# 8

# From Unconditional Solidarity to Conditional Evaluability

## *Competing Notions of Conditionality and the Swedish Aid Model**

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### 8.1 Introduction: Solidarity's Conditions?

> Sweden led the Nordic bloc with a style of aid that was unashamedly ideological and in conflict with that of the United States, and that had an explicit goal of targeting the poorest groups. By the 1980s, with the Cold War coming to a close, the altruistic intentions began to make way for more pragmatic commercial self-interest.
>
> (Usher 1997: 73)

Sweden has been described – together with the other Nordic countries – as "the darling of the 'Third World'," much due to its long-standing dedication to the United Nations' recommended norm of allotting 1 percent of GNI to official development assistance (ODA) (Lödén 1999; Brodin 2000: 35; see also Engh 2009; Ekengren and Götz 2013; Bergman Rosamond 2016; Borring Olesen 2018; Jakobsen 2018). Beyond this comparative generosity – in relation to the OECD's (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) recommendation of 0.7 percent ODA/GNI and with exception of the Gulf states – one of the key characteristics of the special relationship between the Scandinavian countries and their partner countries in the Global

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South has precisely been the ambition to provide development assistance unconditionally to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where underdevelopment, poverty and inequality are the most prevalent (for drivers of ODA, see Stokke 2019; for the first decades of Swedish ODA, see Berg, Lundberg, and Tydén, 2021).

The aim has been to minimize the degree of undue influence which development research has identified as a corollary of "tied" development aid and export credits, a kind of influence which has also been criticized politically as another form of neo-colonialism. This has been a defining feature of the so-called "Nordic aid model," as distinct from the development aid policies pursued by other OECD members (Odén 2011; see also Elgström and Delputte 2016; Engh forthcoming). Over the past decade, however, the Swedish aid model has converged with overall OECD positions since the passing of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) as well as in connection to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Nairobi Outcome Document (OECD 2016; see also United Nations General Assembly 2015). Gradually, the Scandinavian countries have begun to profile themselves as pioneers in terms of promoting transparency as a means towards aid effectiveness and against corruption. This can be viewed as a confirmation of a long-standing Scandinavian "brand" in promoting democracy (as well as good governance) through development aid. But given previous Scandinavian focus on the primacy of the conditions of the donor and the principle of non-conditionality, it has also been viewed as an end to Scandinavian exceptionalism by critical observers (cf. Odén and Wohlgemuth 2013).

This chapter analyzes how competing notions of conditionality – primarily tensions between efficiency and solidarity – have played out in debates and discourses on development aid since the 1960s in one Scandinavian country and a key donor – Sweden. Repeated and shifting demands for accountability and transparency serve as a probe into the complex, competing, and often fluctuating aims, goals, and motives of international development aid. This chapter is organized in line with the main principles which have guided these persistent demands for accountability and transparency in development aid – i.e., aid on the conditions of the donor, the recipient, development as such, and aid on the conditions of the market, respectively.

It is argued that current debates on "the end of aid" are informed by a historical and unresolved tension between ideals of "unconditional solidarity" on the one hand and "conditional efficiency" on the other: The

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supposedly novel concern with accountability, evaluation, and transparency in development aid (as well as in other policy fields) neither appears as a neutral demand for "more knowledge" or "better facts" on development aid and its effects among donors and beneficiaries alike, nor as a neoliberal policy designed to hollow out both aid and Scandinavian uniqueness. Instead, it emerges as an element in a longstanding struggle between government-sponsored ODA and government-sponsored foreign direct investment (FDI) as the preferred instrument of development. As such, it has been used on both the left and the right, in the defence as well as in the critique of existing development aid discourses, goals, and practices, illustrating how presumably neutral calls for openness can be used quite flexibly to serve opposed political aims (Götz and Marklund 2014; see also Götz, Brewis, and Werther 2020). In conclusion, it is argued that the various demands for openness elucidate competing aims of aid, indicating a paradox in the transparency paradigm in contemporary development aid discourse, whereby efficient aid – as manifested in economic growth – eventually leads to the *end of aid* while its alleged inefficiency – as evidenced in social inequality – ensures its continued legitimacy.

