DEFINITION, MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: THE CASE OF BRAZIL

Carlos R. S. Milani
INTRODUCTION

Studies on in North-South and South-South development cooperation have demonstrated that there are distinct types of historical experiences, with multiple domestic actors being involved and thematic agendas being reinforced based on different motivations, as well as various institutional designs conceived by governments in order to implement their strategies (BRAUTIGAM, 2011; CHATUVERDI et al. 2012; CHISHOLM et al., 2009; COMELIAU, 1991; DEGNBOL-M. & ENGBERG-P., 2003; LANCASTER, 2007; PETITEVILLE, 2001; VEEEN, 2011). Even within OECD/DAC countries, where institutionalization has gone further in terms of norms, assessment and peer-review monitoring, variety reigns and differences abound amongst governmental practices. This diversity of national trajectories as well as the lack of an institutionalized international development cooperation regime bring about obstacles, but also create opportunities in terms of political creativity and flexible management procedures (VAZQUEZ, 2013). In

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1Carlos R. S. Milani holds a PhD in Development Studies from the Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris, 1997), and a Post-Doctorate in International Relations at Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris (2008). He is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the Institute for Social and Political Studies of the Rio de Janeiro State University (IESP-UERJ), Research Fellow with the National Science Council (CNPq-1D), and Secretary General of the Brazilian Political Science Association (ABCP). E-mails: crismilani@iesp.uerj.br; carlos.milani@pq.cnpq.br. Institutional websites: www.iesp.uerj.br; www.labmundo.org. Personal website (with publications and research reports): www.carlosmilani.com.br.
In the absence of a proper regime, countries can innovate in the field of rules, procedures, and practices; nevertheless, the lack of a consensus or a lowest common denominator may render statistical comparisons and collective building of norms very difficult in the international realm. That is the reality of North-South aid and South-South cooperation nowadays, as the impasse around the Paris-Accra-Buzan process has so far demonstrated. What is the current state of affairs as far as Brazil’s international development cooperation (IDC) is concerned?

OVERVIEW OF BRAZILIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In the particular case of Brazil, according to official data published by IPEA & ABC (2010, 2013), IDC increased from 160 million USD (2005) to approximately 923 million USD (2010); in this same span of time, technical cooperation expenditure was multiplied by four times, and humanitarian cooperation has also gained ground: from around 600 thousand USD (2005) to 161 million in 2010. ABC online database\(^2\) reveals that amongst 1,464 concluded projects between 1999 and 2012 in other developing countries (South-South cooperation), 577 projects had been developed in South America, 552 projects were in Africa, 164 in the Caribbean, 90 in Central America, 65 in Asia, 15 in North America (Mexico) and 1 in Oceania (Papua New Guinea). Amidst these 1,464 concluded projects, 573 in social policies (health, culture, sports, social development, environment, education), and 539 in governance (public management and planning, urban development, justice, legislative capacity-building, defence and security).

Brazilian IDC is statistically conceived of as public expenditure under the Annual Budget Law’s current spending; it does not include investment loans or debt write-offs, and grants are only exceptionally taken into consideration. There are two main types of public expenditures made by federal administration in

\(^2\) Available at <<http://www.abc.gov.br/projetos/pesquisa>>.
international development cooperation: (1) payment of civil servants and eventual collaborators of the federal public administration (airline tickets, *per diem*, salaries; technical working hours, scholarships, grants); (2) financial commitments with multilateral organizations (IPEA & ABC, 2013, p. 14). The accounting system of the Brazilian IDC reveals a series of pros and cons. On the one hand, the statistical definition of IDC as being 100% concessional demonstrates a political will to go much further beyond OECD’s definition of ODA, which requires a minimum of 25% of concessional funds. One could see through this statistical definition a political effort to revise a symbolic and conceptual dimension of what has been set up by DAC. On the other, IPEA/ABC studies do not take into account other funds and public sources, such as loans given by the National Development Bank (BNDES), the foreign debt write-offs or the activities implemented by sub-national entities within the Brazilian federation.

