

## Brazil in Haiti: Debate over the Peacekeeping Mission

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*More than two years ago, Brazil assumed the leadership of the military troops of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti, referred to by its French acronym MINUSTAH. Since then, Brazil's role in that country has been the subject of heated debate in the Brazilian Parliament, among academics and even among members of the Partido de los Trabajadores, PT, (Workers Party), currently in office.*

To many observers' surprise, the recent presidential elections in Brazil did not produce concrete results and there was a second round on October 29 in which Lula won against Geraldo Alckmin, candidate of the *Partido de la Social Democracia Brasileña, PSDB*, (Brazilian Social Democratic Party).

It is foreseeable that Lula will pursue the same foreign policy he has implemented during his first term of office. For the President, Brazil's presence in Haiti is essential to his country. Nonetheless, Brazil's continuity in Haiti is not entirely ensured due to internal disagreement within the *PT*.

### Brasilia's Inconsistencies

At first sight, Brazil's decision with respect to MINUSTAH seems to be consistent. The government's intention has been, for several years, to extend its influence in the international arena. Former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso hoped Brazil could become a permanent member in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and, under the presidency of Luis Inacio *Lula da Silva*, who has held office since 2003, this objective has become one of the top priorities of the Brazilian foreign policy agenda.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the fact that Brazilian diplomatic authorities link the country's participation in Haiti with the objective of winning a permanent seat in the UNSC, diplomats from other countries state that this participation is Brazil's "acid test" for that seat candidacy.<sup>2</sup>

In the National Congress, the link between both issues is also obvious and has been made explicit by some government representatives. Congressman Luiz Carlos Da Silva, known as Professor Luizinho, the government's leader in Congress, for example, claims that "it is a singular opportunity for Brazil to continue bidding for a permanent seat in the United Nations that led our country not only to send troops to Haiti, but to command them as well."<sup>3</sup>

Although seen this way Brazil's decision seems consistent, more detailed observations show glaring inconsistencies leading to a debate over the mission. On February 29, 2004, Brazil voted in favour of Resolution 1529<sup>4</sup> which established a *Multinational Interim Force*, but did not agree to participate in said Force. It argued that the Resolution would establish a mission to impose peace, based on Chapter

<sup>1</sup> Mónica Hirst, 'Los desafíos de la política sudamericana de Brasil', *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 205, Buenos Aires, September/October, 2006, p. 133, [http://www.nuso.org/upload/articulos/3387\\_1.pdf](http://www.nuso.org/upload/articulos/3387_1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For example: Jamil Chade, 'Missão no Haiti pode ajudar País no CS da ONU', *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 5, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Agência Câmara de Notícias, "Câmara analisa envio de soldados para o Haiti", *A Semana*, May 10, 2004, <http://www.camara.gov.br/internet/agencia/imprimir.asp?pk=49862> ; translation by the author.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1529 (2004).

VII of the United Nations Charter and that Brazil would agree only to participate in a subsequent moment in a peacekeeping mission, in accordance with Chapter VI of the Charter.<sup>5</sup>

Chapter VI refers to peacekeeping missions in which the parties in conflict give their consent to the presence of foreign forces. Instead, Chapter VII allows for the use of force without the parties' consent. Generally, governments providing troops for peacekeeping missions do not want to send them under Chapter VII because it involves greater responsibility over when to use force and their troops face more risks.

That "subsequent moment" the government referred to came with Resolution 1542<sup>6</sup>, approved on April 30, 2004. The inconsistency in Brazil's stand – the country then accepted to participate in the multinational force - emerges from the fact that this Resolution also acts under Chapter VII. The government argues that there is no inconsistency because, in Resolution 1529, reference to Chapter VII of the Charter is made already in the preamble whereas, in Resolution 1542, reference is made only in section seven; hence, it does not refer to the entire resolution but only to that paragraph. According to this interpretation, MINUSTAH would not be based on Chapter VII and would be a peacekeeping operation, and, therefore, there would be no problem in Brazil's participating or even leading the mission's military troops.<sup>7</sup>

### **Leadership and Training**

The internal debate over Brazil's participation in MINUSTAH was not over after having decided to lead the operation: it is still present, though currently it is not as heated. On the one hand, many government representatives belonging to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence point out the advantages of the Brazilian leadership. On the other hand, the opposition, some academics and even members of the *PT* are against this mission. Among favourable arguments, the already mentioned link with Brazil's objective of gaining more political weight internationally and becoming a UNSC permanent member is one of the most important ones.

