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# Common Goals and Differential Commitments

The Role of Emerging Economies in Global Development

*Neissan Alessandro Besharati*



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## Abstract

The following discussion paper explores the heated debate around ‘common goals and differential commitments’ in international development cooperation. It tries to capture the views and positions of the so-called ‘emerging economies’ on their role and contribution to global development and the post-2015 agenda. It explains the divergence between North-South and South-South cooperation with regard to their historical narratives, conceptual paradigms, delivery approaches, functions and capacity. It highlights the importance of standard-setting, monitoring, accountability and peer-review but it also explains the technical challenges and political tensions in bringing the ‘Southern providers’ into the regimes and systems led by the OECD-DAC and the current post-Busan Global Partnership. The paper explains the challenges of categorising the new development partners, and defining and measuring the quantum, quality and effectiveness of their development cooperation activities. It stresses the importance of developing a framework for monitoring and evaluating South-South cooperation and the identification of appropriate institutional platforms for such discussions to take place. The paper is based on empirical research and engagement with numerous Southern stakeholders and offers concrete policy proposals for the different development partners involved in the debate.



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## Abbreviations

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AE	Aid effectiveness
AfDB	African Development Bank
Afrodad	African Forum and Network on Debt and Development
AP-Dev	African Platform for Development Effectiveness
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ASA	Africa South America (Forum)
AsDB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BAPA	Buenos Aires Action Plan
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, China
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Germany)
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CBDR	Common but differentiated responsibilities
CCT	Conditional cash transfers
CDI	Commitment to Development Index
CIVEATS	Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Argentina, Turkey, South Africa
CIVETS	Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DAG	Development Assistance Group
DCD	Development Cooperation Directorate
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation (South Africa)
DWG	Development Working Group
ECDC	Economic cooperation between developing countries
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FOCAC	Forum for China-Africa Collaboration
G8	Group of 8
G20	Group of 20
G77	Group of 77
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GNI	Gross national income
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
HDI	Human Development Index
HIC	High-income country
HLF	High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
HLP	United Nations High Level Panel of Eminent People
IAB	Inter-American Development Bank

IBSA	India Brazil South Africa Dialogue Forum
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ICT	Information and communications technology
K5	'Key Partners' (China, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil and India)
LDCs	Least-developed countries
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIC	Middle-income country
MIKT	Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSC	North-South cooperation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DCD	Development Co-operation Directorate
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Cooperation
PBIG	Post-Busan Interim Group
PCD	Policy coherence for development
PPP	Purchasing power parity
SME	Small and medium enterprises
SSC	South-South cooperation
SSDC	South-South development cooperation
TCDC	Technical cooperation among developing countries
TT-SSC	Task Team on SSC
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDCF	United Nations Development Cooperation Forum
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WP-Eff	Working Party on Aid Effectiveness
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Summary

*“...we now all form an integral part of a new and more inclusive development agenda, in which actors participate on the basis of common goals, shared principles and differential commitments” (Busan HLF-4 Outcome Document 2011)*

This was one of the iconic sentences captured in the outcome document emerging from the deeply debated Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4) in December 2011. ‘Differential commitments’, an idea similar to ‘common but differentiated responsibility’ (CBDR) emerging from the climate change talks, is a sensitive and highly politicised concept which has frequently been used in recent global policy negotiations. It now also captures the spirit in which middle-income countries view their role in the international development arena.

The following paper discusses the heated topic around the role of emerging economies in global development. It unpacks the fuzzy concept of ‘differential commitments’ and the sensitivities around ‘accountability’ in international development cooperation. It explains how traditional donors have been encouraging a more universal approach to ‘shared responsibilities’, while emerging partners continue to highlight their specificities and the ongoing development challenges they still face within their territories. As the post-2015 global development agenda is currently being defined, most divergence will be on how the new development campaign will be implemented and financed, and the specific role expected from each player.

The paper is prefaced by a discussion on the controversy and complexities around even categorising such new groups of ‘emerging development partners’. The author argues that there is no clear economic logic or development rationale in defining the new group of ‘Southern providers’ and that, rather, this new sub-division emerges out of a political drive. The consequences of such a re-categorisation process for middle-income countries (still greatly challenged by poverty and inequality) has been a reduction of aid received, and intensified pressure to share with industrialised countries the burden of responsibilities for international development. Though acknowledging the important role and contribution of South-South cooperation to global development, this paper explains that this cannot be put on the same level plane as North-South cooperation (NSC), which is essentially different in its historical narrative, its conceptual paradigm, function, delivery approach and financial capacity. This is the reason for the call by Southern providers for ‘differential commitments’ in international development.

The current discussion around South-South cooperation versus North-South cooperation is heavily tainted by polarised opinions and political rhetoric, but overall very little empirical evidence exists on the quality, effectiveness and impact of South-South cooperation on Africa and the rest of the developing world. This stems from major information gaps, and the monitoring and evaluation challenges faced by almost all emerging donors. To conduct such analytical exercises there is a need to agree on common definitions, standards, norms, criteria, measurement and reporting systems, which are currently not available for Southern providers. The paper stresses the importance of standard-setting, accountability and peer review and goes on to illustrate some of the current systems in place to monitor and evaluate international development cooperation, such as the UN, the OECD, and some Southern pilots. It discusses the strength and weaknesses of these various different interna-

tional regimes of ‘soft law’ and explains the need for combining inclusiveness, technical soundness, and political engagement in order to ensure an effective monitoring system.

The paper illustrates the OECD-DAC as the oldest and most seasoned institution to monitor quantity and quality of development assistance, but also elaborates on the apprehension of Southern partners to join this system for historical and ideological reasons. It discusses the evolution of the various High Level Forums (Rome, Paris, Accra, Busan) into gradually more inclusive platforms and explains the efforts of the DAC to reach out to emerging economies and bring them into the aid effectiveness process. It provides rich insights on the complexities of negotiating the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), as a new universal forum where norms and monitoring frameworks can be developed for different players and different financing mechanisms for development. The obsessive drive to bring emerging economies in the Busan process finally resulted in a compromised outcome document and the eventual distancing of some BRICS countries from a process which they still view as very ‘DAC-driven’ and based on an antiquated ‘Northern’ paradigm which they do not agree with and whose rules they do not want to follow or be assessed against.

Reflecting G77 sentiments, some middle-income countries are still suspicious of the DAC and view it still as ‘an agent of Northern hegemony’, while others are more pragmatic and see the Global Partnership as a space to influence development policy and learn useful lessons from traditional donors. While there are some areas of convergence between North-South and South-South cooperation, for political reasons and technical constraints, most emerging economies believe that the norms and systems to monitor development cooperation of the traditional donors are not appropriate to also evaluate cooperation activities of Southern providers. While keeping a ‘differential’ approach in global accountability, the paper discusses some basic principles such as transparency, untying of aid, and country-led ownership, which need to be applied for the benefit of the poorest partner countries during development cooperation.

The paper concludes by emphasising the importance for middle-income countries of devising their own alternative framework to the DAC, where they can define, monitor and evaluate their development cooperation. Such a Southern framework would encourage learning, improve effectiveness, promote accountability and advance the South-South narrative. This also implies finding appropriate platforms (inclusive, well-resourced, politically effective) for Southern partners to engage in such discussion. The paper explores various options for the development of the South-South development cooperation discourse, including the use of regional platforms, the GPEDC, the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (UNDCF), the G20 development working group, the BRICS and the IBSA alliance, elaborating for each of them their pros and their cons.

The exposé captures some of the latest discussions held in New Delhi (2013) and in other meetings of the South, where many of these issues have been debated. It is the result of in-depth analysis on the topic, empirical research, and inputs received from a variety of stakeholders involved in the process. It provides policy proposals for the various partners and hopes to be a contribution to the upcoming debates leading up to the first ministerial meeting of the Global Partnership to be held in Mexico in the early part of 2014.

### *Policy recommendations*

Distilled from the discussions that have emerged in the research process, the author offers some key recommendations to the various stakeholders involved in this debate on how the agenda discussed above can be propelled forward:

- *Traditional/DAC donors* need to ease the current pressure on emerging economies to share the burden of responsibilities on global development commitments. They should demonstrate example and moral leadership by fulfilling their own outstanding commitments with regards to both quantity and quality of their assistance to the developing world. This should also include continued provision of aid to middle-income countries, still faced with vast poverty challenges. Furthermore industrialised countries need to take a more holistic approach to policy coherence for development, insuring also that their domestic policies benefit (or at least do not harm) developing countries.
- *South-South cooperation providers* need to improve the transparency of their development cooperation data and strengthen their M&E systems, to provide better evidence on SSC flows. They should take leadership in developing a common analytical framework that allows for the definition and measurement of the effectiveness, quality and impact of their SSC programmes. One or more platforms (including the IBSA) could be exploited to conduct such technical discussions, promote exchange and peer learning, and consolidate global information on SSC. Southern providers must be ready to invest political and financial capital in such initiatives.
- *Recipient partner countries* must urgently develop and strengthen their national monitoring frameworks, making sure all development partners (North, South, state and non-state actors) are kept accountable in their development cooperation and that different types of aid activities are aligned to the host country's priorities, norms, and existing systems. Beneficiary countries must basically be in the driving seat and set the rules of the game for all development players!
- *Multilateral platforms (OECD/UN)* should consider shifting the operational centre of any 'global partnership for development' away from Paris (and even New York) to preferably a developing country (ideally in Africa) which should provide strong political backing as well as host the secretariat of such a global partnership. Financial and technical resources should be provided by all partners engaged in the platform in proportion to their economic means. International development cooperation regimes need to go beyond the monitoring of aid to make partners accountable for broader issues around policy coherence for development (PCD).
- *Academia and think-tanks* (preferably from the South) need to conduct more in-depth analysis, field research and rigorous impact evaluations of SSC in beneficiary countries (particularly in Africa). This will help move away from political rhetoric to empirical evidence with regards to the role of SSC vis-à-vis NSC and its contribution to development outcomes for the poorest and most marginalised populations.

## 1 Introduction: who exactly are these ‘new kids on the block’?

The development landscape has transformed itself drastically from what it used to be thirty years ago, or even fifteen years ago when the Millennium Development Goals were initially conceptualised. Paradigms, approaches, modalities and players are more heterogeneous than ever before, thus the global community is now reassessing the roles, responsibilities and accountability of the various stakeholders involved in international development processes. In the current political and academic debates there is often reference to ‘emerging economies’, ‘southern powers’, ‘threshold countries’, ‘provider-recipient countries’, ‘South-South cooperation (SSC) providers’ and ‘new donors’ which can often lead to some confusion. The following paper discusses the role of these new players in the international development architecture.

Before embarking on a discussion around ‘differential responsibilities’ in global development, one must first of all be clear which group of countries we are exactly talking about. What distinguishes the so-called ‘Southern providers’ from other developing countries? Is it politics or economics that define this new category of countries? Are North-South conceptual divides still relevant? Where do we draw the line between ‘developing’, ‘developed’ and ‘in-between countries’? How do we define and measure a nation’s ‘development’ and by what value system? When does a nation stop needing assistance and when should it start helping others? These are critical questions that are the bases of any further debate around rights, roles, responsibilities and expectations within the international development system. This opening section will discuss the complexities and controversies of trying to define such new constituents of development partners.

### *Old school*

International development cooperation originated in a political and economic landscape post-World War II in which the world was defined by the Western capitalist block, the Eastern communist block and the Third World group of (mostly poor) nations contested between the two major ideological camps. There were wealthy industrialised, ‘developed’ nations mostly in the geographic North, and poor countries in the South that were still dependent on aid from their former colonizers and the major powers to support their economies, infrastructure and nation-building process. Political alliances and organisations were established in the second half of the twentieth century that assisted different groups of nations to negotiate better their positions within multilateral forums such as the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Among these political constructs, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), particularly its Development Assistance Committee (DAC), became synonymous with the high-income countries and ‘Western donors’, while the Group of 77 (G77) became associated with the ‘aid-receiving countries’ mostly in the Southern hemisphere. The G77 has become the common voice of poor countries, a ‘coalition of the dissatisfied’ (Nganje 2013), which rarely missed an opportunity at international meetings to blame the ‘developed’ countries for their problems and to remind them of their obligations to provide compensatory assistance (Atwood 2012). Since then, the global economic landscape has changed drastically, calling these old country groupings into question; however these historical legacies still play a major role in the politics of international development cooperation even today.



### *The usual suspects*

The world has come a long way and the development landscape is not as black and white anymore. In recent decades some countries have switched from being aid recipients to aid providers, and some are still in between. This is a new grouping that is not yet well defined, does not have a narrative, a clear constituency and thus a common position on world affairs. Kragelund (2010) has commented on the rise of non-traditional/non-DAC donors like Brazil, South Africa, India and China as some of the BASIC countries who have for decades participated in development cooperation, particularly in Africa. Grimm et al. (2009) attempt to categorise this grouping of emerging donors by assessing their activities in terms of financial volumes, their priorities and aid practices, their relation to multilateral institutions, and the implications of their engagement for the future of European aid. In the last decade these countries have been associated by recent loose alliances, such as the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) association or the emerging countries who are members of the Group of 20 (G20) of major global economies such as Argentina, Brazil, India, South Africa, Korea, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Some include in the category of Southern providers most of the Gulf countries which have very quickly switched from being developing to being very rich nations because of oil exports. Some economist such as Ward, Geoghegan, O'Neill<sup>1</sup> have forecasted the upcoming rise of Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey (MIKT) and Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey (CIVETS) as the 'third wave' of SSC providers (Schulz, 2010). Different industrialised countries<sup>2</sup> have identified some of these emerging powers as key strategic players to engage in addressing national, regional and global concerns (see more in next section).

### *Giving and receiving*

South-South cooperation – sharing knowledge, experiences, resources and technical expertise among developing nations – has existed for decades, even between the poorest countries. What has caught global attention in the recent decade is that once poverty-stricken countries like China, India, Brazil, Venezuela, South Korea and Turkey, are contributing each year between US \$500 million and US \$4 billion in development assistance (UN-ECOSOC, 2008, 2009, UNDESA, 2010)<sup>3</sup>, surpassing in some cases the aid provided by some of the smaller DAC countries. Paradoxically, many of these middle-income countries are still large recipients of aid from external partners. Colombia for example, while being an active South-South provider, is also the biggest ODA recipient in Latin America. Countries such as Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are major donors and have among the highest per-capita income in the world, yet they are still part of the G77 representing the developing nations. This dual role is however not limited only to the South. During its devastating earthquake in 2011, Japan received humanitarian support even from very poor countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Swazi-

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1 See for instance <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c14730ae-aff3-11e1-ad0b-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2e03o-VWew>, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/comment/citydiary/7886195/Geoghegan-digests-and-delivers-new-acronym.html>, [http://www.economist.com/blogs/theworldin2010/2009/11/acronyms\\_4](http://www.economist.com/blogs/theworldin2010/2009/11/acronyms_4), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/27/hsbc-emergingmarkets-idUSLDE63Q26Q20100427>.

2 See, for example, BMZ (2011), German Strategy for Development Cooperation with Global Development Partners 2011–2015, BMZ Strategy Paper 6, Bonn (2011).

3 See also [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/south-south\\_cooperation.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/south-south_cooperation.pdf).

land and Haiti<sup>4</sup>. In recent years, Mexico provided technical assistance to New York City; Angola offered to bail out Portugal's debt crisis; Papua New Guinea and Indonesia helped Australia during its floods. Does this imply a reversal of roles between donors and recipients? Though low-income countries, Ecuador, Nigeria and Honduras also provide assistance to other countries, so should they also be categorised as Southern providers? Where do we draw the line? Such clear-cut categorisations between providers and receivers are not possible anymore today. The richest country in the world, the United States, has millions of people living in poverty that require 'aid', while even the poorest nations have people wealthy in resources and in knowledge that can contribute to the welfare of the global community.

### *Limits of the definition of Official Development Assistance*

The current definition of 'aid' was set in 1972 by the DAC and until today governs the great part of development cooperation globally. It was deliberately restricted, as previously donors would include in their reporting of aid to the developing world expenses such as military operations, war reparations costs and support to former colonies<sup>5</sup>, debt reorganisation, exports promotion, and refugee and student support costs incurrent in donor countries. The current definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA) (see OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms) implies that the money, goods and technical assistance is provided to other countries with a 'developmental purpose' (not commercial or political), through 'official' government channels, and on 'concessional' terms (with a grant element of 25%).

This automatically to a great extent restricts much of the assistance provided by the South, which often takes the form of peace-keeping efforts, refugee and student support, debt reorganisation, trade facilitation, private investment, less concessional loans and credit lines – but still very beneficial to recipient countries. For this and other reasons (explained later in the paper), South-South development cooperation flows are very difficult to measure as they are not recorded in a coherent way by the different countries. A large portion of development assistance from the South is technical cooperation, transfer of technology, skills, know-how, training and scholarships that are difficult (although not impossible) to quantify and assign monetary value to, especially when making cross-country comparisons. Is training offered by the Americans better than Indian capacity-building programmes? Are Norwegian engineers and doctors more valuable than South African or Colombian specialists? The costs assigned to the technical inputs can vary extensively between countries, and the quality and outcome of such services are also subjective.

Support is not only in financial terms, but can often be more valuable in the form of people, time, knowledge and technology. A lot of countries contribute more generously through 'unofficial' channels – through private philanthropy, religious charities, civil society and volunteer organisations rather than government channels. Hence, this is not recorded as ODA. The Hudson Institute (2012), for example, estimates that American philanthropy to developing countries reached US \$38 billion against the official budget of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) of US \$29 billion. With that

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4 Discussion with Japanese academics in Johannesburg, August 2013.

