

The Donor's Dilemma: Thinking Politically About Difficult Choices

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Executive summary

Development aid donors are often faced with a dilemma when giving aid to non-democratic developmental states. Giving aid to governments that are committed to achieving development seems desirable, yet such assistance can also be seen as condoning or even supporting rights violations committed by non-democratic regimes.

This paper suggests a conceptual framework to help donors to address this dilemma in a normatively justified way. It suggests that there are three analytically distinct types of 'donor's dilemma': complicity, double effect and dirty hands.

It seeks to show that a 'thinking and working politically' (TWP) approach to the donor's dilemma does not have to be normatively silent; on the contrary, analysing and understanding political contexts and constraints is indispensable for normative evaluations of the dilemmas generated by development aid.

The framework

Recent methodological developments in normative political theory challenge the simplistic dichotomy between idealistic and abstract 'normative theory' on the one hand, and the kind of gritty political realism offered by TWP on the other. We suggest three possible models that acknowledge the political significance of the donor's dilemma and which offer tools to engage with it in a practical way.

Complicity dilemmas

In complicity dilemmas, an agent acts to achieve a desired outcome but others do wrong while progress towards that outcome is underway. To avoid complicity, the agent would have to withdraw and sacrifice the positive effect of her intended actions. In our use of the term complicity, the agent does not share the wrongdoer's intentions, and her acts do not, in themselves, constitute part of the wrongdoing. However, the agent can become complicit with the wrongdoing in at least one of two ways: either by causally contributing to it, or by condoning it even when she is not directly causally contributing to the wrongdoing itself. In all complicity cases, the dilemma arises from the link between the agent's actions (towards the positive effect) and the actions of the principal wrongdoer (towards the negative effect).

Double effect dilemmas

This name borrows from the ethical Doctrine of Double Effect, which in summary means sometimes it is permissible to cause a harm as a side effect – but not as a means – of bringing about a good result. In double effect dilemmas, the agent's pursuit of the desired effect has foreseeable side effects which, in most other contexts, would constitute a wrong. We suggest that a political reading of double effect dilemmas would interpret them as cases in which the structural realities that constrain the agent produce a situation in which actions towards desired effects will inevitably generate negative side effects. However, even when the dilemma is forced on the agent by the structure of constraints, it is still her actions that are generating the wrong.

Dirty hands dilemmas

In dirty hands dilemmas, the agent acts in a way that would generate a negative effect as a means – perhaps the only means – to achieve the desired positive effect. Understood politically, dirty hands dilemmas arise where different goals – for instance, stability, fairness, justice – are in tension with each other, and some have to be sacrificed, compromised or negated to maintain others. Importantly, however, this is not a tension between personal morality and political necessity. Dirty hands represent an exceptionally difficult case: one in which the agent herself has to do wrong. This understanding of dirty hands identifies it as a rare exception, unlike the more common cases of clashes between the politician's personal morality and the responsibilities of the political role.

Key insights

- The conceptual framework developed in this paper shows that the donor's dilemma is, in fact, three different dilemmas. It also shows that a politically realistic approach to these conundrums, sensitive to context and political complexity, need not be normatively silent. Instead donors can acknowledge that they face a dilemma, identify which kind of dilemma it is, and work towards transitioning away from the context that generates it. Both diagnosis and response require engagement with relevant actors and stakeholders.
- Approaching the donor's dilemma as a structural problem depersonalises it, and this helps to ensure that the donor avoids conflating the dilemma with the contingent leadership of the recipient state. This clarity will also help improve long-term outcomes, since all the evidence shows that relying too much on a particular leader or government is more likely to hinder than to help transition away from the context of a dilemma.
- An all-or-nothing approach to the donor's dilemma offers only two choices; either fully endorsing financial support to a developmental regime regardless of how it behaves, or withdrawing all aid to preserve the moral integrity of the donor. Correctly identifying contextual constraints and recognising that such problems are in fact dilemmas helps avoid perverse outcomes such as the misdiagnosis of non-dilemmas as dilemmas, or mistaking complicity dilemmas for dirty hands dilemmas. Our hope is that the framework outlined here illuminates some of the nuances of these situations.
- Finally, there are likely to be sound instrumental benefits from the framework developed in this paper. The long-term success of development aid depends on consistent public support. We argue that explicit acknowledgement of development aid dilemmas would make it possible for donors to build a coherent case for different responses to normatively distinct situations, and so strengthen the public legitimacy of development aid.

1

Introduction

Thirty years on from the devastating famine which claimed the lives of over a million people, some describe Ethiopia's transformation as "an economic miracle" (D. Smith, 2014b). In the past decade, the country has seen impressive economic growth, a significant fall in poverty, infrastructure development and dramatic improvements in the health and education of the population.¹ Many attribute this transformation to a combination of foreign aid and the Ethiopian government's commitment to development, its implementation of effective policies, and its success in reducing corruption (Stiglitz, 2003, 26; Easterly, 2014, 123–7, 156–7; Carothers and Gramont, 2013; Levy, 2014). Nevertheless, human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch (2010) have criticised donor governments for turning a blind eye to rights abuses committed by the Ethiopian government, fuelling accusations of donors' complicity in human and civil rights violations (Loewenberg, 2013; Oakland Institute, 2013; Easterly, 2014). In September 2012, lawyers representing an Ethiopian farmer named in court papers as "Mr O" announced they would begin proceedings against the UK government. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) had funded an Ethiopian government programme that, they claimed, had led to severe human rights abuses. Mr O claimed that the Ethiopian government's "villagisation" programme led to the forced resettlement of thousands of families, including his own, to places that lacked any basic amenities. He said he had witnessed the beating and rape of villagers by soldiers.²

The case demonstrates the clash that often exists between the benefits of development aid and concerns over rights violations committed by aid recipients, which we will hereafter refer to as "the donor's dilemma". This dilemma extends well beyond the Ethiopian context; many other countries that receive international aid, such as Rwanda, Uganda, and Vietnam, can be categorised as "non-democratic developmental states" (Carothers and Gramont, 2013, 114). How do donors decide whether or not to continue to provide aid to such states? If donors do continue to provide aid to such governments, what other measures can be taken to ensure they are not complicit in rights violations? In this paper we construct a framework that donors can use to address this dilemma in a normatively justified way.

In the first section, we briefly discuss the specific context of international development aid and the political effects of aid that give rise to the donor's dilemma.

