

One step forward and two steps back: addressing Brazil's structural constraints to proceeding with the Global South as a political project

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Abstract

While the Global South emerged as a collective political project in which states could pursue a more autonomous path to development through South-South Cooperation (SSC), there is no clear consensus on what SSC is, preventing the development of shared international guidelines and impacting on the States involved. Furthermore, in the case of Brazil, cooperation programmes are tied to governmental agendas rather than State agendas, preventing the emergence of a continuous political project centred on the Global South. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine these gaps by recalling the formation of Global South consciousness and the political changes in Brazil using a structuralist approach. We aim to present an up-to-date picture of the country's challenges by demonstrating how the lack of conceptual agreement affects SSC and what the long-standing problems are that make it difficult to turn the Global South and SSC into a State agenda in Brazil.

Keywords: Brazil; Global South; South-South cooperation; Foreign Policy

Resumo

Enquanto o Sul Global surgiu como um projeto político coletivo em que os Estados poderiam buscar um caminho mais autônomo para o desenvolvimento por meio da Cooperação Sul-Sul (CSS), não há um consenso claro sobre o que é CSS, impedindo o desenvolvimento de diretrizes internacionais compartilhadas e impactando os Estados envolvidos. Além disso, no caso do Brasil, os programas de cooperação estão atrelados às agendas governamentais e não às agendas estatais, impedindo o surgimento de um projeto político contínuo centrado no Sul Global. Portanto, o objetivo deste artigo é examinar essas lacunas ao relembrar a formação da consciência do Sul Global e as mudanças políticas no Brasil a partir de uma abordagem estruturalista. Nosso objetivo é apresentar um panorama atualizado dos desafios do país, demonstrando como a falta de acordo conceitual afeta a CSS e quais são os problemas de longa data que dificultam a transformação do Sul Global e da CSS em uma agenda de Estado no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Brasil; Sul Global; Cooperação Sul-Sul; Política Externa.

Introduction

The economic rise of the countries of the Global South in the first decade of the 2000s heralded a new era of South-South Cooperation (SSC) as a Brazilian Foreign Policy strategy. Following the crisis in the final years of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government (1995-2003), Brazil underwent a significant transformation with the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva by the Worker's Party (PT), implying a shift to the Left in Brazilian politics (Lo Brutto; López, 2017).

Such a transformation encompassed changes at the domestic level, with the implementation of important social policies such as "Fome Zero" (Zero Hunger), as well as Brazil's position in the international system, and a diplomatic distance from the influence of the United States. Consequently, a new dynamism, focused on the formation of partnerships with the Global South and on economic growth, enabled Brazil's prominence in SSC by replicating successful national experiences, such as the General Coordination of Humanitarian Cooperation and Fight Against Hunger (CGFOME) and practices of the Brazilian Public Healthcare System (SUS) (Chimienti and Creutzfeldt, 2016; Lo Brutto and Aceves López, 2017; Lo Brutto and Minutti, 2019; Mawdsley, 2019; Vadell, 2019).

However, as SSC projects grew in scope, new challenges and demands arose. The narrative structure of Third World solidarity, with mutual benefits and equal gains, would not produce efficient answers to questions about the current problems of cooperation in the Global South. Among these issues, the lack of international and domestic harmonisation on the concept of "South-South Cooperation" stands out as a fundamental gap with practical implications. Because of this gap and other structural constraints like the lack of mechanisms to create a sustainable agenda centred on the SSC, Brazil is unable to make the Global South a state agenda instead of a temporary government topic to be worked on.

Therefore, we intend to consider the mentioned gaps in greater detail in the following three sections. In the first section, we trace the historical development of Global South identity, beginning with the understanding of the formation of South-South dialogue in the 1950s and continuing to the present. The second section provides a brief discussion on the concept of SSC, highlighting the lack of a unified understanding based on a literature review. The third section examines Brazil's role in forming alliances with countries in the Global South, particularly in the context of South-South cooperation. It also illustrates the main point of this article when we discuss the structural factors that make it hard for Brazil to set an agenda for the Global South.

On top of that, rather than a conclusion, we have reached a question on Brazil's next steps. Perhaps, rather than trying to figure out Brazil's way back to the Global South, the

real question lies in understanding whether the Global South is still a valid path in light of Brazilian foreign policy and cooperation trajectory.

Latin America, the Global South, and South-South Cooperation: a brief history

The Global South as a concept is based on the emergence of a shared identity among underdeveloped former colonies within an international system previously dominated by two great powers, namely the United States of America and the former Soviet Union. Initially regarded as a sign of the emergence of a Third World¹ in the post-World War II period, such an identity has its roots in the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference (1955), which became a symbol of African and Asian emancipation.

Because it was the first in a series of other initiatives, the Bandung Conference was a game changer in terms of Third World countries' autonomy in international relations. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (1961), the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (1964), and the Tricontinental Conference (1966) all shared an anti-imperialist and non-aligned agenda. Nonetheless, these efforts were insufficient to keep those territories from becoming the sites of ideological battles between the US and the former Soviet Union, where political, military, and economic support have been used as co-optation tools (Portela, 2021).

Along with the struggle to establish powerful zones around the world, traditional bilateral donor organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its international forum, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), emerged shortly after the US government formalised the Marshall Plan. Such a plan marked the beginning of the International Development Cooperation, which was formalised upon the OECD's institutionalisation (Santos and Milani, 2014; Souza, 2014).