5 As in the case of France and Japan.

same token, Charities Aid Foundation (2012) has ranked Liberia number 11 in the World Giving Index, above most of the DAC countries.<sup>6</sup>

### *Growth, power, influence*

As we have established that being considered a provider or a receiver of development assistance can be a fairly relative exercise, why are some countries elevated to the ranks of ‘emerging powers’? Many developing countries have certainly caused a shift in the economic and political power balances of the world. In certain industries, some middle-income countries are global leaders and have become serious trading competitors to the OECD countries. Countries such as Brazil, South Africa and India also exert a significant political, cultural and economic influence in their surrounding areas and can thus be considered ‘regional powers’. Some have also extended their influence beyond their region and now additionally have a significant presence on the African continent (see Chaturvedi et al. 2012; Alden / Vieira 2011).

In the case of China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil, population size plays a huge role in affecting global trends in energy and environmental footprints, food security, lifestyle consumption, trade and all other aspects of global development. Geographic spread also allows these countries to have access to a wide range of natural resources and maintain a diversified base of agricultural and industrial production. Services and manufacturing from these countries are also very competitive due to low costs and high labour productivity. Most of these countries witnessed spectacular growth over the past decades, and hold large reserves of foreign currency (BMZ 2011). However many of these fast-growing economies are highly driven by oil exports such as Venezuela, the Gulf countries and even Nigeria. These economies are thus still fragile and subject to shocks based on shifts in fuel prices that could potentially cause economic gains to be easily reversed (Roubini 2013; Sharma 2013).

Aside from economic strength, many of these countries hold significant military arsenals and nuclear capabilities and exert significant political influence in multilateral institutions. Notwithstanding their social and economic status they are often considered ‘great powers’ globally or in their regions, capable of exerting their influence in multilateral discussions and shaping international affairs (Kennedy 2010; Cooper / Antkiewicz / Shaw 2007; Cooper / Mo 2013; Buzan / Wæver 2003).

Many of the recent Southern political alliances such as BRICS and IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) are informal clubs aimed at promoting collaboration among the powers of the South, joining forces to restructure the global economic and political governance and realigning power balances. South Africa is far from being comparable to the other BRICS with regards to population and size of the economy, however its strategic geo-political location allows it to be the gateway to the rest of the continent. Its legitimacy to be part of bodies such as G20 and BRICS stems from the important role it plays in Africa, therefore it feels morally obliged to advocate for the priorities of the continent in every global forum. Nevertheless, South Africa is closely tailed by other fast-growing economies rising on the continent, such as Nigeria and Angola, though still at early stages of their development.

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6 See <http://www.cafonline.org/PDF/WorldGivingIndex2012WEB.pdf>.

*Poverty and inequality*

Many of the middle-income countries who sit around the table of the G20 do so because of their overall gross domestic product (GDP). Yet it would be a mistake to base their development status only on such a parameter. Using GDP per capita gives a slightly better indication on the well-being of the general population. Most of such middle-income countries in fact have extremely high inequality levels and uneven wealth distributions (see GINI coefficient). This can often be the cause of social unrest and protest as has been the case even recently in South Africa, Mexico, Turkey and Brazil<sup>7</sup>. While at times resembling highly industrialised countries of Europe and North America, many of these emerging economies have regions of their countries that resemble some of the poorest countries in Africa. If we take a people-centred rather than a country-centred approach to development (Glennie 2011a; Sumner 2012a/b), most poor people of the world live in middle-income countries. India alone has almost the same amount of people living below US \$2 a day than the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa. It thus becomes problematic for such governments to justify with their domestic constituency the need to provide aid overseas when there are so many problems back home to be addressed.

Finally, definitions of ‘development’ and ‘poverty’ need to go beyond antiquated material conceptions of income, technology and infrastructure. South Asian economists, such as Amartya Sen (1999) and Mabub-ul Haq (1995), have proposed more holistic notions of ‘human development’ which have been accompanied by new matrixes such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). These are potentially better indicators than GDP to measure countries’ development progress, and thus requirements of external assistance.

*A confusing picture*

As discussed above, defining a new category of so-called ‘emerging economies’ can be extremely problematic and controversial. Often these lines do not follow an economic logic or clear development reasoning. While attempts have been made by scholars (Krage-lund 2010; Grimm et al. 2009; Chaturvedi / Fues / Sidiropoulos 2012), by economists at Goldman Sachs and at the HSBC Group, and by the OECD to group such middle-income countries, these country typologies are neither particularly clear nor scientifically consistent. Rather, such a subdivision of the development landscape into traditional (DAC) donors, low-income recipient countries, and ‘emerging donors’ merely boils down to more political manoeuvring (an aspect that will be discussed in the next section).

Depending on the political lens they use, different analysts and policy-makers make their own conclusions as to which countries to include in the category of emerging partners in debates around international development. Below is a list of some countries commonly referred to in academic and policy circles as Southern providers. The countries are compared along a number of economic, political and developmental parameters. While most of these countries are members of the G77 and consider themselves developing nations, the reader will observe that, on many of the indicators, they come close or even surpass some of the traditional DAC donors. While Russia is sometimes lumped with these countries

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7 Mine workers upheaval in South Africa in 2012; teachers strike in Mexico August 2013; public protests in Brazil around the World Cup expenditures 2013; clashes between protesters and police in Turkey in 2013.

	GDP nominal <sup>8</sup>	GDP per capita <sup>9</sup> (WB classification) <sup>10</sup>	People living in dire poverty <sup>11</sup>	GINI coefficient inequality	HDI <sup>12</sup>	Aid provided <sup>13</sup> (percentage of GNI)	ODA received <sup>14</sup>	G77 <sup>15</sup>	OECD / DAC	G20
Argentina	446.044	10,942 Upper MIC	1.9% 0.7 million	44.5	0.811 Very high	14	84	Y	N/N	Y
Brazil	2,476.652	12,594 Upper MIC	10.8% 20.8 million	54.7	0.730 High	300–1,000	870	Y	N/N	Y
Chile	248.585	14,394 Upper MIC	2.7% 0.4 million	52.1	0.819 Very high	7	161	Y	Y/N	
China	7,318.499	5,445 Upper MIC	27.2% 363.8 million	42	0.699 Medium	3,000–8,000	-796 <sup>16</sup>	Y	N/N	Y
Colombia	333.372	7,104 Upper MIC	15.8% 7.3 million	55.9	0.719 High	0.4	1,024	Y	N/N	
Egypt	229.531	2,781 Lower MIC	15.4% 13.1 million	30.8	0.662 Medium	18.4	412	Y	N/N	
India	1,872.840	1,509 Lower MIC	68.8% 842.5 million	33.0	0.554 Medium	700–3,000	3,221	Y	N/N	Y
Indonesia	846.832	3,495 Lower MIC	46.1% 110.5 million	35.6	0.629 Medium	580	415	Y	N/N	Y
S. Korea	1,116.247	22,424 HIC		31.3	0.909 Very high	1,550 (0.13%)	118	N	Y/Y	Y
Kuwait	176.590	62,664 HIC			0.790 High	144–283	N	Y	N/N	
DAC Com-parator	Iceland 14.026	Czech Rep. 20,677 HIC	USA <sup>17</sup> 1.2% 3.8 million	USA 45.0	Portugal 0.816 Very high	Greece 324 0.13%	South Korea 118	N	Y/Y	
Malaysia	287.937	9,977 Upper MIC	2.3% 0.6 million	46.2	0.769 High	17	31	Y	N/N	
Mexico	1,153.343	10,047 Upper MIC	4.5% 5.1 million	47.2	0.775 High	320	963	N	Y/N	Y
Saudi Arabia	576.824	20,540 HIC			0.782 High	5,075 (0.85%)	N	Y	N/N	Y
Singapore	239.700	46,241 HIC		48.1	0.895 Very high	62	N	Y	N/N	
South Africa	408.237	8,070 Upper MIC	31.3% 15.6 million	63.1	0.629 Medium	95–3,000 (0.2%–1%) <sup>18</sup>	1,398	Y	N/N	Y
Thailand	345.672	4,972 Upper MIC	4.1% 2.8 million	39.4	0.690 Medium	30–180	(500)	Y	N/N	
Turkey	774.983	10,524 Upper MIC	4.7% 3.4 million	40.0	0.722 High	2,531 0.32%	3,193	N	Y/N	Y
UAE	360.245	45,653 HIC			0.818 Very high	1,000 (0.32%)	N	Y	N/N	
Venezuela	316.482	10,810 Upper MIC	12.9% 3.7 million	44.8	0.748 High	1,000–4,500	44	Y	N/N	

Source: Author's own compilation

8 Billions of US dollars a year (Source: World Bank statistics, 2011).

9 Figures in US dollars (Source: World Bank statistics, 2011).

10 MIC = middle-income country and HIC = high-income country.

11 Percentage of population and number of people living on less than US \$2 a day (purchasing power parity (PPP)) (source World Bank statistics, 2010).

12 Source: UNDP 2013, Human Development Report.

13 Millions of US dollars (Source: OECD, 2013c; UNDESA estimates; Southern think-tanks & academics).

14 Million US dollars ODA disbursed in 2011 (Source: OECD, 2013c).

15 Y = yes: member of the country grouping, N = no: not member of country grouping

16 Negative because of loan repayments.

17 Source: National Poverty Centre, February 2012.

18 Diverse estimates Alden / le Pere 2010; Braude / Thandrayan / Sidiropoulos 2008; Grimm 2011; Vickers 2012 – varying depending on the definition of development aid and what is included in such.

because of BRICS, the author has decided not to include it in the list for obvious historical and political reasons. Taiwan (Chinese Taipei) is another major Southern donor that provides between US\$ 360–530 million a year in ODA (0.13% of GDP) to other developing countries<sup>19</sup>; however due to its complicated political status, it is difficult to gather the appropriate social-economic data from the multilateral organisations about the island. Amounts of aid received originate from OECD databases, and figures of aid provided come from UN publications, or other academic sources<sup>20</sup>. However, as discussed earlier and later in the paper, such numbers need to be treated with extreme caution.

## 2 Implications of reconfiguring the development architecture

### *New categorisation: a Northern push?*

Defining a new category of development partners as ‘emerging economies’ is a fairly sensitive undertaking because in essence it is about reconfiguring the global development architecture.<sup>21</sup> Such new categorisation has implications and consequences for middle-income countries as it often leads them, on the one hand, to receive less aid and, on the other, to be expected to adopt more responsibilities in world affairs. Politically speaking in fact, none of these countries, including China (the second largest economy in the world), want to be highlighted as ‘emerging powers’ or a ‘donor’ country (Atwood 2012)<sup>22</sup>. They still firmly believe that they are developing countries for all the reasons discussed above. Having a unified and big constituency of countries from the South including large economies (in the G77 for example) provides stronger bargaining power in the UN, WTO and other international negotiations.

The strongest push to stratify the developing world into low-income countries and ‘emerging economies’ originates mostly from DAC countries and traditional Northern donors<sup>23</sup>. The OECD has singled out, for example, China, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil and India as the ‘key partners’ (K5) for ‘enhanced engagement’, and Germany has identified Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa as its ‘global development partners’ (BMZ 2011). These are also the similar group of countries included in the ‘outreach five’ countries of the G8, proposed by France and the United Kingdom. This allows traditional donors to treat these countries with a diversified approach. The concept of ‘emerging economies’ is in fact a construct discussed more in Northern circles (academic, governmental and corporate) than put forth by the actual countries in question. The following section will discuss the possible political motivations and implications behind this drive.

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19 See, for instance, <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/EnOfficial/FileList/DownloadPage/?opno=67c9cebc-c85e-4713-9b1f-be189ae1d4bf>, <http://www.taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xItem=179966&ctNode=445>, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201308180026.aspx>, <http://idct.cier.edu.tw/eng/a01.htm>, <http://taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xItem=182177&ctNode=425>.

20 Some of these figures are drawn from presentations made by various different experts at the workshop on ‘Development Agencies of Emerging Powers’ held in Mexico City in August 2013.

21 From an interview with a diplomat from a BRICS country, June 2013.

22 Based also on interviews with various Chinese officials and academics.

23 Views of various diplomats from BRICS and OECD countries, interviewed in Paris, Brussels, Bonn and Pretoria, June–July 2013.

### *Closing the aid taps to middle-income countries (MICs)*

In 2008 the United States, the largest economic power in the world, suffered an unprecedented financial crisis followed by a serious debt crisis that affected the entire Eurozone. This has led to austerity measures across the OECD countries, cuts in public spending, and thus also to a decrease in ODA budgets<sup>24</sup>. ‘The pie has shrunk and cannot feed anymore everyone.’<sup>25</sup> An elderly German factory worker might struggle to accept that in these difficult times his tax money should be spent on providing aid to his competitors in emerging economies.<sup>26</sup> This has intensified the debate among traditional donors around the concept of ‘selectivity’ where aid budgets are reduced or eliminated completely for middle-income countries in favour of prioritising the poorest low-income countries. This has been clear, for example, in the ‘differentiation’ policy of the European Union’s Agenda for Change (Herbert 2013; Koch 2012), or by the recent announcement of UK DFID minister to cut direct aid to South Africa by 2015<sup>27</sup>, or Germany’s decision to end bilateral development cooperation with China by 2014<sup>28</sup>. These policies underestimate the poverty, inequality and development challenges of most middle-income countries, discussed in the previous section, and assume that such countries are able to take care of their poor with their own resources.

Most of the middle-income countries on the other hand have made it clear that ODA is still welcome and appreciated, to be used in targeted areas and types of interventions, involving more technical assistance rather than financial. The South African government, for instance, has indicated that, though constituting less than 1% of the national budget, ODA is a useful discretionary supplementary resource which can be used with more flexibility to do experimental work, pilot new ideas, unlock bottlenecks, improve service delivery and leverage other domestic resources, and thus useful for value-add, risk-taking, innovation and knowledge transfer (South Africa National Treasury 2010; Besharati 2013b). As in South Africa, in most emerging markets, ODA represents a tiny fraction of development finance, and this therefore gives more negotiating power to the recipient country, promoting a more horizontal type of relationship with its development partners. Not being in a life or death aid-dependency situation, middle-income countries are better able to oppose conditionality pressures from Northern donors, and set the rules of the game for their development cooperation better. The Indian government, for example, to reduce fragmentation and transaction costs, has decided to work with donors only providing above US \$25 million in ODA, driving out many of the smaller donors to direct their efforts elsewhere (Chaturvedi 2012).

Graduation to becoming a middle-income country does not mean that development cooperation with traditional donors stops completely. In fact this is usually just ‘redefined’ through other approaches and modalities. Grant-based giving is transformed into more loans, concessional or non-concessional (or a blend of the two), technical cooperation, dialogue and

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24 See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/aft/43234753.pdf>.

25 Words of a Southern diplomat engaged in development cooperation, June 2013.

26 Example provided by Thomas Fues at the workshop of ‘Development Agencies in Emerging Powers’ in Mexico City, August 2013.

27 See BBC World article of 1 May 2013 available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22348326>.

28 See [http://www.bmz.de/en/what\\_we\\_do/countries\\_regions/asien/china/index.html?follow=adword](http://www.bmz.de/en/what_we_do/countries_regions/asien/china/index.html?follow=adword).

exchange (Besharati 2011, 2012c, 2013b; BMZ 2011). The bulk of the assistance from traditional donors to middle-income countries tends to focus on priority concerns such as climate change, trade, migration, security and combating crime and trafficking<sup>29</sup>.

Although governments might not require ODA anymore, aid to civil society in middle-income countries can still play a very important role in assisting NGOs to provide services to the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society, where the government is not able to reach. Aid to CSOs can also contribute to the advocacy and watchdog role of civil society organisation (CSOs) in the promotion of democracy, accountability and human rights. This approach is the one followed by the USAID model of aid provision (Herbert 2013; Besharati 2013b).

#### *Additional expectations for emerging economies*

The general trend observed from traditional donors has been a shift from doing development cooperation ‘in’ middle-income countries to doing it ‘with’ middle-income countries. Industrialised countries increasingly seek the support of emerging economies in addressing global challenges, delivering on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (and the post-2015 agenda) and in the provision of global and regional public goods (such as environmental protection, peace and security, stability of financial markets.) (BMZ 2011). The renewed, more equal relationship of ‘partnership’ encourages more exchange on a cultural, diplomatic and commercial basis. The trend has also been that such middle-income countries have been used as pivot/anchor countries in trilateral cooperation in support of a third low-income country in the developing world (BMZ 2013). Being often called to cost-share expenses of domestic and international development interventions with DAC donors, middle-income countries have more to say in setting the terms of the co-cooperation arrangements.

A common suspicion shared by many emerging powers (Atwood 2012) is that, with their graduation to their new ‘status’, they not only receive less aid but are also under great pressure to share with traditional donors the burden of responsibilities (and costs) of international development.<sup>30</sup> It is thus not surprising that the title of one of the recent strategy papers (2012) of German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) was entitled ‘Shaping globalization – expanding partnerships – sharing responsibility’.

The North has a large amount of old commitments still unfulfilled, which for some countries stem from historical responsibilities for redressing colonial and post-colonial exploitation. Southern diplomats have emphasised that North-South cooperation (NSC) stems from a moral duty that industrialised countries have towards the developing world of sharing a part of their surplus and wealth (Atwood 2012), while SSC is undertaken in a spirit of solidarity, friendship and voluntary sharing of experiences among peers<sup>31</sup>. Such new Southern providers are thus extremely cautious to avoid that the historical responsibilities of DAC donors are not slackened, diluted or brushed under the carpet because of the spectacular economic rise of the South against the backdrop of financial crisis in the North

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29 Illustrated in particular in aid to Latin American countries like Mexico, Colombia and Brazil.

