

PHD THESIS

EXTENDED SUMMARY

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND FOREIGN POLICY IN TRANSITION: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMERGING DONORS.
COMPETING PARADIGMS OF THE EU NEW MEMBER STATES AND THE
GLOBAL SOUTH

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Table of Contents	
DECLARATION OF HONOR.....	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	8
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	10
1.1.Puzzle	11
1.2. Relevance and Research Gap	13
1.3. Structure	14
CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGICAL NOTES	19
CHAPTER 3. AID AND FOREIGN POLICY: THE POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	24
3.1.The Politics of Aid in the IR System	24
3.2.Why Do States Give Aid? Self-Interest Or Altruism?	32
3.3.What is Aid? ODA, DAC Committee, and Forms of Aid	36
3.4.Is Aid Effective?	42
3.5.Who are the Emerging and the Traditional Donors?	45
CHAPTER 4. THE ORTHODOXY OF EU CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT	51
4.1.Introduction	51
4.2.Short Overview of The EU’s Political Commitments Towards Aid	52
4.3.The Europeanisation of New EU Member States Aid Policies	62
CHAPTER 5. SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION - PARADIGM-SHIFTING IN DEVELOPMENT?	67
5.1.Introduction	67
5.2.Various Understandings of South-South Cooperation	68

5.3. Technical Cooperation.....	76
5.4. Triangular Cooperation	79
CHAPTER 6. ANALYSIS.....	81
6.1. Latin American countries, members only of the Global South?.....	81
6.2. Argentina.....	81
6.2.1. Country Profile.....	81
6.2.2. Argentina’s Foreign Policy.....	83
6.2.3. Argentina’s International Cooperation Model.....	85
6.2.4. Argentine’s Humanitarian Response To Covid19	92
6.3. Brazil.....	93
6.3.1. Country Profile.....	93
6.3.2. Brazil’s Foreign Policy.....	95
6.3.3. Brazil’s International Cooperation Model.....	97
6.3.4. Brazil’s Humanitarian Response To Covid19	107
6.4. Chile	109
6.4.1. Country Profile.....	109
6.4.2. Chilean Foreign Policy.....	110
6.4.3. Chile’s International Cooperation Model.....	111
6.4.4. Chile’s Humanitarian Response to Covid19.....	117
6.5. New EU Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania).....	118
6.6. The Czech Republic	119
6.6.1. Country Profile.....	119
6.6.2. The Czech Republic Foreign Policy and Cooperation Agenda.....	120
6.6.3. The Czech Republic Humanitarian Response To Covid19	128
6.7. Hungary.....	129
6.7.1. Country Profile.....	129
6.7.2. Hungary's Foreign Policy and Cooperation For Development Agendas	130
6.7.3. The Hungarian Humanitarian Response To Covid19	136
6.8. Poland	137
6.8.1. Country Profile.....	137
6.8.2. Poland’s Foreign Policy and Cooperation Agenda	138
6.8.3. Poland’s Humanitarian Response To Covid19.....	145
6.9. Romania.....	146
6.9.1. Country Profile.....	146
6.9.2. Romanian Foreign Policy and Cooperation Agenda	147
6.9.3. Romania’s Humanitarian Response to Covid19	153

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS	155
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	164

The idea of this thesis emerged several years ago, while I was carrying out fieldwork research in the Republic of Moldova. During the week spent in Chişinău conducting interviews about the relationship between civil society organizations and donors, I saw numerous buildings that had been rehabilitated and restored with the help of the Romanian Government, as part of the cooperation for development mechanism. I thought that it was a powerful visual instrument that enhances Romania’s profile as a donor. Discussing with various NGO representatives, I ended up asking them what they thought about Romania as a donor country and I was surprised to hear that countries from the Visegrad Group were more visible than Romania. This especially applied to the NGO sector, which, at the time, preferred to apply for the uncomplicated calls issued by the countries in the Visegrad Group. I have also learned that Czechia and Poland are running programmes with the Government and the local authorities that are well received. Moreover, some years ago, Hungary was still launching small grant calls for NGOs from the Republic of Moldova, to increase their capacity to attract funds and become more independent. While that academic inquiry is not part of this thesis, I simply started wondering about the Central and Eastern European countries dynamics in the international arena, what distinguishes one from another, and how these countries, as part of the European Union, have adopted the norms and the practices of the Western donors, since all CEE states were offering foreign assistance. Moreover, participating at various conferences in the field of international development, I have learned about the rapid changes from the Global South and about an entire group of countries that are offering assistance for development. Except for the title of “emergent donors” given by international organizations and the academic literature, what do all these countries have in common (both Global South and CEE)? Do they have anything in common apart from this powerful label? These questions lead to a number of diverse readings, from the politics of aid in IR theories to donor motivations in giving aid and various forms of aid. While the overview of these theories gave me the theoretical framework of the analysis - foreign policy analysis coupled with social constructivism perspectives, I also presented the main approaches that define South-South cooperation for better understanding the conceptual space of cooperation in Latin American countries (in my case, Argentina, Brazil and Chile). Since Central and Eastern European countries (in my case, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania) are labelled as emergent donors, but are part of the European Union, the largest donor organization in the world, I also presented the main frameworks that

