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International Organizations diffusion in South-South Cooperation dynamics. Notes on the Uruguayan case in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The scenario of International Development Cooperation has been transformed in the new century by the increase of South-South Cooperation (SSC). In response, the North has deployed its influence through International Organizations (IO) to moderate and model the agendas and institutions of the South. Uruguay is a good example of how IOs' interests and methodologies have influenced cooperation strategies and institutionalization processes in developing countries through diffusion mechanisms.

Keywords: International Organizations; Diffusion; International Development Cooperation; South-South Cooperation; Uruguay.

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Introduction

In the mid-twentieth century, Asian and African decolonization processes, together with the rise in oil prices, stimulated South-South Cooperation (SSC) based on the principles of solidarity, non-interventionism and horizontality. However, the South-South impetus and the demands to establish a New International Economic Order were restrained by the neoliberal expansion that took place since the mid-eighties.

In this way, it was not until the beginning of the 21st Century — due to the emergence of middle powers, the rise in commodity prices and the economic, financial and social crisis in the developed countries — that the resulting new cracks in the international system let the developing countries return to the flags of SSC.

Among the various aspects in which the renewed South-South relation was reflected, the International Development Cooperation

(IDC) system was the one that most clearly manifested the changes produced by the re-emergence of SSC. Specialised literature has focused particularly on the “new players” or “emerging donors” — especially Brazil, China and India — and on the way in which they fostered new values and cooperation modalities, which transformed IDC (Manning 2006; Rowlands 2008).

In this sense, the case studies about SSC offered by the main emerging powers and the impacts on the IDC system mainly highlight the potentiality of changes in regulations, values and procedures. However, there are also debates about the reactions of the traditional donors of Official Development Aid (ODA) to SSC (Lengfelder 2016; Muhr 2016).

The fact that SSC is essentially political (Ayllón Pino 2009; Lechini 2009) can be clearly perceived when we find among its ultimate objectives the promotion of solidarity between developing countries which aim to ensure national self-sufficiency and a proper international insertion. If we take this as a starting point, it is possible to better understand the reasons why the rise of SSC has drawn the attention of traditional donors of IDC. Accordingly, we consider that before the advance of some autonomous and reformist positions of the South regarding the IDC system, the so called “North” countries have tried to get involved in SSC through triangular cooperation (TC) proposals and multilateral platforms, in order not to lose legitimacy and influence over development patterns and the behavior of the countries from the South.

In the particular case of Latin America (LA), developed countries are looking for new interaction and projection opportunities since the changes in ODA patterns implied a deterioration in the relations mechanism between the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) / Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and LA countries. In effect, the decline of ODA in the region and the rise of SSC were deeply influenced by different factors. Namely, the changes in the IDC system since the implementation of the Aid Effectiveness Agenda—which geographically concentrated ODA flows to African countries; the decision of DAC members to redirect aid flows to the countries of higher geostrategic importance due to the presence of terrorism; and finally, the graduation of the LA countries that achieved considerable economic growth in the 21st Century—thus, not being a priority as aid recipients any more.

On the grounds of these facts, it is important to consider that LA has been a region where, despite the differences in their foreign policy identities and development models, SSC has developed special dynamics. In effect, it distinguishes the region from the rest of the developing world and it has marked the evolution of SSC in the regulatory, conceptual, practical and institutional spheres (Malacalza 2016; Lima et al. 2016). In this context, it is possible to appreciate that Northern countries are looking for new interaction opportunities and a stronger presence in the region through TC and programmes of International Organizations (IO) that aim at improving IDC.

These aspects could be noticed in the case of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay since 2005. In effect, from the foreign policy analysis (FPA) Lamas (2017) identifies the elements that stimulated Uruguayan SSC in the 2005-2015 period. In addition to domestic factors—regarding the government’s orientation and the development model—there were also systemic elements related to an adequate context for LA integration, the rise in commodity prices, the decline of

ODA in the region and the implementation of multilateral programmes and TC initiatives, which contributed to strengthen IDC institutionality. As for this last factor, the United Nations (UN) implemented the “Delivering as One” (DaO) programme and afterwards, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) established the Technical Unit of the Ibero-American Programme for South-South Cooperation Enhancement (PIFCSS, Spanish acronym for *Programa Iberoamericano para el Fortalecimiento de la Cooperación Sur-Sur*).

Pursuant to what we have presented above, it is possible to frame the following question: How do ideas and practices spread across development IOs, influencing policies, practices and all aspects of the internal structure of Uruguayan SSC during the 21st century? To address this issue, the present work aims at analysing how the two mentioned multilateral initiatives and TC affect the layout of Uruguay’s institutionality.