The government's representative in Congress, Congressman Luizinho; the then Defence Minister, Jose Viegas; and the Foreign Affairs Minister, Celso Amorim, defend the decision of sending 1,200 soldiers and Brazil's leadership in Haiti. They argue that participation is important - in addition to helping in the reconstruction of that country - for Brazil's foreign policy, even for the country to have a bigger say in the United Nations.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, it is argued that by leading the troops of a United Nations peacekeeping operation for the first time, the country's visibility and prestige in international relations are increased and its disposition to take on responsibilities as a regional leader, strengthening regional stability and security, is shown. In this way, Haiti has entailed, for Lula and his government, an opportunity for Brazil since it is a situation with great political visibility in the Latin American region, which could legitimise, in some way, the looked-for Brazilian leadership.

Since the Cardoso administration, Brazil has attempted to define its leadership, placing itself as a regional power and trying not to face up to the United States but proving to be a key actor. The then Brazilian ambassador in the United Nations

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<sup>5</sup> Eliane Oliveira, 'Forças brasileiras só irão num segundo momento', *O Globo*, March 2, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1542 (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Eugenio Diniz, 'O Brasil e a MINUSTAH', [http://www.ndu.edu/chds/Journal/PDF/2005/Diniz\\_article-edited.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/chds/Journal/PDF/2005/Diniz_article-edited.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Agencia Câmara de Notícias, 'Ministros defendem envio de soldados para o Haiti', *Tempo Real*, May 12, 2004, <http://www.camara.gov.br/internet/agencia/imprimir.asp?pk=50080>

wrote in 2003: "The sooner Brazil is seen as an active and key interlocutor, the greater its influence in the international scene will be".<sup>9</sup>

Regionally, another argument used is that, by taking the leadership of a military contingent comprising also forces belonging to Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and other countries, it was assumed that Haiti is a Latin American problem which has to be solved by the region and not by the United States.

### **Critical Voices: Why Not Send Troops to Haiti?**

In April 2004, a number of intellectuals, legislators and social and union leaders launched a national campaign against sending Brazilian military troops to Haiti. In the manifest, they requested that Lula did not send those forces since they would become occupation troops violating Haiti's national sovereignty. Among the subscribers were some *PT* members, for instance Markus Sokol, Cristovam Buarque, Ivan Valente (Federal Congressman, São Paulo) and Maninha (Federal Congresswoman, Federal District), the sociologist Emir Sader and Professor Plinio de Arruda. Also included were representatives of the *Central Unitaria de Trabalhadores, CUT*, (Workers Central Organisation) and the *Movimento Sin Tierra* (Brazil's Landless Rural Workers' Movement).<sup>10</sup> On May 13, the subscribers organised a public act against sending troops at the Law School of the University of São Paulo (*USP*).<sup>11</sup>

According to the opponents, the fact that Haiti suffered a *coup d'état* supported by American armed forces, which, along with French and Chilean forces, installed the transition government, made any foreign military mission in the country an occupation force. Emir Sader and Demetrio Magnoli, as well as *PT* Congressman Ivan Valente were against Brazil's taking on a leading role in MINUSTAH thus legitimising President George Bush's "imperialistic and interventionist policy".<sup>12</sup>

Jorge Zaverucha, Professor of the Federal University of Pernambuco and researcher in the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, claimed that, for some sectors of the *PT*, Lula was playing along American interests in addition to legitimising the *coup d'état* practice since former Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, had been ousted. For this same reason, Brazil neither should lead the UN mission's troops nor should it contribute by sending any.<sup>13</sup>

Another reason for discord was the economic cost. Critiques claimed that the money used for Brazilian participation could be spent on social projects in Brazil rather than outside the country. Along this line of reasoning, it was argued that the Brazilian army was leaving for another country when it could be tackling urban violence problems in Brazil. The Defence Minister responded to this criticism by arguing that sending Brazilian military men to Haiti would come in useful to train the Armed Forces to, eventually, fight crime in Brazil. Thus, the mission in Haiti would be like a training period to then use military troops in Brazilian urban centres.

Jose Botafogo Gonçalves of the Brazilian Centre of International Relations (*CEBRI*) in Rio de Janeiro questioned whether the objective of gaining a permanent seat in the UNSC was feasible. Brazil's ability to take on the responsibilities and costs pertaining to a permanent seat were questioned. Likewise, on the other hand, Paulo

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<sup>9</sup> Rubens A. Barbosa, 'Post-9-11: a Brazilian View', *World Policy Journal*, Vol. XX, No. 3, 2003, p.81; translation by the autor.

