.

In contrast to this vision of the 'disaggregated state', in which the component parts of governmental authority forge connections with similarly situated elements within other countries, the new aid consensus as represented by the Paris Declaration focuses its efforts to improve policy and governance in aid-recipient countries on the state as a unitary entity. The new aid consensus is especially fixated on developing countries' national budgets (and associated anti-poverty plans) as the key instruments for effecting lasting change. While donors recognize the importance of the elements that comprise developing country states, they nevertheless seek to establish their relationships with aid-recipient governments on an anachronistic state-to-state basis. The laudable intention is to shore up state capacities in developing countries, to instill a sense of national 'ownership' in their development strategies, and to reduce the transaction costs (and policy conflicts) that arise when aid-recipient governments must answer to a large number of donor agencies, each with its own priorities and reporting procedures.

However, these same objectives could be better achieved by building on the government network phenomenon that Slaughter has documented – and without some of the negative side-effects. In her book, *A New World Order*, Slaughter explicitly challenges people concerned with the current state of global governance to imagine

ways of placing the power of the network paradigm in the service of a more effective and just world order. An especially promising means of doing this is to combine the goals of the new aid consensus with the methods found in transnational government networking. International development assistance, in other words, must move towards a 'networked aid architecture'.

A networked aid architecture offers two key advantages over the existing development-assistance paradigm. First, it would increase the likelihood of achieving real, as opposed to spurious, ownership by aid-recipient countries of the reform programs to which they have committed themselves. Unlike the current system, where each developing country is pitted against a consortium of rich-country aid agencies, in a networked aid architecture developing country officials would be situated amidst their functionally similar peers from other countries, rich and poor, all of whom must adapt their policies to meet common objectives. Second, where a sense of ownership is not enough to motivate officials to meet their obligations – and often it is not – government networks provide a more targeted means of wielding sanctions to punish non-compliance. Because networks bring together parts of states (individual ministries, regulatory agencies, judicial organs), both carrots and sticks are directed at the relevant government unit, rather than at a developing country government as a whole, as in the new aid consensus. Moreover, in a networked aid architecture, sanctions would be wielded by decision-making bodies that include officials from other aid-recipient governments, making them considerably more legitimate.

Before elaborating further the benefits of a networked aid architecture, as well as why it is more feasible than advocates of the new aid consensus will want to acknowledge, it is first necessary to specify how this disaggregated approach to strengthening developing country capacity differs, structurally, from the existing system.

III

Conventionally, official development assistance is delivered by one government to another, either directly by its aid ministry, or in the form of pooled funds channelled through a multilateral agency such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, or one of several regional development organizations. Conventional development assistance thus involves a mediating role for the specialised aid agencies and ministries of donor governments, which channel funds, devise capacity-building programmes, and provide (usually subcontracted) technical assistance to aid-recipient countries. Foreign aid programmes cover a huge range of activities, from reforms to the way in which public expenditure is managed to the creation of new regulatory agencies. Each donor government is engaged in a similarly diverse portfolio of work in each of the countries in which it operates.

In certain respects, the international development assistance community already resembles one of Slaughter's government networks. Aid officials from donor governments collaborate with their counterparts from other donor countries. Networks

of national aid officials operate both within and independently of formal intergovernmental bodies. As the Paris Declaration itself demonstrates, organizations like the OECD help to form networks that assess the nature of development problems and the difficulties donor governments face in seeking to address them. Like associations of financial regulators, networks of aid officials recognise that in order to achieve their objectives they must cooperate with one another by collectively formulating policy approaches, sharing information, drawing up codes of conduct, and even shaming donor agencies that fail to live up to their commitments. Donor representatives also form standalone networks related to specific development sectors. The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, for instance, is a network run mainly by donor aid agencies that fund microfinance initiatives in developing countries.⁶ Existing network-like bodies in the development field sometimes include representatives of aid-recipient governments – for instance, in the Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA).⁷ The donors working within a given country also form a ‘consultative group’ within which aid officials and recipient-government representatives discuss problems, suggest new priorities, and pledge funds.

Such aid-related bodies differ in one crucial respect from the government networks analyzed by Slaughter. They lack a peer-group setting in which function-specific recipient-country officials engage with similarly situated officials – from other recipient

⁶ See www.cgap.org/about.donors.html for a complete list, which in this case also includes non-governmental organizations.