Another central concept related to the historical roots of cooperation in the Global South is the DAC, which is responsible for structuring the processes of bilateral donations between the OECD and the Third World. The DAC formulates the concept of "Official Development Assistance" (ODA). This kind of aid was heavily criticized, especially by the countries that got it, because it ignored the interests and needs of Third World countries in favour of the geopolitical interests of developed countries. This widened the gap between capitalist centres and the periphery (Mawdsley, 2012; Santos and Milani, 2014). This

¹ The term Third World appeared when Sauvy (1952) identified an excluded third party apart from the direct disputes performed by the US and the former USSR. This party was formed by a group of underdeveloped States, comprising a considerable part of the human and material resources of the planet. For further information, see Alfred Sauvy (1952) *Trois Mondes, Une Planète, Le Magazine del'homme moderne*. Available at: <http://www.homme-moderne.org/societe/demo/sauvy/3mondes.html>.

scenario was responsible for making the peripheral countries come out of their shells and adopt a new mindset regarding their roles in the international system, questioning the availability of mechanisms to promote development.

Even though Latin America and the Caribbean States did not participate in Bandung or the subsequent processes, they did take their own steps to assist the Third World in countering the United States' strong influence. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)² was the epicentre of debates about the gap between North and South American countries, challenges to the system's periphery, and, as an outcome, the structuralist approach. These debates provided the ground for Latin America's active participation in the debate over the structural inequalities of international trade after 1964, when UNCTAD began its activities—an issue that had been widely discussed within ECLAC since 1948 (Bielschowsky and Vereinte Nationen, 2000a, 2000b; Rodriguez, 2009; Lima *et al.*, 2016; Martín *et al.*, 2019).

Furthermore, Lima and Milani (2016) discuss how assisting Latin American countries became increasingly important to the International Development Cooperation (IDC), particularly after the Cuban Revolution (1959). Along with increased aid, the US promoted the Alliance for Progress during Kennedy's administration to spread anti-communism and exert influence in the region. For their part, Latin American ruling elites used bargaining with North American support to advance their national development projects. Indeed, due to the fight against communism, US power projection in Latin America shaped the region's model of cooperation and development, removing it from a Third-Worldist developmental perspective. Nonetheless, after the Cuban missile crisis (1962), the assistance took on new dimensions (Hobsbawm, 2017).

Once the communist threat in Latin America was no longer a primary concern for the United States, the Alliance for Progress provided modest but limited assistance, preventing economic disaster rather than development in the region. The aid funded military governments in Latin America, widening the gap between the elites and the rest of society. It also shed light on important issues like economic growth, social inequality, and the difficulties of translating a sustainable development logic into practice (Hobsbawm, 2007, 2017).

² The absence of Latin America from the Marshall Plan sparked outrage among Latin Americans, who had also suffered from the war. As a "consolation prize" in response to the protests, the United Nations General Assembly established the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1948. For many years, the ECLAC was in charge of guiding Latin American policymakers, and it included great thinkers like Raul Prebisch, Celso Furtado, Maria da Conceição Tavares, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto, and Anibal Pinto, among others (Bielschowsky and Vereinte Nationen, 2000a).

Despite the unsustainable development path that Latin America was on, Afro-Asian and Latin American claims began to converge for the first time with the first UNCTAD Conference (1964), responsible for the emergence of the G77 and chaired by Raul Prebisch³. So, the International Cooperation between Developing Countries (ICDC) took two different directions: one focused on politics, with the Conference of non-aligned countries connecting Bandung to the NAM, and the other focused on economics, with the G77 connecting with the UNCTAD (Martín *et al.*, 2019, Portela, 2021).

Under Prebisch's influence, the debate that will guide UNCTAD goes through a similar route as ECLAC's, in which inequalities in international trade bolstered peripheral countries' demand for a financial compensation mechanism when commodity prices were low. At the forum, special tariffs on opening up agriculture in the First World were also a theme of discussion, along with the possibility of letting countries in the periphery protect particular markets, especially those related to technology. As a result, the collective self-sufficiency concept emerged as a tool for the expansion of cooperation among peripheral countries and as a way of collectively bargaining with developed countries (Martín *et al.*, 2019).

A notable achievement, however, was the collective resolution of domestic issues. That was the beginning of the Global South consciousness, and the term "South" was coined to represent not only the pervasive inequality but also a shared journey toward development. Such a positive shift highlighted the complementarity of the South's economies as well as the fact that they could carve their own way apart from the benevolence of the Global North (Martín *et al.*, 2019).

Thus, the Global South began to emerge not only as a shared consciousness but also as an agenda for developing countries to overcome inequalities. In this context, South-South relations can be understood as both a tool and a goal. They were meant to narrow economic gaps and empower the Global South in international organisations.

Moreover, the Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (ECDC) played a relevant role. This financial branch of the SSC's background was considered an autonomous policy instrument to press for changes in international trade and development funding. Still, the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development was the technical

³ Raúl Prebisch (1901-1986) was an Argentine economist, he was also the first Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). He later became Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In his reflections on Latin America he wrote "The economic development of Latin America and its main problems", marking the Latin American structuralist thought. At https://biblioguias.cepal.org/prebisch_pt/raul-prebisch-e-cepal

branch, which was later adopted by the United Nations through a working group on the technical cooperation model in 1972 (Martín *et al.*, 2019).

