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LATIN AMERICA'S FAREWELL TO ARMS IN HAITI

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In April 2017, the UN Security Council approved resolution 2350, which simultaneously determined the end of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). While the conclusion of the Mission in Haiti took place together with the ending of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Haiti was the only country to receive a replacement mission. Its tasks were to consolidate the justice and human rights system and complete the creation of a local police force. Surprisingly, the Security Council (SC) framed the mandate of the new mission under chapter VII of the UN Charter, a de facto postponement of Haitian sovereignty for two more years.

This text intends to address the reconfiguration of UN intervention in Haiti and will focus upon two basic questions. The first relates to the balance of MINUSTAH per-

formance during its thirteen and a half years, particularly the role of Latin America, and more precisely that of Brazil in charge of its military command. This prompts discussion

regarding lessons learned among regional troop contributors to the mission. The second question refers to the nature and responsibilities of MINUJUSTH, the most recent link between the developments in Haiti and global governance deliberations, especially in the SC and the UN Commission on Human Rights.

A dialogue of the deaf at the Security Council

The controversies over resolution 2350 were explicit at Security Council meetings. Russia and China aligned with Latin America in questioning the justification for keeping the new mandate under chapter VII. An open door for the use of force did not seem compatible with a mission conceived to defend human rights and the rule of law. MINUJUSTH comprises seven police units, a staff of 980 employees and 295 offic-

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ers.¹ The inclusion of article 18, which legitimised the use of force, was questioned for not being in line with the contents previously agreed at the SC. Besides the use of inappropriate language, there were concerns about the improvised manoeuvre behind the resolution's final draft. The procedure was justified by the US in the name of SC presidential prerogative. In fact, the new mission in Haiti became part of the long list of topics affected by the Trump administration's hardline approach at the UN (Aguirre, 2018). After more than 13 years of proactive monitoring of the MINUSTAH mandate at the Security Council, the Group of Friends of Haiti was completely ignored.

Other concerns on the future of Haiti emerged in a new round of exchanges at the SC, after the approval of resolution 2350. Three points were underscored: the duration of the new mission, the continuous neglect of the UN in the fight against cholera, and the importance of linking the new UN mission with the 2017–2020 Haitian National Police Strategic Plan. Regarding the life expectancy of MINUJUSTH, a two-year mandate was considered counter-productive and hasty. Insistence on the UN's health security responsibilities was based on the evidence that the cholera epidemic was far from being resolved. In October 2016, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon created the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, sponsored by the UNDP. In 2016,

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the fund's total budget was \$638,100; France was its only donor. In 2017, this fund functioned with a budget of a million dollars, thanks to the contributions of 16 donors. Three were Latin American: Cuba, Uruguay and Chile.²

Finally, the concerns regarding police training raised uncertainties and doubts regarding the commitment and political will of the Haitian authorities. The creation of a police force of 15,000 men would be essential to lock in the robust rule of law in Haiti. In this case, US economic support was crucial, covering 30% of the budget for Haitian police reform.

A last review at the SC of MINUSTAH took place before its final dismantling. Latin American discrepancies were voiced again: i) the Group of Friends of Haiti requested that the UN launch a reparation plan to compensate for the impact of the cholera epidemic; ii) Uruguay underlined its concern with the Haitian government's decision to start reorganising local armed forces; iii) Bolivia questioned the decision to put MINUJUSTH under chapter VII. The Haitian government contested this point as well, arguing that the new mission should only cover "technical cooperation activities".