⁷ The SPA was founded in 1987 as the Special Program of Assistance to Africa, and was re-branded in 1999. See www.spa-psa.org. In 2002 its membership was expanded to include a network of African governments called the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). See www.nepad.org. The SPA is, along with the OECD’s DAC, a major forum promoting the objectives and methods of the new aid consensus.

governments and donor governments alike – in an ongoing process of rulemaking, mutual assessment, capacity-building, and enforcement. The existing aid architecture, even in its new ‘ownership’-oriented incarnation, reflects the structural asymmetry between donor and recipient governments. While aid-recipient governments are represented by officials with specific functional responsibilities, donor governments are represented by aid officials. That is, recipient government representatives are not solely concerned with managing the aid relationship, though in aid-dependent countries it is a major preoccupation. They are concerned instead with the concrete challenges of governance within their specific fields, whether law enforcement, public health, primary education, or agricultural marketing.

Officials from donor and recipient government are ‘peers’ in the sense that both represent their respective governments; but they have little in common in terms of the specific responsibilities assigned to them. The environment ministers from the UK and Sri Lanka, for instance, face common professional dilemmas in that both are engaged in similar work in their respective national settings. But in the context of development assistance, it is not the UK environment minister with which his Sri Lankan counterpart interacts. His interlocutor is from the UK aid ministry, an official who does not occupy an equivalent functional role. While both would surely like to see Sri Lanka’s environment improved, their professional profiles and the problems they face are distinct. The same goes for finance ministers, sectoral regulators, and other officials in aid-recipient governments: their interactions on matters related to development

assistance are primarily with the aid-agency staff (or other diplomatic representatives) of donor governments.

Government officials in aid recipient countries do engage with their function-specific counterparts from donor governments in other forums, such as in the Financial Action Task Force, a network devoted to combating money-laundering.⁸ But these forums are not (by and large) where development assistance is determined. In a networked aid architecture, they would be.

In other words, when it comes to issues of international development, rich-country aid officials are the equivalent of conventional 'diplomats', whose role in global governance, Slaughter argues, has declined due to the proliferation of more agile networks of similarly situated government officials. If regular diplomats have found at least part of their function supplanted by transnational networks of practitioners, why should 'development diplomats' be immune from this trend?

The shift from conventional development assistance to a disaggregated, 'networked' aid architecture would mean that instead of donors distributing funds to developing countries almost entirely through their aid ministries and the multilateral development institutions with which they coordinate their policies, external assistance would increasingly be routed through functionally organized government networks. Each network would include relevant government officials from both rich and poor countries,

⁸ Since September 11, 2001 the FATF has reoriented its work to focus on international financing of terrorism. See <http://www.fatf-gafi.org>.

all of which would face policy obligations by virtue of their participation in a membership-based body. No longer would the UK's Department for International Development, for instance, directly support the reform of public finance, labour markets, and utilities regulation in Malawi, and then pursue a separate, though similarly wide-ranging, agenda in Mozambique, Mali, and other aid-recipient countries. Instead, development assistance (both the formulation of policy frameworks and the disbursement of funding) would take place through a series of issue-specific networks, each of which would include the functionally responsible government representatives (whether a budget director, labour commissioner, or electricity-utility regulator) from donor and recipient countries from around the world. In a globalized world, all governments – not just those from aid-recipient countries – are engaged in a process of continuous reform. Bringing their officials together in a collective problem-solving forum places them on more neutral turf, where the shortcomings of all governments are on public view, even if it does not erase the power imbalances that arise from the fact that some are from donor countries and others are not.

IV

While envisioning a new aid architecture built around transnational government networks requires a profound conceptual reorientation, it is not as much a leap in the dark as some might think. To incorporate much, though not all, of the functions currently performed by development agencies within an expanded system of

government networks will doubtless demand a great deal of institutional reengineering. Both aid programmes and government networks, as currently constituted, will need substantial reform. But the transition to a networked aid architecture will be eased by three elements that the new aid consensus and the government network paradigm have in common. Though they differ in certain key respects, both approaches share (1) a desire to orient collaboration around the creation of transnational 'public goods'; (2) a belief in the importance of ownership (or buy-in) by developing country officials; and (3) a built-in emphasis on capacity building to support peer-group partners.