To achieve the mentioned objective, we conducted a qualitative research with an analytical-descriptive approach, where we employed primary and secondary sources and data produced through 24 semi-structured interviews with key actors of Uruguayan cooperation governance — political and technical actors of the Uruguayan foreign policy (8); International and multilateral agencies in the country (8); and SSC specialist (8) — from May to June, 2017; February to March, 2018; and January to February, 2019. Given the obtained results, we sustain that both the creation of the Uruguay International Cooperation Agency (AUCI, Spanish acronym for *Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional*) and the SSC guidelines developed by the consecutive administrations of Uruguay have been influenced by the agendas of IOs. This contributed to outline Uruguay’s current profile in the IDC system.

The paper is structured in five sections. First, we present preliminary considerations on SSC, since it is a multifaceted concept which can be interpreted in various ways. In the second section, we present the basic arguments to understand the way in which developed countries are capable of influencing the policies of multilateral organisms related to development and the way in which the latter, in turn, can influence SSC; moreover, the influence of SSC in the IDC system is also problematised. In the third section, we start analysing the case of Uruguay, describing its participation in the IDC system, framed in a process of graduation based on DAC/OECD criteria. In the fourth section, we present the process of institutional strengthening of Uruguayan cooperation, which gave rise to AUCI, and we analyse the participation of the UN, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and SEGIB in such process. We close the article by presenting some final remarks about the future of the Uruguayan case in the new ‘Development in Transition’ approach.

Preliminary considerations on SSC

The concept of South-South cooperation has various aspects, and it has been used in multiple ways, without consensus on its definition and delimitations (Ayllón 2009, 4). For this reason,

it is worth clarifying that in the present work, we refer to SSC from two different analytical approaches for the sake of understanding the connection between multilateral organisms and Uruguay's SSC policy.

From the first approach, SSC is conceived as a political construction that, given its own nature, requires certain basic assumptions among the states involved, encouraged to strengthen their economic interdependence, stimulate processes of commercial and political integration, address global and strategic issues and promote stability in the international system. In practice, this SSC is mainly reflected in the positions adopted in global and regional institutions, in trade and investment agreements and especially in IDC projects and programmes (Lechini and Morasso 2015). In this way, within the IDC system, SSC is presented as a horizontal and alternative cooperation modality, based on the principles of equity, non-interventionism and solidarity.

It is important to highlight that SSC dynamics have the potential to influence international cooperation. That happens because SSC materialises through technical transfer, exchange of experiences, programmes, political arrangements, and good practices (Lima 2015). Thus, diffusion has become frequent in the realm of SSC where policy models developed in the so-called emerging economies were later transferred to other developing countries or least developed ones. As Weyland (2007) posits, within certain constraints, Latin Americans do, however, influence one another.

Since Busan Declaration in 2011, the debate on the development cooperation agenda incorporates SSC and TC as effective implementation methods. Therefore, SSC also started to influence the IDC system, especially with their principles of non-conditionality, horizontality and demand driving. However, this cannot be compared in terms of intensity and legitimacy to North policy diffusion to the rest of the world. We consider it important to problematise SSC's capacity to influence the IDC system because the direction and implications of the diffusion are also representations of international power.

From the second analytical approach, we refer to SSC as part of the foreign policy of a state. Thus, it is a public policy that involves a wide range of public and private actors as well as systemic and domestic factors, which affect the strategies that each country and society defines in a specific and dissimilar way (Milani 2012).

When identifying SSC within Uruguay's external action, it is possible to analyse the sectors and geographical targets that the country addresses, its alliances, the prominence of its actors and the goals established by the consecutive administrations. This is particularly important when noting that there is strong consensus on the fact that IDC, and more precisely SSC, is considered part of Uruguay's foreign policy (Fittipaldi 2013, 209).

In this sense, the FPA approach is useful to understand the factors affecting the Uruguayan strategy of SSC. We consider that both domestic factors, as the government's orientation and the development model, along with systemic ones -mainly the IDC system and its institutions - shape the SSC in LA.

Based on this analytical division, in the following sections we will analyse the influence of multilateral organisms in SSC, understood as one of the IDC modalities, together with ODA.

Furthermore, we will introduce the mechanisms used by IOs to contribute to the institutional configuration of Uruguay's SSC, conceived in terms of foreign policy.

The role of International Organizations in the configuration of SSC

We consider that IOs are actors of the international system, immersed in the correlation of inter-state forces, which, on the one hand, reflect power asymmetries between states and, on the other, generate their own agendas and fields of power. Moreover, they produce rules to guide the behavior of their members. Thus, IOs “can become autonomous sites of authority, independent from the state ‘principals’ who may have created them, because of power flowing from at least two sources: (1) the legitimacy of the rational-legal authority they embody, and (2) control over technical expertise and information” (Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 707).

