AFRICA'S LAST 'LAST CHANCE'? REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMISSION FOR AFRICA AND THE MILLENNIUM PROJECT REPORTS

Andrew Mold

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Summary: t will only have escaped the attention of died-in-the-grain recluses that Africa has recently been firmly placed on the international agenda in a way that was perhaps unthinkable a couple of years ago. Music concerts, television documentaries and, above all, political meetings have all been carried out recently in support of African 'development'. Two particular proposals have claimed the limelight: first, the Commission for Africa set up last year by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and whose report was published in the month before the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in july 2005

1. Introduction

It will only have escaped the attention of died-in-the-grain recluses that Africa has recently been firmly placed on the international agenda in a way that was perhaps unthinkable a couple of years ago. Music concerts, television documentaries and, above all, political meetings have all been carried out recently in support of African 'development'. Two particular proposals have claimed the limelight: first, the Commission for Africa (CFA) set up last year by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, compromising 18 commissioners, and whose report was published in the month before the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in July 2005, with the clear intention of getting at least some of the report's recommendations endorsed by the G8 leaders.

The second is the Millennium Project (MP), also set up last year, at the behest of the UN's Secretary General Kofi Annan, and led by the Harvard Professor of Economics Jeffrey Sachs. Although the remit of this second report is not specifically dedicated only to Africa, but rather to how to achieve the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their target date of 2015 (something which, by general agreement, is looking like an increasingly remote possibility for the vast majority of sub-Saharan countries), it is clear from the recommendations that the focus of the report is on the developmental problems of Africa.

There has undoubtedly been a lot of hubris generated by these two projects, but particularly with regard to the CFA. Mr Blair has himself added to this impression, making statements about how 'there can be no excuse, no defence, no justification for the plight of millions of our fellow beings in Africa today. There should be nothing standing in our way… if we fail to act, we will betray the future not only of hundreds, millions of children in Africa but of our own children, too. It is unthinkable that we should do so' (cited by Left, 2005). Caught up in the clamour, some commentators have even dubbed the CFA report as 'Africa's last chance', perhaps unaware that Africa's own developmental strategy, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), was similarly named at

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* *Editor of the European Journal of Development Research*

the G8 meeting in Canada only three years ago. Two 'last chances' in the first five years of the new millennium is perhaps rather excessive, particularly when bearing in mind these are only the last in a long succession of blueprints for African development over the last thirty years.

This short paper is dedicated to exploring what is the reality behind these proposals. We will focus on both the process for elaborating the respective reports (ie, the circumstances under which the reports were drawn up) as well as the substantive content of each. It is concluded that although there are a number of recommendations that are to be welcomed in both the CFA and MP (recommendations that, if implemented, would represent a significant step forward from the kind of policies previously endorsed by the G8 countries) both projects suffer from certain conceptual and political blindspots. Chief among these is probably the lack of recognition in both reports of the importance of letting developing country governments set their own development agendas, through an enlargement of their 'policy space'. Both reports acknowledge the importance of local 'ownership' of policy strategy, but in reality are highly prescriptive in nature regarding the kind of policies which need to be adopted.

More crucially, although there are signs that political momentum is growing in favour of 'doing something about Africa', it is still unclear how far this will go. Given the current international political climate, and the past record of implementation on the findings of such reports, it is argued in this paper that the chances of getting more than a few of the reports' findings actually implemented are quite slim. This does not mean that the reports are worthless, but expectations probably need to be scaled down. As the UNDP (2005, p. 40) puts it,

> 'The currency of pledges from the international community is by now so severely debased by non-delivery that it is widely perceived as worthless. Restoring that currency is vital not just to the success of the MDGs but also to the creation of confidence in multilateralism and international cooperation—the twin foundations for strengthened international peace and security.'

2. Elaborating the Reports: The Process

Summarising such long documents is not easy: the main report for the MP runs to 329 pages, but this is only one in a series of thirteen documents called 'Task force reports' on topics such as trade, education and gender quality, water and sanitation, HIV, etc. In the case of the CFA, the whole report weighs in at 464 pages (although the summary version is a more merciful 184 pages). Table 1 provides an overview of the major financing recommendations to make the policy proposals tenable (more will be said on this later).

Table 1. The CFA and MP Reports: Some Key Proposals on Finances for Development from the Donors

	Commission for Africa	Millennium Project Report
Aid to SSA	Doubling of aid levels over the next three to five years by US$25 billion a year. Most of this in the form of grants, not loans.	Aid to SSA to reach US$36.4 billion in 2006, but to rapidly be scaled up to reach US$83.4 billion by 2015 (ie, approximately four times current levels).
Total International aid flows	Aid increases financed by meeting existing commitments to move towards the 0.7% ODA/GNI target.	By 2006, global official development assistance should reach US$135 billion, up from US$69 billion in 2003. It is claimed that the MDGs could be met with about 0.44% and 0.54% of donor's GNP.
Debt cancellation	100% debt cancellation for the poorest African countries.	Report warns that debt cancellation on 'unserviceable debt' does not add at all to additional resources required to meet the MDGs.
Aid quality	Report urges for an improvement in aid quality (eg, elimination of tied aid).	Report stresses poor quality of existing aid flows, and that most is spent on 'consultants, food and other emergency aid, administrative costs and debt relief'.
Policy conditionality	Reduction of policy conditionality associated with external assistance.	No direct statement, but report suggests that 'many government leaders in poor countries with weak governance systems are making heroic efforts at improvement, and those efforts need to be recognised and supported'.
Education	An additional US$7-8 billion per year for education (not restricted to primary education).	Recommendations on sectoral investment are 'country-specific', based on estimates of per capita expenditures required to meet MDGs. Five case studies were used to support the findings: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda.
Health	US$7 billion over five years for health services.	
Infrastructure	US$10 billion a year investment in infrastructure until 2010, with possible increases subsequently.	
Social protection	Support of US$2 billion for immediate development of social protection strategies for orphans and vulnerable children, rising to US$5-6 billion a year by 2015.	

Source: the author, from CFA (2005) and MP (2005).

It is perhaps helpful to understand the dynamic behind these reports to have an idea about the way in which both were drawn up. The CFA report was led by a group of 17 commissioners appointed under the Chairmanship of Britain's Prime Minister, Tony Blair.[1] According to the CFA's preface,

> 'We were invited in our individual and personal capacities rather than as representatives of governments or institutions. A majority of us come from Africa and we have varied experience as political leaders, public servants and in the private sector. The task we were set was this: to define the challenges facing Africa, and to provide clear recommendations on how to support the changes needed to reduce poverty.'