## 8.2 From Unconditional Solidarity …

> It is fantastic that all this [broad public acceptance of foreign aid in Sweden] has come about so fast regarding the developing countries. While the US and the Soviet Union, already situated at the centre of world, have taken the leap to the moon, we have taken the step out into the world from our island. It is a big step.
>
> (Michanek 1969: 6)[1]

Few geopolitical shifts have been anticipated for so long as the decolonization of the early 1960s. Yet, not many have caused so much longstanding consternation. Not only the super powers and the former colonial powers sought to prepare themselves for this momentous shift in global politics. Also, minor and neutral states tried to adapt to the new world, including the Scandinavian countries (Borring Olesen et al. 2013). After the setting up of a coordinating committee for civil society and governmental efforts in the early 1950s, the foundation of Sweden's development aid policy was laid out in 1962, which also stated the four

[1] All translations by the author.

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aims of Swedish development aid as: resource growth; economic and social equality; economic and political independence; democratic social development (Proposition 1962:100; see also SOU 1977:13; cf. Chapter 7). However, concerning the fulfillment of these aims, the proposition was cautious, noting that: "It is a delicate task to state social and political aims for the provision of development aid. It is not self-evident that the social and political systems and principles to which we subscribe are purposive or attainable in all developing countries" (Proposition 1962:100: 7).

This caution was in part motivated by the gradual transition from Minister of Foreign Affairs Östen Undén's legalistic interpretation of Sweden's neutrality policy towards a more "activist" stance (Ekengren 1999; Lödén 1999). Yet, while the declared goal of 1962 was international solidarity and reduction of poverty it was also acknowledged that this could only be achieved through resource growth – as underdevelopment remained the core cause of poverty, and lack of capital posed a serious obstacle to development. Already in 1960, Swedish business and industrial circles had taken an interest in the new global situation caused by decolonization. That year, the Centre for Business and Policy Studies (Studieförbundet Näringsliv och samhälle, SNS) published a report on the relations between Swedish business and the so-called "under-developed countries" (SNS 1960; see also Gustafsson 1969; discussion in Glover 2019). In 1962, Swedish Export Credit Corporation (Aktiebolaget Svensk Exportkredit) was formed to facilitate government credits to Swedish corporations willing to invest in high-risk "Third World" countries (Berg 1987; see also Dohlman 1989).

International solidarity, business interests, corporatist structures, and an initial shortage of government resources, personnel, and know-how for the new emerging policy field of "international developmental questions" contributed in various ways to an early integration of popular movements, private sector, and government – a kind of regime – combining both idealized and actual Swedish relations with the decolonizing Global South, encompassing domestic interests, norms, and power relations (Elvander 1966; Berntson and Persson 1968; Faragó 1969; for a contrary view, see Englund 1991). The initial focus on development in the sense of modernization also meant that "technical assistance" would often be practically indistinguishable from "foreign investment" and *vice versa*. The free trade for a free world-doctrine as pioneered in US President Harry S. Truman's Point Four Program of 1949 also played a

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role in the formation of early Swedish development aid (just as in the development programs of the other Nordic countries, cf. Borring Olesen et al. 2013). A governmental report delivered in 1963 by a working group within the Board for International Development Issues (Beredningen för internationella biståndsfrågor) noted that:

> the Swedish Government has long conducted a liberal trade policy, characterized by viz. low tariffs and absence of quantitative restrictions. By and large, our market is already open for the export products of the developing countries, and Sweden can be said to be in pole position regarding the liberal, free-trade-friendly character of trade policy. (SOU 1963:37: 83)

The traditional free trade stance on the part of the Social Democratic Government – "with exception of restrictions caused by agricultural regulation," as the report observed – "seeks to achieve more liberal world trade by also taking the interests of the developing countries into account." The report concluded that it therefore appeared important "that both government and business assist the developing countries to find more outlets for their products" (SOU 1963:37: 83). At the time, Swedish trade with developing countries was on the rise in 1956–1961, not the least due to considerable Swedish investments in iron mining in Liberia, e.g. the Liberian-American-Swedish Mining Company (LAMCO) (Bruno 2018). Close cooperation between government and business was thus expected in the early formation of Swedish development aid (Glover 2018). While Swedish development aid took institutional shape in the form of the establishment of the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) in 1965, Swedish economic exchange with the developing countries continued to grow, although irregularly.[2]