The functions and efforts of IOs aim at moderating and channeling the development/underdevelopment dialectic generating institutionality and fostering values, practices and symbolisms. Moreover, IOs serve the function of generating theoretical and technical knowledge that substantially contributes to formulate the concept of development and the policies and actions that must be implemented to achieve it. This knowledge essentially reproduces the views of the developed countries and those with hierarchical positions in the international system (Enríquez Pérez 2017).

In relation to this issue, International Political Economy (IPE) and critical theory feature power relations in the world of cooperation, questioning its instruments and procedures, in which they identify political and economic interests that strive for either the maximisation of power and wealth or the maintenance of the *status quo* in the international system. In this same line, Susan Strange (1994) questions the benefits of this kind of cooperation, referring to the existence of structural power, which proceeds from its unequal distribution and from the actions that maintain the system. ODA appears as a “mechanism of stabilisation and dissemination of constitutive values for the maintenance of the world hegemonic order” (Hettne 1995, 154). We agree with Montúfar (2004) when he states that IDC adopts a format that responds to three central factors related to each other: the donor's interests and power; international organizations and ideas, in line with Barnett and Duvall's (2004) assertions about institutional and structural power.

In this sense, if we focus the attention on IOs associated with IDC, it is possible to observe that DAC country members can exert their influence in those organizations so that they adopt certain perspectives or reach particular results. This can occur in various ways. For instance, donors can wield their influence by negotiating their financial contributions in return for the organizations' engagement to adopt certain criteria. Likewise, their pressure can be felt through their prominent places in the organization's decision structures, or through the selection of their technical bodies. Moreover, they can promote knowledge that responds to their interests and worldviews.

Within this framework it is possible to observe the debates about the role of multilateral organisms in the configuration of values, rules and regulations to manage SSC. At the same time, the ‘new donors’, who have shown critical positions regarding ODA standards, are reluctant to adopt OECD parameters to produce, systematise and evaluate information about SSC.

It is widely known that the DAC has had a crucial role in the creation of an epistemic/conceptual system that homogenises ODA language and intends to co-opt SSC rhetoric and logic. In other words, the DAC provides the traditional donors with the basis to find the convergence of regulations and practices with the new donors. DAC members can achieve this by exerting their influence so that the new donors adopt ODA principles and its ideas on development to apply them when they implement South-South actions and institutionalise it at a national level. “If new donors learn aid practices from DAC member countries, they are more likely to adopt a similar regime as the DAC aid model” (Haider 2018, 2).

Indeed, “diffusion,” understood as the displacement of knowledge, ideas, paradigms, experiences and know-how frequently take place directly or indirectly via international cooperation, sometimes also being a key aspect of IDC projects and programs, later elaborated in institutions and/or practices. Stone et al. (2020) point out the “power” of ideas and knowledge in the transfer/diffusion process, not only from the North, but more recently also from the South, where practices of South-South knowledge exchange have become more frequent. Also, some Northern states have learned from the South. Another aspect to consider in the diffusion process is the role that domestic bureaucracies play to adapt these ideas, practices or policies to a local framework in accordance with their interest.

However, as Quadir (2013) highlights, it was precisely this legitimating DAC rhetoric that was resisted and confronted by emerging actors, which multiplied the debates — both at a political-institutional and an academic level — about the suitability and convenience of applying DAC regulations to SSC. As Weyland (2011) remarks, these institutional models and blueprints from the North, when transferred to a different setting, often fail to command firm, reliable compliance, and do not operate well, since these ideational schemes do not emerge from preferences of local actors. Thus, some governments and other actors have been resisting foreign models and ideas.

Having made the previous statements, we agree with Abdenur and Fonseca’s (2013) argument, who state that since the re-emergence of SSC, developed countries have made efforts to get involved in the configuration of SSC practices. Particularly, by taking part in TC modalities, by generating academic knowledge on SSC and through multilateral platforms, seeking new points of entry into SSC to reshape their norms and practices, while also maintaining or gaining access to broader economic, political and security opportunities, they have been losing access. The ultimate goal is not losing presence and gaining legitimacy in Southern issues.

It is in the context of this debate about the influence of IOs in the institutionalisation of SSC in developing countries that we study the case of Uruguay. We found that IOs have promoted initiatives aimed at generating “common points” between the North and the South, as well

as replicating institutional mechanisms and know-how within the governance of IDC, which eventually tend to make SSC adopt similar perspectives to ODA's.