In the second section, we provide a general framework for analysing political dilemmas. We specify an analytical distinction between different models of dilemmas and consider the normative and political significance of each.

In the third section, we apply the general framework to the case of development aid and flesh out the relevant considerations in different cases, drawing on empirical examples. This, we argue, can serve to demonstrate that a political approach to aid, which is sensitive to political contexts and structural constraints, need not be normatively silent.

1 Ethiopia's average annual growth between 2004/5 and 2012/13 was 10.9%, and the number of people living in poverty fell by 39% between 1995/96 and 2011/12. See Ethiopia's 2012 MDGs Report: http://www.et.undp.org/content/dam/ethiopia/docs/Ethiopia%20MDG%20Report%202012_Final.pdf and the World Bank's Ethiopia overview: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview#1> [accessed 22 January 2015].

2 Mr O's case is discussed in several media articles (BBC News, 2012; D. Smith, 2014a; Birrell, 2014). The case is also described by Easterly (2014: 158–9).

2

The political effects of development aid

In this section we briefly discuss the context of international aid to non-democratic developmental regimes.

First, we consider international aid and the effects of aid that give rise to the donor's dilemma. We focus specifically on official development assistance (ODA) provided by bilateral donors in this study, rather than other forms of development assistance.

Second, we discuss in more detail non-democratic developmental states and, in particular, why giving aid to such states gives rise to a dilemma.

In the past decade, the controversy surrounding international aid has largely centred on a debate on whether or not aid to poorer nations has a positive impact on development outcomes. The growing consensus is that the question of whether aid "works" is a largely misguided one, and that the answer depends on the type of aid and outcome under consideration (Wright and Winters, 2010; Qian, forthcoming; Hudson, 2015). Accordingly, we do not focus on aid effectiveness in this paper. Instead we proceed on the assumption that aid has a positive impact on socioeconomic development outcomes, such as income, health, and education. The dilemma arises because aid has additional and potentially undesired effects in recipient countries, which have implications for the relationship between donor and recipient governments.

We focus on two political effects. First, giving aid provides donors with some level of influence over recipient governments. Second, aid strengthens the position of the government in relation to other actors in society by providing the recipient government with greater material resources and legitimacy.

Influence

Giving aid provides governments of donor countries with influence over recipient governments. Some, such as Morgenthau (1962), have argued that this political influence is, and should be, the primary purpose of foreign aid. Others, such as Hayter (1971) have criticised foreign aid for this reason, arguing that this influence is a form of "imperialism". Take, for example, the debate surrounding aid conditionality, where donors have often attached conditions to the provision of aid. While much of the focus has been on conditions linked to economic liberalisation, donors have also attached conditions linked to governance and political issues (Dijkstra and White, 2002), or to elicit support from recipient governments to achieve foreign policy goals (Rai, 1980; Wang, 1999; Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2008). Critics have long argued that aid can reduce democratic accountability, particularly in countries that are heavily dependent on foreign aid. As international aid makes governments less dependent on its citizens for tax revenue, it also leads to lower government accountability to citizens (See Brautigam, 1992; Mkandawire, 2010).

Resources, legitimacy, and accountability

A second effect of aid is that it strengthens the position of the government in relation to other actors in a society, such as opposition political parties and civil society. Aid can give a government access to more material resources than other actors have and, in addition, often bolsters the legitimacy of a regime (Robinson 1993). This is an issue frequently raised by critics of foreign aid. They argue that aid given to autocracies impedes democratisation because it increases their "resources, patronage, and power in relation to the rest of society", and thereby "enhances the hold of governments over their subjects" (Bauer 1986, 45–6; Easterly 2007; Wright 2009).

These effects are further complicated when aid is given to non-democratic developmental regimes. The term "developmental" has been applied to governments of poorer nations that take an active role in promoting socioeconomic development through close involvement in the market, and are seen as having achieved some success in doing so (Johnson, 1982; Wade, 1990; Evans, 1992). It is especially associated with the East Asian 'tiger' economies of Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore (Amsden, 1994). Other examples of developmental states include Japan, Botswana and, more recently, Rwanda and Ethiopia. The governments of most developmental states are non-democratic and have frequently been implicated in the violation of political and civil rights in their countries. Indeed, in his analysis of developmental states, Leftwich (1995: 418) argues "the combinations of their sometimes brutal suppression of civil rights, their apparently wide measure of legitimacy, and their generally sustained performance in delivering developmental goods... are intimately connected".

It is worth noting that some question the demarcation of socioeconomic development and democratic governance.³ Most notably, Sen (1999) argues that democratic deliberation is both a means and an end of development. From this perspective, the notion of non-democratic development would be a contradiction in terms. However, as Carothers and de Gramont (2013: 102) note, this perspective did not gain acceptance among aid donors who “preferred to stick to socioeconomic conceptions of development”. Much of the focus among policymakers and scholars has been on trying to better understand the relationship between political rights and socioeconomic development, particularly in light of the success of the East Asian developmental states.

While studies have demonstrated the empirical relationship between democracy and development (for instance, Przeworski et al., 2000), there has been little consensus on whether democratic governance is a cause or an outcome of economic development. Development research and policy in the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by modernisation theory, which posits that a minimum level of economic development was required in order to sustain democracy (Lipset, 1959). Following the end of the Cold War, however, donors increasingly sought to promote democracy and “good governance” (Hudson and Dasandi, 2014). A major reason for this transformation is that while there were examples of developmental authoritarianism, “examples of anti-developmental authoritarianism were far more numerous” (Kelsall, 2014: 6). Donors subsequently sought to promote more responsive and accountable governance in developing countries (D. Williams and Young, 1994). They also introduced “second generation” aid conditionalities, which linked aid provisions to democratisation, respect for human rights, and public sector reform (Dijkstra and White, 2002; Carothers and Gramont, 2013).

