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# Promoting international development through corporate social responsibility: the Canadian government's partnership with Canadian mining companies

Dragana Bodruzic

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# Promoting international development through corporate social responsibility: the Canadian government's partnership with Canadian mining companies

Dragana Bodruzic*

*University of Toronto, Political Science, Toronto, ON, Canada*

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## Introduction

A recent trend in mainstream international development discourse, as evidenced in the creation of the United Nations (UN) Global Compact in 1999, has been to emphasize the role that businesses can play in promoting sustainable development in the Global South. It follows a concurrent emphasis on the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR). In Canada, this is exemplified by a recent public-private partnership between the former Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), now a part of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD), three Canadian mining companies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to deliver development projects through the companies' CSR initiatives. This new partnership poses serious questions about the role, if any, that governments should be playing in financing the overseas CSR projects of multinational corporations based in their countries.

This paper analyzes this partnership with reference to two literatures: the nascent, though still underdeveloped, literature addressing the relationship between CSR and development, and the literature on Canadian foreign aid and international development policies. The main question addressed in this paper is: what do these new partnerships suggest about how the developmental goals of Canadian official development assistance (ODA) are being set? The paper argues that the Canadian government is increasingly allowing corporate actors to influence the country's development agenda, to the detriment of civil society actors. Moreover, the government is using CIDA (now DFATD) and ODA not to promote development abroad, but to aid Canadian commercial interests by helping Canadian mining companies obtain a social licence to operate.

The paper begins by providing an overview of the emerging literature on the relationship between CSR and development, tracing the link between this literature and development theory more broadly. It argues that, though this relationship remains under-theorized, research on past CSR development projects paints a mixed picture of the impact of these projects on development outcomes. Next, it analyses past CIDA practices and the history of Canadian ODA since the 1960s, with the goal of showing how national self-interest and commercial priorities have tended to trump

*Dragana Bodruzic is a PhD student, specializing in development studies and comparative politics.

humanitarian goals in shaping aid policies. It shows that in recent years, the relationship between CIDA and development NGOs has become more tenuous, while government policy has also sought to emphasize the role that corporate actors can play in international development. Finally, the paper considers the current partnerships between CIDA (and now DFATD) and mining companies. It focuses on the criticisms that have been put forth against the pilot projects by members of Canadian civil society and by the communities affected by the projects, as well as the government's response. It argues that these partnerships are reflective of the recent trend that displaces civil society actors with corporate actors as both contributors to development policy formation and as recipients of ODA funds. Consistent with many previous Canadian development policies, these partnerships also show that Canadian development policy is largely driven by Canadian commercial interests; however, the manner in which this is happening has changed.

## Understanding the relationship between development and corporate social responsibility

Recently, businesses have become involved in development practices, not only through their CSR policies, but also through multi-stakeholder partnerships with NGOs and governmental and multilateral organizations. The UN has played a key role in promoting these types of partnerships and in promoting the idea that business should play a role in development. The perfect example is the creation of the UN Global Compact. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in 1999, Kofi Annan called for the creation of the global compact which aims to bring together businesses, governments and civil society actors, in the pursuit of principles which, together, can be broadly understood as developmental.

The very term "development", however, has historically been contested.[1] An interest in development gained prominence following World War II, with the emergence of positivist modernization theories about how the countries of the Global South could go about achieving economic growth and development (Lehmann 1979). This was a highly economistic approach, and the main ingredients of the development strategy included capital accumulation, deliberate industrialization, state planning and external aid (Escobar 1995, Leys 1996). By the late 1950s, it was becoming clear that these efforts were failing (Leys 1996). Development theorists and practitioners began to realize that economic development would not automatically entail poverty reduction, social equality and an improvement in standards of living. To compensate, there was a shift to include these considerations within new concepts such as "redistribution with growth" and "basic needs" (Leys 1996).

In the 1980s, there was an emergence of ultra-rationalist development perspectives (e.g., Bates 1981), the forebearers of global neoliberalism, which focused on public sector reform, economic structural adjustment and good governance (Sylvester 1999). The result was the introduction of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), which sought to decrease the role of government in markets since, according to rational choice theorists, governments distort market incentives and outcomes. This approach also included reducing the government's provision of social services such as healthcare and education, and ended up making many of the Global South's poorest people even poorer (Leys 1996). Following the negative impact of SAPs, criticism emerged that the opinions of the people whom development efforts are meant to help should be taken into consideration. This led to calls for "participatory development" (Chambers 1983, Nelson and Wright 1995). The promise of listening to local voices is not always an easy task (Crewe and Harrison 1998, Mosse 2005, Lewis and Mosse 2006). Nonetheless, it remains an important one.

