India has been a provider of development assistance to other countries since the early 1950s, impressively soon after it achieved independence. This includes grants, loans, debt relief, scholarships, technical cooperation, food aid, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance (Price 2005, Agrawal 2007, Chanana 2009, Meier and Murthy 2011, Chaturvedi 2012a, 2012b, Mullen 2013). Over the last decade India’s visibility in and contributions to international development have significantly expanded, and together with other ‘South–South’ partners like Brazil and China, India is now successfully challenging the dominant, western-led norms, modalities and institutions of the ‘international’ development regime (Mawdsley 2012a). Development cooperation is rarely the explicit subject of foreign policy analyses, yet it has much to recommend it as a lens on the identities and interests that shape India’s engagement with the South Asian region, the rest of the G77, other ‘rising powers’ and the West. In particular, the languages, performances, practices and agendas of development cooperation provide insight into a rich interplay between the realms of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power. As with all ‘donor’ or partner countries, development cooperation combines claims to a particular form of national virtue in combination with strategic geo-economic agendas, sometimes in complementary ways and sometimes in tension. India’s development cooperation continues to be powerfully anchored in its colonial and post-colonial history, even as it is currently being re-tuned towards evolving foreign policy interests, capacities and contexts in the twenty-first century. Development cooperation is now a key element in the meetings and discussions of rising power initiatives and forums, notably IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), the BRICS Forum Summit (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and the India–Africa Forum Summits; as well as in the global development governance architecture (UNDP 2013). It therefore provides a means of exploring India’s re-positioning with G77 partner states, with other ‘rising powers’ such as China and Brazil, and with the ‘established’ powers.

The first part of this chapter gives a brief overview of the history, modalities and architecture of India’s development cooperation. The second section changes tack to set out a critical analysis of India’s discursive framing of its development cooperation relationships and initiatives within a construct of post-colonial and ‘Third Worldist’ solidarity. Here I focus on the projection of ‘virtue’ in the realm of foreign policy. Like other claims to virtue
International development

(such as those accompanying various forms of western foreign aid), I suggest that this reflects a real sense of doing and being ‘good’ that should not be dismissed as a simple veneer for more strategic interests. However, this frame can also work to obscure ‘unenlightened’ self-interest, as well as the violence and contradictions of ‘development’ (or rather, economic growth strategies), both domestically and abroad. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on future directions for Indian development cooperation, with a focus on some of the emerging challenges that are likely to confront the Modi government and beyond.

India’s development cooperation: definitions, institutions, modalities

India has been a provider of formal development assistance since the early 1950s (for detailed accounts, see Price 2005, 2011, Agrawal 2007, Chanana 2009, Meier and Murthy 2011, Chaturvedi 2012a, 2012b, Mullen 2013, Chaturvedi et al. 2014). This comprises various forms of concessional financing (e.g. grants, loans, Lines of Credit, debt relief), technical assistance (e.g. providing experts, training and educational scholarships) and humanitarian assistance (financing, personnel and in-kind, including food aid, medicines and so on). Cultural exchanges have also been enrolled in building good will and ties between India and its partner countries. As we will see, the last decade has marked a real acceleration and vitality in India’s development cooperation flows, signifying growing capacity but also renewed recognition of its strategic value in supporting geo-economic and diplomatic interests.

Most of India’s development cooperation flows and activities have traditionally focused on its South Asian neighbours. Piccio (2013) reports that in 2012–2013, Bhutan received 36 per cent ($213 million) of India’s technical assistance budget, much of which is focused on generating hydropower, of which India buys back a substantial proportion; while Nepal received 8 per cent ($49 million). Afghanistan is an increasing priority for India, which is investing in roads, energy and social programmes, and has financed and built its new Parliament (Sachdeva 2014). India also has longstanding development partnership relations with many African countries, and it is notable that these are both expanding, notably through Lines of Credit (see below), but also flagship programmes, such as the pan-Africa e-network, and in terms of technical assistance (Cheru and Obi 2010, Mawdsley and McCann 2011). For example, in the second India–Africa Forum Summit held in Addis Ababa in 2011, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pledged $700 million to build educational institutions and training programmes across Africa, as well as a further $5 billion in Lines of Credit (Piccio 2013). Demonstrating shifting domestic needs and changing external contexts, historic relations with Eastern African countries and South Africa are now being somewhat eclipsed by the new importance of central Africa and West Africa (Singh 2007, Vittorini and Harris 2011). The TEAM-9 initiative, for example, is now facilitating emerging relationships between India and eight oil-producing West African counties.