30 Concerns emerged from interviews with diplomats and academics from several BRICS countries.

31 Based on interviews with Brazilian, Indian and South African diplomats between June and July 2013.



(Bhatia 2013b).<sup>32</sup> SSC certainly has a role to play in global development but it cannot substitute or diminish the commitments made and the responsibilities held by traditional donors<sup>33</sup>. These sentiments have also been pungently captured in the recent statement of South African President Jacob Zuma at the 68th UN General Assembly meeting<sup>34</sup>:

*“We also wish to emphasize that any development agenda beyond 2015 must be based on the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities in order to equalize the international playing field. We raise this point out of concern because it appears that the global economic meltdown has brought about new developments that are detrimental to the developing world, especially Africa. Some of the new developments include the tendency to renegotiate the rules of the game... We wish to emphasize as well our expectations that the developed North and developing South should continue to engage in a genuine partnership. In this regard, the developed North should stand ready to meet their commitment to contribute 0.7% of their gross national income towards Official Development Assistance... The tendency to attempt to delegate some of these historical responsibilities to new emerging economies in the South is unacceptable and unworkable as such emerging nations have their own historical challenges and backlogs to deal with.”*

### **3 The post-2015 development agenda: how to foot the bill?**

The discussion around the what-agenda of international development cooperation is captured in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 development plan that will follow them. These are huge topics that require a separate treatment and can only be dealt with very marginally in this paper. Much analysis has already been allotted to the strengths and weaknesses of the MDGs and to what lessons can feed into the post-2015 development planning process (UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons 2013). The following section will thus focus on the views of emerging economies on these processes, and how this relates to the debates around ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ (CBDR).

#### *Lopsided responsibilities*

Except for some potential divergences on the climate change debates<sup>35</sup>, developing and industrialised countries should not have much difficulty agreeing to work together for a better, safer, healthier world with less poverty and inequality, where everyone enjoys employment, freedom, peace and prosperity. The UN global development debates (MDGs and post-2015) is where most countries, as politically apart they might be, will find common grounds. But the devil will be in the detail. The more important questions will be how the new global plan will be implemented, what will be the enablers and, more fundamentally, how will it be financed and who will be responsible for delivering which new commitments?

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32 Based on interviews and remarks from government representatives of several BRICS countries in Addis Ababa, Delhi, Bonn and Paris during the course of 2013.

33 Based on remarks made by Dinesh Bhatia, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Relations, Government of India, at the UNDCF Symposium in Addis Ababa, 7 June 2013, and at the Conference of Southern Providers in New Delhi, 16 April 2013.

34 New York (24 September 2013) – Full speech available at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2013/jzum0924.html>.

35 Already clear from the Rio+20 and Durban COP17 debates.

The previous MDGs were to a large extent pre-cooked by the United Nations and the donor community before the Millennium Summit<sup>36</sup>, but eventually significant weight was placed on the shoulders of developing countries, responsible for implementing goals 1 to 7. MDG 8, on the other hand, that required serious political commitment and called for the support of wealthy countries to make important contributions in areas of aid, trade, debt relief, information and communications technology (ICT), medicine and technology was more fuzzy, scattered and problematic. As opposed to the other 7 goals, MDG 8 had a very poor monitoring system (UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, 2013), weak quantifiable indicators and no benchmark, thus making it more difficult to measure performance and hold industrialised countries to account.

While any future global plan will need everyone to play a role in ensuring the well-being of the entire human family and the preservation of our common planet, each nation's contribution will have to be commensurate to its capacities, histories and specific circumstances (UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, 2013). Every country, whether rich or poor, will have its own needs as well as experiences to contribute. The next global development plan needs to shift from a country-focused approach to a people-centred approach (Glennie 2011; Sumner 2012a/b). Every country has its poor, vulnerable and marginalised, and at the same time different types of intellectual and material resources. Thus, all need to be mobilised in order to protect the planet, reduce poverty and advance together as a unified global civilisation.

#### *How is development financed?*

The previous model for financing the MDGs was heavily based on a twentieth century North-South aid paradigm. In other words, international development targets were to be achieved through developed countries boosting their ODA to the developing world and to the multilateral agencies (Sachs 2005). Experts had calculated that no less than US \$100 billion every year would be required to meet the MDGs (UNDP 2003). Over the last decade OECD donors channelled increasing amounts of their funding to social sectors highlighted in the MDGs through bilateral aid or through vertical funds such as the Global Fund<sup>37</sup> and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

Today however ODA is dwarfed when compared to other sources of financing to the developing countries (see Hudson Institute 2012; Greenhill / Prizzon / Rogerson 2013; Lundsgaarde 2013; Besharati 2012b, Besharati, 2013a), such as climate financing, philanthropy, remittances, corporate social investments (particularly from the extractive industries). ODA does not have the same prominence it had in the past anymore with regards to financing global development. There is now a wide range of technical and financial assistance flows to developing countries which needs to be aligned to receiving-country development priorities and better reported in a transparent manner. Development cooperation is

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36 Just before the historical Millennium Summit, the OECD, the UN, the World Bank and the IMF had put forward a report called 'A Better World for All' which proposed a framework of goals almost identical to what became the Millennium Development Goals. These were in large part based on commitments made at various major UN conferences in the 1990s as well as the international development goals proposed by the DAC in the 1996 document 'Shaping the 21st Century'.

37 To fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

not only about money but also about the exchange between countries of people, goods, ideas and technology.

The global development discourse of the past few years has emphasised concepts such as ‘development effectiveness’ (Kindornay / Shannon / Morton 2009) and ‘policy coherence for development’ (PCD), or the systematic promotion of parallel and reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies in order to achieve increased development results for poor countries<sup>38</sup>. Notions of PCD and development effectiveness have particularly resonated in the South, with examples such as the African Platform for Development Effectiveness (2011).

Within such frameworks, aid to developing countries is always welcome and Northern donors are urged to uphold historical commitments such as contributing 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to ODA. However more significant development gains can occur when aid efforts are coupled with the promotion of peace and stability, the removal of trade barriers, the creation of an enabling environment for private investment, the promotion of good governance, rule of law and transparency, local economic development through infrastructure and small and medium enterprise (SME) development, support to migrants and reducing costs of remittance transfers, relaxing intellectual property laws to assist access to medicine and technology in favour of developing countries – to name just a few of the many simultaneous actions that need to take place to facilitate holistic development processes . Within the ‘development effectiveness’ discourse, African institutions<sup>39</sup> have also been advocating for more attention to be given to domestic resource mobilisation, improving taxation and financial management system, building institutional capacities and fighting corruption and illegal capital flows. This is why SSC partners have looked at development cooperation beyond just the provision of ODA, to include cooperation between developing countries within the broader prism of trade, investment and infrastructure development.

Already at the Monterrey Conference (2002) the primacy of domestic resource mobilisation was established as the main financier of development. This is even truer today. A recent ODI report (Greenhill / Prizzon / Rogerson 2013) has highlighted that, particularly in middle-income countries, domestic taxation and customs revenue constitutes the overwhelming share of the development financing of the nation. The sheer size of the population of emerging economies also has a large impact on consumer consumption, energy, food requirements, and of course the environmental footprint. During the MDG campaign the biggest gains in reducing global poverty can be attributed to the economic growth that occurred in India and China alone (United Nations 2013; Hackenesch / Janus 2013). This gives an indication that, even in the post-2015 campaign, the biggest contribution that middle-income countries can make to any future global development agenda would be to focus on their own national development<sup>40</sup>.

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38 See, for instance, <http://www.oecd.org/development/pcd/50461952.pdf>.

39 See, for example, remarks by the Nigerian Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, at various GPEDC steering committee meetings, as well as key priorities of the African Consensus (AU-NEPAD 2011).

40 Based on interviews conducted in 2013 with various academics from China, India and South Africa.

## 4 South-South cooperation: different narratives, paradigms and functions

In the previous section we have seen how a major contribution that middle-income countries provide to global development is through their own poverty-reduction endeavours within their territories. Nevertheless, do emerging economies also have a role to play in assisting other countries? The answer is South-South cooperation (SSC) – broadly defined as the exchange of resources, technology, skills and technical know-how among countries of the South to promote development – social, economic, cultural, political and scientific (Besharati 2012c). Just as there is no uniform approach to North-South development cooperation, SSC is also extremely heterogeneous and different Southern partners approach the provision of assistance to their neighbours and peers in very different ways. The topic of South-South cooperation, its diverse forms, features, modalities, actors, sectorial and geographic focus, niche expertise and comparative strengths have been extensively treated in numerous publications of the United Nations and by many Northern and Southern scholars<sup>41</sup>. For this reason this section will focus on highlighting the ‘polarized ideological divide’ (Atwood 2012) that argues that the origins, conceptual paradigms, financial volumes and approaches of SSC are essentially different from those of North-South cooperation (NSC), and thus cannot be put on the same level field in terms of roles and responsibilities in global development processes.

### *Differing historical journeys*

NSC and SSC have evolved over the last six decades under two parallel but very different historical narratives. NSC generally suffers from a historical legacy that links it to colonial and post-colonial dependency relations between the industrialised North and the poverty-stricken South. The roots of SSC, on the other hand, are found in the solidarity politics and alliances pursued by newly independent states in Asia and Africa, along with their counterparts in Latin America, during the Cold War. Concerned that the dominant bipolar politics of the day would undermine efforts to achieve economic development and sustain political unity, they came together in Bandung in 1955 to set out an agenda that, under the auspices of the Non-Aligned Movement created six years later, would lay the foundation for coordinated action in the decades to come (Alden / Morphet / Vieira 2010).

With the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) by the Group of 77 in 1964, a formal institutionalisation of SSC commenced, focusing on two aspects in particular - technical cooperation and economic cooperation. Subsequent events, such as the UN Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) convened in Argentina in 1978, sought to refine the areas of cooperation. The Buenos Aires Action Plan (BAPA), which emerged out of this meeting, produced more specific terms of reference, policy guidelines and procedures for technical cooperation among developing countries. In the same year, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established a special unit for SSC.

Since then numerous G77 and UN meetings and conferences (including the most recent Nairobi Conference in 2009) have been held, and UNDESA has been providing support

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41 See, for instance, works of Alden, Alves, Besharati, Chaturvedi, De Mello e Souza, Grimm, Huang, Milani, Perez Pineda, Naidu, Fues, Schulz, Sidiropoulos, Wajjwalku, Xiaoyun, to name just a few.

to this movement within the context of the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (UNDCF). But it was not until the 21st century that the concept gained more interest in OECD circles when Southern powers like China, India and Brazil rose to new heights and increased their economic engagements with fellow developing countries in Africa and in their regions. The moral formal convergence of North-South cooperation and South-South cooperation started around the HLF-3 in Accra, which will be discussed later in the paper.

### *Incomparable financial envelopes*

With all the warranted enthusiasm for the new emerging economies, the magnitude of SSC is often exaggerated and overhyped within academic and political circles. The international development industry (both governmental and non-governmental) is in fact currently estimated to be managing over US \$200 billion every year<sup>42</sup> in assistance to poor countries. We have seen previously the large amounts of flows to developing countries which occur through corporate social investments and remittances, but even charities, philanthropy, churches and non-governmental organisations channel between UD \$50–60 billion dollars every year to poor countries (Hudson Institute 2008–2012). According to the latest UN estimates, global volumes of SSC currently reach US \$13–15 billion a year (UNDESA 2010), which is still quite miniscule compared to the US \$120–130 billion a year of ODA provided by DAC donors<sup>43</sup>. It would therefore be inappropriate to place the same levels of expectations on SSC as on North-South Cooperation in terms of impact, or to see SSC as an adjunct, supplement or substitution of traditional aid (Bhatia 2013; Nairobi Outcome Document 2009). Financing from middle-income countries to global development is barely 5% of all other flows. However, the analysis of financial flows from industrialised and emerging economies to the developing world could maybe provide another picture if trade, investment and remittances were also included in the equation (Alden / Alves 2008; Roodman 2003)

Volumes aside, contributions of emerging economies to international development are nevertheless appreciated and well-received by host countries<sup>44</sup>. Recipient countries now have more options to choose from and more diversity in the range of development packages, modalities and types of collaborations they can forge with various different external partners. SSC also expresses itself in areas of peace-keeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Perez Pineda 2009; Chaturvedi / Fues / Sidiropoulos 2012) and many countries such as Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and South Africa contribute a significant portion of their aid (at times between 40% and 90%) through multilateral channels (Alves 2013a; IPEA 2013; Figueroa 2013), thus highlighting their important role in the delivery of regional and global public goods.

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42 Rough estimate based on adding US \$129 billion DAC ODA (OECD 2013c) + US \$15 billion SSC flows (UN-DESA 2010) + US \$56 billion global private philanthropy (Hudson Institute 2012).

43 See OECD reports and trends – <http://webnet.oecd.org/dcdgraphs/ODAhistory/>.

44 Based on a telephone interview with a representative from the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) (Zimbabwe) and the Rwanda Ministry of Finance in June 2013, as well as results from the 4th round of the Afrobarometer survey (2008) available at <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>.

*Charity versus mutuality*

It would be naïve to assume that development aid is provided on purely altruistic basis. No donor is in Africa to just provide charity. Development cooperation (from the North or the South) is almost always linked to other national interests whether economic, political, strategic, commercial or diplomatic. While NSC was less direct in expressing its manifold motives, SSC is a bit more explicit in its strategic objectives.

Under the umbrella of ‘mutual gain’, development engagements between countries of the South are more open about interests, as long as both parties benefit in some way or from the cooperation arrangements<sup>45</sup>. For emerging powers, Africa is not seen as a gloomy continent, a basket-case of problems, which necessitates help, but rather as a land of opportunities where new ‘business’ relations can be established. Investing in infrastructure, economic development and political capital on the continent will provide important returns from access to raw materials, the opening of upcoming markets and will open doors for future types of cooperation. For China, South Africa and other emerging powers, building ‘bridges and roads’ into Africa not only has a symbolic function but also a very practical one. Brazilian and Indian development contributions in Northern Mozambique, such as the rehabilitation of the Pro-Savana corridor, the railway system and the deep-water port of Nacala, are not only useful for the economic development of Mozambique, but also good for the businesses operations of Southern mining giants such as Vale do Rio Doce and Jindal Steel (Besharati 2012b). Thus SSC is often undertaken with a sense of ‘enlightened self-interest’ acknowledging that assisting neighbours and other developing countries will also contribute in the long run to one’s own national growth. Already in the days of Mandela, South Africa, for instance, realised that it could never survive within Africa as ‘an island of prosperity within a sea of poverty’ (Nelson Mandela 1998, quoted in Besharati 2013b).

This reciprocity and win-win situation is the foundation of SSC. SSC distinguishes itself from NSC as a ‘two-way horizontal collaboration of equals’ rather than a ‘one way charitable relationships of aid’ (Besharati 2012a). The type of cooperation developing countries would maintain would be similar to a political/economic partnership between France and Germany or the United States and Japan. Middle-income countries thus very vehemently oppose using the word ‘aid’ and calling themselves ‘donors’. The South African government refers to its cooperation as ‘partnership’ and ‘ubuntu’ (Besharati 2013b; Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) 2011), Brazil as ‘friendship’, China as ‘gifts’ (Xiaoyun / Guoliang 2009). In the rhetoric associated to South-South partnerships, words such as solidarity, brotherhood, trust, equality, reciprocity, peer exchange and mutual learning are often present (Besharati 2012c). That said, one may question if an economic giant like China and a small land-locked, low-income country like Lesotho can really enter a development partnership on an equal footing?

In part also due to the small volumes of their assistance, Southern providers are usually less concerned with development results in the same way that traditional donors are. The focus is in fact more on building political and commercial relations. SSC is actually most of the time managed by ministries of foreign affairs and used as a diplomatic instrument to address other foreign policy concerns, such as security, and trade and migration, or to gain

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45 From a focus group discussion held with Northern and Southern academics at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research, Duisburg, June 2013.

support in multilateral forums. Nevertheless, even if they do not apply ‘policy conditionalities’ in the same way as the North does, it would be incorrect to say that South-South development cooperation was done on a completely selfless basis. Even the mere fact of being selective in terms of which areas to work in and which countries to support implies that a certain level of strategic priorities are also present among Southern providers. In some countries such as China (and soon also in Brazil<sup>46</sup>), development cooperation is managed by the Ministry of Commerce which gives an even stronger indication of the important link in the South between development cooperation, trade, investment and other national economic imperatives.

### *Demand-driven versus prescriptive conditionalities*

A principle which is highly emphasised in discourse on SSC is that assistance must be ‘demand-driven’ and tailored to the recipient’s needs (Chaturvedi 2012). As opposed to development cooperation approaches of traditional donors, SSC endeavours to not be predefined, prescriptive or to attach conditionalities to it (Bhatia 2013a). The historical roots of SSC have in fact emphasised the importance of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in national affairs (Nairobi Outcome Document, 2009), while NSC was often accompanied by policy conditionalities linked to democracy, human rights, governance reform, rule of law and economic liberalisation. South-South partnerships on the other hand encourage the concept of independence, self-reliance, and that recipient countries need to have the space to define their own policies, have ownership and leadership of their development process, and set the priorities of the development assistance they wish to receive<sup>47</sup>.

