Brazil and its African "neighbours":
the old aid system for new global ambitions

Development Series

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Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 3

2.0 Current developments in the international aid system ........................................................................... 4

3.0 Brazil in the donors club ......................................................................................................................... 6

   3.1 Diplomacy developments of Brazil’s development assistance in Africa ........................................... 7
   3.2 Political objectives, operational components and disbursement patterns in Africa ....................... 8
       3.2.1 Policy objectives and priorities ................................................................................................. 8
       3.2.2 Management .......................................................................................................................... 8
       3.2.3 Geographical focus ............................................................................................................... 9
       3.2.4 Operational component ....................................................................................................... 9
       3.2.5 Disbursement patterns and amounts ....................................................................................... 10
   3.3 Partnerships between Brazil and international donors ........................................................................ 10
   3.4 Research for development in Africa .................................................................................................. 11

4.0 Discussion ............................................................................................................................................ 12

   4.1 The old paradigm: commercial considerations aside the “ethical imperative” ................................ 12

5.0 Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 14

References .................................................................................................................................................. 15

List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Agência Brasileria de Cooperação</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASA</td>
<td>Africa – South America Summit</td>
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<td>ASACOF</td>
<td>Africa-South America Cooperative Forum</td>
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<td>BRIC</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India and China</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>EMBRAPA</td>
<td>Brazilian Agricultural Research Company</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBSA</td>
<td>India-Brazil-South Africa</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>The New Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPPs</td>
<td>Public-Private Partnerships</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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1.0 Introduction

Ever since its appointment at the leadership of Brazil in 2003, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has visited the African continent eight times, meeting with governmental counterparts in 19 African states (Lapper, 2010). Quite a remarkable figure, especially if considering that the Chinese President, Hu Jintao, whose country is now Africa’s second-largest trade partner after the US, registers less visits to the continent (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010).

It is quite interesting to analyze the current developments in Africa’s trade and foreign policies. It is no news that traditional Western partners –and donors- have seen a recent competition in their commercial and strategic alliances in the continent by new emerging actors, represented by the BRIC countries (Kragelund, 2008; The DATA Report, 2008; Development Policy Forum, 2010). These new actors in the development world have in the past decades increased their linkages with African countries, showing proactiveness and willingness to actively engage with the African governments (Woods, 2008; Rowlands, 2008). Having been aid recipients for many decades, these countries are approaching the issues of economic growth and social development in the African continent from a different perspective than traditional partners and donors, in a way making use of their own experience in dealing with poverty and inequality to feed international cooperation programs and strategic trade relations (Kragelund, 2010).

Despite Brazil being only Africa’s 10th largest trade partner, after USA, China, India and others, the country has engaged into unprecedented diplomatic initiatives in support of its development and commercial assistance. Ever since 2003, Brazil has opened sixteen new embassies in Africa (ABC, 2009) and high-level political summits, called ASA/Africa – South America Summit, are used to favour relations between the two regions on issues like trade negotiations, investments and international cooperation assistance. Brazil is therefore highly putting the African region into its foreign policy (being it trade or aid) agenda and, in spite of being its development cooperation only marginal compared to the amounts disbursed by the emerging China and India, it is quite interesting to further investigate the rational, components and directions of Brazil’s role in Africa. From a political point of view, it is very clear that the country is nurturing close relationships with Africa as part of Lula da Silva’s foreign policy agenda of having its country’s international emerging role upgraded and recognized at international level (Lima and Hirst, 2006). The ambitions of securing a permanent seat under a reformed UN Security Council is certainly directing Brazil’s dialogue with African governments in the field of trade and cooperation assistance (Schläger, 2007). From an economic point of view, it makes perfect sense to engage in Africa, a continent with a balance of natural resources, a promise of large consumer markets and untapped agricultural potential. With estimations ranking Brazil the 7th largest economy in the world by 2030 (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010), it is clear at national level that a great deal of this growth will be supported by the “African neighbours”. Since 2000, Brazilian trade has increased 15% each year, recording a percentage of trade with Africa as a proportion of GDP equal to 1.7% (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010).
As far as international aid assistance is concerned, Brazil’s offer for cooperation assistance is relatively minuscule, especially when compared to traditional Western economies or other BRIC countries (AidData, 2010), but it has in the recent decade positioned itself at a very strategic level, making even more apparent the invigorated tie existing between development assistance and political goals. As more extensively explained at page 10, the country has in the past decades gradually shifted its focus from the traditional African recipient countries, including South Africa and the Lusophone Africa, to include a court of other Sub-Saharan countries, from the French-speaking Mali and Senegal to the Anglophone Kenya and Ghana (AidData, 2010).

