

**The incongruent faces of a middle power: South
Africa's emergence in international development**

Paper Prepared for the BISA Convention
Edinburgh, Scotland, 20-22 June, 2012

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It has been eighteen years since South Africa made the transition from an apartheid state to a constitutional democracy, yet apartheid's legacy continues to shape current economic, political and social development. Whereas the political transition has been relatively smooth and some strata of society enjoy socio-economic conditions equivalent to those in the developed world, others experience extreme deprivation, exclusion and poverty levels comparable with those of other African countries. A vast economic disparity exists within the South African population and the government faces an uphill struggle in extending opportunities to all and improving the delivery of public services. Yet, South Africa has the most advanced economy on the African continent; an emerging market with an abundant supply of natural resources; well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transport sectors; a stock exchange that is the 17th largest in the world; and, modern infrastructure supporting the efficient distribution of goods to major urban centres throughout the region. South Africa is officially now one of the BRICS countries, along with powerhouse countries Brazil, Russia, India and China, and has a high profile international role in numerous international organisations, as well as a leadership role in Southern Africa.

One would assume, given South Africa’s international positioning, that there would be domestic discussions around its international role, particularly around its role in international development. This research originates from a project

titled ‘Public Perceptions of Development Cooperation of non-DAC donors’,ⁱ which aimed to explore how public perceptions shaped discourses of development in ‘emerging’ states, South Africa being one of the five case studies. During the course of the research it became evident that in the South African case, the domestic public discourses around development cooperation were nearly non-existent. During the time of this project (2010-2011), South Africa was in the process of consolidating its different forms of development co-operation through a new South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) and was continuing to establish itself as an international development player in the African region. The incongruity between the domestic South African development co-operation discourses and South Africa’s international discourses around development cooperation are the focus of this paper.

In order to examine these incongruities, two conceptual explanatory frames have been brought together. The first is the public engagement in development literature that outlines how international development is constructed, mediated and represented to publics of donor countries; how discourses of international development are formed and presented to domestic audiences. The second conceptual explanatory frame is middle power theory, and more specifically ‘emerging’ middle power theory that seeks to address how these states behave in international politics. At first, these two conceptual areas appear an odd pairing of theoretical fields, the first much less developed than the second, one which is focussed on domestic process while the other on international processes; yet this is exactly why these conceptual fields have been brought together.

The public engagement in development thinking has focussed on ‘developed’, or donor country discourses. Yet, this field can benefit from an exploration of how such development discourses evolve in emerging countries. Alternatively, the well-established middle power literature has evolved to take into account emerging middle powers (van der Westhuizen, 1998, Schoeman 2000) yet less attention has been focussed on domestic processes within those middle powers. Thus, the aim of bringing together these two conceptual fields is to help answer the driving set of questions informing this research: how do South African domestic and international development discourses differ? And, what contributes to different South African international development discourses?

In order to answer these questions, the first part of this paper will explore international development in the South African context, and the second section of the paper surveys South Africa’s international presence. A conceptual framework of public engagement in development and emerging middle power theory is brought together with the following section of the paper highlighting some of the findings from the in-depth research conducted both inside and outside South Africa. The final section of the paper focuses on what we can learn about South Africa through the domestic and international duality.

South African development context

South Africa is in a somewhat unique position – it is a country that is both a recipient and a donor of development assistanceⁱⁱ. Internally within South Africa, there is a great deal of both domestic as well as external aid being

directed towards development issues, but unlike other African economies, external aid is merely a fraction of South Africa’s GDP. The total contribution of foreign assistance to the South African economy is less than few percentage points of the national budget and any aid received is very specifically targeted.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, whilst HIV/AIDS receives large amounts of both internal state funding and external donor funding, projects are frequently run through internationally based organisations and funding is channelled through NGOs.

