The Mexican South-South Cooperation. Soft Power of an Emerging Country

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Most of the emerging countries are involved in a process of institutional transformation, with a view to implementing, strengthen or reform their respective systems and structures of international cooperation for development.

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Introduction

China, Brazil, India, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, South Africa, Mexico and many other emerging countries try to practice an active and effective foreign policy as one of its most distinctive features. Its aim is to reflect a greater presence in the international system. In this context, such countries have put in place ambitious policies of international cooperation for development (ICD). In this regard, on the one hand, the constant is that currently these States perform a wide range of activities of ICD, through the implementation of numerous projects, programmes and partnerships with priority countries. On the other hand, these actions are implemented through renewed legal and institutional mechanisms dedicated to manage foreign aid as a tool of foreign policy.

This is relevant since in recent years, because of the lack of enough "hard" power resources, and as a sort of "soft" power exercises, this range of countries are particulary interested in provide ICD through the South-Southcooperation modality (SSC). The above, beyond actions of solidarity in favour of third parties, is carried out in order to foster greater presence and influence on their respective geographical influence zone. The purpose of this foreign aid activities, thus, is to achieve foreign policy objectives.

The increasing SSC activities, "...even though it is a modest element of the multiple manifestations of the foreign political and economic agenda of the emerging countries, is currently transforming the geography of world power" (Mawdsley, 2012: 12). In this
context, Mexico, an emerging country whose geographical ascription is torn between North America and Latin America, matches with the previously mentioned phenomena. It does so in terms of implementing different exercises of SSC through the Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID), established in 2011 with the purpose to strengthen the Mexican aid provided mainly to Central, and South America as well as to the Caribbean.

Based on these considerations, the purpose of this paper is to analyse the general status of the IDC of Mexico in its role as a Latinamerican emerging country, reviewing its activities, achievements and more significant challenges, in order to establish the capacity of this activity to constitute an effective foreign policy instrument.

The central argument of this research suggests that although there are advances in relation to the repositioning and institutionalization of the Mexican IDC as an instrument of foreign policy, this activity continues to have significant delays in regard to its role as an element of greater impact in favor of the foreign policy of the country. This is explained because of the current institutional weakness of AMEXCID as well as the uncertainty of the Mexican aid financing. Both situations reduce Mexican foreign aid activities, effectiveness and impact in third countries.

**Foreign Policy, geostrategy and international cooperation of emerging countries.**

Since three decades ago, the emerging countries are characterized by strengthening their respective policies of cooperation through the south-south modality (SSC). This is to offer collaboration to other developing countries. The above leads to the fact that in several cases these countries replicate the classical north-south aid procedures, in the sense of offering support to countries with a relative lower level of development, although in several cases using more horizontal schemes, although this varies depending on the profile of each partner country. However, beyond or in addition to the solidarity criteria as a reason for granting technical or financial support to third parties, the providers of SSC in general and
the emerging countries in particular, often support the deployment of such actions based on precepts of foreign policy. In this regard the national interest of the provider in compliance of the interest of the recipients countries is the main aim of this activities.

That is why the SSC programs of the emerging countries are actually repeatedly based on the promotion of the national interests of donnors and not always on the recipient countries needs (Quadir, 2013: 328). These programs are projected on a staggered basis according to the geostrategic priority of certain regions and countries with regard to the purposes of the supplier in question. This reveals that, at least from this perspective, the SSC is not quite different of the north-south cooperation, because it is a foreign policy tool that responds to internal political and economic purposes.

From this point of view, "the symbiotic relationship of security, policy and commercial interests and projection of power inherent in the North-South cooperation fully applies to the South-South cooperation" (Benzi and Zapata, 2013: 68). While it is true that the SSC is not exclusively a deliberately concerted action which serves premeditated purposes in the sphere of foreign policy of States, sharpest positions in this regard indicate that the self interests of SSC providers is what mainly explains the geographical and sectoral orientation of their technical and financial cooperation, and not actually the development of the recipients (Domínguez, 2013)

In summary, the SSC conferred by the emerging countries is equipped with multiple purposes that have as their ultimate goal national priorities, as well as (and according to each case) complement national capacities in those allies countries where the collaboration is provided. In this sense, a kind of geographical determinism defines the orientation of the activities to be implemented by the SSC practitioners.