The present paper intends to analyze in more detail the latest developments of Brazilian involvement in the African continent, particularly focusing on its role as a new donor and provider of international cooperation assistance to African nations. This study focuses particularly on the issue of aid governance, taken in the perspective of how far Brazilian international cooperation is driven more by the development cause than by commercial issues. The conclusion this paper would like to achieve is that, despite talking of itself as a new international donor with its own approach to development issues, the country is however still anchored in the framework of the traditional aid system, where development aid is tightly connected to specific foreign policy and commercial interests.

After having reviewed in a short introduction the latest evolutions in the international aid system, the paper will explore the components and objectives of the Brazilian development aid in Africa, making due reference to its diplomatic aspects and partnerships with other donors. The discussion session will then follow, to analyze Brazil’s development assistance in Africa under the critical perspective of commercial interests and governance, thereby casting the light on how much the Brazilian development aid is indeed offering an alternative path to development to Africa, or rather simply re-framing the old aid architectural system, with its subtle mixture of cooperation and political and commercial objectives.

2.0 Current developments in the international aid system

As from the end of the 1970s, aid projects worldwide have been proliferating (AidData, 2010). If in the mid-90s, the total amount of individual aid projects (multilateral and bilateral) was standing slightly above 20,000, there has been ever since a sharp increase in this number, leading to a peak in 2006/2007 of more than 100,000 aid projects in the world. Despite the complexity of the international aid system, which the Paris and Accra declarations have tried to improve, bilateral and multilateral donors have engaged themselves in a growing number of projects, which has certainly paved the road for additional fragmentation in the international aid architecture.

Owen Barder, Visiting Fellow at the Center for Global Development in Washington DC, and affiliated to the UK Department of International Development, in one of his recent blog posts has even framed the potential collapse of the traditional development system per se, in consideration of various variables: a burgeoning number
of donors\textsuperscript{1} and lack of donors' coordination\textsuperscript{2}, heavy bureaucracy and new layers of complexity in the aid system, public mood for anti aid voices -including Dambisa Moyo and Andrew Mwenda (Mwenda and Tangri, 2006; Mwenda, 2006)- and, equally relevant, the rise as aid donors in Africa of the new non-DAC nations, with their own approach to development cooperation and apparent indifference in joining the international aid system built up by traditional Western donors (Barder, 2010).

While Barder’s conclusion over a collapse is per se controversial, the variables laid out by the researcher are very real and certainly cast the light on the role that new actors, BRICs namely, can play and are already playing in the international aid system. Even if South-South cooperation is nothing new, as different forms of collaborations among Southern countries date back to the end of colonialism in the 1960s (Folke et al., 1993), the past decade has seen a re-emerging of more intense relationships among Southern countries, where the emerging powers have registered an increased potential to influence future developments of their developing partners.

If we take a larger view and explore in more detail the general political and economic role of BRIC countries in the African region, we can see that the latest years of prominent economic growth at domestic level have been accompanied by an increase in BRIC-Africa trade as a proportion of Africa-world trade: from 4.6% in 1993 to over 19% in 2008 (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010). Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly playing an important role for BRICs: if back in 1980 this part of Africa represented 53% of BRIC-Africa trade, the percentage consistently increased to 77% by 2008 (United Nations, 2009). Under this context, Brazil is playing an important role. Today, African trade constitutes 6.3% of Brazil's total trade, standing in nominal terms at USD26.3 bn in 2008, relative to USD700 mn in 1990 (WTO, 2009). Despite the rapid growth in imports from Brazil, the majority of Brazil-Africa trade constitutes African exports to Brazil. Most of Africa’s imports from Brazil are made up of soft commodities, with the country supplying 28% of Africa’s total sugar and sugar confectionary imports, 18% of Africa’s total dairy product, eggs, honey and edible animal products, 17% of Africa’s cereal imports (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010).

