NOREF Report

Brazil: an emerging peacekeeping actor

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Executive summary

As the presence of Western states in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) has gradually decreased, new states have been filling the resultant void, although these operations remain wedded to Western ideas and standards of how such interventions should be carried out. However, as emerging powers like Brazil are now taking the lead on the ground, the question that this report seeks to shed light on is how this is starting to affect the way in which the UN carries out its PKOs. It assesses the Brazilian military lead in MINUSTAH in Haiti against the backdrop of the so-called "pacification" strategy currently employed in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. It shows that rather than being a "transmission belt" for a traditional Western model of military intervention, Brazil's lead in MINUSTAH has had an added value, building on Brazilian experience with urban conflict, which is an area with which the UN and Western states are unfamiliar. In fact, several states, including the U.S., have started to look to Brazil when developing and adapting concepts for urban and anti-crime operations. This shows that as Brazil has become a more active participant in UN PKOs, it has also gradually begun to set the agenda for how the UN runs such operations.

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Brazil and UN peacekeeping operations

As the presence of Western states in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) has gradually decreased, new states have been filling the resultant void. (These operations are still predominantly carried out under Western military command, but states like Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and China are providing the manpower on the ground.) While there are local variations in terms of military tactics and organisation, implementation of mandates, etc., UN PKOs remain wedded to Western ideas and standards of how military interventions should be carried out. However, as emerging powers like Brazil are now moving in to take the lead on the ground, the question that this short report seeks to shed light on is how this is starting to affect the way in which the UN carries out such operations.

In March 2004 French president Jacques Chirac, in a phone call to Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, formally invited Brazil to take the lead of a UN military mission in Haiti that was to be created three months later. The initiative was backed by the U.S. and the EU, who wanted to secure legitimacy for the UN mission by giving command to a regional actor. The initiative also received support from other Latin American states such as Chile, Argentina and Peru. Giving the military command of the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to Brazil could be seen as an attempt to create a legitimate "transmission belt" of the liberal peace project into a country that had gradually grown weary of military interference by Western states (Moreno et al., 2012; see also Paris, 2002). However, rather than merely adopting a predefined UN PKO model, Brazil, along with the predominantly Latin American force contributors, had to adapt to what is routinely described as an "untypical" UN PKO (Fishel & Sáenz, 2007; Heine & Thompson, 2011). From the start the key challenge for MINUSTAH was to ensure stability and public security in the face of widespread urban violence by armed gangs in the slums in and around the capital of Port-au-Prince. In reality, however, despite MINUSTAH being described as a peacekeeping mission there was never any peace to keep. Rather than comparing the situation to other UN PKOs,

therefore, it is more fruitful to assess it against the backdrop of Brazil's domestic experiences of addressing extensive levels of violence and the emergence of so-called ungoverned spaces in the slums or *favelas* in and around cities such as Rio de Janeiro in particular.

By exploring this link, this report identifies some of the context-specific and general lessons that may be drawn from Brazil's experiences in MINUSTAH/Haiti and Rio. Initial findings suggest that there is indeed room for mutual lessons to be learned, but there are also significant differences, both in terms of the different demands of the multinational and national contexts, and the presence of effective and legitimate state authority in the post-intervention phase. Also, despite the rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, MINUSTAH has fared marginally better than previous military interventions, partly because Brazilian commanders have been able to reinvent established UN operational practices and adapt them to the new challenges they face in Haiti.

Addressing urban violence: the national and multinational contexts

Many have tried to diagnose the "Haitian problem", i.e. the driving forces that have transformed colonial Haiti, once considered the jewel of the Caribbean, into what has been variously characterised as a nightmare, predator, collapsed, failed, failing, kleptocratic, phantom, virtual or pariah state (Buss, 2008: 2).[1] After winning its independence in 1804 in the only successful slave revolt in history, Haiti currently has the dubious honour of being the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. It has been subject to a string of foreign interventions, starting with the U.S. invasion in 1915, interspersed only by periods of anarchy and dictatorship. There is no quick fix to Haiti's problems. However, notwithstanding the importance of Haitian history for its current state of affairs, this report does not

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1 For a condensed breakdown of Haitian history, see Pace and Luz-incourt (2009).

dwell on the historical factors that continue to stand in the way of sustainable solutions to the host of challenges that haunt this nation. Rather, it engages with the challenges that Haiti has posed within the context of a UN PKO. In this particular context, Haiti represents an "untypical" situation, indeed.