Donor efforts to promote responsive and accountable governance, however, are widely seen as having produced disappointing results (Andrews, 2013; Levy, 2014). There is a growing consensus that the failure of these efforts is because development policy is based on a “best practice” approach to governance, in which donors and other development organisations tried to transfer governance models from developed nations to developing country contexts (Levy, 2014). The limitations of this approach, combined with the emergence of a new generation of successful non-democratic developmental states such as China, Vietnam, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, has had a significant influence on the recent ‘political turn’ in development research and policy (Kelsall 2014; Carothers and Gramont, 2013; Levy 2014). This political turn – broadly labelled “thinking and working politically” (TWP) – emphasises the need for donors to better engage with the political realities of the local contexts in which they work (Green, 2013). This has led to an acceptance that there are “tensions, conflicts [and] difficult trade-offs over time between the various goals of development – such as growth, democracy, stability, equity and autonomy” (Leftwich, 1993: 605). The emphasis on political realism, the acceptance of trade-offs, and the importance given to the role of domestic leadership have meant that proponents of TWP tend to take a favourable view of developmental regimes, even if they exhibit authoritarian characteristics (Kelsall, 2008; Booth, 2011; Booth, 2012; see also Khan, 2007). Indeed, some proponents of TWP criticise the donor emphasis on democratic governance on the basis that “what poor developing countries really need are leaders who... can get things done” (Booth, 2011: 3; cf. Carothers and Gramont, 2013: 212–14).

While advocates of TWP are right to highlight the importance of political context and structural constraints of development, this willingness to overlook normative concerns is problematic. Critics have expressed a concern with the “top down” approach of TWP and the danger that “issues of power, rights and justice too easily get lost” and “we end up helping governments that routinely kill or suppress their opponents [to] ‘deliver development’” (Green, 2014). An evaluation of development aid policies, we argue, does depend on the recognition of complex political contexts and constraints. This does not mean, however, that normative challenges of the donor’s dilemma ought to be sidelined. As we have discussed, the different effects of aid are closely connected. Efforts to improve development outcomes by giving aid provides donors with some influence over recipient governments and this is a key reason why donor governments have been accused of complicity in the actions of recipient governments. Furthermore, aid provided to developing country governments also increases the power of the government relative to other actors. Aid may in fact “help” a government in its efforts to repress citizens in a country, and so undermine the positive effects of aid in terms of improved socioeconomic development outcomes. Therefore the precise nature of these various effects and the normative significance of the dilemmas they generate needs to be better understood.

3 We thank Chris Roche for raising this point.

3

Political dilemmas: complicity, double effect, dirty hands

In this section, we develop a general framework for analysing political dilemmas. In doing so, we rely on recent methodological developments in normative political theory, which challenge the simplistic dichotomy between idealistic and abstract 'normative theory' on the one hand, and the kind of gritty political realism offered by TWP on the other. In brief, we maintain that a political theory of the donor's dilemma can remain normative while being sensitive to the realities of politics. We suggest three possible models. Rather than dissolving the donor's dilemma by philosophical fiat, these models acknowledge its political significance and offer tools for practically engaging with it. With the conceptual distinction between different dilemmas in place, the final section of this paper applies this general conceptual framework to the donor's dilemma.

What is a dilemma? In moral theory, a dilemma arises when an agent is faced with a choice between two incompatible alternatives and each choice is morally wrong. Dilemmas are an ontological, rather than an epistemic concept: while no one denies that some cases of moral conflict may appear insoluble to the agent, moral philosophers disagree on whether 'genuine' moral dilemmas exist (Gowans, 1987; Mason, 1996). Some philosophical approaches deny that genuine moral dilemmas can rationally exist. If a choice must be made between two feasible actions that seem equally right (or wrong), the generation of a moral dilemma is seen as equivalent to self-contradiction and a sign that that a particular theory is defective. This extreme position misrepresents the importance of recognising dilemmas on three grounds: psychologically, morally, and conceptually. First, moral dilemmas explain the sense of remorse, guilt and distress that accompany choosing one action over another. Second, moral dilemmas allow for the existence of what Williams (1981) calls "moral remainders", meaning that we can acknowledge that in choosing to sacrifice one source of moral value, its force on us does not disappear. Third, as Hill (2002) writes, while dilemmas may be absent from a morally perfect world, our world is not a perfect one. If everyone acted as they should, there would be no dilemmas. Thus, there are two imperatives when facing moral dilemmas: choosing the lesser of two evils in the short term, and changing the normative landscape so that such dilemmas would not arise again in the long term.

While the structure provided by the moral-philosophical literature on moral dilemmas is valuable, its focus on individual agents acting independently of institutional and structural contexts limits its applicability to political conduct. To be useful for a distinctively political analysis, this literature must be reconstructed. Recent methodological developments in political theory highlight the distinct nature of political conduct in a non-ideal world. In line with this, we maintain that a political theory of dilemmas ought not be primarily interested in the psychological effects of moral conflict on individual agents, nor in the meta-ethical question of whether all moral principles are compatible in all possible worlds.⁴ Understanding dilemmas *politically* means that we have to interpret them as particular relations between the actions of political actors situated in specific social structures and their effects. More specifically, political dilemmas arise where nature of the relation means the pursuit of a desirable goal would have an undesired effect. The source of the conflict remains normative – indeed, in many cases the dilemma arises as a clash between the realisation of values to which the political actor is committed. The important point is that this *clash arises from contextual constraints on action, not from the values themselves*. Interpreting the dilemma requires an analysis of the normative context one is in.

With these points in mind, we now turn to three models of political dilemmas that are relevant to the case of the donor's dilemma: complicity, double effect and dirty hands.⁵ In all of these models, the political actor betrays an important value to which it was publicly committed; however, the different structure of the relation between action and effects suggests that the short-term and long-term judgment is different in each of them. This section of the paper gives a general explanation of the three political dilemmas. Concrete examples of the dilemmas in the development context are given in Section 4 with consideration of how donors might respond to them.

4 The many differences and disagreements between these methodological developments – e.g., non-ideal theory, practice-dependence, political realism – is beyond the scope of this paper, and is not crucial for what follows. For an overview of these positions and their respective points of agreement and disagreement, see (Galston, 2010; Gilibert, 2012; Valentini, 2012; Rossi and Sleat, 2014; Erman and Möller, 2015; Sleat, forthcoming).

5 The framework we present here is inspired by Jennifer Rubenstein's recent work (2015: 87–115). Our account differs from Rubenstein, however, as it is focused on governmental donors and highlights the fact that these normative contexts can also be described as dilemmas. Hugo Slim's work on the dilemmas faced by relief agencies (1997) provides a useful analytical distinction between different real dilemmas and other difficult choices, yet is more focused on moral evaluation.

