

What is SAPS ‘doing’ in Kinshasa? Exploring the dynamics of South- South police building¹

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ABSTRACT

On the surface, South Africa seems well positioned to play a leading role in development cooperation in Africa. Support for such a role is appealing at a time when the notion of South-South exchanges is current. Beyond the political rhetoric, however, there lie a range of issues which at present hamper the role of South Africa, and its public police agency, the South African Police Service, in particular. These issues are explored through an examination of South African Police Service’s assistance to the Police Nationale Congolaise (hereinafter referred to as the PNC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereinafter referred to as the DRC). For purposes of this enquiry I rely on a field visit to Kinshasa and a series of interviews with South African Police Services’ (hereinafter referred to as SAPS) officials conversant with the emerging dynamics of developmental assistance to other police institutions within the region. From this case study — admittedly brief and limited — some broader observations relevant to South-South assistance in the terrain of safety and security are made, in the hope of helping advance our understanding of the role of the police in police building during state reconstruction.

1. Introduction

In the early 1990s, at the time of South Africa’s transition to a constitutional state, not many people may have anticipated just how quickly the industry in police reform would take off and how the opportunities for travel, fame and fortune, in a limited kind of way, would spring up. Of those who did, one must say that Wilfried Schärf was not among their number. His was a more disinterested, although altogether engaged and informed, stance. Neither could many locals have appreciated how popular a reference the South African case study of police reform would become in comparative conversations on post-conflict

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¹ This discussion draws on a much more detailed rendition of fieldwork as discussed in an occasional paper on the topic: E van der Spuy ‘South-South cooperation in police building: the case for South Africa’ (2008), occasional paper, *Centre of Criminology, University of Cape Town.*

reconstruction as far afield as Peru, Palestine and Papua New Guinea. Fifteen years into the new dispensation, a fair number of people have become well versed in educating foreign audiences about the achievements of security sector reform after apartheid. As the fault lines of the project of South African police reform become more visible, the reflections on 'achievements' have turned more realistic. Proof of this growing critical engagement is to be found in South Africa's evolving body of police studies.

The space for reflection on 'how to do police reform' was initially created by a group of civil society actors and struggle intellectuals. Wilfried Schärf was one such. Based at the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cape Town, he was no stranger to the highly politicised engagements with policing which prevailed at the time. The publication in 1985 of a research report on the police use of torture of political detainees under the auspices of the Institute provoked a considerable outcry.² Not least were the public condemnations from apartheid's political masters. A campaign, led by some Afrikaner social scientists in Afrikaans-language newspapers (notably *Die Burger*), tried to discredit the research report and then cast aspersions on the anti-apartheid leanings of UCT as a tertiary institution at a time of 'national onslaught.' The whole saga illustrated once again that critical engagement with the apartheid police at a time of crisis was fraught with dangers.

Soon thereafter, however, political changes were in the offing. From 1990 onwards the opportunities for engagement with South Africa's future beyond apartheid really opened up. Like many others, staff at the Institute came to participate in a wide range of discussions on the future shape of the police. Those were heady days of discussions, always vibrant and often acrimonious. Ideas were entertained, adopted or discarded, strategic plans designed and programme interventions plotted. All of this activity was guided by an explicit political agenda to pursue what later came to be known as the 'good governance' of police and policing in pursuit of 'community safety'.

In the Western Cape a broad coalition of community and non-governmental organisations formed the Joint Forum on Policing. In the early phase of its existence the Joint Forum had a rather loose character. It convened to discuss the kind of pressing matters which accompanied the confrontational and paramilitary model of public order policing which prevailed at the time. At this stage the political relationship between the Joint Forum and the police in the province was an adversarial one. However, as the political scales tipped in favour of negotiation, the Joint Forum moved from the margins to the centre of

² D Foster and D Sandler *A Study of Detention and Torture in South Africa* (1985).

policy discussions involving the new political elites. Here Wilfried was a key participant.

This change in focus and in the nature of the political relationship is evident in the documentation which is to be found in the filing cabinets located in the storeroom of the (now renamed) Centre of Criminology at UCT. In 1996, for example, the Joint Forum on Policing with Wilfried's strong support met regularly, debated various issues, devised strategies and made many a policy input on issues as diverse as police oversight; police training; police use of torture; anti-gang policy; taxi-violence; organised crime; community policing, neighbourhood watch and many more. The minutes capture just how widely the Joint Forum on Policing's involvement in policy was to stretch. The new-found partnership between activist networks (such as the Joint Forum on Policing and its member organisations) and new state incumbents (the new Ministry of Safety and Security), resulted in the Joint Forum's representation on provincial security structures,³ responsible for crime combating and prevention. By the late 1990s the Joint Forum on Policing had expanded its influence and helped to set an agenda for project Police Reform within the province. Documentary sources pay testimony to the mood of political optimism which prevailed at the time and the sense of civic responsibility amongst affiliates to help create a new ethos for policing.