In reading and repeating figures like those cited above we must be aware that the complex nature and multi-institutional management of India’s development cooperation mean that some caution needs to be exercised. Existing accounting systems are not necessarily set up to isolate and identify all of the flows that might come under this inherently diffuse category, which by their blurred and blended nature may in any case be evaded, double counted, or simply naturally subsumed in other transfers. Defining, calculating and monitoring South–South flows are growing areas of pressure, as various donors and non-state development actors seek to enhance transparency across the whole sector (e.g. Tierney et al. 2011). While there are important rationales for these efforts, including domestic accountability and...
effective international cooperation, some Southern actors express concern that the real intent is to expose, manipulate and discipline the SSDC (South–South Development Cooperation) in ways that inhibit its autonomy and thus foreign policy value. Like other Southern development actors, India asserts its right to define development cooperation on its own terms rather than those of OECD-DAC (OECD Development Assistance Committee) or other international organisations. Bearing this in mind, the best available calculations suggest that Indian expenditure on foreign technical and economic cooperation constituted a historic high of 59.5 per cent of all MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) spending in 2012–2013, having generally hovered around 35–40 per cent since 1997–1998. As a percentage of GNP this comes to 0.074 per cent (Chaturvedi et al. 2014). Piccio (2013) reports that in 2013–2014 the Government of India put aside $1.3 billion for foreign assistance, a figure that excludes Lines of Credit (see below). By Piccio’s calculations this represents a fourfold increase since 2003–2004. It should also be noted that by adjusting these figures to Purchasing Power Parity, recipients may get a great deal more value for money from India than from western donors, depending on the type of flow.

A feature of India’s development cooperation is the expertise it claims to derive from direct experience of many of the social, environmental and market conditions of partner countries. Examples include training in conducting elections in low literacy regions, developing ICT (information and communication technologies) systems and capacities in poorer contexts, and promoting agrarian technologies that suit dry and sub-tropical soils and climates. A second characteristic element of Indian development cooperation, again something it shares with other Southern donors and development partners, is the insistence that it responds to the needs and priorities of its partners, and that unlike western donors, India does not impose its own agendas or policy conditionalities. In a small number of countries, India’s development cooperation accounts for a notable share of overall development assistance (such as Afghanistan and Nepal), and in the case of Bhutan, it comprises a significant proportion of the national budget. However, notwithstanding recent increases, in most countries India’s development cooperation share tends to be relatively small. That said, as Bach (2013) rightly argues, calculations based on a ‘traditional’ reckoning of donor/partner influence through the quantum of ‘aid’ can underplay the geopolitical significance of South–South development cooperation.

Bach’s observation points to a broader issue of profound importance, which is that South–South ‘development cooperation’ should not be mistaken for ‘foreign aid’. It certainly has many shared practical and even conceptual elements with what the OECD-DAC and multilateral development organisations would define as ‘foreign aid’ (or more properly Overseas Development Assistance: ODA). Like western foreign aid, Indian development cooperation is also partly located within a set of normative claims about ‘moral’ relations between states (but, as we shall see, very different from those framing North-South flows); while clearly many of its material elements – technical assistance, grants and some types of loan – would comfortably fall under the definition of ODA. However, as well as its very different historical lineages and symbolic positioning (discussed in more detail below), SSDC is characteristically blurred and blended with trade, investment and diplomatic agendas. While informed comparisons can certainly be valid and productive up to a point, foreign aid and SSDC are not equivalent or synonymous, but arise from profoundly different historical structures and locations (although the direction of travel appears to be convergence in key regards: Mawdsley 2014b).