This concept however also has its shortfalls. As demonstrated by the experiences of South Africa and Brazil, the heavy emphasis on demand-driven cooperation and the ad-hoc provision of development projects stemming from diplomatic engagements and state visits, has sometimes led to a fragmented, scattered and thus ineffective international programming portfolio (Besharati 2013b; De Mello e Souza 2013; Arda 2013). Entering a development partnership with no clear priorities and responding to ad-hoc requests from partners has meant that at times soccer stadiums and presidential palaces were built<sup>48</sup> instead of hospitals and schools.

While being flexible and adaptable to the needs of recipient countries, Southern providers still need to ‘communicate’ what they can offer<sup>49</sup> and where their comparative strengths and experiences lie. Thus the development programmes offered in the Forum for China-Africa Collaboration (FOCAC) or in the India-Africa Forum need to be assessed and compared to the development packages offered by DAC donors, so that ultimately partner countries can ‘pick and choose’, ‘take or leave’ what they find useful for their national

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46 In a recent talk, President Dilma Rousseff announced that Brazil will restructure its development cooperation agency, possibly bringing its technical and economic cooperation together in a more substantial cooperation programme led by the Ministry of Trade indicating possibly a more commercial and strategic drive to Brazil’s cooperation (De Mello e Souza 2013).

47 From an interview with various African Ministry of Finance officials in September 2012 and August 2013.

48 There are multiple examples of such types of project in Chinese and South African development cooperation activities.

49 Comments of Mehmet Arda at the workshop on ‘Development Agencies in Emerging Powers’ in Mexico City, August 2013.

development processes. This likewise implies accepting the ‘conditions’ attached to the aid package, whether these may be adopting some governance reforms or recognising ‘one China’ in UN fora<sup>50</sup>.

## 5 Evidence deficit in South-South cooperation

### *Heroes or rogues?*

The previous section has already started to highlight some of the tensions that lie in the current debates around SSC. Policy-makers, academics, media, civil society and the general public are divided in their views with regards to the new emerging donors in the development landscape, with most of the disputes centred on the role of China in Africa. Many believe that the emergence of new development players is a positive signal that allows developing countries more access to development financing and more mechanisms, modalities and approaches to cooperation. Traditional partners, in both trade and aid, are losing their monopoly as they are ‘priced out’ (Naim 2007) by the competition coming from the new emerging partners who often provide assistance in a faster, cheaper and more flexible manner (UNDESA 2010). As a result, in recent years a great deal of Western criticism has surfaced on the quality of services, safety and environmental standards, labour practices, and lack of transparency<sup>51</sup> in the operations of ‘Asian donors and investors’ in Africa, depicted as being rapacious and mercantilist (Holslag 2006) in their approach to the continent and its natural resources<sup>52</sup>. Some commentators such as Naim (2007) have characterised some of the major Southern donors such as China, Venezuela, Iran, Saudi Arabia as providing ‘rogue aid’ to corrupt and autocratic regimes, thus undermining important governance reforms which traditional donors have been trying to push forward through their international development policy. History nevertheless shows that this is not much different from the support which Northern countries such as the United States, Russia, Great Britain and France provided in the past to dictators and corrupt leaders in exchange for short-term favours. One is thus left to wonder if emerging donors are ‘saints or devils in disguise’<sup>53</sup>, like their counterparts in the North?

Although SSC has been widely discussed for the past decades in many academic and political fora, the debate sometimes suffers from overtones of political ideology (Atwood 2012) and ‘emotionally-loaded messages’<sup>54</sup>. It is not always clear how much the general rhetoric is translated into reality on the ground. One can take neither the positive nor the negative opinions on the role of emerging donors at face value. Views on SSC are in fact not firmly grounded in evidence but tend to reflect perceptions and political stances. In

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50 From a focus group discussion held with Northern and Southern academics at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research, Duisburg, June 2013.

51 Comments from an Afrodad representative in a telephone interview (June 2013) at the BRICS Summit side-event in Durban (March 2013).

52 See also <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/apr/02/china-aid-africa-development>.

53 Sentence used by one of the diplomats engaged in international development cooperation discourse, from an email feedback received in September 2013.

54 From the address of Talat Abdel-Malek (Egyptian diplomat) at the High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation held in Bogota in 2010.



fact, not much empirical research has been undertaken on the real contribution of SSC to development outcomes so far. Is SSC any better than traditional North-South cooperation? There is a serious gap in evidence in the discourse that needs to be addressed not only through monitoring and evaluation but through more rigorous scientific analysis. Without sound evidence, learning and future improvements become very difficult and the SSC debate will continue to remain at the rhetorical level.

*Getting the numbers right!*

As a start, the exact magnitude of resources for development coming from the South is not at all clear. UNDESA has done some useful analytical work around SSC through the International Development Cooperation Reports and the background studies prepared for the 2008 and 2010 UNDCF reports. Many, nevertheless, disagree with the UNDESA figures. Different expert papers and reports present very large variations in the calculations of volumes of development cooperation from the various emerging economies<sup>55</sup>. This is due to several problems.

Firstly, to measure South-South development cooperation there needs to be a common definition and interpretations, which can be applied when aggregating figures from the various emerging partners. While generally disagreeing with the DAC definition of ODA (discussed in previous section), most Southern providers apply different criteria to measure their development cooperation. We have seen earlier the challenges of monetising the technical cooperation from the emerging donors, qualifying the Chinese and Indian loans and credit lines, or the South African peace-keeping and customs budget support, as Official Development Assistance. Depending on how much technical and financial cooperation is included, figures relating to the aid from Southern partners can vary enormously. At the core of the evaluation challenge is thus a conceptual challenge where debates are still ongoing whether development cooperation is a part of SSC or SSC is part of development cooperation?<sup>56</sup>

Another factor contributing to the information deficits in SSC is in the way development cooperation is managed. In almost all emerging donors, development assistance to third nations is provided by numerous different ministries, public entities, agencies, state-owned enterprises and academic institutions (Braude /Thandrayan /Sidiropoulos 2008; Chaturvedi / Fues / Sidiropoulos 2012; De Mello e Souza 2013; Huang 2013). Often these middle-income countries do not possess an over-arching development cooperation framework and a central agency to coordinate all foreign assistance from the countries' institutions to other developing countries (Besharati 2013b; Chaturvedi 2012). As a result, different types of data are produced by each entity following different M&E systems, reporting formats, standards and time-frames, thus making it difficult to produce aggregate figures and account properly for all the outgoing development assistance.

As a consequence, transparency and rigor in reporting development cooperation is extremely weak among the emerging donors (Besharati 2012c; De Mello e Souza 2013; UN-ECOSOC, 2008; Santiso 2001). All these challenges in data management, monitoring and

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55 See, for instance, large discrepancies in figures for the development cooperation of India and South Africa (Chaturvedi 2012; Alden / le Pere 2010; Braude et al. 2008; Grimm 2011; Vickers 2012).

56 Question raised by Elizabeth Sidiropoulos at the workshop of 'Development Agencies in Emerging Powers' in Mexico City, August 2013.

evaluation, and statistics on South-South development cooperation have been widely acknowledged and discussed at many recent conferences such as Nairobi (2009), Bogota (2010), and New Delhi (2013). Several Southern governments and academics are endeavouring to address these technical issues, however a political dimension to the problem also exists. Some middle-income countries are reluctant to publicise the exact figures of their foreign aid, as this may have repercussions in connection to their delicate cooperation arrangements with other countries as well as their domestic stakeholders and tax-payers, who may question why money is being spent in other parts of the world when there were so much poverty and so many problems at home to be addressed first (Grimm 2011; Besharati 2013b; Hackenesch / Janus 2013).

### *Evaluating impact and effectiveness*

When basic monitoring and the collection of simple development cooperation information are weak or unavailable, it becomes even more difficult to conduct more complex analytical work. Almost all Southern providers have poor monitoring and evaluation systems<sup>57</sup>. Annual reports from emerging donors tend to focus more on low-level administrative data on inputs, activities, missions, and people involved, and sometimes on immediate outputs (such as hospitals built, how many kilometres of roads have been constructed, etc.). Most of the evaluations are qualitative, subjective, anecdotal and reflect perceptions and political stances. Less attention is put on assessing outcome, quality, sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness.

Although many low-income and middle-income countries have conducted interesting randomised controlled trials on their own national policies and programmes<sup>58</sup>, not many rigorous impact evaluations are conducted on SSC initiatives and projects they are supporting in other countries. This is in part due to the fact that SSC activities tend to be relatively small to justify the prohibitive cost of complex impact assessments. Also, as mentioned above, much of the SSC is not so centred around development results but rather around strategic political and economic relationship-building. This is also reflected by the fact that most of the officials in emerging economies engaged in development partnerships tend to be diplomatic personnel rather than development practitioners (Cabral, 2010 Besharati 2013b).

Finally when assessing processes, quality and effectiveness of SSC, it is necessary to have clear criteria and norms of ‘good practices’ against which development assistance from different partners can be measured. Southern providers generally do not agree with the standards and criteria developed by the OECD-DAC, which they find difficult to report against and they do not find appropriate for judging their unique type of cooperation. But, at the same time, there are no internationally agreed norms and parameters for SSC. Such norms and parameters would be required if any type of quality and effectiveness assessment of the development interventions of Southern providers is to be carried out. These issues will be expanded further in the next section.

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57 Similar issues raised by all authors at the workshop of ‘Development Agencies in Emerging Powers’ in Mexico City, August 2013.

58 See, for instance, impact evaluations of PROGRESA in Mexico (Behrman et al. 2005); Bolsa Familia and Bolsa Escola in Brazil (Glewwe / Kassouf 2010); child/women nutritional programmes in Sri Lanka (White 2009); Dinaledi schools initiative in South Africa (World Bank 2010).

## 6 Standards, monitoring and peer review

### *The need for accountability*

In the arena of development cooperation, accountability comes from many angles. There is vertical accountability between donors and recipients; there is tripartite domestic accountability between the government, civil society and the private sector within one country (Kharas 2012); and there is ‘mutual accountability’ between development partners. Accountability comes from donors and tax-payers, who want to make sure they get the ‘best value’ for their investments and that their contributions are effectively spent to maximise the intended results. At the same time, beneficiaries also wish to ensure that they reap the greatest benefits possible from the external assistance they are receiving. When it comes to oversight mechanisms, national accountability systems can be extremely powerful, as development partners have a moral and sometimes legal obligation to follow the rules of the country in which they operate. Having said that, domestic accountability systems require capacities to be in place and are usually built around international regimes that have been universally agreed within global fora.

In international relations there are no legally binding commitments and enforcement mechanisms as there are at the level of sovereign states. However monitoring and peer review are important instruments of global governance that act as ‘soft law’ and exert a certain diplomatic pressure between countries (Ashoff 2013). Reporting on global norms and peer reviews provides countries with incentives, pride and shame, to honour commitments and positively vie with one another, as they are ranked on performance based on compliance with the global standards. Global monitoring and peer reviews are hence very useful in promoting mutual accountability, learning and improvement in the development cooperation system.

For peer reviews to be effective they need to engage the highest levels of political powers and clear roles, rights and responsibilities need to be assigned to the various parties involved. It has to be clear who is accountable for what and by when, hence clear targets are essential. They also need to be backed up by technically sound monitoring systems that use empirical and credible methods of measurement. Relevant indicators are thus critical and, with that, also reliable data which can be easily gathered on a timely basis to measure progress. Obviously capacities need to be in place among all the partners in order to conduct such monitoring and evaluations, and to report transparently to peers and public. And lastly, peer reviews can only occur once the community of nations has agreed on the principles, standards, criteria and norms upon which they are to be regularly assessed. The following section will delve into the currently available international regimes of monitoring and accountability which exist in the development cooperation space.

### *The United Nations system*

The UN is obviously the broadest, most legitimate forum where almost all countries of the world are represented. The main development framework that currently drives the United Nations system is the Millennium Development Goals extracted out of the Millennium Summit (2000) which was endorsed by 189 Heads of State. The MDGs are accompanied by a set of targets and indicators that are regularly monitored by the various UN agencies and national stakeholders and these form the basis of country-level discussions. At the global level, periodic events linked to the General Assembly meetings in New York have been organised to review progress on the MDGs such as the 2005 World Summit, the 2008 High

Level Meeting, the 2010 Summit, and the MDG review meeting of the General Assembly which took place in September 2013. In addition, the ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Reviews take stock of progress against the MDGs and the ECOSOC's National Voluntary Presentations constitute a soft review of countries' efforts towards achieving the MDGs.<sup>59</sup>

Previously I have explained how the MDGs framework puts a lot of weight on monitoring progress in developing countries. MDG8, which is supposed to capture the role and responsibilities of developed countries, has however had a poor monitoring and accountability framework, and has been criticised for being technically weak and lacking in concrete targets and quantifiable indicators (Report by UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015, 2013), and thus also lacking the appropriate political review process to make it effective.

### *The DAC system*

One of the main components of MDG8 (Global Partnership) has been the need to increase ODA flows. In this regard the OECD-DAC has been a much better forum than the United Nations in providing accountability, monitoring mechanisms and peer reviews on aid flows to the developing world. Following the Monterrey UN Conference on Financing for Development (2002) it became clear that, in order to tackle the MDGs effectively, there was a need for a regular platform for donors and partners to discuss how to increase the quantum and quality of development assistance. This is what led the OECD-DAC to spearhead a series of High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness (HLF) in Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011)<sup>60</sup>, the implications of which on the middle-income countries will be discussed later in the paper.

The HLF process aside, OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has generally been the 'custodian' of ODA, as it defines and regulates 90% of the world's donor assistance. From its inception in the early 1960s it has been coordinating the post-war development assistance of the United States, France and the United Kingdom and today its membership includes 26 donor countries and some of the major multilateral development organisations as observers (OECD 2013). Among the functions fulfilled by the DAC is to increase the quantity of aid provided by the industrialised world but also the quality and effectiveness of such development assistance, by setting standards and norms, sharing good practice, providing guidelines, encouraging regular reporting, monitoring compliance, facilitating peer reviews; thus promoting accountability and learning among the major traditional donors. It also defines which countries are to be recipients and the terms of ODA, and maintains up-to-date records of ODA flows to and from most countries. In both the OECD and the DAC, each country has the same vote (regardless of size), and most decisions are made by consensus. Thus member-states have a significant role in shaping the agenda.

Ashoff (2013) has elaborated on the quality of the DAC peer review system, highlighting its technical rigor and benefits with regard to providing critical and impartial, yet helpful and respectful feedback to donor countries. The effectiveness of the DAC peer reviews is

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59 See <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/amr/index.shtml>, <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/amrnational2012.shtml>.

60 For more information about the aid effectiveness process, refer to the articles of Besharati (2013a) and Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López (2011).

demonstrated by the fact that many Northern development agencies have implemented significant institutional and policy reforms as a result of DAC peer reviews. An example has been Germany's move to merge its scattered technical cooperation implemented through various organisations into one agency, the GIZ, in 2010. Similarly, 88% of DAC recommendations have been partially or fully implemented (Ashoff 2013). Even the monitoring and evaluation system of the Paris Declaration, which encompassed decades of DAC aid effectiveness experience, was demonstrated to have contributed to institutional and behavioural changes in donor and beneficiary country practices of development cooperation (Wood et al. 2011).

The problem with the DAC system is that it still operates on the 20th century paradigm of North-South vertical aid relations in a world where development cooperation is now about many other elements as well (see previous discussion on policy coherence for development). Although the DAC has led to a great many positive results for the developing world, most of the South generally regards it as a bastion of Northern hegemony<sup>61</sup>, the 'Paris coffee club of donors'<sup>62</sup>, and chooses rather to antagonise it instead of engaging with it constructively or taking advantage of the opportunities it presents<sup>63</sup>. This will be elaborated further in the paper.

#### *APRM: a good Southern model*

Peer review is not only an approach common among developed countries, there are also some very good models of such monitoring and accountability systems in the South. One outstanding example is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which emerged out of President Thabo Mbeki's<sup>64</sup> efforts to promote ownership, responsibility and leadership in the promotion of good governance and accountability on the continent (Khadiagala 2013). In the APRM process, African leaders have chosen the norms and standards they wish to follow; and have been regularly assessing themselves on performance in relationship to those standards. This allows for important debates to take place at national and regional level to encourage policy reforms, even in very sensitive areas such as governance and human rights. The APRM is built around a detailed set of commitments, standards and indicators for the four thematic areas of democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and social-economic development.

The APRM has been a very powerful instrument for peer learning, dialogue and diplomacy catalysing policy reform on the continent and providing a platform for inter-government and civil society engagement. Since 2003, 33 countries have joined the APRM voluntarily, 17 of which have completed the review process. Interesting cases exist on how the APRM has contributed to important reforms in Rwanda, Ghana and Kenya (Turianskyi 2012). The success of the APRM lies in the fact that it engages the highest political leaders of the countries involved (Heads of State) through the APRM Forum, and it is an endogenous initiative where the standards set are based on African values, and countries are reviewed by African peers and local experts. The breadth of the sensitive subjects tackled is unparalleled with issues such as rule of law, individual and collective

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61 Views gathered from many policy-makers, civil society and academics throughout the developing world.

62 Humorous nick-name given to the DAC by some African government officials.

63 Interview with a middle-income country diplomat in Paris, July 2013.

64 Of South Africa.

rights, democratic political processes, free and fair elections, separation of powers and independence of judiciary being scrutinised (NEPAD, 2002). It is an outstanding example of peer review occurring in the South, which rebuts the notion of non-interference with non-indifference (Turianskyi 2012).