But by the early 2000s attendance at Joint Forum on Policing meetings had dwindled to a few remaining stalwarts. By then many of the member organisations had weakened or dissolved. Key personalities had moved on. Some of the founding members found employment in the state. Those left behind in the non-governmental sector battled policy fatigue and had to contend with diminishing resources. Over time the relations between the new police elite and civil society too had cooled down. In 2000, the then Commissioner of Police, Jackie Selebi told NGOs that the business of policing had to be left to the professional police, thank you very much. The space for open dialogue and partnership was contracting. There was talk of the end of an era.

The Joint Forum on Policing was one symbol — amongst many others of course — of an active civil society and its capacity for constructive engagement in the social engineering of a democratic South Africa. The resilience of civil society in South Africa had long served as a source of inspiration to others within the continent. The demise of the Joint Forum on Policing did not of course mean that conversations on police and policing ceased, but rather that they took off in different

³ This structure was called the Multi-Agency Delivery Action Mechanism or MADAM for short.

directions. A changing domestic and global environment meant that new kinds of issues were placed on the agenda. New constituencies joined the debates. Over time more diversity and perhaps less intensity characterised the discourse on and about the police. The dominance of civil society disappeared.

In fact, while civil society was not really noticing — or was deliberately sidelined — the police had been expanding their own networks and engaging in their own conversations on the challenges confronting police organisations in the new millennium. In pockets of the organisation members of the police had become adept at packaging recipes for institutional reform (South African style) at regional and other international gatherings. By this time, the opportunities for an exchange of ideas and operational strategies between and amongst police had multiplied in the global environment. The police fraternity — both internationally and in some quarters locally too — had grown in scope and in many instances in sophistication. Increasingly police personnel were 'talking' and 'doing' police building.

2. South-South Police Building: The background to SAPS-PNC collaboration

One example of this trend of police doing police building is to be found in the way in which the SAPS had repositioned itself in the orbit and networks of policy exchanges within the African continent. From an initial recipient of quite generous foreign police assistance (technical and financial) in the early period of reform, it seemed poised to become an emerging exporter of capacity-building to other police agencies in the continent. The current collaboration between SAPS and the PNC in the DRC is an illustrative example. In the section to follow aspects of this exchange relationship are briefly outlined before turning to a more detailed consideration of the challenges confronting SAPS's involvement in foreign police building as perceived and articulated by members of the police organisation. For the purpose of this discussion I draw on a field visit to Kinshasa, interviews with a small sample of police officers at police headquarters involved in developmental assistance abroad, and an interactive roundtable discussion with senior police officials in Pretoria at which the politics and logistics of development assistance were discussed.

Before turning to the issues identified in the discussions it is appropriate to reflect on the concept of police building. This concept is intimately tied to the broader concept of state building. One influential policy paper recently defined state building as 'action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between

state and societal groups'.⁴ In post-conflict settings, state building has become *the* key concern within the development community's quest for developing institutions and capacities of states in the South.⁵ Over the past decade there has been explicit recognition of the importance of enhancing law enforcement capacity during state-building in new democracies. Policy frameworks have come to outline the principles and structures required to best pursue such capacity building of police and other rule of law institutions within the political framework of 'good governance'.⁶

South Africa played a key role in the DRC's political negotiations. They resulted in the signing of the Lusaka Peace Agreement at Sun City in South Africa in 2002 and the holding of democratic elections on 30 July 2006 — the first in 45 years. From then onwards, South Africa's assistance to the DRC, dating back to agreements signed in January 2004, has been informed by 'its vision of an African Renaissance characterized by peace, stability and security, growth and socio-economic development for the African continent' and is aligned with the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (hereinafter referred to as NEPAD).⁷ The latter is described as a 'vision and strategic framework for Africa's renewal'. It was adopted in 2001 by the then Organisation of African Unity.⁸ The details of South Africa's involvement in the DRC have been clarified through bi-national deliberations. The involvement has been informed by policy frameworks which make reference to Post-Conflict Development and Reconstruction (PCDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR).⁹

In the early phase, South African assistance as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding which followed the SA-DRC Bi-National Commission of 2004, converged around three areas: security sector reform, institutional capacity building, and economic development. By February 2008 there were 27 signed agreements and memoranda of understanding covering areas such as health, education, water, electric-

⁴ OECD DAC, Concepts and Dilemmas of State-building in Fragile Situations: from Fragility to Resilience. Offprint of the *Journal on Development* 2008, 9 (3).