Even eighteen years after the end of apartheid, 50% of the population lives below the poverty line. While South Africa’s richest are continuing to expand their wealth, not enough progress has been made to alleviate poverty and reduce economic inequality.^{iv} South Africa is classified as an Upper Middle Income Country with a GDP per capita of US\$5,693 in 2008 (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2009), and according to a recent Mid-Term Country Report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), South Africa is well on its way to achieving many of the MDGs by 2015. However, persistent high levels of income inequality and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS are the main obstacles to South Africa achieving the MDGs. Since the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has seen consistent and reasonably strong real GDP growth, at an average rate of 3.5% up until 2008. The country has a well-developed infrastructure and institutions and a large and reasonably diversified economy. However, even though South Africa is the wealthiest country in southern Africa, South Africa faces huge challenges in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, high unemployment, growing inequality, poverty and crime.

The ending of apartheid brought with it a more conciliatory and inclusive agenda of regional and foreign relations. During the anti-apartheid struggle, the ANC had received support from many of the neighbouring regimes, and so was inclined towards embracing cooperative relations with these regimes – even where these regimes were themselves sometimes not entirely democratic. Although the post-apartheid state was built on the principles of democracy, the infrastructure of government was largely built out of the remnants of the apartheid regime. The first five years of the post-apartheid government was effectively a process of gradually remaking and reshaping the convoluted patchwork of segregated apartheid institutions into a workable developmental state. The developmental agenda was in effect a number of projects coordinated across departments which themselves were splintered into different racial and provincial entities under apartheid.

Along with many other state infrastructures, South Africa's Development Assistance Programme was incorporated into the new post-apartheid government infrastructure after 1994. The emphasis was directed towards strengthening state and democracy in the region, and this contributed to a more conciliatory and cooperative South African foreign policy agenda regionally. South Africa, as the symbol of democracy and reconciliation, was internationally outspoken against what has emerged as a discourse of ‘global apartheid’ (Bond 2001). Mandela famously chastised the west for its declining commitment to development support in Africa, and in more recent years South Africa has played a significant role as a G8 advisor, as a member of the UN security council, as part of the G20 as well as the ‘non-aligned movement’ (Alden and

Soko 2005). This new foreign policy agenda was also undermined in a number of ways. Firstly, the post-apartheid South African state was obviously fundamentally committed to democracy, but it was simultaneously morally indebted to those regimes that had supported the anti-apartheid struggle. These two criteria were not in every case contiguous, and so the post-apartheid state was caught between an ideological commitment to democracy and a political commitment to African and post-colonial solidarity. Secondly, although publically South Africa’s regional neighbours celebrated the ending of apartheid and welcomed South Africa into the community of African states, they also remained pragmatically suspicious of South Africa.

After 1994 South Africa was invited to join SADCC, renamed in 1992 as the Southern African Development Community (SADC). What began as an agreement on coordinating regional development priorities, developed into an instrument for greater economic and customs integration in the region, in which South Africa has played a leading role. Yet there remain suspicions about the role of South Africa as a regional power amongst other SADC members. This is due in part to the history of the apartheid regime actively seeking to destabilise neighbouring regimes, and partly due to a suspicion of South Africa's overwhelmingly dominant economy. South Africa accounts for over a third of Sub-Saharan Africa’s economy, with seventeen out of the top twenty companies in Africa coming from South Africa (Carmody, 2012: 224). South Africa has failed in the post-apartheid era to allay these suspicions, and as such is perceived as deeply inward-looking. Moreover, South Africa has also been only partially successful in achieving its own national interests regionally, striking an

equivocal balance between consolidating internal political imperatives and pursuing regional economic and political interests (Sidiropoulos, 2008).

The Mbeki Presidency consolidated the international standing of South Africa, establishing South Africa as an important conduit between Africa and the international arena. Mbeki’s philosophical and theoretical thinking was based on the solidarity of the non-aligned states and south-south relationships, and at the same time leveraging support and investment from the global north. Central to Mbeki’s philosophy was the concept of the African Renaissance – the idea that Africa could collectively overcome declining growth rates and human development indices, as well as establish a culture of effective governance and democracy. The then Finance Minister Trevor Manuel defined this new position thus: ‘there is a new resilience and a new will to succeed in the African continent. We in South Africa have called it a renaissance, a new vision of political and economic renewal. It takes the global competitive marketplace as point of departure’ (quoted in Melber, 2005: 18).

