

South-south cooperation

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Question

South-south cooperation: where did the concept originate and how is it explained by different developing countries? How has the concept evolved since it was first elaborated?

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1. Summary

This rapid literature review collates available literature on South-South cooperation (SSC) (including the origins of the concept and how it is explained by different developing countries). It draws on a diverse range of sources including academic and grey literature. Given the breadth of debates regarding SSC, this review should be considered as indicative of broad narratives.

SSC, both the theoretical notion and its practical application, is a commonly accepted component in discussions of international development policy. However, straightforward the concept of SSC might appear, the term is not without ambiguity and many commentators highlight that there is no agreed definition.

SSC is broadly understood as the transfer and exchange of resources, technologies and knowledge between developing countries and has grown exponentially in recent years as a result of the increased engagement of 'new' or '(re)emerging' development cooperation 'providers' from the South. However, the notion of SSC is neither new nor static, rather it has evolved in response to global developments. It is viewed simultaneously as:

- a different mode of cooperation to traditional North-South cooperation;
- an innovative expression of solidarity among developing countries;
- a hope for a better world and, to some extent;
- a new ideology for its approach to the world and its interpretation of the relationships among people.

Arriving at a singular definition of SSC is problematised by the contentious debates about what Southern entails, what development means and whether cooperation happens between partners (equals) or not (i.e. how power asymmetries manifest in cooperation).

Whilst the term SSC is 'relatively' new (i.e., emerging in the 1950s), its antecedents have much older roots. For example, precursors included 'Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)' and the closely related concept of 'Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (ECDC)'. SSC can be seen to have evolved through four main periods:

1. The first period (1955-1978) starts with the Bandung Conference (Asian-African Summit) and finishes with the Buenos Aires Conference and the approval of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). This Plan codified the guidelines for what does and does not constitute SSC.
2. The second period (1978 to 2000) included the Millennium Summit, with the setting of the Millennium Development Goals, and the prompting of efforts against poverty.
3. The third period covers the period 2000-2009 and includes the 30+1 anniversary of the Buenos Aires Conference more commonly known as the Nairobi Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009).
4. The fourth period covers the period from 2009 onward and includes the first Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit, in 2013 and the development and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

More broadly, it has been argued that SSC was born out of an explicitly politically radical discourse during the Cold War around global economic justice. Its expansion in the 2000s reflected updated claims and hopes of its transformative potential. SSC re-emerged as desired and desirable, embedded in official narratives on the similarities and adaptability of

Southern knowledges and technologies and as a welcome expanded room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis Northern aid paradigms and conditionalities. Yet SSC expansion has also led to changes in its nature towards less-radical, mainstream, techno-scientific forms of development cooperation.

The evidence base for this query is complex to assess given the definitional ambiguity of the term and its evolution since the 1950s. Reflecting on the inclusion of gender, there were few explicit references, however, discussions of gender are central to the Sustainable Development Goals and of contemporary decolonisation literature.

2. South-South Cooperation

South-South development cooperation is broadly understood as the transfer and exchange of resources, technologies and knowledge between developing countries and has grown exponentially in recent years as a result of the increased engagement of 'new' or '(re)emerging' development cooperation 'providers' from the South (Waisbich, 2021; Cabana, 2014; Besharati & MacFeely, 2019). However, the notion of South-South cooperation (SSC) is neither new nor static, rather it has evolved in response to global developments (Gray & Gills, 2016). It is viewed simultaneously as (Cabana, 2014: 5):

- a different method of cooperation to the traditional North-South;
- an innovative expression of solidarity among developing countries;
- a hope for a better world and, to some extent;
- a new ideology for its approach to the world and its interpretation of the relationship among peoples.

Arriving at a singular definition of SSC is problematised by the contentious debates about what Southern entails, what development means and whether cooperation happens between partners or not. For example, it is acknowledged that the South is not a homogenous block and there exist power asymmetries between countries (Cabana, 2014). In particular, questions are raised as to whether the financing provided by large Southern economies to smaller developing countries, is provided primarily with a developmental intention, or for the commercial benefit of the provider country (Taylor, 2009)?

Despite these debates it is clear that the notion of SSC has attained increased prominence and been embedded in various platforms and entities (see section three on the genesis of SSC). Further to this estimates of the value of SSC have grown dramatically in both volume and geographic reach, manifesting through a variety of approaches, modalities and instruments used by developing countries and development partners (Besharati & MacFeely, 2019)¹. In a large part this is due to the rise of development finance from China and other emerging economies, but also through more intensive exchanges between low- and middle-income countries. As such, SSC is widely acknowledged as an important contributor to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Besharati & MacFeely, 2019).

Challenges remain in how commentators define, quantify, monitor and evaluate SSC (Faciolince, 2019). Indeed, statistics on SSC have been critiqued for being limited, inaccurate, incomplete or not available at all (Besharati, 2013). The weakness in monitoring, evaluation and information

¹ Estimates of the value of SCC are subject to much debate (see Besharati & MacFeely, 2019 for a more detailed discussion).

management is cited as a problem across most SSC partners (Sidiropoulos, Perez, Chaturvedi & Fues, 2015). In part, this is due to the limited time Southern actors have had to develop and mature monitoring systems. Further to this, in almost all instances of SSC, cooperation is provided by a range of different entities, which often leads to a fragmented and ineffective approach to the management of information on external development cooperation (Besharati, 2013).

In 2013, estimates of the value of annual SSC for development was US\$20 billion. However, this figure did not capture the importance of the South-South collective negotiation and knowledge-sharing activities (IFAD, 2017).