However, doubts had already been expressed in the congress program adopted by the Swedish labor movement as represented by Swedish Social Democratic Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, SAP) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Landsorganisationen i Sverige, LO) in 1967. Entitled *Solidaritet med de fattiga folken* (Solidarity with the Poor Peoples), the emerging scepticism regarding trade as a vehicle of development eventually made its way from the congress program into the government's 1968 proposition for reform of development aid (SAP and LO 1967; Proposition 1968:101; see also Berntson and Persson 1968;

[2] In 1995, SIDA was reorganized into the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

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Gustafsson 1969). In 1968, SIDA thus added to the quote from Proposition 1962:100, noting that the neutrality of Swedish foreign policy and the principle of noninterference would not preclude the "attempt to guide the direction of development aid so that it, as far as one may assess it, contributes to a social development in the direction of political democracy and social equality," thus indicating a continued preference for the conditions of the donor on the part of development aid (see also discussion in Markensten 1967: 11).

Around the same time, increasingly radical opinion-makers, intellectuals, and scholars began to question that free trade within the capitalist system could help alleviate poverty. For example, Gunnar Myrdal (1969) – Sweden's most profiled expert on "Third World" issues, not the least in his role as founding Director of the Institute of International Economic Studies at Stockholm University and author of *Asian Drama* (1968) – argued that free trade would largely cement existing global power relations. Instead, aid, democracy, planning, public health, and social reforms would be necessary to provide the needed capital investment and institutional frameworks for world development to turn into "virtuous circles." Here, the small and neutral countries of the world could find a special role to fulfil, Sweden perhaps more so than others, Myrdal argued.

This optimism concerning Sweden's possibilities in shaping world order was perhaps most vividly expressed in SIDA General Director Ernst Michanek's (1969) analogy between the 1 percent goal and space race of the super powers, cited above. The most enthusiastic accounts of this view also involved attempts at translating what was interchangeably called the "Swedish model," "the Swedish middle-way," or "functional socialism," in economist Gunnar Adler-Karlsson's influential formulation, with its paradoxical combination of capitalism and communism to international situations as a pragmatic and realistic alternative to the Cold War rivalry between these principles (Adler-Karlsson 1967; Myrdal 1970; see also discussion in Reid-Henry 2017). Some noted that growing US disillusionment with development aid for failing to achieve the intended effect of Truman's Four Point Program in stemming communism in the "Third World" would allow "the middle powers" to play a more decisive role (Kalderén 1969; Michanek 1969: 7). Others argued that Swedish development aid could fulfil an important function for domestic economic policy in Sweden itself, by checking the rise of private consumption and the risk of inflation (Lindbeck 1969) as well as controlling Sweden's balance of payments (Kragh 1969). Noting that

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Swedish aid was primarily dependent upon Swedish economic growth, it must be developed in a strategic partnership combining the two, otherwise Sweden would "neither be able to assist in correspondence with its resources, nor can it answer to the needs of the developing countries," economist Ingvar Svennilsson (1969: 183) warned.

By the time of this Swedish debate on development aid, the notion of the "needs" of the so-called developing countries also took on a new sense of acuteness, as decolonization was increasingly viewed among prominent leaders of the Global South as opening for a new wave of neo-colonial patterns of subordination. On the one hand, the problem was one of necessary, yet unconditional financing of development projects: In the words of Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, "all the money in this world is either Red or Blue. I do not have my own Green money, so where can I get some from? I am not taking a cold war position. All I want is money to build it [i.e., the TAZARA Railway]" (1965, cited in George 2014: 65). On the other hand, development aid came under fire from the New Left – both in the North and in the South – for allegedly facilitating the needs of export industry, in addition to the already existing criticism from cultural radicals and liberals for not paying enough attention to human rights.

