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Trilateral development cooperation can enhance South Africa's development partnership capabilities in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction

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Introduction

South Africa has played an important peacemaking role in Africa, in keeping with its foreign policy identity which promotes peace, security and development on the continent. This softer approach to post conflict reconstruction has been informed by South Africa's commitment to support peace and stability in states and shares an important link with its developmental agenda. Conflict threatens human security and severely hampers development in a broad sense. This link between security and development informs South Africa's peacebuilding and peacemaking initiatives.

South Africa's African agenda, peace diplomacy and developmental partnership agenda are therefore extensively inter-connected principles of its post-apartheid foreign policy. Commencing with a brief overview of South Africa's credentials as a continental peacemaker, this policy brief seeks to locate the proposed idea of a mediation unit in the context of South Africa's development partnership agenda. It argues that trilateral development cooperation (TDC) has

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advantages for South Africa including an enhancement of its bridge-building role and buttressing its foreign policy priorities of mediation, developmental peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction and an African-centred diplomacy of development.¹

The merits of enhancing mediation capacity in relation to peacebuilding initiatives

In establishing the linkages between a developmental partnership and a diplomatic relationship, peace diplomacy has gained momentum as a prominent feature of South Africa's 'development' interventions. The exercise of peace diplomacy is multi-faceted and has included mediation and negotiation processes, peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) activities as seen in South Africa's extensive engagements in the DRC, Burundi, Madagascar and South Sudan among others.² South Africa's preference for negotiation and mediation reflects on a larger global commitment to mediation as seen with the 2011 United Nations General Assembly Resolution : *Strengthening the role of mediation in the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, Conflict Prevention and Resolution (A/RES/65/283)* which emphasised the importance of national mediation capacity. The development of a mediation unit would therefore help South Africa align its peacemaking and PCRD strategies with the priorities of the United Nations.

South Africa's legitimacy as a purveyor of peace and stability has been established through its own relatively peaceful transition to democracy, process of negotiation and record of good governance. While South Africa has gained credibility through its contribution to peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives in Burundi, Madagascar, Libya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire, the success of its mediation efforts have sometimes been undermined by recurring issues. Problems surrounding South Africa's impartiality as a mediator, pursuit of economic and strategic interests and

maintenance of its developmental agenda are all important considerations here. These considerations highlight the tension emanating from the contradiction between the ideals in its foreign policy identity and, the hegemonic perception of South Africa.

One of South Africa's first peacebuilding initiatives took place in Burundi where former President Nelson Mandela took over from Tanzania's former President Julius Nyerere in 2000 and managed to place enough pressure on the relevant parties to sign the Arusha Accord. This however, excluded the main armed rebel groups and was not a ceasefire and the formerly excluded rebels joined later. The mediation in Burundi was successful and South Africa played an important part in the implementation of the Accord through sustained engagement and financial support. However, the Arusha Accord has recently come under pressure in light of the contentious presidential elections scheduled in Burundi for 15 July 2015 where President Nkurunziza plans to run for a third term in office amidst fervent opposition from the African Union, United Nations, opposition parties and civil society organisations within Burundi. The elections are ultimately viewed as a violation of the Arusha Accord which contained provisions to limit presidential terms to two terms.

South Africa's intervention in the DRC is also a valuable example of its post-conflict involvement in the implementation of reforms and the development of institutions³. The implementation of the agreement is just as valuable as the mediation process because it helps to maintain long term stability. There are however, lessons to be learnt from less successful interventions like that in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe. In Côte d'Ivoire, Mbeki's neutrality was called into question when rebel groups linked Mbeki to the favouritism of former President Gbagbo because Mbeki focused on the restoration of state authority⁴.

In addition Mbeki was accused of ignoring regional leaders, ECOWAS and being anti- French – two integral players in the peacebuilding process. Ten months later, Mbeki withdrew as mediator. In the Zimbabwean conflict, it was Zuma who came under fire for his non - confrontational stance on the conflict between the ruling party, ZANU-PF and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was seen as a continuation of Mbeki's approach⁵. Opposition groups also complained that Zuma was not fully committed to the mediation process.

Successful mediation is compromised when the credibility of the mediator is called into question. It is also undermined by the plethora of competing interests of other actors who sometimes engage on the basis of deadline diplomacy. This approach may affect the overall quality of the agreement as can be the case with proximity talks. In some cases it also trumps political status over competence of the mediator which reflects on a larger issue that, mediation is a highly specialised skill and not just part of peace diplomacy. The development of a mediation unit could ensure that mediators are trained and equipped to provide a more specialised service. It would also be easier to share knowledge and experiences and build up institutional memory. This could be useful in preventative diplomacy, analysis and early warning for peacebuilding.⁶ The existence of a well co-ordinated mediation unit could also support more sustained engagement in the implementation of post mediation agreements. In essence, it could address the gap between mandate and delivery faced by South Africa and many other countries involved in conflict mediation. An in-house mediation unit could also add to capacity building and expertise of regional support units.