As the IPEA/ABC report on 2005-2009 IDC asserts, “a common definition of international cooperation was reached that served as an operational base for data collection, namely: the total funds invested by the Brazilian federal government, entirely as non-repayable grants, in governments of other countries, in nationals of other countries in Brazilian territory or in international organizations with the purpose of contributing to international development, understood as the strengthening of the capacities of international organizations and groups or populations of other countries to improve their socioeconomic conditions” (IPEA/ABC, 2013, p. 17). As the report itself acknowledges, “the concept of cooperation was formulated to guide the survey, bearing in mind the need to allow the comparison with traditional concepts used for nearly 60 years to quantify public international cooperation for the development of other countries. However, it is noteworthy that this concept is not aligned with the traditional definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA) of the OECD” (p. 17). Therefore, the effort made so far by the Brazilian government to promote transparency is an important step, even though reports need to be published
more timely (the last report refers to 2010 data), and the statistical improvement for a more effective generation of accountability within the Brazilian society.

Another aspect that calls our attention is the fact that technical cooperation accounts for 6.3% of total 2010 IDC budget, i.e. 57,770,554 million USD (IPEA & ABC, 2013, p. 18), whereas humanitarian assistance accounted for 17.5%, educational cooperation 3.8%, scientific and technological cooperation 2.6%, peace-keeping operations 36% and contributions to multilateral organizations 33.7% of the total budget. Technical cooperation is not a priority in terms of public expenditure, although it may be celebrated worldwide thanks to its flexible adaptability to local contexts in other developing countries. Indeed, particularly since the 1988 Constitution and all along the re-democratization years, civil servants and technical consultants have earned expertise in education, health, agriculture, culture, and public management, and have also gained suitable knowledge on the actual functioning of the domestic politics and the complex interplay among interest groups. Civil servants are the main agents of implementation of Brazilian IDC; they tend to be less expensive than national and international market professionals, and come from several institutions, ministries, and public agencies such as FIOCRUZ (public health) or EMBRAPA (agriculture). Their participation in Brazilian IDC has so far contributed to hinder the flowering increase of an “aid industry” in Brazil. Nonetheless, it is true that many civil society organizations end up being excluded from IDC projects and programmes. Viva Rio, Associação Alfabetização Solidária and Missão Criança are three cases of NGOs being currently involved in ABC’s educational and humanitarian cooperation projects. Several Brazilian NGOs dealing with rights (human rights, women’s rights, right to development, right to a safe environment, etc.) criticize the Brazilian government for what they label as a “participation deficit”, a subject that still needs more attention from academic social science research (MENDONÇA et al. 2013; SANTOS, 2014).
Geographically, Brazilian IDC is concentrated in two main regions: Latin America and Africa (map 1). ABC database informs us that between 1999 and 2012, there were 84 developing countries with which ABC had cooperated: 40 of them were African countries, 13 were from the Caribbean, 11 from South America, other 11 from Asia, 7 from Central America, 1 from North America (Mexico), and 1 from Oceania (Papua New Guinea). This concentration in Latin America and Africa can result from the historical formation of Brazil’s society, its culture and current identity in foreign policy (focus on the South). It also stems from the “demand-driven” principle that guides ABC’s agenda, and a very balanced distribution of Brazilian diplomatic representations worldwide (map 2), which guarantees direct bilateral dialogs with many developing countries in the field. It is true that the large number of developing countries (84) with which Brazil develops official IDC may also express a significant dispersion of cooperation efforts. What is the difference that a tiny project in Papua New Guinea can produce in development promotion? Irrespective of the fact that Brazil’s government is not a signatory of the Paris Declaration, the issue of efficiency should be further discussed having in mind the rare public funds available to make a difference in IDC.
Another relevant issue is the fact that Brazilian IDC may reveal public-private tensions, since countries where technical cooperation projects are more numerous may also be those where Brazilian transnational companies and business have more interest at stake (map 3), but we cannot develop this argument in this paper (ALBUQUERQUE, 2014).