Moreover, conceptualizations of "development" have been contested by both academics and practitioners working on development projects. To this day, there is no single widely accepted definition of the term. In recent decades, two concepts of development – human development and sustainable development – have become widely accepted and promoted. Human development is defined as "[the] process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living" (UNDP 1990, pp. 9–10). It therefore emphasizes social development over purely economic considerations. The notion of sustainable development emerged from the 1987 Brundtland Report, emphasizing that development must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development has been the primary lens through which mining companies have framed their CSR policies (Sagebien and Whellams 2010, Dashwood 2012).

Thus far, development theory has failed to adequately engage with the emerging trend of corporate actors becoming involved in development. A preliminary search of leading development studies journals reveals a comparatively small number of articles even mentioning CSR. As with development, there is still no consensus on precisely how CSR should be defined. It has become an umbrella term designating corporate concerns with sustainable growth, social and environmental concerns, and fair employment practices (Williams and Conley 2005, Dahlsrud 2008). In the Global South, CSR practices often take the shape of projects with broadly developmental goals: for instance, poverty alleviation, investment in education and healthcare, and the provision of public goods such as access to clean water. The practical and policy implications of this emphasis on CSR should not be underestimated. While CSR spending still constitutes only a small portion of corporate budgets, more and more corporations are now becoming involved in these types of activities, sometimes on a short-term basis, but also through more long-term commitments (Sharp 2006, Utting 2007, Frynas 2009). Nonetheless, existing evidence suggests that the promise of CSR has not materialized (Hamann 2003, Banerjee 2007, Frynas 2009, Utting and Marques 2010, Raman 2010).

Existing research on CSR is drawn primarily from management studies, though some of this work is fairly interdisciplinary. Very broadly, proponents of CSR argue that it provides a means of ameliorating some of the negative effects of globalization. The increasing power of multinationals, including their growing influence in the Global South, can allow them to have a positive social impact (Hamann and Acutt 2003, Levy and Kaplan 2008). International economic integration can lead to new environmental and social problems, causing greater need for coordinated responses (Levy and Kaplan 2008). Despite this, many states have tended to restrict their regulatory and social provision roles (in many countries in the Global South, this has been the result of externally imposed policies, particularly those of structural adjustment). This has created strains on existing institutional capacities, while at the same time the need for international coordination has increased (Levy and Kaplan 2008). Because corporations have substantial organizational, technological and financial resources, some proponents of CSR have argued that multinational corporations (MNCs) have the capacity necessary to deal with such governance gaps.

The staunchest critics of CSR draw primarily on critical theory (Banerjee 2006, 2007, Ireland and Pillay 2010, Shamir 2010) and critical legal theory (Bakan 2004, Amao 2011), arguing that CSR is little more than window-washing.[2] According to Shamir (2010 p. 531), "the emergent field of CSR shows capitalism's ability to transform critique into commercial and managerial assets". Indeed, this points to the fact that, more and more, discourse on CSR has shifted to the business case for CSR (Hamann 2004), which posits that being socially responsible simply makes good business sense. In other words, the business case for CSR states that CSR practices are win-win for everyone involved. However, there are many instances in which the profit motive and the goal of being socially responsible are at odds.

Most importantly, within CSR projects, the relationship between the corporation as an agent of development and those identified as recipients of development is essentially a quasi-contractual one (Sharp 2006). Those who are not members of the communities concerned are not directly entitled to any of the development projects being provided by the corporation. This is markedly different from how states are expected to approach development, since a state's stakeholders are, at least in theory, all of its citizens.

Overall, there is still insufficient research into the relationship between CSR and development to accurately assess CSR's impact on local communities (Hamann 2006, Visser 2008). Much of the existing literature on CSR refers strictly to the context of the Global North rather than the Global South. A compilation of work on CSR, in the form of the *Oxford handbook on corporate social responsibility*, dedicates only one of its 28 chapters to CSR in countries in the Global South. There is a divergence in how CSR is practiced in these different contexts (Visser 2008). While in industrialized countries the focus is on the ethical and legal responsibilities of businesses, in the Global South economic priorities are placed highest. Consequently, much of CSR research dealing with the ethical and legal responsibilities of companies in the Global North cannot be easily applied to our analyses of CSR in the Global South. Moreover, the mainstream CSR literature also ignores issues such as tax avoidance, poverty reduction, unsustainable investment and the social and structural determinants of poverty, which plague many countries in the Global South (Idemudia 2011).