[1] These were Fola Adeola, K.Y. Amoako, Nancy Kassebaum Baker, Hilary Benn, Gordon Brown, Michel Camdessus, Bob Geldof, Ralph Goodale, Ji Peiding, William Kalema, Trevor Manuel, Benjamin Mkapa, Linah Mohohlo, Tidjane Thiam, Anna Biaijuka and Meles Zenawi. There were thus a total of nine commissioners from Africa, allowing the Report's authors to claim that the 'majority' of the Commissioners were from Africa. Nevertheless, the CFA has been criticised by one prominent African commentator on the ground that 'it is dominated by Westerners! Even at the governmental level, Blair chose his African partners instead of going through Africa's own multilateral organisations be they regional or continental (AU). If there is no consensus during the process, why should there be one after the report?' (Abdul-Raheem, 2005, p. 13).

Although the selection process of these commissioners was not made totally clear, the objective was apparently to gain a fairly even balance in the geographical spread between African delegates and donor countries –something which was not totally achieved: for instance, there was no member from Germany or Italy–. Nor was there much of a gender balance (only three appointees were women). One or two of the appointments were particularly controversial. For example, the appointment of Michel Camdessus, former Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, who had been one of the architects of Structural Adjustment for Africa, was widely commented upon.[2]

The CFA report was guided by the commissioners, but research was conducted primarily by a group of British civil servants –some of them seconded from the Treasury–. The head of the Secretariat of the CFA was Myles Wickstead, previously British Ambassador to Ethiopia.[3] Reportedly, the chief writer was Paul Vallely, associate editor of the British newspaper *The Independent* (Cammack, 2005). In different sections of the report, the influence of particular people was more evident. For instance, British economist (and ex-Chief Economist for the World Bank) Nicholas Stern was said to be responsible for sections related directly to economic development and trade. Although Tony Blair chaired the CFA, many attribute a major role in the setting up of the whole initiative to the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. This impression is confirmed not only by the way in which Brown become actively involved in the promotion of the report, but also the participation of his close advisors from the Treasury in drawing up the document. Brown also leaves his mark on the report in the way in which there is an insistence on rigorous 'targeting' in many of the report's recommendations –the report is replete with monetary and output targets, something very much in the personal style of the Chancellor–.

As for the MP report, this has been very much driven by the dynamic but somewhat controversial figure of Jeffrey Sachs.[4] The project received financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and is closely linked to the Earth Institute at Columbia University, where Sachs is currently Director. The MP report (2005) is in fact not one report, but a compendium of 13 reports dealing with different dimensions of the MDGs, including agriculture, health, education, water and sanitation, trade and innovations and technology. The positive 'can-do' nature of the MP, reminiscent of the development programmes of the 1950s and 1960s, is reflected by the fact that each of these reports has been drawn up by a 'Task Force'. Like the CFA, the spirit of the MP very much reveals a predisposition towards targets. For instance, for three African countries (Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda), the report provides detailed sectoral estimates of the additional ODA required to bring public spending up to the levels required to meet the MDGs (Table 2). The estimates included in the report about the financial needs have not, however, gone unchallenged, and some are particularly controversial, a point to which we will return later.

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[2] See, for instance, World Development Movement (2004).

[3] An interesting discussion on the justification and remit of the report between Myles Wickstead and members of the House of Commons International Development Committee is to be found in 'The Commission for Africa and Policy Coherence for Development: First Do No Harm', available at *http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmintdev/494/494.pdf*

[4] As a consultant, he was heavily involved throughout the 1990s in the transformation of Eastern Europe and Russia towards the market economy. Although Sachs (2005) himself staunchly defends the record of the reform process, it has been widely criticised, particularly in the case of Russia, where human development indicators have suffered one of the most severe setbacks in recent history (Ellman, 2004).

Table 2. Estimates of the Foreign Aid Required to Meet the MDGs (US$/person/year, 2000-15)

	Ghana	Tanzania	Uganda
Hunger	3.3	6.2	2.4
Education	11.8	7.8	6.7
Gender equality	1.5	1.6	1.4
Health	17.8	24.3	20.0
Water supply and sanitation	2.4	1.5	0.7
Energy	5.7	5.2	4.1
Roads	6.6	13.6	11.4
Total	49.1	60.2	46.7

Source: MP (2005), cited in *The Economist* (2005).

The focus on targets within the framework of the MDGs in both the MP and, to a lesser degree, in the CFA, has admittedly aroused much scepticism. Yet careful analysis shows that over the last forty years the UN has set some fifty development goals, with a record of performance that is more encouraging than often realised. A number of targets have been fully, or almost fully, achieved –for instance, the eradication of smallpox, major reductions of infant mortality and the near elimination of polio and guinea worm (Emmerij, Jolly and Weiss, 2005)–.[5] That said, it has been questioned whether the MDG goals are excessively optimistic (Moss, 2005, p. 9). In many cases, poor African countries are being asked to achieve in a decade what took European countries many generations to accomplish. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is being asked to reach universal primary school completion by 2015 from a current level of around 57%. This leap took European countries over a century to achieve, but both the CFA and the MP now expect African countries to do the same in just ten years.

Beyond the tendency towards targeting, there is a high degree of convergence between the other propositions of the MP and the CFA. Both reports are extremely ambitious in their scope, encompassing aid policies, sectoral strategies, the responsibilities of donors and African governments, etc. Both endorse a major 'up-scaling' of aid to the continent, recommending approximately a doubling of aid to the continent during the next few years to around US$50 billion a year (with additional resources planned over the long term). And (within certain limits) both studies contemplate a more ambitious role than previously for the African State in the provision of health and educational services, as well as infrastructure.[6] Finally, both the CFA and MP reports are insistent on the importance of 'good governance' on the part of African countries themselves if the 'scaling-up' of aid is to be effective (though, as we shall suggest later, what exactly is implied by the term 'good governance' is a key bone of contention).[7]

[5] As Emmerij, Jolly and Weiss (2005) point out, it is only a small minority of global goals for which hardly any progress has been made: the reduction of maternal mortality is one prime example; another, revealing and very serious, is the 0.7% goal for development assistance in general and the goal for assistance to least developed countries in particular.

[6] This last point can to some extent be taken as a tacit *mea culpa* from the donor community regarding the policies which were foisted on African countries during the period of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s, when state capacity was significantly debilitated throughout the continent. Through policies of privatisation and liberalisation, structural adjustment involved giving much greater protagonism to market forces in the African economies than had previously been the case. Belatedly, however, the development community, and particularly the International Financial Institutions (IFIs, principally the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) recognised that it was practically impossible to implement any policy agenda at all without sufficient state capacity.

[7] On governance, the CFA report is in fact more exhaustive, touching on a vast area of commitments related to 'good governance' and focusing considerable attention on the responsibilities of the donor countries in fostering good governance within Africa. The MP report, in contrast, simply argues that governance is much better than is commonly supposed in SSA, drawing the conclusion that a number of countries have been unfairly 'overlooked' by donors and thus are deserving of more aid.