<sup>10</sup> Manifesto da Campanha: Não ao envio de tropas do Brasil ao Haiti, April 8, 2004, <http://www.midiaindependente.org/pt/blue/2004/04/277171.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> Ato em São Paulo contra o envio de tropas brasileiras ao Haiti, May 10, 2004, <http://brasil.indymedia.org/pt/blue/2004/05/279560.shtml>

<sup>12</sup> Ver Emir Sader, 'What is Brazil Doing in Haiti?', June 29, 2004, <http://americas.irc-online.org/commentary/2004/0406brazil.html> and Nora Di Pacce, 'Brasil en Haiti: ¿Misión de paz u ocupación?', *Radio Nederland*, May 20, 2004, <http://www.rebellion.org/brasil/040520pacce.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, 'O Brasil no Haiti e o Haiti no Brasil', July 2004, <http://www.resdal.org/haiti/haiti-crisis-zaverucha.html>

Edgar Resende, of the International Relations Department of the Pontifical Catholic University in São Paulo, highlights the traditional non-intervention principle inherent to Brazilian foreign policy and added that, given the complexity of the situation, it would be very difficult for the troops not to get their hands dirty.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, there has been some criticism outside Brazil against the improvisation with which the mission was started-up.<sup>15</sup>

### **Brazil's Role in Haiti**

Despite criticism in Brazil towards the link between the mission in Haiti and the permanent seat in the Security Council, as well as internal problems of urban violence, Brazil has expressed its concern for regional stability along with Argentina, Chile and other Latin American countries. These governments have reacted positively to the crisis of the Caribbean country, supplying troops for MINUSTAH and strengthening regional and hemispheric cooperation.

Military leadership in the mission represents an enormous challenge for Brazil. Critiques and doubts over Brazil's ability to lead the mission's troops successfully were many in 2004 and 2005. During this period, the security situation in Haiti deteriorated and MINUSTAH was incapable of facing growing violence in the country, especially in shantytowns in Puerto Principe.<sup>16</sup> In addition, human rights were, and are, frequently violated; MINUSTAH could be more active in that regard.<sup>17</sup> The United Nations' mandate deals, specifically, with human rights, translated into the ability and obligation of MINUSTAH to carry out actions in order to investigate and end impunity as well as to advance in the disarmament of short weapons.<sup>18</sup>

Brazil's approach to peacekeeping duties is characterised as traditional, adopting a neutral position and keeping armed bands apart as in the case of classic conflicts. The Brazilian contingent, well trained and equipped, has the necessary resources to impose force, but has chosen to act less aggressively and more cautiously. This approach is limited by the existing heated political debate in Brazil. On the one hand, the government wants to avoid the death of Brazilian soldiers, which would reopen a debate over the leadership of this mission, and, on the other hand, it wants to avoid the death of Haitian civilians. The bottom line is the unsolved question of whether it is legitimate for Brazil to lead this mission's troops, which, for some sectors in Latin America and other Southern countries (for instance, for certain circles in the South African government which provided refuge for Aristide), is illegitimate.

According to several sources, residents of Cité Soleil, the most troublesome neighbourhood in Haiti under Brazil's responsibility, are, on the one hand, grateful for the "first investigate and not shoot" Brazilian attitude<sup>19</sup> but, at the same time, they are frustrated for watching them drive UN armoured cars and not interfere when shootings start. The Lula administration thinks that "Brazil's approach is better than employing arms and bombs" and "it is not considered an occupation force but a peacekeeping force".<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding this less interventionist

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond Colitt, 'Brazil leads UN's Haiti peacekeeping mission', *Financial Times*, May 31, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, 'Intervención en Haití, misión frustrada. Una crítica de América Latina', *FRIDE*, October 2005, <http://www.fride.es/File/ViewLinkFile.aspx?FileId=774>

<sup>16</sup> Gustavo Gonzalez, 'Haiti: Latin America-led Peacekeeping Operation – A 'Mission Impossible'', *Inter Press Service*, November 2004.

<sup>17</sup> 'Keeping the peace in Haiti?', Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights & Centro de Justiça Global, March 2005, <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/KeepingthepeaceJusticiaGlobal-4.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Mariano Aguirre, 'Naciones Unidas y España en Haití', *FRIDE*, February, 2006, p. 3, <http://www.fride.org/Publications/Publication.aspx?Item=1070>

<sup>19</sup> 'Haiti: Brazilian Troops in MINUSTAH must intervene to stop violence', *Refugees International*, March 17, 2005, <http://www.refintl.org/content/article/detail/5428/?PHPSESSID=447d33c54a95ba9>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

approach, it is argued that it is necessary to use greater force to put an end to violence in Haiti.<sup>21</sup>

Other Cité Soleil citizens preferred the American military men of the Multinational Interim Force (from February to June 2004); though far more interventionist, their actions against violence seemed to be more effective.<sup>22</sup> Other military contingents, for example, Chile's in Cap-Haitien, have acted more energetically and firmly against violence and insecurity, patrolling (on foot and by car) and guarding intersections in troublesome neighbourhoods. Although Brazilian soldiers have a good reputation, Cité Soleil residents want a greater and more continuous presence in order to be able to live in a safer environment.