Haiti has not gone through a war; nonetheless, the Haitian situation is one in which violence and conflict have become deeply entrenched in politics and society at large. Rather than comparing it with the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon or the Sudans, which have recently been home to more "typical" UN PKOs, Haiti has more resemblance to places like South Africa, Mexico and Colombia – or Brazil, for that matter.[2] These are places "where the murder rate is seen as symptomatic of societies where pervasive political tensions are played out at the individual and small group level rather than being mobilized as insurgencies" (Pace & Luzincourt, 2009: 8). Another feature is that the violence seen in the abovementioned places tends predominantly to be an urban phenomenon, whereas insurgencies have often been rural in nature. Nevertheless, the level of lethal violence seen in the former situations often surpasses that in many insurgencies or wars (Pace & Luzincourt, 2009). The difference between Haiti and places like South Africa, Mexico, Colombia or Brazil is that in these latter countries urban violence remains a national problem, whereas in 2004 in Haiti the gangs of Port-au-Prince were turned into a problem for the UN to solve.

Western commentators often tend to assume that a Latin American lead nation would offer a Latin American solution to a typically Latin American problem of urban violence. However, for Brazilian policymakers, MINUSTAH was rather seen as a way to assert Brazil's leadership in the region and show itself as a responsible global player (Hirst, 2007; Mendelson Forman 2011). Some commentators mention such factors as a shared cultural and historical heritage, or Haitians' love of Brazilian football, as factors contributing to the success of MINUSTAH (See e.g. Chagas 2010;

Moreno et al., 2012). Yet for obvious reasons, many Brazilians will object to any comparisons being made between Haitian and Brazilian society. Nonetheless, there are both obvious and more tacit connections between urban violence and ways of dealing with it in Brazil and Haiti that need to be fleshed out to achieve a better understanding of how to deal with this challenge in both national and multinational contexts.

From peacekeeping to "pacification" and back

For years Brazil has experienced extensive levels of violence and the emergence of so-called ungoverned spaces in the slums or *favelas* in and around several of its major cities, but in Rio de Janeiro in particular. The challenges emerging from these ungoverned spaces are often connected to drug-related crime. However, a more fundamental problem is the lack of an effective state presence in these areas, with the consequences for health, security and basic service provision that such a situation entails. In many of the *favelas* in Rio people still live their lives with almost no state interference, answering to their local gang/community leader, who provides security and basic services (by, for example, supplying electricity and cable television through illegal "taps" into public and private services), and earning their salaries and paying their "taxes" in the black market economy. Many of these individuals are in fact able to lead fairly normal lives, but they tend to lack the opportunities given to people outside the *favelas*, such as proper health care and education, which forces many into drug-related activities and the inevitable insecurity and often early and violent deaths that such lives incur. It is also when the effects of these activities have spilled over into the governed spaces that the state has responded to this situation, usually meeting violence with violence. However, this has started to change.

Since 2008 local and state authorities in Rio have developed and applied what has been referred to as a "pacification" strategy to take back state control of the *favelas*. The strategy has involved three phases: (i) a *tactical intervention* by the military police – the Special Police Operations Battalion (Bathalhão de Operacções Policiais

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2 This is not to say that every operation should not be seen in its particular context. In one way or another, all conflicts are "untypical", and predefined force concepts and practices will always have to be adapted to local needs.

Especiais or BOPE)[3] – with support of the army or the Marine Corps, to recover areas controlled by armed groups; (ii) a *stabilisation* phase designed to secure and calm these areas; and (iii) a *consolidation* phase involving the permanent deployment of specially trained Pacification Police Units (Unidade de Policia Pacificadora or UPPs) (see Muggah & Souza Mulli, 2012). For the most part the "pacification" strategy has been a success and some 30 *favelas* have so far been pacified, vastly improving Rio's public image in the run-up to the 2012 Rio+20 summit, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Accordingly, "pacification" has also been presented as a model to the region and the world. However enticing this opportunity may appear, however, it is important to understand that this approach did not come about in a vacuum, but is the result of an evolutionary process that involves lessons drawn by the Brazilian army and Marine Corps from military operations in Haiti.

As previously mentioned, when MINUSTAH deployed in 2004, Haiti was not a country at war. But because of the extremely volatile security situation, especially in and around the capital of Port-au-Prince, MINUSTAH received a Chapter VII mandate and was assigned a robust military force. At present, MINUSTAH forces still consist of roughly 10,000 personnel, including 7,200 military troops, of which 1,900 are Brazilian and 2,800 Formed Police Units (FPUs), in addition to 2,000 civilians.[4]

MINUSTAH's first two years were marked by hesitation on the part of the Brazilian forces, who were unfamiliar with operating under a Chapter VII mandate (Chagas, 2010). However, after the violence escalated throughout 2004 and 2005, in 2006 MINUSTAH was given the green light to intervene militarily and forcefully in gang strongholds (Dziedzic & Perito, 2008; Dorn, 2009). By July 2007 MINUSTAH and the Haitian authorities had regained control of all sections of the capital and the crime rate had dropped. Several hundred gang members were apprehended and MINUSTAH established a permanent presence in notorious neighbourhoods like Cité Soleil and