At the 52nd National Conference of the ANC in 2007, held in Polokwane, a number of significant events occurred which impacted on the foreign policy context of South Africa, the most significant being the election of Jacob Zuma as the president of the ANC. Mbeki, the president of the country, was left as a relatively powerless figure, since he lacked support from his own cabinet and within a year he was recalled from office by his own party. This signalled a shift in both domestic and foreign policy within the South African government.

Perhaps one of the most important resolutions that came out of the Polokwane conference was the proposal for the establishment of the South African Development Partnership Agency. According to the Polokwane Resolution:

The idea of a Developmental Partnership is one of the key strategies that could assist the ANC and government in pursuit of our vision for a better Africa. The Development Partnership will enhance our agenda on international relations which rests on three pillars namely; (i) consolidation of the African agenda, (ii) South-South and (iii) North-South cooperation.... The national budgetary processes should commit the necessary resources to such a developmental partnership. The fund should be located in the Department of Foreign Affairs as is the current situation, functioning as the African Renaissance Fund.^v

Whilst SADPA gives some institutional framework for a new period of partnership, what is perhaps more important is the broader shift in thinking with respect to South Africa’s international relations priorities. If the Mbeki era is characterised by a mixture of idealism and seeking a leadership role for South Africa, the post-Mbeki era is characterised by pragmatism and realism. This may suggest a continuation of many of the Mbeki-era policies, but there is nevertheless a shift toward a language of national strategic interest (Sidiropoulos 2008). Fienes and Habib (2009) suggests that many within the new Zuma presidency were involved in the development of the Mbeki doctrine on international relations, and therefore the expectation should be that there will not be any radical shifts. This incomplete continuity is perhaps captured in the change in the name of the Department of Foreign Affairs to the Department of

International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). The new name places the emphasis on cooperation rather than on seeing international engagement as a function of the internal bureaucracy. This is a point to which Landsberg (2010) concurs, although also pointing out that the Zuma presidency has by and large been more pragmatic with regards to both domestic and international affairs. Certainly, the establishment of a far more robust and overarching agency such as SADPA to coordinate South Africa’s development partnership interventions suggests continued commitment to these partnerships. But it also suggests increasing consolidation of interests and conditionality.

The key issue for the success of SADPA and the DIRCO will be the ability to link the international involvement of South Africa to domestic concerns. While Mbeki was a strong proponent of the role of business in development, thus opening the way for South African business to enter Africa, there remained scepticism within the South African public domain. The Zuma presidency appears to have much more explicitly placed South Africa’s involvement in Africa and in partnerships with other southern nations such as India and Brazil, as vital to South Africa’s economic success. It remains to be seen how this resonates within South Africa – but as yet, it appears as though there is little public discourse on these issues.

South Africa's international presence

Thus, during the past ten years, there has been an increasing focus on international relations and South Africa's foreign policy imperatives. This was

largely a response to the increasing implication of South Africa into international networks during the past ten years, but also reflects the leadership of former-president Thabo Mbeki, who had a personal commitment and conviction towards positioning South Africa as an important global player. In incorporating the African Renaissance Fund into SADPA, we see the establishment of SADPA - a single state agency - suggesting greater government control and tighter strategic focus of South Africa's international relations.

Where domestic discourses of development cooperation do exist, they appear to be framed within broader preoccupations around the South African state and the sovereignty of the developmental state. While this discourse has emerged around questions of delivery, it has also been permeated by concerns about social and economic transformation on the one hand, and (perhaps more cynically) a somewhat more recent concern with the 'national interest' in terms of international relations on the other.