It is worth digressing here slightly to comment on some of the intellectual and political implications of this observation. Some commentators (more so in the West, but not
exclusively so) tend to make a category error in simplistically treating ‘aid’ and ‘South–South development cooperation’ as equivalents, leading to distorted comparisons and conclusions. Deborah Bräutigam (2009) has been especially effective at demonstrating this in relation to Chinese ‘aid’, for example. However, other commentators (more so in the South, but again, not exclusively so) tend to overdraw the binary, refusing to see any shared conceptual or practical dimensions between aid and SSDC. This is often allied to a robust critique of ‘imperialistic western aid’, certainly justifiable to an extent – although not when ‘western’ aid is reductively treated as a single phenomenon. It can also be accompanied by the dismissal of any critical appraisal of SSDC as being motivated by ignorance and/or ulterior motives – again, sometimes a reasonable concern, but not universally so. This defensiveness, even if partly understandable, is not conducive to more critical or progressive analyses. The domain of policy-academic debate about SSDC is maturing and changing very rapidly, but it is an area that is prone to slippages and suspicions when it comes to assumptions about personal, national and institutional positionalities. We shall return to these observations in the conclusions.

To come back to the overview, India’s institutional framework for development cooperation has historically been rather fragmented, and is currently in a period of adjustment. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is nodal, but the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce and the EXIM Bank (Export Import Bank of India) are playing a growing role. A flagship programme, initiated in 1964 and which is in currently in a new phase of growth, is the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scheme. ITEC comprises projects and project-related work, deputations of experts and study tours, but its main focus is on providing training programmes in areas as diverse as small and medium enterprises, rural credit programmes, food processing, textiles and women’s entrepreneurship. IT and computing skills represent an increasingly large share of the training available and in demand; and more recently it has expanded to include disaster relief aid. The scheme runs in over 150 countries, and through it the Indian government offers about 10,000 civilian and military placements a year (Chaturvedi et al. 2014). Some time ago, Agrawal (2007) estimated that there were some 40,000 ITEC alumni around the world, an expanding number of course. Partner governments are free to nominate their own candidates, usually bureaucrats and officials, who are then funded to travel to India and undertake the relevant training. In Africa, ITEC is bolstered by the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP), while a third programme, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), promotes an array of cultural interactions and tours. Chaturvedi et al. (2014) report that ITEC is now funded to the tune of $11 million/year.

India’s EXIM Bank now manages its official Lines of Credit (LoCs). Through LoCs, the Government of India helps lower risk by guaranteeing loans and providing interest subsidies, and different types are open to Indian firms, and overseas governments, firms and banks (Sinha 2010). Like other aspects of India’s development cooperation, these LoCs are heavily tied to the purchase of Indian goods and services. India is criticised by the ‘traditional’ donors for blurring the lines between ‘aid’, geopolitics and commerce, but supporters of this blended approach argue that it provides a more effective bundling of financing and technical assistance (CII-WTO 2013). Indeed, if anything, it appears that ‘traditional’ donors may start to move more strongly in this direction (Mawdsley et al. 2014). These LoCs are one part of the growing choice of financial instruments and credit sources across the global South, offering both risks and rewards for lenders and borrowers. Like many other elements of Indian development cooperation they have a long history: Chaturvedi et al. (2014) document LoCs to Burma in 1950–1951, as well as other examples over the following decades. But
like other elements too, the quantum, organisation and purposing of India’s LoCs has been changing over the last decade. A much higher share is now going to African countries, while the shift to the EXIM Bank from the Ministry of Finance signals a firmer commercial agenda. Very clearly, the growing sums available through LoCs is indicative of India’s strengthening economic clout: Chaturvedi et al. (2014) calculate total LoC commitments in 2012 as $7.7 billion, comprising 153 LoCs in 94 countries. Projects financed include rice production in Senegal, power plants in Belarus and IT training centres in Mongolia (see also Mullen 2013).