As a result, since the mid-2000s, several academics have sought to draw attention to the need to develop a deeper understanding of the CSR-development relationship. Idemudia (2011) notes that there have been calls for a more South-centred approach (i.e., for more research on how CSR projects are implemented in the Global South) (Utting 2003), a more development-oriented agenda (Fox 2004) and a critical CSR agenda (i.e., an agenda that considers more closely why and how businesses are involved in development through CSR) (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, Prieto-Carron *et al.* 2006). This has led to new research, particularly with respect to CSR practices in extractive industries (see Idemudia 2007, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, Frynas 2009, Coumans 2011, Muthuri *et al.* 2012, Owen and Kemp 2012). There have also been efforts to more closely examine CSR in specific environments in the Global South. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) launched a project titled *Business responsibility for sustainable development*, which included a number of country case studies, as well as producing a number of edited collections (see Utting 2002, Fig 2007, Utting and Clapp 2008). Together, these analyses highlight differences in how CSR is understood within different contexts in the Global South. For instance, in India, the dominant conceptualization of CSR has indigenous roots in Gandhi's notion of trusteeship (Sood and Arora 2006; see also Sundar 2000, Mitra 2007, Chakrabarty 2011), and is therefore different from understandings of CSR dominant in the Global North. In Brazil, however, the concept of CSR, though it has roots in the Catholic notion of charity, is nonetheless more of an imported concept (Cappellin and Giuliani 2004). Many multinational corporations, including mining companies, tend to approach different contexts with their own understanding of CSR, which may differ from local expectations about the responsibility corporations owe to society. An unwillingness to take local perspectives on corporate responsibility into account may not only make their CSR projects less effective, but it may also lead to political conflicts.

Despite this increasing academic interest in the relationship between CSR and development, problems with this research agenda remain. In particular, there is a failure to critically engage with the role of governments in CSR, and a failure to adopt a bottom-up approach to CSR analysis (Idemudia 2011). While some analyses make strides in this direction (Idemudia 2007, 2010a, Owen and Kemp 2012, Valente 2012), further research on the relationship between CSR and development is still needed in order to see whether CSR lives up to its promises. In particular, the role of the state in shaping the relationship between CSR and development needs further analysis. In the case of multinationals, this can include the roles of both host and home states. This paper is primarily concerned with the role of home countries (in this case, Canada) in shaping this relationship within the mining industry. However, before considering the role of the Canadian government more generally, and of CIDA in particular, this paper briefly considers the history of Canadian aid policy.

## CIDA – history of Canadian ODA

Debates about what role Canadian ODA should play are not new.[3] Historically, the two main drivers of ODA have been ethical considerations and humanitarian concerns on the one hand, and self-interest, in this case particularly Canadian commercial interests, on the other.[4] In practice, while studies have shown that the Canadian public supports ODA for primarily humanitarian reasons (Pratt, 2001), many scholars have argued that humanitarian values have had at best a secondary impact on Canadian ODA policies (Huot 2001, Pratt 2001, Tomlinson 2001, Brown 2007, 2012a, Cameron 2007). For instance, Canada has been notorious for its use of tied aid, which involves making ODA conditional on the purchase of goods and services from the donor country (Brown 2012b).

Since 2000, development assistance has undergone fundamental changes, both in Canada and in other donor countries. It is within this changing global context that developments within CIDA (now DFATD) need to be analyzed. As Brown (2012a) notes, two development policy paradigms have been central within the last decade: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[5] and the neoliberal Washington Consensus[6] (and subsequent revised versions of the Consensus, including Poverty Reduction Strategies). The two policy paradigms have often been seemingly at odds, particularly since the policies of the Washington Consensus have had a negative impact on the prospects of achieving the MDGs. Some of the changes within ODA commitments during this time, which have sought to move ODA closer to the goals of the MDGs, have included a donor commitment to increase aid budgets in 2002, followed by a call for greater aid effectiveness in 2005 (Brown 2012a). In Canada, this resulted in a 2005 International Policy Statement (IPS), which includes a chapter on development, emphasizing the need to improve ODA delivery, not only to combat poverty abroad, but also to serve Canadian interests (including providing Canada with a more prominent role in international affairs) (Brown 2007). However, while setting out humanitarian reasons as central to development assistance at the beginning, the IPS largely abandons this in preference of more self-interested foreign policy objectives, as well as an emphasis on trade, the private sector and globalization.

Two of the key themes coming out of these shifts in development ODA in Canada are aid effectiveness and policy coherence (Brown 2007, 2012a).[7] However, there has been little consensus on precisely what these terms mean. As Brown (2012a) points out, donors rarely use aid effectiveness to refer to developmental results on the ground, but rather consider whether or not money is effectively spent (the real question, therefore, is one of aid efficiency, not effectiveness).

The IPS was released by Paul Martin's Liberal government in 2005, and was subsequently largely adopted by the new Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In 2008, the government, under minority Conservative rule, adopted the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (ODAAA), which states three key objectives: "that aid 'contributes to poverty reduction; takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and is consistent with international human rights standards'" (cited in Blackwood and Stewart, 2012, p. 218). As Blackwood and Stewart (2012) point out with reference to CIDA's support of Canadian mining companies, actual ODA has often been at odds with the principles set up in the ODAAA. Further proof of this is worrying trends in ODA under the Conservative government (Brown 2012c). According to Brown, the government has increasingly sought to centralize control of CIDA and ODA. Since 2006, the Prime Minister's Office has required advance approval of official comments made by civil servants, and this extends to organizations receiving funding from CIDA (Brown 2012c). This is also apparent in the behavior of the two recent Ministers of International Cooperation, Bev Oda and Julian Fantino. While Oda was exceptionally slow in approving CIDA projects, Fantino has simply shut many of them down. As a result, in the 2012–2013 fiscal year, CIDA lapsed some CAD $800 million in spending (Kenny 2013). Senator Colin Kenny (2013) argues that this was no blunder, but a deliberate act, with "the agency effectively [taking] the money away from the world's unfortunate and [handing] it back to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty".