⁵ F Fukuyana *State building: Governance and world order in the twenty-first century* (2004).

⁶ G C Celador 'Police reform: Peacebuilding through 'Democratic Policing?' (2005) 12 *International Peacekeeping* 364.

⁷ See *Parliamentary Monitoring Group International Relations, Peace and Security Cluster*, available at, <http://www.pmg.org.za/briefing/200080213-international-relations-peace-security-cluster>, accessed on 20 August 2008.

⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs *NEPAD in Brief*, 2004, available at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/au.nepad/nepadbrief>, accessed on 25 October 2008.

⁹ 'President Mbeki to host President "Joseph Kabila for the SA-DRC Joint Commission"', 1 April 2008, available at <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2008/08040112451001.htm>, accessed 20 August 2008.

ity, and employment. At the time of my own field visit there were nine South African government departments¹⁰ involved in the cooperation agreement. More than 32 memoranda of understanding had been concluded.¹¹ South African assistance to the DRC thus comprises a wide spectrum of developmental concerns of which assistance to the police is but one.

2.1 Terms of reference for SAPS-PNC collaboration

Any scrutiny of the terms of reference for foreign engagement with the security agencies in the DRC points to the centrality of the paradigm of security sector reform. South Africa committed itself to support a 'comprehensive SSR programme that is DRC-led'. In anticipation of later remarks, it can be noted however that the adoption of this framework within the South African Department of Foreign Affairs has yet to be matched by real strategic capacity.¹²

In terms of the South African Government and DRC Cooperation Agreement involving SAPS and the PNC, there are a number of focus areas to be pursued within the next five years. For one, strategic management courses will be presented. A second broad focus concerns operational training in the following seven areas: Crowd Management; Intelligence; Big Event Policing; VIP Training; Firearm Proliferation; Rehabilitation of Training Centres, and the establishment of a Project Management Unit. The methodology to be followed involves that of SAPS trainers training PNC trainers with a view to future self-sufficiency. Funding for such operational assistance (as in other parts of the state) remains largely dependent on Northern donors, with some financial support from the African Renaissance Fund (located within the South African Department of Foreign Affairs) as well as Departmental budgets.

2.2 Multiple transfers

The answer to the question as to what exactly is being transferred from one location to another in pursuit of police building is hardly straightforward. Hardware, techniques, processes, structures, ideas and norms — these are all objects of transfer. The mechanisms through which

¹⁰ Departments of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Transport, Provincial and Local Government, Public Service and Administration, South African National Defence Force; Safety and Security; Education, and Health.

¹¹ See Republic of South Africa 'Joint Communiqué: SA-DRC Bi-National Commission', 2005, available at <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/sbow.asp?type=pr&include=president/pr/2005/pr042> Accessed 25 September 2008.

¹² Interview, MM, Kinshasa, 12 August 2008.

such objects are transferred are also diverse. Technical experts may be deployed to install technology and exchange visits may be organised to showcase how others engage with project Police Reform. Classroom education and field training constitute a much used mechanism for the transplantation of professional skills. Practical assistance in the context of joint operations provides opportunities for developmental assistance of the recipient institution. Drawing on field exposure during the Kinshasa visit, at least four different modalities of assistance to which the South African-DRC involvement has given rise were apparent.

The transferring of equipment and technical assistance for elections constituted one such modality. In the beginning of the international engagement with peace processes in the DRC the focus was on securing the elections, a challenging enough project on its own. 'Securing elections' came to provide a common focus for the international community around which a measure of cooperation could be achieved. An apportioning of the policing pie was made possible through the adoption of an Electoral Security Plan to which a number of international donors pledged their support. A key challenge in this regard involved the installation of a radio system across the country. With the election date looming, time was of the essence. More than 10 000 Tait terminals to service radios had to be installed. After some deliberation it fell to South African police technicians to undertake this installation. From conversations in Kinshasa, it became clear that opinion as to exactly how the SAPS technicians had fared in the field was somewhat divided. Big picture assessments were more favourable than the views of those who were more intimately involved in the management of the project.