## 7 The problematic relationship between the South and the OECD-DAC

### *Background and strength of the OECD*

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC), previously known as Development Assistance Group (DAG), has been hosted since the beginning by the OECD, which provided secretarial support to the Committee's work through its Development Cooperation Directorate (DCD). As a result the DAC, though officially a separate organisation, has always been intrinsically associated with the OECD, which also had its roots in the early Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), set up to implement the Marshall Plan and supervise the distribution of aid during the post-war reconstruction period.

It functions as a forum for agreeing on standards and norms, sharing policy experiences, identifying good practices and finding answers to common problems (OECD 2013). It monitors trends and facilitates different instruments, treaties and peer reviews that allow it to implement 'soft law' and improve the policies of its member states. At any given time around 200 committees<sup>65</sup>, working groups and expert group discussions are taking place dealing with a variety of policy areas such as economics, trade, education, the environment, taxation, public governance, and social affairs. The OECD is like a 'mini-UN', a global public good, an international think-tank, serviced by 2,500 staff engaging in in-depth analytical work and producing guidelines of good practice for countries, which can still pick and choose what they find useful for their context<sup>66</sup>.

As discussed earlier, another important function played by the OECD is that it coordinates the domestic and international policies of its members, thus facilitating common positions of the industrialised world in bigger multilateral fora, such as the UN, the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. In this way it is a very important forum for global decision-making. As it is a much smaller group than the UN and security is not addressed, discussions in the OECD are less politicised and consensus is achieved more quickly. However, contrary to popular belief, even the OECD is a very heterogeneous group of nations and at times decisions are reached after long and painful negotiations (Atwood 2012).

### *The OECD and the South*

Since its establishment in 1961, 34 countries have joined the OECD. Over the years, membership to the OECD has included more and more non-European countries, however the general expectation is that of 'like-mindedness' of its member states. This means in practical terms a commitment to democracy, free market economy, and human rights.

The 34 OECD member states account for 60% of the world's GDP. OECD countries tend to be highly industrialised and high-income economies and therefore it is understandable

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65 Interview with an OECD official, Paris, July 2013.

66 From an interview with a diplomat from a K5 country in Paris, July 2013.

that in international politics the OECD has become tantamount to the Northern industrialised ‘developed’ world. It is however this very reason that has historically caused the apprehension by the South towards the OECD as an institution: the organisation is seen as the stronghold of ‘Western hegemony’, ‘capitalism’, ‘imperialist and neo-colonial powers’ – the ‘Paris club of rich countries’<sup>67</sup>. The South and civil society often criticise the OECD for being too prescriptive in developing standards and policies which originate from the conceptual framework of the North.

Nonetheless, the OECD is not a stranger to developing countries. Turkey, Greece and Ireland have been members of the organisation since 1961, although at that time they were all poor nations and recipients of foreign aid. The first major breakthrough however occurred when Mexico joined the OECD in 1994, followed shortly after by South Korea in 1996. Both countries still feel connected to the Southern tradition, and find themselves ‘in-between’, that is, part of the developing world but also of the industrialised world. In this way they play a brokering role between the North and the South. Arguably both countries’ engagement with the OECD can be justified as a function of their close relationship with and dependency on the United States as regards to security, migration, trade and economic partnership. While their heart is still with the South, both countries had to practically withdraw from the G77 when they became members of the OECD. What has however been unprecedented in history is Chile’s recent accession (2010) to the OECD, while still retaining membership to the G77. This signals a drastic shift from the previous ‘black and white’ global political economy that had characterised the development community. Following Chile, other emerging economies are in the pipeline to join the OECD. These include Costa Rica, Colombia and even Russia, which was once the powerful centre of antagonism to the western neo-liberal block.

### *The DAC and the South*

While becoming a member of the OECD is a political statement of the place countries want to have in the international development landscape, becoming a member of the DAC carries even more implications as it means that the country joins a club of major traditional donors. DAC membership requirements are fairly simple and straightforward. They include a) possessing a development cooperation strategy and institutional framework, b) demonstrating a measure of aid effort (providing at least US \$100 million in ODA a year or 0.2% of the country’s GNI), and c) having a system for monitoring and evaluating the performance of development assistance (OECD, 2013a). Once countries have joined the DAC they are expected to progressively untie their aid, report their aid statistics regularly, attend DAC meetings, participate in peer reviews (as subjects as well as examiners) and endeavour to follow DAC recommendations – thus constantly improving their development cooperation.

Not all OECD countries were in a position to do this straight away. ‘Graduation’ to DAC membership was only possible for Ireland in 1985, Spain in 1991, Greece in 1999, and the Czech Republic and Iceland in 2013. For South Korea, joining the DAC in 2010 was a statement of a success of how a poverty-ridden, war-stricken country transformed itself over a couple of decades into a wealthy country able to give back the support it had received from the rest of the world. Generally speaking, there are 9 OECD countries that are

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67 Various comments uttered by government and civil society representatives in developing countries.

not part of the DAC, and recently they have been encouraged to use DAC concepts, standards and systems, undertake a lighter peer review, rationalise their development cooperation, and endeavour to quantify and report their aid transparently. This trend has been particularly strong for countries like Turkey and the Eastern European member states that are part of the EU, which for geo-political reasons need to gradually engage and conform more with the DAC. Among the non-OECD countries that endeavour to follow DAC reporting systems are also Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

The Latin American middle-income countries which are part of the OECD, such as Mexico, Chile and Colombia, do not have the same capabilities as industrialised countries to fully follow the DAC regulations and they also do not want to project themselves as donor countries yet, as they are still facing major poverty challenges domestically. Nevertheless Mexico is an 'active observer' of DAC meetings, trying to influence the aid effectiveness agenda, learning what it can from the experiences of traditional donors, and adapting what it can to the particular Mexican context (Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López 2011).

More serious apprehension in engaging with the DAC is felt by the BRICS countries, many of which constitute the pillars of the global South within the G77, historically seen as the anti-OECD movement. For most Southern partners, even the word 'aid' (the main business of the DAC) is a dirty word<sup>68</sup>. These middle-income countries do not want to project the image of being donors<sup>69</sup> and still wish to continue receiving aid. They believe in the horizontal cooperation of equals rather than vertical, one-way provider-receiver relationships (Besharati 2012c). Their SSC does not fit into the traditional ODA definition and the DAC parameters (see previous discussion). They insist that their cooperation is different, and thus should not have the same responsibilities as that of industrialised countries or feel pressured to report according to the DAC norms (Bhatia 2013a/b). Overall, middle-income countries still consider themselves developing countries, economically and politically different from the OECD countries, which they view as still stuck in an antiquated paradigm of development<sup>70</sup>.

### *Outreach efforts*

The DAC has been aware of some of these concerns and since 2009 it has endeavoured to reach out to the emerging economies by becoming more flexible and open in its approaches for accommodating the engagement of middle-income countries in its work (Atwood 2012; Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López 2011). On 6 April 2011, the DAC issued a statement 'welcoming new partners in international development cooperation', acknowledging diversity and the dual role of many countries as providers and receivers, opening dialogue to new partners without 'preconditions', and clarifying explicitly that countries can become members of the DAC while continuing to receive aid. Brian Atwood, then Chair of the DAC, travelled all the way to Beijing to provide a mandarin translation of this statement to the Chinese government and Communist Party. In these debates, Mexico has been

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68 Comments from many African and South American officials involved in development cooperation.

69 This has been repeated many times by representatives of countries such as South Africa, China, Brazil and Mexico, for instance.

70 Comments made by several Brazilian, Indian, South African and Mexican diplomats engaged in the aid effectiveness debates since Paris (2005) up to the current post-Busan discussions. Confirmed also in recent interviews in Paris and Pretoria (June-August 2013).



very instrumental in persuading its OECD peers of the specificities of middle-income countries and the need to create a ‘comfort zone’ where new partners can engage (Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López 2011; Atwood 2012). A year later, in December 2012, the DAC High Level Meeting in London released a communiqué, reaffirming the need to involve more actors in the development landscape who do not necessarily follow DAC norms and rules. With this it acknowledged the need to look at policy coherence and development effectiveness and agreed to re-visit the definition of ODA in order to take into account different forms of development finance that benefit recipient countries.

Since 2007, the OECD and the DAC have been assiduously courting Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa, identified as key partners (the K5) in a process of ‘enhanced engagement’, to encourage outreach and the sharing of knowledge with these major global players as well. For most of these countries the doors of the OECD are wide open with a red carpet and high hopes for membership. These Southern powers, however, while being in most part technically ready, are hesitant to formally join the OECD and the DAC for all the political reasons discussed above. They do not want to be bound to the obligations of OECD members as they are keen to retain the freedom of space to make their own policy choices<sup>71</sup>. Nonetheless, Brazil, Indonesia, India, China and South Africa still see the benefits of engaging closely with the OECD, learning and drawing from its vast experience, knowledge and resources<sup>72</sup>. While not being officially members of the organisation, the K5 countries have diplomats in Paris permanently assigned to the OECD. The K5 countries are each engaged in 10 to 35 bodies, treaties, projects and instruments of the OECD, including contributing substantial fees for participation in such mechanisms. Even in committees where they are not official members, they attend meetings as observers including the DAC and many of the peer reviews<sup>73</sup>.

An interesting example of collaborative initiatives has been the China-DAC study group which was formed in 2009 to exchange knowledge and experiences in promoting growth and poverty alleviation in developing countries (Atwood 2012). South Africa has been engaged with the OECD in such a way that, apart from Foreign Affairs officials, it has recently even posted a National Treasury attaché to Paris to deal with the manifold OECD engagements<sup>74</sup>. While there could be political repercussions in becoming an official member of the Paris-based organisation, South Africa and the other K5 countries have realised that they can still reap all the benefits of the work of the OECD without necessarily becoming part of the organisation<sup>75</sup>.

### *Politically scattered, emerging economies*

Overall, Southern partners see the value of engaging with the OECD as a space to gather good practices from other countries, seek high-end analytical and technical advice, learn what is useful from the Northern experience and adapt to their own country contexts.

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71 From an interview with a diplomat of one of the K5 countries in Paris, July 2013.

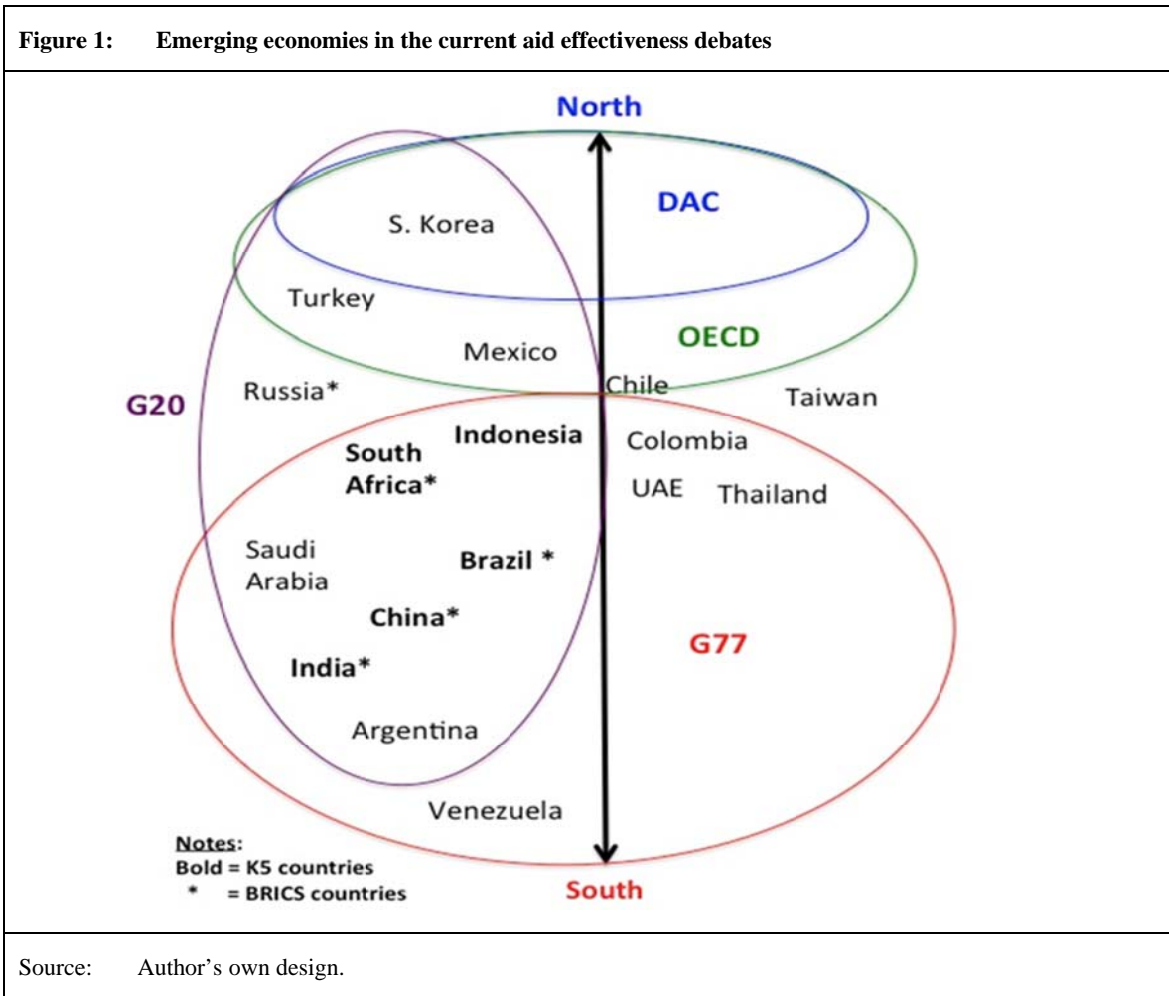
72 Feedback provided by representatives from Indonesia, Brazil, China, South Africa in interviews held in Paris in July 2013.

73 Interview with an OECD-DCD official, Paris, July 2013.

74 Interview with South African Treasury officials in Pretoria, August 2013.

75 Interview with a South African diplomat in Paris, July 2013.

Many of the middle-income countries, such as Mexico, Chile, South Africa and Brazil, are of the opinion that participating in OECD and DAC meetings, even as observers, allows them the opportunity to engage in important decision-making processes, influence developed countries' policy, shape the common benchmarks – and basically change the system from within<sup>76</sup>. But, at the same time, most K5 countries are also aware of the implications of joining the OECD, which is more of a political challenge than a technical one<sup>77</sup>. G77 ideologies still dominate the diplomatic corps of Southern nations heavily. The result is a scattered situation among middle-income countries, some sticking more to a historical North-South dichotomous view of the world and some blurring the lines and joining the ranks of the traditional development partners. In connection to Table 1, Figure 1 highlights the political orientation of some of the major Southern providers which hover between the G77, the G20, the OECD and the DAC. This also gives a rough indication of the orientation of emerging economies in the Busan Global Partnership discussed in more depth in the next section. K5 countries are highlighted in bold and BRICS countries have an asterisk.



76 Interview with Mexican and South Korean diplomats in Paris, July 2013.

77 Feedback from several South African officials gathered in interviews held in Pretoria and in Paris between 2010 and 2013.

## 8 Bringing South-South cooperation into the aid effectiveness agenda

We have seen previously that SSC and North-South cooperation have different historical evolutions and were progressing on two fairly separate paths until the second half of the 2000s, when middle-income countries started to have a more prominent role in the global political economy. Many DAC donors now want the Southern providers to also comply with the same rules of engagement with developing countries. The German government, for example, has stated:

*“It is becoming increasingly apparent that our global development partners [emerging economies] are now also acting as ‘donors’ – makers and drivers of global development agendas... [They] do not always operate in accordance with the same development policy principles and procedures as DAC donors. Different interpretations and degrees of respect for the principles of development cooperation, such as good governance, are increasingly causing the recipient countries to feel that double standards are present within the donor community”<sup>78</sup>*

The underlying question which is now arising is: Should emerging economies that are now also giving substantial support to other developing countries be included in the monitoring and peer-review systems of traditional development partners? If they are both donors and recipients at the same time, where do they fit in to the global accountability frameworks for development cooperation?

### *The legacy of Paris*

For the last five decades up to the first High Level Forum in Rome in 2003, aid effectiveness debates were a territory exclusive to the Northern donors, and Southern countries were passive recipients of decisions made in Paris. This began to change in 2005 when developing countries were invited to be part of the second High Level Forum and to participate in shaping this debate. At this event, the renowned document of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was produced. It summarised decades of DAC norms and standards of good practice of development cooperation. Although the intention was to come up with a joint compact on development cooperation principles agreed by donors and recipients, developing countries were only involved last minute, with some Southern diplomats complaining they received the draft document only a day before the conference<sup>79</sup>. As an African official narrated, ‘developing countries were invited to Paris to have coffee and cookies with the donors’<sup>80</sup>.

Nonetheless, the Paris Declaration – together with the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action – became the new ‘bible of aid effectiveness’. It was built around 5 principles, 12 indicators, and targets to be achieved by 2010. A rigorous monitoring process was set in place managed centrally by the OECD-DAC secretariat. While an outstanding 134 countries and 26 international organisations had endorsed the Paris Declaration, the mechanisms were built on a dichotomous paradigm where there were commitments to be

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78 BMZ Strategy Paper 6/2011, Strategy for Development Cooperation with Global Development Partners 2011–2015, Bonn, 12.