shaped the concept of foreign policy of aid in this space, with a focus on how the new EU member states managed to adopt norms and discourses in their cooperation agendas. This discussion is all the more interesting because the new EU member states had provided foreign assistance in their communist past to countries from the Global South and after EU accession, they had to embrace new norms and discourses.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore, from a comparative perspective and using the foreign policy analysis tools, how emergent donors from various geo-political spaces choose to use development assistance, including technical cooperation as an instrument of foreign policy and as a mechanism of building their international reputation. In this inquiry, I present the most important academic debates from the field and based on the social constructivist approaches and foreign policy analysis mechanisms, I analyse the processes of foreign aid agenda creation and how these agenda are used as foreign policy tools by emergent donors attached to various discourses and practices of aid.

Puzzle

Since its inception, after the Second World War, the international cooperation for development has received constant attention and it has been defined and redefined based on the international dynamics and the domestic configuration of politics. While the narratives of foreign aid have changed constantly and the literature both from international relations and development has tried to capture and explain these evolutions, the domestic politics of foreign aid and the manner in which countries use aid mechanisms to enhance their international profile remain insufficiently explored. The fall of the Berlin Wall was one of the moments that changed the landscape of cooperation for development. After decades of using aid as a mechanism for maintaining influence in various developing countries (in one of the two sides of the spectrum: Capitalism and Communism), the fall of communism brought a donor fatigue and moved the attention towards former communist countries. Even though foreign aid has been traditionally explained through Western lenses and included a top-down approach between the donor and the recipient, the last decades have witnessed important changes in this space. Within the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, there are new configurations on the international arena and countries embark on a mission of solving the world's most pressing problems (Keeley, 2012). Some of the countries that have been recipients in the aid system changed their vocation and became donors. Asian countries, Latin American countries, and other countries from the Global South have changed their vocation. Classic examples in the

literature, such as Brazil, India, China, Turkey, South Africa or Russia, strengthened their cooperation for development programmes and increased their international visibility by maintaining their vocation as recipient, but also acting as donors (Szent-Iványi & Lightfoot, 2015). Of course, many programmes are still small in terms of aid volumes, but there is a majority of middle-income countries around the world that are experiencing a new role, that of donors. Within this new plurality in the global arena, one may wonder if the traditional donors from the Global North will lose their dominance and will have to adapt to new rules that are written in the present moment. Within the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that implied the active participation in negotiations of a variety of countries, from traditional to emergent donors, NGOs, companies, academia, private foundations and IGOs, developing countries have been recognized as playing an important part in achieving the 2030 Agenda (BAPA 40+, 2019). The South-South cooperation for development has received more attention, not only from the developing countries, but also from the Western institutions, as being an equally important paradigm for implementing the SDGs.

While the last decades have seen a great dynamic within the Global South countries, a new group of donors represented from Central and Eastern European states that joined the European Union after 2004, have emerged in the international arena. During communism, these countries provided assistance for development to other ideologically close developing countries from the Global South. After the fall of communism, these countries became recipients of foreign aid until they joined the EU (Horký-Hlucháň & Lightfoot, 2015). To become members of the European Union, these countries had to perform structural reforms and improve their institutional capacity. As such, in a fairly short period of time, Central and Eastern European countries transitioned from recipient to donor countries, adapting their institutions for the *acquis communautaire*, including the ones related to cooperation for development (Szent-Iványi & Lightfoot, 2015). While having their own similarities in terms of both past communist regimes and democratization experiences, this group of countries that joined the EU after 2004 have their own particularities and differences in terms of cooperation for development agenda, which will be explored within this thesis.

All in all, the global diversity of donorship offers a good window of opportunity for exploring the changing practices of foreign aid, the intersections between development and foreign policy and the opportunities that may arise with these transformations. Moreover, as Zakaria Fareed (2009) argued in the “Post-American World”, the last decades have witnessed the “rise of the rest” or an emerging presence in the international arena of various middle powers that are trying to reclaim their regional and even international recognition. Using cooperation for development

tools, among other political instruments, these middle power countries aim to consolidate their international profile and increase their presence in the international arena. This dynamic is fuelled by the challenges brought by globalisation, climate emergency, migration and, in the last year, the global pandemic. From a political perspective, “the rise of the rest” can be interpreted as the aspiration of various states from the Global South to have more than a voice at the global table. In this sense, Nye (2015) explains this demand for seats at the table of negotiations on various topics, from trade agreements to climate policies, and so on, as a problem of leadership, since it implies “getting everyone into the act and still getting action”. While provocative and straightforward, these dynamics briefly presented above open a wide array of questions.