Debates underpinning SSC in many respects mirror shifts in the global landscape of development cooperation. As the Task Team on South-South Cooperation (2011: 00) argued, the era of oneway cooperation has become outdated, as countries of the South are engaging in collaborative learning models to share innovative, adaptable and cost-efficient solutions to address their development challenges. They stress that cooperation goes far beyond financial contributions and North-South technical assistance, and that a group of Middle and Low Income Countries (MICs and LICs) are creating new and innovative responses to their socio-economic-environmental challenges, ranging from poverty and education to climate change, post-conflict and reconstruction (Task Team on South-South Cooperation, 2011).

These new arrangements among Southern countries have been referred to as horizontal partnerships, where activities are based on trust, mutual learning and equity and conceived to establish long-term relationships (Task Team on South-South Cooperation, 2011). More recent developments in SSC have taken the form of an increased volume of South-South trade, South-South flows of foreign direct investment, movements towards regional integration, technology transfers, sharing of solutions and experts, and other forms of exchanges (IFAD, 2017).

Reflecting on this broad approach, Mthembu (2018) notes that most developing countries have found that there is something quite different about SSC. It places more emphasis on technical cooperation and knowledge transfer than on the conditions of donor-based projects, programmes or budget supports.

More critical studies that reflect on the nature of SSC comment that, the heterogeneity of what is conceived as the Global South, the crises of capitalism, and the search for the realisation of national geostrategic interest places SSC under several and serious pressures (Caixeta & Dos Santos, 2022). Caixeta and Dos Santos (2022) argue that the principles agreed at the Bandung Conference (1955), as well as in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA, 1978) and reaffirmed in the Nairobi Declaration (2009), are at risk of being discredited by a SSC that replicates dominant practices. That is to argue that SSC continues to be thought of and carried out by the elites of the countries of the South, with a state-centric approach, mediated by economic interests and international political conditionality that disregards different worldviews (Caixeta & Dos Santos 2022).

Definitions

SSC, both the theoretical notion and its practical application, are commonly accepted components in discussions of international development policy. However straightforward the concept of SSC might appear, the term is not without ambiguity. As commentators have noted, there is no agreed definition (Waisbich, 2021). This is partly because the notion of “developing countries” has evolved to include a range of countries with different levels of income and from

parts of the world historically not considered part of this grouping i.e. parts of the former Soviet Union (Waisbich, 2021). Further to this, the delineation of “developing” countries by income status also further complicates the notion of partnerships between equals.

In what follows, I provide an overview of definitions of SSC provided by academics, civil society groups, national governments and international agencies (and proposed at international forums). These should be treated as indicative rather than exemplary, and reflect the diversity of opinions regarding what does and what does not constitute SSC. It is also important to note that whilst certain features of SSC are reflected consistently across definitions (i.e. partnership, knowledge exchange, cooperation), their interpretation is influenced by contemporary factors and is thus subject to change (i.e. the experience of decolonisation, the end of the Cold War, financial crises in South East Asia and globally and the rise of economies such as India, Brazil and China).

Reflecting on the challenge of defining SSC, Mthembu (2018) asserts that given the interchangeable manner in which terms such as South-South Cooperation, development cooperation, or foreign aid are used, it is important that contemporary scholars and practitioners in the international development landscape add greater clarity to these terms and concepts. Further to this, Faciolince (2019) argues that attempting a definition is needed that allows for a standardised approach to the quantification of SSC flows that can emulate ODA as a statistical measure for the contribution by traditional donors to global development.

More broadly, Rowlands (2008: 3) comments that “international development assistance can be a difficult concept to work with. Value-laden euphemisms such as ‘foreign aid’ and technically specific terms such as ‘official development assistance’ are often used as awkward substitutes, making it difficult to describe development assistance in a manner that is both sufficiently broad in conception and analytically precise in application. Moreover, traditional donors have dominated international development assistance – both as a concept and a field of endeavour – making it necessary to re-examine the practice in the presence of new emerging donors”.

International donors

The United Nations (2019) comment that “South-South cooperation refers to the technical cooperation among developing countries in the Global South. It is a tool used by the states, international organizations, academics, civil society and the private sector to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and successful initiatives in specific areas such as agricultural development, human rights, urbanization, health, climate change etc.”²

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation comments that “South-South cooperation is a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains. Involving two or more developing countries, it can take place on a bilateral, regional, intraregional or interregional basis. Developing countries share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts. Recent developments in South-South cooperation have taken the form of increased volume of South-South trade, South-South flows of foreign direct investment, movements towards regional integration, technology transfers, sharing of solutions

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>

and experts, and other forms of exchanges” (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation³).

World Bank: For the World Bank, SSC and the linked process of South-South Knowledge Exchange connects policy makers and development practitioners within and across countries to learn from each others' experiences and to identify workable development solutions and policies⁴.

JICA: As with many organisations, JICA subscribes to the UN definition of SSC but augments it with following comments. JICA considers that SSC/Triangular Cooperation are effective in 1) disseminating successful efforts including those achieved through Japan's cooperation, 2) contributing to the promotion of regional and global cooperation, and 3) complementing and supplementing bilateral cooperation with the knowledge and experience of developing countries to achieve development results⁵.

Accra Agenda for Action: As stated in the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) article 19d, “South-South cooperation 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”⁶.

Nairobi Outcome: In the Nairobi Outcome (2009), participants in the UN's high-level conference on South-South Cooperation reaffirmed that SSC differed from official development assistance (ODA) as “a partnership among equals, based on solidarity”, and must be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free of any conditionality⁷.

Civil Society

Discussions of SSC amongst Civil Society are multiple and diverse. NeST has emerged as a significant voice in this realm. NeST was established in 2014, on the sidelines of the Mexico High Level Forum on Effective Development Cooperation, and in response to the 2013 Delhi Conference of Southern Providers and subsequent meetings in Beijing. The members of the global NeST executive are the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS - India), The Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA - Brazil), The China Agricultural University and SAIIA. NeST researchers have argued that perhaps the least divisive definition of South-South cooperation is as a relationship between and among the developing countries (Kakonge, 2014: 1).