First, integral to both the new aid consensus and the government network paradigm is an emphasis on conceiving of international coordination as a means by which transnational public goods are created. The intellectual foundations for the new aid consensus – favoring country ownership, pooled donor funding of national budgets, and streamlined reporting procedures – were largely laid by Ravi Kanbur, an academic economist who briefly worked at the World Bank. Kanbur included in his landmark 1999 manifesto on 'the future of development assistance' the need for aid to be substantially reframed as a mechanism for creating transnational public goods, such as halting the spread of infectious diseases through internationally funded immunization programs, combating global warming through aid-assisted reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and using the resources of generally stable rich states to prevent civil conflicts in developing regions, which often cause refugees, and political instability, to

spill over national borders.⁹ Transnational public goods tend to be underprovided because states typically seek to ‘free ride’ on the contributions of other states: when it is impossible to prevent benefits arising from the efforts of one state from spilling across national borders, there is little incentive for other states to contribute their fair share. To the extent that such problems overlap with issues of development, the issue becomes one of coordination.

From Kanbur’s perspective, the thrust of which is shared by a group of policy specialists assembled by the United Nations Development Program,¹⁰ there are practical benefits to redefining development as an exercise in the provision of transnational public goods. Framing development issues in terms of global interdependence – where what happens in the developing world directly affects the developed world – is not only a more analytically rigorous method for identifying the priorities of development assistance and specifying which burden-sharing arrangements (both among states and between states and non-state actors) are best suited to specific problems, but also a politically savvy means of increasing support for foreign assistance among both governments and publics in donor countries.¹¹

⁹ See Chapter 4 of Ravi Kanbur, *The Future of Development Assistance: Common Pools and International Public Goods*, Policy Essay No. 25 (Washington, DC: Overseas Development Council, 1999), pp. 55-94.

¹⁰ Their analytical studies are collected in Inge Kaul *et al* (eds), *Global Public Goods: International Cooperation for the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press for the United Nations Development Program, 1999); and Inge Kaul *et al* (eds), *Providing Global Public Goods: Managing Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press for the United Nations Development Program, 2003).

¹¹ As Kanbur put it, ‘[t]he dual realizations – that development assistance in the form of international public goods can help mitigate some of the negative cross-border effects stemming from the lack of development, and that this aid can improve the welfare of giver and receiver alike – can now provide a rationale for maintaining or even increasing the level of development assistance’, even in a context of ‘disillusionment with past results and domestic demands for the associated resources’. See Kanbur, *The Future of Development Assistance...*, p. 57.

Slaughter's networked world order is similarly constructed in terms of the provision of transnational public goods. Government networks, while focused on issues within their functionally specific remits, also serve to 'expand [the] regulatory reach' of national governments at a time when many actors increasingly operate transnationally, using technology and indeed network forms themselves (al-Qaeda, criminal mafias, and even forms of corporate ownership) to evade national jurisdictions.¹² The main purpose of government networks, in other words, is to develop effective methods for combating transnational 'public bads'. This increasingly requires the cooperation of developing countries, which otherwise become weak links in the global chain of governance. Thus, the redefinition of development assistance in terms of public goods, and the focus of government networks on their provision, makes the channelling of aid through an expanded system of such networks a logical extension of the new aid consensus.

Second, there is fundamental agreement between donor agencies promoting the new aid consensus and the proponents of government networks that compulsion, based on the application of external financial leverage, cannot be the primary driver of policy and institutional reform in developing countries. While the idea of ownership is slippery at best, at its core is the extremely sensible notion that, for there to be any chance of success, officials in developing countries must be pursuing policies they believe will work, that they consider the product of a fair deliberative process, and that they can expect external actors to support them in achieving.

¹² Slaughter, *A New World Order*, p. 3.

Where the current orthodoxy in the aid community and the model of governance suggested by Slaughter's networked world order diverge, however, is in the means of promoting ownership. The new aid consensus has, up to now, centered on helping poor-country governments to formulate national development plans,¹³ which donors are then expected to fund on an all-or-nothing basis through general support of national budgets. Under the terms of the new aid consensus, donors remain free to determine, for each recipient country, whether they consider progress sufficient to warrant an extension (or even expansion) of funding. But donors are not permitted the option of cherry-picking, pouring money into one promising sector and pulling out of others they consider either misguided in theory or poorly performing in practice. Such interference is deemed to demoralize and undermine the commitment of developing country officials.