This overview makes evident how relevant are trade –and investment- relations between BRICs/Brazil and African nations and how emerging economies have been trying to shape a new kind of South-South collaboration, based on important economic ties.

What is though becoming more and more apparent in this context is the common tendency among BRIC nations to use development assistance to facilitate the improvement of their private economic relations with African countries. While in nominal amounts their contributions as donors are obviously less important than traditional donors’ aid\textsuperscript{3}, it is noteworthy noticing that BRICs are indeed offering additional sources of

\textsuperscript{1} When referring to the UN system only, it is worthwhile noticing that the UN has a number of development agencies working in developing countries that is higher than the number of developing countries as such.

\textsuperscript{2} Senegal alone has 82 individual aid coordination forums.

\textsuperscript{3} As estimated by Kragelund, 2010: aid from BRICs ranges from 0,03 (Brazil) to 0,79 (China) as far as the percent og GNI is concerned. This compares to an average of 0.28% in 2007 for DAC donors.
development aid in support of African socio-economic development. What is interesting about South-South development cooperation is that it builds upon the old concept of aid as a means for foreign policy objectives, while introducing some own peculiar aspects, such as (Kragelund, 2010):

- The non-conditionality potential of Southern donors’ aid;
- The massive preference for project aid;
- The perception of Africa as a business partner, more than a continent in need for aid;
- The favorite focus on productive sectors;
- The provision of assistance through loans and credits.

Individual DAC members have shown concern relative to the rejuvenation of the donor role of emerging powers, sharing their worries about the development ethics behind the distribution of aid from BRICs to the African continent (i.e.: allegations of rogue aid and non-democratic/non-transparent practices) and the negative impact this could have on all those projects (mainly from DAC countries) targeting good governance and democratic practices (Naím, 2007). If this could certainly be true from one side, it is also important to mention those studies (Kragelund, 2010; Whitfield, 2008; Tull, 2006) that turn to different conclusions and thus deny that BRICs aid is jeopardizing the economic and political reforms initiated in the African continent. A study from Kragelund (2008) shows that the return of emerging powers to more intensified collaborations under a South-South cooperation framework could bring about some positive effects in the African continent. If, on the one hand, the investments in the productive sectors, versus the traditional social sectors targeted by DAC donors, can guarantee for the creation of an appropriate economic infrastructure in support of the African growth, the recurring to project aid, on the other hand, is not necessarily increasing transaction costs for developing countries, whose administrative burden is already under pressure due to sector-wide approaches and other programmatic aid. Additionally, a prior study from IDRC reveals that non-traditional donors are generally perceived as reliable intermediaries between Western donors and the African recipients, hence playing an important facilitation role (Rowlands, 2008).

To conclude, with different arguments showing pros and cons of the return of the emerging powers’ international assistance to Africa, it is still unclear whether countries like China and Brazil will (positively or negatively) impact the effectiveness of democratic and economic reforms initiated in the continent and, in general, if they will ever be able to inject important socio-economic development in Africa, or if they will simply end up perpetuating the old aid system established by traditional donors, with its mix of bureaucracy, complexity and underlying commercial and political interests.

### 3.0 Brazil in the donors club

In this section, the paper intends to explore the main characteristics of Brazil’s development assistance, starting with a short review encompassing the country’s efforts in inspiring its commercial and development assistance,

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4 For a review of the peculiarities of Brazilian development aid in particular, see page 9.
and continuing with a more specific analysis of Brazilian aid, encompassing official aims, modalities, sectors and involved entities.