Discussions have been underway since 2003 regarding stronger institutionalisation of Indian development cooperation. Somewhat halting progress followed, with various announcements and intentions not always finding a firm footing, but a breakthrough came in 2012 with establishment of a new Development Partnership Administration (DPA) within the MEA. The intention of the DPA is to enable a dedicated, more effective and streamlined set of development cooperation programmes. Different divisions deal with Lines of Credit, grant projects, civilian and defence training slots under ITEC and related programmes, and humanitarian/disaster responses in different regions/partner countries. Around 50 other Ministries, Departments and agencies are also involved through their involvement in technical cooperation programmes. However, differences within and between these institutions can lead to some policy incoherence; while development cooperation policymaking and programmes – like other parts of Indian foreign policy – may be hampered by the relatively small number of personnel in the MEA (and more specifically in the DPA), as well as by the rapidly growing field, some of which is bringing novel challenges in terms of expertise, scale, site and partner context (Chaturvedi 2012b). NGOs and other civil society groupings have, with very few exceptions, not been enrolled within India’s development cooperation activities to date – although there are emerging forums of discussion and possible partnerships (Dubochet 2011, Roychoudhury 2013, PRIA-RIS 2013, Mawdsley and Roychoudhury 2015).

In respect of multilateral development organisations, India is a major provider of UN peacekeeping troops, and is now increasing its commitments – selectively – to a number of multilaterals, such as the World Food Programme. India is also becoming a larger and arguably more powerful creditor to a number of IMF and World Bank funds and institutions (the relationship is not straightforward: see Bryant 2008, Woods 2010, Vestergaard and Wade 2013). However, in terms of country-level collaboration, India tends not to sit on formal donor coordination bodies, with the exceptions of Afghanistan and Nepal. In some contexts this is because India’s development cooperation flows are small and it does not have the capacity or will to join onerous coordination bodies. But it is also because the ‘traditional donors’ at the country level have not always fully woken up to the growing presence and importance of the non-DAC donors, other than China (Mawdsley 2010); while like a number of other Southern partners, India rejects the persistent colonial/post-colonial power relations embedded in these donor forums, and in dominant ‘aid’ ideologies, relationships and architectures more broadly (Nair 2013). Overall, while India is certainly engaging more closely with certain parts of the international development community, it is doing so on its own terms, and is presently showing little interest in being drawn into dialogue and emerging partnership initiatives, such as the Global Partnership for Development Effectiveness or the post-2015 development discussions. Where there is more activity is with rising power formations, such as IBSA (Vieira and Alden 2011) and the BRICS Forum Summit, although these are still coalescing and finding their identity and rationales (Price 2011).

This very short overview of India’s development cooperation history, organisation and programmes can only scratch the surface, and readers are encouraged to turn to
the more substantial works referenced. Taking a somewhat different approach, the next section turns to a critical appraisal of the discursive framework for Indian development cooperation.

**Framing Indian development cooperation**

India’s foreign policy orientation and capacities in the twenty-first century show both continuity and change across a spectrum of issues and relationships (for different perspectives, see amongst others: Raja Mohan 2004, Malone 2011, Bajpai and Pant 2013, Chaudhuri 2013, Ogden 2014). It is striking then, that notwithstanding what has clearly been a very significant period of expansion and re-articulation of development cooperation since 2003, development cooperation, as a particular realm of foreign policy, has remained strongly discursively anchored to an earlier era, framed most notably by the Non-Aligned Movement and attempts to foster stronger ‘Third World’ diplomatic alliances and platforms within the UN, while promoting South–South economic integration. At official events, and in speeches, publications and communiqués, Indian development cooperation, like SSDC more broadly, is consistently framed around the following claims:

- The assertion of a shared experience of colonial exploitation, post-colonial inequality and present vulnerability to uneven neoliberal globalisation, and thus a shared identity of a ‘developing’ nation;
- Based on this shared experience, a specific expertise in appropriate development approaches and technologies;
- An explicit rejection of hierarchical relations, and a strong articulation of the principles of respect, sovereignty and non-interference; and
- An insistence on win-win outcomes and mutual opportunity provided by Indian development cooperation.