Secondly, the government has increasingly sought to instrumentalize development assistance and CIDA (Brown 2012c), including shifting their focus to commercial interests. Thus, in 2007, the government broke with the broader donor consensus to focus more closely on the Americas (where many Canadian industries have commercial interests) as opposed to Africa, introduced an aid budget freeze and increasingly began to adopt a discourse of transparency and accountability in CIDA spending (though without sufficient explanation of what this would mean in practice) (Brown 2012a). Therefore, under this guise, the government pulled out aid from some of the poorest countries in the world, to focus on regions where Canada has commercial interests. At the same time, the effort to align ODA policy with the national priorities of recipient countries has declined. Brown shows that Canada's rate of compliance with the principle of alignment has gone from 52 per cent in 2005 to 39 per cent in 2010 (Brown 2012a, p. 8).

Overall, under the Conservative government, tensions have been growing between CIDA and civil society actors engaged in international development. In July 2010, then-International Cooperation Minister Bev Oda announced a new *Partnership with Canadians*, which seeks to redefine and "modernize" the relationship between CIDA and Canadian NGOs involved in international development (Brown 2012c). According to Brown (2012c), the way in which the relationship between CIDA and NGOs is being redefined serves to further undermine the autonomy of development NGOs, as well as their ability to respond to the needs of both their NGO partners in the Global South and the groups they seek to help. Brown (2012c, p. 288) concludes: "they undermine the contributions of NGOs as development actors and decrease aid effectiveness from a development perspective, even if they may help the government reach other objectives".

At the same time, the government has increasingly sought to open up space for corporate actors to both influence international development policy and to become recipients of ODA funds. The Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, titled *Driving inclusive growth: the role of the private sector in development*, published in November 2012, analyses the role that the private sector should play in Canadian international development policy.[8] The report analyses recent trends in international development circles, emphasizing the role that corporate actors can play in international development. The report notes: "While economic growth is essential to poverty reduction, such growth itself flows predominantly from private sector investment and the job and business creation that follow" (Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development 2012, p. 17). The Report supports this statement using the case of South Korea, but its argument is unconvincing. Prominent theorists of developmental states, including Peter Evans (1995) and Atul Kohli (2004), have shown that South Korean growth is best explained with reference to the efforts of the Korean state to promote industrial development through macroeconomic planning. The Report, though acknowledging the need for robust public institutions, de-emphasizes the role of the state while championing the private sector as central to economic growth. Moreover, the Report goes on to talk about the need for "pro-poor growth", which it largely associates with making sure the poor are involved with formal markets. This shows a very limited conceptualization of what may be needed to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation, and development more generally, in the Global South.

The Report also presents dissenting opinions, and notes that one of the biggest problems that needs to be addressed if the private sector is to contribute to development is the issue of tax evasion. Though so much discussion often centers on the issue of corruption in the Global South, the Report (Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development 2012, p. 30) notes that of the total money that illicitly moves from the Global South to richer countries, about 3 per cent is due to corruption, about 35 per cent is due to criminal activity and between 60–65 per cent is due to tax evasion. However, while in its deliberations the Standing Committee did listen to the views of academics and NGOs presenting dissenting views, and these are presented in the Report, the final recommendations are very much in favor of private sector involvement in development. They emphasize that CIDA should pursue public-private partnerships with corporate actors, and should seek to aid the private sector by providing it with expertise and possibly loans.

Given that the Report does bring up some serious debates, these recommendations do not really follow from those debates. In its Dissenting Opinion, the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) notes that no CIDA officials were invited to testify for the Committee, and that "[m]ost of the recommendations contained in the committee report do not reflect evidence heard during the study" (Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development 2012, p. 114). They also accurately point out that not all economic growth is necessarily sustainable, nor does it lead to poverty reduction. This is not to say that the promotion of the private sector is inherently contradictory to the goal of reducing poverty. This is an ongoing debate, the full details of which are beyond the scope of this paper. However, the Report too easily concludes, despite the dissenting views presented, that this is a path CIDA should be pursuing, thereby side-lining other potential (presumably state-centered or civil society-centered) approaches.

As stated earlier, given the general trend amongst Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donors to further include corporate actors in development, the current government's stance is not far out of step with international trends. However, it does appear to be a rather strong example of those trends. While the recent High-Level Panel (2013) on the post-MDGs does call for a role for business actors in development, the focus of the report is still primarily on poverty reduction. (Similarly, this is also the case for major OECD donors such as the United Kingdom.) The language of the Standing Committee Report, on the other hand, de-emphasizes poverty reduction in favor of economic growth. In this, it mirrors early modernization development theory, the promises of which ultimately failed to materialize.