### 3.1 Diplomacy developments of Brazil’s development assistance in Africa

Brazil has been developing partnerships with allied countries and international organisations for over four decades. As indicated by Agência Brasileria de Cooperação, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, which is responsible for the management and implementation of development cooperation programmes, Brazil started its activities in the area of technical cooperation ever since the 60s, but it is only as the end of the 70s that an official technical cooperation scheme was introduced. These development programmes got further reinforced in the 80s and 90s, and even more as from 2003, when President Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva strongly engaged in South-South cooperation and in increasing the visibility of its country at regional and global level. As of today, the country has 23 agreements of technical cooperation with 23 African nations, some of them dating back to mid 70s, some others more recent or still under negotiations (ABC, 2010).

As for the other BRIC nations, the interesting aspect of Brazil as a donor is its dichotomy of being both aid provider and recipient. Aside agreements of technical cooperation with developing countries, the country has signed agreements for receiving technical cooperation by both multilateral institutions (i.e. UNICEF; EU; UNDP) and bilateral relationships (i.e. Germany; Portugal; United States). Brazil continues to confront a number of significant development challenges. For example, in 2006, the UNDP estimated that 45 percent of the country’s wealth is controlled by 10 percent of the population and over 20 percent of Brazilians live on less than USD 2 a day (UNDP, 2010). Still, its willingness to move away from recipient status to donor, as well as its recent success in reducing poverty domestically – through, for example, social welfare payments that are conditional on school attendance or visits to clinics – make Brazil an active partner in Africa, which is transferring some of its substantial expertise and national programmes to its Southern partners (de Sousa, 2010). Brazil does not share the global economic dominance that other emerging markets can boast, but it has achieved good progress in economic and social development, which justifies its juxtaposition between the industrialised and developing world (Schläger, 2007).

As explained by Tingley (2010), donor domestic government ideologies influence foreign aid composition and its support to developmental or strategic considerations. The case of Brazil in Africa is somehow embracing this theory, by having a country leader who has framed the Brazilian international cooperation around its foreign policy agenda, with the aim of securing a permanent seat to Brazil in an enlarged UN Security Council, as well as to create greater bargaining power for the South in multilateral fora –the African 54 States represent in this respect significant voting power.

Ever since taking power in 2003, da Silva has recurred to a mushrooming of official visits and political summits to engage with African stakeholders and create new, long-term collaboration ties. In 2006 the first ASA Summit took place, with a focus on energy security, to be followed in 2009 with a similar event where the reform of the
UN Security Council was at the centre of the Afro-Brazilian discussions (Kragelund, 2010). Brazilian African Talks have been recently arranged by ABC to offer a forum for discussing solutions and strategic partnerships for food safety, hunger alleviation and poverty reduction in African country (ABC, 2010). As in the case of other BRICs, international diplomacy is thus certainly a relevant means by which facilitating Brazil’s objectives in international cooperation and foreign policy. In 2005, Brazilian President Luiz "Lula" da Silva during a visit to Senegal stated that Brazil has a political, historical and moral obligation towards Africa and apologized for Brazil’s role in the African slave trade. Since then da Silva has used unprecedented diplomacy and collaborative agreements to strengthen Brazilian cooperation with Africa -while couching trade deals in the continent (Freemantle and Stevens 2009). Cultural and linguistic connections have also prominently helped the success of Brazil in Africa. Historic links with Lusophone Africa go back centuries and the country has obviously leveraged this advantage, especially in Angola and Mozambique (Kragelund, 2008).

3.2 Political objectives, operational components and disbursement patterns in Africa

The Brazilian international cooperation system might have aspects in common with its BRIC counterparts (see page 6) as well as some elements resembling traditional Western donors’ practices. These include the sharing of values with traditional donors, for example in the area of democracy promotion and human rights (Osikena, 2010). Having this as background information, a quick review of the components of Brazilian international aid would certainly be beneficial for a better understanding of Brazil’s political, commercial and cooperation policy directions. In the “Discussion” session, a more critical analysis of these components is outlined.

3.2.1 Policy objectives and priorities

As reported by de Sousa (2010), the main objectives behind Brazilian technical cooperation include:

- Contribution to the deepening of Brazil’s relations with developing countries,
- Extension of the exchange and dissemination of technical knowledge,
- Promotion of capacity building, and
- Strengthening of the state institutions in development countries.

