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Brazil: A long-term commitment with Haiti

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As if the decades of political instability and military meddling, the complacent and misguided neighbourly interventions, the gross underdevelopment, coupled with extreme social and economic conditions and aggravated by the prosperous and deadly drug trade, were not enough, the Caribbean nation of Haiti suffered yet, another blow, with a devastating earthquake on 12 January.

Amidst the disaster stood the United Nations Stabilization Mission on Haiti (MINUSTAH), the force charged with the (ineffectual) improvement of the social and political conditions of the country. MINUSTAH comprises a total of 9.000 military and civilian personnel, and Brazil, with its 1.200, troops took the lead in 2004 of the international contingent, aiming at succeeding where previous United Nations missions or the U.S. (with different agendas, one could argue), failed in the past.

Brazil's leadership role was not assumed without controversy. At the

time, the demanding costs of supporting a long-term military operation on foreign soil were criticized by President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva's opponents, who pointed out that the social inequalities and disparities Brazil faced (and still faces) are more deserving of funds and political attention than an often-overlooked and distant Caribbean nation, of little geopolitical import.

Nevertheless, Lula da Silva and his closest advisers correctly understood the opportunity presented to the country's growing aspirations and external objectives by undertaking the leadership role in MINUSTAH. Craving a place among the world's executive-elite has always been a somewhat dreamy goal for Brazilian foreign policy, but since Lula da Silva took office, a permanent seat in the UN Security Council became the undisputable "obsession" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Leading MINUSTAH thus became a natural step in the continuous campaign towards Brazil's Security Council ambitions. Alleging supposedly greater cultural affinities and answering to multiple Central American calls for increased involvement, Brazil then found itself in the position of sending its largest external military expedition since World War II (when nearly 25.000 soldiers fought alongside the Allies in Italy).

Good intentions, however, are not always enough in a widespread crisis

scenario. Although in charge of overseeing the doubtful 2006 elections in Haiti (subsequent to the 2004 *coup d'état* that led to the deterioration of the local situation), the newly-reinforced international forces quickly proved incapable of significantly improving the security and safety of the Haitian people, who continued to endure the plague of organized criminality and drug trafficking together with ineffective and practically nonexistent state institutions.

Nevertheless, when the disaster struck the island in the beginning of January, it was the men and women of MINUSTAH, often criticized for and accused of either passivity towards local violence or excess force when actually addressing it, who constituted the first line of aid to the local populations. Facing an apocalyptically-devastated Port-au-Prince, the blue-helmets suffered their own losses, with their chain-of-command severely incapacitated due to a total of 92 civilian and military casualties, including the former Head of Mission, the Tunisian Hédi Annabi and his Principal Deputy, Luiz Carlos da Costa alongside other 20 Brazilians.

Although shocked by this unexpected tragedy, Brazil was quick to respond and immediately sent US\$15 million in aid and tons of medical and food supplies, while promising to double its military contingent in order to assure the safety of local aid distribution.

At the end of the day, Brazil was



their asymmetries, the Lusophone countries should push forward with a grand strategy aiming at guaranteeing as much continuous representation in the Security Council as possible in order to ensure their mutual benefit.

Lusophone countries ready to accept Obiang dictatorship

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Contrary to the Commonwealth (54 member states) and *La Francophonie* (56 member states), which include countries whose official language is not the language of the former colonial power, for membership of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) Portuguese as official language is a prerequisite *sine qua non*. Therefore, when in 2002 Timor Leste became the CPLP's eighth member, the Lusophone community seemed complete. However, this has changed since Spanish-speaking Equatorial Guinea has appeared on the scene. In 2004 President Teodoro Obiang Nguema participated as guest of honour in the fifth CPLP Summit in São Tomé and declared his country's intention to join the CPLP. Subsequently the CPLP created the hitherto nonexistent status of associated observer, which was unanimously conceded to Equatorial Guinea in 2006. In June 2008 President Obiang attended the seventh CPLP Summit in Lisbon. The CPLP expects to admit the country as a full member state at the forthcoming summit in Luanda this

year, provided that the Obiang regime declares Portuguese as Equatorial Guinea's third official language. In early 2009 Lisbon promised the Obiang regime support for the teaching of Portuguese in his country. Nevertheless, the introduction of Portuguese in Equatorial Guinea is as arbitrary as that of French in 1998, since both languages are not actually spoken in the country. The imposition of Portuguese as official language in Equatorial Guinea is as bizarre as if Guinea-Bissau's President Malam Bacai Sanhá suddenly decreed Spanish to be his country's official language.

Both the Obiang regime and the CPLP have claimed historical ties with Equatorial Guinea to justify the membership, since formally the territory belonged to Portugal until 1778 when it was ceded to Spain. However, in the preceding 300-year period, only the tiny island of Annobón (17 km²) was colonized by Portugal. In the early 16th century it was settled with African slaves from neighbouring São Tomé. Therefore, Fá d'Ambô, the language spoken by Annobón's 2,000 inhabitants, is a Portuguese-based Creole language similar to the Creole of São Tomé.