Uruguay in the IDC system

With the intention of enhancing development cooperation effectiveness, the beginning of the new century served as the starting point for the signature of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which adopted eight development goals (MDGs). As part of the background of this issue, many critics argue that, despite the declarations on global cooperation, MDGs were not universal, since they mirrored the North's views, imposed to the South. This can be noted in the strong focus put on extreme poverty, which denoted a paternalist approach, without making reference to inequality or social exclusion. This IDC Agenda re-oriented ODA funds towards the "least developed" countries according to DAC-OECD standards, causing a decline of ODA in LA.

Accordingly, in the Consensus of El Salvador on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries, LA countries claimed the necessity to keep receiving cooperation in order to achieve MDGs and to take into account other criteria apart from income per capita to evaluate the countries' level of development and allocate ODA.

Uruguay supported such position based on the "[...] multidimensional concept of sustainable human development, seen as an effective exercise of all the capacities and rights that everyone has in order to choose the life they want to live" (AUCI 2014, 53). According to a former Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Uruguay identified as a claimant of ODA, which is considered a global commitment among developed countries, and it assumed an active role within the debate on the Aid Effectiveness Agenda.

The consolidation of Uruguayan SSC and TC started to be noticed in the second decade of the 21st Century, going from the penultimate place in 2008 to the fifth place in 2014 in the annual SEGIB report. According to these reports, Uruguay registered a significant increase in the provision of technical SSC projects to LA. In 2016, the last year registered by SEGIB reports to date, Uruguay took part in the implementation of 84 bilateral SSC initiatives (75 projects and 9 actions) (*Informe de la cooperación Sur-Sur en Iberoamérica* 2018, 52-53).

In its dual role as recipient and provider of international cooperation, Uruguay could be labelled as a "global adaptive actor" or a "moderate reformist" that looks for a place according to its capacities in the IDC system shaped by the North (Cerdeña Duenás and Lemus Delgado 2015; Malacalza 2016). This means that Uruguay is an actor that expected an adjustment in the system to make space for the middle-income countries and SSC, and not the creation of a new regime, different from the one created by the DAC. Indeed, Uruguay has participated in different initiatives in the context of reconstruction of the architecture of IDC, like Delivering as One (DaO) programme.

This programme was launched by UN Secretary-General in 2006 to further strengthen the management and coordination of UN operational activities. The DaO process was an initiative that took place between 2007 and 2012 in eight “pilot” countries (Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Pakistan, Vietnam and Uruguay), through which the UN implemented, together with the national governments, the new frame to manage IDC. The main objective was to adopt the “Four Ones” – namely One Leader, One Programme, One Budget and, where appropriate, One Office – to develop approaches that would enhance coherence, efficiency and effectiveness at country level and reduce transaction costs.

According to the former UN Resident Coordinator in Uruguay, DaO’s objective was “[...] allowing the UN, in collaboration with the governments of the eight country pilots, to develop approaches that would enhance the coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of the UN at a national scale and to reduce transaction costs for the countries that adopted it” (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 124).

The case of Uruguay has the peculiarity of being the only nation selected from LA and the only upper-middle income economy (at that moment) to be part of the group of voluntary countries. In accordance with its purpose, the DaO initiative benefits Uruguay with various projects and actions that aimed at strengthening its institutionality and mechanisms of IDC through the implementation of joint results frameworks, annual reports, monitoring mechanism, and also joint monitoring and evaluation task forces. In this way, it supported the process implemented by the government regarding the efforts to organise and rationalise the country’s international cooperation, as well as, from the cooperative actor’s perspective, the consolidation of a chief interlocutor in the government, based on the “One UN, One Country” approach (Harari et al. 2010, 15-16).

The Four Ones reflected the principles established at the Paris Declaration (2005). In this way, the agenda and priorities of the ODA’s offers were deployed in recipient countries along with procedures, metrics and standards that were functional to the established aid architecture. It is also important to remark that DaO had the financial support of 25 DAC country donors and multi-donor trust funds. One of these modalities was the Expanded Delivering as One Funding Window for Achievement of the MDGs, launched in 2008 with initial support from Spain, the UK and Norway. As a result, one of the joint programmes financed by the One UN Coherence Fund “increased partnership with the European Union (EU) and Spanish Government” (*Independent evaluation of delivering as one: main report 2012*, 246).

During the same period, Uruguay started to strengthen its political integration and cooperation with LA, setting out as a SSC provider. Moreover, the country began to seize greater opportunities to develop TC projects, mainly within SEGIB and especially with Spain as its developed partner. In this framework, Uruguay’s former director of international cooperation at the MoFA highlights TC as “a new alternative that Uruguay is starting to grasp, because it will foster the possibility of raising old-school funds from traditional cooperation with another name, another modality and other — much smaller — amounts.”