The country aims thereby at promoting partnerships where economic and social development play an integral role in building international security and peace, as well as co-operation and collaboration between developing countries to exchange know-how, technical expertise and build capacity through strengthening institutions.

3.2.2 Management

The guidelines for development policy are expressed by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and communicated to the ABC and other stakeholders. The coordination of the Brazilian development policy is part of the tasks of ABC, which is handling development funds both as a donor and as a recipient agency. However, the institutional framework of the Brazilian cooperation activities is quite diffuse and largely uncoordinated, due to a burgeoning number of partners involved and a lack of appropriate strategies, with the consequence of
having many overlapping programmes (Kragelund, 2010). De Sousa reports for 120 institutions involved in Brazilian development cooperation, with 15 Reals spent by any institution for each real spent by the Agency (de Sousa, 2010). This is due to the fact that, while the ABC acts as a focal point and coordinates projects, relationships, financial resources and logistics, it is the Brazilian ministries role, under a form of inter-ministerial cooperation, to contribute with technical experts to the projects. Only a few projects are indeed implemented directly by the ABC, but it is mainly private and public partners that take care of it, including ministries, banks, research institutions and NGOs (ABC, 2009).

There are indeed some non-governmental foundations and organizations engaged in concrete international development cooperation projects. Nevertheless, the presence of Brazilian NGOs in the international development context is still very small and the country is hoping to engage more and more civil society actors in this area (de Sousa, 2010).

Finally, there are now tendencies towards an increasing professionalisation in cooperation, with improved managing and financial practices in the Brazilian international cooperation (Osikena, 2010).

### 3.2.3 Geographical focus

Portuguese-speaking African countries have become a priority in Brazilian technical cooperation. Three quarters of Brazilian development projects in Africa are channeled to the Lusophone countries (in terms of both resources and projects). According to ECOSOC report (2008), in 2007 Cape Verde was the African country that received higher amounts of the Brazilian technical assistance. South Africa is also traditionally at the centre of the Brazilian attention, but Brazil is now expanding its geographical outreach to encompass other non-Lusophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa – i.e.: Benin, Mali, Togo and Senegal (DataAid, 2010).

### 3.2.4 Operational component

The Brazilian international cooperation activities target technical assistance as the main operational component. Research programs and academic collaborations make also part of Brazilian international cooperation, with the aim of favoring reciprocal exchanges to advance technological developments in both the recipient and donor country (see page 13). Financial assistance, food emergency and debt relief are instead representing only a minor part of the disbursements (de Sousa, 2010). Brazil has supported the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative by granting debt relief to such countries, which by the end of December 2004 owed Brazil a total of USD 1 billion. Brazil has also granted relief to its other debtors, mainly in Latin America, for another USD150 million (Schläger, 2007).

Brazil is mainly focusing on projects rather than broader programs. In fact, the country focuses mostly on the productive sectors of the African society, with a minor engagement in social development. The sectoral priorities encompass agriculture (mainly biofuels and cotton production, as well as agricultural research capacity) and, to a lesser extent, education (literacy programs and technical skills), health (HIV&AIDS projects) and capacity
building in public administration. Nonetheless, a range of other sectors is also targeted by Brazilian cooperation, from infrastructure to post-conflict resolution (AidData 2010).

### 3.2.5 Disbursement patterns and amounts

The absence of a centralized institution with overall responsibility for development assistance programs means that it is virtually impossible to calculate the precise amount of resources devoted to these activities. Although there are no official reports about the monetary scale of Brazil’s engagement in the African continent—a problem in common with other BRICs, estimates indicate USD 85 mn budgeted by the country for development cooperation in 2007, most of which was allocated across ministries: the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (including the Agency for Cooperation budget), Health, Education, Agriculture and Science and Technology. This is apparently taken as a conservative estimation, and higher budget numbers seem more realistic, as many projects do not rely only on national resources and/or are not reported in the Federal Budget (de Sousa, 2010). Kragelund (2010) makes estimations where aid from Brazil stays at around 0.03% of the country’s GNI. Still, in economic terms, it represents quite a minuscule international cooperation budget, particularly if compared to other BRIC nations (mainly China and India) or traditional Northern donors.