As a working definition, Kakonge (2014:1) argues that “South-South cooperation is essentially a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual or collective development objectives through a cooperative exchange of knowledge, skills, resources and technical knowhow. In addition, it is axiomatic that South-South cooperation should be initiated,

³ <https://unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/lac/brief/south-south-knowledge-exchange-latin-america-caribbean-region>

⁵ https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/types_of_assistance/south/overview.html

⁶ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/AccraAgendaAction-4sept2008-FINAL-ENG_16h00.pdf

⁷ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/673444?ln=en>

organized and managed by developing countries themselves, possibly with the support of a donor country or multilateral institution such as a UN agency, acting as a third partner in the configuration known as 'triangular cooperation'".

The Task Team on South-South Cooperation (2011: 00) comment that "South-South Cooperation (SSC) has become the expression of collaboration and partnership among countries from the South, interested in sharing, learning, and exploring their complementary strengths to go beyond their traditional role as aid recipients".

IFAD (2017: 3) comment that "SSC and South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) provide a broad framework for collaboration among countries of the Global South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains".

Academic

Debates, discussions and definitions forwarded by academia are more diffuse, involving different approaches and stances. In what follows I identify a number who have worked extensively on SSC.

Waisbich (2022) comments that SSC can be understood as an opportunity for the Global South to change the global order and innovate the International Development Cooperation system. It represents a new trend in the twenty-first century. Since the Second World War marked a parameter of hegemonic development, the Global South has emerged as an identity in politics in reaction to inequalities in the international and domestic political plans of states.

Caixeta and Dos Santos (2022: 1) comment that SSC was forged in a diverse group of countries, and has consolidated itself as an expression of solidarity between the peoples and governments of the South and as a strategy of economic and political autonomy, through horizontal relations and mutual strengthening.

According to Gurria (2010: 10), the providers of South-South cooperation largely regard themselves as peers in mutually beneficial relationships and reject the traditional relationship of "donor and recipient"

Gray & Gills (2016: 557) refer to SSC as a set of practices inspired by a vision of mutual benefit and solidarity among the disadvantaged of the world system. It conveys the hope that development may be achieved by the poor themselves through their mutual assistance to one another, and the whole world order transformed to reflect their mutual interests *vis-à-vis* the dominant global North".

Academics within the South, continue to debate the relationship between development cooperation and SSC (Besharati et al. 2015). Some view SSC as a form of co-operation in the wider arena of development cooperation (Besharati et al. 2015: 10), while others consider development cooperation to be intrinsically part of a bigger SSC framework. Some have argued that SSC is too broad and rather put forward the term of South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) to define the specific 'development co-operation' coming from other Southern partners (Besharati et al. 2015: 10). Others oppose the term of SSDC, claiming that it has emerged out of the OECD-DAC circles as a way to bring SSC closer to ODA approaches (Besharati et al. 2015: 10). Sidiropoulos et al. (2015) argues that at the core of the measurement challenge is a conceptual challenge whether development cooperation is a part of SSC or SSC is part of development cooperation?

Faciolince (2019) comments that SSC cannot be matched to Official Development Assistance (ODA). SSC is not just concessional aid, it is not only for developmental purposes, and it is not always done through 'official' channels. On a conceptual level, SSC encompasses relations between developing countries, which go beyond grants and technical cooperation. It also includes trade, investment, infrastructure finance, peace and security, regional economic integration and other political solidarity in the global South.

Developing country governments

While the concept of SSC generally includes various exchanges amongst countries of the global South, including trade and investment, one must be more disciplined when using the concept of development cooperation, which is only one amongst many available tools of SSC. Indeed while development cooperation forms only one aspect or sub-set of SSC, it is not the case that other forms of South-South Cooperation such as trade and investment can be characterised as development cooperation from the South (Mthembu, 2018).

Understanding development cooperation models, practices and motivations of some of the larger emerging economies is a challenge. There are considerable knowledge gaps, not only because of the relative novelty of their aid programmes but also, and perhaps more significantly, because of limited records of transparency and accountability that characterise them (Faciolince, 2019).

Reflecting more broadly on the approach taken to SSC by a range of countries, Mthembu (2018: 4) comments that "development cooperation from Southern powers could thus more aptly be understood as official transfers of money, goods, and services to developing countries specifically for their economic development and welfare. These transfers need to come from official government ministries or agencies and be concessional in nature".

Complicating discussions of SSC is the inaccurate measurement of what constitutes development programmes of Southern powers amongst academics and the media. Mthembu (2018) highlights reporting surrounding the 2018 FOCAC Summit, where China pledged \$60 billion towards Africa in the next three years. Following that announcement, some media outlets reported that China pledged \$60 billion in 'aid', despite only \$15 billion of that money being allocated towards interest free loans, low interest loans, and concessional loans, which do indeed qualify as development cooperation. The rest of the funds were largely for various types of credits and investment vehicles, offered at commercial, yet competitive rates.

A broad feature of the below definitions is that, when referring to SSC, Southern partners include not only grants and technical cooperation but also regional economic integration, trade, investment, remittances, humanitarian interventions and peace-building, export credit lines and other instruments and modalities of cooperation not included in ODA (Beshherati & MacFeely, 2019). SSC thus breaks from the narrow ODA definition by including blended finance to and from private actors as well as financing not considered concessional according to OECD/IMF standards and regimes (Beshherati & MacFeely, 2019). Southern countries have argued that such other forms of solidarity between developing countries constitute powerful instruments for promoting international and regional development. While ODA provides a more narrow definition, which privileges vertical relations driven by grants, technical cooperation and concessional loans (Cabana, 2014). Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the nuanced differences and intersections between North-South cooperation (NSC) and SSC.