The following year, marked by the 1973 oil crisis, dependency theories gained particular strength as a result of a series of events advocating the deconstruction of the old international order. The end of Bretton Woods, an increase in commodity prices, and the outcome of decolonisation processes in Africa and Asia were the basis of the claims for a new structure (Ayllón Pino, 2014a). Nonetheless, the years that followed, especially from the late 1970s onward, were unsatisfactory for the South and its agenda.

In 1978, the United Nations held the Conference on Technical Cooperation for Development in Buenos Aires. There, ECDC and technical cooperation were split up, granting the upper hand to the North's interests. From the 1980s to the 1990s, the Global South's developmental discourse weakened as a result of global transformation, the rise of American neoliberalism, and the consequent focus on the region's political, economic, and social frailties. As a result of the exhaustion of Latin America's primary import substitution practices, the region's extensive debt crisis, and the imposing measures imposed by the Washington Consensus, the SSC was demobilised (Leite, 2012; Milani and Carvalho, 2013; Ayllón Pino, 2014b, 2014a; Lima *et al.*, 2016; Martín *et al.*, 2019). On top of that, in 1987, the Southern Commission held by the Non-Aligned Countries exposed the fact that the South did not possess enough knowledge about itself, extending the breakdown within the Global South's ideals and the SSC. That scenario would only change in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Portela, 2021).

For the next fifteen years, the SSC expanded dramatically, with increased collaboration among Global South countries and, as a result, increased visibility of these countries in the international arena. Mawdsley (2019) called this phase SSC 2.0, while the first movements in the "Third World" in 1950 were SSC 1.0 and the current stage corresponds to SSC 3.0. This late effervescence of SSC coincided with China's increasing protagonism. In addition to being against neoliberalism, the countries of the Global South saw their economies grow and the prices of commodities skyrocket. This gave rise to a new era (Gallagher, 2016; Wise, 2016; Wise and Chonn Ching, 2018; Vadell, 2019).

Mawdsley (2019) identifies three major trends that occurred during SSC 2.0: increased visibility, outgrowth, and the transformation of North-South identities and agendas. In the context of multilateralism, there have been changes in international trade, foreign investments, and geopolitical alliances. These changes have led to the creation of new institutions like the BRICS, IBSA, and a Focus Area at the UN. Ayllón Pino (2014a) also lists four things that helped SSC move forward in the 2000s:

1. The growth of nominal GDP in Global South countries - an indicator of the increase in the propagation of global wealth.
2. The execution of public policies based on diverse learning and national development experiences.
3. The action of emerging and middle-income countries regarding assertive foreign policies translated into the articulation of the South into organisations and the generation of mechanisms to foster political dialogue and economic empowerment. Like Mawdsley (2019), the author identifies the BRICS as a product of this advance.
4. Strong leadership and financial resources as outcomes of the intensification of SSC, where the countries could share technical, scientific, and technological knowledge, experience, best practices, and solutions to overcome obstacles.

Notwithstanding, as a result of their increased visibility in the international arena, the Global South countries have begun to question and criticise mutual benefits and equal gains among cooperation partners. As we mentioned at the start of the article, the solidarity narrative was not enough to get past the issues caused by complex arrangements and interactions that went beyond the old North-South and South-South relationships (Mawdsley, 2019). As a result, one of the most difficult challenges for modern SSC is obtaining adequate institutional supervision for project implementation and coordination, particularly in countries facing high corruption and a lack of transparency. Continuous implementation is also hard because there is not enough oversight from institutions, coordination in trade policies, or even national policies and guidelines for cooperation (Nigam, 2015).

This last point is the most important part of our argument about how Brazil is moving toward and away from a Global South agenda, which we aim to discuss in more detail in the last part of this article. Before proceeding with this specific discussion, we highlight the lack of agreement on the concept of SSC, in the following section, as an issue that must not be overlooked. Because SSC is frequently confused with Triangular Cooperation (TRC) or only Technical Cooperation, the dissonant terminology in the former has practical implications. We will show that both pose benefits for Brazil, but their political effects are different. This means that making policies for cooperation and development needs to be done with more thought and clarity, internationally and domestically as well.

A brief literature review about the lack of consensus on the concept of South-South Cooperation

Since the first and classical international relations debate, illustrated by Carr (2001) through the opposite views of realism and idealism, cooperation has occupied a central position among different theoretical approaches and scholar traditions. Different standpoints regarding this theme populated the classical literature, encompassing the cooperation possibilities amidst the anarchy of the international system; alternative approaches to the realist assumption of the inevitability of war; and the emergence of international rules and institutions (Axelrod and Keohane, 1985; Putnam, 1988; Wendt, 1992, 2003; Jervis, 1999; Keohane, 2005; Nye Jr. and Keohane, 2011). Scholars who dedicated their efforts to building this body of theory spent most of their time trying to understand how cooperation worked.

It is worth noting that the debate over cooperation is still ongoing. Recent discussions have focused on more specific topics like humanitarian aid, peace-building, and state-building. Additional issues concerned diplomacy, the economy, and development issues such as the International Development Cooperation (Leite, 2012; Santos and Milani, 2014; Souza, 2014). However, addressing SSC takes us into more volatile and difficult theoretical territory. Instead of discussing how cooperation could be seen, SSC discusses how cooperation is a process and how it could be used as a means of empowerment.

That is a notable change between how the classical literature addressed cooperation and the current challenges of this debate, particularly with regard to the Global South agenda. However, this change also brought to light the lack of consensus among scholars regarding the concept of SSC. On the one hand, we recognise the necessity of reaching an agreement on what SSC is and is not, particularly because this gap extends way beyond academia. It applies to international institutions as well. On the other hand, this was not our goal, and we are aware that this paper would not be enough to fill this gap.