In its disbursement patterns, the country is reluctant to apply the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, by so showing its willingness in developing cooperation programs beyond the traditional Northern donors’ schemes. According to official declarations, Brazil’s ODA is not conditioned on profits for its enterprises and commerce, nor to political criteria, but is purely free of conditions. Most of the projects supported are co-financed by external partners (i.e. other bilateral or multilateral donors and local institutions). It is mainly loans and credits that are disbursed by ABC (ABC, 2009).

### 3.3 Partnerships between Brazil and international donors

An additional interesting aspect of the Brazilian role as a donor is its ability of partnering with different stakeholders, BRIC donors, DAC donors and international organisations for catalysing a robust “critical mass” and uniting interests from various partners towards the achievement of specific purposes of its international cooperation activities. Brazil’s engagement in the African continent does not only come as a pure bilateral relationship between the country and its individual African counterparts, but in certain occasions it also assumes the form of a triangular or multilateral partnership at the benefit of the overall South-South cooperation.

In this respect, an example is provided by the IBSA dialogue that, ever since 2003, has developed a triangular cooperation among India, Brazil and South Africa in particular sectors of common interest (i.e.: trade and agriculture). Despite the consistent ethnical, social and economic differences existing among the involved

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5 In 2007, USA provided USD 575 mn to Africa for trade-related assistance only, and USD18.8 bn was allocated to HIV&AIDS programmes (Osikena, 2010).

6 Brazil signed the Declaration but allegedly only in its position as a recipient country, not a donor (OECD, 2010).
partners, the three nations have agreed to join resources in order to advance common development and contribute to “a new international architecture, to bring their voice together on global issues and to deepen their ties in various areas” (IBSA, 2010). IBSA also collaborate on the implementation of concrete projects of cooperation and partnership with less developed countries by the means of the IBSA Facility for Development Cooperation, funded by the UNDP program for South-South cooperation.

Trilateral cooperation is in general positively appraised by the Brazilian government, as it is seen as a form of additional financing of its own objectives. What has been visible during the last years is that several international partners, e.g. Japan, Germany, the UK and the EU, have increased their trilateral cooperation programs with Brazil (Altenburg & Weikert, 2006).

An additional partnership that is more focusing on regionalization aspects is represented by the Africa-South America Cooperative Forum (ASACOF). This is a coordinated effort between Nigeria and Brazil targeting specific sectors (i.e.: investment, energy, tourism) that also represent some of the focus priorities under NEPAD (Osikena, 2010).

As far as OECD donors are concerned, also in consideration of Brazil’s median role in between the developed and developing world, the nation has collaborated with some traditional donors, particularly as for the promotion of social development in Africa. An example is given by the collaboration with the UK’s Department for International Development and the Inter-American Development Bank for replicating in Ghana one of the success programs implemented by Brazil at national level, Bolsa Familia7. Such a partnership has proved to be critical in order to be able to unfold the program at country-level in Africa. The scheme has been applauded in the African contexts and now other countries (incl. South Africa and Nigeria) are willing to engage in a similar partnership with Brazil and international donors in order to have the scheme implemented in their national territory. Additionally, during the last years, several international partners, e.g. Japan, Germany, the UK and the EU, have increased their trilateral cooperation programs with Brazil.

3.4 Research for development in Africa

Several programmes are implemented in the field of research for development by Brazil as part of its assistance and they represent strategic, though small, components of Brazilian international aid. These programmes are in general motivated by Brazilian interests (Brazil’s scientific progress has made the country a valuable international partner in scientific and technological cooperation) and shall advance and consolidate Brazilian technological development and progress, while improving research approaches in African countries (Rowlands, 2008). Among others, Brazil is cooperating with Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, and Angola with a view to strengthening local agricultural research institutes (Schläger, 2007). Interestingly enough, research collaborations are also framed by foreign policy issues. An example is given by the visit arranged by Brazil in May 2007 of a group of

7 The programme, roughly translated into "Family grant" consists in the provision of monetary support to indigent families, under the conditions of having them investing in the education and health of their children via their enrollment in primary schools and vaccination programmes (MDS, 2010).
representatives of Burkina-Faso, Mali, Tchad and Benin to the “Brazilian Agricultural Research Company” (EMBRAPA), when African officers had the opportunity to get acquainted with the Brazilian program for harvesting and processing of cotton. EMBRAPA had already developed some capacity building projects in Benin and Mali, including the technical training of African officials. Furthermore, in 2006, EMBRAPA opened an office in Accra, where a team of researchers has been carrying out surveys and providing assistance to various African countries (WTO, 2007). Research for development priorities encompass health, education, agriculture, and science and technology (Rowlands, 2008).