In this case almost all the South countries that provide SSC lack an appropriate organizational structure needed to manage properly their policies of international cooperation, to respond to the new challenges in development, or rearrange their national priorities in this regard (Quadir, Op. Cit: 328). To reverse this situation, the international
cooperation practiced by this type of countries and especially in Latin America is characterized in recent years by a reconfiguration in the institutional framework of the governmental offices that manage this activity (Erthal and Marcondes, 2013: 47).

The aim is to go beyond the mere geopolitical identification of recipients countries and go forward through the establishment of innovative mechanisms that contribute to "govern" this type of process, with the aim to get more predictable results, in line with the national interest of the provider (foreign policy) and the recipient, as well with general purposes of the global development agenda (Prado, 2011).

In order to achieve this goal, although there is no defined procedures, there are elements that facilitate a better IDC institutionalization. The most outstanding elements in this regard are: trained personnel, legal aid guidelines, budget, national systems of monitoring and evaluation, as well as a coordinating institution (Mawdsley, Op. cit: 93). In this sense the improvement of IDC institutionalization process is the common denominator of the emerging countries, in where Mexico is an interesting example in this regard.

**Mexican international development cooperation. General characteristics**

In its dimension of foreign policy instrument, the IDC of Mexico has historically been an activity that has tried, as recipient country, to complement national development capacities. As donor country, Mexican foreign aid aims to contribute to the attention of political purposes through solidarity actions directed preferentially towards relevant geoestrategic countries. In this way, the supply of Mexican cooperation, just like happens in other countries, constitutes a sovereign foreign policy activity to meet preferentially national aspirations. Similarly, and without prejudice to the foregoing, Mexican cooperation measures intended to strengthen key development sectors of partner countries, especially in those ones of their immediate geographical environment, where there are historical, political, economic and cultural ties.
In the case of Mexico the international cooperation in its donor dimension has been practiced continuously since four decades ago, being Central America, the Caribbean and South America the main partners. In 1970, after practicing a passive foreign policy, the government of president Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) would take a turn in this regard in order to implement an active profile foreign policy. The causes that led to this change in strategy is framed around the changes in the international order during the early seventies, the domestic economic crisis, as well as to the left-wing movements in opposition to the federal government. By these internal and external factors, Echeverría encourage an increasing presence of the country in the international arena.

In this context, the fledgling international cooperation practiced from now on, in line with the new guidelines of an active foreign policy, would serve as pragmatically political instrument in favour of the Government in turn interests. An example in this sense was the support provided by President Echeverría (architect of the students slaughter in 1968 that asked for larger democracy participation) to the left wing Government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1972, during the international financial blockade in retaliation to their expropriation policy. The Mexican credit line in favor of the latter southern country had the aim to legitimize Echeverría’s Government against the national leftist movements, providing the message that while inside the country the government was criticized, abroad it was perceived as a solidarity parter (Ojeda, 1986: 66-70).

Late in the decade of the eighties the Mexican cooperation would migrate to Central America, which passed by a context of internal wars and political instability, generating a social and economic crisis un the Mexican south border. In this context, the Mexican military aid (not official) to the Sandinistas, the Contadora Group (1983) the San José Pact (1980), the Esquipulas Summit (1987), as well as the multiple financial and technical bilateral technical support, the Mexican government deployed a wide range of instruments and modalities of cooperation toward this region, of which depended in large measure the Mexican security and stability.
In all cases, Mexico offered these support in order to fulfill national interest under the logic of granting to their beneficiaries foreign aid. What were these interests? In essence, to promote regional political stability, moderate the revolutionary political movements in Central America and to prevent the American military intervention in the area, neutralizing such conflicts with regard to the east west confrontation (Ibid). All this under the perspective that such disturbances were generated by historical social injustices, which if not contained through diplomatic actions and development cooperation they will significantly affect the Mexican security and sovereignty. Hence, in this context, the Mexican IDC conferred to Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and other countries during the decade of the eighties and nineties should be considered a priority foreign policy strategy with the aim to contribute to the peace process in the region.