Figure 1: **Partnerships, policies and financing for development (Besharati & MacFeely, 2019: 4)** This figure has been removed for copyright reasons. The figure can be viewed at

https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ser-rp-2019d2_en.pdf

- Key to understanding this graphic:
ECDC = Economic Cooperation between Developing Countries; TCDC = Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries; TrC = Trilateral Cooperation; FDI = Foreign Direct Investment; PCD = Policy Coherence for Development; OOF = Other Official Flows; TOSSD = Total Official Support for Sustainable Development; FfD = Financing for Development; SDG = Sustainable Development Goal (Besharati & MacFeely, 2019: 4).

In what follows I provide an illustrative overview of some of the key providers of SSC.

India: India has to date no official public guidelines and methodologies to quantify, report and/or evaluate its development cooperation. Indeed, New Delhi has not yet formally defined the exact boundaries around the kind of activities that should be counted as development cooperation although RIS has been advancing the idea of an 'Indian development compact' (The South-South Cooperation report compiled by the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation - FCSSC, 2017). The 'Development Compact' is a concept put forward to illustrate the nature of SSC and takes an 'ecological approach' (Chaturvedi, 2016) to development, which is seen to be achieved through the interactions of different externalities in the national and regional environment. The 'Development compact', which is considered the 'cornerstone of India's development cooperation' (Chaturvedi, 2016), suggests that cooperation between developing countries should occur via actions of a) capacity building; b) lines of credit; c) trade and investment; d) technology transfer; and e) classical grants. Such development cooperation involves both State as well as non-State actors.

South Africa: After the emergence democratic rule in 1994, South Africa's relations with other countries in Africa witnessed a transformation. The development assistance program formulated an instrument to advance of what has been referred to as an African Renaissance. South Africa's development cooperation with the African continent involves three pillars: (i) Strengthening Africa's institutions, regionally and continentally; (ii) Promoting implementation of Africa's socioeconomic development program, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and (iii) Enhancing bilateral political and socioeconomic relations through dialogue and cooperation (FCSSC, 2017: 13).

China: Chin and Frolic (2007, 13) suggest that "the Chinese definition of foreign assistance is much broader than conventional Western definitions. In China, foreign assistance encompasses not only grants and loans, but also commercial investments, trade related concessional financing, and educational and cultural exchange programs."

This approach to development cooperation is reflected in the way China provides development finance through a blend of public and private resources and diversity of institutions involved in the development partnership. This approach to SSC which capitalises on trade, private investment and economic cooperation between developing countries, has been the central thrust of the Bandung conference as well as the establishment and operation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), both seminal processes in the history of South-South cooperation (Besharati, 2018).

FCSSC (2017) comment that definitions of Chinese SSC are framed by the 'Eight Principles for China's Aid to Third World Countries' also called the 'Eight Principles of Foreign Economic and

Technical Assistance' (FCSSC, 2017). These: a) Emphasise equality and mutual benefit; b) Respect sovereignty and never attach conditions; c) Provide interest-free or low-interest loans; d) Help recipient countries develop independence and self-reliance; e) Build projects that require little investment and can be accomplished quickly; f) Provide quality equipment and material at market prices; g) Ensure effective technical assistance; h) Pay experts according to local standards (FCSSC, 2017: 8).

Chin and Frolic (2007) reflect on the specific approach of China to development cooperation as distinct to foreign assistance. They note that contrary to the commonly held assumption on the broad nature of its development cooperation, China's actual official definition of development cooperation is not much broader than conventional northern definitions (Chin & Frolic, 2007: 13). This is illustrated through China's White Paper on Foreign Aid (2011), which illustrates that China's definition is far closer to that of the DAC (yet not identical).

Brazil: In Brazil, the absence of a national policy on SSC also means the absence of a coherent national narrative around what constitutes international development cooperation and SSC. Indeed, as Wasibich (2020) comments, it remains inconclusive as to what constitutes Brazilian development cooperation.

As a working definition for Brazilian cooperation for international development the Brazilian Cooperation for International Development (COBRADI) used "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" (Brazilian Cooperation for International Development: 2005-2009 cited in Wasibich, 2020)

In 2016 COBRADI analysed data from 2011 to 2013, divided Brazilian cooperation to international development into seven modalities: 1. Technical; 2. Educational; 3. Scientific and technological; 4. Humanitarian; 5. Refugee support and protection; 6. Peacekeeping operations and 7. Contribution to international organisations (FCSSC, 2017)

Brazilian strategies give priority to the exchange of experiences (policy practices) and emphasise the use of government officials, civil servants and public institutions as the primary instrument for the country's contribution to international development (FCSSC, 2017: 10).

3. Genesis of SSC

The concept of SSC and its characteristics have evolved and been much debated during a range of international, regional and bilateral forums, as well as within countries of the Global South. Whilst the term SSC is 'relatively' new (i.e. emerging in the 1950s), its antecedents have much older roots. For example, precursors included 'Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)' and the closely related concept of 'Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (ECDC)' (Cabana, 2014).

In recent history, almost every forum, dialogue space and event related to international cooperation make reference to SSC and many activities are directed to improve the systematisation, classification and characterisation of this type of cooperation (Cabana, 2014).