In relation to Africa, for example, Ministerial speeches will almost invariably start with the ancient trade ties of the Indian Ocean, move to shared colonial oppression, recall Gandhi’s initiation into political and social activism in South Africa, and invoke Nehru’s commitment to African independence and autonomy. In a visit to Mauritius in 2009, India’s urbane UN representative, Shashi Tharoor, exemplified the content and tone of dozens of official speeches:

The India–Africa partnership has deep roots in history. Linked across the Indian Ocean, we have been neighbours and partners for thousands of years ... The advent of the Europeans and the colonial period disturbed these interactions but could not disrupt them. Later, both India and Africa shared the pain of subjugation and the joys of freedom and liberation. Satyagraha [truth force], non-violence and active opposition to injustice and discrimination were first used by Mahatma Gandhi on the continent of Africa ... Nehru was also a firm believer and practitioner of the principle of Afro-Asian solidarity.

*Parentheses added*

The first observation here is that framing past relations and current interests in this way differs markedly from the recent mainstream constructions of foreign aid in the West (although see Lancaster 2007 as a reminder of the range/plurality within the ‘West’). Even
though OECD-DAC politicians and policy-makers publicly state that national self-interest is a motivation for their own aid (for example, in terms of national security), and indeed, are increasingly keen to make this case in the context of the financial crisis, the wider western public continue to overwhelmingly understand aid as ‘charity’ to the poor, whether or not they approve of such expenditure (van Heerde and Hudson 2010; see also Hulme and Fukuda-Parr 2009 on the emergence of the post-millennial normative aid regime). Dane Rowlands (2008: 8) observes that even amongst development professionals:

> Despite the consistent evidence that [western] aid allocation tends to be dominated by … political and strategic interests … there remains within the development community as a whole a sense that the true objective and motivation of development is the moral one of assisting the less fortunate.

Although western development actors have, since the late 1990s, embraced the language of ‘partnership’, most commentators observe the continuities of paternalism and power that are structured around vertical hierarchies of those who give and those who receive (Baaz 2005; Hyden 2008). In contrast, India resists the terminology of ‘donor–recipient’ and ‘foreign aid’, tarnished as these terms are by dominant western/OECD-DAC associations. Mutual opportunity, win-win outcomes and post-colonial solidarity dominate the speeches, policy language and high-level ‘conduct’ of Indian development cooperation. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal and Sudan, for example, are not the objects of charity or compassion, but places that can (to use the language of gift theory) maintain their honour and status by providing resources, investment opportunities and markets in return; places that have been similarly unfairly suppressed by colonial powers and post-colonial inequalities. This rhetoric is given expression in the ritualised performances that surround events like the India–Africa Summit (launched in 2008), as well as bilateral high-level meetings and delegations. The red carpet is literally rolled out, and every effort made to enact and convey respect, while underlining the dignity and sovereign presence of the partner nations (Mawdsley 2012b). India is able to assert a claim to selfless good citizenship and solidarity, *within and through* a language of mutual benefit (rather than charity), by insisting on aligned experiences, interests and agendas between itself and its partners.

One outcome of the language of and commitment to mutual benefit and equality is the stated respect for sovereignty and position of non-interference. Indian development cooperation, as with SSDC more broadly, is characteristically not accompanied by policy conditionalities. Southern partners reject the practice of imposing changes on partner country governance structures, one of the most contentious aspects of mainstream international development. The Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and 1990s were a particularly explicit expression of this, but interference (direct and indirect) is in the founding DNA of post-war mainstream international development (Gould 2005): indeed, many would claim that efforts to ‘reform’ developing economies and societies is virtuous and necessary. Critics of this (official) stance of non-interference express concerns that it will undermine efforts to reduce corruption, achieve poverty reduction and promote human rights. In some cases it is taken as evidence that the rising powers in question have little or no commitment to ‘inclusive development’, but are overwhelmingly motivated by the pursuit of their own interests – securing investment opportunities, opening access to markets, capturing resource flows, and soaping diplomatic solidarities with political elites (Fuchs and Vadlamannati 2012). India’s riposte, like that of other providers of SSDC, is located within its historic commitment to foreign policy principles that were enshrined in declarations at
the Bandung Conference of 1955. Western aid conditionalities have repeatedly breached that sovereignty, while for India non-interference is asserted to be a central and distinctive principle of its development cooperation politics and conduct. It is critical to observe also that western donors are also motivated by self-interest (defined in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways), and that foreign aid must always, first and foremost, be understood as a tool of foreign policy.

