



Noref Report

Brazil in Haiti: the challenges ahead

Monica Hirst

Summary

In light of the January 2010 earthquake, Brazil's decision to contribute immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term reconstruction in Haiti is not a new challenge. The mandate fits seamlessly into the existing foreign policy priorities of the Lula administration. Brazil has sent dozens of medical professionals as well as food, water and first aid supplies to Haiti, along with a donation of \$18.8 million of which \$5 million have already been delivered to the UN. Brazil is determined to be a leader in the international reconstruction efforts in Haiti, aligning itself with other bilateral donors and multilateral agencies. The South American nation's intentions to lead the efforts are clear, with the Brazilian foreign minister suggesting a proposed Marshall Plan for Haiti be reconsidered as a "Lula Plan".

Like many other countries, Brazil responded immediately to Haiti's most recent tragedy. In addition to a demonstration of solidarity in crisis, Brazil had other motivations as it had already been playing an important role in Haitian reconstruction before the earthquake. Second, Brazil suffered its own losses in the earthquake, which created an empathy between the two nations and made Brazilian society part of this tragedy. The loss of 18 Brazilians from the United Nations Stabilisation Mission (Minustah), as well as the Mission's deputy, Luis Carlos da Costa, and well-known social worker, Zilda Arns, highlighted the presence that both the Lula government and Brazilian social organisations have had in Haiti over the last six years.

Since 2004, Brazilian defence and foreign policy have devoted enormous attention to Haiti. This was accomplished by a two-fold strategy: Brazil's full involvement in United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Monica Hirst is a Brazilian-American professor of International Affairs at the Torcuato Di Tella University in Buenos Aires. She has taught at the Argentine Foreign Service Institute and the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO – Argentina) and served as a visiting professor at Stanford, the University of São Paulo and Harvard. She has worked as a consultant for the UN Development Program, Ford Foundation, Andean Development Corporation and the Foreign Ministries of Argentina and Colombia. Hirst co-coordinates the project "Reconstruction of Haiti: Strengthening Argentina's Capacity for Effective Cooperation", run by FLACSO and supported by the International Development Research Centre. She has published extensively on Brazilian foreign policy, Latin America–US relations, regional security and integration.

post-conflict reconstruction mandates by assuming the military command of Minustah; and making Haiti a first priority in Brazil's recently expanded engagement in South-South Cooperation (SSC) for development. Hence, the more recent push to provide humanitarian relief and participate in the long-term reconstruction of Haiti is not a new challenge for Brazil; instead, it shows continuity and coherence with the previous foreign policy priorities of the Lula administration.

The implications of the Haiti experience

After some initial doubts, the Lula government has slowly garnered widespread support for its work in Haiti over the past six years. The motivations behind Brazil's presence in Haiti today are many; some have been present since the beginning, while others have unfolded as a consequence of a relatively successful intervention.

Along with its military and diplomatic presence, state development agencies and social organisations became involved in a myriad of projects with the Haitian government and civil society. For the Brazilian Armed Forces, its presence in Haiti became an opportunity to add a global political component to its institutional mission. For the Itamaraty (as the Foreign Ministry is called in Brazil), this presence added prestige and international acknowledgement to Brazilian involvement in global affairs. Indeed, Brazil's ambition is to take centre stage in multilateral politics.

In the last decade, Brazil has become an active supporter of enhanced multilateral initiatives, particularly the expanded UN role in world politics, and Brazil has increased its own participation and responsibilities. Strengthening the legal and parliamentary structure of the UN system has become an ongoing obligation for Brazil, clearly establishing its ambition to be one of the new permanent members of the UN Security Council (should the number of seats increase). Besides being part of the so-called G4, along with Germany, Japan and India, Brazil has not missed an opportunity to sit as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. (Brazil has been elected five times as a non-permanent member in the post-cold war era: 1989-90, 1993-94, 1998-99, 2003-04 and 2010-11).

Imminent challenges

Brazil has responded to Haiti's immediate needs for humanitarian assistance and local security. In addition to the 1,266 men that were already part of Minustah prior to the January 12 earthquake, Brazil has sent two teams of rescuers totalling 51 men, 10 units of doctors, 50 ambulances, 6,000 tonnes of food, 11 tonnes of water, 258

first aid kits and 48 health professionals. The Brazilian government has committed an additional contingent of 1,300 rescue workers and pledged a donation of \$18.8 million, of which \$5 million has already been delivered to the UN. Soldiers with previous experience in Haiti will become especially valuable in the present context of reconstruction.

Ten days after the earthquake in Haiti, the Lula administration announced a relief plan for Haiti that will involve an expenditure of \$205 million. Of this amount, \$115 million will be transferred to the Defence Ministry for the execution of tasks assumed by the Brazilian troops recruited by Minustah. Additionally, \$76 million will fund a special relief programme handled by the Ministry of Health, which will be installed at Port-au-Prince. The programme will provide 10 units of 24-hour medical attention for patient diagnosis and basic treatment.