Brazil's presence in Haiti is important because there is also a certain cultural affinity. That has allowed for the fostering of social activities thus facilitating the appropriation of the peacekeeping process and strengthening the social weave. A good example is the football match organised between both countries in August 2004, which was a symbolic event for Haiti, surrounded by a sport and peace spirit; "weapons kill and sports enrich an entire society's life".<sup>23</sup> On this occasion, a cooperation agreement within the sphere of sports was signed by Brazil and Haiti, emphasising the friendly relationship between both countries.<sup>24</sup> The acceptance of the Brazilian presence by Haitians is positive and this facilitates the social legitimacy of the stabilisation and peacekeeping process.

The Brazilian contingent's approach is more social than others, fulfilling basic needs of the population. For many Haitians, unfulfilled needs condition daily violent actions. Brazilians participated in distributing food, removing rubbish from the streets and opening medical and dental centres and hairdressing salons, among other actions. Brazil is widely experienced in street and urban violence, since it is a country that suffers more deaths than some countries involved in conflict.<sup>25</sup> The problem Haiti faces now is not political violence but crime arising from the lack of jobs and money to meet basic needs. A Haitian describes the situation in the following way: "If they give me 50 cents to beat-up a person living next door, I do it to eat".<sup>26</sup>

The Brazilian contingent represents the largest contribution per country for MINUSTAH, with 1,214 military men and four policemen. Haiti's rehabilitation depends, to a great extent, on the elimination of insecurity and thus the mission is essential if it manages to achieve this goal. The Brazilian contingent is of vital importance due to its actions in Cité Soleil. In addition, the withdrawal of Brazilian troops could influence Argentina, Chile and other Latin American countries to withdraw their troops from MINUSTAH; those forces combined account for more than half of the troops (more than 3,500 soldiers).

MINUSTAH, with a total of 9,151 troops and civilians approved by the Security Council, represents a mid-size mission. Currently, the United Nations has 16 peacekeeping operations, with a total of 115,655 authorised troops and civilians.<sup>27</sup> However, a study underlines the difference between authorised personnel and contingents on the field, which only amount to 72,822 troops, and there are around 43,000 men who have not been deployed yet.<sup>28</sup> The significant increase in peace

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> 'Haitian Voices: Response to the Brazilian Peacekeepers', *Refugees International*, April 3, 2005, <http://www.refintl.org/content/article/detail/5297?PHPSESSID=447d33c54a95ba9>

<sup>23</sup> 'Le Football au coeur de la Paix', <http://www.sakapfet.com/brazilvshaiti/press/index.tpl>

<sup>24</sup> FIFA, 'Le Brésil écrase Haïti 6-0 dans le match pour el paix', <http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/fr/040819/11/10cg.html>

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Hay, 'Brazil looks for way out of Haiti Mission', *Reuters*, January 12, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> 'Haitian Voices: Responses to Brazilian Peacekeepers', *Refugees International*, April 3, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Security Council Report. 'Twenty Days in August: The Security Council Sets Massive New Challenges for UN Peacekeeping', September 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

operations in recent years implies great pressure on the countries that supply troops and policemen bearing a great number of military men abroad. Brazil's premature withdrawal in this international context, along with great demands for troops by the UN for several countries in conflict, would make it very difficult to replace troops in Haiti.

### **Forecast**

More than two years have passed by since the United Nations mission was deployed in Haiti and its success is still uncertain. Brazil had not had such a responsibility in peacekeeping operations so far. Despite some analysts' suspicion, members of MINUSTAH itself claim that "Brazil has done a great job so far".<sup>29</sup>

The situation in Haiti is improving, the level of violence has decreased and armed groups have reduced the number of their activities. However, there are shortcomings in the mission and the time of post-conflict processes is paradoxical: it is short to re-establish order and meet basic needs and long to achieve sustainable results.<sup>30</sup> Brazil cannot be in charge of everything, but should it stay in Haiti, it would have to critically revise the sense of the mission with the other countries. A quick withdrawal strategy could cause the premature end of the United Nations mandate and Haiti could go back to social violence, with serious or minor shortcomings, uncontrolled by foreign forces.

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<sup>29</sup> Member of MINUSTAH who preferred to remain anonymous. Interview, October 9, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Astri Suhrke, 'When more is Less: Aiding StateBuilding in Afghanistan', *FRIDE*, September 2006.

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