India’s normative framing of its development cooperation activities and agendas can be seen as a continuance of what Philippe Nel (2010: 951) calls ‘the unfinished struggle against disrespect and humiliation’. Drawing on constructivist international relations theory, Nel argues that the rising powers are presently seeking not just redistribution of global wealth and power (e.g. at the UN Security Council), but also recognition (see also Vieira 2012). The hierarchical languages and assumptions embedded in mainstream development over most of the post-1945 era are emblematic of decades of such humiliation – indeed, it is remarkable to what extent patronising and parochial languages and assumptions persist within everyday and official development discourse. While there have been previous attempts to build Third World platforms and joint demands, such as the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s, what has changed is the economic and political muscle that the leading rising powers now command. There is no question that this South–South discourse projects a sanitised and highly selective account of interests, agendas and impacts: it certainly can, but will not necessarily or automatically, support the interests of poorer people or poorer countries (see below). But just like foreign aid for many westerners, India’s development cooperation partnerships are constructed through a moral lens that has a real and deep purchase, in spite of contradictions and tensions in practice.

The key to both the legitimacy but also the problematic nature of these claims is that this framework tends to foreground an ethic of justice between states. Sovereign respect, (apparent) non-interference, and the claim to belong to and be working for the world’s poorest, exploited and marginalised states is clearly appreciated by many within partner countries and beyond. It constitutes an entirely justifiable challenge to a manifestly unjust dispensation of global power that reflects unequal colonial and post-1945 power relations. However, this focus on justice between states risks serious inattention to justice within states, whether in terms of land rights, labour terms and conditions, civil and political freedoms, social discrimination, and so on (Prashad 2008). Assertions of win–win outcomes, let’s say between India and Ethiopia or Nepal, are often founded on a simplistic construction of the ‘national interest’ of both partners, often equated with rapid and untrammelled industrial modernisation, whether in extraction, agriculture, infrastructure or manufacturing. This obscures and depoliticises the contested and dislocating nature of ‘development’, masking different sub-national interests of class, gender, region, sector, ethnicity and so on. Building roads, developing raw materials and ‘modernising’ agriculture will indeed bring benefits to many, but it also usually brings social and environmental costs, particularly to indigenous peoples, small farmers, herders, forest-reliant people and the poorest. How these are addressed, ameliorated and/or compensated, and whose voices are heard in the process, is the difference between growth and development.

The uneven social and economic consequences of India’s international development agendas are often glossed over beneath a symbolic regime of striving nations seeking to contest inequalities and injustices within the international hierarchy of states. The domestic politics of development within partner nations are concealed in this account of mutual benefit and Third World solidarity. When Indian politicians and officials talk about ‘respect for sovereignty’, there is little acknowledgement that sovereign power may be contested
from below, and that it by no means necessarily translates into a uncontested relationship between a nation-state and its citizens. An example of this can be found in state-supported Indian investment in agri-business in Ethiopia, which is officially framed on both sides as an example of win-win development cooperation (with Indian private sector investment being supported diplomatically, and through ITEC and Lines of Credit/official financing). However Ethiopian and Indian activists are attempting to raise issues of violent resettlement and dislocation, corrupt land deals, regressive tax and labour terms, and inattention to water and other sustainability issues (Rowden 2011). In doing so, they are drawing attention to the darker side of India’s international and domestic ‘development’ path (see also Mawdsley and Roychoudhury 2015). Interestingly – and something that disconcerts simplistic accounts of India as opposite to the West, whether as hero or villain – the UK is also currently under fire for similarly damaging ‘development’ policies in Ethiopia (Smith 2014). To re-state the point made earlier in this chapter, foreign aid and SSDC are certainly different in many regards, but this does not exclude some shared and/or similar components and characteristics.