The biggest change adopted by the current government has been the ending of CIDA as an autonomous unit, and its integration into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). Precisely what this will mean for the future of Canadian ODA remains to be seen, but, if current trends are any indication, we are likely to see even closer alignments with Canadian foreign policy, rather than with development goals.[9] In an analysis of the merger, Carment *et al.* (2013) argue that we have cause for concern. They show that there has been very little transparency about how policy is made by the government, as well as little accountability regarding how resources are allocated and evaluated. They therefore conclude that there is great doubt that moving to a mega-bureaucracy will help to close these gaps. It is within this context that the relationship between the Canadian government (and DFATD in particular) and Canadian mining companies' CSR policies needs to be considered.

## Corporate social responsibility, mining and the role of the Canadian government

The research on CSR presented at the beginning of this paper, though still underdeveloped, shows that the link between CSR and development in its current state is at best a tenuous one. Despite this, the Canadian government has sought to use ODA to fund CSR projects, with the stated goal of promoting development within communities affected by mining operations. It is necessary to consider, hence, the manner in which extractive industries have engaged in CSR thus far, and the impact their policies have had on community development.

Various extractive industries, and mining in particular, have in recent decades made strides in adopting CSR strategies, and in deploying those strategies in the pursuit of community development. This is in part a result of the nature of these industries: they often produce obvious externalities, particularly for the environment. Moreover, the mining industry came under severe criticisms for a series of violations in the 1990s, including environmental disasters, human rights abuses, misbehavior by mining company security personnel and violations of rights of indigenous populations (Coumans 2011). As a result, local conflicts over mining intensified, and mining companies increasingly began to realize that they needed to obtain a "social licence to operate" (Coumans 2011). In practice, this has meant that by the end of the 1990s, many mining companies have paid greater attention to their environmental and social responsibilities.

The question of whether this greater attention constitutes a more genuine shift towards embracing such responsibilities, or an effort to repair their public image, has been the subject of debate. For instance, a recent study by Hevina Dashwood (2012) of the emergence of CSR norms in the Canadian mining industry sees this shift as more than just reputation management, while critics such as Catherine Coumans (2011) and Bonnie Campbell (2011) argue that the main reasons for the shift are much less altruistic, emphasizing the companies' desire to manage conflicts over mining.

Dashwood (2012) finds that most large multinationals have by now adopted the norm of sustainable development, and have utilized this norm in framing their CSR policies. However, while Dashwood's study represents a beginning, there is insufficient research exploring the question of how different companies understand sustainable development, and how this impacts their CSR practices. In particular, it is not clear to what degree local populations have ownership over how their communities should be "developed". Generally, companies have not effectively managed to include diverse voices from the communities where they operate (Idemudia 2010b, North 2011, Campbell 2011). Instead, local resistance to extractive operations and numerous conflicts have emerged. Where local consultation does take place, it is usually inadequate (Frynas 2005). Often, while some key community leaders may be consulted, there is no consultation with other groups (such as women and youth), and no consideration of how local power relations may be excluding the voices of some community members. Indeed, in some cases, companies' CSR projects can serve to exacerbate local tensions, leading to violence (Welker 2009).

In many instances, corporate actors, aware that they may not have the expertise to engage in development, either hire or form partnerships with NGOs. Some of the best examples of effective CSR efforts are precisely cases of such partnerships.[10] According to Hamann and Acutt (2003), the possibility of partnering up with business can have positive benefits for civil society actors. They note: "business has important resources and capabilities that can, and should, be harnessed for development purposes" (Hamann and Acutt 2003, p. 261). This does not negate the need for civil society to maintain its monitoring function, but recognizes that NGOs can sometimes draw on corporate resources to pursue development goals. An inherent danger, however, is that there are power asymmetries between corporate actors and civil society. Hamann and Acutt (2003) therefore emphasize the need to develop "critical cooperation" based on principled negotiation, through which civil society actors can attempt to balance power asymmetries.

Problems with CSR in overseas operations of extractive industries go beyond these issues. The impact of extractive industries cannot be understood solely with reference to the manner in which CSR projects are run. As Bird and Herman (2004) point out, businesses contribute (or prove detrimental) to development not primarily through philanthropy or social investments, but through their regular business activities. In the case of extractive industries, companies are engaged in removing non-renewable resources, and are consequently taking away from the stock of wealth of the communities in which they operate.

Moreover, the impact of mining operations on communities is inherently tied to the governance capacities of states, as well as the mining policies adopted by those states. In recent decades, many countries in the Global South, often as a result of structural adjustment programmes and outside pressures, have adopted neoliberal mining codes (Moore 2011). This has weakened already weak institutions that are either unable, unwilling or simply lack the resources to properly implement regulations. Often, the home governments of extractive companies also use diplomatic pressures to promote the companies' interests, without sufficient attention to the wellbeing of local populations. According to Coumans (2011), many MNCs have taken advantage of weak governance mechanisms, helping to explain why, even when faced with the prospect of job creation, many communities choose to reject the opening of mines.