Since then Mexico has provided SSC to Central America, South America and the Caribbean (in that order). Through the years the IDC of Mexico won recognition and national and international status. This was reflected in 1988 when the Mexican Congress included IDC in the Constitution as a guiding principle of foreign policy. During the government of President Felipe Calderon international cooperation in security matters had more support than the one dedicated to development.

In 2007 a Senate initiative of an opposition Party (and not through an initiative from the Presidency, the main Republican power responsible for the conduction of foreign policy) activated a legislatura process in order to establish a Law related to the IDC.

The proposal, drawn up by the Senator Rosario Green was dedicated to strengthening Mexican cooperation as a more effective foreign policy tool through the creation of new institutions and mechanisms operating in their midst.

The latter Law entered into force on 11 April 2011.
In this way and for the first time in the history of Mexico's foreign policy, there was a legal mandate which forced the Mexican Government to conform the following instances and operational and financial mechanisms of IDC:

- Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID);
- Advisory Council of the International Cooperation for Development;
- Mexican Program of International Cooperation for Development (PROCID);
- National Registry and Mexican System of Information for International Cooperation for Development (SIMEXCID); and
- National Fund for International Development Cooperation (FONCID).

Figure 1. The Mexican System of International Cooperation for Development

Based on the provisions of the Law, AMEXCID, a decentralized body of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, was founded the 29th September of 201, a year before of the end of this presidential term.

In quantitative terms, Mexican SSC projects provided to Latin America and the Caribbean partners during the period 2007-2012 yield interesting data.
For example, the number of Mexican bilateral projects to Latin America and the Caribbean has been intermittent and variable, as shown in the following graphic. At the beginning of the administration of Calderon, there were 68 bilateral projects in total towards the region. In 2008 there was an increase of 108%, with a total of 142 bilateral projects. Due to the global economic crisis, there was a decrease in the number of projects, running that year only 107 projects, an approximate decrease of 25%. In 2010 the Mexican SSC increased to 149 bilateral projects, but they reversed in 2011, with 126. Finally, the administration of Calderon closed 2012 with 153 bilateral projects to the region.

Graphic 1. Number of bilateral projects executed by Mexico in Latin America and the Caribbean 2007-2012

Source: Own elaboration based on reports of proceedings of DGCTC 2007-2010 SRE-DGCTC, annual report of the international cooperation of Mexico 2009 SRE-DGCTC, report Mexico's international cooperation 2010 SRE-DGCTC, international cooperation for development 2011 annual report. SRE-AMEXCID and annual report of technical and scientific cooperation 2012 SRE-AMEXCID

The topics where Mexico shared its experiences and expertise in Latin American and Caribbean partners during the designated period are shown in the following graphic.
Graph 2. Priority areas for international cooperation from Mexico in Latin America and the Caribbean 2007-2012 (percentage distribution)

* Information in accordance with the report Mexico's 2010 international cooperation.
Source: Own elaboration based on reports of proceedings of DGCTC 2007-2010 SRE-DGCTC, annual report of the international cooperation of Mexico 2009 SRE-DGCTC, report Mexico's international cooperation 2010 SRE-DGCTC, 2011SRE-AMEXCID development international cooperation annual report and annual report.

The following graph shows the number of bilateral projects of Mexican SSC in Latin America, specifying the number of projects in Central America and the Caribbean region. Due to the lack of information in the annual Official Reports, it is only possible to analyze the period 2010-2012. New incompatibility and lack of clear official information cause that, for example, in 2010 the total number of bilateral projects in Latin America is 149; while
the sum of projects in Central America and the Caribbean is 155: obviously an incoherent data.

Graph 3. Number of bilateral projects executed by Mexico in Central America and the Caribbean 2010-2012.