Cabana (2014) identifies four main periods during which the concept of SSC has evolved:

1. The first period (1955-1978) starts with the Bandung Conference (Asian-African Summit) and culminates with the Buenos Aires Conference and the approval of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). This Plan codifies some of the guidelines that constitute the grounds of SSC.
2. The second period spans 1978 to 2000, and includes the Millennium Summit, with the setting of the Millennium Development Goals, and the prompting of efforts against poverty.
3. The third period covers the period 2000-2009 and includes the 30+1 anniversary of the Buenos Aires Conference more commonly known as the the Nairobi Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009).
4. The fourth period covers the period from 2009 onward and includes the first CELAC Summit, in January 2013 and the development of the Sustainable Development Goals.

More broadly, SSC was born out of an explicitly politically radical discourse during the Cold War around global economic justice. Its expansion in the 2000s reflected somewhat updated claims and hopes of its transformative potential. SSC re-emerged as desired and desirable, embedded in official narratives on the similarities and adaptability of Southern knowledges and technologies and as a welcome expanded room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis Northern aid paradigms and conditionalities. Yet SSC expansion has also led to changes in its nature towards less-radical, mainstream, techno-scientific forms of development cooperation (Waisbich, 2021).

The first period

The origin of SSC can be traced back to the Bandung Conference 1955 that brought together representatives of 29 Asian and African nations to discuss the potential for collaboration among developing countries. The Bandung Conference marked the early stages of the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that emerged in 1961, defined as a group of States not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc (Cabana, 2014). During the 1960s and 1970s, with the global socio-economic climate entangled with Cold War politics, developing countries began seeking ways to chart the course of their own development; alternatives to the existing economic and political order (UN, 2019). The NAM and early discussion of SSC were thus motivated not only by the Cold War context that defines this period, but also by the wave of decolonisation that took place during this period.

In 1964 the aim of fostering economic cooperation among developing countries resulted in the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), that became a permanent intergovernmental body located in Geneva, Switzerland. At the first UNCTAD conference, Latin American countries joined with African and Asian countries to create the G-77 (IFAD, 2017). The G77 aimed at reaching a joint position to set the standards for international trade, in order to achieve greater development of its own countries and to benefit from better and fairer conditions. The NAM group was also a means to foster cooperation among developing countries (Cabana, 2014).

The NAM, as well as the G77, promoted TCDC and ECDC as forums and means for political and economic cooperation. At first, the NAM's plans on economic cooperation included TCDC, but later TCDC untied from NAM and asserted its own identity (Cabana, 2014) .

It is with the establishment of these two main forums of political cooperation that the petition for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) by southern countries was developed. This petition was discussed at the UN Extraordinary General Assembly in 1974, in which the Declaration and the Action Program on the Establishment of a NIEO were endorsed (Cabana, 2014). Cooperation

among developing countries and the demand for more support from developed countries were included in this Plan.

The vision for a NIEO was to be achieved through tackling structural unequal exchange through 'a just and equitable relationship' between the goods exported by developing countries and the goods imported, with an emphasis on sovereignty over natural resources and the right to nationalise key industries. These demands were rooted in the failure of the emerging postwar international order to tackle the legacies of colonialism and to provide adequate space for postcolonial states to establish their own national approaches to development (Gray & Gills, 2016).

In the following years, developing countries organised and asserted their position regarding the NIEO, highlighting the need for a fairer global economic order, one that would give more importance to developing countries and that would condemn uneven international trade and the plundering of transnational corporations in their own countries (Cabana, 2014).

This period culminated in the Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in Buenos Aires (1978), and the approval of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), a document that would become referential for notions of SSC.

What is now known as SSC is in part derived from the adoption of the BAPA by 138 UN Member States in Argentina. The basic objectives of South-South collaboration, according to the BAPA for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries endorsed by the General Assembly in 1978 (resolution 33/134), are to:

- foster the self-reliance of developing countries by enhancing their creative capacity to find solutions to their development problems in keeping with their own aspirations, values and specific needs;
- promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among developing countries through the exchange of experiences; the pooling, sharing and use of their technical and other resources; and the development of their complementary capacities;
- strengthen the capacity of developing countries to identify and analyse together their main development issues and formulate the requisite strategies to address them;
- increase the quantity and enhance the quality of international development cooperation through the pooling of capacities to improve the effectiveness of the resources devoted to such cooperation;
- create and strengthen existing technological capacities in the developing countries in order to improve the effectiveness with which such capacities are used and to improve the capacity of developing countries to absorb and adapt technology and skills to meet their specific developmental needs;
- increase and improve communications among developing countries, leading to a greater awareness of common problems and wider access to available knowledge and experience as well as the creation of new knowledge in tackling development problems;
- recognize and respond to the problems and requirements of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and the countries most seriously affected by, for example, natural disasters and other crises; and
- enable developing countries to achieve a greater degree of participation in international economic activities and to expand international cooperation for development.

The plan established a scheme of collaboration among least developed countries, mostly located in the south of the planet. It also established for the first time a framework for this type of cooperation, and incorporated in its practice the basic principles of relations between sovereign States: respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and equality of rights, among others (UN, 2019).

During this period a number of key organisations were formed, these included the; East African Development Bank (1967), the African Development Fund (1972) and the West African Development Bank (1973). This period also saw the creation of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union). The 1970s also saw the Chinese construct a railway between Tanzania and Zambia (Cabana, 2014).

In Asia, efforts at regional integration processes saw the emergence of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the formation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1965 (Cabana, 2014).

The second period

This second period is bookmarked by the Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in Buenos Aires (1978) and the Millennium Summit (2000). The outcome of the 1978 conference, the BAPA for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries contained 38 recommendations for improved TCDC. The BAPA also defined a series of new and concrete recommendations aimed at establishing legal frameworks and financing mechanisms at the national, regional, interregional and global levels. In 1978, the UN established the Unit for South–South Cooperation to promote South–South trade and collaboration within its agencies and in 1980, the UN General Assembly established a High-level Committee on the Review of TCDC. This committee was renamed, in 2003, the High-level Committee on SSC (HLCSSC) (IFAD, 2017).