Furthermore, the Brazilian government has shown great determination to become a leader in the international efforts toward Haitian reconstruction. Synchronisation of its efforts with other bilateral donors, the UN authorities and a myriad of multilateral agencies has been taking place on daily basis. The South American nation's intentions to lead the efforts are clear: when the Brazilian Foreign Minister was asked if it would be plausible to think of a Marshall Plan for Haiti, the minister replied, "Why not a Lula Plan?"¹

Foreign intervention

From a foreign policy standpoint, the concern over differentiating Brazil's actions in Haiti from other examples of foreign intervention – propelled by imperialist motivations – has always been present. This concern has become even more pressing as Brazil perceives the dangers posed by the deployment of a major US military operation in Haiti. The urge to contain an Americanisation of the international assistance to Haiti has led the Brazilian government, together with France, to stress that all humanitarian relief operations be subordinated to UN coordination. Yet, in the context of the first three weeks of post-earthquake humanitarian assistance to Haiti, it has been almost impossible to enforce such discipline, because of both the chaotic local situation and the "advantages" inevitably imposed by America's greater deployment capacity.

1 Leandro Colon, "Amorim diz que ajuda brasileira deve dobrar", *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, 24 January 2010, http://www.mre.gov.br/portugues/noticiario/nacional/selecao_detalhe3.asp?ID_RESENHA=663014, accessed 24 January 2010.

The Brazilian government has already promised to double its military presence, while the UN authorities have authorised a new UNSC mandate that will increase Minustah troop strength by 2,000 to 8,940 and its police officers by 1,500 to 3,711.² The renewed mission will support recovery, reconstruction and stability efforts and implicitly points to the transitory nature of the US military presence in Haiti, a matter which has been overemphasised by Brazilian authorities.³ An expanded mandate will also open a new phase in communication between the UN mission and the NGOs dedicated to humanitarian work.

Although Brazil is contributing politically to strengthening UN organisation in Haiti, it still faces a difficult task at home. The only way to meet this challenge will be to improve its capacity to coordinate its actions in the field at three equally important levels.

Domestic coordination

Brazil's presence in Haiti comprises a wide range of actors. On the ground, this includes the military, which participates in Minustah; the different government agencies involved in the development cooperation projects pooled by the Brazilian Embassy in Port-au-Prince; and the Brazilian private sector and independent social organisations. In the next phase of Haiti's reconstruction, further coordination will be needed between these actors.

At state level in Brazil, the most important departments are the Foreign and Defence Ministries. Both are 100% committed to the rebuilding process in Haiti, yet this does not mean that they necessarily speak the same language. While Defence Minister Nelson Jobin rapidly committed Brazilian military presence in Haiti for five more years, Foreign Minister Celso Amorin reminded his colleague that all decisions of this sort are, and should be, subordinated to UNSC resolutions.⁴

2 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1908 of 19 January 2010, S/Res/1908 (2010), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/212/64/PDF/N1021264.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 9 February 2010.

3 "Sub de Amorim diz que prazo de 5 anos é prematuro", *Folha do Sao Paulo*, 18 January 2010, http://www.mre.gov.br/portugues/noticiario/nacional/selecao_detalhe3.asp?ID_RESEN-HA=660263, accessed 20 January 2010.

4 "Sub de Amorim diz que prazo de 5 anos é prematuro", *Folha do Sao Paulo*, 18 January 2010.

The Brazilian government needs to improve coordination with national and international NGOs since these organisations will tend to expand their work even more in Haiti. Of the Brazilian NGOs, Viva Rio stands out for its work in the slums of Port-au-Prince, linking projects that address the social, cultural and security needs of the local population. In the present context, this organisation has already announced its commitment to expand the scope and duration of its activities.

International coordination

Coordination will also be necessary with other governments and agencies, particularly UN agencies and regional bodies, such as the OAS. Internationally, Brazil will tend to engage more actively with multilateral agencies and donor countries to ensure a long-term commitment to Haitian reconstruction. This trend was already observed at the Montreal Conference.

Though communication with other Latin American countries will not be sidelined, the understanding is that relations with the US, Canada, France, Spain and the EU in general will tend to be prioritised. Brazilian diplomacy will also be putting pressure on UN agencies, the International Development Bank and the World Bank to release sustainable development funding for Haiti. Brazil's first concern has been to ensure that the immediate post-earthquake US military presence in Haiti would not inhibit the multilateral nature of the international relief efforts in the country.

Local liaison

Above all, it is vital that Brazil coordinates its actions with political, economic and social organisations in Haiti, to contribute to rebuilding Haitian state and its society upon a sovereign, self-sustainable and democratic basis. The fast response of local social groups in different Haitian areas after the earthquake revealed their capacity to target basic needs on a community basis. This has already become a crucial bridge to improving the impact of international cooperation at the present phase. The work developed by Brazilian troops, civil authorities and NGOs, together with these groups in the past several weeks, should be continued and expanded upon in the next few years.

While strengthening the Haitian state and its society has always been present in Brazil's involvement in the Caribbean nation, it has now gained strategic significance. Now, more than ever, neocolonialism must be avoided as the way out for Haiti's tragic reality.