It is clear that the Mexican IDC had establish to Latin America and the Caribbean as their main objectives, in accordance to the foreign policy guidiliness. In this sense, "Central America ranks as the focal region of these activities, in strict adherence to the priority strategic that the Government of Mexico has been given to this region." (Prado & Velazquez, 2013: 126).

**International cooperation for development as an instrument of foreign policy of President Enrique Peña Nieto**

The arrival in December of 2012 to the Presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto vestige a more encouraging scenario with respect to foreign policy and IDC.

Within this administration, the main objective of foreign policy is to turn Mexico into an actor with global responsibility. To this end the Government established four foreign policy
priorities: strengthening the international presence of Mexico; promote the value of Mexico in the world; enhance the interests of Mexico abroad; and expand IDC.

The inclusion of IDC as one of the four pillars the foreign policy guidelines of this government shows the increasing interest of Mexican authorities on this issue.

In accordance with the above, and considering that the 2013-2018 National Development Plan states that "...the foreign policy will be based on IDC...", (Presidency of the Republic, 2013: 99), this document stipulates that AMEXCID should "fully meet its role as coordinator and executor of the international cooperation provided by the Mexican State" (Ibid. 150).

The Executive Director of the AMEXCID is clear in this regard, noting that "In the field of foreign policy, the IDC is considered as an instrument of soft power that facilitates and promotes diplomatic relations at the bilateral, regional and global level" (Valle, 2014: 17)

As a result of such political determination to improve IDC in 2012 it was determined that AMEXCID will be conformed by new structure. Nevertheless, currently this has nor yet occurred.

Figure 2. Proposed new organigram of the Mexican Agency for international cooperation
In terms of IDC projects managed by AMEXCID it is important to notice that Mexico continues the implementation of an significantly amount of projects provided by donors (bilateral and multilateral schemes).

Of the 535 projects managed by AMEXCID in 2011, 70% (374) projects, respond to the logic of reception of external collaboration from bilateral and multilateral donors, while just 30% (161 projects) emanate from the Mexican offer (SSC).

Graph 4. Relationship of Mexican reception-offer of international cooperation for development, 2011
In 2012 AMEXCID managed a total of 212 SSC projects in the technical and scientific fields. Of them, 194 (92%) were implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean, whereas 17 did so in Asia-Pacific and one in Africa (AMEXCID, op. cit: 6). In this regard, 153 of these projects were deployed through the bilateral scheme, 18 through regional programmes, while 23 did so through triangular cooperation (ibid).

These data reflect that Mexico designs its SSC as a preferential premeditated manner as a political and solidarity exercise to improve Mexican presence in recipient countries without any intermediaries (multilateralism/triangular cooperation). As many others emerging countries, the Mexican government do so to maximize the possibility that such actions are perceived in their respective destinations, such as exercises of foreign policy dedicated to give precedence to the bilateral relationship with the partner country.

Graph 5. Mexican offer of South-South Cooperation to Latin America and the Caribbean by mode of collaboration, 2012

Of the 153 SSC bilateral projects provided by Mexico in that year, 58 were instrumented in Central America, which is equivalent to 38% of the total. South America was supported by 48 projects (31.3%), while the Caribbean was a partner in 47 projects (30.7%).
reveals that, as has been the constant since the seventies, Central America continues to have a priority position for the Mexican cooperation, in strict accordance with the purposes of foreign policy set by the federal government (Ibid).

Chart 6. Priority areas in the South South cooperation of Mexico in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2012.

![Chart](chart.png)


In 2012 the priority sectors that Mexico attended by their South South collaboration were the following: Government and civil society: 38; agricultural development: 33; education, science and technology: 26; environment: 11; Health: 11; power: 6; Tourism: 6; Housing and urban development: 4; Economic development and productive sector: 4 (Ibid).
Graphic 7. Projects of bilateral South-South cooperation by sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2012.


In regard to the Central American countries, in 2012 the order was as follows: Costa Rica (20 projects), Guatemala (11 projects), El Salvador (9 projects), Nicaragua (8 projects), Honduras (5 projects), Belize (3 projects) and Panama (2 projects) (Ibid).