The regional prism

The prominent participation of Latin American troops, alongside other contributors, led MINUSTAH to become emblematic as an initiative of regional cooperation combined with multilateral intervention. Special mention must be made of the presence of the ABC+U group (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay), which reinforced the mission's South American facade. The performance of the ABC cluster in the Haiti reconstruction led to an unprecedented articulation between defence and foreign policies aimed at expanding the presence of these countries in the global debate on governance and effective multilateralism. The regional presence in Haiti carried the illusion that successful democratic transition experience, especially in the Southern Cone, would be exported to Haiti. Besides stabilisation and peacekeeping, Latin American troops undertook tasks related to local communications, infrastructure, public health and civil construction. The tasks became even more crucial after the devastating effects of natural disasters such as Hurricane Jeanne in 2004 and the earthquake of 2010. On many occasions improvised solutions would substitute for the lack of international aid in the construction of roads, schools and hospitals and the improvement of basic sanitary conditions.

Non-military Latin American cooperation also made a major contribution in this context. Besides Cuba's medical presence, Venezuela gave key help to the supply of oil. The first years of MINUSTAH were especially important for regional South-South cooperation in the areas of health, food security, education, institutional strengthening and infrastructure (Malacalza, 2017). Haiti also represented a target for Latin American social organisations training in humanitarian assistance – such was the case of Techo para mi País and Viva Rio. After the 2010 earthquake, Latin American cooperation in Haiti decreased dramatically and irreversibly. The presence of heavyweight donors together with out-of-control activism of NGOs in the context of deep fragility of the local government concentrated the focus of aid on basic humanitarian necessities.

From a regional perspective, the termination of MINUSTAH contrasted with its creation. The Latin American footprint was obscured after the 2010 earthquake. Slowly MINUSTAH entered a state of fatigue. The military presence was overstretched, aggravating the cholera epidemic and repeated human rights violations were committed by UN troops. In this context, individual decisions to depart replaced coordinated regional withdrawal. Dispersion was more a reflection of the political fragmentation in Latin America than of military rivalries and and/or differences. On the contrary, for the armed forces in the region, the experience in Haiti represented the chance to share similar processes of capacity building and create new areas of common knowledge.

MINUSTAH became a benchmark experiment for the Latin American military regarding humanitarian crisis logistics and assistance. The involvement of troops from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Peru and Bolivia in emergency scenarios was required by the sequence of severe natural dis-

1. See: CSONU- SC/7924 meeting, SC/12794 13/04/2017.

2. See: <http://mpft.undp.org/factsheet/fund/CLH00>. Accessed: October 25, 2017.

asters – Hurricane Jeanne in 2004, the earthquake of 2010, Hurricane Matthew of 2016 – and the cholera epidemic that started in 2010. Characterised as armed humanitarianism, these challenging contexts led to learning processes to be put into practice in other international and/or domestic realities. Interaction with NGOs to team up in attending to local populations became part of this capacity building.

A quick overview of Brazil's participation

In 2017, Brazil was participating in nine (of a total of 17) peace missions and registered a significant expansion of its troops' contribution. In this same context, Brazil has evolved from being a selective troop provider to an ambitious innovator regarding political approaches and methods of stabilisation. Whilst the Brazilian military has a history of participation in UN-led missions, the benchmark of its present commitment took place in 2004, when the Brazilian government assumed the military command of MINUSTAH. UN-led responsibilities assumed by the Brazilian military in Haiti, according to the yearly mandates approved at the Security Council, encompassed a diverse spectrum of responsibilities: i) the stabilisation of local public order; ii) active participation in the reform and expansion of native police forces; iii) elimination, disarmament and containment of local gangs; iv) protection of human rights and the rule of law; v) logistical support to development cooperation and the improvement of local infrastructure.

From the very beginning, Brazil expressed the intention to differentiate its presence on Haitian soil from other examples of external intervention motivated by imperialist ambitions. The idea that Brazil should assume the military command of MINUSTAH in order to avoid "other" presences went hand in hand with the acknowledgement of the UN Security Council as the only legitimate actor able to deliberate on military intervention in sovereign countries. The Brazilian presence has oscillated between coordinated action with its South American peers and the construction of its own profile in the performance of its responsibilities in Haiti. This double facet reproduced in reality a Brazilian pattern of behaviour which was deepened during the Lula government, aiming at combining but not merging regional policy with global interests.