The spaces for South Africa to advance these values are manifold. South Africa is currently a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. It is an important member of the G20 group of the world's strongest economies. It is a founding member of the IBSA tri-lateral group of emerging democracies. It is a regular participant in meetings at the United Nations and the African Union, including at the UN Human Rights Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Council. South Africa plays a leading role in the SADC and in debates regarding trade justice at the World Trade Organisation. The Secretariat for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) with its African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is based in South Africa (CIVICUS, 2011: 4-5).

South Africa’s involvement in international bodies, and the future aims of the government are: ‘to promote the advance of the African agenda... promote regional integration, promote South-South cooperation and promote the Millennium Development Goals with the objective of focusing on cooperation between South Africa and other African countries’ (Parliamentary Monitoring group, 2011).

South Africa’s humanitarian aid contributions since 2000 shows peaks in giving, most notably in 2002 when nearly US\$20 million went to Zimbabwe. In line with its ‘African Renaissance’ approach to development assistance, its humanitarian aid is focused in Africa. Every year since 2000 an African country has been featured as a top recipient. In 2009 of the four recipients that received humanitarian aid, three were in Africa – Ethiopia (US\$0.3 million), Somalia (US\$0.2 million) and Democratic Republic of Congo, (US\$0.1 million). South Africa favours multilateral mechanisms to channel its humanitarian aid (such as the World Food Programme), which have made up 90% of all allocations every year, with the exception of 2008.^{vi}

South Africa channels a significant proportion of funds through multilateral mechanisms, which accounted for over 90% of contributions in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2009. In 2008 the majority of humanitarian aid went to the Kenyan Red Cross - US\$0.5 million - in the form of emergency support relief including non-food items. The World Food Programme (WFP) has continuously featured amongst the top ten first level recipients since 2005, featuring as the number one first level recipient in 2005 (US\$5.4 million) and 2009 (US\$0.7 million). The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) is the first level recipient to receive

the largest amount of humanitarian aid from South Africa, at US\$15 million in 2006. In 2009 South Africa made troop contributions to three UN missions, all based in Africa. Its largest contribution was 1,173 troops to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which made up 6.4% of total troop contributions to the mission that year.^{vii} During the apartheid era South Africa extended support to African countries such as Lesotho, Gabon, Cote d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and Comoros, as well as Paraguay. During this period development assistance was issued in the form of loans under the Economic Co-operation Promotion Loan Fund Act 1968, with project related funds being administered through South Africa’s Development Assistant Program.

South Africa has a long history of development cooperation and this has been explicitly and inexplicitly tied to its national interests. Today, poverty and inequality still exist in South Africa and the international aspirations of the South African state are clear. However, what we currently see is that for South African development assistance to be justified domestically, this assistance is not necessarily framed in humanitarian terms, but in those of national self-interest. This was captured in DIRCO’s stated aims: ‘Development cooperation [is] a vehicle to advance South Africa’s foreign policy to address challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation in Africa and the South’ (PMG, 2011).

Conceptual frameworks

To explore the questions posed in this paper, it is helpful to examine the literature around the fields of domestic and international development discourses. Within this growing field, we start with the idea of ‘the public faces’ of development (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004) that explores the ways that development is constructed, mediated and represented to publics, in short the way that development is communicated and conveyed by diverse organisations and institutions. Development awareness and development engagement has been of interest to both the academic and practitioner communities. The different relationships that development organisations forge with their publics through fundraising, marketing, development education, campaigning and advocacy may significantly vary between (and even within) organisations (Yanacopulos and Baillie Smith, 2007). The UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) has been conducting annual surveys of development attitudes within the UK since 2000. They have also been conducting ‘The School Omnibus’ study with MORI focused on Development Education amongst 11 – 16 year olds (MORI/DFID 2006). The Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) study ‘The Live Aid Legacy’ (2002) explored relationships of publics to international development, as did the post ‘Make Poverty History’ studies conducted in 2005-2006 (Darnton 2006) which explored the ‘Public Perceptions of Poverty’ around large scale campaigns. Finally, the European Commission’s ‘The Millennium Development Goals and Perceptions of Development Aid’ examined European attitudes in 2005 towards international development. The impetus behind such studies is to gage public support for funding international development initiatives, as ‘conventional wisdom suggests that successful and

sustainable development cooperation policies and expenditures require a constituency for aid in donor countries’ (Czaplinska, 2007).