It is worth mentioning that the OECD and SEGIB conceive TC as a “modality under construction,” with no agreements on its definition and with scarce academic works that deal with it. Both the variety of purposes assigned to it and the plurality of political and cooperative contexts in which it operates hinder the possibility of reaching a consensus on its delimitation and characterisation. In fact, it was a marginalised modality until the end of the first decade of this century.

In this sense, in 2011 Busan High-Level Forum, TC was prominent in the declarations and it was increasingly cemented in the IDC agenda. In the SDGs, it is emphasised as a way of revitalising the Global Alliance for Sustainable Development and it was set at the same level as SSC in the 2nd High-Level Conference on SSC, held in March 2019, in the 40th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA+40).

The consolidation of TC in the region is being especially stimulated by SEGIB. In the context of BAPA+40, it broached a reflective process regarding TC with the prospect of analysing how to strengthen it. Additionally, in view of the new regional economic and political reality and the relative deceleration of SSC since 2015, LA countries have started to show a tendency for this type of cooperation. This trend rose, since it can help to maintain relations with developed countries — especially by providing financing opportunities for the graduated countries — but with different terms than ODA, at least in regard to aid conditionality.

Uruguayan participation in TC is still incipient, but it has been acknowledged at a discourse level and it reveals a growing data tendency. Based on the country’s international cooperation profile, SEGIB selected Montevideo as the headquarters for the PIFCSS’ Technical Unit during the 2012-2015 period. This is considered a relevant fact for the analysis because the programme has a key role in the strengthening of SSC in the region, in the exchange of experiences related to public policies of each country and in the coordination of positions in the IDC system regarding SSC and TC.

Unlike the DaO initiative, which strengthened the Uruguayan technical capacities and institutionality, the PIFCSS also enhanced the political dialogue related to SSC between Ibero-American countries. The PIFCSS is composed of political representatives of Ibero-American states and a Technical Unit in charge of implementing the guidelines of SEGIB. The PIFCSS was approved in the 8th Ibero-American Summit in 2008, with the initial mission of “strengthening and invigorating Ibero-American Horizontal SSC—thus contributing to the quality and impact of its actions — as well as promoting the exchange of experiences that would be adaptable to the contexts and priorities of each country’s public policies” (PIFCSS 2008). With the passage of time, the PIFCSS assumed a central role in the production of methodological instruments and research documents on SSC and TC. Among them, we can identify the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the Structured Mechanism for the Exchange of SSC Experiences and ten editions of the Report of SSC in Ibero-America, which is the main and most well-known product. In addition, we must mention the “Diploma course on international cooperation with emphasis on SSC.”

In this sense, leading the PIFCSS' Technical Unit implied that Uruguay occupied a central role, since it represented the region in various international forums. This allowed the country to have access to numerous instances of training for AUCI employees; to learn about good practices and different ways of implementing cooperation; and to work on the development and strengthening of its institutions (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 146).

The institutionalisation process of Uruguayan IDC

Since the 2005 Paris Declaration, traditional donors started to demand changes in the management of development assistance to the recipient countries. In this way, they encouraged regulatory and institutional adjustments at state level in developing countries, as the case of Uruguay illustrates. This was asserted in the interviews we held with the staff of AUCI and the Planning and Budget Office (OPP, for its acronym in Spanish), when referring to the demands for institutional consolidation and enhancement of cooperation management, particularly regarding AECID and the UN in Uruguay. As stated by AECID's former general coordinator in Uruguay, his job aimed at "maximising the impact of ODA flows, by overcoming traditional constraints related to the ways in which such flows were provided, allocated and managed" (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 94).

At that time, the main organisms in charge of cooperation in Uruguay were the Department of Cultural Affairs and International Cooperation of the MoFA and the Department of International Cooperation of the OPP. Additionally, there was a poorly coordinated network of cooperation departments or offices inside the Ministries, departmental governments and civil society organizations, among other actors that constituted the National System for International Cooperation (NSIC) (Porciúncula 2010). This poorly harmonised system was seen by IOs as a hindrance to the efficiency of their work. Consequently, they started to stimulate the national government to improve its harmonisation in order to facilitate their work and coherence, based on the consolidation of a single interlocutor that would represent the NSIC.

In view of the facts, the cooperation policy and its institutionality have been strongly shaped by Uruguay's experience with DaO, which represented an instrument that favoured greater inter-governmental coordination of the country's cooperation activities and strengthened its administration (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 123). In this sense, DaO principles guided joint work between governmental organisations, departmental administrations and civil society. They also favoured the constitution of a NSIC with institutional focal points legitimated by and engaged with the initiative, with knowledge of the management, implementation and monitoring process of the DaO initiative (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 125).