As such, this thesis aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the role and the place of the development cooperation policy in the foreign policy agenda of the emerging donors?
2. How do emerging donors use the cooperation for development agenda as instrument for reputation building?

As subsequent questions, the thesis will answer the following set of questions:

- a.) Who are the actors involved in setting the agenda and how is it formed?
- b.) Is the cooperation for development agenda adapted to the foreign policy strategy? What are the thematic areas?
- c.) Who are the partner countries recipients of aid and how are they chosen? Is it a reputation building process?
- d.) What are the thematic areas of cooperation for development, and do they change over time? Why?
- e.) How do supranational actors, such as the European Union, influence the national agendas of cooperation for development in the case of Central and Eastern European countries?

Relevance and Research Gap

This thesis contributes to the literature on cooperation for development and foreign policy studies in several ways. Firstly, it is rooted in a comparative design, bringing into analysis emergent donors from different geographical spaces, attached to different practices and discourses of aid. Secondly, the study develops a framework for understanding how the cooperation for development agenda is set. Being rooted in the vast literature that discusses

donors' motives for giving aid (Lancaster, 2007; van der Veen 2011; Lundsgaarde, 2012), the model offers a clear understanding of the actors and the processes that generate the agenda. Moreover, the study aims to explore the various aspects of reputation building through foreign aid tools. Thirdly, by analysing the humanitarian response these countries had after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, one can assess the robustness of the cooperation mechanisms and the states' attachment to the values of solidarity in the international arena. Finally, by better understanding these dynamics, it will be easier to formulate policy recommendations and to explore this field of study with other academic tools in future research.

Structure

This thesis is structured in the following manner:

Chapter 2 describes the methodological framework of this thesis.

This thesis is grounded on a comparative framework. In the tradition of comparative political science studies, this thesis is based on the most different design and pays attention to the case selection. Moreover, the data analysed in this thesis are comparable and the equivalence is respected. Using this methodological approach, I will investigate both the differences and the similarities between the countries analysed.

Being based on the most different design, the thesis explores the cooperation for development mechanisms and agendas elaborated by various emergent donors: Latin American countries and Central and Eastern European countries. I chose these two geographical blocks for the following reasons: the Latin American countries are part of the Global South paradigm and follow the South-South Cooperation principles; the Central and Eastern European countries are complying (or at least, they should comply) with the European norms and values on development. Therefore, for the Latin American block, the countries included in the study are Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and from Central and Eastern European block, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. These countries are very different - different geographical areas, different cooperation for development discourses, different practices, and mechanisms, but they also have some similarities - various regional and local leadership interests, and, at least theoretically, a comparable democratization experience. Moreover, the Western international organizations and the literature considers them as emergent donors.

Regarding the process of case selection, for the Latin American group I chose the countries that are regional leaders, or they have aspirations to become ones, they had a democratization

experience after the fall of the military dictatorships and they adhere and promote the South-South cooperation mechanisms and values, having an established agenda of cooperation for development, and tradition of both receiving and giving aid.

For the Central and Eastern European countries, there are several variables that make these countries similar: they all had provided foreign assistance during the Communist regimes, they all had transitioned to democracy and within the process of joining the European Union, they all had to reform their institutions and create their premises for including the cooperation for development into their domestic agendas (Szent-Iványi & Lightfoot, 2015). However, even within these similarities, all the countries included in the study have their own particularities that are briefly presented in the methodological chapter and are explored within the analysis.

In this analysis I use the following source of data: primary source of official government data sources, such as government cooperation for development strategies, government foreign policy strategies, government reports on aid implementation, and relevant laws. The time framework for collecting and analysing the data is 2015-2020. Moreover, for the final part of the analysis, I use official press releases published by national development agencies on their websites about their humanitarian assistance provided in the Covid-19 context.

Chapter 3 aims to offer a presentation of the most important international relations theories that explain the politics of aid and to understand the reasons why states choose to develop cooperation for development programmes as components of their foreign policy agenda. As such, the chapter overviews the main discussions on aid, states' motives to engage in the cooperation for development programmes, the most important theoretical frameworks behind foreign aid and the dichotomic debate between emergent and traditional donors. In addition, the chapter offers a discussion on the effectiveness of aid and how donors' behaviours and practices have changed in time. One final discussion is related to the Sustainable Development Agenda and its core features, since these principles are included in the objectives of all countries, regardless of their vocation: donor, recipient, or both.