Questions concerning ways that publics engage with development are also the focus of research being conducted within the field of Media Studies. Questions which explore how different media are being utilised, how they contribute to relationships between ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ and North and South, as well as how different media communicate development messages across borders, are of key importance. Some of this literature focuses specifically on humanitarian relationships (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006; Korf, 2006; Scott, 2011) but is informative in teasing out the relationships of international development more broadly. Thus, the prevailing wisdom is that the greater the support and identification of publics to the development agenda, the greater the commitment of that country to foreign development assistance. All of the above studies and examinations focus on how development is mediated and relayed to publics in OECD countries in the North.

But what about how development is constructed, mediated and represented within emerging countries such as South Africa? The ways that international development is discussed within emerging middle powers significantly differs between countries. Within the five countries examined in the DFID research project (China, Russia, Poland, India and South Africa), international development was least discussed domestically in the South African case. Noel and Therien's (2002) explanation is that:

...the association between public support for redistribution at home and abroad is strong and significant, but negative. In countries where domestic income redistribution is seen as an important priority, foreign aid is less popular; where this is less so, there is more concern for the fate of the poor in the South.

Internationally, there is widespread agreement that countries such as Brazil, India and South Africa, which are ‘regional powers’, ‘middle powers’ and ‘emerging powers’ are becoming increasingly important in international politics (Hurrell, 2006). Whilst there is some debate concerning the classification of such countries, the term ‘emerging middle power’, utilised by van der Westhuizen (1998) best describes their behaviour and their collective role in international politics. These emerging middle powers have societal and economic conditions and histories that differ from OECD country middle powers. This is captured by Nolte (2007:10) when stating: ‘while traditional middle powers are first and foremost defined by their role in international politics, the new [emerging] middle powers are, first of all, regional powers and in addition middle powers (with regard to their power sources) on a global scale’. Vom Hau et al (2012) outline four key strategies employed by emerging middle powers in function of influencing global politics, which are: issue leading through coalition-building centred on policymaking in global governance institutions; opportunity seeking through bilateral relations and trade agreements with other countries; regional organising in a geographically defined area; and, regional mobilising through economic integration functioning as a regional hub.

Additionally, emerging middle powers are frequently developing countries themselves, and have internal demands that differ from established middle power countries (such as Canada, Australia and Norway). Jordaan (2003) differentiates established middle powers and emerging middle powers by a number of factors. He claims that emerging middle powers may be fairly new to democracy; they appeared after the Cold War as a result of changing international dynamics; they do not belong to the ‘core’ of the world economy enjoying high standards of living, but to the semi periphery in unequal countries with high degrees of poverty; they tend to be very powerful and active within their geographic region; they tend to make ‘heroic’ international interventions rather than providing large scale development aid; and, they are more appealing than reforming in their character (Jordaan, 2003: 170-176).

With respect to middle powers being regional powers, Flandes and Habib (2009) build on Van der Westhulzen's original argument of emerging middle power theory in outlining some of their fundamental characteristics. They state that middle powers build alliances with other states or within international institutions, and have an interest in stable and orderly governments. Regional powers, they argue, assume leadership of a geographic area and are influential in regional affairs. Additional features of a regional power are:

...the economic, political and cultural interconnectedness of the state to its region; its provision of collective goods to members of the region; its demonstration of an ideational leadership (here defined as the ability to bring about reforms based on regional values and normative

perspectives); and the acceptance of its leadership among potential followers. (Flemes and Habib, 2009: 137-138).

They argue that countries like Brazil, India and South Africa are both emerging middle and regional powers and that the category 'emerging middle power' clearly describes this categorisation.