Given this lack of universal agreement among countries or even among scholars on SSC and its categories, we intend to focus on a more limited but focused analysis. We chose to demonstrate the main (and diverse) interpretations of SSC and how this affects Brazil's alignment with the Global South agenda. Even though this option has flaws, it enables us to show how a lack of consensus can lead to distinct understandings related to cooperation categories, which presents political impacts. This occurs when there are no clear guidelines illustrating such distinctions precisely.

In this sense, the first issue to take into account is that the clash of interests between the Global South and the Global North poses one of the causes of the mentioned lack of conceptual agreement (Portela, 2021). More than a language issue, this gap encompasses a political background. Additionally, it is possible to observe that the several explanations

available diverge in extent, complexity, and 'target audience'. We present some of the main conceptualisation attempts in Table 1.

Table 1: South-South cooperation explained according to different points of view

<i>Author(s) / Organisation (s)</i>	<i>South-South Cooperation definition</i>	<i>Additional comments</i>
World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Trade Organisation (WTO)	An exchange of knowledge between actors – governments, organisations, and individuals - in developing countries (World Health Organization, 2022). * No specific definition was available on the WTO website.	* It is possible to infer that both organisations share this understanding, but curiously references to SSC were present just as events and forums on the WTO website. There were no specific documents, glossary entries or areas regarding SSC, apart from a particular event held on May 16th, 2022 ¹ (World Trade Organization, 2022). In contrast, further definitions and comments were available on the WHO website ² .
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	There were no specific definitions regarding the concept of SSC on the Program website (United National Development Program, 2022). However, as the copyright of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) website is also a responsibility of the UNDP, it is possible to infer that the organisations have an interchangeable understanding of SSC.	Despite the absence of a specific definition on the UNDP website, it is possible to infer the centrality of the theme once several publications, news, events, and the like were available, directly related to SSC, Global South, and Triangular Cooperation. It is also possible to observe an association between SSC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), alongside the positive impacts on health, education, and social well-being in developing countries.

¹ For further info about the event, please refer to the following webpage: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/pillar4_e.htm.

² The website suffered a revamp in May 2022. Nevertheless, it is possible to access a snapshot of May 6th, 2022, containing the organisation's action and definition of SSC, using the Internet Archive website, as follows: <https://archive.org/web/web.php>.

<i>Author(s) / Organisation (s)</i>	<i>South-South Cooperation definition</i>	<i>Additional comments</i>
United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)	SSC is understood as a broad structure of collaboration between the countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical fields. Involving two or more developing countries, it can occur on bilateral, regional, intraregional, or interregional bases. Developing countries share knowledge, skills, experience, and resources to achieve their development goals through joint efforts. Recent developments in South-South cooperation have taken the form of increased south-south trade volume, South-South flows of foreign direct investment, moves towards regional integration, technology transfers, sharing of solutions and specialists and other forms of exchange.	As a dedicated office for SSC affairs, it is expected of the UNOSSC to provide a comprehensive definition of it. There is also a definition of Triangular cooperation (TRC) available on the website, understanding TRC as a collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management, and technological systems as well as other forms of support. Other information on objectives and general guiding principles of SSC are available(United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2022).
Ayllón Pino (2013, 2014b, 2014a, 2015)	Across different analysis, particularly observing Latin America perspective on Global South, the author considers SSC as an instrument of international projection based on the philosophy of mutual benefits and equal gains among countries.	The author's concept of SSC rescues the spirit of the Bandung Conference. Nevertheless, the complexity of coping with such a philosophy has increased significantly in the current time, demanding further reflections on the mechanisms to 'keep it alive'.
Mawdsley (2012, 2018, 2019); Nauta, Fourie and Mawdsley (2019)	Based on the author's analysis, it is possible to infer that SSC is a phenomenon encompassing an alternative setting of cooperation, obfuscated by Northern colonial views and erroneously compared to foreign aid, ignoring particular geopolitics and geoeconomics.	Rather than offer a specific definition for SSC, the author's papers focus primarily on discussing further the context in which the phenomenon unfolds. All the same, Mawdsley dedicates a considerable effort to understanding SSC as a developing and ongoing process.

Elaborated by the Authors (2022).

Based on Table 1, some ideas emerge particularly regarding the lack of a unified concept across UN organisations. To begin, as previously stated, we recognise that developing a shared understanding of SSC requires a complex yet collaborative effort. However, after more than two decades of SSC across various phases with subsequent institutionalisation, the UN still could not provide a universal concept. Of course, more information and specifics can be found on the UNOSSC website. It is entirely reasonable for a large organisation like the UN to have specialised departments. Nevertheless, the first step in any organisational procedure involving changes and their diffusion is a shared understanding to provide guidelines and a solid foundation for coordinated action. The mentioned gap within the institution has an effect on States, especially on how they address cooperation based on different domestic contexts.

This situation leads us to a second point. As previously illustrated in Table 1, there is no prevailing concept for SSC among various authors, dividing academia into a diverse set of viewpoints. Still, despite shedding light on many different points of view, academia seems to take a much more consistent stance on the differences between SSC and TRC, for instance. The latter is based on the concept of combining ideas on SSC and North-South Cooperation. SSC, on the other hand, is an alternative to the North-South logic. It is based on a different geopolitical and even philosophical context (Ayllón Pino, 2013; Mawdsley, 2018).