Beyond the security of elections, however, lay the more demanding job of securing the new democracy. From here onwards strategic engagements with the challenges ahead would invoke the policy template of security sector reform. In pursuit of the latter, training in the principles of public management constituted a second example of the way in which principles and mechanisms were being transferred from one location to another. During my visit to Kinshasa, 25 PNC officers were attending a workshop on Public Management Reform offered by South African experts. The workshop itself has to be put into a wider global context of managerial reforms.¹³ Over the past two decades public sector reform has brought new paradigms and mechanisms to bear on the workings of state bureaucracies. In this view new management techniques provide both an impetus for, and a key to, organisational change within public service organisations. But the late 1990s new public management ideas were embraced by state

¹³ G A Larbi 'The new public management approach and crisis states' (1999). Discussion paper 112, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva.

functionaries in post-Apartheid South Africa. Such ideas infiltrated into police management systems and practices with the view to 'professionalising' service delivery. At the time SAPS could draw on the support of various development agencies and police institutions (the Belgium Gendarmerie, in particular) in transmitting the principles and systems required.¹⁴

By 2008 South Africa was exporting new public management ideas to the DRC. The terms of reference for this export are contained in the Bi-National Commission, with South Africa having agreed to train 1 000 public officials in contemporary models of public management. The training exchange which happened at a Catholic Centre in Kinshasa was itself proof of an intricate process of how ideas, policies and institutional arrangements are transferred in the pursuit of New Managerialism from Auckland (originally) via Brussels (via the Belgian Gendarmerie) to Pretoria (SAPS HQ) and then, by a confluence of events, to the Catholic Centre in Kinshasa in August 2008. From this fleeting field observation it was not possible to ascertain what sense the 25 PNC members of the senior command made of the philosophy itself. What was clear, however, was that presentations professing the virtues of post-industrial 'managerialist logic' (ie the adoption of up-to-date administrative procedures, accounting practices, and personnel policies) could not avoid contending with the day-to-day realities of pre-modern administration in the DRC of which so many interviewees spoke.

Developmental assistance in pursuit of police building is not only about the tangible transfer of hardware (radio communication systems) or modern systems and complicated mechanisms aimed at service delivery and performance appraisal. It is also about creating spaces to debate the future, to consider the kinds of values and principles to guide the provision of security, and to exchange ideas on possible trajectories. Creating the kinds of conditions within which former adversaries — police and communities — can talk about reform is also a critical aspect of the reform agenda. This requires that narrow institutional approaches to police reform give way to more inclusive approaches. For example, recognition of the critical role of civil society in the broader project of police reform has meant that donor aid agencies seek opportunities to engage in the soft (civil) underbelly of security and safety. Building a broader reform *movement* is now regarded as critical to the prospects for success in transforming regime policing. Renewed interest in the role of civil society in project police reform

¹⁴ E van der Spuy 'International assistance and local pressures in the reform of policing: The case of the Eastern Cape' (2005) 36 (2) *South African Review of Sociology* 19.

has emerged with comparative lessons drawn from Latin America,¹⁵ Eastern Europe, and Africa. South African experiences in this regard (as the earlier reference to the participatory role of the Joint Forum on Policing in the Western Cape documented) are widely considered worth emulating.

At the time of my visit, I came across two examples of how the transfer of South African expertise relating to broadening the reform discussions was taking place. The first related to a public seminar which took place at the Auditorium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kinshasa. This seminar focused on the South African case study as part of a wider series of public seminars (with financial support from Sweden) which aimed at showcasing experiments in African police reform. The platform was shared by the SAPS officer stationed in Kinshasa with the responsibility of coordinating SAPS assistance to the PNC, and a representative of the Institute of Democracy in Africa (Idasa). Both presenters spoke about police reform endeavours in South Africa, highlighting experiences from a police and civil society angle respectively. In the presentation the challenges of reform were broached and the unanticipated difficulties highlighted. The importance of dialogue amongst former protagonists was emphasised by both speakers. A lively interchange took place between the discussants and the participants from the floor. The men in uniform — the largest contingent by far within the 180-strong audience — participated actively.

A second example of a more inclusive approach to the reform of safety and security concerned the building of civil society capacity, as undertaken by the South African civil society organisation, Idasa. As an NGO, Idasa has a long history of involvement in conflict resolution and facilitation of policy debates on police reform in South Africa. On a much more ambitious scale than the Joint Forum on Policing, Idasa has over the past two decades established itself as one of the foremost NGOs involved in debates on democratisation — including the reform of the police as organisation. In Kinshasa and in other provinces of the DRC too Idasa acted as an ‘honest broker’ in a debate involving civil society on the future of policing in the DRC. The terms of reference for Idasa’s engagement was set out in a tripartite agreement involving SAPS and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (hereinafter referred to as DFID).¹⁶

In terms of the project framework, which DFID funded, Idasa would engage with the tasks at hand by exchanging information on comparative practices from South African experience; organising study visits

¹⁵ R Neild ‘Democratic police reforms in war-torn societies’ (2001) 1 (1) *Conflict, Security and Development* 21.

¹⁶ More details on the contractual terms of reference are spelt out in the report by van der Spuy op cit (n 1).

of a cross-section of police, parliamentarians and civil society representatives to South Africa; and by expanding civil society's capacity to engage in debates. In undertaking such tasks Idasa had to negotiate for itself a credible position as mediator in the highly competitive donor environment within the DRC.