This period was also significantly influenced by the transition from a bipolar international context (i.e. the Cold War) to the hegemony of the USA (i.e. the collapse of the Soviet Union). This period saw several conflicts in the Middle East region e.g., the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the war in Lebanon (1982) and the Gulf war (1990-1991). It is also the period of the Latin American debt crisis and the crisis in Southeast Asia in 1997 which also affected neighbouring countries (Cabana, 2014).

The second period corresponded with the perceived failure of the NIEO project and the pursuit of alternatives, for example discussions organised by the South Commission such as the North-South Conference in Cancun in 1981 (Cabana, 2014). The South Commission met several times between 1987 and 1990, producing recommendations for southern countries and presented these in the document 'Challenge to the South'. Its release in 1990 resulted in the establishment of the South Centre, an intergovernmental think-tank settled in Switzerland to support southern countries. It was an attempt to provide a solid organisational base to the movement of developing countries, built on something else rather than just forums and political meetings.

During this period, particularly in the 1980's, reference to SSC becomes more common. This included publications such:

- Beyond the slogan on South-South Cooperation (1980).
- South-South Cooperation and Economic Order (1982).

- The Brandt Commission report: Common Crisis North-South: Cooperation for World Recovery (1983).
- The Challenges of South-South Cooperation (1983).

At a government level, the term is used in events such as the NAM Summit in 1983 (New Delhi) and the Sixth Session of the UNCTAD in Belgrade (1983). However, it is not until the following decade that the use of the expression is consolidated, coexisting in the meantime with the terms TCDC and ECDC (Cabana, 2014).

This period is also notable for the introduction of specific SSC funds including the UN Fund for SSC (1995), the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI) of the Organisation of American States (OAS) (1997) and also the Perez Guerrero Trust Fund (1983), a fund to finance technical cooperation projects among developing countries in the G77 (Cabana, 2014).

This period also saw a concerted effort to boost SSC and to support the exchange of experiences and ways to improve its functioning. Examples include the meeting on TCDC Pivotal Countries in Santiago de Chile in 1997 and the Forum on Cooperation Experiences organised by the Japanese government the following year. One of the best-known cooperation mechanisms, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) emerged during this period despite regional conflict..

In Asia, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) emerges in 1985 and the APEC (1989) is established and becomes one of the relevant forums on economic cooperation between Asia and the Pacific; its topic areas include economic and technical cooperation. The financial crisis of 1997 in Southeast Asia is notable for leading to greater awareness of the need for cooperation among the regions states to overcome the crisis. This was one of the premises that motivated the High Level Conference on Regional and Sub-regional Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (Bali, 1998), within the G77. An example of this renewed interest are the specification of the cooperation areas for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC) in 1998 and the introduction of another interregional forum between Latin America and East Asia, the East Asia-Latin America Forum (EALAF) in 1999.

In Africa attempts at integration included the Conference of the South African Development Community (SADC, 1980), the African Economic Community (AEC, 1991), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU, 1994), and the African Union (1999) to replace the Organisation of African Unity.

The First Summit of the South takes place in Cuba in 2000, within the G77 framework, to deal with issues closely related to globalisation and development. Here, “South-South Cooperation is defined as an instrument for development and reinforcement of economic independence, and it comprises TCDC as well as ECDC” (Declaration of the South Summit, 2000). The summit also reaffirmed the G77 and China’s commitment to “pursue a common and constructive course of action for the protection and promotion of our collective interests and genuine international cooperation for development” (Declaration of the South Summit, 2000).

The third period

From 2000 on the number of events concerning SSC is seen to increase dramatically. Cabana (2014) suggests that during this period, SSC is less influenced by historical and political factors

as in the previous periods (i.e. decolonisation and the cold war). Others assert that economic factors assume greater salience (FCSSC, 2017). FCSSC (2017) highlight that the first decade of the 21st century was a time of economic growth, for both developed and developing countries, up to the financial crisis in 2008. These years of economic prosperity are reflected in the increase of total ODA, which had already doubled between 2000 and 2005 (Cabana, 2014).

The Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Monterrey Consensus on Development Financing (2002) encouraged states to put their efforts into the most disadvantaged countries (mainly in the African continent). As a consequence, the increase of aid from that year onwards was channelled towards these countries with less aid directed at middle or lower middle income countries.

During this period, Cabana (2014) asserts the 'South' as a frame of reference becomes heterogeneous, as classifications and gradations of developing countries come to the fore e.g. Least Developed Countries and those referred to as Middle Income Countries. Emerging economies also play an increasingly prominent role during this period, becoming essential providers of SSC.

SSC is a key feature of various forums and political dialogues. This is the case of the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) forum in 2003 and the BRICS Summits (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) in 2009. During this period SSC becomes an integral element of discussions regarding sustainable development as in the Johannesburg Summit (2002), as well as in debates on aid quality (2008) and on Development Financing (2002).

In 2003 United Nations General Assembly declared 12th September (the date on which it had endorsed the BAPA), as the International Day for South-South Cooperation.

The reference to SSC in the debate on aid effectiveness of the Accra Agenda for Action was a milestone. The formation of the Task-Team on SouthSouth Cooperation (TT-SSC) in 2009, aiming at conducting a high level event on SSC in 2010. Thus, several regional and international events were held, to compile successful SSC experiences.

During this decade, traditional forums such as G77 or NAM operate alongside other more specific forums. However, they maintain a role as one of most active spaces for debate; holding events such as the South-South High Level Conference on Science and Technology (2002), the Second South Summit in Doha (2005) (FCSSC, 2017).