Canada is the largest state actor in the global mining industry: Canadian companies represent 75 per cent of mining and exploration companies around the world, and 57 per cent of all mining companies are represented on the Toronto Stock Exchange (Blackwood and Stewart 2012, p. 224). Despite this, the Canadian government has virtually no legally binding framework for regulating the behavior of its mining companies in other states (Webb 2011, Blackwood and Stewart 2012), and has instead focused on promoting voluntary CSR as a means of ensuring that Canadian mining companies abroad behave in socially and environmentally responsible ways (Sagebien *et al.* 2008).

Moreover, the Canadian government has on several occasions used diplomatic channels to support Canadian mining companies, even in instances where these companies were engaged in highly irregular (and even illegal) behavior. For example, a recent report from MiningWatch (and its partners) details the involvement of Canadian diplomatic staff in Mexico to support Blackfire Exploration, a Calgary-based mining company (Moore and Colgrove 2013). Opened in 2008, the company-operated mine in Chiapas, Mexico, was closed two years later by the Mexican government for violating environmental regulations. Prior to this, a local anti-mining activist had been murdered, and there were corruption allegations regarding the company and a local mayor. Through an access-to-information request, MiningWatch was able to obtain Embassy of Canada documents showing that the embassy provided virtually unconditional support in spite of the company's behavior. The embassy continued to defend the company to Mexican state officials even after corruption charges had emerged, the local anti-mining activist had been murdered and the Mexican state closed down the mine. The embassy even provided the company with information on how to sue the state of Chiapas under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Moore and Colgrove 2013). In another example, Wikileaks cables from the United States Embassy in Lima illustrate how the American and Canadian governments worked to support their mining companies in Peru by putting diplomatic pressure on the local government. The backdrop to this was violent police repression against peasant farmers protesting a copper-molybdenum mine in northwestern Peru (three protestors were shot and one died) (Moore 2011, para. 9). The leaked cables also show that company representatives asked the diplomats to urge the Peruvian government to institute certain reforms, which would make it harder for anti-mining groups to organize. CIDA has in fact had an active role in influencing mining policies in several jurisdictions, including helping to draft pro-mining codes in countries such as Colombia (Coumans 2011, Blackwood and Stewart 2012).

Overall, therefore, the Canadian government has a history of supporting the international operations of Canadian mining companies. In 2009, the Canadian government officially launched its *Building the Canadian advantage: a corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy for the Canadian international extractive sector* (DFAIT 2009). The strategy aims to improve the competitive advantage of Canadian extractive sector companies, by helping them to manage social and environmental risks. The policy was the result of a longer process looking at the relationship between the Canadian government and the operations of Canadian mining companies abroad. In June 2005, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade produced a report recognizing that Canadian mining companies should comply with internationally recognized human rights and environmental standards, in order to receive diplomatic or financial support from the Canadian government (DFAIT Review Process 2013). This resulted in DFAIT organizing a series of National Roundtables, which brought together different stakeholders in a dialogue on how to aid Canadian companies in behaving in socially and environmentally responsible ways. The resulting *CSR Strategy* is based on four pillars:

(1) host country capacity building, through support of initiatives related to resource governance, with the goal of ultimately helping host countries to use these resources to reduce poverty;
(2) promotion of CSR Performance Guidelines, including the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the Global Reporting Initiative;
(3) establishment of the Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor, with two stated roles – advisory and dispute resolution; and
(4) development of the Centre for Excellence in CSR, designed to promote the voluntary adoption of the above standards by mining companies (DFAIT Review Process 2013).

The *CSR Strategy*, however, fails to establish any mechanism by which the Canadian government can hold mining companies accountable for their CSR policies, as was suggested by the original Roundtables (Krause 2011). For instance, while the establishment of the Office of the CSR Counsellor provides a dispute resolution mechanism, this mechanism is only open to mining communities if they can show that they have exhausted the company's own dispute resolution procedures (DFAIT Review Process 2013). Efforts to create a minimum set of compulsory standards resulted in Bill C-300, brought before the Canadian Parliament in 2009. The Bill would have: (1) put in place human rights, labor and environmental standards for Canadian companies abroad, (2) created a complaints mechanisms that would allow members of affected communities to file complaints against companies not living up to those standards and (3) created a possible sanction for companies that were found out of compliance with those standards, in the form of loss of government financial and political support (MiningWatch Canada 2010). The Bill was defeated in fall 2010 (Moore 2011, Blackwood and Stewart 2012).