**South Africa as Africa's de facto peacemaker:
linking peace diplomacy with development
partnerships**

Peace Diplomacy is embedded in South Africa's development interventions. Based on the dual reality of South Africa as a provider and recipient of aid, it must be emphasized that South Africa frames its development partnership agenda within the framework of South-South cooperation (as opposed to the OECD-DAC matrix of definitions), formalized in the 1978 UN Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the 2009 UN High Level Conference on South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is centred on principles such as solidarity, non-intervention, mutual benefit and includes an array of initiatives ranging from knowledge-sharing to technology transfers and capacity building. Consequently, South Africa's post-2015 development partnership agenda has to be viewed in the context of its self-actualised identity as not only belonging to the South, but also as a bridge-builder between the global South and the North.⁷

The proposed South Africa Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) has been tasked with the rationalization and coordination of South Africa's development cooperation activities, including peace and security partnerships as one aspect of its programmes.⁸ SADPA was essentially conceived as a foreign policy tool to advance South Africa's prioritization of Africa and the global South as key impulses of its developmental partnership trajectory. While SADPA is yet to develop clear, streamlined guidelines to steer the development cooperation agenda, as far as peace and security are concerned, a harmonisation of political aspects of development cooperation (under Department of International Relations and Cooperation /DIRCO) and the developmental aspects of development assistance (under SADPA) will go a long way in strengthening South Africa's leadership in continental peace and security affairs.⁹ The narrative of Pretoria's engagement as a peacemaker on the continent reveals a mixed bag of both successes and failures across the various cases. However, in spite of South Africa's laudable repertoire in peacebuilding and

post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) activities, most of these engagements lacked sustainable impact as a result of their ad hoc, uncoordinated and incoherent manner of implementation.¹⁰ As such, an opportunity exists for the creation of a mediation unit within the DIRCO that will be closely affiliated to SADPA.

A dedicated mediation unit can help refine South Africa's development interventions under the rubric of peace and security

The South African model of mediation, incorporating concepts such as inclusiveness, political will, impartial facilitation and consensus has been well-documented following close to two decades of South Africa's engagement at the helm of the continent's peace and security affairs. In alignment with international principles such as the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, for South Africa, the pursuit of aid effectiveness in relation to peace interventions will mean harnessing the rich mosaic of experience and institutional memory into a functional mediation unit. A mediation unit, under the authority of DIRCO and SADPA, would be a source of expertise for high-level interlocutors such as the President, provide technical support to the lead mediator and his party and offer operational guidelines on programmes which fall under PCRD such as capacity-building in the public sector and security sector reform.

In laying the groundwork for a mediation unit, SADPA would have to take into account the political character of development assistance. Indeed a critical analysis of South Africa's involvement in negotiation and post-negotiations phases of various conflicts has revealed an ongoing tension between humanistic impulse and a strategic interest to accrue economic benefits. The politicization of development assistance, coupled with the complexity of the mediation process characterized by variables such as the dynamics of the conflict

environment; overlapping interests and mandates of stakeholders; challenges of coordination and division of labour and institutional backing from regional mediation support units means that South Africa will have to tread carefully in its foray into the sphere of development partnerships. The fact that South Africa is both a giver and recipient of development assistance draws out the looming question of whose agenda will carry the day given the power politics that are inherent in the sphere of development partnerships.¹¹ South Africa's leadership role on the continent has also come into question in light of the xenophobic attacks and therefore raises important considerations regarding the credibility of its developmental assistance to other African states. Furthermore, the nature of developmental assistance needs to be reconceptualised with more emphasis on the importance of its sustainability. External assistance should transcend a 'quick fix' approach which focuses on security and economic aid and should instead be coupled with a broader domestic plan in the recipient country, to improve governance and stability.¹²

Recommendations

There are several potent considerations relevant to the mooted idea of a mediation unit within DIRCO:

1. Embracing a holistic view of the peace process: it is crucial to adapt a holistic approach to mediation that incorporates broadly accepted definitions of mediation, acknowledges its inextricable linkages with peacebuilding and PCRD and incorporates a networked, multi-sectoral approach involving a diverse cross-section of stakeholders. South Africa should critically review its comparative advantages, think long-term and formulate clear deliverables on the depth of commitment. Should South Africa focus on both peacemaking and PCRD? Or should it disengage in the aftermath of peace processes and defer PCRD activities to other development partners?