Bel Air that had previously been inaccessible to local and international authorities. From a military point of view the operations were a resounding success for the Brazilians, who introduced several new operational practices, including the establishment of MINUSTAH strong points inside gang-controlled areas, the use of night operations to reduce civilian casualties and the extensive use of intelligence in all phases of the operations (Dorn, 2009). However, the heavy-handed way in which the operations were carried out did cause controversy. Among some UN member states, for example, the operations reignited a long-standing debate regarding the use of intelligence methods in UN PKOs (see Norheim-Martinsen & Ravndal, 2011). The very use of military force to fight crime in itself raises a number of key issues, such as its long-term effects on the relationship among international actors, the Haitian authorities and the Haitian public at large, and the ability to re-establish a sense of normalcy in a society only as long as a heavy military presence is maintained.

Similar concerns have also been raised by the military presence in some of the Rio *favelas* (e.g. see *World Politics Review*, 2011). Troops from the Brazilian Marine Corps, which participated in the first phase of the two first "pacifications" of the *favelas* of Vila Cruiserio and Alemão in November 2010, were also part of the military surge against the gangs in Port-au-Prince in Haiti in 2006-07. The same can be said of the Brazilian army, which retained a military "peacekeeping" presence in the Alemão *favela* in Rio up until the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012, a point rarely mentioned by "pacification" proponents. In fact, the term "peacekeeping", even if sits somewhat uneasily with Brazilian police and army personnel, is sometimes used by the Rio police to describe what they are currently doing in the *favelas*.[5] Lessons obviously travel both ways.

In fact, all military units in preparation for deployment in Haiti go through a tactical course in "*favela* environment operations" at BOPE, and civilian personnel regularly take part in courses taught by army personnel at the Peacekeeping Operations Joint Centre in Rio. Because "pacification" has required BOPE to retain a more visible presence for a longer period of time while awaiting relief by the UPPs, they have also had

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3 Made famous through the popular movies *Tropa de Elite I & II*.

4 Force numbers have gradually been reduced after a peak following the January 2010 earthquake. MINUSTAH's mandate has been extended to October 2013, when force numbers will be further reduced.

5 Interviews by the author, Rio de Janeiro, June 2012.

to revise their traditional hard-hitting tactics and move towards an approach more in line with "hearts and minds" thinking in military operations.[6] Some commentators have even suggested that one of the reasons for participating in MINUSTAH in the first place was to use the operation as a training ground for the army for use in public security emergencies in Brazil (Diniz, 2007). But whereas the domestic "pacification" strategy has led to a gradually "softer" approach in Rio, Haiti is still host to some 1,900 Brazilian troops – but only eight Brazilian police officers.

Adapting to the UN system

Overall, the focus of MINUSTAH is shifting towards enabling the Haiti National Police (PNH) to take over policing activities. Currently, the UN Police Mission, through its FPUs, has the main responsibility for maintaining community security together with the PNH, whereas the UN military forces are there to support the police. But the process of training the PNH remains very slow, mainly because of recruitment problems and widespread corruption in the police and in Haitian society at large. The target number for the PNH is 20,000 officers, but only 10,000 have been recruited so far. The problem is also one of quality, as the PNH lacks the most basic resources and professional skills to carry out criminal investigations, prosecutions, etc. This is why countries like Norway have started to focus their efforts on building local capacity in key areas, such as dealing with sexual violence. Towards the end of the year Norway will also deploy at task force to improve capacity in fighting organised crime.

However, these ongoing efforts to improve civilian capacity to deal with urban violence in Haiti could probably not have come about without the forceful crackdown on the gangs in 2006-07 and the continued UN military presence in the most volatile neighbourhoods. The situation in both Haiti and Rio has revealed the necessity of regaining territorial control before any meaningful state presence can be reinstated. Yet this is an argument that sits uneasily with Western states, for which crime and violence constitute an issue that should be tackled by the police and not the

armed forces. But, as mentioned above, the levels of violence in Port-au-Prince and several other Latin American and Caribbean cities tend to surpass those of many conventional conflicts. There is a danger, therefore, that Western models of policing are not suited to meet the challenges raised by urban violence on the scale seen here. Long-term strategies obviously need to include a gradual transition to the police and more long-term community projects designed to offer social security, employment, political participation, etc. But it might also be that Western states need to accept that there may be utility in using the armed forces in situations where urban violence exceeds certain levels.