In Sweden, this tension sparked scathing criticisms of the government's development aid policies, spearheaded by economic historian and radical left politician Bo Gustafsson's (1964) and public intellectual Jan Myrdal's (1989 [1965], 1971) highly publicized positionings. Especially, Jan Myrdal's weekly Sunday chronicles in Stockholm newspapers 1959–1971 – culminating in the satirical and much debated 1968 television film *Hjälparen* on the alleged hypocrisy of Swedish aid workers. Myrdal turned against SIDA's support for the training of local employees at LAMCO in Liberia. The dumping of surplus Swedish paper in the decolonizing countries were often singled out as key examples, alongside Swedish investments in apartheid South Africa, prospective hydropower dam construction in war-ravaged Portuguese colonies and the marketing of arms to Latin American and South Asian dictatorships. Furthermore, the selection of recipient countries was heavily criticized for allegedly being based upon either the interests of Swedish business (e.g. Pakistan and India) or the traditions from the Swedish missionary movement in the 1800s (e.g. Ethiopia), rather than either the poor's needs or reform capacity of the recipient (Berntson and Persson 1968; for a critical analysis of this tension, see Stokke 1978).

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The "shady" language about the aims of Swedish development aid in Proposition 1968:101 was put under scrutiny by Bo Gustafsson (1969),[3] alleging that official Swedish prose on development aid was vague on purpose: Under the pretext that development aid is difficult to evaluate due to the complex nature of the problems and the vast tasks ahead, advocates of ODA could easily obscure the way in which it was being used to promote Swedish business interests globally, he argued. The radical critics, by contrast, demanded that development aid should be opened to public scrutiny, just as any other public sector, as "a basic democratic value" (Bohm 1969: 211–212). The implicit assumption was that such assessment and evaluation would prove that the Swedish development aid does not fulfil its stated aims of reducing poverty and should be dramatically redesigned (Markensten 1967; Berntson and Persson 1968; Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1969: 61, 72–73). In fact, the young, mostly left-wing academics concluded it would be naive to expect a capitalist country – albeit small, social democratic, and neutral – to engage in any other relation with the "Third World" than a purely exploitative one (Gustafsson 1969: 60; see also discussion in Tängerstad 1988; Salomon 1996).

This tension would continue to trouble Swedish relations with the decolonizing world even as Swedish policymakers shifted from the cautious legalistic neutralism of the early 1950s to the active foreign policy from the late 1960s and onwards (Ekengren 1999; Lödén 1999). Arguably, Sweden took a higher profile on global issues and "Third World" politics from Olof Palme's take-over as Chairman of the Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister in 1969. Previous neutral or moral aims of poverty reduction and improved living conditions were increasingly aligned with explicit statements in favour of "Third World" solidarity, expressed in gradually more open, if strictly humanitarian support to liberation movements in Vietnam, but also in South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies from 1969 and onwards (Öberg 1985; Sellström 1999; 2002).

[3] In 1967–1970, Gustafsson served as Chairman of the pro-Chinese Communist League Marxists-Leninists (Kommunistiska Förbundet Marxist-Leninisterna, KFML), which played an important role in organizing the Swedish popular movement United NLF Groups (De förenade FNL-grupperna, DFFG) in support of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (FNL) (Tängerstad 1988; Salomon 1996).

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These conflicts were regularly viewed by Swedish representatives in terms of a global anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle for national liberation and self-determination, rather than in terms of the bipolar Cold War logic. While developmental theorists both in the North and in the South began to question the modernization-rationalization paradigm represented by Gunnar Myrdal and the earlier generation of developmental economists and planners, most developing countries could at the same time witness the outwardly impressive results of Chinese and Soviet models of development, including large-scale industrialization, collectivization, and central planning (Bauer 1971; Caiden and Wildavsky 1974). The insight that development aid under present conditions would not substantially alter global power relations provided one of the basic tenets of the vocal demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the early 1970s and as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 (UNGA 1974) in the wake of the oil crisis following upon the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Under the NIEO agenda, the Group of 77 countries of the Global South demanded higher foreign aid ratios, more fair rules of world market exchange, set price controls for raw materials, and increased technology transfers from the First World to the Second World, securing not only true sovereignty and self-reliance for the decolonizing states, but also a shift towards a more equal world. Among the first of the so-called "like-minded group" of Western countries, Sweden welcomed the NIEO agenda (Stokke 1978; Dolman 1979; Huldt 1979; Hveem 1980). This stance also tapped into ongoing debates on the actual conditions of development, where capitalist or communist emphasis upon economic growth was contrasted with the depletion of human and natural resources it implied, followed by a marked turn towards both indigenous knowledge, post-materialist values and the promotion of alternative development models, thus qualifying the implication of what "development" would really entail and how to best achieve it (Borowy and Schmelzer 2017; Marklund 2020).