What are the roles of development agencies in the peace process?

2. Locating South Africa's development partnership trajectory in the context of post-2015 development agenda: Pertinent to its role in peace and security and the continued emphasis on Africa as its development partnership agenda, government needs to develop structured interactions with multiple stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, academia, and NGO's in harnessing the full benefits of South Africa's advantages as a key development partner. In this regard, peer-learning would include a comprehensive and widely-sourced consultation process entailing visits to development agencies in the North and South, the commissioning of studies and papers and consultation with relevant departments and ministries of countries that are a part of the Friends of Mediation Group.¹³ For instance, the Nordic countries of Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark have a long-standing history of formalised mediation and conflict competencies within their foreign policy making and implementation machineries.

3. Aiming for strategic complementarity with key local, regional and international partners in the area of peace and security: the emphasis should be on coordination and institutionalizing of a national mediation capacity as a way of reinforcing mediation support units at the sub-regional (SADC), regional (AU) and international (UN) levels. The mediation unit at state level will go a long way in filling the capacity-building gaps and shortfall of technical expertise at the regional and international level.

4. Identify viable sources of funding: given the technical and administrative challenges that come with operationalization of SADPA, trilateral development cooperation (TDC) presents a feasible mode of funding for both the agency and the proposed mediation unit. TDC entails a Development Assistance Committee (DAC) bilateral and/or a

multilateral donor partnering with a 'pivotal' state (typically but not always a rising power such as Brazil, Turkey or South Africa) to provide development assistance in a third country setting (such as Haiti, Iraq or Sudan). One of the most cited advantages of TDC is that it seeks to harmonise the North-South and South-South cooperation models whilst enhancing ownership by recipient/beneficiary countries. By virtue of its comparative advantages of access and experience, South Africa has already positioned itself as an attractive pivotal partner for peacebuilding to donors from the North and South. For example, South Africa's post-conflict engagement in Burundi, DRC and South Sudan has included training of diplomats, capacity-building workshops for the public sector and information-sharing and best practice exchanges. A whole range of coalitional possibilities including the BRICS, IBSA and MIKTA¹⁴ present viable sources of funding for South Africa's peacebuilding and PCRD activities within a TDC framework. Furthermore, given the areas of convergence between the EU and South Africa in terms of their approach to peace and security, the EU also presents as a viable candidate for a developmental partnership with South Africa.¹⁵

Ultimately, enhancing the capacity for South Africa's peace and security interventions boils down to whether or not SADPA can find its footing and meet its mandate paying particular attention to strategic action plans; monitoring and evaluation; and networking and experience-sharing with relevant development stakeholders. The notion of a mediation unit is a viable means of revamping the effectiveness and attractiveness of South Africa's peace interventions and its development partnership agenda at large.

Notes

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- 5 Landsberg, C. 2010. 'The Foreign Policy of Zuma Government: Pursuing the National Interest', *South African Journal of International Affairs* 17(3) pp 273-93
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- 8 Parliamentary Monitoring Group. 2011. *SADPA establishment* available at <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/13181/> (accessed 7 may 2015)
- 9 Sidiropoulos, E. 2012.' Emerging 'Donor', Geopolitical Actor: South Africa in the Global Terrain' in G. Carbonnier (ed), *International Development Policy Aid, Emerging Economies and Global Policies*. Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Pp. 89-103.
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- 11 Besharati, N.A. 2013. South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA): Strategic Aid or Development Packages for Africa?, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs; Lucey, A. and O'Riordan, A. 2014. South Africa and Aid Effectiveness: Lessons for SADPA as a Development Partner, ISS Paper 252, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies
- 12 Mills, G and Davis, D. 2015. 'Burundi: Defence, diplomacy and the missing development link' *Daily Maverick*, available at <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-05-17-burundi-defence-diplomacy-and-the-missing-development-link/#.VVwyLvmqqko>
- 13 The Group of Friends of Mediation currently consists of 40 Member States, the United Nations and 7 regional organizations and other international organizations, it was founded on 24 September 2010, to promote and advance the use of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as to generate support for the development of mediation.
- 14 MIKTA refers an informal grouping consisting of Mexico, Indonesia, S.Korea, Turkey and Australia. The group's cohesion bears close resemblance to the principles in BRICS and IBSA namely strong economies, regional strategic importance and interest in influencing global governance. For more on role of BRICS/ IBSA see Kok, N. 2014. South Africa's peacebuilding and PCRD activities : The role of IBSA and BRICS. Institute for Security Studies, Paper 267, September 2014. Available at <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper267.pdf> (accessed 7 May 2015).
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