Complicity dilemmas

In complicity dilemmas, the actions required to achieve a desired effect make the agent complicit in the wrongdoing of others. To avoid complicity, the agent would have to sacrifice the positive effect of her intended actions. In our use of the term, stating that the agent is complicit in the wrongdoing implies that she does not share the wrongdoer's intentions, and that her acts do not, in themselves, constitute part of the wrongdoing. For the sake of simplicity, and without committing our account to Lepora and Goodin's influential conceptual map (2013: 31–53), it suffices to say that the agent can become complicit with the wrongdoing in at least one of two ways: either by *causally contributing* to it, or by *condoning* it even when she is not directly causally contributing to the wrongdoing itself.⁶

There are more complicated (and more controversial) cases of complicity dilemmas. These include cases in which the agent becomes complicit in the wrongdoing by benefitting from it, either knowingly or unknowingly; or cases in which the agent is just one part of a collective which is committing the wrongdoing.⁷ For the purposes of our discussion, we will disregard these possibilities, but it is important to note that their general structure is similar: the agent facing the dilemma is not the principal wrongdoer, and the dilemma arises from the link between her actions (towards the positive effect) and the actions of the principal wrongdoer (towards the negative effect).

Double effect dilemmas

In double effect dilemmas, the pursuit of the desired effect has foreseeable side effects which, in most other contexts, would constitute a wrong. This name borrows from what is known in ethics as the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE). DDE could be summarised as maintaining that "...sometimes it is *permissible* to cause a harm as a side effect of bringing about a good result even though it would not be permissible to cause such a harm as a means to bringing about the same good end" (McIntyre, 2014). In classical readings, conditions for permissible double-effect may be quite restrictive. They may require, for example, that the action itself must be morally good or at least indifferent (ruling out murder, for example); that the positive effect must be produced directly by the action, not by the negative effect; that the positive effect must be proportional to the negative effect; and, perhaps most importantly, that the agent does not will the negative effect.

From the perspective of political theory this is problematic. Focusing on a particular agent's intention is not relevant for the assessment of actions and effects. Yet simply dropping the condition of intentionality would not do since the evaluation of the act would then turn on the comparison of the positive and negative effects, collapsing into a consequentialist position which merely dissolves the dilemma. We suggest, therefore, that a political reading of double effect dilemmas would interpret them as cases in which the structural constraints imposed on the political agent produce a situation in which actions towards desired effects generate negative side effects. These structural constraints may be caused by the agent's own previous failure, by the failure or wrong actions of other agents or more controversially, by natural contingencies that are not the fault of any agent in particular.

Unlike complicity dilemmas, the negative side-effect is not generated by the actions of an independent agent with which the primary agent is complicit. It is generated by the actions of the agent facing the dilemma. Even when the dilemma is forced on the agent by the structure of constraints, it is still her actions that are generating the wrong.

Secondly, part of what distinguishes double effect dilemmas from dirty hands dilemmas (discussed below) is that the negative side effect is not a means for achieving the positive effect, even if it contributes to the positive effect causally. One thing may cause another thing without being a means to an end, and this distinction need not rely on the controversial distinction between intending an effect and merely foreseeing it (see Cavanaugh, 2006).⁸

A further complication arises from the observation that political action in complex societies is very different from the actions described in traditional examples of double effect. In these examples, the direct action of the agent is the source of both the positive and negative effects – such as, a doctor saving the life of a pregnant woman while killing her foetus. Political action, however, rarely has this direct relation to effects, as it is often mediated by independent agents: even the direct orders of a political leader are carried out by other people. Strictly speaking, the free reactions of an agent to another agent's actions cannot be counted as effect; they are seen as a new action that breaks the chain of causation.

Importantly, however, effects are distinguished from free reactions not simply by being what follows naturally from action, but also as being what follows from the ordinary operation of social institutions. For example, when we mail a letter, it could be

6 Lepora and Goodin differentiate between cases of causal contribution (complicity, *simpliciter* and collaboration) and cases in which there is usually no causal contribution (connivance, condoning, consorting and contiguity). While they argue that complicity necessarily involves causal contribution, they concede that the latter group may sometime be classified as complicity. Our position here is therefore stronger.

7 On these further complications, See Goodin and Barry (2014) and Kutz (2007) respectively. It should be noted that Kutz's account of complicity is different than ours, since he places emphasis on participatory intentions of complicit agents.

8 Note, however, that Cavanaugh uses this argument for the opposite purpose to ours; he argues that the focus on intention makes the means/end criteria wrong or redundant.

said that the letter's arrival at its destination is the effect of our action even though it is the postman who does the actual delivery (cf. Donagan, 1991). This final point is crucial for distinguishing cases of complicity from cases of double effect since, as stated above, in double effect dilemmas the negative effects follow from the actions of the primary agent. Understood structurally, we posit that double effect dilemmas arise not only in cases in which the direct action of the agent causes the negative effect, but also in cases in which the foreseeable actions of other agents, given certain institutional and structural failings, generate the negative effect. Secondary agents, in cases of double effects, are viewed as part of the structure in which the action of the principal agent is performed.

Dirty hands dilemmas

In dirty hands dilemmas, the agent acts in a way that would generate a negative effect as means for achieving the positive effect. Unlike cases of complicity, the negative effects are the result of the agent's own actions, and not of an independent wrongdoer. Unlike cases of double effect, the negative effect is not merely foreseeable. Rather, it is seen as a means – perhaps the only means – to achieve the desired positive effect.

Some theorists see dirty hands as a clash between the politician's personal ethical commitments and the requirements of political power or, as Weber famously puts it, between the "ethics of conviction" and the "ethics of responsibility" (Weber, 1994; cf. Walzer, 1973). This reading, however, is misleading. Seeing the dilemma as a clash between personal morality and the obligations of a politician's role focuses unduly on the individual agent, rather than on the structure of competing political requirements that generate this dilemma. Understood politically, dirty hands dilemmas arise where different goals – for instance, stability, fairness, justice – are in tension with each other, and some have to be sacrificed, compromised or negated to maintain others. This may be a dilemma more prevalent in liberal democracies, where political institutions are publicly committed to certain morally-laden values such as civic freedoms or democratic accountability (Bellamy, 2010; Archard, 2013). Importantly, however, this is not a tension between personal morality and political necessity.