One of the latest efforts to implement this strategy has been the government's launching of three pilot projects to reduce poverty in Peru, Ghana and Burkina Faso (Coumans 2011, Arnold 2012, Blackwood and Stewart 2012). Announced by then Minister of International Cooperation, Bev Oda, the projects seek to support the CSR development projects of three Canadian mining companies, working together with development NGOs, through the financial support of CIDA. The project in Peru, for instance, partners Barrick Gold with World Vision, in a project to help residents of Quirulvilca, Peru, "to become more involved and influential in their own community planning" (D. Toycen, quoted in Arnold 2012). Overall, the government has pledged CAD \$6.7 million to the three pilot projects, while the remaining partners have pledged CAD \$3 million (Carin 2012). The difference in funds pledged is striking: it indicates that the Canadian government is the one primarily funding these CSR operations.

## The Canadian government's partnership with mining companies and the future of Canadian ODA

CIDA's new partnership with mining companies has met with many criticisms. Robert Fox, head of Oxfam Canada, for instance, argues that mining companies have a very questionable history of promoting development (Payton 2012), with other critics noting that this acts as a direct subsidy to mining companies (Mackrael 2012). In sum, critics argue that tax dollars are being used to buy the consent of communities in which Canadian mining companies operate, a cost which should be covered by the mining companies, not the Canadian government.

In their defence, mining companies have emphasized the partnership aspect of these pilot projects to highlight the potential for a positive developmental impact. A spokesman for Barrick Gold notes, for instance, that since Barrick does not have adequate expertise to develop CSR development projects on their own, they are partnering with World Vision (Mackrael 2012). This indicates a level of awareness of the difficulty of implementing development projects. According to the current International Cooperation Minister, Julian Fantino, this should be a template for the future of Canadian ODA (Mackrael 2012), but, according to critics such as Blackwood and Stewart (2012), these projects are part of a whole-of-government approach to support the mining industry.

In particular, it is not clear how the Canadian government can hold Canadian mining companies accountable for these projects. After becoming the International Cooperation Minister, Fantino pledged to make sure that "every nickel" CIDA spends is accounted for and provides value (Fitzpatrick 2012). However, this does not seem to apply to holding corporate actors accountable. Blackwood and Stewart (2012) analyse how CIDA's support of the mining industry measures up against the principles of ODA set out in the ODAAA. They argue that existing research (and this is supported by this paper) largely shows that the promotion of extractive sector development does not meet the goal of poverty reduction, fails to take into account the perspectives of the poor and fails to be consistent with human rights standards. Moreover, according to Coumans (2011 p. 506), "there is little transparency from CIDA regarding its funding for CSR projects at mine sites".

Cooperation Minister Fantino's response to these criticisms is interesting, and points to a particular vision of development held by the Canadian government. Fantino has argued that CIDA is a tool of Canadian foreign policy and as such should be used to promote Canadian interests abroad, while *also* helping to alleviate poverty in these countries (Mackrael 2012). In an interview with *CBC News*, he stated:

> We're not getting into the extractive business ... This is trying to help the needy countries to enable them to help themselves, to develop sustainable economies such as we've seen can be done with countries so that we don't have to continually bail them out with their food issues, their education, their health issues and on it goes. (quoted in Payton 2012, para. 6)

A further elaboration of Fantino's stance on development is also seen in his response to a letter from Peruvian community groups writing to the Canadian government about the proposed Barrick-World Vision project. The letter expressed concern over past broken promises of companies' sustainable development projects and asked CIDA to stop supporting the project. Instead, the letter asks CIDA to monitor Barrick's activities in Peru to ensure that the rights of affected communities are respected. Julian Fantino responded to this letter more than five months later, largely ignoring the issues raised and stating: "more, not less, of these projects are needed if developing countries are to successfully transition to highly productive economies that enable free enterprise and empower free people to participate in global value chains and shape a more prosperous world" (quoted in MiningWatch Canada 2012, para. 5).[11]

This supports the position of those critics who argue that the pilot projects are more about buying the consent of communities where companies operate rather than about genuine development concerns. It also indicates that mining companies, and donor governments, sometimes ignore the will of communities in making decisions about their future "development". Moreover, it shows that the vision of development adopted by the current Canadian government, and which seems to be guiding CIDA's (and now DFATD's) partnership with mining companies, is at odds with local voices, and indeed with the past lessons of development practice. All of this suggests that these efforts are unlikely to avoid the problems encountered by past development projects, and, as such, to be able to achieve positive long-term development outcomes. They may, however, achieve short-term benefits for the mining companies by providing public goods that can pacify the resistance of local communities to mining operations.

This may indeed be the government's goal: to cloak the objective of promoting the interests of Canadian business abroad under the veil of development. Does this partnership then represent a new shift for Canadian development practice? The answer is both yes and no. As has been shown, Canada has historically supported its commercial interests through ODA policies such as the extensive use of tied aid. In recent decades, the government has sought to reduce its use of tied aid. However, this has been offset by policies such as these CSR partnerships. The primary change that seems to be taking place concerns the role of civil society actors in providing input into (and implementing) Canadian development policies.

The Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development specifically considers these CSR pilot projects, noting that they were initially developed by the NGOs themselves. This has some very interesting implications: it seems to support the argument that these projects are primarily driven by developmental considerations rather than corporate interests. Thus, the fact that they may serve the function of helping mining companies to obtain a social licence to operate is a secondary benefit. However, this conclusion is problematic for two reasons.

Firstly, as Stephen Brown (2012c) has so eloquently argued, the relationship between the Canadian government (and CIDA) and civil society development actors has increasingly become strenuous. This has included the government's 2009 decision to abruptly cut funding to a number of prominent NGOs (Brown 2012c). However, NGOs running development projects need some means to secure funding. If the government is making funds available through these types of public-private partnerships, then NGOs will presumably attempt to develop and propose projects that can secure such funds. However, this serves to undercut their autonomy, and may result in a lack of attention to potentially more pressing developmental concerns.

Secondly, corporations tend to run CSR projects in communities that are somehow designated as being their stakeholders (Sharp 2006). This is particularly true for industries such as mining. Development NGOs seeking to engage in partnerships with corporations, therefore, are likely to be limited in their choice of communities in which they can operate. This is not to say that development NGOs should never engage in such partnerships – after all, as Hamann and Acutt (2003) point out, corporations can be a significant source of funds. Moreover, NGOs relying on CIDA funding in the past have often had to meet specific funding requirements, which reduced their choice of projects or location. However, this new shift indicates that corporate interests are becoming more central in determining where projects are run. Thus, for instance, in a commentary of Canadian foreign aid to global health, Huish and Spiegel (2012) note that the government's cooperation with mining companies shows a perverse health geography that recognizes health needs only where Canadian business interests are to be found.

The input of NGOs in the formation of Canadian development policy therefore appears to be decreasing, in favor of a greater involvement by the corporate sector. NGOs are still needed – after all, they have the expertise and knowledge needed to run development projects.

Nevertheless, this reduces their autonomy as well as their bargaining power vis-à-vis their corporate partners. If this trend continues, and NGOs increasingly need to engage in these types of partnerships to secure their funding, this is also likely to curb their ability to engage in their monitoring and advocacy roles.

In sum, the Canadian government's new partnership with mining companies provides insight into both the government's stance on international development and on how development should be promoted (and by which actors). Firstly, the government's vision of development emphasizes the virtue of free markets in contributing to development, while not sufficiently acknowledging the possibility that free markets can at times be detrimental to those goals. It also pays insufficient attention to local needs and context, at times openly disregarding the input of local populations, while claiming to be contributing to their long-term development. Instead, in practice, the government is allowing Canadian commercial interests to more strongly influence and determine international development policies. While Canada has historically often allowed commercial interests to shape development policies, these partnerships still represent a shift in Canadian development practice. In this new configuration, the autonomy of civil society actors in international development is eroding, and they are increasingly being treated as sources of expert knowledge and as service providers, needed to help companies implement their development projects. Now that CIDA has been folded into DFAIT, it remains to be seen how these trends will proceed in the future, but, judging by the Standing Committee's Report, they are likely to continue.

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## Notes

1. A fuller account of the emergence of various development theories, or a normative argument about what "development" should look like, is beyond the scope of this paper.
2. It should be noted that there are also purely economic criticisms of CSR. Milton Friedman (1970), for instance, argues that "the social responsibility of business is the pursuit of profit".
3. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines ODA as "the sum of grants and sub-market-rate loans made to developing countries to promote economic development and welfare" (Sachs 2005a, p. 79). This therefore does not include military aid, or aid to higher-income countries.
4. What is entailed by self-interest in this case can vary. According to Pratt (2001), historically this has included a promotion of commercial interests in response to pressures from dominant class interests, pressures of bureaucratic politics, and security interests (for instance, strategic commercial alliances during the Cold War).
5. The goals include issues such as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality, among others (Sachs 2005b).
6. The Consensus includes an emphasis on market principles, including fiscal policy discipline, privatization of state enterprises and reduction of public spending, trade liberalization and economic opening toward foreign direct investment, and deregulation (Pieterse 2012).
7. Historically, Canada has been one the poorest international performers in terms of fragmentation and policy coherence (Carment *et al.* 2013).
8. Canada's efforts to allow the private sector a greater role in development are part of a larger trend amongst OECD donors (Bulles and Kindornay 2013, Kindornay and Reilley-King 2013, Swiss 2013), though the precise nature of this involvement has varied between different states.
9. It should also be noted that the Conservative government decided on the merger without consulting CIDA or DFAIT personnel, who learnt about the decision on budget day, along with the rest of the country (Swiss 2013).

10. Frynas (2005) gives the example of Statoil's Akassa project in the Niger Delta, which, through a partnership with a development NGO, was able to effectively take local voices into consideration in developing their CSR development projects.
11. There is little research on the degree to which the voices of local communities have been taken into consideration in the case of the other two pilot projects (i.e., those in Burkina Faso and Ghana).

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