For anyone familiar with the workings of reports like these, the convergence among the MP and CFA proposals will not be surprising. There has been a considerable amount of cross pollination between the two projects, with many formal and informal contacts between the different teams involved in drawing up the proposals. Indeed, there has been an implicit concern that each proposal avoids contradicting the other, with the object that similar ideas expressed 'independently' in the two reports will be mutually reinforcing.

3. The Commission for Africa (CFA)

Why was the CFA set up? Supporters of the initiative claim that it was essentially to take advantage of the coincidence in the first half of 2005 of the British government leading the G8 and taking over the presidency of the EU, as well as stemming from a profound belief that 'the conditions of the lives of the majority of Africans to be intolerable and an affront to the dignity of all mankind. We insist upon an alteration of these conditions through a change of policy in favour of the weak' (CFA, 2005, prologue). It was thus argued that the CFA could avoid the fate of the 1980s Brandt Commission which made similar calls for a change in North-South relations but which in terms of policy implementation was almost completely ineffectual. This time around, so the argument ran, there was a far greater chance of getting the proposals implemented.[8]

In its initial stages, the report had to struggle with a number of dilemmas regarding its raison d'être. One was justifying why a priority should be given by the international community to Africa. If poverty reduction is the essential objective, then surely aid should be distributed towards the countries with the worst problems of endemic poverty? Why should poor Asian or Latin American countries be excluded? Why leave out India and China, where the largest number of the world poor live? The retort on this last point was quite easy: although both countries still have to contend with serious problems related to poverty, China and India are currently experiencing very high growth rates and have access to international finance in a way which would be unthinkable for the average small African economy. But even for small, landlocked countries in Asia like Cambodia, with a very low income per capita and many similar developmental problems to poor African countries, it could be argued that the country has the advantage of finding itself in the centre of a dynamic region, where economic performance is currently strong, and thus the perspectives for growth are far better than for the majority of African countries. Because of a confluence of adverse circumstances (low income *per capita*, poor infrastructure, perceived high levels of corruption, adverse climate, etc.), Africa warranted special treatment, so the argument ran.

The CFA's report 'Our Common Interest' certainly starts very boldly, proclaiming that:

> 'We address ourselves to the people of Africa and the world as a whole. For it is they who must demand action... The measures we propose constitute a coherent package for Africa. They must be delivered together. 2005 is the year to take the decisions that will show we are serious about turning the vision of a strong and prosperous Africa into a reality' (CFA, 2005, p. 4).

[8] A number of critics suggested that the ultimate goal might have been less noble, being 'concocted' to improve Tony Blair's public image and credibility, both badly damaged by his backing of the US military campaign in Iraq (Monbiot, 2005; Graham, 2005).

But do the authors achieve this objective of providing a 'coherent package'? The document provides in many respects a frank and forthright critique of past mistakes and presents a road map for future progress, but it is often sketchy on aspects of implementation (Maxwell, 2005). For example, the CFA makes a strong case for reversal of the decline in investment in water and sanitation, and calls for an additional US$10 billion a year in 2006 (and US$20 billion by 2015) from donors to be spent on improving health service delivery. However, the biggest challenge on the health front is how to actually achieve expanded and better health services. Beyond recognising that the strengthening of health systems requires greater 'coordination' between donors and national governments, the CFA provides few concrete suggestions about how this is to be achieved (Mayhew, Tibenderana, and Haines, 2005). Similarly, although the severity of the brain drain (and the West's responsibility in provoking it) is acknowledged –'Africa loses an average of 70,000 skilled personnel a year to developed countries in this brain drain. Zambia has lost all but 400 of its 1,600 doctors in recent years' (CFA, 2005, p. 20)– no concerted action plan is to be found within the CFA report to counter these tendencies. Echoing this ambivalence, the best that the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in June could come up with was the promise to 'create an enabling environment for retention [of skilled labour]', without any new financial commitments to address these concerns (Oxfam, 2005, p. 7).

This is a problem which pervades much of the report. Perhaps fearful of extending their recommendations beyond their remit, the report's authors make many useful observations, but are often excessively vague on the policy implications. For instance, on reducing the dependence of African countries on primary commodity exports, the report argues that the G8 and EU countries should 'help develop the capacity to process agricultural products and improve the productivity and quality of raw materials. They should fund the development of organisations to help small farmers market their produce. Supermarkets could do more to make it easier for household farmers to become suppliers.' Such generalist exhortations are unlikely to take us very far. In fact, despite repeatedly stressing the importance of Africa achieving a deeper 'integration' into the world economy, the treatment of the trade issue is generally noncommittal: a bolder stance, for example, might have included a call for an end to all agricultural subsidies in North America, Japan and Europe, and produce a roadmap of how to achieve this. But on such polemics, the CFA is regrettably silent.[9]

Despite these limitations, the professionals involved in the research and the writing up of the relevant chapters of the CFA were evidently given some important margins of manoeuvre regarding the topics that could be raised. The report is generally even-handed in its criticisms of both African governments and the donor community. However, much of the onus for action is placed on the developed countries. For those who believe, like this author, that the first principle of international development policy should be 'do no harm', this is a very welcome angle. For example, the CFA insists that 'it is pointless for the

[9] Even this limited stance taken on the trade issue has got the CFA in trouble with some of its trading partners. According to a leaked document (see *www.epawatch.net*), the European Commission took exception to the CFA's position on the ongoing negotiations between the EU and their African partners regarding the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). The CFA basically argues in favour of a more cautious approach to the negotiations of the EPAs, and warns of the possible negative welfare impact for Africa of what are in essence free trade deals between the African countries and the EU. This position was seen by Brussels as undermining its strategy in promoting the EPAs. It has, however, subsequently been suggested that this dispute is essentially superficial and indeed even staged, so as to put a break on 'unrealistic' aspirations about what the CFA can achieve. Critics point out that DG Trade is now run by Tony Blair's erstwhile colleague and close confidant Peter Mandelson (Monbiot, 2005).

developed world to bemoan African corruption when it does not take the specific measures needed to counter it' (CFA, 2005, p. 46). It subsequently recommends the implementation of UN anti-corruption legislation (which has so far only been ratified by one G8 country). Similarly, the report stresses the importance of achieving peace and security in the region if developmental objectives are to be achieved. In this context, it is suggested that 'as a matter of priority and no later than 2006, the international community should open negotiations on an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)' (*ibid.*, p. 54).