Map 3

GLOBAL PRESENCE OF BRAZILIAN BUSINESS

Source: Websites of companies, 2013
At the national level, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) has the main responsibility for IDC coordination, but there are also special international cooperation units within “domestic” ministries (Health, Education, Culture); even within the Ministry of Foreign Relations, where ABC is located, there is a special unit dealing with food security cooperation programmes (CG-Fome). One could also recall IDC initiatives coming from the Presidency, federate-states and municipalities (MILANI; RIBEIRO, 2011). In the absence of a coordinated effort for reporting and policy-making, we believe that the current institutional setting may result in IDC fragmentation, and also yield much less coherence amidst different national and sub-national IDC strategies. These issues may be concrete shortcomings in the way of building a solid IDC public policy in Brazil.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper does not aim to propose a model for the consolidation and institutionalization of Brazilian IDC. We acknowledge that Brazil’s role in development cooperation is marked by a wide recognition of its development experiences as potentially useful for various governments, as well as for international organizations and other developing countries committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 agenda. This paper searches, however, wrap up with a few questions based on other national experiences in South-South cooperation, and learning from the lessons of history of North-South cooperation (ETIENNE, 2007; MILANI, 2012; MILANI et al., 2013; PANKAJ, 2005). These are questions that we consider of paramount relevance for the future construction of a Brazilian IDC public policy, and for the consolidation of Brazil’s profile as a cooperation provider. Informality and institutional dispersion are the main features of Brazilian cooperation’s institutional framework. ABC, currently part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), is just one among a myriad of institutions making decisions and implementing cooperation initiatives. Currently, there are divergent proposals to reform this system: one is to create a new agency in charge of development
cooperation, trade and investment, and the other to strengthen ABC by boosting its human and financial resources. The influence of emerging countries such as the BRICS and IBSA countries is also rapidly increasing, including their role as providers of official and non-official South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC).

1. Conceptual and statistical clear definitions: what is the understanding of cooperation? And what is its statistical definition that the Brazilian government should consider in formulating an IDC public policy? Which modalities should it include?

2. Purpose of the policy: what is the scope of the IDC public policy? What are the concrete problems to which the Brazilian IDC public policy should respond? Are they exclusively international or should they also respond to Brazil’s national interests?

3. Actors: which actors are mostly impacted by this policy? How do these actors participate in its formulation and implementation? What is the governance proposal for interaction and dialog between political institutions and civil society organizations? How to take into account the impacts in partner countries? Could partner countries be integrated in design and evaluation of this public policy?

4. Agency and professional skills: which national agency should have responsibility for which IDC modalities? How to ensure coordination and dialogue between different modalities so as to guarantee policy consistency and coherence? How to ensure a dialog between IDC goals and foreign policy objectives?

5. Bureaucracy and training: should the agency have a body of officials and technicians with knowledge of international relations and IDC? How to set up a
challenging career plan and ensure the recruitment of very talented professionals? How to guarantee skills development and capacity building for bureaucratic agents?

6. Transparency and accountability: what systems should the government adopt in order to produce, collect, analyze, and disseminate data on Brazil’s IDC? What could be done in terms of setting up and nurturing a policy epistemic community, which could also share the responsibility for the assessment and monitoring of IDC?

7. Standards and normative dimension: how can Brazil (its government and society) articulate the principle of national sovereignty of partner countries with human rights standards? How to require that international and regional standards be respected and followed by domestic actors who benefit directly and indirectly from Brazilian IDC projects and programs? What are the norms, if any, that Brazil’s IDC should promote and sustain?

8. Political articulation: what could be the role of the agency in terms of support and subsidy for Itamaraty’s activities in international cooperation forums? How will the government engage in regional and international development cooperation forums with South American, African, BRICS and IBSA countries?

9. Participation: what participatory mechanisms will the agency set up to dialog with civil society actors (NGOs, companies, universities and foundations)? Should these actors participate in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Brazilian IDC?

10. Regulatory framework: what is the regulatory framework that the Brazilian government should establish for the future development of this public policy? Will it contemplate the various actors of the Brazilian IDC, such as the
National Congress and political parties, NGOs and social movements, business, institutes and private foundations, universities and research groups, ministries and other public administration bodies, federative entities?

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