Chapter 4 presents the most important moments and processes that shaped the European Union cooperation for development agenda. Being a dynamic institution, the EU has constantly adapted its cooperation for development agenda based on the global developments and the regional dynamics. This evolution comes with a series of treaties and international documents that put the foundations of cooperation policies and adapted EU's approaches and mechanisms according to the most important global events (MDGs, Addis Ababa, Paris Declaration, SDGs,

etc). The second part of this chapter discusses the process of Europeanisation within the Central and Eastern European new member states and how this is reflected in their domestic cooperation for development agenda.

Chapter 5 explores the various understandings of South-South Cooperation (SSC), the most important principles attached to this paradigm and the use of technical and triangular cooperation mechanism within this paradigm, mentioning the most important historical moments that shaped these ideas and how they are used by emerging donors as foreign policy instruments.

Chapter 6 offers a detailed analysis of the countries included in the study (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania). Based on the understandings offered through the theoretical chapters and acknowledging the political diversity within these countries, the analysis follows the research questions states at the beginning of this chapter. For each country, there is general presentation of its socio-economic context as an introductory part for the analysis. Then, the analysis presents the foreign policy context for each country, its cooperation for development agenda and country's humanitarian response as a response to Covid-19 crisis. Specifically, the analysis explains the process of agenda formation and explores the mechanisms of political bargaining indicating the actors involved in the process. Moreover, the analysis is looking at foreign policy agendas and how the cooperation mechanisms are coupled with the foreign policy objectives. Understanding the mechanisms of offering assistance, within the context of the aforementioned agendas, the analysis will explore how countries use these tools for increasing their international profile or for constructing their donor brand. Moreover, part of the research is analysing the compliance of donor's agenda with international norms and rules – where it is the case and also how and if these countries offered humanitarian assistance as a response to Covid-19 crisis.

Chapter 7 discusses the main conclusions of this thesis, its limitations and future research directions. For all the countries included in the study, the cooperation for development assistance represents an instrument of foreign aid and it is part of the foreign policy objectives. Moreover, all the countries at least try to use these mechanisms as tools for enhancing their international profile, but there are variations from country to country.

Firstly, the process of designing the agenda implies for almost all the country a bargain between the politicians and the bureaucrats. However, there are countries where this process is mainly

political, and the agenda is established by the most important leaders (president – Argentina and Brazil and prime-minister – Hungary). For all the other countries, the processes are rather complex, and involve negotiations from various actors involved. However, even in these complex situations, the political dimension still can capture the agenda (Romania).

Regarding the foreign policy agenda, all countries connect the cooperation agenda to their foreign policy objectives, in various degrees. There are countries that overlap these two dimensions or use the foreign assistance only as a tool of foreign policy: Argentina, Brazil and Hungary. There are countries who align these two sets of documents (Chile, partially Poland) and countries that overlap some components (Czechia and Romania). Even from this context, there are countries who clearly state that their international reputation is an important priority (Brazil and Poland). But this dimension is important for all of them and appears explicitly in the way countries communicate their foreign policy and cooperation agendas.

Constructing the reputation is also intermediated through the way countries choose their thematic areas of providing assistance and their recipient partners. Countries from Latin America “export” their national success stories (social, agricultural, capacity building projects, etc) and Central and Eastern European countries have transformed their transition to democracy experience into a “foreign assistance brand” that can be offered to other countries from the region. Moreover, the recipients for all the countries included in the study are mostly partner countries from their geographical vicinity. Of course, there is variation between these countries, as they have different foreign policy ambitions and pursue different ends.

Another important discussion is related to the membership to other supra-governmental organizations. CEE countries, being part of the EU, have to comply to the European norms and values. However, all these norms fall into the category of soft law and there are no binding mechanisms for enforcing them. In this context, CEE countries partially respect the EU philosophy of doing aid, with variation from country to country, but there are ambitions to follow the path of the traditional donors (Czech Republic and Poland). Countries from Latin America are part of various regional organizations, but no structure is alike EU and its norms. Therefore, the Latin American countries are “talking the talk” of South-South cooperation and promise to respect these principles when implementing technical cooperation projects, without any mechanisms of control.

Of course, there are many nuances detailed in the conclusion chapter regarding these countries. Important to mention here is that the finding of the thesis can be used by policy makers when drafting their agendas and implementing their programmes. Moreover, there are several discussions open for future inquiry. For example, this academic inquiry does not address the

influence of populism and populist leaders on the foreign policy agenda and cooperation programmes. Moreover, having a limited time framework, the analysis does not take into consideration all the events that could have impacted countries behaviours. Other potential areas of future studies come from different methodological design.

Key words: international cooperation for development; emergent donors; foreign policy agenda; South-South Cooperation; Central and Eastern European Countries; Global South;