To conclude this section, commentators across the political spectrum recognise a shift in Indian foreign policy since the new millennium. This is a diffuse, complex and partial shift, which shows both continuity and change, but India’s détente with the United States, its pursuit of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and membership of the G20, the BRICS and IBSA, all point to a gear change in both its global power and its global positioning (Golub 2013, Mielniczuk 2013, Nel and Taylor 2013). The language of fraternity, solidarity and shared interests between poorer nations that was strongly characteristic of an earlier era persists to some extent across the foreign policy spectrum, but in the (diffuse) realm of ‘development cooperation’ this language appears notably unadulterated by more recent capacities, discourses and interests. While development cooperation practices and institutions are certainly changing, often in ways that are becoming more adept, agile and suited to changing strategic needs, the meta-narrative of South–South cooperation continues to definitively frame development partnerships within an earlier historical era. Over the coming decade(s) we are likely to see whether or not this framing can withstand the challenges of promoting inclusive or exploitative development, in the context of India’s own development path, as well as the changing balance of power and alignment within and between the G77 and the G20.

Conclusions

Development cooperation both drives and reflects changing geographies of production and consumption, winners and losers, norm makers and takers, trade, investment and geopolitics. India is one of the oldest and largest providers of South–South development assistance, but like other (so-called) ‘non-traditional’ actors, its historic role as a development partner has, until the last decade or so, been largely overlooked by the international media, academia and policy analysts. This is an oversight that has been rapidly corrected, largely because of the broader BRICS phenomenon, and more specifically as the growing interest in China’s development assistance started to prompt a wider evaluation of SSDC (Mawdsley 2012a). The last decade has witnessed growth across the spectrum of Indian concessional finance, technical assistance and humanitarianism, as well as trade, investment and diplomatic activity that falls under the somewhat amorphous category of ‘development cooperation’. India is now a key player in the current re-making of global development norms, actors, modalities and institutions.
While foreign policy analysts have tended to overlook this particular material and discursive domain, in this chapter I have suggested that development cooperation provides an interesting and important lens on changing capacities, interests and identities. A variety of disciplinary approaches are essential to understanding this complex, multi-sited and multi-scaled phenomenon, including Anthropology, Development Studies and Geography. Critical, reflective and progressive scholarship is essential in thinking through a field laden with normative values, conflicting interests and disputed or poorly understood definitions and categories (Eyben 2013).

A final thought on the future: at the time of writing, the Modi government has been in power for a few months, and there are no clear signs of how such a major regime change will play out in terms of foreign policy. Rather than the dangerous enterprise of speculating on future directions, I will raise briefly some (by no means all) of the issues that may have implications for the next decade of Indian development cooperation under Modi and beyond. The first is domestic scrutiny and perception. At present India’s development cooperation is largely conducted by elite technocrats, insulated from both popular and party political consciousness. This is likely to change, with implications for how the government of the day justifies overseas expenditure. Although there is certainly likely to be criticism, perhaps counter-intuitively, there may also be considerable elite and middle class support (Mawdsley 2014a). A second issue concerns criticism and resistance by social movements and civil society organisations, domestically and abroad, as India contributes to economic growth in partner countries. The question of how winners and losers are created and treated within this context may become a pressing one where and when aggrieved groups are able to mobilise, nationally and transnationally. In particular, India will face growing reputational issues as its private sector companies – which are enrolled as vehicles of development cooperation – grow in activity and visibility (Rowden 2011, Mawdsley and Roychoudhury 2015). Third, India’s development cooperation personnel and infrastructures will need to continue to strengthen given the growing workload of challenges and opportunities they face. Finally, the Government of India must decide on how best to pursue its interests within the rapidly changing realm of global development governance – what blend of non-engagement, dialogue and cooperation will work best with different actors and institutions – while balancing interests in the promotion of national interest and global public goods. As India’s footprint grows in the South Asian region, Africa and beyond, so too will its exposure to risks and rewards, potentially opening up new strategic considerations in how it engages with international, regional and other platforms of development governance.

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