Also welcome is the way in which on a number of fronts explicit support is given to African institutions. It is recommended that some of the additional aid is channelled through the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the regional economic communities. Recognising the crucial nature of ensuring peace and security, it is similarly proposed that Western nations fund at least of 50% of the Africa Union's peacekeeping budget. Reversing years of World Bank orthodoxy that poor developing countries could not afford the luxury of tertiary education, the CFA report also contains an important acknowledgement of the role of African universities in building up human capital. But perhaps with an eye on the donor community and the International Financial Institutions, the report often stops tantalisingly short of bolder declarations. For instance, 'rich nations should support the removal of fees for basic healthcare, until African governments can afford to take on these costs themselves. Basic healthcare should be free <u>for poor people</u>' (CFA, 2005, p. 68, emphasis mine). Despite widespread evidence that 'selectivity' and 'targeting' of basic social services is generally ineffective and incurs extremely high administrative costs, the report's authors did not apparently feel that they could endorse a policy of universal basic healthcare for all.

How is all this to be financed? The CFA endorses a controversial proposal, initially made by Chancellor Gordon Brown in 2003, to create an International Finance Facility (IFF) in order to 'frontload' US$50 billion in aid per year until 2015. Under this plan, donors would make long-term and binding pledges on aid; using these commitments as security the IFF would raise money from the international capital markets by issuing bonds, which donors' future pledges would then repay. The idea is basically to 'lock-in' donor countries to their commitments on increased aid spending to Africa. However, there are a number of serious questions which have been raised regarding how this would work in practice (Moss, 2005). For a start, despite the frequent claim that the IFF, if implemented, would create 'additional' resources for African development, in reality the IFF by itself does not create any net new resources. In fact, because of the relatively high interest rate and transaction costs associated with what is in essence a plan to issue debt in order to finance current expenditure on aid, critics argue that it may actually end up reducing future aid flows (World Bank, 2005, p. 105). Moreover, doubts have been raised about the philosophy of 'aid today is better than aid tomorrow' which underlines the initiative is really a sound one. Certainly, there are some kinds of aid where up-front spending could be cost effective (such as for immunisation campaigns and other preventive health care). But long-term recurrent expenditures for maintaining roads, schools, hospitals, etc (in terms of salaries and supplies) can be just as important as the initial investment. The history of economic development is replete with examples of failed large-scale investments which were not accompanied by sufficient financing to cover these recurrent costs. As Moss (2005, p. 6-7) notes:

> 'Anyone who has driven on African roads knows that building them is the easy part; it is their maintenance which is trickier... we can see this in the examples of countries which

> successfully used aid to grow out of poverty. Botswana and South Korea received aid, not in a huge wave, but rather in steady moderate amounts over decades. This suggests that long-term sustainable flows of assistance may be preferable to a "big push" or the frequent calls for a "Marshall Plan for Africa".'

To sum up, the CFA has some important things to say which have not been stressed before in a major report emanating from an industrialised nation's initiative. But it is rather weak regarding recommendations on how to implement the proposals. As a final comment, the Report frequently takes a rather reductionist approach in the way in which Africa is treated: too many references are made to 'Africa's problems' without sufficiently differentiating between countries. Despite impressions to the contrary, Africa is not universally immersed in a crisis, and in some countries important progress has been registered in certain spheres.[10] This is recognised in various parts of the report (there are several mentions of Botswana's successes, for instance), but it would have been nice to see a more explicit acknowledgement throughout.

4. The Millennium Project (MP)

The MP starts from the premise that Africa is caught in a particularly pernicious 'poverty trap'. 'Put simply, the continent is too poor to grow' (*The Economist*, 2005, p. 25). According to Sachs, this is the product of a tragically unfortunate set of circumstances –the region is uniquely burdened by disease (its people account for 85% of malaria's death toll of 1.2 million and 75% of the 2.1 million deaths from AIDS last year)–. It is also disfavoured by geography (less than a quarter of Africa's population live within 100 km of the coast). Because of its peculiar ecology, the continent's farmers failed to benefit from the green revolution. As a result of these factors, the continent can amass too little capital to support a growing population. Short of capital, it is too poor to save: its gross national savings were just 16% of GDP in 2003, compared with 42% in Asia. And without sufficient saving, the region cannot overcome its shortage of capital (*ibid.*).

There is of course nothing new in such ideas. The need for a 'big push' to induce development has been around since the 1950s and 60s –it is an integral part of Walter Rostow's 'Stages of Development', for example, and the much-debated merits of 'balanced' versus 'unbalanced' growth (ie, the idea that investments are needed simultaneously on all fronts, *vis-à-vis* the concept of prioritising particular sectors)–. In this context, arguably, the MP report adopts a more structured approach to the interventions than the CFA report. It attempts to identify 'quick wins': anti-malarial bednets, nutrition support for young children, fertiliser for African farmers (Maxwell, 2005). However, it should be stressed that there is no universal agreement upon the merits of a 'big push'. William Easterly (2005, p. 8-9 and 30), in particular, has been very scathing of the idea, and argues that:

> 'the big stylised facts certainly do not support the prediction that aid has big growth effects, helping countries escape from poverty traps: (1) growth is lower in aid-intensive countries than in developing countries that get little aid, (2) aid has risen over time as a percent of income in Africa, but Africa's growth rate has fallen over time... coordination failures and poverty traps are fascinating objects for theoretical and empirical exploration. However, the description of poverty traps, Big Pushes, and takeoffs as a justification for foreign aid receives scare support in the actual experiences of economic development.'

[10] See Sender (1999) for a persuasive argument of this.

Another of the key messages of the MP report is that governance is better than is commonly assumed in the continent, and that African countries are thus deserving of more aid. Sachs (2005, p. 190-191) is adamant on this point: 'Politics, at the end of the day, simply cannot explain Africa's prolonged economic crisis. The claim that Africa's corruption is the basic source of the problem does not withstand practical experience or serious scrutiny. During the past decade, I witnessed close at hand how relatively well-governed countries in Africa, such as Ghana, Malawi, Mali and Senegal, failed to prosper, whereas societies in Asia perceived to have extensive corruption, such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, enjoyed rapid growth'. There may be much merit in such an approach, and certainly it is a refreshing change to the Afro-pessimism which pervades much writing on the continent. Africa is not uniquely afflicted by corruption, and to suggest otherwise is to ignore the history of successful developers like South Korea in the 1960s and China now, where corruption was rife during the period of early capitalist development (Kahn, 2002, p. 165).[11]

There are a number of very good concrete policy recommendations included within the pages of the MP. One is for example the support expressed for establishing a continent-wide school feeding programme –programmes which existed in a number of countries prior to structural adjustment but were subsequently dismantled–.[12] Another is the endorsement of re-establishing subsidies for food-insecure farmers to ensure access to key farm inputs such as fertilizers (MP, 2005, p. 70). Like the CFA, the report also recommends the elimination of school fees, the imposition of which has been much criticised across the continent, and which has contributed to reducing school attendance. The support given to strengthening the provision of regional public goods (MP, chapter 15), particularly transport and telecommunications infrastructure, is also to be welcomed – accelerating regional integration is one of the major pending challenges for Africa (UNECA, 2004) and external help is clearly required to make this possible–.