79 Interview with Mexican and Brazilian delegates involved in the Paris process, July–August 2013.

80 From a speech given by an African official at an SAIIA event in Pretoria in December 2012.

achieved by donor countries and commitments to be achieved by recipient countries (Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López 2011) with nothing to capture the nuances in-between. India, South Africa, China and Mexico signed the Declaration as aid recipients, while Brazil and Venezuela did not ratify the document (Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López 2011). Brazil refused to conform to what it considered an obnoxious system based of antiquated vertical aid relationships, conditionalities, and rating systems contrary to the core values of its SSC<sup>81</sup>.

To guide the aid effectiveness process, the OECD-DAC had established the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-Eff), with an executive committee made up of representatives of multi-laterals, donor countries and recipient countries, named respectively ‘development partners’ and ‘partner countries’ to reflect the new paradigm shift. Some of the Southern countries deeply engaged, and at times taking even leadership on various WP-Eff processes, included South Africa, Egypt, Colombia, Indonesia, Thailand, Mexico, Ghana and Turkey. Some of these same MICs have also been some of the prime partners of trilateral cooperation arrangements with the OECD donors. At the same time, G77 representatives gathering at Nairobi at the High Level Conference on South-South Technical Cooperation would continue to express reluctance to engage in the aid effectiveness agenda (UNECA 2011), seen as an imposition of Northern rules on international development relations.

#### *Accra and South-South working groups*

Although, in Paris, the particular role of middle-income countries in development cooperation was not taken into serious consideration, the third High Level Forum hosted in Africa in 2008 was the beginning of the marriage between SSC and the Aid Effectiveness processes. The famous paragraph 19 of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) stipulated:

*“We welcome the role of new contributors and will improve the way all development actors work together by taking the following actions:*

- a) We encourage all development actors, including those engaged in South-South co-operation, to use the Paris Declaration principles as a point of reference in providing development co-operation.*
- b) We acknowledge the contributions made by all development actors, and in particular the role of middle-income countries as both providers and recipients of aid. We recognise the importance and particularities of SSC and acknowledge that we can learn from the experience of developing countries. We encourage further development of triangular co-operation.*
- c) South-South co-operation on development aims to observe the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, equality among developing partners and respect for their independence, national sovereignty, cultural diversity and identity and local content. It plays an important role in international development co-operation and is a valuable complement to North-South co-operation.”*  
(Accra Agenda for Action, 2008, par. 19)

The AAA paved the way for a more visible engagement of developing countries in the global aid effectiveness debates (Bracho Carpizo / Garcia-López 2011; Atwood 2012). Shortly after Accra, Colombia put forward a proposal to the WP-Eff and in 2009, backed

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81 Interviews with Brazilian officials in Paris and Pretoria in July 2013.

by Mexico and Spain, to establish the Task Team on SSC (TT-SSC). The TT-SSC, chaired by Colombia and Indonesia, had the triple function of 1) enriching the Aid Effectiveness (AE) agenda with practices from SSC; 2) adapting the AE principles to SSC; and 3) ensuring synergies between SSC and NSC. One of the first enterprises of the TT-SSC was a large analytical undertaking in close collaboration with Southern academia to review more than 100 case studies of good SSC experiences (Task Team on South-South Cooperation 2010). The analytical work was show-cased at the High Level Event on SSC and Capacity Development held in Bogota in March 2010 which gave the opportunity to discuss the contribution made by SSC, explore regional perspectives, and flag out the challenges of coordination and information management.

Over the next years, the Task Team made concerted efforts to reach out to diverse development fora, including the G20 and the UNDCF. In the lead up to the HLF4 in Busan, it facilitated various regional consultations and made sure SSC featured high on the agenda. In Busan, the Task Team evolved into what is now known as the Building Block on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, however the work has lost much of its momentum. Despite the fact that the process was supported by several Northern partners led by the World Bank Institute, both the Task Team and the Building Block lacked some legitimacy as certain major Southern powers such as Brazil, India and China did not participate.

#### *The frantic effort of Busan*

Hosted by South Korea, the new ‘poster child of the OECD’, the 4th High Level Forum in 2011 set out as its main objective to bring a now large spectrum of development actors together under the same roof (Besharati 2012a). OECD countries, emerging economies, low-income countries, international organisations, the private sector, parliamentarians and civil society, all renewed their joint commitments towards internationally agreed global development goals, while at the same time acknowledging the different roles they played in the process. The idea was to reach common ground and to find ways to harmonise all types of development cooperation under universally agreed norms, explore complementarities and provide a space for exchange and learning. This implied also bringing in SSC into the DAC-like approaches to monitoring, evaluation and peer review, but within a more legitimate, broad-based and inclusive platform.

The most challenging and complex political engagement of the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4) was to bring into the system the major emerging economies, which until then had firmly kept themselves at armed length from the OECD-DAC processes. Some of the Southern ‘hard-liners’ such as Venezuela and Cuba were not even invited to the HLF-4, probably because of their links to North Korea<sup>82</sup>. In Busan getting China to join the club became the new obsession of the DAC countries<sup>83</sup>. Having said that, all major Southern partners had major concerns with the political and technical implications of being put on the same-level plane as traditional donors. While Brazil finally agreed to come to the table, China signalled before the conference that it would not endorse the Busan Agreement, which gave further support to also India’s position. After protracted negotiations leading up to and into the late hours of the Busan HLF-4 – and

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82 Informal discussion with a Southern diplomat, August 2013.

83 Comments made by an official from a multilateral organisation closely involved in the negotiation of the Busan Outcome Document, July 2013.

through some very serious British and South Korean diplomatic efforts (Atwood 2012) – India and China finally agreed to sign the Busan Global Partnership document<sup>84</sup> with the last minute additional paragraph which they proposed adding to the first page stating that:

*“The nature, modalities and responsibilities that apply to South-South co-operation differ from those that apply to North-South co-operation. At the same time, we recognize that we are all part of a development agenda in which we participate on the basis of common goals and shared principles. In this context, we encourage increased efforts to support effective co-operation based on our specific country situations. The principles, commitments and actions agreed in the outcome document of Busan shall be the reference for South-South partners on a voluntary basis.”*  
(Busan HLF-4 Outcome Document 2011, par. 2)

This stems from the belief that SSC and NSC are essentially different in their approach, features and historical functions. This political stance, coupled with many technical limitations (already discussed in this paper), made Southern providers assert that it would not be fair to assess their development cooperation with the same standards and criteria set for the traditional donors. In the Busan negotiations, the Rio Declaration (1992) discourse around ‘common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)’ re-emerged during the debate. In order not to replicate the exact same language of the climate change talks (Atwood 2012), Busan sherpas agreed to use the terms of ‘differential commitments’<sup>85</sup>. Busan acknowledged the important role emerging economies play in global development, highlighting their specificities and acknowledging their dual role as South-South providers and aid-receivers. The underlying rationale behind the concept of ‘differential commitments’ was captured in the paragraph proposed by Mexico and backed up by Brazil which stressed that:

*“Today’s complex architecture for development co-operation has evolved from the North-South paradigm. Distinct from the traditional relationship between aid providers and recipients, developing nations and a number of emerging economies have become important providers of South-South development co-operation. They remain developing countries and still face poverty at home. As such, they remain eligible to benefit from development co-operation provided by others, yet they have increasingly taken upon themselves the responsibility to share experiences and co-operate with other developing countries. The Paris Declaration did not address the complexity of these new actors, while the Accra Agenda for Action recognized their importance and specificities. While North-South co-operation remains the main form of development co-operation, South-South co-operation continues to evolve, providing additional diversity of resources for development. At Busan, we now all form an integral part of a new and more inclusive development agenda, in which these actors participate on the basis of common goals, shared principles and differential commitments.”*  
(Busan Outcome Document, par. 14)

All in all, the final Busan Outcome Document was a much diluted and weaker text than the Paris and Accra commitments (Besharati 2012a)<sup>86</sup>. The Australians, Canadians, the

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84 Based on accounts of various diplomats and officials closely involved in the Busan negotiations; various interviews held between 2011 and 2013.

85 Based on accounts of various diplomats and officials closely involved in the Busan negotiations, July-August 2011, interviews held in Paris and Mexico City.

86 See also the views of commentators such as Maxwell (2012) and Owen (2011).

Americans and civil society delegations were not happy with the Chinese/Indian additions (Atwood 2012) but compromises needed to be finally made in order to accommodate the new actors. The platform has been very cleverly called the 'Global Partnership' to link it back to the initial MDG8 process. The word 'aid' had almost disappeared from the discourse (it had been replaced by 'development cooperation') and traditional dichotomies between NSC and SSC had been blurred. The new Busan Global Partnership transformed the 'aid effectiveness' agenda into a broader 'development effectiveness' agenda, which looks at diverse sources of development financing, policy coherence and a range of issues advocated by the North, the South and non-State actors.

### *Southern providers in post-Busan*

A more detailed analysis of the overall developments post-Busan can be found in my previous paper (Besharati, 2013a). Because of that this section will focus only on the engagement of the Southern providers in the post-Busan debates. Throughout all these discussions, emerging economies who are members of the OECD, such as South Korea and Mexico, have tried to play a mediating role between the traditional donors and the South, which they still feel strongly a part of. Korea organised the HLF-4 and Mexico is now planning to host the 1st post-Busan ministerial meeting in April 2014 which will build on their solid international diplomacy experience gained from the Los Cabos G20 Summit (2012), the Cancun Climate Change talks (2010) and the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development (2002).

Interestingly, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation is the only OECD-sponsored mechanism which (at least on paper) is endorsed by all 5 key partners (Brazil, India, China Indonesia and South Africa). But one of the weaknesses of the outcome document was that it left a lot of important details (time-lines, targets, indicators, and the monitoring framework) to be decided and operationalised in the post-Busan discussions. Shortly after Busan, an interim group (PBIG) was set up to assist the old Working Party on Aid Effectiveness to transform itself into the new Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) steering committee that would follow up on the Busan commitments. India and China followed this delicate transition process as silent but attentive observers, while South Africa, Mexico and Brazil were more active and vocal in the post-Busan discussions<sup>87</sup>. After an initial few meetings, however the major BRICS economies gradually lost interest in the process and went back to their default positions.

Shortly after the HLF-4, Argentina wrote a formal letter to the OECD secretariat expressing its non-endorsement of the Busan Partnership<sup>88</sup>. In the subsequent Spring 2012 meetings of the UN in New York, several of the Latin American and G77 countries debated if they should withdraw their endorsement and avoid future references to the Busan process, which they did not view as legitimate and implemented within the correct UN apparatus, but rather as an agenda driven by the rich countries (Atwood 2012).<sup>89</sup>

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87 Based on accounts from OECD officials and Southern diplomats engaged in the post-Busan talks.

88 Account given by one of the diplomats heavily involved in the Busan and GPEDC processes, August 2013.

89 The same story was accounted by a UNDP New York official at a meeting in Pretoria in February 2013.

As a result of long-standing and recent history, many of the Southern powers still view the Busan Global Partnership with caution and suspicion, concerned that this might be a ‘trap’ through which DAC commitments and standards are imposed on them and they are pressured into a monitoring and accountability system with rules they do not agree with<sup>90</sup>. Brasilia has historical grudges against the aid effectiveness process which go back to Paris HLF-2 (see the section entitled "The legacy of Paris") while Beijing has serious technical, conceptual and political problems in applying DAC norms to its particular approach to cooperation (see for instance Xiaoyun / Guoliang 2009; Hackenesch 2009) and Delhi is still strongly engrained in an ideological North-South divide, which stems from antagonist G77 views towards the Busan Global Partnership and the concern that the UN would be the more appropriate and legitimate forum to discuss development cooperation issues (Bhatia 2013b; Nairobi Outcome Document 2009)<sup>91</sup>. All three countries have made it very clear that they do not want to be ‘monitored’ or ‘rated’ with indicators and criteria made by and for Northern development partners (Bhatia 2013; Atwood 2012)

Among the BRICS peers, South Africa stands out as different because its foreign policy is very closely tied to the position of the rest of the continent. Though not agreeing to many DAC approaches, Africa all-in-all appreciated and pro-actively utilised the WP-Eff platform (Atwood 2012; Besharati 2013a) and now the Global Partnership, as a space to voice its concerns and as a mechanism to keep all development partners accountable in their development cooperation commitments with the continent. As such, South Africa continues to engage in the GPEDC processes though, like its other peer Colombia, it has temporarily stepped back from the global debates to sort out the internal restructuring of its development cooperation strategy (Besharati 2013a). Nonetheless, South Africa and Mexico played an active role in facilitating the nomination of Indonesia as co-chair of the GPEDC steering committee (Atwood 2012).

On the steering committee of the Global Partnership, Indonesia and Peru represent the so-called ‘provider-recipient countries’. But despite this, there is virtually no proper channel of consultation, coordination, information-sharing, and position-building between the constituency of middle-income countries and their representatives who sit on the GPEDC steering committee. This problem of communication between GPEDC steering committee members and their constituency does not only relate to middle-income countries but also to Africa, the private sector and ironically even the DAC countries, many of which have complained that they are not receiving enough information on progress with the Global Partnership<sup>92</sup>. This calls for an urgent re-visiting of the assumptions upon which the GPEDC was built, particularly to check whether capacities are truly in place to allow for the envisioned constituency-based mechanisms to work<sup>93</sup>.

On paper, developing countries are more numerous than donor countries so, in theory, the South should have a greater bargaining power in the Global Partnership. In practice,

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90 Comments made by many Southern academics and policy-makers from discussions held in Shanghai, Delhi, Addis, Duisburg and Paris during the course of 2013.

91 Based also on an interview with a South African official explaining the role of their BRICS peers in the Busan process, July 2013.

92 Based on interviews with OECD officials and diplomats from DAC and non-DAC countries, June–July 2013.

93 See discussion in my previous paper Besharati (2013a), and Atwood (2012).



though, recipient countries have far less resources at their disposal and thus less capacity to engage in the debates than industrialised countries do. The system is thus still very DAC-dominated, using definitions, categories, tools, methods and measurements established by the traditional donors. Just as it has been in the past for the aid effectiveness process, the bulk of the funding for the GPEDC activities comes from DAC donors, which even end up subsidising the travels of Southern representatives to come to international meetings. Although the GPEDC was designed to be independent from the OECD-DAC, the secretariat of the Global Partnership still operates from within the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who in Busan was also invited to provide technical support to the system and to assist in the outreach and support to developing countries, does not have the same level of experience as the OECD and is not able to mobilise the required funding to support its GPEDC secretarial role. This might also indicate the low level of interest of middle-income countries in supporting the GPEDC process. As a result, most of the substantive work is still directed from Paris which adds strength to the conclusion from the South that “the Busan Global Partnership is the same old DAC-run show”<sup>94</sup>.

## 9 Applying traditional norms to emerging donors

### *An impossible union?*

The political processes described in the previous sections have provided vivid examples of the enormous tensions which exist in trying to integrate the emerging economies into the traditional development cooperation architecture. There are some political forces (mostly Northern) that push for ‘universality’<sup>95</sup> in development cooperation norms that expect NSC and SSC to follow the same rules of engagement and be evaluated under the same framework. Other views (mostly Southern) strongly advocate the ‘specificity’ of each type of cooperation and tend to highlight the incompatibility of NSC and SSC that originates from different histories, follow different inspirations, paradigms and premises, and operate under different models, approaches and delivery mechanisms (Bhatia 2013). Development cooperation from middle-income countries is therefore a completely different beast, and some have even gone to the extreme to argue that SSC should not even be considered ODA (Nairobi Outcome Document, 2009).

Representatives of Southern providers are thus very emphatic in underlining that they should not be expected to carry the same responsibilities and obligations as traditional donors.<sup>96</sup> The understanding is that their small cooperation with other fellow developing countries is done on a ‘voluntary basis’, in the spirit of ‘solidarity’ and free from the constraints and pressures of externally imposed rules and accountability mechanisms set by the North (Bhatia 2013). The old promises of traditional donors do not apply to them,

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94 Almost the exact words were taken from an interview with a Southern diplomat in Paris in July 2013. Similar comments were made by Southern academics gathered at a conference in Shanghai in January 2013.

95 Highlighted by Elizabeth Sidiropoulos at the workshop on ‘Development Agencies in Emerging Powers’ held in Mexico City, August 2013.

96 Views gathered through interviews with numerous officials from various BRICS and other middle-income countries in Pretoria and Paris between 2012 and 2013.

hence the argument of ‘differential commitments’ (see discussion above on Busan). As many of the targets of the traditional donors are still unfulfilled, this puts the spotlight on the emerging economies but this is also seen as a way to distract attention from the historical commitments of the developed countries which are still outstanding<sup>97</sup>. These are some of the many Southern political stances that have animated the debate. However, there are also some clear technical problems to be addressed. Traditional donors have been engaged in development cooperation for almost fifty years and have had time to develop experience and a mature complexity in their systems. Middle-income countries, on the other hand, are still fairly new to this field and are still learning and developing their infant development agencies. Thus capacities are very different: it would be just as inappropriate to ask an elementary school student to follow the same rules as a university student<sup>98</sup>.

African governments acknowledge the emergence of new ‘Asian’ donors on the continent, and appreciate the options they now have of engaging in a variety of development partnerships both with old and new players. Although they acknowledge the pros and the cons of these diverse ‘cooperation packages’, recipient countries nevertheless do feel that the basic rules of engagement still apply to all development partners.<sup>99</sup> The following section will explore some of these specific development cooperation principles and discuss whether they should, or should not apply to Southern providers.