It does not imply that SSC is necessarily superior to TRC, but that they present distinct proposals with distinct implications. For example, ProSavanna became known as the largest agro-industrial project on the African continent. The goal of the project was to introduce agricultural exploration in the Nacala corridor by emulating what happened in Mato Grosso from 1970 to 1990.

The Brazilian *cerrado*⁴ was altered thanks to the collaboration and funding of Japanese engineers. The success of this ecosystem's transformation inspired the triangular cooperation present in ProSavanna, which aimed to develop northern Mozambique using the technologies of the Brazilian company Embrapa, and Japan, which would be in charge of product commercialization primarily in Asian markets (IPEA, 2018; Liberti, 2018). Even though the ProSavanna proposal worked at first, Mozambican peasants presented resistance since the initiative was not based on equal gains (Liberti, 2018).

In this regard, a key distinction between TRC and SSC is that the former is not necessarily bound by the logic of equal gains toward development, whereas the latter is.

⁴ Brazilian “cerrado” presents a savannah-like ecosystem, mainly present in the country’s Western Central region.

Because the political commitments involved differ, such a distinction cannot be overlooked. SSC is committed to building an alternative development narrative to colonialism and the pervasive inequality that prevents the South from improving its position in the international system. The TRC does not share such a philosophical and geopolitical background debate; the commitment to laying the groundwork for the South's independent growth is not the focus of this cooperation category.

On a sidenote, Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) was an expression of how SSC unfolded in Brazil (Piseta, 2019), especially after the 2000s, with notable efforts encompassing administrative, diplomatic, and economic initiatives between 2005 and 2010 through technology, know-how, and resource sharing with other countries of the Global South (Silva and Almeida Filho, 2020).

Thus, in Brazil, all these cooperation categories occur. However, in practice, when the "frontiers" between the different concepts of cooperation are blurred, two major outcomes emerge:

1. Once the increase in technical cooperation is no longer a good measure of how committed Brazil is to the Global South agenda because the SSC has its own principles and geopolitics (Mawdsley, 2018), it is no longer possible to tell how committed Brazil is to the Global South agenda.
2. When Brazil is the recipient of SSC rather than the donor, a lack of international guidelines providing clear definitions may cause issues such as the absence of medium-to-long-term project commitment plans, accurate courses of action, and so on. This is especially true in the case of SSC involving China and Brazil, where the former participates economically and tends to treat it as an economic cooperation, while the latter presents managerial challenges in addressing these projects within the SSC context (Portela, 2021). Once the UN could not reach an agreement on the definition of SSC, it is difficult for States to find a common language and mediate this type of cooperation on their own due to their different settings and points of view.

Furthermore, as we will discuss in the following section, the increase in technical cooperation and SSC initiatives in Brazil, particularly during the Lula and Dilma administrations, did not result in a structural legacy to provide a continuum, despite significant social advances (Silva and Almeida Filho, 2020). As a result, the question of how important the Global South agenda is to Brazilian foreign policy remains unanswered.

Additional questions, such as what has changed over time and what factors might lead the country to use this agenda as a reference point, also arise in this context. These are the main topics we aim to cover next.

Swinging back and forth: the Brazilian view on the Global South agenda

During the Lula government (2003–2011), Brazil's role in SSC gained a strong protagonism. But in more recent years, there has been a growing distance from the Global South agenda, and the current government strongly opposes South-South alignment.

In either case, it is possible to observe two parallel dynamics resulting in SSC and the Global South agenda challenges and constraints: domestic and international system perspectives. From the second, we learn that the changes in SSC, the international economy, and major changes in international relations posed issues that go far beyond the lack of a common language for cooperation between States. Domestically, we understand that a lack of institutionalisation is one of the main causes of Brazil's sporadic proximity to the Global South agenda. Nonetheless, what else is driving this back and forth? What else has changed since Lula's administration until today? Before answering these questions, we dedicated some space to recovering the framework of each government from the 2000s onwards.

Brazilian foreign policy, like that of other developing and emerging countries, was marked by an alignment with the Global South in the first decade of the 2000s, with Brazil playing a major role on the international stage. Technical, scientific, and technological cooperation based on partnerships and mutual and equal gains were widely used as an instrument in the country's foreign policy strategy (Lo Brutto and Aceves López, 2017; Milani, 2017; Carvalho, 2021).

When Lula assumed the presidency in 2003, Brazil witnessed the beginning of a new era in which its foreign policy would be more independent, particularly in comparison to the previous decades' submission to the neoliberal ideas of the Washington Consensus. The aim of these changes was to be understood as part of a Grand National Project and as an important lever in the country's development process (Carvalho, 2021).

In this scenario, the priority that the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, in Portuguese) had during President Lula's government is a point that deserves to be highlighted. The agency is responsible for planning and implementing technical cooperation projects, and during this period, the institution acquired relevance, especially after an administrative reform. In addition to a budget increase, ABC was granted greater autonomy, which allowed it to play a central role in different cooperation projects. Most of these projects were centred on technical cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries in

Africa that spoke Portuguese and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Milani, 2017).

In sum, throughout Lula's presidency, Brazilian foreign policy standards sought to make the state an indispensable actor, achieve international credibility, and serve as a balancing force between the great powers and the middle and smaller powers. Brazil presented a new set of proposals, ideas, and commitments in all areas of foreign policy. By focusing on improving social indicators and using SSC as one of its main assets to promote income distribution and reduce poverty, the state attempted to demonstrate to its Global South alliances how successful its own social transformation projects were (Carvalho, 2021; Milani, 2017; IPEA, 2018).