A networked aid architecture, on the other hand, would promote ownership through what Slaughter calls 'socialization' of developing country officials – involving them in collaborative settings in which, along with their functional counterparts from other countries, rich and poor, they participate in defining collective norms, disseminating information about best practice, monitoring compliance among their peers, and deciding on how best to combine capacity-building measures with enforcement action. As in the new aid consensus, the emphasis is on persuasion and the exercise of influence. The

¹³ These have taken the form of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), national development plans outlining the contributions of policy measures to reducing poverty, and specifying measurable indicators of progress. PRSPs were originally introduced as a requirement for countries seeking international debt relief under the multi-donor Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, as well as for those applying for concessional finance from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, but have since become the focal point of donor efforts to coordinate their aid programs.

key difference is that, in the networked aid architecture, developing country officials would operate alongside their direct functional peers, who by virtue of shared circumstance, possess greater legitimacy than aid-agency officials. Clearly, the US treasury secretary and the finance minister of Laos face different circumstances. But situating both amidst a network of their functionally equivalent peers – which would include representatives from rich and poor countries – stands a better chance of inculcating a sense of common purpose, or at least a shared understanding of issues, than a face-off between aid agencies and the recipient-government officials deputed to negotiate with them, one country at a time. Through frequent meetings and intensive deliberations, government networks, Slaughter tells us, ‘build trust and establish relationships among their participants’. Through the exchange of information about innovative approaches taken by some network members, and the failure of others to fulfil their obligations, networks ‘create incentives to establish a good reputation and avoid a bad one’.¹⁴

The third point of convergence between the new aid consensus and a networked aid architecture concerns capacity building. As Slaughter points out, capacity building – which is what development aid is supposed to be providing, through funding as well as technical assistance – is already an integral feature of existing government networks. Because government networks have reached their most elaborate form in the context of the European Union (EU), there is a tendency to associate this form of international cooperation with clubs of rich countries. Indeed, developed countries are more often

¹⁴ Anne-Marie Slaughter, ‘Government Networks, World Order, and the G20’, paper presented at the meeting on ‘The G-20 Architecture in 2020—Securing a Legitimate Role for the G-20’, 29 February 2004, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, p. 4.

members of, and are usually more intensively engaged in, transnational government networks than are developing countries. But this is not always the case. In several networks, developing countries play a central role, in some cases exceeding that of their richer counterparts. Slaughter notes, for instance, that South Africa's Constitutional Court has been more influential in recent years than the US Supreme Court in the development of legal norms within transnational judicial networks. Financial-sector regulators from India, moreover, have become leading members of the government networks in which they have operated. One study found that it was the pursuit of prestigious committee assignments within such networks that motivated Indian participants to take more forceful action to improve India's domestic regulatory institutions.¹⁵ They had been socialised into the values of a mixed-income club rather than having been coerced into compliance by a group of rich-country aid donors.

Suitably adapted, existing government networks, and others that would need to be created, offer a crucial site for building capacity to achieve the policy objectives currently promoted by specialized government aid agencies. As Slaughter puts it, government networks, as part and parcel of their collaborative nature, 'offer technical assistance and professional socialization to members from less developed nations – whether regulators, judges, or legislators'.¹⁶ She cites the example of the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE). Among other things, the INECE offers technical assistance to environmental agencies from both rich

¹⁵ John Echeverri-Gent, 'Financial Globalization and India's Equity Market Reform', *India Review* (Special Issue on 'The Politics of India's Next Generation of Economic Reforms', Rob Jenkins and Sunil Khilnani (eds.), vol. 3, no. 4., Autumn 2004.

¹⁶ Slaughter, 'Government Networks, World Order, and the G20'.

and poor countries.¹⁷ Slaughter sees capacity-building and the problems of global governance as going hand in hand: ‘in a world in which a major set of obstacles to effective global regulation is a simple inability on the part of many developing countries to translate paper rules into changes in actual behavior, governments must be able not only to negotiate treaties but also to create the capacity to comply with them’.¹⁸ Indeed, Slaughter herself repeatedly hints at the possibility of a much greater role for government networks in development, arguing that, if strengthened, they ‘could help rebuild states ravaged by conflict, weakened by poverty, disease, and privatization, or stalled in the transition from dictatorship to democracy’.¹⁹

Expanding the scope and quantity of capacity-building activities undertaken through government networks will of course require close attention to institutional design. But in broad terms, the central principle – as in the new aid consensus – would be that aid must be pooled. But in a networked aid architecture, this aid would be pooled within relevant government networks rather than within individual recipient country budgets. Instead of donor governments making the ultimate decisions about capacity-building needs, performance assessment, and enforcement action, these functions would be placed under the control of elected committees within these networks. Though Slaughter argues that government networks – because they are built around a core of domestically accountable government officials, rather than self-appointed policy entrepreneurs such as NGOs or private-sector entities – are an improvement over

¹⁷ Slaughter, *A New World Order*, p. 173; and INECE’s mission statement (available at <http://www.inece.org/overview.html>), which lists ‘strengthening capacity’ as one of its main objectives.