Despite this growing enthusiasm for Third World perspectives on development among both official representatives of Swedish development aid as well as the growing number of civil society solidarity organizations, it is not self-evident that the Swedes would evade skepticism because of their declared support of the interests of the "Third World" – whether through development aid, diplomatic action, or support of the NIEO. In the late 1960s, for example, leading North Vietnamese politicians were wary of the "real" interests of the Swedes in North Vietnam. According to Sweden's Beijing ambassador Lennart

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Petri, Vietnamese Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyễn Duy Trinh asked "Why are you so interested in us? What do you really want?" (Petri 1996: 414). Whether convinced by the Swedish declarations of solidarity or not, the Vietnamese proceeded to produce a "shopping list" including items they figured would fit with the aims of both Swedish and Vietnamese *realpolitik*, among others a large paper mill, given Swedish business interests and technical expertise in this area (Jerve et al. 1999: 35).

The Swedish solution to this tension was to provide aid "on the conditions of the recipient," possibly best formulated in an anthology of that name, edited by SIDA official Lennart Wohlgemuth (1976; see also SOU 1977:13). The logical assumption here was that only the recipients can know what they need: If development aid is provided in dialogue between donor and recipient it will not only be more legitimate, but also more efficient. The difference between these two perceptions of aid was reflected in the 1975 setting up of the Swedish Board for Industrial and Technical Cooperation (Beredningen för internationellt tekniskt-ekonomiskt samarbete, BITS) which offered aid finance for Swedish companies' export activities and financial investments in the Global South, as well as the Swedish Import Promotion Office for Products from the Developing Countries (Importkontoret för u-landsprodukter, IMPOD), in addition to the already existing Swedish National Export Credits Guarantee Board (Exportkreditnämnden, EKN) (Proposition 1974:57; SOU 1977:77).

The NIEO agenda assisted in reframing Swedish economic interests perceptibly subjugated to the requests of the recipient. In effect, the Swedish government took upon itself a more active role in promoting Swedish business operating in the Global South, resulting in an increase of "industrial aid" from 2 per cent to 20 per cent of SIDA's aid budget from 1970 to 1975, while Swedish ODA expanded from 128.8 million USD equivalent of 0.47 per cent of Swedish GNP in 1968 to 1.45 per cent – 1134.4 million USD – in 1976 (Frühling 1986: 288–289). Similarly, Swedish direct investments in "developing countries" expanded threefold from 206 million SEK in 1973 to 673 million SEK in 1976, Swedish bank credits accumulated to some 12 billion SEK in 1974–1976, while Swedish government's lending to developing countries reached some 1.4 billion SEK in 1976, signalling the public-private commitment of Palme's Sweden to a significant economic global outreach during this turning point in the global Cold War (Sveriges riksbank 1977: 102, 104, 172–173).

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## 8.3 … to Conditional Evaluability?

> The Swedish taxpayer would be disappointed if he [sic!] saw what came out of the billions that have been used for development aid. In a few years, many of the Swedish projects will not be possible to trace in the material world. Piles of PMs and programs is all that is left.
>
> (Henning Hamilton, Forester, cited in Braw and Rubin 1979: 5)

Under the caption of recipient's conditions diverging sets of preferences regarding development unfolded under the aegis of the NIEO agenda. On the one hand, capital intense, complex and large-scale aid projects, requiring high-level managerial skills and technological competence – such as hydro power (e.g. Uri Dam in India, Kotmale Dam in Sri Lanka), paper mills (e.g. Bai Bang in Vietnam), infrastructure (e.g. TAZARA Railway in Tanzania, constructed and built by People's Republic of China, but supported by Sweden), or state farms (e.g. the joint Nordic MONAP agricultural project in Mozambique) – could either be rationalized as pilot efforts which would generate economic, social, and technological spin-offs or criticized as "white elephants." Yet, it could be argued that recipients, trying to offset Cold War instabilities, acted rationally in demanding concrete, long-term investments which would typically ensure a steady resource flow over a longer time-period in a way which vaguely formulated and open-ended "programs," subject to constant revision could hardly match.