Actually, Equatorial Guinea has many more historical affinities with the Commonwealth. The capital, Malabo, was founded in 1827 as a naval base called Port Clarence by the British to combat the slave trade. Today, with at least 70.000 speakers, the second African language spoken in Equatorial Guinea is Pichinglis, an English-based Creole language closely related to Krio, which arrived with African settlers from Freetown in Sierra Leone during the British presence in Fernando Po that ended in 1858 when Spanish colonization began. In the 1960's some 85.000 Nigerians worked on the cocoa plantations on this island, adding to the Commonwealth association.

However, unlike the CPLP, the Commonwealth is not solely based on a common language, but also on political principles. In the past, due

to the violation of these principles, the Commonwealth has suspended the membership of several member states, including Nigeria and Zimbabwe. Long before the Mugabe regime was suspended from the Commonwealth in 2002, the despotic Obiang regime had been known as one of the most repressive and corrupt in Africa. Obiang came to power through a bloody coup in 1979 when he deposed his uncle Francisco Macías Nguema, who, since 1968, had made Equatorial Guinea one of Africa's most violent dictatorships. Obiang ended his predecessor's excessive violence and open terror, but has preserved despotic power, widespread corruption and human rights violations.

In 1991 his regime introduced a multiparty system, but elections have never been free and fair. Obiang's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) has held an absolute monopoly over political and economic life. In May 2008 the ruling PDGE and its allies obtained 99 of 100 seats in the legislative elections. In November 2009 Obiang was re-elected for another seven-year term with 95.4% of the votes. Since the discovery of off-shore oil in the mid 1990's, Equatorial Guinea has become the third-largest oil producer in Sub-Saharan Africa, currently with a *per capita* GDP on par with Spain. However, despite the oil wealth, 77% of the population has remained below the poverty line. According to a recent Human Rights Watch report, "the government of Equatorial Guinea has not only failed to curb the endemic corruption, but it has also consistently mismanaged its oil revenue wealth". Besides, "the government has made some very limited progress on civil and political rights in the past decade".

Despite its notoriously repressive and corrupt regime, Equatorial Guinea's future CPLP membership has not been questioned by any political party in Portugal or any other member state, something which would likely occur in the Commonwealth, a sign either of the CPLP's immaturity, or a need for firmer principles.

**24-25 February (Palma de Mallorca):**

Portuguese Defense Minister Augusto Santos Silva attended the EU Informal Defense Ministers Gathering, which included a special session with ministers from five Maghreb countries.

26-27 February (Manzini):

Foreign Minister, Luís Amado travelled to Swaziland where he met with the local Portuguese community, with his counterpart, Lutfo Dlamini and King Mswati III. Bilateral ties, CPLP relations and regional issues were amongst the main topics of discussion.

28 February (Maseru):

Luís Amado visited Lesotho, where he met with local Foreign Minister Mohlabi Kenneth Tsekoa to address bilateral relations and regional issues.

São Tomé and Príncipe

8 February (Lisbon):

The Prime Minister of São Tomé and Príncipe, Rafael Branco, during his one-week working visit to Portugal, called for Portuguese oil company Galp Energia to be involved in oil and gas

exploration in his country's Exclusive Economic Zone.

18 February (Washington):

The U.S.'s Financial Action Task Force issued a report highlighting São Tomé and Príncipe, alongside Pakistan and Turkmenistan, as countries that continue to have deficiencies in their systems for countering money laundering and terror financing, although not with the same gravity as Iran, North Korea, Angola, Ecuador or Ethiopia.

25 February (Luanda):

Manuel Vicente, president of Angola's state-held Sonangol, announced that the oil company is interested in exploiting oil reserves in São Tomé and Príncipe, probably in a joint investment by oil companies from the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, including Brazilian Petrobrás and Portuguese Galp Energia.

Timor Leste

3 February (Díli):

Lawyer, academic and human rights activist Adérito de Jesus was appointed as the coun-

try's first anti-corruption commissioner with unanimous parliamentary approval.

9 February (Díli):

Japan and the United Nations decided to extend assistance totalling US\$4.2 million through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security to a project entitled "Community mobilization for poverty reduction and social inclusion in service delivery" in Timor Leste.

13 February (Malé):

President José Ramos-Horta visited the Maldives and met with President Mohamed Nash-eed and other state dignitaries.

19 February (Lisbon):

Timor Leste Foreign Minister, Zacarias da Costa met with his Portuguese counterpart, Luís Amado, and Portuguese President, Aníbal Cavaco Silva.

23 February (New York):

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative, Ameerah Haq, presented a recommendation to the Security Council to extend the mandate of the ongoing mission, UNMIT, for another year.

26 February (New York):

In a unanimous resolution, the 15 members of the United Nations Security Council agreed to extend the duration of the UNMIT mission.

Reading List

Kai Thaler, "Avoiding the Abyss: Finding a Way Forward in Guinea-Bissau" (*Portuguese Journal of International Affairs*, No. 2 Autumn/Winter 2009): 3-14.

Miguel Girão de Sousa, "The Challenges and Constraints of Security Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau: A View from the Field" (*Portuguese Journal of International Affairs*, No. 2 Autumn/Winter 2009): 15-26.

Michela Telatin, "Questioning the EU SSR in Guinea-Bissau" (*Portuguese Journal of International Affairs*, No. 2 Autumn/Winter 2009): 27-35.

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