DaO programme lay the basis for the development of AUCI. According to the UNDP official in Uruguay, the "H" programme, which was implemented within the framework of the so-called

Joint Programmes, was the cornerstone of the creation of AUCI. At the time, it was projected as the “International Cooperation Institute,” it oversaw human resources training and it worked on the upgrading of cooperation institutionalization. Hence, the DaO process allowed AUCI to lead the coordination of the NSCI and become the guiding cooperation entity of the country (Agencia Uruguay de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 122).

At the same time, in this context of new international rules for aid effectiveness, AECID — through the 2008 Management Contract — committed to supporting the consolidation of the institutions that received cooperation. Moreover, it concluded memorandums of understanding with several partners of the region — like Uruguay — to develop TC, enhance its capacities and share the achieved improvements. In this context, in 2009 the country approved the project named “Creation of Uruguay’s Institute of International Cooperation (IUCI),” which later became an Agency, as mentioned before. This project, designed with the purposes of strengthening Uruguay’s cooperation institutionalization, training its staff and developing instruments to systematise information, received financial support from AECID (187 thousand dollars) and the UN (152 thousand dollars) (Agencia Uruguay de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 94).

The creation of AUCI as the guiding organism of the country’s international cooperation policy concluded the process with the Law n. 18.719 of the 2010-2014 National Budget. AUCI was conceived as a decentralised organism, directly dependant on the Presidency of the Republic, with a Board of Directors composed by the Presidential Deputy Secretary, the Director of OPP and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The initiative was effective in regard to the actions of IOs, in the sense that it successfully achieved the expected outcomes of the programme. All actions regarding institutional strengthening, transference of good practices, recruitment and training of technical human resources explain the evident institutional isomorphism of AUCI, as observed by Sanahuja on this report.

Similarly, there was also an increase in efforts towards the institutional strengthening of cooperation at a regional level, given that the behaviours, ideas and preferences of political actors are not external to public institutions, but rather develop within them. According to Porciúncula (2010, 19), the political change of Uruguay’s administration had a reformist character, which was already present in most LA countries and proposed the creation of new institutions. Therefore, the first SSC projects that Uruguay received from the region — mainly from Chile and Colombia — aimed at the transfer of knowledge and lessons learned through the process of institutional building, which provided the basis for the design and definition of national regulations.

SEGIB, through the PIFCSS, was relevant in the cooperation conceptions among its main activity areas, training of the staff in charge of cooperation in the region, the exchange of experiences, the development and harmonisation of information and the development of methodologies and instruments for SSC and TC. Besides, it implements a process of reflection and adaptation concerning the institutional cooperation arrangements in the countries of the region. In addition, this programme serves as a hub to develop positions within the spheres of the IDC system and promote dialogue with other actors (Agencia Uruguay de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 145).

The case of Uruguay is also peculiar because it hosted the headquarters of the PIFCSS' Technical Unit during the 2012-2015 period, which contributed to improving records and visibility of Uruguay on the subject of SSC. The PIFCSS' Technical Unit started to operate in Uruguay in 2012 at the office of the Presidency of the Republic, where AUCI staff worked. According to AUCI (2014, 146), the three years in which it directed the PIFCSS' Technical Unit allowed Uruguay to strengthen its participation in international forums representing the PIFCSS. At the same time, it was useful to gain knowledge and consolidate its SSC strategy, based on the fact that one of the fundamental fields in which the PIFCSS has worked is precisely the strengthening of agencies and entities in charge of cooperation in LA countries. Its purpose was to boost cooperation through human resource training concerning conceptual aspects and SSC management instruments. The corollary of the strong engagement that Uruguay started to have in regional and international platforms was that AUCI assumed command of the PIFCSS' Technical Unit (Fittipaldi 2013, 205).

Furthermore, Uruguay had a role as a cooperation provider for other countries of the region, operating as an actor that has transferred good practices and experiences gained as a pilot country of the DaO programme, through TC. This is based on the fact that “if Uruguay pretends to have an impact on a third country, it must necessarily associate with another partner that can expand its scope in terms of financing and technical capacity. Hence, the aim is to achieve an enhanced SSC” (Fittipaldi 2013, 218).

In this sense, the TC activities that Uruguay reported were precisely related to the field of training, through the implementation of courses with international experts for the technical staff of Uruguay. Moreover, other countries were encouraged to participate so that they can profit from the experience.

As an illustrative example, we can cite the case of cooperation between Uruguay and El Salvador to implement the DaO programme in the latter country. The exchange of experiences, knowledge, actions and lessons learned among both countries and the UN resulted in El Salvador being internationally acknowledged as the 36th DaO country in the world and the first self-starter in LA (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2014, 128-129).