On the other hand, the NIEO agenda not only aimed for the industrialization of the Global South. It also engendered visions of "another development" – environmentally balanced and socially sustainable, in line with traditional values in the recipient countries. For example, President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere's conception of African socialism and *ujamaa* ("familyhood") as formulated in the famous Arusha Declaration and TANU's Policy on Socialism and Self Reliance (Government of Tanzania 1967; see also Pratt 1976) was enthusiastically embraced by Olof Palme in a September 1971 speech in Dar es Salaam upon his tour in Tanzania and Zambia, drawing parallels between SAP and TANU on the basis of the governing parties' shared belief in democratic socialism (Palme 1971; see also Lödén 1999: 188; Ottosson 2001; Silén 2007: 25; Östberg 2009).

However, as the *ujamaa* collectivization and villagization process, involving the resettlement of some 13 million people, ultimately failed to achieve the intended self-reliance (Simensen 2008; Paaskesen 2010; see also Scott 1998), Swedish and Nordic aid entered a conundrum,

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which was exacerbated by the internal tensions among the TANU leadership in 1979 on whether to continue with the villagization or to accept the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) offer of debt relief in exchange for a program of austerity measures which would effectively cancel Nyerere's African socialism (Bjerk 2017: 118–120). As the means and ends of Swedish development aid directed to Tanzania should be determined by the recipient, the divergent views in the Tanzanian leadership spelled consternation for the Swedes, as noted by Counsellor Per Lindström, charged with responsibility for Swedish aid at the Swedish Embassy in Dar es Salaam at the time (Braw and Rubin 1979: 59). Eventually, Nyerere stepped down as President in November 1985, giving way to Ali Hassan Mwinyi's economic liberalization policies. This spelled the end to the Nordic–Tanzanian partnership in developing a middle way between the recipient conditionality favored by the Swedish aid model and market conditionality underpinning the IMF's and the World Bank's emphasis upon structural reform which would evolve into the Washington Consensus during the next decade (Selim 1983; World Bank 1984; Cassen 1986; Odén and Tinnes 2003; see also Selbervik 2008). However, this marked shift in one of the most stable allegiances of North-South solidarity apparently had little impact upon the self-understanding of Swedish aid practitioners, as can be evidenced by the view of Sten Rylander, Deputy Director General of Sida, speaking of Swedish aid to recently independent Namibia: "I feel we can do this better than France, Germany, Canada or the Americans. They are just there to rip off Namibia. [. . .] I feel that in Sweden and Norway, we have a track record in Africa about the building of hydro-power plants. In Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia. That's why they like us. Our people give confidence" (Rylander, cited in Usher 1997: 73).

While public support as well as political commitment across the party spectrum remained rather strong for development aid in Sweden (Brante 1976; Hedman 1977; see also Ekengren 1997; Ekengren and Oscarsson 1999), a growing body of researchers – inside and outside the Swedish aid administration – begun to raise questions about aid effectiveness as well as human rights during the early and mid-1980s. Noting that neither human rights nor poverty reduction seemed to improve faster in countries that received the most aid if compared with those that received proportionately less, demands for increased accountability in the interest of efficiency and legitimacy in Swedish aid intensified (Andersson, Heikensten, and de Vylder 1984; Anell and Rydén 1984; Forss 1985; Johansson and Paues 1985).

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In a timely response to the demand for more public scrutiny, i.e. from 1982 and onward, SIDA (1982–1994) began to produce a series of aid assessment reports. These reports revealed that Swedish aid was in fact being "tied" up in various ways – "taking back with one hand what has been given with the other," in the words of SIDA economist Karlis Goppers. In 1984, the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionsverket) criticized how these subventions served as an unconditional support for the recipient regime, without necessarily helping the poor (Riksrevisionsverket 1984). In Fiscal Year 1985/1986, moreover, no less than 41 percent of the bilateral aid channeled through SIDA returned to Sweden in this way (Berg 1987: 147; Linnér 1988: 34). Critics remarked that import subventions and so-called *u-krediter* (development credits) had evolved into a method for disbursing funds from the aid budget to fulfil the one percent goal annually, without requiring much administration and without risking Sweden's balance of payments (cf. Berg 1987: 148).