In line with the general rejection of dilemmas, absolutists reject the conceptual possibility of dirty hands as "doing wrong in order to do right" and argue that there is no special problem of dirty hands (for instance Nielsen 2007). As with other dilemmas, dirty hands cases may arise from previous wrongdoing of the agent or from the wrongdoings of others, and as such are not conceptually confused. Dirty hands are unique, however, since they represent an exceptionally difficult case: one in which the agent herself has to do wrong, and not just contribute to it in an indirect way or as a side effect. This understanding of dirty hands identifies these dilemmas as rare exceptions, or limiting cases for the normative framework – unlike the more common cases of clashes between the politician's personal morality and the responsibilities of the political role.⁹

A political reading of the dirty hands dilemma has to identify the exceptional circumstances in which such radical action may be unavoidable. One possible route is to consider cases in which certain normative commitments are suspended in order to secure the conditions that enable them in the first place. Several political theorists, for example, have identified the 'first political question' as the securing and maintenance of peace, order and stability, which are both prior and necessary conditions for the fulfilment of further political ideals such as socio-economic justice, political representation and government transparency. This position sees the legitimacy of any government as hinging on its ability to address the first political question, especially in cases of catastrophe or emergency (B. Williams, 2007; Rossi and Sleat, 2014).

Which dilemma?

Complicity, double effect, and dirty hands – understood as models of political dilemmas – arise in different contexts and create distinct normative problems for the political agent. It is important for the agent, therefore, not only to recognise that she is facing a dilemma, but also *which* dilemma it is. Real politics is, of course, a messy business. We do not wish to suggest here that every context will fit perfectly into the mould of one of our proposed models. There may, for instance, be more complex cases of different dilemmas arising simultaneously.¹⁰ For the moment, we only propose this framework as a conceptual distinction between different ideal-types of political dilemmas. With the general framework in place, we can turn to examining the specific features of international aid to non-democratic developmental regimes and discuss possible responses.

⁹ These 'exception clauses' are incorporated in a variety of ethical systems, whether they are deontological, consequentialist or other. See Nagel (1972) and Coady (2011).

¹⁰ We thank Avia Pasternak for raising this point.

4

Analysing the donor's dilemma: recognition and response

In this section we apply our general framework of political dilemmas to the specific context of donors giving aid to non-democratic developmental states. In doing so, we provide examples of each type of dilemma in the development context. We also discuss how donors can recognise the type of dilemma they face. Finally, we explain the potential short-term and long-term responses of donors to navigate the specific dilemma. This is summarised in Table 1 below.

It is important to clarify that what follows is not intended to be an algorithm for resolving political dilemmas and nor do we provide practitioners with an answer to the perennial question of “what to do on Monday morning” (Hudson and Leftwich, 2014: 8). Politics needs to be understood as a skilled art or craft, requiring particular judgment for specific contexts and cannot be reduced to applied principles (Geuss, 2008). Nevertheless we argue that this framework can help highlight the relevant normative and political considerations in each context. This may provide a guide for how to approach each dilemma.

Aid and complicity

Following from the definition and analysis of complicity dilemmas, aid and complicity cases are those in which, given the wrongdoings of the recipient government, the donor government action towards development goals either directly contributes causally to rights violations, or provides implicit legitimisation for them. As Table 1 indicates, the principal wrongdoer is the recipient government, and it is the recipient government's violation of rights that generates the dilemma. The recipient government's violation of rights is not generated or constituted by the aid and is not a means to achieving positive development outcomes. So the dilemma donors face is that the funding they provide solidifies the power of the recipient government and provides it with international and, in many cases, national legitimacy.

Complicity is the most widely discussed normative context in the literature on the dilemmas of aid. Thus, for example, a paradigmatic case is the abuse of international aid resources (provided by INGOs) in refugee camps in Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania during and immediately following the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Lepora and Goodin, 2013; Rubenstein, 2015). Members of the Hutu-dominated Rwandan Armed Forces (RAF), who were seeking to re-establish their military force, abused humanitarian aid and used civilians in the camps as human shields. As Rubenstein describes this particular dilemma, “[S]hould humanitarian INGOs that are committed to acting consistently with democratic and egalitarian norms accept contributing knowingly but unintentionally to injustices committed primarily by other actors?” (2015: 91–2).¹¹

These cases are structurally similar to complicity dilemmas of state donors, although arguably, unlike INGOs that only serve quasi-governmental functions, state donors have more direct responsibility for the effects of their actions. Therefore the threshold for being complicit is lower: One possible route for complicity is to track the negative effects causally contributing to the wrong committed by recipient governments. For example, as Peter Uvin demonstrates in *Aiding Violence* (1998), French development aid in Rwanda was used to acquire weapons later used in the Tutsi genocide. There is no question here that the principal wrongdoer is the Hutu government, of course, but as Uvin's narrative demonstrates, France and other Western states can be seen as complicit in this wrong since aid money was flowing in even when signs such as the escalation of racialised propaganda indicated the real possibility of mass violence.

While providing external legitimacy to regimes that violate rights may not causally contribute to the right violation directly, it can also be considered a case of complicity. The most egregious recent examples were common during the Cold War, where Western aid – albeit with the ulterior intention of blocking the spread of communism – legitimised leaders who were on the ‘right’ side of the Iron Curtain, while at the same time strengthening their position vis-à-vis internal opposition. The dictatorships of Mobutu Sese Seko in the DRC and the Du Valliers in Haiti are glaring examples of Western failure to recognise this tension. For our purposes, the fact that Cold War aid had an additional political goal is not significant, as the structure of the dilemma remains the same.

While these examples are high-level incidents of donor complicity, project staff for donor aid agencies can also face the complicity dilemma in their day-to-day work, particularly in decisions about which local actors to work with. For example, some donor projects in fragile contexts, such as Afghanistan, are seen as having reinforced the power of “local strongmen”

11 Note, however, that Rubenstein (2015: 97–99) explicitly rejects the complicity label for her “spattered hands” account, as she assumes complicity requires sharing intentions with the principal wrongdoer. Our definition of complicity does not require shared intentions.

involved in criminality by providing resources and legitimacy (see Goodhand, 2002; Mankin, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2015). Donors therefore need to navigate the complicity dilemma at both the national level and the project level.

Given the responsibility of donor states for the effects of their actions, mere ignorance of causal mechanisms is not an excuse, as is evident from the example of French aid in Rwanda. To avoid blind complicity, donors need to¹² invest resources in working with local stakeholders that may provide valuable contextual knowledge, identify reasons for concern, and make it possible to monitor the situation on the ground to avoid culpable ignorance. This stakeholder approach towards responsibility for complicity has now become common in multinational corporations that rely on global supply chains with some success, and the same reasoning applies to the actions of donor states.