Schoeman (2000) specifically writes about South Africa as a regional emerging middle power, and states that emerging middle powers such as South Africa are expected to exercise a morally responsible role in their respective regions promoting and protecting acceptable rules and norms defined at the global level. Schoeman argues that, as moral standing is a defining characteristic of their power status, emerging middle powers strive for a more active role at the international level and they therefore start to display the behaviour associated with traditional middle powers. By combining regional power with moral responsibility he suggests that emerging middle powers behave in the same or at least very similar fashion to the traditional middle powers internationally (Schoeman, 2000: 50).

So why distinguish between traditional middle powers and emerging middle powers? Jordaan, Van der Westhulzen and Schoeman have all outlined some of the behavioural differences between these two categories, but there are two important features in these distinctions that relate to this study. The first is that emerging middle powers are regional powers with strong regional interests, and second is that emerging middle powers generally have high levels of poverty and inequality within their own countries. It is the interaction between the

domestic and the international that is of key importance here, as is outlined by Cornelia Huelsz (2009: 226-230):

...by including an analysis of domestic conditions, which presents the possibility of seeing behaviour to be formed not only by the international structure, we obtained a ‘broader’ and more fertile ground for our understanding of all the different forms of power that exist in the international political economy.... Hence, for the future study of emerging powers the inclusion of an analysis that focuses on the interplay between international and domestic factors can offer a better insight into the different forms of power an emerging power possesses and exercises at the international level.

Van der Westhuizen (1998:435) also confirms that regional middle power behaviour is driven by domestic political concerns. Thus, these theorists encourage any analysis to ‘focus on what Robert Putnam has called two level games: the interaction between domestic and international politics’ (van der Westhuizen, 1998: 435).

Domestic South Africa

The empirical research conducted for this study has exposed a complex field of public discourse in South Africa, within which development cooperation has remained largely obscured by discourses of a domestic developmental agenda and foreign-policy national interest.^{viii} Development cooperation has remained largely under-represented in the mainstream media outlets. Neither the

opposition Democratic Alliance nor the powerful trade union alliance partner COSATU have undertake significant interventions into issues of development cooperation. Where the issue of development cooperation and donor aid has had a 'public face', it has been primarily through civil-society and non-government agencies, whose area of operation includes or is tangentially connected to development cooperation within Southern Africa.

South Africa's transition into democracy in the mid-1990s helped shape its foreign policy with development assistance primarily targeting other African countries. After the country's first democratic elections in 1994, aid became untied and by 2000 South Africa's Development Assistant Program was replaced by the African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund, or as it became, the African Renaissance Fund. African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund Act (Act No 51 of 2000) was adopted on 22 January 2001 and it stated that South Africa's development cooperation would focus predominantly on African countries and would emphasise the promotion of democracy, humanitarian assistance, prevention and conflict resolution and good governance. In 2012, the new agency SADPA is being launched, acting as South Africa's first development aid agency.

South Africa has always been an unequal country, currently with the second highest GINI coefficient (measurement of inequality within a country) in the world. In such an unequal society, when we speak of South African public engagement, exactly which publics are we speaking of? In this research, one way to explore the different public discourses of development assistance was to examine how such discourses appeared in popular media, such as newspaper,

broadcast media as well as online discussions. The study also explored different forms of segmentation of publics. Whilst race is still the primary division within South Africa, socio-economic divides are increasingly a key factor. In South Africa, newspapers and media outlets define publics through categories of LSM (Living Standard Measures). Significantly in this study, regardless of the different methods used to segment publics (even between high and lower LSM categories), discourses of development assistance did not seem to appear in the public domain for any group.