During this period, the activities of the UN Special Unit for South-South Cooperation intensify, dedicated to the exchange of experiences initiated in the Global South-South Development Expo in 2008. The World Bank establishes its South-South Exchange Facility mechanism, and The Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), publishing its first Report on SSC in Ibero-America.

Bilateral forums held by China and India with African partner countries demonstrate a desire to cooperate with the continent. China held the first Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. In 2006 it organised the first Presidential Summit, which resulted in the Chinese agreement to double the aid to the continent within the three following years. India started its own forum with Africa in 2008 (Cabana, 2014).

In the Ibero-American Summits of 2008 and 2009 (San Salvador and Estoril) the search of joint positions on international cooperation regarding Middle Income Countries continues, adding the issue of the heterogeneous reality of the Latin American region, and fostering the preparation of an Integral Action Plan for cooperation in these countries. Venezuelan initiatives in 2005, Petrocaribe (2005) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). ALBA is the framework

of the ALBA Bank and the ALBA-Caribbean Fund, two basic financial mechanisms. The establishment of UNASUR in 2008 is important for integration processes, although its role as juridical entity will only start three years later Cabana, 2014).

It was also during this period that critical SSC studies emerged, to be further developed during the fourth period. These studies provided a lens to investigate development cooperation among developing countries beyond the grand narratives present in some media, policy analysis and early research on the issue (Waisbich, 2021). Attentive to power within and across South-South relations, this body of work questions how SSC is formulated, enacted, and performed.

The fourth period

The period is marked by the economic crisis of 2008. This contraction of many of the economies of the global North had multiple consequences (Cabana, 2014). One of the most relevant being the reduction of aid destined for developing countries, particularly those grouped as middle income (Waisbich, 2021).

These conditions, on the one hand the reduction of the aid to Middle Income Countries and on the other, the constant economic growth of developing countries, have fostered not only an economic increase of SSC but also its stronger international impact. This interest and growth is not only encouraged by developing countries but also by developed countries that have shown interest in supporting this method, either through Triangular Cooperation or through regional schemes (Cabana, 2014).

In 2009, the United Nations organised a High-level Conference on SSC in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference adopted the Nairobi Outcome Document on SSC, which served as a global policy framework for SSC. The need for enhanced cooperation among developing countries has also assumed new meaning in the global development landscape. Notably, the role of SSC is emphasised in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (goal 17, target 17.9), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (paragraphs 44-45), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (paragraph 56), and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (paragraph 4 and others) (IFAD, 2019).

During this period, the South Centre (2009: 2) outlined fourteen principles for SSC:

- SSC is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity;
- SSC and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South;
- SSC must not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation. Strengthening SSC must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries;
- Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analysed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations;
- Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as ODS from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies;

- SSC is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. SSC deserves its own separate and independent promotion;
- SSC is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity;
- SSC is based on complete equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit;
- SSC respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility;
- SSC strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of an action-oriented approach to development challenges;
- SSC promotes the exchange of best practices and support among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas);
- SSC is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries;
- SSC seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development;
- The modalities and mechanisms for promoting SSC are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation.

During this period new forums of a multilateral nature emerge, for example the G20 supercedes the G8. Although it started in 2008 with many countries already engaged in SSC as its members (as the BRICS, Mexico and Argentina), it did not consider SSC in the debates until the 2010 Seoul Summit.

More recent commentaries have linked discussion around SSC with debates concerning decolonisation, for example Caixeta and Dos Santos (2022), highlighted the power of post-development to inspire new alliances and practices for SSC. In turn, Escobar (2017) proposes that we are witnessing a civilizational transition that brings three different models of cooperation:

- development assistance, that of traditional cooperation, in which the World Bank and conventional NGOs etc. are involved;
- cooperation as/for social justice, based on the promotion and achievement of human rights and environmental sustainability with a strong role for different groups in society, such as Oxfam;
- cooperation for autonomy or solidarity cooperation linked to post-development proposals for which the binarism of we and the others in the North and South give way to alliances and collective action networks.

Authors such as Caixeta and Dos Santos (2022), Escobar (2017) critically assert that SSC is linked to procedures (logical framework of projects), institutionalities (goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals) and evaluation criteria derived from traditional cooperation practice e.g. ODA. Caixeta and Dos Santos (2022) conclude that, contemporary SSC seems to lack a clear link with its initial purposes and, therefore, reproduces what has been before.

The emergence of China and the BRICS more broadly, has seen increasing debate regarding the opportunities and pitfalls of alternatives to development assistance from the global North. The shift in production and manufacturing from the global North to the global South has significantly

altered the economic geography of the world (Waisbich, 2021). Throughout periods three and four commentators agree that the 're-emergence' of SSC in the early 2000s alongside the new global geographies of poverty and inequality have contributed to significantly change the development landscape (Waisbich, 2021)

4. Key debates within SSC

The South-South Cooperation report compiled by the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation (FCSSC, 2017: 1) comments that SSC has undergone tremendous transformations. "Once characterised as parochial and irrelevant by conventional Western development analysts, South-South Development Cooperation (also known as SSDC) has evolved from its aspirational origins in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation in parts of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, to become a significant engine of development in parts of the emerging South and its development partners".

Power asymmetries

One of the major challenges in defining SSC is that the middle income countries in the South that provide developing country partners with technical assistance often project a conventional donor-recipient relationship (Waisbich, 2021). For example, Waisbich (2021) comments that the major developing countries e.g. China, India, Brazil, Turkey and others are inclined to the view that they have nothing to learn from other developing countries, marking a departure from early articulations of SSC that articulated mutual knowledge transfer as a significant feature.