Despite these strengths, on reading the MP the overall impression is given that the report adopts an excessively technocratic approach to the problems confronting developing countries. One area which is particularly controversial is the cost estimates provided for reaching the MDGs. These are controversial on two levels. First, at a micro level, different studies have produced widely discrepant estimates about exactly how much it would cost to fund particular interventions. Table 3, comparing estimates of the cost of achieving

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[11] Kahn (*ibid.*) musters a powerful argument on this score:

> 'Although it is undoubtedly the case that corruption imposes large costs on investors and on society and that high levels of corruption undoubtedly undermine the social fabric if it goes on for too long, there is no evidence that successful developers first fought and won the battle against corruption and then developed… Without excusing corruption, international agencies have to face up to the fact that the construction of capitalism, although it may be necessary for the long-term prosperity of poor countries, is itself an ugly and conflictual process. Attempts to attain a corruption-free, representative and accountable system of governance at this stage may not only not be achievable, but may divert attention from what actually needs to be done to improve the quality of state intervention to accelerate the transition and make it more socially acceptable.'

[12] The CFA (2005b, p. 211) also supports this proposal, but notes donors 'to date have tended to fund short-term, small-scale and –frequently– complex social protection projects, often in reaction to a disaster. For social protection to have real impact such projects must be at scale and therefore simple. They must be high impact and therefore bold. African governments require predictable, long-term support from donors in order to take on these types of recurrent costs.'

universal primary education in Uganda from different sources, is illustrative. Although the cost estimates are stated in dollars of different years, it is clear that there is an enormous difference between, on the one hand, the estimates produced by UNICEF and, on the other, those by the MP. Indeed, there is approximately a four-fold difference. Of course, as Reddy and Heuty (2005, p. 13) point out, this variation may in part reflect differences in the understanding of the goal and in detailed analytical premises. But it is still worrying that such assumptions are not fully explained. Similar doubts have been raised about other key estimates produced in the MP. For example, the ability to accurately portray the number of people suffering from malaria has been questioned (*The Economist*, 2005b, p. 70). And if the number of sufferers is not known, then it is practical terms impossible to cost any interventions to prevent these infections. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that only one African country (Mauritius) currently registers births and deaths according to UN standards, so it is impossible, for example, to know exactly how many people are dying from AIDS.

Table 3. Unit Cost of Universal Primary Education in Uganda

Study	Estimated Annual Cost per Pupil
UNICEF 2001	US$13 (1998 prices)
EPRC 2001	US$46 (2001 prices)
World Bank 2003	US$27.5 (2001 prices)
Millennium Project	US$53 (2000 prices)

Source: Reddy and Heuty (2005), p. 13.

The second level on which there is considerable concern about the MP cost-estimates is a logical consequence stemming from the aforementioned problems at the micro-level: the misgivings about the total cost estimates for achieving the MDGs. As an example, Reddy and Heuty (2005) compare the estimates produced for the Zedillo Report, UNDP's Human Development Report 2003 and the World Bank (see Annex). According to the Zedillo Report, halving world poverty would cost US$20 billion a year. According to a Computable General Equilibrium Model (CGE) used by the World Bank, however, that cost would range from US$54-US$62 billion –about three times as much–. Such estimates depend critically on the assumptions of the so-called poverty reduction elasticity to growth (ie, the elasticity of the poverty headcount ratio with respect to *per capita* income). In fact, the MP explicitly declines to use country-specific estimates of so-called poverty reduction elasticities of growth because of the large variation between different available estimates. Bearing in mind these very major discrepancies, the cost-estimates produced by the MP for achieving the MDGs need to be taken with a rather large pinch of salt. Yet in the text of the MP, such doubts that exist about the global estimates are played down, with a simple statement that 'the ODA estimation methodology presented here represents a pioneering effort at a bottom-up, integrated, country-level approach to MDG needs assessments. Even so, the results are subject to several sources of uncertainty and should not be interpreted as a definitive point estimate of MDG investment needs.' (MP, 2005, p. 254).

In order to finance the MP proposals, Sachs (2005, p. 302-308) very much targets the US as the chief country which should shoulder the increase in ODA. He argues persuasively that the US's idea of itself as a 'generous donor' is very much contradicted by its own statistics on giving, and suggests that the country would be easily able to afford the increment that the MP recommendations supposes. Therein perhaps lies the whole Achilles' heel of his analysis. Despite some concessions on debt relief and the channelling of additional financing through the Millennium Challenge Account (a new US facility for providing aid to selected developing countries), there are few signs that the US is about to embrace a massive increase in aid spending to Africa. On the contrary, confronted by a

massive budget deficit at home, and with resources being overstretched abroad in the Middle East, Afghanistan, etc., the prospects for large-scale additional injections of aid by the US over the medium to long terms are fairly bleak.[13]

5. Evaluation

All this has to be set against a backdrop of a considerable 'initiative fatigue' which is beginning to set in within the continent. Representative of the kind of sentiments which are often expressed is a piece in the Ugandan daily *The Monitor*, signed by Andrew Mwenda. He argues that the Blair Commission

> 'epitomises the failed development experience of Africa – product of policies designed by the state and for the state in collusion with the so-called 'development partners' where the continent's people have very little say... Instead of listening to their own people, governments in Africa listen to donors. Foreign aid therefore undermines democratic culture, and it also brings a begging mentality among state politicians and bureaucrats alike so that for every fiscal shortage they look for foreign aid, not for policies that favour rapid capital accumulation.'[14]

Certainly, the number of initiatives in favour of improving development prospects, and in particular improving the economic, social and political performance of Africa, has been apparently never-ending. One British-based NGO, World Development Movement, suggests that there is really no need for more 'analysis' or 'discussion' –the problems are well-defined, all that is needed now is the commitment to fulfil existing pledges and promises (WDM, 2004)–. There is much truth in such accusations: the international community has often behaved like a small child who quickly loses interest in his new toy and moves on to the next one. As a *New Statesman* (2005) leader puts it, 'the modern western mind has a short attention span; it prefers the immediate and the contingent to the long-term and the remote'. It is in many ways inexplicable (or perhaps rather 'inexcusable') how some of the past well thought-out programmes like the 20/20 initiative, which arose from the Copenhagen Social Summit in 1995 and endorsed increases by both donors and aid recipients in expenditures on basic social services, fell by the wayside.