If and when complicity in rights violation is recognised, in most cases and at least in the short term it is likely that the best course of action for donors is to detach; in other words, to withdraw aid and sever the causal or legitimising contribution to the wrongdoing. This is clearly the case when the relative weight of the negative effect is considerably higher than any benefit generated by aid. Even in more nuanced cases, complicity in wrongdoing can undermine the positive effects of aid (Easterly, 2007: 117–23). Nevertheless, the conceptualisation of the problem as a dilemma highlights the fact that withdrawing aid generates “moral remainders”, as the positive effect of development is now withdrawn. How to address these remainders is dependent on context – for example, whether aid was in place but then withdrawn, generating dependency. It also seems that it would not be enough to simply keep hands clean, especially in cases in which there was previous involvement; in these cases there will be a need to publicly denounce the wrongdoer recipient government rather than do no more than detach.

In order to further consider donors' short-term responses to complicity dilemmas, we briefly discuss two recent examples. The first example is the withdrawal of DFID's and other development donors' budget support to Malawi in 2011, which we argue is a positive example of how donors could respond to complicity dilemmas in the short term. The decision to stop providing aid directly to the Malawian government came as a result of concerns over economic mismanagement and governance in the country (Tran, 2011). DFID issued a clear statement that explained the suspension of budget support was in large part due to deteriorating governance in the country, including the suppression of demonstrations, the intimidation of civil society organisations, and the introduction of legislation that would make it easier for the Government of Malawi to place restrictions on opponents without legal challenge. Andrew Mitchell, the Secretary of State for International Development at the time, added:

The UK provides development assistance in order to help communities lift themselves out of grinding poverty... But poor people in Malawi and British taxpayers alike have been let down. In those circumstances I cannot justify the provision of general budget support for Malawi... In the meantime we will use other means to ensure that programmes to protect poor Malawians... are able to continue (Mitchell and Department of International Development, 2011).

As the statement makes clear, DFID and other donors continued to support initiatives for improving fundamental needs such as health, education, water and sanitation through project aid (Tenthani, 2014). In other words, efforts were made to address the moral remainders created by DFID's withdrawal of budget support. It is also worth noting that DFID explicitly linked the reestablishment of budget support to addressing issues of economic mismanagement and governance. Given the Malawian government's dependence on UK aid for its budget, the withdrawal of aid appears to have led to efforts to improve governance which DFID has monitored and publicly encouraged (Tran, 2012; Kainja, 2014). DFID's short-term response to the deterioration of political rights in Malawi, we argue, provides a good example of how donors might address complicity dilemmas.

In contrast, DFID's response to accusations of complicity in rights violations by the Ethiopian government demonstrates the problems with more typical donor responses to complicity dilemmas. In late 2014, DFID suspended its project to support the Ethiopian police force at the same time that Amnesty International produced a report documenting how Ethiopian security forces had tortured, mutilated, raped, and murdered Ethiopians in order to suppress political opposition. Yet, despite an internal assessment of the police support project that suggested it posed a high risk of being complicit in human rights violations, DFID denied the cancellation of the project was related to concerns about human rights. The internal assessment document was also removed from DFID's website (Holehouse, 2014).

Although DFID's approach to the Malawian and Ethiopian contexts led to aid to the respective governments being suspended, we argue that while DFID adequately addressed the dilemma in the Malawian context, it did not do so in the Ethiopian case. DFID's unwillingness to publicly denounce wrongdoing in the Ethiopian context means that the UK government continues to provide legitimacy to the Ethiopian government and police force, and as such remains complicit. One might argue that the difference in DFID's approach in each case is because the Ethiopian government has an impressive recent development record, and as such, can be considered a “developmental regime”, which is not the case with the Malawian government.¹³ This would suggest that DFID might view supporting the Ethiopian government as a “necessary evil”. However, if this were the case, the dilemma DFID faced in Ethiopia would be more akin to a dirty hands dilemma. Even if it were, however, DFID's response would still fail to meet the requirements for an appropriate reaction to a dirty hands dilemma, as we discuss below.

¹² See for example Gap Inc's engagement of stakeholders in cases of labour rights violations (N. C. Smith, Ansett, and Erez 2011).

¹³ The difference in approach to the two countries is also likely to be the result of regional security concerns, which mean Ethiopia is seen as a key strategic partner (see Loewenberg, 2013).

There may be cases in which the benefits of aid, or the foreseeable negative effects of withdrawing aid, would outweigh the negative effects of complicity.¹⁴ In such cases, it would mean that the short-term response to the dilemma would not necessarily be detachment. However, it is important to note that this is merely the short term, local response. A context in which complicity with rights violations of a wrongdoer is the lesser evil is one that needs to be transformed, if and when such transformation is feasible. Donors may accept a level of complicity as a necessary evil but, given the dilemmatic structure of this case, they will want to make sure they do not lose sight of their responsibilities for the harmed parties, as well as to the imperative of reform.

Aid and double effect

Unlike complicity dilemmas, the negative effect of rights violations in double effect cases is seen as a consequence of the actions donors take towards positive development goals, rather than as actions of independent wrongdoers. As we pointed out, this need not mean that this is the direct effect of the donors' actions, but it is a foreseeable side effect that is affected by structural and institutional constraints. It may be that the actions of the donor are mediated through the actions of participants in social institutions; however, the key point is that it is the donors' actions that ultimately brought about the negative side effect.

Some examples of double effect dilemmas of aid are not directly related to the problem of non-democratic developmental regimes. For example, while malaria prevention is clearly a beneficial effect of aid, and the free distribution of mosquito nets is considered a cost-effective and targeted measure towards this goal, recent research in Zambia showed that the introduction of light, strong and free nets has led to the unintended consequence of local communities using the nets for fishing rather than their intended purpose. This has adverse effects not only on the wildlife of the Lake Tanganyika, but also the health of local communities whose fish and drinking water are now contaminated by insecticide (Gettleman, 2015).