Stolte (2010) observes that, for Brazil, SSC with Africa is an evolving process, moving from the realm of political solidarity, to a more conventional marketbased relationship. Moreover, she argues that, like other emerging economies, Brazil is looking at Africa as a promising market for its goods and services, especially manufactured or semi-manufactured products. The resulting interactions become commercial and not true SSC.

Key questions remain, as to whether emerging donors should be understood in terms of a mutually beneficial form of SSC or whether this is simply a manifestation of the pursuit of their 'national interest' (Gray & Gills, 2014). For some, emerging donor aid programmes are celebrated for their departure from the neoliberal norms of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee and as providing a mutually beneficial form of developmental assistance as an alternative to the dominant aid paradigm (Tan Mullins et al. 2010). Others have conversely criticised rising powers such China as 'rogue donors' and as using aid to obtain rights for the extraction of resources (Taylor, 2016).

As has been argued, therefore, the most radical critics of the new 'rising powers' decry practices in which there is a perceived pattern of the re-subordination of much of the population and natural resources of the global South, or the 'periphery', both to the continued power of the global North and simultaneously to the growing power of new actors from the global South itself. This critique of 'Southern neo-colonialism' and 'sub-imperialism' contrasts with past and present hopes for 'collective self-reliance'; an emergent 'South-South collective development paradigm' and 'horizontal transnationalism' via South-South economic cooperation.

Political, institutional and technical challenges of reporting SSC

The Busan 4th High Level Forum marked a major effort to bring SSC into the mainstream aid effectiveness system. However, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation

(GPEDC) failed to convince major SSC providers – such as China, India and Brazil – to engage in its monitoring and accountability apparatus (Faciolince, 2019). Numerous commentators highlight that SSC does not sit comfortably in the assessment frameworks set out for traditional donors with many political, institutional and technical challenges that prevent SSC providers from reporting into the systems developed by the OECD DAC (Faciolince, 2019).

More broadly, from the early era of the Marshall Plan, the concept of ODA was intensely discussed and revised by the OECD-DAC into a definition for financial and technical flows to developing countries, which fit within the parameters of being a) developmental in purpose; b) concessional in nature; and c) undertaken through the official channels, whether bilateral or multilateral (Besharati, 2017).

Besharati (2017) comments that SSC on the other hand emerged out of a different tradition including the Asia-Africa Summit in Bandung (1955) and the Buenos Aires Conference on Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries (1978). These events saw SSC emerge as a force in international development cooperation that operates in parallel to ODA from Northern countries. As a result, overtly or covertly, there has been pressure to align SSC to the monitoring systems of the OECD and integrate SSC into ODA or the measure of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (Besharati, 2017). These attempts have been resisted by the global South due to political as well as technical reasons.

SSC funding

According to Kakonge (2014), the principal shortcoming in SSC is the lack of funding. Historically, countries have been unable to implement SSC ventures without financial assistance from a third party. This normally means a UN agency or a bilateral donor and the resulting configuration is one of triangular cooperation. There are a few developing countries which can perform this third party function: Argentina and Brazil supported the civil components of the UN mission in Haiti and the provision of 30 Cuban doctors to the government of Sierra Leone was funded by South Africa (Kakonge, 2014).

Failed objectives

SSC has yet to meet the objectives laid out in BAPA. Apart from certain areas, such as trade, which has expanded over the last 20 years, results have been mixed (Caixeta & Dos Santos 2022). Waisbich (2021) argues that the concept of SSC should be carefully revisited as countries of the South are now starting to manifest differences between one another: emerging economies of the South, such as Brazil, India, Chile and South Africa, are pursuing an agenda which goes much further than traditional SSC.

While the ideologies deployed by proponents of SSC may be different from those of the West, both use political rhetoric to conceal their own interests (Taylor, 2009). At the same time, as with the interventions of rising powers in other fields of SSC, there remain key questions as to whether emerging donors are capable of challenging the dominant conditionality-driven aid architecture, and whether a new aid paradigm can be established that moves beyond the pursuit of the national interest and focuses on the developmental needs of recipients.

Defining what constitutes SSC

Historically, commercial loans have been distinguished from development finance through the concept of “concessional”, or how much a loan is provided on quasi grant-like favorable terms.

Concessional, or grant element, has been defined and calculated by institutions such as the OECD and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with complex formulas involving a number of factors such as interest rates, grace period, discount rate, repayment period, maturity of the loan (Besharati, 2013).

While contesting the Northern development finance regimes, SSC partners are yet to define their own thresholds and approaches to calculating concessional of their various lending instruments. In his study of South-South development finance, Bhattarchaya (2016) has found that even using the traditional OECD and IMF methods, much of the credit lines from the major Southern providers still remain highly concessional. Bhattarchaya (2016) argues that a number of questions need clarifying: should all loans and credit lines from Southern providers to other developing countries be included in SSC or only the concessional ones? What concessional threshold should be used for Southern lending institutions and instruments? Should the South use the same approach as the OECD/IMF or should it develop its own methods to calculate concessional?

Currently it is difficult to compare the SSC of, for instance, Brazil, South Africa and India because each country uses its own criteria and methodologies for quantifying its development cooperation. Depending on which aspects of technical and economic cooperation are included, SSC figures can vary enormously (Besharati & MacFeely, 2019).

The evolution of SSC

Mthembu (2018) argues that SSC as a concept covers the myriad flows amongst countries of the global South. At the time when it was conceptualised as a term, flows amongst countries in the global South were limited, and often mediated by Northern countries and institutions. However, with South-South flows growing rapidly, it becomes more important to distinguish between the various components of SSC, especially development cooperation, where confusion persists. Mthembu (2018) argued that in the build up to BAPA+40, it was important to clearly distinguish between SSC as a broader concept and development cooperation from Southern powers so that they are not used interchangeably, whether explicitly or implicitly.

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