At the same time as the transfer of management principles and models was occurring in Kinshasa, a week-long intensive workshop with 24 civil society representatives took place at another Catholic venue. A *Cours de formation sur la reforme de la PNC et la RSS* was convened by Idasa. The training involved a substantive engagement with matters relating to security sector reform. The role of parliament and the opportunities for civilian engagement were discussed as were the challenges for coordinating and networking between state and civil society across provinces, between provinces, and the capital. Here too the South African case study was put to illustrative use.

Observations in Kinshasa clarified for me the extent to which, under the broad rubric of development, a wide range of activities may be pursued either sequentially or simultaneously. For example, infrastructural investment aimed at building the material base of security organisations could be seen as creating the necessary preconditions for subsequent organisational growth. In many post-conflict instances, the provision of basic infrastructure (police buildings, training academies, computers, etc), is a critical component of modernisation. The building of human resource capacities at all levels is a key focus of assistance in all post-conflict jurisdictions. Such capacity building is aimed at the professionalisation of policing and at creating the kinds of skills required for effective policing on a wide range of fronts. In pursuit of democratisation again, developmental efforts were engaging, however superficially, with more normative concerns aimed at institutionalising the principles and practices closely associated with 'good governance'. One could not help wondering at the effectiveness of these well-meaning interventions in the context of the DRC.

3. Challenges confronting foreign police building: Views from within SAPS

Looking beyond the surface description of some of the activities being pursued in the name of police building in the DRC, what are the challenges confronting South African involvement in foreign police building? How did those involved — either from head office in Pretoria, SAPS officers on the ground, or fellow donor practitioners in Kinshasa — assess the challenges confronting the newly adopted developmental role of the South African Police Service? Police practitioners located at

the Training Division of SAPS Head Office who had been involved in the packaging of reform templates had few illusions about the challenges ahead. Senior police officials who attended a roundtable discussion in Pretoria¹⁷ offered their insights into the issues confronting South African involvement in police building abroad.

Problematising the concept of police building

At the roundtable discussion with a cadre of senior SAPS officials, the concept of police building provoked some debate. There was a need, noted one participant, for clarifying the objectives of police building. Police building should not be seen as an end in itself but rather a means towards improving community safety. Another participant pointed out that police building could harbour political dangers if not subject to the rules of 'good governance'. Police building should aim at advancing the collective good rather than the sectarian interests of some. Their discussions were useful in problematising the concept of police building and alerting us to the politics of state building more generally. Senior police officials did not hesitate to warn against an apolitical usage of the concept of police building. The rest of the discussions focused on the wide range of challenges confronting South African involvement in foreign police building viewed from the vantage point of practitioners in the field.

Vague policy frameworks

SAPS's involvement in the development of police agencies in the region is of a relatively recent nature. Consequently systems and procedures pertaining to developmental assistance are still in the process of evolution. According to some officials, the involvement of SAPS in assistance has been complicated by a variety of factors. The lack of a 'coherent policy framework' to guide assistance more generally and assistance to police more specifically was seen as a major stumbling block.¹⁸ In its absence, SAPS was, according to one source, simply indulging in 'spot welding'.¹⁹ As a consequence officers in foreign locations such as Kinshasa ended up performing 'activities' in the field. But activities did not add up to a coherent programme of intervention, argued another.²⁰ This view too was shared by two SAPS officers in Kinshasa who drew

¹⁷ Roundtable discussions on the topic of SAPS's assistance to other police institutions within the African continent. Workshop attended by 13 senior SAPS officials at the Training College in Pretoria, November 2008.

¹⁸ Interview, JB, SAPS, Pretoria, 13 August 2006.

¹⁹ Interview, JB, SAPS, Pretoria, 5 September 2006.

²⁰ Group Interview, SAPS, Pretoria, 5 September 2007.

a distinction between 'ad hoc' activities 'here and there' and a 'coherent programme' of intervention defined by clear policy objectives.

Recently there have been attempts within the Department of Foreign Affairs formally and within pockets of SAPS itself more informally to engage with security sector policy frameworks.²¹ Such policy engagements hold some promise for the purpose of clarifying the developmental terms of reference for 'police to police assistance' — North-to-South as well as South-to-South. At the roundtable discussion in 2008, it was noted that involvement of SAPS in foreign police building all too often takes place in a vacuum, with little reference to other justice sector institutions. The need for aligning assistance to the police to a wider sectoral approach was again emphasised. As such there was recognition of the need for a more comprehensive regulatory framework for managing assistance to other agencies²² and for avoiding the pitfalls of narrow institutional approaches which fail to engage across sectors of the criminal justice system.