¹⁸ Slaughter, ‘Government Networks, World Order, and the G20’, p. 3.

¹⁹ Slaughter, *A New World Order*, p. 34.

certain other policy network models, she also recognizes that the transparency and accountability of government networks must be improved. The shift from the existing development paradigm to a networked aid architecture would increase the need for such reforms.

While Slaughter's emphasis is on using networks as 'sources of support for national government officials aspiring to be full members of the global community',²⁰ she also (indirectly) highlights a crucial advantage of a networked aid architecture: the ability to employ networks to sanction members that fail to live up to their commitments. If strengthened, Slaughter notes, networks could provide many more targeted 'pressure points'²¹ through which to exert collective leverage on non-compliant members. Both 'aid' and 'pressure' 'would no longer flow state to state, but would penetrate the state to the level of specific individuals who constitute a government and must make and implement decisions on the ground'.²²

Rather than punishing an entire government, a disaggregated model of development assistance would allow sanctions to be imposed only on those government entities that fail to meet the obligations specified within their respective transnational networks. By contrast, the new aid consensus provides the international community with a much blunter instrument: the option of reducing or withdrawing funding across the board. Punishing a specific ministry or regulatory agency is not permitted. This difficulty was

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 34-35.

²¹ Ibid, p. 34

²² Ibid, p. 35.

nicely illustrated in a recent *New York Times* editorial that condemned the Ethiopian government's repression of its own citizens. Rather than 'withholding some of Ethiopia's foreign aid money', as Britain had proposed, the editorial argued that 'Western donors should funnel money to ground-level aid projects, while shunning direct budgetary support of the government' – just the kind of targeted action the new aid consensus does not permit.²³ A networked aid paradigm would allow – indeed encourage – such targeting. And any decision on sanctions would have the added advantage of enhanced legitimacy: it would represent not the diktat of western donors, but a judgement representing the collective decision of rich and poor countries alike.

V

Finally, let us anticipate and respond to some likely objections to the idea of reorienting development assistance around a networked aid architecture. One likely complaint is that although government networks are fine for the provision of transnational public goods like the protection of the earth's climate, and that indeed development policy questions to some degree overlap with transnational public goods issues, it is still the case that many development issues do not. This is a fair concern, but there are two reasons why it need not undermine a commitment to a networked aid architecture. First, remember, the proposal is not that all development assistance be routed through transnational government networks; just that a gradually increasing proportion should

²³ 'Mr. Good Government Goes Bad', *New York Times*, 27 November 2005.

be. The point is to effect a transition *toward* a networked aid architecture. A good start would be to steer additional funds arising from recent promises of increased development aid – most notably at the G8 Gleneagles summit in July 2005 – toward government networks, beginning with those that possess the most advanced systems of capacity building for weaker members. Second, many more seemingly domestic development issues possess a transnational public-goods dimension than the aid community currently recognises. Education and employment policies in developing countries, for instance, are as strong an influence on the actions of illegal ‘economic migrants’ to rich countries as immigration and law-enforcement policies. Addressing such issues through a network of officials responsible for human resource development would surely complement the purely domestic processes of education reform that would obviously need to continue in developing countries, just as the transnational networking activities of police officials takes place alongside ongoing internal restructuring within many law-enforcement agencies.

Another potential objection to the idea of disaggregating development assistance is that while government networks may be an appropriate model for countries at similar levels of economic development, they will not work when disparities between their members are too great. Again, this is a reasonable concern. On the other hand, existing government networks have already adopted differential standards for members facing differing conditions. Indeed, the recognition of such differences is part of the process through which capacity-building needs are assessed, and by which performance targets are devised. Though common agreement to joint action is sought in government

networks, there is nothing in their operational structure that requires them to insist upon exact equivalence among participating government entities. A cluster of development-focused government networks would likely prove at least as flexible as the consortia of aid agencies whose functions they would in part supplant.

In challenging us to devise innovative approaches to improving global governance, Slaughter suggests that we put on a new set of conceptual lenses: 'Stop imagining the international system as a system of states'; focus instead on 'all the different institutions that perform the basic functions of governments...[each] interacting both with each other domestically and also with their foreign and supranational counterparts'. Her point is not just about what is, but what could be: 'these different lenses make it possible to imagine a genuinely new set of possibilities for a future world order. The building blocks of this order would not be states but parts of states: courts, regulatory agencies, ministries, legislatures'.²⁴

A networked aid architecture can be constructed from the same building blocks, while still benefiting from the recent insights found current development thinking.

²⁴ Slaughter, *A New World Order*, p. 5.