Preparations for the mission in Haiti led to the creation of the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Center (CCO-PAB), which expanded and diversified its curricula during these years. The inclusion of a civil-military unit as part of this process led to close relations with local academics, which then led to the organisation of the Brazilian Network of Research on Peace Operations (REBRAPAZ). The growing academic interest of the military linked studies of MINUSTAH with its impact on foreign policy and the significance of peace operations for public security policies in Brazil. Special mention should be made of the studies on the militarisation of public security methods enforced in the peripheral areas of Rio de Janeiro. Research findings show a "Haiti-Rio de

Janeiro" experimentation link that works in both directions. Partnership with Viva Rio (VVR) – an NGO focused on pacification and conflict mediation in Rio slums – allowed the Brazilian military to acquaint itself with unknown approaches. An example was the participation of the Brazilian military from Rio de Janeiro in syncretic rituals in Haiti (Cesar, 2017). At the same time, this collaboration gave way to six peace accords with Haitian armed groups based in the slum areas of Port-au-Prince. After the 2010 earthquake, when humanitarian emergencies took over the local agenda, this sort of team-working diminished dramatically.

Following the earthquake, the impact of a severe humanitarian crisis accompanied by perilous social conditions posed new challenges for the Brazilian military. At first, a cohabitation pact had to be established with the arrival of numerous US troops: UN contingents were made responsible for local security while US forces were in charge of the distribution of humanitarian aid. The refugee camps that spread all over Port-au-Prince and adjacent areas were not addressed as refugee camps resulting from forced migration processes, instead the Brazilian military viewed these camps as a provisional substitute for the neighbourhoods that had been destroyed by the earthquake. Therefore, although surrounded by rubble, the people in these camps preserved their notions of community and belong-

The regional presence in Haiti carried the illusion that successful democratic transition experience, especially in the Southern Cone, would be exported to Haiti.

ing, which were a valuable asset in terms of their commitment to reconstruction. In this view of the situation, in the months following the earthquake women were targeted as the central focal point for the assistance from the international community.

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Brazil took further steps with regard to its military and economic responsibilities in this country and its action came to be more closely linked to local demands and international expectations than to South American coordination. Since the earthquake of January 2010, the military command had simultaneously to deal with a severe humanitarian crisis and the chaotic presence of external actors, which brought along with them prejudices and misconceptions of foreign governments and NGOs. In the face of the dramatic reconstruction needs of Haiti after the earthquake the Brazilian army expanded its military presence, especially of military engineers, to attend to the infrastructure needs in the country. Though communication with other Latin American countries was not sidelined, the understanding with the US, Canada, France, Spain and the EU in general tended to be prioritised.

This augmented presence was accompanied by the expansion of bilateral and trilateral cooperation projects, coordinated with DAC donors, multilateral agencies and/or Southern partners. Altogether, these tasks have contributed to changing Brazil's profile in peacekeeping operations (PKOs),

leading to an expanded presence at the UNPKO headquarters in New York, a stronger link between the defence and foreign ministries in Brasilia and the strengthening of fraternal ties with the South American military which participates in MINUSTAH.

Brazil concluded its mission in Haiti on October 10 2017, leaving behind more than 13 years of military command of MINUSTAH. For Brazil, this experience meant sending 37,000 soldiers who represented 12% of the countries' armed forces. This translated into the sending of 26 contingents, which formed 33 infantry battalions and 24 army corps of engineers. One of the merits underlined by the Brazilian authorities has been the absence of casualties during the years in Haiti. A tone of praise has dominated the Brazilian official narrative on the Haitian experience, with it considered "a new chapter in the military history of Brazil", particularly for the international acknowledgement it awakened (Cesar, 2017: 4). Accordingly, the performance in Haiti permitted an

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"exceptional response" in peace operations. Nevertheless, this euphoria has not been echoed in Brazilian political circles. Growing political indifference has replaced the initial interest of the Commission of Foreign and Defence Affairs at Congress. Besides this, the coincidence of the end of MINUSTAH and the domestic crisis in Brazil contributed even more to this lack of interest.