Participants at the roundtable pointed to the need for developing within the Department of Foreign Affairs a comprehensive regulatory framework for managing developmental cooperation. Some thought that clarification of the terms of reference for Security Sector Reform in foreign development cooperation could assist. Active engagement with relevant clusters such as the International Relations, Peace and Security Cluster were recommended. Others supported the idea that SAPS could also clarify its objectives and priorities in foreign police building and in doing so integrate the foreign engagements of the SAPS into the strategic policy and planning of the Department of Safety and Security. The need for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different divisions within the organisation was reiterated. All of the participants were in agreement that it was necessary to utilise experiences in managing donor assistance to SAPS in the development of policy frameworks for overseas development partnership. The experi-

²¹ The 'United Nations Support for Security Sector Reform in Africa: Towards an African perspective') conference took place in Cape Town in November 2007. Organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic it brought 120 delegates of various African governments, the African Union Commission, the United Nations and a number of bilateral agencies involved in security reform in Africa together to articulate a common social security reform concept and define an 'African vision.' Even if the deliberations did not produce a robust African vision, they did indicate the need for a strategic policy framework that can guide assistance to, and development of, security and peace in the region. Just how such a strategic framework will pan out, however, remains to be seen.

²² Another respondent pointed out that the drafting of such a framework had already started (telephone conversation with PdP, 20 August 2008).

ences of the SAPS as *recipient* of aid had to be brought in line with its role as *provider* of aid.

Ad hoc assistance versus developmental engagement

It was argued that the lack of an overarching strategic framework, the absence of coordinating mechanisms, the in-fighting for a slice of the developmental pie within SAPS Head Office, and (a perceived) lukewarm political support contributed to ad hoc approaches to assistance on the ground. As a consequence of such factors, SAPS was said to run the risk of being little more than 'an agent of imposition' of 'ill-defined interventions' in 'foreign', and ill-understood, locations.²³ Participants were concerned that under such conditions South Africa would invoke criticisms of being a neo-colonial force operating behind the rhetoric of a 'development partnership'. The roundtable discussion reiterated wider concerns with the absence of policy for the involvement of SAPS in development cooperation, the lack of clarity with regards to the objectives of assistance, and a consequent lack of planning with regards to capacity, resources and operational implementation.

Budgets and budgetary processes

Reviews of South Africa's role as an 'emerging' donor point to the ad hoc nature of resource utilisation in South Africa's developmental partnership with Africa.²⁴ Similar concerns were expressed amongst those interviewed during the course of this research. Conversations at the roundtable in November 2008 confirmed that the budgetary processes are unclear. These comments point to the need for developing an appropriate legislative framework for spending money for purposes of development. Clarification of the budgetary processes and the rules guiding financial expenditures to be followed within the Department of Safety and Security too need attention.

Lack of coordination

The problem of ad hoc approaches to capacity building (the so-called 'spot welding' approach) is further exacerbated by the absence of coordinating mechanisms within the police organisation and among different government departments involved in development. In its role as recipient of aid, SAPS has demonstrated its capacity to coordinate

²³ Group Interview, SAPS, Pretoria, 5 September 2007.

²⁴ S Cleary, S Cross and M Ntsimi *Developmental support by South Africa to the African continent: Assessment and recommendations on Policies and Procedures* (2006), unpublished report prepared for the TEA-Cegos Consortium.

foreign assistance coming into the organisation, and to channel such assistance in the direction of locally defined organisational priorities.²⁵ Similar mechanisms do not at present exist to regulate its role as provider of assistance of a more developmental nature. Discussions at the roundtable in Pretoria pointed to the lack of intra-departmental communication *within* the police organisation, a lack of coordination between the police organisation and other justice institutions and a lack of communication across government departments such as Foreign Affairs, Treasury and Safety and Security.

The lack of coordination has in recent years furthermore been exacerbated by internal friction within SAPS. The opening up of opportunities for assistance elsewhere in the region has been accompanied by internal competition amongst senior police officials as to who should lay claim to the new portfolio. Conflicts over turf — particularly between the Training Division and the Strategic Management Division — have arisen owing to the lack of role clarification within the police organisation as to who should be taking responsibility for what. Such conflicts have further complicated efforts to clarify principles and rules of developmental engagement. Intra-institutional rivalries are clearly a force to be reckoned with in so far as such rivalries may undermine the gloss of rhetoric.