### *Some common grounds*

Politics aside, not all traditional aid effectiveness principles are necessarily bad. They exist for a reason<sup>100</sup>. They are based on decades of experience in North-South cooperation and on what evidence has been shown to work in favour of recipient countries. Hence Busan and previous HLFs remain a useful framework from which all partners (emerging economies included) can pick and choose what is useful for their purposes. Most of the commitments and principles agreed in Paris, Accra and Busan were in fact requested by the developing world (including the Southern providers when they were recipients of aid). Why, then, should they disagree with the same principles when it comes to their outgoing development cooperation?

Often the same principles and values for development cooperation contained in documents from the OECD-DAC community are the same as those also contained in SSC documents produced in Bandung (1955), Buenos Aires (1978), Nairobi (2009), Bogota (2010) and other major Southern conferences. NSC and SSC converge for example in beliefs such as national ownership and that development assistance should be aligned to the priorities of recipient countries; in the idea of inclusiveness and multi-stakeholder participation; the importance of capacity development; and in the principle of transparency and mutual accountability (see Ling 2010; Hackenesch 2009; Chaturvedi / Fues / Sidiropoulos 2012; Tortora / OECD-DCD 2011 for more in-depth comparative analysis). North-South and

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97 From interviews with representatives of BRICS countries in Paris and Pretoria from June–July 2013.

98 This analogy was made by an academic and expert in Chinese development cooperation in an interview in Duisburg in June 2013.

99 Based on interviews with various representatives of low-income recipient countries in Africa, July–September 2013.

100 Comments of a UK DFID official during an interview in Pretoria, June 2013.

South-South experiences have also frequently come together in successful ‘triangular co-operations’ where many middle-income countries, such as Chile, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil and Colombia, have played a ‘pivotal’ role by partnering with traditional donors in the provision of assistance to other third developing countries.

### *Transparency, accountability and results*

Transparency in development cooperation is of important value to all partners: tax-payers, beneficiaries, civil society, parliaments, academia and the general public, whether in the North or in the South, all have the right to know how their governments and agencies manage their development finance. In previous sections we have already discussed the weaknesses of the information management systems of the emerging donors, and the implications this has on transparency, accountability and reporting.

The shortfalls in upholding this principle is therefore often not the result of a deliberate political decision but simply of a lack of technical capacities and resources in Southern providers to undertake the thorough reporting exercises on a regular basis and at the standards currently expected by the seasoned development agencies. For the majority of emerging donors, the real challenge is to get an accurate overview from the manifold agencies in their country engaged in different development cooperation activities internationally (Besharati 2013b; De Mello e Souza 2013; Huang 2013). In most middle-income countries, the general population is also more concerned with accountability and corruption vis-à-vis domestic public spending and less with that related to the relatively small foreign aid provided in cooperation with other countries.

The Chinese case is, however, an exception where the entire political system is not as interested in democratic accountability and the detailed information sharing on government finance. The exact figures of Chinese aid to specific partner countries is a ‘state guarded secret’ (Grimm et al. 2009; Afrodad, 2008), that not even beneficiaries or Chinese academics are able to access<sup>101</sup> due to the sensitivities surrounding the publicising of such figures and the concerns of repercussions this might have on local constituents (as discussed in previous sections). The situation has improved slightly however with the recent public release in 2011 by the Chinese government of its White Paper on foreign aid which summarises 60 years of Chinese assistance to the developing world and attempts to reverse some of the negative publicity that Chinese cooperation has been getting internationally (see early sections).

While, in their international development assistance, Northern donors and their citizens are increasingly giving attention to ‘value for money’ and ‘results’, the drivers of SSC are often of more political and diplomatic nature and are thus less concerned with the actual development impact. In NSC, the results-based orientation encourages a more serious utilisation of monitoring and evaluation systems, while in the Southern model, the costs of undertaking rigorous and complex evaluations might not be justified in relationship to the small amounts of resources which are being spent on conducting SSC. Rigorous M&E and reporting systems utilised by Northern donors can thus become too burdensome for some Southern providers.

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101 Based on feedback provided by Afrodad researchers and academics and experts of Chinese cooperation in private discussions held in Shanghai, Delhi, Duisburg and Johannesburg during the course of 2012/13.

*The 0.7% target*

One of the most contentious debates is that concerning the commitment of developed countries to provide 0.7% of the donor country's GNI to development assistance. The origin of such a target goes back to the 1960s/70s. The initial proposal, which came from the World Council of Churches, was further refined by Tinbergen and by the Pearson Commission until it was officially endorsed by the UN General Assembly as a parameter of what was expected from rich countries to help the poor in the world.

Although in general there is no real push for middle-income countries to adopt such standards, some analysts have suggested that emerging donors could have a similar target such as 0.2% (Grimm 2011; European Report on Development 2013). Most Southern policy-makers and academics have rebutted that this was a standard set by the North for the North and should not apply to development cooperation from the South<sup>102</sup>. Emerging donors, in fact, do not have the same historical baggage as the developed countries, but rather provide the little they have on a voluntary basis in a spirit of solidarity, friendship, ubuntu (DIRCO 2011), and neighbourly support. Because of this, it would be inappropriate for Southern countries to be pressured into quantitative targets for external assistance when they still have so much poverty and socio-economic challenges at home to address. And, finally, it would be out of place for traditional donors to expect a similar effort from new partners, when only a few European countries (such as the Nordic countries, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) have managed to fulfil the 0.7% target in decades of development cooperation. Interestingly, some of the middle-income countries such as South Africa have already surpassed this amount and are providing near to 1% of their GDP in development cooperation activities (Grimm 2011; Vickers 2012).

*Tied aid*

One aspect closely linked to the fair measurement of volumes of assistance to the developing world is the issue of 'tied aid'. It can happen that a donor country reports that it is providing a lot of money to a developing country although very little might actually go into the hands of the government and people of the recipient country. This is because development cooperation is provided in conjunction with contractors (NGOs, companies, technical specialists), overpriced services and products and goods from the donor country. This is clearly 'counter-developmental' as it leads neither to national ownership, capacity-building nor to the use of local expertise, materials and resources. Although it is accepted that both parties can theoretically gain from development cooperation, in principle most of the benefits of the partnership should go to the poorer country.

Tied-aid practices have been longed the subject of criticism from civil society and developing countries (Jepma 1991) and this is why DAC donors have been endeavouring to gradually 'untie' their aid for decades. The new donors for their part are starting to grapple with the same challenges as the traditional donors, especially as much of the South-South support is provided through technical cooperation which is extremely prone to being provided via home country institutions and human resources. What is highly criticised, for

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102 Based on interviews held with Indian, Chinese, Brazilian and South African academics and government officials between 2012 and 2013.

example, is Chinese development assistance (especially financial assistance) to Africa which is almost entirely provided with Chinese contractors, technology and personnel, giving little room for the development of local capacities and the support of the recipient country's industries.

Tied aid undertaken by emerging economies is however to some extent more justifiable than that from industrialised countries. As discussed earlier, emerging economies are still nations that are developing and therefore also need to take care of the development of their own economies and local industries and to assist their experts, companies and banks to expand their presence in the global markets. The same trend was visible in industrialised countries at the early stages of their development cooperation. Prior to the 1990s, aid from the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany was very tied, and even now smaller DAC donors such as Spain, Greece and Italy continue to provide assistance linked to their local NGOs and country personnel. This has often been justified on the ground of having to win the support of local constituencies and electorates in order to release more Parliamentary (or Congress) funding for foreign aid.

At the same time, while claiming to have untied their aid, many traditional donors require in their procurement policies service providers who are able to comply with tight regulations, speak the home language and be officially accredited in the donor country's databases, thus making it almost impossible for contractors from third countries to apply for such tenders (Besharati 2011)<sup>103</sup>. From this perspective, Chinese academics are currently discussing with their government (Huang 2013) that, even if China were to untie its development cooperation, Chinese products and its workforce would still be competitive in the global development industry due to low costs, high productivity and quick and efficient implementation periods. In principle, South Africa and Brazil disapprove of the practice of tied aid and officially provide cooperation that is untied; nonetheless de-facto assistance is almost always connected to the institutions, technology and experts of the provider countries, similar to the approach undertaken by traditional donors. The DAC countries' agreement in 2001 to untie their aid excludes scholarships, food aid and technical assistance (Atwood 2012) which ironically constitutes the overwhelming majority of the assistance that Africa still receives from most of its donors (Collier 2008; Besharati 2011).

#### *Coordination and monitoring – a country-led thing!*

Coordination and harmonisation have been principles of aid effectiveness discussed by the DAC community since the first HLF in 2003. The rationale of donor coordination is to avoid duplication, promote coherence, reduce fragmentation and facilitate division of labour. While the purpose is to reduce transaction costs to recipient countries, sometimes coordination can also be costly and time-consuming and might not be worth the investment. For this reason, DAC donors sometimes decide to coordinate their aid activities because it allows them to have a united approach when exerting policy conditionalities on recipient countries. In recent years, however, coordination and harmonisation have been generally in decline due also to increased donor concerns with visibility (Vollmer 2012).

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103 See also [http://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/publications/Country\\_Ownership.pdf](http://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/publications/Country_Ownership.pdf).

For the reasons discussed above, emerging donors operating in developing countries are often reticent to coordinate their efforts with those of the traditional donors. This has sometimes led to emerging donors operating in diametrically opposed ways to the traditional development partners – both positively and negatively (see early discussions). As emerging donors do not follow the norms established by the community of traditional partners, their activities in Africa are often criticised for not following the correct environmental norms, safety standards, labour regulations, and quality of service delivery (Naim 2007; Grimm 2011; Afrodad 2008). Although many universal principles have been set in the UN, WTO, World Bank, ILO and other international conventions, much of the implementation of such standards are subject to the legal and regulatory frameworks of the partner countries.

The other side of the story is that the emergence of new donors in Africa is a positive thing, as it provides partner countries with access to different choices, options and development packages. This also gives the recipient country more bargaining power as it leverages the strength of each development partner in order to maximise returns on its local development.

For effective coordination of development cooperation activities to occur, recipient countries must be in the driving seat and ensure that all the support they receive is aligned and contributing to their national development priorities. They must set the rules of the game and the standards to be followed in the country – and enforce them on every development partner, whether North, South, public or private. Strong ownership and leadership is required by recipient countries in establishing appropriate forums and frameworks which bring together both traditional donors and new donors under ‘shared principles and differential commitments’, but nevertheless based on partner-country development planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation systems. National level accountability frameworks can be extremely powerful and effective – hence the rationale for the Busan call for ‘global light and country-focused’ monitoring of development cooperation.

Country-level accountability works when there are sufficient capacities in the recipient country to manage the diverse development partners working with them. However it is easier to build national monitoring systems and exert pressure on partners if there is a global framework universally agreed in multilateral fora which partner countries can continually refer back to in their engagements with their donors. Hence the usefulness of global and regional standard-setting, monitoring and peer review fora, discussed in earlier sections of the paper.

## **10 A framework for South-South cooperation: the time has come!**

### *The bold step of Delhi*

The issues, tensions and peculiarities of South-South cooperation in relationship to the North-South aid system had been discussed as far back as the Bandung (1955) and Buenos Aires (1972) conferences and have been on the agenda of the United Nations institutions (namely UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP) for decades. However the movement has picked up a great deal of momentum in recent years through conferences such as Nairobi (2009), Bogota (2010) and the UNDCF processes. 2013 has likewise been a year filled with de-

bates around the emerging economies in the global development agenda with thought-provoking discussions held at Addis Ababa, Shanghai, Beijing, Pretoria, Durban, Johannesburg and Mexico City, to name a few meetings, often organised with the support of Northern partners.

But one outstanding gesture of leadership coming from the South was the April 2013 Delhi Conference on Southern Providers, entirely funded by the government of India. This included academics, officials and representative from all major SSC partners around the world, and participation by high-level political figures such as UN Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo and Indian Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai. The Delhi Conference called for the intensification of dialogue and collaboration among Southern academics and policy-makers to encourage better evidence-based analysis, systematic collection of data and evaluation of SSC. It emphasised the need to share experiences, promote peer learning, the exchange of knowledge and thus the institution-building of the new emerging development agencies. It underlined the need to strengthen regional and multilateral systems in order to provide Southern partners with more platforms on which to engage with one another on issues of common concern in order to help them build common positions and take up more proactive roles in the larger global fora where developed countries also participate, including the Busan Global Partnership (see more in RIS/UNDESA/MEA report, 2013). Some of the ideas discussed in Delhi, as well as at other recent meetings of the South, will be elaborated on further in the next few sections, outlining a number of potential proposals on how to advance the agenda further in the upcoming years.

#### *Improve evidence for learning, effectiveness and accountability*

Nobody questions the constructive role that South-South cooperation can play in international development, but notwithstanding the stacks of literature on the subject and the decades of debates, real evidence of the impact of SSC on the ground is still extremely thin. As a result, discussions are dominated by the rhetoric of both critics and supporters of the new donors in the global development landscape. We have seen in earlier sections of this paper that major knowledge gaps still exist when it comes to precise volumes, impact, effectiveness and the quality of the development cooperation from emerging development partners. For all intents and purposes, strengthening the evidence of SSC cooperation is now a high imperative.

The development cooperation packages from Southern partners are gradually increasing (UN-ECOSOC, 2008–2009, UNDESA, 2010–2013), and thus also the influence of middle-income countries on the rest of the developing world. If emerging economies want to be taken seriously on the global scene, they need to be more organised and systematic with regard to their development cooperation. Many middle-income countries are at embryonic stages in the establishment of their international development agencies (Chaturvedi / Fues / Sidiropoulos 2012), hence it is important that they ‘get it right’ and learn from their own past experiences, that of their peers, as well as the experiences of traditional development partners, whether positive or negative. Evaluation is thus key to ongoing learning, refinement and improvement.

Effectiveness’, a word often associated with the OECD-DAC processes, is actually a neutral concept that can also be applied to SSC. It is about making sure that objectives are met, and that desired results are accomplished successfully. The results and objectives of

traditional donors or emerging economies might be different from one another, however both want to make sure that their aims are achieved. Thus the evaluation of the effectiveness of a cooperation programme of any development agency is a necessary exercise. This is usually done within the framework of the country's foreign policy objectives, whether these are developmental, commercial, or strategic.

Related to effectiveness is also the concept of accountability, where both Northern and Southern donors need to justify to their citizens, their parliaments and their domestic constituents the 'investments' that are being made overseas. Accountability towards the beneficiaries or partner countries of the cooperation programme is also critical. Some recipient countries, particularly in Africa, have reported to have experienced similar issues with Southern providers to the ones they have experienced in the past with Northern donors<sup>104</sup>. Thus building strong monitoring and evaluation systems and institutional capacities to provide ongoing evidence for the design and improvement of future cooperation programmes with the rest of the developing world is a priority for all emerging development partners.

### *A frame of reference for SSC*

Having established the need and importance of monitoring, evaluation, evidence and accountability, there needs to be clear parameters by which these analytical exercises are conducted. Without clear definitions and reporting guidelines we cannot come to grips with the exact volumes of Southern flows, and without standards and norms we cannot empirically evaluate the quality and contribution made by emerging economies to international development. By what criteria are we supposed to judge the impact and effectiveness of SSC?

We have seen earlier in this paper that the OECD-DAC has spent over 50 years defining, guiding and creating standards for 'effective' development cooperation. For political and technical reasons, also discussed earlier, we have also seen that emerging donors experience major discomfort (to say the least) in following the 'Paris aid effectiveness systems' as their *modus operandi*. Southern actors in development cooperation do not believe it is appropriate to assess their international development activities using the rules, standards and principles of NSC because this emerged from a different historical path, conceptual paradigms and delivery approaches. They do not want to subject themselves to the peer review, accountability and norms of a system which they did not take part in devising. It would thus not be appropriate to judge development cooperation from Southern providers with the same criteria and standards set by the traditional donors.

Although these concerns are all valid, it is not good enough to just refute anything coming from the DAC, without having an alternative proposal to put on the table. Middle-income countries need to develop for themselves a framework that they are comfortable with in the evaluation of their development cooperation activities. To build such a framework, one could begin by distilling the principles discussed at historical South conferences such as Bandung, Buenos Aires, Nairobi, G77, ASA (Africa South America (Forum)), AU, etc. In

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104 At an Oxfam/NEPAD/Afrodad side-event during the BRICS Summit in March 2013 in Durban, representatives from African countries mentioned challenges with regard to transparency and tied-aid practices which they had been experiencing with some of the development assistance from BRICS countries.



order for it to be effective, it would require a technically sound monitoring system with clear indicators and empirical measurement systems. The methodological details on how to measure the quality of SSC could be elaborated by the rich pool of technical experts and academics already present in developing countries.

*What are the ‘differential commitments’?*

Once a framework for defining, measuring and assessing SSC is in place, the next big and sensitive question would then be: Are emerging economies ready to make promises, commitments and assign targets to their development cooperation efforts? This speaks to the concept of ‘responsibilities’ that is a highly politically loaded word. On the one hand, the traditional donors are quite keen to share the burden of their international development obligation with the new emerging economies which have gathered much momentum in the recent decade in the light of slow growth (or even recession) in industrialised countries. On the other side, middle-income countries continue to insist that they are still developing countries with lots of poverty, inequality and domestic issues to address before worrying about global public goods. They argue that SSC should be free from any form of ‘obligation’ (Bhatia 2013) and on the contrary should be implemented on a voluntary basis and in the spirit of solidarity. As middle-income countries still have fairly limited capacities, it would be unfair to expect the same level of duties from them as from seasoned donors.