In response to this criticism, Gösta Edgren, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for development aid issues, claimed that the attempts at scrutinizing these disbursements under the so-called *Landöversyn 1980* (SIDA 1980) had been prevented by the then center-right government which did not endorse "us washing our dirty linen in public," as he put it (Edgren cited in Berg 1987: 143, 224). In the ensuing parliamentary debate, the center-right parties shot back by attacking the current SAP government for favoring trade union-owned companies in aid-related public procurement (Riksdagen 1984). Now, however, the motivation for evaluation was less focused on revealing the hidden imperialism or business interests behind development aid, than its concrete results, its effect upon the poor, and its alleged ideological tilt to the left in terms of which countries and projects received support (Englund 1991; Karlström 1991). Despite the flood of reports and evaluations which followed, Swedish development aid debate had by the late 1980s largely become concerned with either minute technicalities or partisan domestic politics, despite the fact that public opinion support for continued Swedish development aid remained high and rising, growing from some 73 percent in 1984 to 85 percent two years later (Ekengren and Oscarsson 1999: 14ff; for a discussion, see Linnér 1988).

Under the pressure of the Swedish banking crisis in 1990–1994 as well as long-standing criticism from organized business interests, the incoming center-right government with Moderate Party leader Carl Bildt as Prime Minister in 1991–1994 undertook a review of the organization of

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Swedish development aid, assigning the task to the Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance, SASDA (Kommittén för utvärdering och analys inom biståndsområdet). This working group referred to the preceding Swedish approach, characterized with recipients' conditionality as "overly optimistic – to the point of being naïve," proposing that a greater proportion of aid to be tied to Swedish industry in the interest of mutual benefits (Hveem and McNeill 1994: 9; Usher 1997: 73). The links between development assistance and donor country exports were highlighted (Ds 1994:58; Ds 1994:75). The working group suggested that BITS should be integrated with the reorganized SIDA and IMPOD restructured into SwedeCorp. This shift should also be seen in the perspective of the former "Second World" emerging not only as a global region in need of both investment, development and aid in the wake of post-communist democratization and transition, but also an adjacent region long obscured in Swedish public perception. In 1995, a year after SAP had returned into government, the two agencies were merged to form a new organization, embodying the new converging setup – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (Usher 1997).

This convergence is epitomized in the World Bank's (1998) report *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*. The report argued that aid is most efficient in countries with functional institutions and sound macroeconomic policies, while underdevelopment and poverty are largely anthropogenic – caused by dysfunctional institutions, unsound policies, and misguided development aid which serves to protect the former (Lensink and White 1999). The World Bank's (1998) report was criticized on methodological grounds (Isaksson and Keller 1999), sceptics arguing that the report basically recommends giving aid to those who do not need it while closing it down for those who do, thus facilitating aid exit strategies in an era when countries such as Vietnam have evolved into high-growth mid-income economies (Fee 2012; Mawdsley 2012). To the sceptics, the report signaled that the World Bank – long a key player in the "foreign aid regime" (Lumsdaine 1993) – contrasted the "inefficiency" of development aid to the "efficiency" of market forces, thus confirming free trade and institutional reform as the preferred means of world development and the primacy of the market's conditionality, also in Swedish aid policies (for an argument predating the report, see Dahlgren 1992). The pre-1995 setup is in fact often regarded as the epitome of the erstwhile "Nordic model of development aid" (Cedergren and Odén 1991; Ds 1994:58; Hveem and McNeill 1994; Odén 2011).

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## 8.4 Conclusion: Evaluability's Conditions?