The mainstream print media reviewed – the Mail and Guardian, The Times, The Star, The Sowetan and The Sun - represented the significant portion of print news media within South Africa. Additionally, some specialist media such as the COSATU Shop-Steward newspaper and a significant portion of the online media such as the Times Online and the Mail and Guardian Online, were also reviewed and analysed for this same two year period between 2009-2011. Although this media research captured the primary information sources for a large proportion of South African publics, it is difficult to claim that the analysis represent a coherent or complete 'public'. There is never only one public, or indeed a legible field of publics and public engagement; despite this, the range of media analysed captured most of the main sources of information within South Africa.

In most of the newspapers examined there was a relatively wide coverage of the questions of development, service delivery and governance within the South African national context. The developmental state, the national developmental agenda, and international development policy were issues that featured. This

was especially acute around times of elections e.g. in the 2009 national elections, and the 2011 municipal election. Development assistance to other countries did not feature in any significant manner during this time. Where these newspapers have engaged the issue of donor aid, it is usually in reference to 'other' countries. There has been a construction and caricaturing of the relationship between donor aid countries (from the west) and donor recipients (poor African countries), which serves to situate South Africa as a relatively well off country: i.e. not in danger of becoming a recipient of donor aid. With respect to South Africa being a donor country, none of the newspapers that were analysed carried an article about the South African Development Partnership Agency being developed during this time.

Interviews with editors both at Mail and Guardian and at the Times revealed that SADPA had neither featured as a major news item, nor as an editorial or op-ed piece in the news. SADPA also did not feature in the ANC media. The weekly publication, ANC Today, which is intended as the newsletter through which ANC members and leadership can engage, made no mention of the new agency, with the exception of broader discussions of development assistance and the national interests of the government. While there was a broader discussion around the role of development in the national context, and in the context of the aims of the developmental state, there was also very little discussion of the agency within the non-government sector.

News 24 portrays itself as the most up to date news service in South Africa, providing twenty-four hour updating of news stories and current events. In reality, News 24 carries very little analysis and editorial content, but like many

online news sources provides a range of linked and networked content around particular news events and stories. News 24 has regularly covered issues of donor aid, but these stories are always in relation to other African countries, and have followed a conventional narrative of western donors and African recipients. In 2009, the News 24 website covered the announcement by the President in his State of the Nation address of the South African Development Partnership Agency. The article was a brief statement of the announcement, and SADPA was presented by the President as being in the national interest. There was no public response to the announcement, and there was no follow-up of the article.

An analysis of the international press during the period of mid-2010 to mid-2011 showed a different story. This press covered South Africa process of setting up the South African Development Partnership Agency which would bring together all the different forms of development assistance under one umbrella. The stories claim that SADPA represented a clear effort to not only bringing together rather disparate elements of South African development assistance, but to also clearly identifying South Africa as an international development player. The similarity in the wording of these stories reflects that these newspapers and online sources were responding to a South African government press release. The importance of setting up such an agency is linked to international prestige, and the South African government’s international publicity ensured that the international community was aware of the creation of SADPA.

SADPA generated a small degree of discussion within the ANC internal membership media outlets, and within the civil-society / NGO community. Nevertheless, the SADPA has become implicated discursively into the more

dominant public discourses of domestic development delivery on the one hand, and international strategic interests, particularly with regards to Southern Africa, on the other.

While donor aid and development cooperation as concepts do not appear predominant in public discourse in South Africa, at least as contained within the mainstream media, there do appear to be a number of other discourses of development and international relations that are prevalent. These include concerns about the developmental state, issues of service delivery, and more recently issues of national diplomatic and economic interest in international relations. It is largely within these quite dominant discourses that issues of donor aid and development cooperation have been overshadowed. This suggests that in South Africa, to some degree, there is a public preoccupation with South Africa as internally constituted.

Insights from South Africa

This research has exposed a complex field of public discourse in South Africa, within which development cooperation has remained largely obscured by discourses of a domestic developmental agenda and foreign-policy national interest in particular. Development cooperation has remained largely under-represented in the mainstream media outlets.