Against this backdrop, it is inevitable that the proposals of the CFA and the MP will put the whole question of the effectiveness of development aid back in the limelight. Nancy Birdsall (2004), one of the leading experts on aid effectiveness, has recently identified seven of the worst 'sins' or failings of donors, including an impatience with institution building, collusion and coordination failures, failure to evaluate properly the results of their support, and financing that is volatile and unpredictable. Another recent report (Oxfam/Action Aid, 2005) estimated recently that around 40% of international 'aid' (and 20% of that going to Africa) actually ends up staying in the donor countries' economies, through aid tied to the purchase of the goods and services from the donor countries. If one bears in mind the consultancy fees, the salaries of aid workers, etc, it is likely that the real percentage of aid which effectively stays in the economies of the donor countries is much higher.[15]

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[13] In a recent declaration, John Bolton, America's representative to the UN, added to the pessimism on this score by stating that although the US supported, in generic terms, the goals expressed in the 2000 Millennium Declaration, it did not support the full panoply of indicators and schedules formulated by the UN secretariat the following year (The Economist, 2005, p. 69).
[14] Mwenda (2005).
[15] The British government has in fact made an important stand on this issue, untying all of its aid. The CFA

Clearly such problems will have to be addressed if either the CFA or the MP proposals are to prosper. For instance, by putting additional burdens on scarce bureaucratic resources, on many occasions aid has been construed as being part of the problem, not the solution. At one time there were 405 aided projects in the Mozambique Ministry of Health alone. In the early 1990s in Tanzania, there were 40 'donors' and more than 2000 projects (Chambers, 2005, p. 40). This created such a burden for the Tanzanian authorities that they were eventually obliged to call a 'mission moratorium' for a period of three months, to allow administrators to actually carry out their usual duties. As Easterly (2002, p. 44) puts it, reflecting on the Ethiopian case,

> 'there is a certain irony in donors increasing the pressure on the government's managerial capacity through donor red tape and then turning around and trying to satisfy their own demands through 'capacity building.' No amount of 'capacity-building' seems likely to relieve the severe managerial bottlenecks to the foreign aid process.'

There has been much corresponding debate in the literature on the capacity of African states to 'absorb' such a dramatic increase in international aid as that advocated by the CFA and the MP. Most studies estimate that an 'aid saturation point' could be reached anywhere between 15% and 45% of GDP, beyond which the marginal benefits to additional aid may become negative (de Renzio, 2005, p. 3). It is evident that the level of aid in some countries is already within that range (Table 3).

Table 3. Aid Dependence in Africa, 2003

	Aid per Capita (Current US$)	GDP per Capita (Constant 2000 US$)	Aid/GNI (%)	Aid as % of Govt. Expend. (1)	Population, Total (mn)
Burkina Faso	37.2	252.9	11	–	12.1
Ethiopia	21.9	102.4	23	87	68.6
Ghana	43.9	275.9	12	–	20.7
Kenya	15.1	340.8	3	25	31.9
Madagascar	31.9	233.2	10	90	16.9
Mozambique	55.0	254.9	25	–	18.8
Niger	38.5	177.6	17	–	11.8
Senegal	43.9	485.4	7	91	10.2
Uganda	38.0	276.5	16	93	25.3
Zambia	53.8	354.4	13	114	10.4
SSA	34.3	513.7	6	–	704.5

(1) Where available, data is cited at its highest level since 1996.
Source: World Development Indicators Online.

In fact, nearly two dozen African countries currently receive aid worth more than half their total public expenditure. As Moss (2005, p. 7) states, against such a backdrop the scope for across-board doubling or tripling of aid flows seems limited.[16] And as the quotation from Andrew Mwenda suggests at the beginning of this section, high levels of aid as a share of government expenditure can also have some serious implications with respect to governance: it can weaken accountability, encourage rent-seeking and corruption, foment conflict over control of aid funds, contribute to the siphoning off of scarce talent from the local bureaucracy and alleviate pressures to reform inefficient policies and institutions. Using econometric analysis, although the precise relationship is complex, a World Bank research paper (Knack, 2000) has confirmed that aid dependence can be associated with

(2005b, p. 358) makes a call for other donor countries to do the same.
[16] Paradoxically, the countries that could in theory absorb large-scale aid flows are China and India, both large fast-growing economies which currently receive very little aid (0.13% and 0.36% respectively). And neither seems to have requested much more aid.

undermining institutional quality.

Aware of these problems, both the MP and the CFA reports recommend dedicating more resources to capacity-building. However, such policies have often been undermined in the past by the policies of donors and the International Financial Institutions (the IMF and the World Bank). Under Structural Adjustment Programmes, in many African countries the public sector became understaffed and salaries fell to ridiculously low levels. It is difficult to disagree with Sender (2002), who argues that 'inadequate state capacity in sub-Saharan Africa has been a self-fulfilling prophecy; the outcome of a bet rigged by those in a strong position to influence results. The Washington institutions have consistently demanded initiatives that impair governments' capacity for policy formulation and implementation.' Overcoming that lack of capacity must be a key challenge for the success of both the CFA and MP, but neither report really explains the nitty-gritty of how to achieve the required increase in state capacity.

Arguably, both reports also treat two fundamental issues for poverty reduction in a rather cursory manner: inequality and employment. Until recently, inequality has been one of the unspoken problems of the continent; it was assumed that, given the prevalence of poverty, inequality was not a major problem. Recent empirical studies have contributed to dismantling that myth. Data show that Africa suffers from the highest levels of inequality of all continents (UNDP, 2005). Francis Bourguignon (2004, p. 7), Chief Economist of the World Bank, has observed that in Ethiopia growth could have reduced the poverty headcount by some 31% between 1981 and 1995. But because of changes in the distribution that contributed to a 37% increase in poverty, the final effect was a net increase in poverty of 6%.

Unfortunately, neither the MP or the CFA put forward policies to redress the vast existent inequalities by, for example, adopting a progressive tax policy. Both reports stress the importance of pro-poor growth, but neither goes as far as to suggest that redistributional policies are adopted. Silence on this issue has critical implications for meeting the MDGs. As the UNDP (2005:66) points out, although most analysts argue that sub-Saharan Africa has little chance of attaining the MDG goal of halving poverty by 2015, this is not necessarily true if the region combines a more modest increase in growth with an improved pattern of income distribution. For example, by general consensus, Kenya is a country which is well off track for attaining the poverty goal. Even if Kenya were to achieve a 1% *per capita* growth rate (and with the exception of the last two years, recent performance has been well below this, with no *per capita* growth at all in the period since 1997), on current distribution patterns poverty would not be halved until 2030. Yet doubling the share of the poor in future growth at the same 1% rate of growth would dramatically change the prospects, enabling Kenya to halve poverty by 2013.

