Brazil’s Soft-Power Strategy: The Political Aspirations of South–South Development Cooperation - DTU Orbit (22/12/2018)

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By trading upon the principles of South-South cooperation, Brazil is widely viewed as having gained a positive image worldwide. Brazil’s South-South development cooperation was one of the foreign policy instruments it used to raise this profile. However, studies of the generation of soft power are still lacking in the international relations literature, and where empirical research exists it focuses more on the results of soft power strategies than on how soft power is created. Therefore, this article explores how Brazil’s soft power strategy is conceptualized in Brazil’s development cooperation discourse and how it is operationalized through South-South development activities. This research uses a triangulation method combining the analysis of official documents, academic studies and interviews to conclude that the Brazilian government under President Lula (2003-2011) influenced the organization of its cooperation agency and guided it towards sectors and targets that contribute to the creation of positive outcomes. This article contributes to the debate on the state’s behavior in soft power, that is, the ‘behavior’ of the Brazilian government in the design of its cooperation agency’s activities, thus also contributing to knowledge about the relationship between an agent’s behavior and the outcomes of a country’s policy of ‘soft empowerment’.

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