There is an external dimension to the issue of coordination which also deserves mention here. The imperative for coordination amongst donor agencies looms large in the policy frameworks for security sector reform. In the DRC, the establishment of a Common Assistance Framework amongst donors, for example, is aimed at structuring donor interventions in a more strategic way, although its intention is not easily realised. The creation of 'basket funds' amongst donors is another attempt at giving direction to the idea of coordination. It is within this environment that SAPS's pursuit of developmental activities within a bi-national framework seems to complicate its relationship with multilateral partners.²⁶ During the course of field research perceptions of a certain degree of secrecy on the part of South Africa and the SAPS as to the exact nature of its 'cooperation' with the PNC were discovered. As one member of the donor community lamented: 'We simply don't know what exactly they (SAPS and PNC) are up to in their

²⁵ E van der Spuy 'Foreign donor assistance and policing reform in South Africa' (2000) 10 *Policing and Society* 343.

²⁶ This 'mistake' in opting for a bi-national approach (as one interviewee put it) was further aggravated when South Africa called a donor meeting in Pretoria and approached foreign donors located in South Africa to bankroll their activities in the DRC. The 'diplomatic blunder' on the part of the South African government was not viewed empathetically by influential donors in the DRC (interview, LB, Kinshasa, 15 August 2008).

five-year plan of cooperation.’ Such perceptions of secrecy on the part of the SAPS (justified or not) need to be managed given the rhetorical commitment to ‘transparency’ and ‘coordination’.

The emphasis on the need for coordination in development circles underlines the degree of competitiveness which continues to bedevil developmental engagements. Commitment to cooperation often co-exists with a reluctance to align national agendas or sector-specific activities with more communally-based frameworks for assistance. Participants at the roundtable reiterated that South African involvement in development in Africa is a function of both altruism and national self interest. The need for clarification of the national interests (economic, political and/or humanitarian) to be served by foreign involvement elsewhere in the region was emphasised. Other practical recommendations which emerged from the discussions included the need for creating mechanisms to streamline communication on development cooperation amongst key role players situated at different spheres; creating a data base on foreign development assistance on the part of SAPS and other security sector institutions, and expanding the capacity of the donor coordination focal point within the SAPS to regulate both in-coming and out-going developmental aid. These suggestions do seem to pick up on wider public concerns regarding the lack of clear direction in South Africa’s foreign policy and of insufficient transparency in developmental practices. As one critical commentator on the topic has written:

‘In 2006, for example, the Finance Ministry enquired into aid distributed around Africa. It had become clear that there was a large, uncoordinated and unofficial South African aid programme, as ministers touted Africa acting as beneficent big men towards their hosts. The Finance Ministry wanted to know what had been given, when and to whom, for the issue had become an embarrassment, with the EU demanding to know whether South Africa’s aid policy could not be coordinated with theirs. However despite multiple requests and the weight of the Finance ministry behind them, it was simply impossible to get many departments to respond.’²⁷

Political guidance

A further matter of concern, voiced by officers deployed in foreign locations and by other foreign donor agencies in Kinshasa, was the need for political support and guidance to SAPS in the field. Depending on the size of the mission, field officers in distant locations often have to juggle different sets of responsibilities. In small-size missions in particular, field officers may be expected to multi-task, ie to play

²⁷ R W Johnson *South Africa’s Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid* (2009) at 456.

the roles of diplomat, political representative and professional police office. 'Doing justice to all such requirements' is clearly no easy task.²⁸ Participants at the roundtable acknowledged the need for political guidance from the Ministry of Safety and Security. Others again emphasised the importance of SAPS's ownership of development cooperation vis-à-vis political support. Participants reiterated the need for clarifying the terms of reference guiding the interaction between the political and administrative offices involved in developmental cooperation on the part of the SAPS.

Local context and local needs

In contemporary Northern debates on police reform abroad, particularly in post-conflict settings, the indispensability of a proper appraisal of local contextual realities and an appreciation of 'local needs' is routinely acknowledged so as to be able to assist with *appropriate* and *relevant* institution building. In this enquiry too, SAPS officers confirmed the need for proper 'needs assessment' so as to align foreign assistance to the dynamics of time, place and organisational needs. In the case of South Africa and the DRC the distinction between Anglophone and Francophone Africa is potentially an important source of difference, if not potential friction. The relevance of such divisions for security sector reform templates is not always readily understood and probably deserves more attention in reform-orientated strategies. One example of a critical difference in approach between Southern partners involved the 'reform' of public order policing in the DRC. Apart from South Africa, Angola has been the only other African country involved in capacity-building of the PNC. From conversations on the topic it became clear that different approaches to public order policing in particular were being followed. As one observer put it:

'Discussions around crowd management have at times become heated. Particularly when one starts to talk about the kind of equipment which should be made available to the PNC for purposes of crowd management. On this topic there simply were and continue to be important differences of opinion. Whilst the South Africans would be talking about demilitarisation of style of management, the Angolans were in contrast in favour of continued militarisation and of the arming of such units.'²⁹

This difference in approach may well be a function of an Anglophone-Francophone divide vis-à-vis the policing of public order which seems to be not properly acknowledged, nor really understood. The example does illustrate the point about cultural and political diversity situated

²⁸ Interview, BK, Kinshasa, DRC, 14 August 2008.