The employment issue is similarly skirted around. Unemployment is probably the most serious challenge facing African governments today. Figures are so unreliable on this that no one really knows how many unemployed there are in the continent. But it is known that the share of people in formal sector employment often does not reach more than 10%. That is in itself an extraordinary indictment of the economic policies which have been followed over the last 20 years or so and which were endorsed by the donor community, in the guise of SAPs and other policy instruments. In the future, meaningful poverty reduction will only be possible by producing dynamic domestic economies which are heavily intensive in job creation. The CFA flirts with some ideas on employment creation (such as donor

support for Youth Employment Networks) but they are generally marginal to the overall recommendations. With its emphasis on public sector interventions in health and education, the MP hardly broaches this issue.

Another major oversight in both reports is the naïve way in which African politics are often viewed. According to Booth (2005, p. 494), politics constitute 'the biggest blind spot [of the CFA]… for every winning point there is an apparently wilful failure not to reflect the best current thinking on the subject'. But the MP on occasions seems to suffer from the same oversight. Sachs (2005) in particular appears quick to endorse the actions of leaders such as Ethiopian President Meles Zanawi or Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni –however, within the continent, they are far more controversial figures–. Museveni, for instance, recently had to withstand the wrath of the donor community for amending the constitution in order to let him stand for a third term as President (he has already been in power for 19 years). In cases like Equatorial Guinea, with its oil riches, the issue of the lack of democracy is typically not even broached by Western countries. Welcome as the emphasis on 'good governance' may be, the concept is a highly problematic one, and liable to the charge of 'double standards'. Incoherence in the discourse on 'good governance' is also revealed by the obstructionism of a number of Western governments to the UN-led investigation into allegations of the massive illegal appropriation of assets in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).[17]

None of these points should overshadow the key message to emanate from both the MP and the CFA regarding the case for a significant up-scaling of aid. Again, Sachs is probably the most vociferous (and perhaps also most convincing) champion of this. But the questions that up-scaling raises are extremely complicated, and cannot be simply swept aside. How should the increase in resources be channelled through to their ultimate beneficiaries –the poor– should the money be forthcoming? The MP suggests that most of it should be through the UN agencies although, again, the contemporary mood in Washington is hardly conducive to the expansion of the role of the UN. Another key question concerns the role of the IMF and the World Bank. Both the CFA and the MP make some criticism of the roles played by these institutions in the past, but they are less clear concerning their precise role in the future.[18] The relevance of the Melzter Report (2001) on the role of the IFIs should also be noted here, which called for a whittling down of the influence of both institutions.

Another prime question which needs to be addressed is whether the new aid should be disbursed in grant or loan form? Both the CFA and the MP urge donors to expand grant aid to Africa, but it is so far unclear as to what extent this advice will be taken on board, especially by the IFIs (who will ultimately see their power over policy making undermined if aid commitments are dispersed in grant form). The latest World Bank Development Finance (2005) notes that there has indeed been an increase in grant form aid, something which may be taken as a positive development. But should the new aid be channelled through greater budget support, as the CFA suggests, or instead through specific programmes (as the arguments of the MP seems to imply)? The MP argues that the choice is generally dependent on assessments of the 'volition' of the government in question –

[17] See Amnesty International (2005).
[18] According to the CFA (2005b, p. 16), 'the African Development Bank needs to be strengthened and the role of the Economic Commission for Africa enhanced. The IMF and World Bank need to give higher priority to Africa's development. They also need to become more accountable both to their shareholders and to their clients, and to give Africa a stronger voice in their decision-making.'

those with a broadly credible MDG-based poverty reduction strategy support can be 'trusted' with generous budget support–. But where this is lacking, 'development strategies need to focus on humanitarian and health concerns, and aid should be channelled mainly through nongovernmental organizations' (MP, 2005, p. 114). How it is to be decided whether the government has sufficient 'volition' is of course the moot point.

Clearly, it would be churlish to think that there is one unique 'best' way of organising a disparate and complex global aid system. Multilateralism has many benefits over bilateralism, especially regarding coordination. And, as we have seen, policy coherence constitutes a major challenge for the donor countries. The authors of the CFA, above all, seem keenly aware of these problems. Nevertheless, by putting a powerful organisation like the World Bank in charge of international aid, the multilateral option tends towards monolithic concepts of development. And that in itself goes against the concept of ownership and diversity of policy options. Both the MP and the CFA have had to struggle with these dilemmas.

Only slight tongue in cheek, a number of authors have suggested that it would be better to provide the finance directly to the poor, and cut out the 'middle-man' –the international donor community (see, for instance, Hanlon, 2004)–. Given an average income shortfall of about only 31 cents for the 1.1 billion people estimated to be living under the international 'dollar a day' poverty line, Sachs's own calculations (2005, p. 290-291) suggest that it would require only US$62 billion to halve the level of global poverty, considerably cheaper than the US$170 billion estimated by the MP.[19] One way through this morass would be to generalise an international system of 'social security' –charity, it is often observed, is an odious thing, and it would be better to provide support to poor people through an international, rights-based, 'safety net'–. An ambitious proposal along these lines is set out by Fitzgerald (1997). The donor community is usually scathing of 'cash transfers' as a way of solving poverty, but experiences with cash transfers to demobilised soldiers in Mozambique, and the provision of basic pensions for the elderly in South Africa, have shown that it is indeed possible for these systems to work efficiently, and with relatively low administrative costs (Hanlon, 2004). Chapter 6 of the CFA provides a strong commitment on social protection, including the applying of cash allowances to orphans, widows, people with disabilities and the elderly. This might be seen as a positive first step towards endorsing an international system of social security.

Nonetheless, reading the small print is essential to understanding the ultimate impact of proposals like the CFA. In the aftermath of the G8 meeting, Tony Blair was reportedly exasperated by criticism of the debt-relief deal that had ostensibly promised 100% debt relief for the poorest developing countries. Yet despite the rhetoric of African 'ownership' contained in the CFA report, it seems likely that the debt-relief package will increase the range of policy stipulations –in particular, with regard to the continued selling off of state assets through privatisation and the liberalisation of the domestic economies (Killick, 2004)–. Moreover, a large part of the increase in aid flows to Africa over recent years can be accounted for by further debt relief. As the MP warns, this will not necessarily put a penny into new aid programmes. There are thus some contradictions between the recommendations of the report and the probable outcomes. On certain issues, the authors of the CFA are treading on particularly treacherous ground. For instance, on anti-

[19] It has been suggested that even this figure is an overestimate, because Sachs's calculations do not use purchasing power parities. According to one analyst, the amount required to halve poverty might only be one fifth as much as that estimated by Sachs (*The Economist*, 2005b, p. 70).

corruption the OECD has recently issued a report saying not a single firm or person has been prosecuted since its anti-bribery convention came into force in Britain in 2001, citing a lack of political will and resources (Miller, 2005, p. 3). Despite the strong stance taken in the CFA regarding the importance of reducing conflicts in the region, it has also not escaped the attention of critics that five of the G8 member countries, including Britain, are the world's biggest arms dealers.