Furthermore, the academic exchange and parallel research programmes with Indian and South African institutions under the IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) initiative have as their objective to promote technological development and research capacity in the three developing countries.

4.0 Discussion
The role played by Brazil in the last decade in the international aid architecture has been perceived by scholars and policy-makers in different ways. On the one side it has been perceived as a new alternative for developing countries, where the non-conditionality and the egalitarian level between donor and recipient were the highlights of the Brazilian concept for solidarity, in remembrance of its own role as developing country and ODA receiver (Osikena, 2010; Woods, 2008). On the other side, the Brazilian intervention has been scrutinised under the lens of self-interest and commercial strategies, in a way using with Brazil the same interpretation view that developing countries have recurrently applied to Northern donors and their hidden agendas in development aid (Rowlands, 2008; Naím, 2007; Doelling, 2008).

As in many similar debates it can easily turn out that the truth lays somewhere in the middle, but it cannot be denied that suspicions of self-interest can easily rise, when a developing country, in an economic moment of fast rise and in a political moment of global engagement, shows an increase in its sense of solidarity.

4.1 The old paradigm: commercial considerations aside the “ethical imperative”
It has to be recognised that Brazil, particularly in the official figure of its President, has done much in order to show itself as the “good power” to its developing partners worldwide. Being it Africa or Latina America, Brazil has much leveraged on its experience as a developing nation to tighten the bonds at regional level and in South-South cooperation. As far as Africa is concerned, the paper has already reported that important diplomatic efforts have been deployed as a beachhead into African political and commercial markets (page7). Cultural and linguistic connections have also played a key role, in relation to those 90 mn of Brazil’s 198 mn population claiming direct African ancestry (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010).

It has equally to be recognised that this pretentious role as a “good power” with strong historical boundaries and obligations to Africa has also delivered quite favourably for some African governments. It cannot be denied that Brazil’s engagement in Africa has spurred some positive impacts for the socio-economic development of Africa:

- Untied aid, free conditionalities, short-term national commercial interests and political gains;
Additional funding in the development aid international infrastructure, in alternative to Western countries aid;
- Catalyser of other monetary flows (investment and trade), considerably larger and potentially affecting recipient countries more significantly (Kragelund, 2008);
- Expanded number of African countries receiving bilateral aid from Brazil (incl. fragile and failed states);
- Tendency for projects in productive sectors (i.e. infrastructure, energy, water), complementing DAC aid’s focus on social sectors and in line with the most recent recommendations from, for instance, the Commission for Africa (Commission for Africa, 2005);
- Experience of similar problems and shared “developing countries” views leading to common consensus;
- Generation of new donor competition, leading to greater aid efficiency.

The political and moral obligations President Lula mentions while visiting Senegal in 2005 (page 9) recall theories of development aid ethics and moral considerations, from a country that has been sharing for decades the “developing status” and would now like to share the value of his experience with its African counterparts.

Taking this into consideration, it is equally important to see the other side of the coin. In pages 5-6, this study is reporting interesting commercial numbers that, per se, would generate some genuine doubts about the free-from-interest engagement of Brazil in Africa. 18% of Africa’s total BRIC trade is stably in the hands of the Brazilian country. Trade with Africa represents 0.6% of the Brazilian GDP, a percentage close to US and Japanese figures, 0.8% (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010). In 2008, the Brazilian nation run trade deficit with Africa standing at USD10.6 bn and, interestingly enough, more and more Brazilian companies working in the construction, mining and energy field, have been involved in African activities (Lapper, 2010).