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact's recent assessment of DFID's "approach to anti-corruption and its impact on the poor" (ICAI 2014) provides a further example of a double effect dilemma. The report discusses the DFID-supported Local Government and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) in Nepal, which seeks to strengthen local governance by helping to establish local representative bodies that can influence government spending decisions. However, in some instances the project was found to have "increased the opportunities for corruption in society" (2014, 22). The funds provided by DFID and other donors were captured by political elites, who directed the funds towards their preferred projects. In fact, the Economist's (*The Economist*, 2011) investigation into the programme found that struggles among political elites to capture these funds led to violence in some districts. In addition, citizens had to pay bribes to government officials and to forge documents in order to receive funding for projects supported by LGCDP. Subsequently, the programme was criticised by the ICAI (2014: 22–3) for pushing the poor towards corrupt practices, thereby increasing "the perception among the poor that corruption is a necessary and legitimate way of acting".

In the context of the donor's dilemma in non-democratic developmental regimes, a key issue is being able to recognise whether the dilemma is one of double effect or of complicity. This is particularly relevant when we are dealing with mediators who are actors rather than natural occurrences, where actions cannot be seen as autonomous but instead are part of the foreseeable political and institutional context. In states with weak institutions, donors' actions can be seen as introducing new incentives which may have perverse effects on the stability and accountability of the local government (Jones: 2014). If the negative effect of rights violations could be traced back to the donor's actions (and not, as in complicity cases, where donors only facilitate or legitimate the actions of the recipient government), then the normative context can be seen as one of double effect.

It is important to note here that the difference between double effect and complicity is not one of moral responsibility. The fact that corruption was a foreseeable side effect given structural constraints does not relieve the corrupted officials in the recipient state of blame. However, unlike cases of complicity, since the negative side effect could be predicted on the basis of structural constraints rather than the agency of a particular leader or government, the *political* responsibility of donor states is of a different kind. In other words, the relevant distinction is not of moral responsibility (who is culpable), but of recognising the link between actions and effects and best resolving the dilemma.¹⁵

In order to recognise a double effect dilemma, it is therefore necessary to have both contextual knowledge and an understanding of political and social mechanisms. Donors need to ask whether the negative effects of aid would have occurred if a different local actor was in place. This would enable donors to understand whether the cause of the wrongdoing is structural or agential. In thinking about this, we need not say whether this other local actor actually exists at the present time, but whether the actor could feasibly exist given the history and institutional structures of a given context.

Given that the negative side effects arise from the donor's own actions, the focus of short-term responses to double effect dilemmas needs to be on the proportionality of the positive effects of development outcomes and the negative side effects. Since the negative effects are side effects and not a means to an end, the aim would be to minimise them as much as possible and to engage with and compensate affected parties. Furthermore, as the relationship between actions and effects is structural and not agential, the short-term aim will be to strengthen institutions rather than address the wrongdoings of specific actors.

14 For example, if the withdrawal of aid would leave the recipient state open to the influence of a "morally worse actor". See the discussion in Wisor (2014).

15 On this important distinction, see Thompson (1980).

The types of measures to put in place when faced with double effect dilemmas include a greater emphasis on the monitoring of the impact of development programmes and more frequent and direct interactions between donors and the stakeholders. Indeed, both of these recommendations were made by the ICAI (2014: 23) for the DFID-funded LGCDP programme in Nepal. Additional measures include ensuring that accountability mechanisms are built into programme design. For example, the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Mekong Business Initiative project (2014) includes providing a forum "where people adversely affected by ADB-assisted projects can voice and seek solutions to their problems" and register complaints. In addition, donors may need to compensate those adversely affected by their programmes.

In the long term, however, proportionality is not enough. The institutional and structural failures that generate the dilemma in the first place need to be addressed and ameliorated in order to escape the dilemmatic context. The focus of long-term response, therefore, will be on reforming the institutional structures that generate the negative side effect, as well as restoring agency to recipient governments. The latter type of response, of course, needs to take complicity concerns into account.

Aid and dirty hands

In dirty hands dilemmas, it is the recipient government who is the principal wrongdoer, and the donor becomes a "second order" wrongdoer. However, unlike cases of complicity, the violation or limitation of civic rights are seen as necessary for sustaining the basic order and stability of the state when these are threatened. Without these, the possibility of achieving socioeconomic development and democracy and the protection of political and civil liberties in the long term is undermined. This means that in the dirty hands scenario the negative outcome (rights violations) is seen as a means to achieving the positive outcome. In other words, the negative effect is not a side effect or unrelated to the positive effect as in the previous dilemmas; it is a necessary route towards the positive outcome. The recipient government is faced with a dirty hands dilemma of the first order; the donors face a dirty hands dilemma of the second order.

Separating dirty hands from complicity cases may strike some as controversial, but many working in international development have argued that improving the lives of those living in poor countries makes it necessary to work in contexts of weak governance with weak protection for political and civil rights. Indeed, weak governance is what makes development assistance necessary in these countries, and promoting development will lead to better governance and improved political rights. This is a point recently made by Bill Gates (2015) in response to a question over the Gates Foundation's development work in non-democratic settings:

If you want to restrict yourself to well-functioning democracies, you should not get involved with poor countries. Poor countries are difficult, messy, [and] complicated. All [of] the countries we're working in... want to become middle-income countries with great democracies. The deficits they have, in terms of kids who are so stunted that they can't be educated, a death rate that means their population growth is going to be very, very high... and so helping them get rid of those factors, even when they're not perfect yet, is what will let them get to that place.

Furthermore, there is evidence from the history of development to support the theory that democracy requires a minimum level of economic development, and that non-democratic developmental regimes are best placed to achieve this minimum level. A key example here is the process of development in the Republic of South Korea. The country's transformation from one of the poorest nations in the world in 1960 to one of the wealthiest by the early 2000s is widely viewed as "one of the great development success stories, of the contemporary, or any other, era" (Levy, 2014: 55).

The emergence of the developmental state in South Korea followed a military coup in 1961, which brought General Park Chung-Hee to power. The Korean developmental state experimented with different policies to promote industrialisation and high rates of economic growth (Amsden, 1989; Chang and Evans, 2005). The South Korean government was able to implement its industrialisation strategy because of "extensive access to American and international aid funds" (Mardon, 1990: 114). Subsequently, South Korea is held up as a clear example of the way in which "foreign assistance combined with sound institutions and policies... produce good results" (Dollar and Levin, 2006: 2034).

Importantly, the development success that South Korea achieved occurred under an autocratic regime. Indeed, South Korea is used as an example of how autocratic regimes are better placed to implement long-term measures to bring about economic transformation (see Levy 2014, 55-58). This is despite the substantial human rights abuses that took place under South Korea's autocratic regime.¹⁶ It was only in the late 1980s, following mass pro-democracy protests that Korea adopted a democratic system. However, this came about only once a minimum threshold of development had been reached. Hence, for many the Korean example demonstrates how the process of economic development can lead to democratic governance and the protection of civil and political rights.