According to the behavioural definition of middle powers, countries such as South Africa show: ‘the tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, the tendency to embrace compromise positions in international

disputes and the tendency to embrace notions of 'good international citizenship' to guide diplomacy' (Cooper et al. 1993: 19). At first glance, the category of emerging middle powers seems particularly promising for explaining the common behaviour patterns of countries such as Brazil, India and South Africa which found their aspirations on a value-driven discourse committed to democracy, peace and development. In the 2006 Brasilia Summit Declaration, Singh, da Silva and Mbeki reaffirmed their commitment to promoting peace, security, human rights and sustainable social and economic development in the world (Flemes, 2009: 404). Yet, as we have seen with emerging middle powers such as South Africa, they themselves have high levels of poverty and inequality which creates an awkward tension domestically and internationally.

We saw that South Africa's development assistance has remained largely obscured by discourses of a domestic developmental agenda and the country's international relations interests. Development assistance has remained largely under-represented in the mainstream media outlets, and remains of peripheral importance within communities of policy-lobbying outside of DIRCO. The investigation into public discourses of development assistance in South Africa has led to two primary conclusions:

- There is a great deal of internal concern about poverty and development within the South African state itself; and,
- There is an emerging concern about the relationship between development assistance, international stature, and the South African national interest.

As we have seen, South Africa has avoided the moniker of donor. Rather, South Africa has attempted to position itself as a partner in regional and continental development. This view is well captured as far back as 1996 in the then South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo’s statement: ‘South Africa is a developing country with certain of the attributes of a developed, or industrialised country. This enables us to understand, and relate to, the concerns of both the South, as well as the North, and therefore to play a pivotal role’ (quoted in van der Westhuizen, 1998: 450). In the post-apartheid era there have been a range of different kinds of South African assistance and funding extended to other countries – more recently some of this appears to be trilateral aid channelled through the African Renaissance Fund, and as of 2012, through SADPA. Beyond this, South Africa has also pursued a policy of economic integration to underlie development in the continent, and has actively encouraged trade and free-market partnerships in the region.

Whilst the creation of SADPA had been reported in the international press, there had been virtually no coverage about this important agency within South Africa itself during the period of 2009-2011, and neither has there much discussion more broadly about South Africa’s role as a donor, or ‘partner’ in development assistance. The explanation frequently provided by interviewees is that South African publics are concerned about development issues within South Africa itself, with an activist stating ‘how can we justify building schools in Malawi when we are in desperate need of better schools here?’^{ix}

This research on South Africa complements the work of Huelsz (2009:222) who writes about Brazil, and states: ‘as is the case with Brazil, both Indian and South

African elites have similar views about being situated “in-between” the “developed” and the “developing” worlds.’ This ‘in-between’ positioning has meant that South Africa has situated itself internationally as a development player within Africa. Yet domestically, this same story has been presented differently to South African publics, in what Clements Six (2009: 1110) calls the ‘dual position’. She states that the economic and social structure of these new donors ‘defines a “dual position” as developing country on the one hand and development partners in their external relations on the other’. South Africa's incongruent faces therefore make much more sense given these dual positions.

Notes

ⁱ This work was supported by the UK Department for International Development.

ⁱⁱ The term development assistance and development cooperation are used here interchangeably. Aid is a term that is problematic as many of the emerging countries analysed in this research did not give bilateral aid but provided a different form of development assistance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Official Development Assistance commitments as a percentage of GDP measured less than 0.4% in 2007 (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2009).

^{iv} South Africa's GINI coefficient (the measure of inequality) is 57.8, thus ranking it as one of the highest and most unequal countries in the world (UN Human Development Report, 2009: 197).

^v <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=2536>

^{vi} <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/south-africa>

^{vii} <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/quick-comparison-of-oecd-dac-and-un-ocha-fts-data-590.html>

^{viii} This research was conducted in South Africa in 2011. The methods employed consisted of interviews with policy makers, journalists, civil society activists and international donors, a policy analysis, and a media analysis of mainstream print and online media during the period of 2009-2011.

^{ix} Personal interview, 25/04/11, Johannesburg South Africa.

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