Although Uruguay still has a limited participation in TC, it displays a growing tendency to participate at a regional level, partly stimulated by developed countries, the UN and SEGIB. TC has, on the one hand, shown true potential as an instrument of financial and technical support within the path of the renewed 2030 Agenda and, on the other, as an instrument with considerable impact, which transfers Northern knowledge and methodologies to LA.

Uruguay: towards “Development in Transition”

After the important engagement of Uruguay in the IDC system in 2018, the country “graduated” to high-income status. This situation drastically limits the possibilities of receiving

ODA, which had already been suffering an intense and systematic drop in the previous years. For this reason, the government of Uruguay is currently developing a coordination task in IDC forums, concerning the importance of strengthening a new instrument and the need to continue receiving ODA. Uruguay's arguments are based on the fact that the region has structural deficiencies and that SDGs pose challenges to all countries, emphasising the approach of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The particular concern expressed by Chile and Uruguay — the two “graduated” countries in LA — given ODA retraction and the impossibility of participating in EU programmes, were echoed at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the OECD Development Center, of which Uruguay has been a full member since 2015. Indeed, Uruguay has taken part in the elaboration of new metrics for development. It could be underlined that Uruguay agreed with the Development Center and the OECD Statistics Department to be a pilot country for the “Multidimensional Country Review” (MCR) that identified well-being indicators, made a diagnosis on where the country's challenges lie, and defined recommendations of policies and contributions for their implementation (*Estudio multi-dimensional de Uruguay, volumen 1: evaluación inicial* 2014).

The forums promoted by the OECD contributed to the dialogue to review graduation measurement criteria. In this sense, we can point out that the agenda of the South was taken up by the North and the concerns and interests of the South affected the way in which the IDC architecture is being designed. As a result, the new narrative of “Development in Transition” (DiT), supported by the OECD, the ECLAC and the EU was launched.

The DiT approach states that a country's level of development and income are often seen as synonymous, disregarding the fact that development has multiple economic, social and environmental dimensions and that it depends on a wide variety of pathways, which are conditioned by a country's specific geography and history, proposing a metric beyond the GDP per capita and the adoption of approaches like the MCR.

Therefore, DiT is presented as “an opportunity to advance towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda by rethinking the concept of development, the strategies countries should pursue and the role of international co-operation in facilitating these efforts” (Latin American economic outlook 2019: development in transition 2019, 23). DiT calls for improving domestic capacities and adopting more innovative modalities of IDC with a new multi-dimensional approach to sustainable development. The concept of DiT is particularly significant in LA, where most countries are reaching higher income levels, but continue to face structural challenges related to inequalities, regional disparities, access to education, technologies, formal jobs or social protection.

Due to the DiT approach and call to action, the EU launched and led, with the support of the OECD and ECLAC, the Regional Facility for DiT as a facilitator for LA development agenda. Through this Facility, the EU will strengthen its engagement with partner countries in LA and IOs to adapt and offer adequate support. The Facility will assess how transitions to higher levels

of income can benefit from improved strategic and policy capacities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We consider this new approach highly relevant, but at the same time we stress the fact that, despite the relevance of financial and non-financial support, the implementation mechanisms, facilities and practical strategies could reinforce once again the relevance of income and GDP in the development categorisations, transforming the DiT into an ‘intermediate category’ between developing and developed countries. Altogether, this approach has the risk to depoliticise the IDC Agenda debate, which needs to take into account the international power asymmetries and the political capture that blocks the possibility of pushing for systemic change (Costafreda and Cortés Saenz 2020, 237).

In the context of DiT and the pursuit of SDGs in 2019, AUCI published a document in which it “[...] proposes a long term vision, aligned with the international commitments our country has assumed regarding the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, which allows us to overcome the compartmentalised thoughts and actions in order to define a State Policy” (Agencia Uruguaya de Cooperación Internacional 2019, 5), in line with the arguments deployed by ECLAC, the OECD and SEGIB.

The DiT’s concepts were welcomed by international cooperation agencies and both SEGIB and PIFCSS supported the dialogue among LA actors to understand the meaning and the scope of the perspective in alignment with the proposals emanating from OECD and EU. Within this framework, the AUCI has agreed with the General Directorate for International Cooperation and Development of the EU and the EU Delegation in Uruguay to sign a grant contract with the aim of designing and implementing a new form of cooperation to accompany the strategic dialogue on development cooperation between Uruguay and the EU.

The DiT proposes a reformulation of the IDC to encompass the SSC and continue supporting, through multilateral funds and TC, development strategies in recently graduated countries that still have deep inequalities and concerns in their social and economic structures. ODA is presented as a catalyst for technological innovation processes while TC and CSS are promoted as part of a set of modalities to impulse international cooperation. Nonetheless, the risk of considering the SSC as only one more financing modality or simply as an implementation mechanism at the same level as the TC is that SSC could be emptied of its political content and its components of autonomy and collective capacities, such as when SSC was reduced to the term Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries in 1978. In the 21st Century we face once again the risk of depoliticising SSC against the interests of the South.