While domestic observers on the center-right have often criticized Swedish development aid since its inception in the early 1960s for its presumed leftist bias, progressives, radical liberals and left-wing social democrats have pinpointed the longstanding and close association between Swedish aid and Swedish business. While this structure has been typical of the high degree of market and state coordination characteristic of the "Scandinavian model" domestically until the globalizing and neoliberalizing 1990s, its international reflection in the Swedish model of developmental and economic outreach to the Global South has provoked intense debates on the moral and ideological paradoxes of this "corporatist" setup: To the progressives and radicals, Swedish development aid has largely been ineffectual because it has not sought to alter the structural imbalances of the global market, despite its focus on "progressive" regimes in the Global South. To center-right commentators, by contrast, Swedish development aid has partly failed, precisely because it has not been channeled through the global market, supporting global value chains. To the former, the market has been the primary problem. To the latter, the market has been a promising solution. It is in this context we must understand the successive demands for accountability, evaluation, and transparency in the field of development aid and the shifting aid conditionalities which they reflect.

The essence of evaluation lies in assessing the correspondence between aims, means, and outcomes. Thereby, the processes of evaluation can also serve as a mirror. The debate on the need for openness, evaluation, and accountability in development aid as studied in this chapter emerges as a kind of test chart of the donor's self-image and motives, beyond official declarations and policy statements. Today, however, development aid is currently under political pressure from two perspectives, both of which express competing self-images and motives: Neoliberals and populists criticize development aid for alleged inefficiency in reducing poverty and promoting good governance, while progressives operating through the framework provided by post-colonial and subaltern perspectives turn against its assumed intrusiveness, asymmetric power, and cognitive colonization, if not outright racism. Both these sets of criticism pose high demands on the quality of development aid projects to be assessed – efficient and solidaristic, purposive, and participatory. But, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, the issue of accountability and evaluations, openness and transparency are no novelties to the debate

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on development aid. Yet, a set of remarkable reversals can be identified when it comes to their political usage.

There appears to have been a reversal of the traditional objectives for development aid over the period under study here: During the 1960s, it was the left that criticized aid for being inefficient and for not being directed to the poorest, demanding that aid should be closed off to private interests but also voicing skepticism about aid's efficiency at all, given the capitalist world system. Today, conservatives and liberals demand that aid should be terminated once markets begin to grow as aid should only be disbursed wherever the poverty is greatest and be coordinated with free trade, corporate social responsibility and promoting economic growth, whenever possible. On the one hand, this appears logical, as (neo)liberal policies tend to request public support for investment where risks are high and profitability low, demanding it to be closed once risk is reduced and returns are bound to increase. However, in the view of the policy adaptations following upon the Great Recession of 2008, the LDCs not the least in Africa register some of the highest growth rates globally. Supporters of traditional Swedish development aid policy have thus moved to defend the continuation of aid with reference to the potential for sustainable business opportunities – such as in the debate following the former center-right government's decision to end Swedish aid to Vietnam in 2007 – thus reducing the imagined contrast between the "Nordic" or "Swedish aid model" on the one hand, and the public–private partnership model evolving in international aid discourse over the past decades on the other hand. Primarily, this fusing is steeped in the language of efficiency and hence in the demand for evaluability.

This is also where a double paradox of conditional evaluability can be observed. Continuous and seemingly endless evaluation runs the risk of overshadowing the underlying basic motives of aid to begin with, causing aid exhaustion or exasperation: A situation in which efficient aid by necessity must lead to the end of aid while inefficient aid must ensure its continuation – to the extent that the causes of the level of progress and human development at all can be determined or associated with any specific form of external assistance. Previously around 1970, evaluation was primarily prompted by a wish to put the unspoken motives into focus and place the aims under discussion, while leaving efficiency and impact largely aside. Today, in the 2020s, some fifty years later, an otherwise similar preoccupation with evaluation appears to do exactly

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the opposite, rendering the debate on development aid largely a question of impact evaluation and efficiency assessment, rather than scrutinizing motives and questioning drivers (cf. Stokke 2019).

In one sense, then, the productivity of the present aid paradigm of evaluation appears to surpass the previous paradigms of planning and recipient conditionality, as the piles of PMs and programs concerning planned development projects alluded to above is slowly becoming dwarfed by a growing mountain of impact evaluations, accountability reports, and aid assessments produced over the past decennia, constituent parts of a growing facts infrastructure on development cooperation, the value of which will eventually have to be measured itself against the persistent inequalities of the world.

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