Nonetheless, in the subsequent government, it was possible to observe a setback in the relevance of cooperation in governmental strategies and, consequently, the beginning of a dismantling process. In theory, the election of President Dilma Rousseff represented the continuation of the Lula government, mainly due to the maintenance of the Workers' Party (PT) in power. In reality though, the second PT government faced economic problems that made its domestic and foreign policies unstable (Portela, 2021; Menezes and Fingermann, 2020).

For Brazil, the rapid economic growth of the 2000s highlighted the advantages of SSC. However, the end of the commodities boom, the slowing of China's growth, and the lack of dynamism in Brazilian exports highlighted the Brazilian economy's fragility. Such a crisis, which occurred during Dilma's government, made it clear that economic growth without transforming the political, economic, and social structures of the country does not translate into development in the long and medium term. Along with the instability already mentioned, this situation led to President Dilma's impeachment in 2016 and, as a result, a new government (Portela, 2021).

In 2016, as soon as Michel Temer assumed the presidency, several changes were implemented, among which we highlight the change in the regimental structure of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. The government's foreign policy distanced itself from the model applied by previous governments. This implied a non-alignment with the Global South and the ideals of SSC. In this area, budgets for cooperation projects were drastically reduced (Suyama, Waisbich and Leite, 2016; Milani, 2017).

Another relevant change is the dissolution of the cooperation program Brazilian General Co-ordination for International Action against Hunger (CGFOME). The program was an initiative developed to implement technical cooperation projects in the humanitarian sector. Created in 2006, CGFOME gained prominence in Brazilian

cooperation because it was a project inspired by the Zero Hunger program, which aimed to replicate humanitarian cooperation actions at the international level, to meet emergency and structural aspects, in the areas of food and nutrition security and sustainable rural development internationally (Milani, 2017; IPEA, 2018). According to Milani (2017, p. 47):

Through CGFOME, the Brazilian government projected the debate on the fight against hunger in the region and in the world, internationalizing Brazilian practices in this sector, but also establishing dialogue on these topics with FAO, World Food, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, MERCOSUR (particularly the Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture/REAF), the CPLP Food and Nutrition Security Council, among other United Nations bodies.

It is worth noticing, however, that such a termination was not totally abrupt since budget constraints and the economic crisis during Dilma's administration affected CGFOME directly (Fiori, 2016; IPEA, 2018).

Changes in the Temer and, later, Bolsonaro governments resulted in setbacks in SSC for economic development previously promoted by Brazil. Considering particularly Brazilian foreign policy, those changes marked a period of devastation for the country's institutions and social programmes, as well as a significant shortage in the Brazilian performance on the international stage. It is worth mentioning that the alignment with the Global South through SSC has lost even more space during the administration of Jair Bolsonaro, which is illustrated along with other foreign policy shifts during the previous administrations on Table 2.

Table 2 - Key Aspects of Brazilian Foreign Policy and their Impacts on the SSC from 2003 onwards

<i>Administration & Period</i>	<i>Key Aspect of the Foreign Policy</i>	<i>Political context</i>	<i>Key Impacts on the SSC</i>
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2003-2010)	Alignment with the Global South	Favourable political and economic scenarios, both exogenous and endogenous.	Significant investments in South-South Cooperation
Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016)	Alignment with the Global South	The external economic crisis caused significant domestic impacts on the economy and on political performance, resulting in an internal crisis.	Budget cuts for South-South Cooperation programmes; intention to implement economic and financial cooperation.
Michel Temer (2016-2018)	Alignment with the neoliberal agenda, distancing from the Global South	Unfavourable domestic scenario with budget cuts in social policies.	Central South-South Cooperation programmes were cut or dismantled.
Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022)	Alignment with a liberal conservatism agenda permeated by ideological guidelines, significantly apart from the Global South agenda.	Unfavourable domestic scenario with budget cuts in social policies.	Discontinued institutions associated with foreign policy, such as the Brazilian Cooperation Agency.

Source: Authors (2022).

Taking Table 2 into account, we identified two key issues which prevent Brazil from making the Global South and SSC a state agenda.

1. Economic and political crises in Global South countries put South-South Cooperation and the Global South's development agenda in jeopardy.

Political changes in Brazilian strategy for international relations, such as the ones that started during the first term of President Dilma Rousseff, later with President Michel Temer, and more recently with Jair Bolsonaro, permeate an alignment shift in Brazilian foreign policy. More flagrantly, such changes alter the proximity to the developmental purpose of cooperation and alignment with the Global South.

According to Faoro (1958), there is a bureaucratic status in which the Brazilian ruling elite has established itself in the state's power structure and uses this power to its advantage. Furthermore, Fernandes (1976, 2008) argues that as a dependent peripheral country, the national bourgeoisie in Brazil keeps the country dependent and society stratified in order to perpetuate its own fragility and privileges. This social stratification is reflected in income and property inequality, as well as significant racial, gender, and political disparities. Still, this shows that when there is a financial crisis, Brazil is less likely to keep aligning itself with the Global South.

2. Distinction between South-South Cooperation as a recipient/donor

Another incongruity in the alignment regarding South-South relations is when Brazil is the recipient of SSC rather than the donor, as mentioned before, which becomes especially true when we consider the relationship between Brazil and China.