In the final resort, however, the acid test for both projects is the extent to which the governments implement the report's recommendations. For the MP, the day of reckoning comes on 12-14 September at the meeting of the UN General Assembly when the MDG will be discussed. For the CFA, there is no definitive judgement day. The G8 Summit, held on 7-8 July at Gleneagles (but rudely interpreted by the London bombings) advanced the CFA agenda on a number of important fronts, but on others was more disappointing (Oxfam, 2005). Crucially, the G8 leaders confirmed a commitment to increased levels of aid –led mainly by the European countries– which will lead to an increase of US$48 billion a year by 2010 compared with 2004 levels. But this is well below the substantial boost to aid called for by the UN to meet the MDGs (a US$90 billion increment on 2004's level by 2010).

After so much publicity given to the CFA, the British government is definitely under pressure to act. Bob Geldof, member of the CFA, has repeatedly said on this score that 'we will be watching you', implying that if there is any backtracking by the UK government on promises made, then he and other activists will not hesitate to publicise and denounce it. Let us hope that his vigilance pays off. However, a pessimistic (but perhaps correct) view would be that the people making the recommendations in the report do not have the power to implement them –that power resides in the respective parliaments of the G8–. On this score, it might be argued that few of the proposals are likely to find their way into binding legislation. The power of the UK government to persuade the other G8 countries to subscribe to the report's action plan is thus limited. Mr Blair himself has admitted these constraints and has simply said 'what I'm sure of is I'll do my level best to deliver it. I can't do more than that' (cited in Left, 2005).

6. Conclusions

In a recent article, three high-profile economists, Birdsall, Rodrik and Subramanian (2005), suggest that international aid has been vastly oversold as a way of lifting people out of poverty. They do not deny that well-targeted interventions by foreign donors have on occasion been very successful. But broad aid packages have rarely produced the desired results. Instead, they argue, almost all successful cases of development in the last 50 years have been based on creative –and often heterodox– domestic policy innovations, such as export subsidies, patent and copyright infringements, high tariff and non-tariff barriers, public ownership of large segments of banking and industry and restrictions on capital flows, including foreign direct investment. Considering one of the authors (Arvind Subramanian) is a Divisional Chief at the IMF (the institution which is probably the staunchest defender of orthodoxy), this is a startling admission. Their statement is also in stark contrast to the basic positions held by Jeffrey Sachs, or those adopted by the CFA, which essentially 'adheres to the Post-Washington Consensus' (Sandbrook, 2005, p. 1118).

In fact, however, there is plentiful evidence that the room for manoeuvre for developing countries to adopt their own policy choices is shrinking (Chang, 2005). Through the workings of the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank and bilateral donors, African countries now have considerably less margin for designing and adopting their own policies. In this context, it is not without consequence that the two words 'policy space' do not occur once in either the CFA or the MP reports. Consciously or not, because of their prescriptive natures and the way that they have framed the debate, both the CFA and the MP may even contribute to shrinking the existing policy space.

Moreover, some key questions have been ignored or overlooked by the MP and the CFA. How does Africa fit into the global economy? What should its role be? Providing unprocessed raw materials for the industrialised countries has clearly not benefited African development. And what about technological transfers? Although the issue was a major one on the policy agenda in the 1960s and 70s, what happened to that? Presently, meaningful voluntary technological transfer either does not happen at all or happens at a snail's pace. Economists who are experts in successful cases of 'late-industrialisation' like Robert Wade (2004, p. x1ix) suggest that the key challenge is about how to produce an articulated domestic economy, and this does not necessarily come about through greater external integration with the global economy. The simple truth is that Africa is already heavily 'integrated' into the global economy –though not in ways which have been conducive to its development–.

In this sense, in critical documents like the 'Alternative Commission for Africa' (Miller, 2005), it is argued that the CFA and the MP are not sufficiently bold and bring nothing essentially new to the table. Moreover, it is argued that there is a danger for African countries themselves in following too closely these new blueprints for development:

> 'If we accept at face value another strategy document which is inherently flawed, the outcome will be that Africa, rather than the strategy, is viewed as a 'basket case', when the strategy fails. This feeds into the vicious spin circle, whereby Blair and co. will claim that more corporate control and more World Bank conditionality are the cure rather than the cause of Africa's problems' (Miller, 2005, p. 4).

Whether this position is right or not, this author does coincide with the view that the two reports imply a much deeper rethink about how aid is spent and channelled towards developing countries. Moreover, all the aid in the world will not compensate for justly unfair policies towards developing countries. Indeed, it may only help to displace attention from areas where African (and other developing) countries are crying out for a better deal (for example, on trade policy). To be sure, there are many positive things said in both the CFA and the MP. But there is too often a stark distance between the official discourse and what actually happens on the ground.

In the final resort, then, whatever their promoters say, we argue that neither of these initiatives is really about bringing about development *per se* –that would require a much wider, deeper rethink about contemporary policy on the part of the authors–. With their emphasis on health care and education, they do concern themselves with the laudable task of relieving human suffering. As such, whatever shortcomings the two reports may have, they are worthy of our support. But both fall far short of an exhaustive development strategy for the continent. That, arguably, can only come from the African countries themselves.

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Annex

Millennium Development Goals – Global Estimates

	Zedillo Report		Debt Relief and the Millennium Development Goals, Background Paper for HDR 2003		World Bank	
	Estimate in billion USD	Source	Estimate in billion USD	Source	Estimate in billion USD	Source
Halving Poverty and hunger	20	UNCTAD & WB	45.7	See Paper by Gottschalk, R (2000) & own calculations	54 to 62	WB model
Halving Population without access to safe drinking water	0	Global Water Partnership	2.4	Vision 21: A Shared Vision for Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Supply	5 to 21	WB model
Achieving UPE	9	UNICEF	9.1	UNICEF (low)	10 to 30	WB model
Achieving gender equality in primary education	3	Own estimates	-	-	-	WB model
Achieving 3/4 decline in maternal mortality	-	-	20.03	Report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, page 4	20 to 25	WB model
Achieving 2/3 decline in U5MR	-	-				
Halting and reversing HIV/AIDS	7 to 10	UN Secretary General				
Providing special assistance to orphans	-	-	-	-	-	-
Improving lives of 100 million slum dwellers	4	WB Cities without slums action plan	1.7	WB Cities without slums action plan	3.5	WB Cities without slums action plan
Total (Goall)	**20**		**45.7**		**54 to 62**	
Total (Excluding Goall)	**30**		**30.6**		**35 to 76**	
TOTAL	**50**		**76.3**		-	

Source: Reddy and Heuty (2005), p. 40.