The experience in Haiti became crucial for the internationalisation of the Ministry of Defence, opening the door to bilateral and multilateral interactions. The responsibility for the military command of MINUSTAH stimulated Brazilian involvement in global governance, especially the UN Peacebuilding Commission. Nonetheless, critical views were also voiced at the Brazilian defence ministry. A good example was General Santos Cruz, ex-Force Commander of MINUSTAH (in 2007 and in 2010) who stated emphatically: "Brazil should have left Haiti a long time ago."

A last topic related to the impact of the Brazilian presence in Haiti concerns immigration and the growing importance of Brazil as a destination for Haitians since 2010. Haitians arrive through the northern borders, particularly with Peru and Guyana, from where they relocate to urban centres such as São Paulo and Florianópolis. Haitian immigrants are frequently subject to precarious conditions and violent practices. While helped by a protective network supported by religious organisations, NGOs and multilateral agencies, they must cope with the negligence and inefficiencies of local state and/or federal bureaucracies.

Too soon to turn the page

The MINUSTAH experience represents an open chapter in the regional IR field of study. Evaluations acknowledge the

impact of MINUSTAH upon Haiti-Latin American relations, but there is still much ground to cover (Segura, 2017). The following points aim to stimulate further academic and political interest in this direction.

The importance has been underlined at the SC of regional actors/organisations taking responsibility in peace processes by sending military forces and the political management of peace operations. Latin America's reticence to follow this trend is undeniable. The region has performed under the UN umbrella even when the mission carries a regional stamp, as has been the case of MINUSTAH. This brings political and strategic costs to the region. Peacebuilding and stabilisation in Colombia, for instance, show how the region chose a fragmented course of action, avoiding political coordination. Similar conclusions can be reached in face of the absence of UNASUR and CELAC from post-conflict and/or humanitarian crises in the region and in other areas.

The decision to place the new UN mission in Haiti under chapter VII represents a political defeat for Latin America. This decision imposes a neocolonial frame on Haiti that causes a regression in the question of sovereignty in Latin America and the Caribbean. The role played by the US

in promoting this decision, which postpones full recovery of Haitian sovereignty, weakens ex-post the regional footprint in MINUSTAH. Mistreatment of Haiti, worsened by President Trump's disrespectful public comments, has contributed even more to disqualifying Latin America's work in this country.

The US military – particularly the Southern Command – has always been a backstage actor for MINUSTAH. The Latin American military performance in Haiti has strengthened the inter-American link in military humanitarianism in contexts of natural disaster in different parts of the region.

One of the tasks of the new UN mission is to "clean" the image MINUSTAH left behind regarding its responsibility for the cholera epidemic and human rights violations by foreign troops. At the same time, MINUSTAH will have to show effective results in the consolidation of state law and the organisation of a local police force. These will not be easy accomplishments in a context of institutional fragility and uncertain political developments.

The conditions in Haiti after 13 years of MINUSTAH are far from promising. Economic and social indicators prompt great concern. A population of approximately 10.5 million faces dramatic realities such as: 40% illiteracy, 50% living below the poverty line, with 28% in extreme poverty. Only 12% of the Haitian population has internet access, 25% enjoys basic sanitation and 50% drinking water. Haiti is the country with the poorest infrastructure in the western hemisphere; less than 20% of its territory has paved roads.

The chances that Latin America can contribute to ameliorating this reality have decreased since MINUSTAH was dismantled. The end of logistical support offered by Latin American troops to cooperation activities and the growing

disdain of the present governments in the region for maintaining non-military presence in Haiti have long-term implications. In this context, the growing irrelevance of ties with Latin America will contribute to generating a new cycle of marginalisation for Haiti in the international community.

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