Although there can be a certain degree of tolerance and flexibility when applying rules to the new partners, at some point it will still be important to define exactly what the ‘differential commitments’ are that are expected from middle-income countries in international development. Following Busan, Mexico has been urging its Southern peers to demonstrate leadership in unpacking the concept of ‘differential commitments’ by outlining clearly the role of middle-income countries in international development, so that traditional donors no longer have an excuse to slide back on their own unfulfilled responsibilities<sup>105</sup>. African recipients are also increasingly demanding more transparency and accountability in their cooperation activities from all development partners, both traditional and emerging<sup>106</sup>.

## **11 Finding a ‘home’ for South-South cooperation**

The last few sections have summarised some of the major debates currently taking place and have highlighted the pressing need to establish a forum where emerging donors can define, measure, regularly analyse, monitor and account for their development cooperation. An information hub dedicated to the collection, coordination, compilation, processing and dissemination of development cooperation data from middle-income countries is needed (UN-ECOSOC 2009). Moreover, a framework needs to be created with criteria, standards, principles and norms to guide effective cooperation among the nations of the South. Having such a system in place would then encourage peer review, accountability, exchange and the distilling of good practices among Southern providers: in short, an entire

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105 Remarks made by Geraldo Bracho Carpizo (Mexican diplomat engaged in the GPEDC) at the workshop on ‘Development Agencies of Emerging Powers’ held in Mexico City, August 2013.

106 Based on remarks made by government and civil society representatives from Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa (March-September 2013).

system similar to the DAC is also required for the South<sup>107</sup>. The bottom line is that one or more platforms (Bhatia, 2013) need to be established where Southern partners can jointly define, monitor and evaluate their development cooperation, encouraging learning and further development of South-South development partnerships.

Such a process will require political support and the engagement by the highest government quarters within the Southern providers. In previous sections we have seen how for decades traditional donors have utilised the OECD-DAC as the main forum to systematically gather aid data, monitor trends, set standards, evaluate effectiveness, review and learn from one another on how to improve their development assistance programmes. Notwithstanding the effort of the DAC to open up to emerging partners, the earlier work around the TT-SSC, and finally the Busan effort to create a new more inclusive platform, most of the big emerging economies are still reluctant to engage as they see the process as still very DAC-driven, following a Northern paradigm which they do not agree with.

Different narratives, different approaches and now ‘differential commitments’ probably also require a ‘different house’. This implies both a new institutional home as well as a new physical location where discussions are conducted. There is still too much historical legacy linking the GPEDC to the OECD aid effectiveness apparatus and this turns major Southern partners off. For a development cooperation discourse to assume more legitimacy and inclusivity, the policy-making and operational centre needs to shift away from Paris and move towards a country in the South (ideally in Africa).

Critical in all of this is the issue of who is going to fund such a platform and the entire system that comes with it? In the past many similar attempts have been initiated, supported and financed by Northern donors, but this has also made them lose legitimacy. For the process to retain credibility it is important that the financial and human resources for establishing and maintaining such a platform also come from the South. The financing of such a multilateral system needs to be commensurate and proportional to the economic capacities of the participating countries. At the same time, resources in the developing world are very limited and, although some of the big middle-income countries could potentially afford the bill, there also needs to be enough political will to invest in creating such new structures.

The issue is indeed very complex. Initial thought must naturally be given to utilising the current structures existing globally and possibly to starting with fairly loose, informal and virtual arrangements, before formalising these into more solid institutional structures. Many different Southern experts, academics and policy-makers have expressed many different views on how and where to take the SSC agenda forward. In the next few sections, I will illustrate a few different options of where such discussions could be hosted and where the development of a South-South development cooperation framework could eventually take place.

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107 Remarks made by an African official at the Delhi meeting (April 2013) and an Indian diplomat in Addis Ababa (June 2013) have also warned against making reference to the idea of ‘Southern DAC’ or ‘DAC of the South’ because of the negative historical connotations of the institution ‘DAC’ and also in order not to give the impression that Southern providers are now repeating the same antiquated models of the North.

### *Regional systems*

A very important role in norm-setting and the accountability of development cooperation is played by regional organisations that coordinate the work of several countries and stakeholders within a particular region. They serve as useful intermediaries between the national and global frameworks, also stimulating a good deal of South-South cooperation among neighbours (Nairobi Outcome Document 2009). In this regard institutions such as the African Union (AU), the Pacific Islands Forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Arab League (to name but a few) have played an important role in promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange among developing nations. We have also previously discussed the role of the APRM as a powerful platform for the promotion of accountability between the African nations. The AU-NEPAD has also facilitated the development of the African Platform for Development Effectiveness (AP-Dev) and its subsequent mutual accountability framework. The African Consensus (2011) emphasises the complementary role of North-South and South-South cooperation, both needing to be led by recipient country priorities. Such platforms also allow developing countries to consolidate their views into a unified and stronger voice which will in turn allow them to negotiate better with bigger development partners and engage more effectively in other multilateral fora.

A similar platform for development planning, monitoring and cooperation discussions is similarly provided by many regional banks and development finance institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IAB) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), to name a few.

### *GPEDC: constructive dialogue with the North?*

While regional forums are useful, in essence the big emerging powers of the South are scattered across different continents and necessitate the existence of wider global fora to discuss their common approaches to development cooperation. The OECD-DAC has tried very hard to reach out to the developing world, first through the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-Eff) and currently through the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). We have seen earlier how this process benefits from the decade-long analytical experience and resources provided by the OECD, but how at the same time it also discourages major Southern powers such as China, India and Brazil from engaging in it because of historical legacies.

Some middle-income countries, however, have chosen not to take an ‘anti-DAC approach’ and instead to engage with Northern partners in a positive, constructive and collaborative manner. Countries like Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, Indonesia, Chile, Peru and Turkey have recognised the value of engaging in the aid effectiveness process and have also taken leadership in initiatives such as the Task Team and Building Blocks on SSC and the GPEDC Steering Committee. Although they share similar concerns to the rest of their Southern peers, they are engaging proactively with the system of the Global Partnership by trying to change it from within and to use it as an opportunity and space to influence the development policy of traditional donors. The view of a such group of ‘OECD-friendly middle-income countries’ is to thus to improve coordination with one another in

order to consolidate a more unified and coherent position, as they continue to engage in the GPEDC debates<sup>108</sup>.

Development cooperation by traditional donors has also evolved, improved and come a long way since the beginnings in the 1970s. A good deal of North-South cooperation is worthy of merit, and important lessons can be drawn from the experience of traditional donors especially in connection with transparency, accountability, results orientation, monitoring and evaluation. At the very least, emerging donors can ensure that they do not repeat the same mistakes that traditional donors encountered in the evolution of their development cooperation. This is why it would be useful for Southern partners to keep channels to the OECD-DAC open, learning what they can from decades of experience by traditional donors, and picking and choosing what is of relevance to their context. Paris, Accra and Busan remain very useful ‘reference points’ for emerging economies as well, as long as such regulations are not imposed on them rigidly and they are not pressured into inappropriate expectations and unrealistic responsibilities to be borne in the global development campaigns.

### *The United Nations*

When declining to engage in OECD-led processes, countries such as India and Brazil<sup>109</sup> always refer back to the United Nations as the natural, legitimate and universal forum where most international issues, including development cooperation, should be discussed. Historically, in fact, the UN has always been an important platform for the nations of the South providing support services to the work of the G77. UN bodies such as UNDESA, UNCTAD, UNIDO, the FAO and UNDP all have units specifically dedicated to supporting SSC. Since Busan, many have suggested that the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (UNDCF) should be a better, more legitimate and inclusive space in which development cooperation could be discussed. The recent UNDCF symposium in Addis Ababa (2013) for example hosted a meeting of the Directors-General of South-South Providers.

While being a more broad-based forum in its representation and more closely connected to the MDGs, there is also a substantial degree of scepticism and concern as regards its historical inefficiencies. The massive UN bureaucracy has its limits because it operates very slowly and suffers from the influence of multiple political forces that pull it in different directions. The sheer number and diversity of stakeholders often make it difficult to reach consensus and to agree on clear and bold action for the future. This has led to a decrease in political interest in UN forums which are often characterised as mere ‘talk shops’.

Other useful platforms where developed and developing countries come together to discuss global challenges of common concern are the World Trade Organizations (WTO), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, once again, such institutions are also criticised for being Northern dominated because voting powers are usually commensurate to financial contributions.

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108 Based on remarks and interviews with diplomats from Mexico, South Africa and Colombia between April and August 2013.

109 Based on interviews with various BRICS officials, June–August 2013.

### *Advancing the agenda in smaller 'Gs'*

A powerful forum of world leaders where international development and poverty alleviation has been discussed over the past decade has been the various G8+ meetings (i.e. Evian-les-Bains, 2003; Gleneagles, 2005; Heiligendamm, 2007), which often included leaders of the developing South. More recently the G8<sup>110</sup> has evolved into the Group of Twenty (G20), which has also constituted a Development Working Group (DWG). The G20 members represent 2/3 of the earth's population, 90% of global trade and 80% of the world's GDP. The G20 is an 'informal club' of the world's economic giants which includes the major traditional donors (G8), the BRICS countries, and other emerging economies such as Mexico, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey.

The strength of the G8+, the G20 as well as the BRICS and IBSA (discussed later) is that they carry very strong political clout as they engage Heads of States at the yearly summits. Although development cooperation is brought into the debate, and sometimes even SSC (see G20 Seoul Summit communiqué 2010), the discussions tend to focus more on managing the global financial crises, and there is generally very little appetite for accountability and peer review (see the outcome of Bali G20 meeting, 2012).

But the main criticism of the G20 (and also subsequent groupings discussed next) is that, at the end of the day, they are still just 'clubs' representing a smaller group of nations and are far from being legitimate or adequate in representing the concerns of the majority of the developing world. As I have discussed in other papers (Besharati 2013a), the tension of effective international decision-making frequently lies somewhere between 'operational efficiency' and 'broad-based representation'. The international development agenda often moves forward faster with smaller groups of similar nations, hence the successes of the OECD-DAC and G20. While processes in bigger multilateral forums such as the UN, the World Bank and the GPEDC are important and need to continue, there is often value in the work of smaller groups to reach consensus quicker, to make more substantial progress on certain issues, and thus to advance the agenda more rapidly.

### *BRICS*

In the current political economy, when one tries to think of a counterweight to the traditional Western powers, the first thoughts go to the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) formation, the new major alliance of emerging economies aimed at redefining and rebalancing global political and economic order. At the BRICS summits in New Delhi in 2012 and Durban in 2013, the announcement about establishing a potential BRICS-South Development Bank raised a great deal of hopes as regards the expansion of development financing mechanisms, especially for Africa. Moreover the establishment of a BRICS Bank would imply the need for a common international development policy and an operational framework based on principles and standards which all five countries would have to agree on. BRICS could therefore theoretically be a good place to establish a development cooperation framework for the South – except that most of the focus of de-

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110 The Group of 8 (G8) countries include United States, Italy, Germany, France, Russia, United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan.

bates is currently on financial governance and less on development. In addition, the group is technically not a real representation of the South as it contains Russia which was once considered one of the imperialist powers of the North.

### *IBSA*

A more appropriate platform on which to have discussions surrounding South-South development cooperation is possibly the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Forum. The three countries have been working very closely for some ten years, exchanging knowledge and experiences among themselves. All three countries have strong Southern credentials, a common history of struggle against oppression, and similar challenges of fighting poverty and inequality. They are all successful pluralistic democracies that cherish the principles of accountability and multi-stakeholder participation. Moreover all aspire to playing a stronger role in a more balanced global governance system. Although they share the same challenges of inequality, they also have well-articulated experiences in poverty alleviation and social protection systems.

Together with China, all three countries are among the largest Southern providers, maintain significant development cooperation programmes particularly in Africa, share a similar vision and approach to South-South cooperation, and thus can learn a lot from each other's experiences. The three countries have also agreed to undertake more systematic exchanges between their development cooperation agencies<sup>111</sup>. Since 2003, IBSA has established a Joint Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (aka the IBSA Fund<sup>112</sup>) to finance development projects across the world. The allocations from the IBSA Trust Fund are governed by 10 effectiveness criteria that could potentially be refined and expanded upon in order to develop a development cooperation framework for the South (Sidiropoulos 2012; Besharati 2013a).

One strong political drive that brings India, Brazil, and South Africa together is the common aspiration of creating an appropriate counterweight to the dominant Northern powers in order to restructure the international order and create a better representation of the South in global governance institutions. Hence this sentiment could be cultivated and channelled to advance more effectively the SSC agenda. While IBSA could be a very good platform on which to initiate such debates, the problem lies in the fact that it would exclude China, which is a very important player and possibly the biggest Southern provider in the world. Also, the initial enthusiasm around IBSA has also been recently overshadowed by the more sensational BRICS alliance. The decision of President Rousseff of Brazil to forgo the 2013 New Delhi IBSA summit is also an indication of the loss of momentum in IBSA<sup>113</sup>. The development of a common cooperation framework between the three countries could thus potentially inject some spirit into the process and maybe resurrect the almost defunct Southern alliance.

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111 Feedback from various IBSA diplomats, April–July 2013.

112 Every year each country contributes US \$1 million to the joint Trust Fund managed by UNDP.

113 See <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/05/brazil-sees-bric-limitations/comment-page-1/#comment-1196840> and <http://www.postwesternworld.com/2013/07/04/is-ibsa-dead/>.

### *The 'poorest' to the forefront*

The fora discussed above all have their strengths and weaknesses. This is why to a certain extent all of them need to be explored and exploited to advance the South-South development cooperation agenda. Synergies between these platforms can also contribute to the increased accountability of various players in the development cooperation landscape. As most of these ideas are still at early conceptual stages, we therefore need to observe carefully how the political and economic landscape evolves in the next few years and what dynamics will emerge in the lead up to the GPEDC ministerial meeting in Mexico in 2014, and shortly after that.

The OECD, the G20, the BRICS and the IBSA are all useful, but ultimately they remain 'exclusive' groups. Even if the objective is to include the major 'Southern providers', these groups still exclude a large number of important SSC players in Latin America, the Middle East and South-East Asia. Even if – for the sake of efficiency – work begins in a smaller group of emerging powers, such as BRICS or IBSA, it will eventually have to be brought back to the bigger UN forum in order to seek engagement, legitimacy and endorsement by the broader group of developing nations.

Yet, what is maybe more important than involving all the key middle-income countries is the importance of involving the least-developed countries (LDCs) who are the prime recipients of development assistance programmes. Any platform, whether Northern or Southern, which endeavours to alleviate global poverty, needs to ensure that the voices of the poor are properly captured, and that the main beneficiaries of development cooperation are at the 'driving seat' of the partnership. Although this has not always been the case historically, at least on paper traditional donors have also affirmed this important principle. Emerging economies clearly do not want to distance themselves from the rest of the developing countries and create arbitrary lines between low-income countries and middle-income countries which are nevertheless still the largest basins containing the world's poor.

That is why, ultimately, country-led accountability frameworks, and monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the performance of all development partners is the key way forward. Better evidence needs to emerge from developing countries themselves, particularly in Africa, of the contribution both traditional donors as well as new partners are making to the lives of the most deprived and marginalised populations of the planet.

## **12 Conclusions: bringing it all together**

The exact role and responsibilities of emerging economies in international development cooperation have been and still are being much debated in the political and academic arenas. To a large extent, definitions, principles, standards and monitoring frameworks to assess the quality and impact of SSC still require to be elaborated by the stakeholders concerned so to increase the effectiveness and accountability of such new forms of development cooperation.

Although the Busan process has evolved very rapidly, the emerging economies have not had enough internal discussions to consolidate a common position and understanding on these issues and to be able to engage constructively in the Global Partnership debates.

Middle-income countries need more time to develop their own narrative<sup>114</sup>, to consult their constituency, to develop a clear framework, to define their approach better, and to formulate their position on international development cooperation.

Developing a framework and platform for SSC providers would have to be clearly owned and led by the South (including low-income recipients) while the political and financial investments need to be available for such a process to take place. The process could commence with increased communication and the sharing of information before evolving into dialogue, coordination, the setting of common norms and standards, and eventually increased peer review and accountability among partners.

Establishing a framework for South-South development cooperation will advance more rapidly if it is elevated from political and emotional rhetoric to the engagement of the technical expertise from academics, economists, think-tanks, civil society and development specialists present throughout the developing world. Southern technocrats could assist in the development of appropriate parameters, criteria, indicators and metric systems to measure the quantity, quality, effectiveness and impact of the development initiatives of Southern providers. Once the technical blueprints have been developed these would be discussed and endorsed in the diplomatic circles of the various emerging economies, by building consensus at summits such as IBSA, BRICS, regional institutions and the United Nations fora.

While it is important to have a separate South-South cooperation narrative, this eventually needs to also come together with North-South cooperation to form a consolidated international development process which includes industrialised, emerging, low-income countries and other important development partners (civil society, the private sector, and so on) in a joint global endeavour. Development cooperation needs to be seen through a more holistic lens, looking beyond just aid and including coherent responses to other important areas, such as trade, investment, infrastructure, capacity-building, governance reforms, domestic resource mobilization, remittances and other sources of financing for development. The debates in the GPEDC and in the UN fora need to transcend the old ideological North-South divide and explore how the flow of money, people, goods, ideas and technology from both developed and developing countries can contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, and help the international community successfully complete the MDGs and embark with resolve and a united vision on the next post-2015 global development plan.

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114 Remarks made by both Mexican and Indian diplomats engaged in the GPEDC.



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