Regarding the nature of cooperation between China and Brazil, it is important to highlight that China forms partnerships with the Global South, mainly in the form of SSC, as a means to increase the state's presence in the international scenario (Leite, 2018). These partnerships addressed economic-financial relations, guaranteeing the importation of primary goods inputs with the expansion of foreign direct investment, mainly in the areas of natural resources, and guaranteed China a new consumer market. Thus encompassing the Chinese commercial expansion.

China uses a cooperation model based on the New Structural Economy (NSE), examined by Lin and Wang (2017) as the key to the evolution of relations with developing countries. For the authors, China's form of cooperation with the Global South is mainly translated into trade relations and investments in mutual strategic sectors.

The establishment of cooperation between China and Brazil demonstrates a period characterised by a rapid increase in trade and investment flows—where there is a

considerable increase in the demand for commodities, closer political and commercial relations, with an increase in the flow of investments and loans (Leite and Ramos, 2016). China has become the biggest creditor across Brazil's mentioned administrations, surpassing the IMF, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. According to Gallagher and Irwin (2015, p. 51), the Chinese banks "guarantee a large amount of natural resources without suffering large losses".

In more detail, the payment of these loans is guaranteed by future commodity flows to provide loans with fewer conditions and lower the risk of failure. On the one hand, by lending money at low interest rates, China manages to reduce the uncertainties of a possible default. On the other hand, loans can become a trap because, in addition to directing loans to sectors where China has some commercial advantages, a portion of the income generated by the primary-export sector is tied up for loan repayment. This situation can result in a conditional scenario in which the country will either use natural resources to meet financial obligations or the situation will become unsustainable, especially when commodity prices are low (Halland and Canuto, 2013; Bräutigam and Gallagher, 2014; Mihalyi, Adam and Hwang, 2020).

According to Mawdsley (2019), many of these loans benefit from political gains without prior economic assessment, highlighting the lack of synchrony between political interests and economic consequences. In this case, the potential for political gains outweighs the potential for financial gains, making partnerships even riskier. Moreover, as pointed out by Portela (2021), since 2009, such a relationship has fostered a premature deindustrialization process in Brazil, once the dynamics of exporting raw materials and commodities and importing high-tech manufactured and other high-added-value goods intensified.

Consequently, although the China-Brazil relationship is considered SSC in concept, the effect in practice for Brazil stands out as the reproduction of the traditional centre-periphery relationship. With these "side effects" in mind, it is clear that, in addition to reducing differences between the Global South and the rest of the world, it is essential to formulate by reducing differences among Global South partners.

Further details regarding the mentioned Chinese loans are offered in Table 3.

Table 3 - Credit provided to Brazil by Chinese banks the period 2007-2020.

Date	Categories	Purpose	Lender	Amount
2007	Energy	GASENE pipeline	CDB	\$750M
2007	Infrastructure	Presidente Médici	CDB	\$281M
		Candiota Power Station (3rd expansion)		
2009	Energy	Pre-salt oil field development	CDB	\$7.0B
2014	Energy	Bilateral cooperation agreement	CDB	\$3.0B
2015	Energy (Hydropower)	Jupia and Ilha Solteira dams	ICBC	-
2015	Infrastructure	Valemax leasing	ICBC	-
2015	Infrastructure	Maritime equipment leasing	ICBC	-
2015	Infrastructure	E190 aircraft leasing	ICBC	-
2015	Infrastructure	Soy processing industrial line	CDB	\$1.2B
2015	Energy	Bilateral cooperation agreement	CDB	\$1.5B
2015	Energy	Bilateral cooperation agreement	CDB	\$3.5B
2015	Other	Sale of E-195 aircraft	Ex-Im Bank	\$1.3B
2016	Energy	Debt financing	CDB	\$5.0B
2016	Energy	Debt financing	Ex-Im Bank	\$900M
2016	Energy (Renewable)	Ituverava solar plant	Bank of China	-
2017	Infrastructure (Transport)	Port expansion at São Luís	ICBC	-
2017	Energy (Oil & Gas)	Petrobras debt financing	China Construction Bank	-
2017	Other	China-Brazil trade financing	Ex-Im Bank	\$300M
2017	Energy	Oil production	CDB	\$5.0B
2019	Energy	Line of credit	Ex-Im Bank	\$750M
2020	Energy (Oil & Gas)	Eneva operations	China Construction Bank	-
2020	Energy (Electricity Transmission)	Brazil power sector bailout	Bank of Communications, China Construction Bank	-

Caption: Loans from China Policy Banks, China Development Bank (CDB) and China Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank) for the Brazilian government and state-owned companies. The loans granted to Brazil by Chinese commercial banks appear in red. They were granted by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Bank of China (BOC), China Construction Bank (CCB), Bank of Communications (BoCom).

Source: Authors (2022), based on Gallagher, Kevin P. and Margaret Myers (2022) "China-Latin America Finance Database", Washington: Inter-American Dialogue and Margaret Myers (2021) "China-Latin America Commercial Loans Tracker," Washington: Inter-American Dialogue.