²⁹ Interview, MM, 12 August 2008.

within the South. The need for substantive briefing and training of officers to be deployed in foreign missions was emphasised at the roundtable. Here was an implicit acknowledgement that South Africa's appeal to a pan-African identity should not be taken as proof of its actual understanding of African cultural and other differences.

Field officers in foreign locations

Police organisations are characterised by complexity. Beyond the occupational police culture (which may act as a unifying force), there lurk intra-organisational divisions. Such divisions exist along many fault lines: status, gender, race, and functional specialisation. Field officers deployed to foreign locations may feel themselves exposed to complex realities on the ground that set them apart from colleagues at home. Finding a way of engaging with the field experiences of those deployed in foreign locations is in itself important. Lessons learnt about the complexities of police building in other locations (DRC, Rwanda, Sudan) should be captured so as to bolster future foreign involvement. The organisation needs to seek ways of tapping into the experiences of officers deployed in foreign locations and putting these experiences to constructive use in the design of policy and training for operational deployments.

4. Conclusion

In development circles the undiluted transfer of Northern models to Southern locales has become increasingly questioned. This has contributed to growing interest in Southern models of exchange. Within former colonies of Africa, South-South engagement is supported by the notion of a common political identity shaped through colonial conquest and a search for models which are appropriate to African conditions. Beyond these popular rationales lie a much more complex political economy of aid.

The attractiveness of South Africa, and in this instance its public police agency, in development cooperation has much to do with its economic status in the region, the administrative capacity of the state vis-à-vis other states, the degree of modernisation of its police, and in comparative terms, the relatively successful trajectory of police reform in the post-apartheid era. Combined, such features make the SAPS potentially attractive as a change agent in a region where police agencies carry the indelible stamp of political neglect and institutional underdevelopment. However, if South Africa is to capitalise on the opportunities for development cooperation it will need

to engage more strategically with a number of issues as outlined in this article.

The principles and mechanisms underlying South Africa's role as recipient of international assistance are well developed. In contrast, South Africa's role as provider of developmental assistance to others lacks a clear definition of objectives to be achieved, on the one hand, as well as suitable mechanisms to pursue objectives, on the other hand. The findings of two recent reports on South Africa's role as 'emerging' donor in the continent of Africa capture this discrepancy between the regulation of aid imported from elsewhere and exported to others.³⁰ As one report puts it:

'Overall, South Africa's development partnership with the African continent is conducted on an *ad hoc*, reactive basis. There are major shortcomings in the authorisation and budgeting process; coordination between line ministries (and other public sector bodies) whether in country or at base is haphazard; and the general absence of systematic procedures and data capture both weaken the national effort and destabilize bilateral and trilateral relationships.'³¹

A comparative perspective on the dynamics of aid provided by new donors suggest that the 'ailments' affecting the exportation of aid are not specific to South Africa but are also shared by other countries such as Brazil, India and China.³²

In coming to terms with the challenges confronting the transfer of ideas, systems and operational practices in the context of developmental cooperation, it is expedient to look beyond the mere administrative capacities involved in the solicitation, provision and evaluation of technical and financial aid. Given the woes which SAPS confronts at home, it will also come as no surprise that some concern accompanies its new found regional role as exporter of good practices, both within the police organisation and more vocally so within civil society. Despite considerable effort to reconstruct the public police agency, access to security and safety continue to elude South Africans. In coming to terms with this state of affairs, South Africans are well positioned to guard against too narrow and too institutionally exclusive an approach to police building. There is much to be said for resurrecting the spirit of, and practices associated with constructive engagement and dia-

³⁰ D Rowlands *Emerging Donors in International Development Assistance: A Synthesis Report* (2008). IDRC Report; Cleary et al op cit (n 24).

³¹ Cleary op cit (n 24) 12.

³² Emerging donors, the report argues, prefer to emphasise partnership, mutual benefit and horizontal cooperation in their approaches. Emerging donors tend to lack central coordinating mechanisms to govern development assistance programmes. Policy formulation too is more diffuse and programme execution more decentralised than is the custom in Western developmental circles: Rowlands op cit (n 30).

logue which so characterised the early debates on police and policing reform. There is both inspiration and guidance to be found in the earlier contributions of civil society organisations (such as the Joint Forum on Policing and Idasa) as well as the endeavours of individuals (such as Wilfried Schärf and many others) as South Africa seeks to export its transformative expertise to others in the region.