Graph 8. South-south cooperation projects in Central America mexican by partner country, 2012.


The collaboration with South America was carried out in preferential manner with Chile (12 projects), Ecuador (10 projects), Peru (7 projects), Argentina (6 projects), Brazil (5 projects), Colombia (4 projects) and Bolivia (4 projects), (Ibid: 7), as can be seen in the graphic below.
Graph 9. South-south cooperation projects in South America by Mexican partner country, 2012.


Finally, in the Caribbean, for obvious reasons Haiti was the main recipient with 32 projects, while Cuba did with nine, Jamaica with three, the Dominican Republic two while Trinidad and Tobago had one (Ibid: 8).


From the regional perspective AMEXCID informed that during 2012 the reference country carried out 18 projects: 1 via the Mesoamerican Cooperation Program (whose origin was the so-called Plan Puebla-Panama instrumented by his predecessor, Vicente Fox) and the CARICOM.
In the financial sphere, the Mexican IDC also referred interesting data, recently published by the Mexican government. In 2011, and for the first time, the AMEXCID informed the amounts by which finances its IDC, doing the same for the year 2012. However, neither in 2013 nor 2014, for the moment, there is available information in this regard.

Table 1. Total of Mexican International Development Cooperation disbursements 2007-2012

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<th>Año</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<th>2009</th>
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<th>2011</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oferta total de CID mexicana (usd)</td>
<td>N/D</td>
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<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>268,672,379</td>
<td>277,073,094</td>
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Source: based on reports of work of the 2007-2010 DGCTC SRE-DGCTC and quantification of International Cooperation for the Development of Mexico SRE-AMEXCID.

Graph 11. Percentage by type of Mexican International Development Cooperation disbursements, 2011 and 2012

Source: based on quantification of International Cooperation for the Development of Mexico SRE-AMEXCID. Unfortunately, the amounts of the offer of CID mexican for the years 2011 and 2012 he published the AMEXCID in compliance with the law in the field of CID does not provide information regarding the geographical areas in which they were awarded these resources.

Final considerations
At the present time the emerging countries such as Mexico pass through an unprecedented process where the practice of SSC is improving. This activity is usually based in geostrategic purposes as a foreign policy mean in order to achieve mainly political and economic purposes and in a second priority solidarity and development criteria. As has been argued, the Mexican IDC in the geographical manner has been consistent with the guidelines of its foreign policy, establishing Central America, South America and the Caribbean as their main recipients regions. In this way, Mexico, such as many other emerging countries, have implemented a legal and institutional restructuration of its IDC activities in order to foster this activity.

In this scenario, since 2011 Mexico has reinforced its IDC policy and activities. The IDC Law has the aim to establish a new institutional configuration to facilitate the process towards the creation of a state policy in this field of growing importance of emerging countries foreign policy. This legal instrument, based on Mexican geopolitical interests, reiterates the spatial orientation of the supply of development cooperation placing Central and South America and the Caribbean as priority regions; provisions which, in effect, have been addressed, as has been corroborated in this paper.

However, this institutionalization proces of Mexican IDC, as occurs in similar emerging countries, has not been fully met, given the complexity involved to meet all the provisions of the latter Law. However, the project that onced implemented will provide AMEXCID a new structure shows an apparent renewed political will to encourage this process.

The journey to the (never conclusively) building a comprehensive state policy in the field of IDC is complex task to achieve. Neverdeless Mexico is taking steps forward towards that purpose.

In short, although the Mexican IDC constitutes an instrument aligned to foreign policy, the persistent institutional, programmatic and financial weakness of foreign aid limit the impact of this activity and in consequence of Mexican foreign policy.
The full implementation of the Mexican Law on IDC could improve the possibilities for this emerging country to become a more strong and proactive actor in the regional scenario concerned to IDC issues and in consequence to practice a foreign policy in accordance to the status that the current administrations aims to hace in the present international system.

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