Finally, to summarise and return to one of our earlier points, there is a clear distinction in SSC between when Brazil acts as a donor and when it acts as a receiver. As previously stated, one of the most significant issues is that the state's ideas about cooperation, project implementation, and calculating economic benefits do not align. It happens partly because there is no institutional "lingua franca" to mediate SSC initiatives among Global South partners, but also because of domestic institutional flaws that pose an intermittent cooperation agenda. Such a pervasive issue became clear by focusing on the relationship with China, but it could be widespread in other SSC relationships as well. How to overcome these issues remains a question, as it necessitates further and more in-depth considerations not only of the structural domestic issues discussed, but also of the dynamics of international cooperation stalled by political forces (Fiori, 2016).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this article briefly discussed the evolution of South-South Cooperation (SSC) and the Global South agenda, focusing specifically on two major gaps: 1) how international organisations and scholars could not find common ground on what SSC is; and 2) long-standing structural constraints that have caused Brazil's intermittent commitment to the Global South agenda, whose political objectives vary as frequently as government administrations.

Following a brief overview of the evolution of the concept of SSC, we addressed the first gap by demonstrating that different conceptual perspectives on SSC exist even within the United Nations and its departments. Although this type of dilemma is extensive in academia, scholars provide a more stable forum for discussion. The main issue with this gap arises when implementing SSC without a clear definition that could be used as a common language between the states involved. This can lead to managerial issues when addressing the projects arising from this context.

Moreover, in the case of Brazil, the lack of a clearer definition of SSC and other modalities of cooperation may result in the loss of an analytical indicator regarding the state's alignment with the Global South agenda. This is especially evident when considering Brazil's role as a political actor in international relations. As previously stated, increased technical cooperation and advancements in social indicators are not an implicit indication of continued commitment to the Global South agenda. This discussion gained more detailed contours in the article's final section, where we presented the rise and fall of SSC in Brazil after the 2000s. Our main goal was to show how structural problems kept the country from

being close to the Global South. We also wanted to show how the same problems affected all of the different governments and made it hard for them to elaborate a continuous agenda towards cooperation.

It should be noted that this study did not intend to obscure the performance of cooperation in the development process of the countries of the Global South. This collective global action placed the political and economic agendas and priorities of the countries of the South in the international spotlight, since economic cooperation has narrowed the divide between the North and the South, and technical cooperation has enabled countries to share the best practices and solutions for developing countries. Thus, the proposal of this article was suitable to this context because, on one hand, it aims for a necessary conceptual revision that operationalises and reflects the reality of SSC from a Brazilian perspective. On the other hand, it also presents domestic frailties that put Brazil apart from the joint developmental route traced by the Global South agenda.

In the last section of the article, right before these final remarks, our efforts were precisely focused on shedding light on further examples of these domestic frailties in Brazil. We showed that key foreign policy changes affected the way the state understood and implemented cooperation, ultimately impacting on SSC. Two key structural issues underpinned our arguments, connected with the absence of a conceptual harmonisation establishing what SSC is in an international domain:

1. Whenever international economic and political crises happen, SSC and the Global South's developmental agenda are marginalised.
2. When Brazil is both a donor and a recipient in SSC, there are significant differences. In the latter situation, institutional domestic flaws are more evident, be it due to the state's lack of coordination on project implementation, aggravated by the institutional erosion in recent years, or due to the fact that SSC still reproduces asymmetric relations somehow, as we portrayed in the case of the Sino-Brazilian relationship (Salama, 2012; Abdenur and de Souza Neto, 2013; Tambourgi, 2018; Mello Valença and Bizzo Affonso, 2019).

Overall, Brazil's lack of institutionalisation does affect cooperation, but it is far from a current circumstance. Economic fluctuations and changes in the government posed the root causes for oscillations in Brazilian foreign policy regarding the Global South alongside the structural causes that we have discussed so far (Abdenur and de Souza Neto, 2013). In this

sense, shaping and implementing SSC requires more than political will, but also a favourable concertation between the domestic and international scenario.

On a side note, we cannot evade ourselves commenting on our challenges and efforts to find official documents and government agendas related to cooperation in recent years. It is necessary to emphasise the deletion of data related to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency. Aside from technical issues, in our view, this situation is related to the already-mentioned erosion of institutions under the current administration. This is because of scarce institutional memory, making it hard for civil society to get information and hold institutions accountable.

Moreover, theoretically speaking, by addressing the Brazilian case, it is possible to infer that SSC and the Global South agenda have far more challenges than bridging the conceptual gap addressed before. Providing an executive agenda centred on overcoming inequalities, is a challenge which its very beginning is within the Global South itself, and not in the rest of the international system. Setting up practical ways to prevent the SSC from being demobilised during times of crisis is a crucial unaddressed matter. Also, it is a challenge that can't be solved by just rescuing solidarity narratives and historical memories of SSC momentum. According to Lima et al. (2016), one way to prevent this type of political demobilisation is to implement a reform that focuses on making it simpler for Global South States to respond to public cooperation policies. A mechanism like this would establish a legal framework for action (Lima *et al.*, 2016; Mawdsley, 2019). Details regarding such a mechanism and its possibilities remain as issues to be clarified.

We wonder about the role of the institutions in such a reform. It is worth arguing that no domestic or even joint Southern effort will make sense or establish a long-term action plan unless proper coordination and a common language are established. This brings us to the United Nations, which still needs to improve its coordination role in order to foster greater engagement. New attitudes frequently require a new mindset, and we believe it is especially appropriate for both levels involved with long-standing issues in the Global South.

Brazil has a long way to go before regaining its former status as a global player, starting by overcoming domestic political unrest. Playing an active role in the Global South seems to be an appropriate effort to materialise this way forward. However, this does not mean that international organisations should not focus on changing the way international relations operate, beginning with clearer concepts and guidelines.

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