At the moment, crime rates are again on the rise in Port-au-Prince. Although the post-earthquake setting is different from the one that produced the violent uprisings in 2004-05, there are parallels: popular discontent and unfulfilled expectations are on the rise; gang leaders who escaped from prison during the earthquake have reasserted their leadership in parts of Port-au-Prince, while others are being challenged by a new generation of gang members recruited from the cadres of disillusioned street children in Haiti; and the informal gang structures remain present, filling the security and social functions that public institutions and international organisations have been unable to fill (Lunde, 2012; Kolbe & Muggah, 2012). Simply put, the problem is that in Haiti there is no state to provide basic public services or a minimum sense of security when the peacekeepers leave. Thus, every public display of discontent, every demonstration or riot will inevitably threaten to overthrow the government in power and plunge Haiti back into chaos if not prevented from doing so.

Against this understanding of the situation, it is not difficult to understand Brazil's insistence on retaining a sizeable military presence in Haiti, nor its support for rebuilding an armed force in Haiti – a proposition that has been met with much scepticism in the rest of the international community. Again, we may observe a kind of clash of cultures in the way that Brazil and Western states see the relationship between the state and the armed forces. In Brazil, the armed forces enjoy high levels of trust and respect, whereas local police forces are often associated with corruption.

6   Ibid.

This being said, the current "pacification" strategy in Rio has involved a gradual shift of emphasis away from the more hard-hitting military tactics to a "softer" approach in which more emphasis is put on strengthening the UPPs. These units could perhaps serve as a model for the PNH, but Brazil currently has no plans to send more police officers to Haiti. This is partly due to recruitment problems – the Rio police force is struggling to find and train enough officers. But it is also due to the lack of a system – and perhaps also a mentality – for sending civilian peacekeepers to UN missions. Whereas the Brazilian Ministry of Justice may be coming to grips with the need for civilian peacekeepers, the problem is that the decision to deploy police will have to be taken by federal authorities, which "own" the police.

In fact, Brazil has proved somewhat uneasy with both civilian peacekeeping and the co-ordination needs incurred by an integrated mission like MINUSTAH. For example, several Brazilian NGOs are operating in Haiti, such as Viva Rio, which is involved in projects ranging from community violence reduction to water purification. But Brazil does not fund these projects, nor aims to co-ordinate them in any formalised way.

Concluding remarks: setting the agenda for future UN PKOs

When Brazil took the lead in MINUSTAH in Haiti in 2004, it marked a shift in the country's traditional non-intervention policy. Portrayed as a global player in the making for decades, Brazil wanted to use MINUSTAH to assert its leadership in the region and show itself as a responsible regional and global actor. In February 2011 Brazil also assumed leadership of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force off the coast of Lebanon as the first non-NATO country to hold such a position. At present, Brazil participates in seven UN PKOs around the world. As the country has become a more active participant in UN PKOs, it has also gradually begun to set the agenda for how the UN runs its operations. Significant here is the fact that, despite the presence of troops from states such as India and China in UN PKOs, Brazil arguably represents the first among this group of emerging powers to assume an active lead role in this area. MINUSTAH is a pertinent case

in point, because of the regional dimension and the particular challenges raised by the security situation in Haiti.

Several states, including the U.S., have started to look to Brazil when developing and adapting concepts for urban and anti-crime operations (Chagas, 2010). A report by the U.S. Institute of Peace has also advised that the successful lessons from Haiti should be put into practice whenever UN PKO missions are challenged by illegal armed groups (Dziedzic & Perito, 2008). Haiti has a demographic profile that resembles many volatile states in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa in particular (U.S., 2008; Goldstone, 2010; Harroff-Tavel, 2008; Norheim-Martinsen, 2011). Also, more than 50% of the world's population already lives in cities, a share that will grow to 70% by 2050. Newly urbanising states are characterised by rapidly growing cities, urban sprawl, slumification, and massive inequalities between rich and poor. These environments are prone to rising violence, criminal gangs and insurgencies. They are also characterised by lack of management and control, which in turn may open up to radical groups, terrorist networks, and organised criminals gaining a foothold and being able to operate unchecked. The danger of vulnerable cities collapsing completely or being subject to massive systemic breakdown as a result of natural disasters, energy shortages, lack of law and order, etc. will have wide security and humanitarian consequences in the future.

These emerging conflict environments are posing challenges with which the UN and the West are unfamiliar. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that the right lessons are learned from places like Haiti and Rio de Janeiro. The MINUSTAH track record shows that rather than being a "transmission belt" for a traditional Western model of military intervention, Brazil's lead of the MINUSTAH operation has had an added value, even if opinions differ over how to move Haiti beyond the lingering state of emergency that continues to haunt this nation.

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