Recognition of dirty hands dilemmas entails a need to distinguish dirty hands from complicity cases. This may be a more difficult task than distinguishing between double effect and complicity dilemmas. In double effect dilemmas, the donors have to identify whether the negative effects are generated by agents or structures. In both complicity and dirty hands dilemmas, the recipient

¹⁶ In 2012, while running for office, President Park Geun-Hye issued an apology for the human rights abuses that occurred under the rule of her father, General Park Chung-Hee. See BBC News (2015).

government is exercising its agency and the distinguishing factor is the background context. As the required response to each of these dilemmas is very different, a “false positive” (wrongly identifying cases of dirty hands as complicity) risks undermining the conditions needed for rights to be secured, while a “false negative” (wrongly identifying cases of complicity as dirty hands) risks putting the donors in a situation of complicity with the rights violations of the recipient government.

The short-term response from donors, therefore, would need to keep focus on the questions of political legitimacy, and for this task donors will need evidence that the rights violations are being used as a means to a justifiable end. This evidence cannot merely rely on the claims of the recipient state but, as in the case of complicity, would need to build on the local knowledge of stakeholders. This is further complicated by the fact that even when some government policies could be legitimate, others are not, and donors have to be sensitive to this fact. As the wrong committed is serious, the threshold for accepting this evidence must be high; real cases of emergencies that require the suspension of all or some civic rights are very rare. But they do exist.

Unlike cases of complicity, legitimacy is a key factor in dirty hands dilemma. As noted previously, developmental regimes gained legitimacy through their ability to deliver on the positive outcomes in the short term. It is crucial to acknowledge that – unlike in cases of complicity – the recipient government may need to be legitimised, both locally and globally, in order to successfully maintain the level of stability required for development. Donors’ endorsement of the recipient government will be conditional, and both the donor and the recipient government will still need to acknowledge that a wrong is being committed while maintaining that this is necessary given the circumstances.

In the longer term, the donor needs to ensure the recipient government retains its legitimacy through setting clear timeframes and identifiable goals. These goals underlie the transitional nature of the dirty hands dilemma. Unlike traditional political conditionalities, these would have to be more flexible and context-specific: they will differ from case to case according to the particular history, political constraints and feasibility of reform in each state. In the rationale of dirty hands situations, the rights violations taking place in the present are transitional in the sense that they are helping to pave the way towards a time when such rights violations do not take place and politics is “normalised”.

Donors would also need to ensure that they are not promoting a particular government or leader, but are focusing on the function of governments in maintaining conditions of stability and order. This, as we have highlighted, is something that donors have frequently failed to do.¹⁷ Yet this failure restricts the move to politics as normal and also prevents donors from being flexible and being able to adapt to changing circumstances. This is especially crucial when the normative context has moved from dirty hands to one of complicity, requiring a different kind of response.

Table 1: Models of donor’s dilemmas

	Complicity	Double Effect	Dirty Hands
Relationship between actions and effects	Positive and negative effects stem from actions of distinct agents	Positive and negative effects stem from the actions of the same agent	Action with negative effect is the means to the positive effect
Who is the principal wrong-doer?	Recipient government	Donor government	Both <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipient government (First order) • Donor (Second order)
What generates the dilemma?	Recipient government’s wrongdoing	Structural constraints	Solving first political problem
Short term considerations in responding to dilemma	Addressing wrongdoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detaching from recipient government • Compensation • Public denouncing of wrongdoing 	Proportionality between positive and negative effects (minimise negative effects)	Keeping focus on first political problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding complicity • Emphasis on long term aims.
Long term considerations for escaping dilemma	Abolishing wrong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving away from personalised relationship • Encouraging reforms • Developing alternative routes for positive effect 	Reforming structure Restoring agency to recipient government.	Transition to normal politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure recipient government is legitimate • Clear timetable and goals • Promoting government and right conditions, not individuals

¹⁷ Easterly (2014) discusses how donors frequently focus on promoting individual leaders. The problems of this have been discussed in detail in the case of Rwandan President Paul Kagame (D. Smith, 2012).

5

Conclusions

Reading through the conceptual framework developed in this paper, we can see that the donor's dilemma is, in fact, three different dilemmas. Complicity, double effect and dirty hands dilemmas in development aid arise in different contexts and may need different responses. A politically realistic approach to these conundrums, sensitive to context and political complexity, need not be normatively silent. Rather, it is important for donors to be able to acknowledge that they face a dilemma, to recognise which kind of dilemma they are faced with, and to work in the long term towards transitioning away from the context generating it. Acknowledging the dilemma is important because both recognising the dilemma and deciding on the appropriate response require engagement with relevant actors and stakeholders.

A second insight of our research is that focusing on actions and effects would help donors address these dilemmas in a structural, rather than personal manner. The acknowledgment of such dilemmas is hindered by a tendency to focus aid relationships on the specific leadership of the recipient state. As demonstrated in the three dilemmas discussed above, even when legitimising the actions of the current leaders is important, a reliance on a particular leader or government is more likely to constrain the transition away from the context of the dilemma rather than facilitate it.

The third insight is that it is necessary to go beyond the dichotomies of aid provision, which tend to emphasise only two choices; fully endorsing financial support to developmental regimes, or withdrawing aid in order to preserve the moral integrity of the donors. The lack of attention to contextual constraints and to recognising that such problems are in fact dilemmas leads both of these well-intentioned approaches to perverse outcomes; for example, the misdiagnosis of non-dilemmas as dilemmas, or mistaking complicity dilemmas for dirty hands dilemmas. Our hope is that our suggested framework demonstrates the nuanced nature of these situations.

Finally, normative considerations aside, there are likely to be sound instrumental benefits from the framework developed in this paper. The long-term success of development aid depends on consistent public support (Darnton and Kirk, 2011). Some may see this explicit acknowledgement of the dilemmas donors face as risking support for development aid more broadly; we argue the opposite. As the media discussion around cases like that of Mr O and DFID's support for the Ethiopian government demonstrate, there is a real danger of a backlash against development aid where rights are seen to be violated. By explicitly acknowledging and addressing these dilemmas, donors would be able to make the case for responding differently to normatively distinct situations, thus strengthening the public legitimacy of development aid.

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