Conclusion

According to Finnemore (1996), the behaviour of countries depends on their identity and interests, which are primarily composed of international forces transferred to them through IOs

that frame public policies on concrete fields and provide normative guidance for the countries. Therefore, the regulations promoted by IOs can have a decisive impact on the political options of their members. Moreover, sociological-constructivist perspectives emphasise the capacity of IOs as actors with the ability to create taxonomies and conceptual categories in order to understand and grasp the international society.

In this sense, in the present work we draw attention to the fact that before the questioning views on the IDC system and certain loss of influence of Southern conceptions, developed countries started to take part in SSC activities through IOs, particularly OECD and UN, as well as through an increase in TC proposals. The expected result is to co-opt Southern actors and contain an alternative regime of international cooperation emerging from the South with its own financial and political institutionalisation, instruments of technical and technological assistance and system of monitoring and evaluation, different from the DAC.

In the case of Uruguay, we consider that the DaO programme, the establishment of the PIFCSS' Technical Unit and TC actions stem from successful strategies of developed countries, which had an impact on the international cooperation agenda and in the process of institutionalisation of this Southern country.

Through diffusion mechanism, such as training of technical human resources, political reflections and good practices on international cooperation, the IO influenced the institutionalisation of Uruguay's international cooperation and, hence, impacted the strategies that the country outlined as an emerging provider in the IDC system. Based on the interviews that we conducted and the several official documents, we have identified that the Uruguayan government had an optimistic perception of its institutional strengthening and the consolidation of its dual role within the IDC system. They were considered instruments that positively contributed to the prestige and image of the country at an international level.

In addition, as it was mentioned before, the constant interaction between national bureaucracy and international technicians allowed AUCI to adopt a working scheme aligned to the models and practices promoted by the North in order to develop its SSC guidelines. A relevant element is the number of reports, manuals and methodological guides that have been published by SEGIB and the PIFCSS, which gather, systematise and disseminate regional and Uruguayan SSC.

Furthermore, OECD and SEGIB have had a strong influence on the political options of AUCI and on its international positions. Our analysis, made from the perspective of the critical theory and IPE, allows us to explain the lack of reformist proposals and actions in the IDC system coming from Uruguay, and to understand the mechanisms that tend to the redistribution and balance of power, which offers a better position to the country. In this sense, the OECD and SEGIB have had a clear role in the definition of concepts and approaches that Uruguay has adopted when developing its own positions on the IDC system. Straightforward examples are the fact that the country was seen as a "pilot" in two opportunities (DaO and MCR), the alignment with the DiT approach and the support for TC. AUCI presents these modalities as good options to maintain an active profile in the IDC system and continue

receiving support from the North to stimulate its development process to achieve SDGs and strengthen SSC and TC.

From the first approach of SSC perspectives — presented in the first section —, in which SSC is mainly reflected in the positions adopted in global and regional institutions as an alternative cooperation modality, we observe that Uruguay has an approach of ‘global adaptive actor’, where they ‘capitalise’ the international cooperation as an opportunity to have a better position or image in the system. Regardless of the specific financial and technical benefits for the institutionalisation of the Uruguayan SSC, as we can see, these diffusion actions demonstrate the structural power that reinforces the stabilisation of the international debate and the maintenance of the IDC system (Strange 1994; Hettne 1995).

We consider that the ideas and knowledge shared by traditional donors through IOs and TC shaped the expectations and behavior of Uruguay as a country already “graduated” from ODA and as an emerging SSC provider. In this way, we identify that, on the one hand, Uruguay has strengthened its institutionality and its international cooperation system through these programmes.

On the other hand, developed countries managed to stimulate the convergence of regulations and practices between the DAC and a new Southern cooperative partner. They both share the view that it is essential to generate a new set of international instruments that encompasses the peculiarities of the South and that incorporates SSC practices into a larger, more inclusive governance of the IDC system.

The influences of IO, that crystallise visions, values and norms of the North, were critical to the path taken by Uruguay to the consolidation of a dual role in the IDC system. The acceptance, internalization, and reproduction of the DAC dynamics separate the country from the disruptive voices that claim for a SSC regimen with its own rules and values. This also tends to dilute the differences between ODA, TC and SSC. In this sense, we see a clear intention of the developed countries to co-opt the ‘global adaptive actors’ of the South, in order to gain legitimacy and maintain the IDC system’s *status quo*. In this context, IOs have a central role in the diffusion of ideas and practices performing as transmission belts between North and South.

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