To add more, even if Brazil officially supports with its international aid partnerships the improvement of the livelihood of citizens, as well as sustainable growth and social development through the transferring of know-how and technological expertise, the choice of sectors and countries of operations suggests that there are more political than altruistic reasons and that geo-politics are still playing a role. Some of the more relevant partners of Brazil in Africa (i.e.: Nigeria and South Africa) are in fact abundant with natural resources and with promising large consumer markets, and its focus on the energy and agricultural sector in the form of biofuel production and use is certainly related to Brazil’s as ambition as a global biofuel producer and its promotion of an international biofuels markets, with relative benefit for its own exports.

So far, it seems as if Brazil’s arrival in Africa is part of the same pattern that has seen the continent’s traditional partners in the west compete for resources and influence. If we add to the commercial perspective a bit of politics, the picture is even more complete. Under Lula da Silva’s administration, Brazil has engaged in a new foreign policy, based on regional integration, multilateralism and South-South cooperation. The same policy is shaped by ambitions of making Brazil a global player with high international visibility and, possibly, a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Under this new “outreaching” policy, Brazil has gained the sympathy (and votes?) of many African states, thanks given also to the Brazilian promotion of developing countries interests at
international level (i.e. the Lula Group\textsuperscript{8}). After China, Brazil is the BRIC nation with the highest number of African consulates and embassies in its own territory (Freemantle and Stevens, 2010), and with almost 30 of its own diplomatic representation in the African continents.

This new political and diplomatic thrust, when combined with the consistent trade and investment opportunities in the continent, is per se casting doubts on the genuine development approach of Brazil in Africa, and it is rather a sign of potential hidden interests and strategic agendas.

In consideration of this blend of diplomatic and trade issues behind the development aid mask, the conclusion that Brazil is only apparently trying to innovate the traditional aid architecture, while working for enjoying in the long-term the trade and investment benefits connected to it, seems at least reasonable and justified.

5.0 Conclusion

Traditional Western partners—and donors—have seen in recent years a new competition in their commercial and strategic alliances in the continent by new emerging actors, represented by the BRIC countries. These new donors, after having spent the past decades concentrating on their own domestic socio-economic problems, once achieved the positive results of this work and having become emerging powers, have now stepped up in the international scene and built new strategic alliances in commercial, political and development terms.

Despite Brazil being only Africa’s 10\textsuperscript{th} largest trade partner, after USA, China, India and others, the country has engaged into unprecedented diplomatic initiatives in support of its development and commercial assistance. Ever since 2003, Brazil has opened sixteen new embassies in Africa and often recurred to high-level political summits to favour relations at regional level on issues like trade negotiations, investments and international cooperation assistance. Brazil is highly putting the African region into its foreign policy (being it trade or aid) agenda and, in spite of being its development cooperation only marginal compared to the mammoth amounts disbursed by the emerging China and India or by traditional donors, it is quite interesting to follow the evolution of Brazil’s role in Africa.

The present study attempted to analyze in more detail the latest developments of the Brazilian involvement in the African continent, particularly focusing on its role as a new donor and provider of international cooperation assistance to African nations. This study focused particularly on the issue of aid governance, analyzing how the Brazilian international cooperation is driven by the development cause or by commercial issues. The conclusion reached is that, despite talking of itself as a new international donor free of political gain and truly engaging the socio-economic development cause in Africa, view which is shared and debated by various scholars, the country is however still anchored in the framework of the traditional aid system, where development aid is tightly connected to specific foreign policy and commercial interests.

\textsuperscript{8} De Sousa, 2010.
At the same time, it cannot be denied that Brazil has brought about positive impacts in the African continent, via additional financing and project aid, a sharing of domestic experiences for development and the reframing of the relationships with Africa as business partners rather than pure recipients-donors.

Beyond the country’s commercial and development policy goals, in light of the country’s global ambitions, as well as of the future gradual opening of African markets as potential export recipients, it would be undoubtedly interesting to see how Brazil is going to move in the international architecture of aid and power. Therefore, this research certainly needs to be continued and further improved, given the potential global consequences of Brazil’s current aid framework.

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