

THE SOUTHERN EFFECT

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON BRAZIL'S
ENGAGEMENT WITH FRAGILE STATES

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THE SOUTHERN EFFECT:
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON BRAZIL'S ENGAGEMENT WITH FRAGILE STATES

ROBERT MUGGAH AND ILONA SZABÓ DE CARVALHO¹

Frequently undertaken in the context of south-south and triangular cooperation, non-OECD countries such as Brazil are adopting increasingly prominent roles as "aid providers" including in so-called "fragile states". Brazil's recent efforts in promoting development abroad are fundamentally shaped by principles of solidarity, shared cultural affinities and a common experience as an aid recipient. This concept note finds that Brazilian public and non-governmental agencies are increasingly involved in exporting and adapting home-grown social technologies to fragile and stable states alike including Angola, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Mozambique, Surinam and Timor-Leste. Inevitably informed by geopolitical priorities, Brazilian assistance appears to be motivated at least as much by needs expressed in Dili, Maputo and Port-au-Prince as by generic priorities set in Paris, Washington DC and Brasilia. This concept note parses out this emerging "southern effect" and some of its wider implications for engagement with fragile states in the twenty first century.

Introduction

Fragile and failing states² are a declared priority of most multilateral and bilateral development agencies. Over the past decade, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has formulated a rash of policy statements and guidelines to assist donor countries in their efforts to restore public institutions, service delivery capacities, and accountability in countries prone to and emerging from armed conflict.³ Likewise, the World Bank, established more than fifty years ago to revitalise unstable post-war economies, considers "fragility" to be one of its six declared priorities.⁴ Although many multilateral and bilateral agencies confidently prescribe a cocktail of remedies to promote stability, a growing chorus of representatives from fragile states wonder if those intervening on their behalf fully understand the realities on the ground.

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² There is no consensus definition of what constitutes a fragile or failed state. There are many synonyms – "weak," "failing," "failed," "collapsed," "at risk," "precarious", "vulnerable", "recovering" and the World Bank's erstwhile category of "low income countries under stress".

³ See OECD-DAC (2009), (2008a, 2008b, 2006a, 2006b, 2005, 2001).

⁴ Correspondence with Alistair McKechnie (Director), World Bank Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Group, September 13 2009. See also http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/licus/licus06_map.html for a review of fragile states. See also Zoellick (2008), Collier et al (2003) and World Bank (1998a, 1998b).

Notwithstanding standard setting efforts by the OECD and other regional entities, conventional approaches to supporting fragile states are at a crossroads. Recent interventions in “post-war” Iraq, Afghanistan and even Timor-Leste are revealing the fissures and complexities of consolidating security and stimulating development in fragile states. Regional organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) together with governments from Japan to the United States are scrambling for new ways and means of engaging with fragility. Faced with soaring peace-support budgets and chronic pressures owing to the global financial crisis on the domestic front, western donors are casting about for alternatives. Meanwhile, a host of policy makers privately wonder whether the contemporary aid model which focuses on working through formal institutions and supplying technical assistance is outdated and “broken” beyond repair⁵ while more critical scholars question whether any *prima facie* “solutions” for fragile states exist at all.⁶

Alongside established western-led efforts to promote stability in fragile states and cities are a host of smaller-scale and experimental interventions conceived and executed by public and private actors in non-OECD countries. Motivated less by the strategic (read counter-terrorism and conflict prevention) imperatives of “stabilization” and more by principles of solidarity and cultural affinity, countries such as Brazil are increasingly exporting know-how and resources to countries such as Angola, Colombia, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Mozambique and Surinam. While informed by geopolitical interests and growing interest in south-south cooperation more generally⁷, these countries are not burdened by a colonial past. Indeed, Brazil’s efforts to promote stabilization are influenced as much by local priorities expressed in Maputo and Port-au-Prince as by strategic priorities set in Paris, Washington DC or Brasilia.

Although OECD and non-OECD donors share many common objectives, the Brazilian “approach” appears to mark a qualitative departure from typical interventions. At its most basic, these kinds of south-south approaches build on shared realities and understandings with “fragile” partners. This short concept note considers the “southern effect”. It is informed by interviews with OECD-DAC donor representatives, as well as development cooperation and security specialists in Brasilia and Brazilian peace support personnel and NGOs in Port-au-Prince.

Conventional approaches to stabilization

Although the number of armed conflicts around the world appears to be declining⁸, global preoccupation with fragile environments is on the rise. Indeed, there is growing alarm concerning the destabilising effects of societies seized by chronic and acute forms of armed violence and instability together with those beset by, or emerging from, all-out war.⁹ According to the OECD and the United Nations, fragile states constitute potential threats to international, regional and national security.¹⁰ The OECD counts as many as fifty so-called “fragile” or “failing” states and territories accounting for more than one billion people. More than \$USD 26.8 billion in ODA was channelled to these states in 2008 alone. The World Bank’s commitment to redoubling investment in fragile states over the coming years (including an 800 per cent increase in support since the late 1990s) represents a surprising

⁵ This possibility was discussed at a recent conference organised by Switzerland and the OECD. See, for example, Hoyos and Muggah (2009).

⁶ See, for example, Paris (2004).

⁷ See for example OECD (2009b) and ECOSOC (2008).

⁸ See for example the Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2008) and the Human Security Report (2006).

⁹ See for example the recent UNSG (2009) and OECD (2009a).

¹⁰ See for example OECD (2009, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2007, 2005, 2001).

reversal on trends just a decade earlier when only “good performers” were rewarded with scarce aid dollars.

With goals ranging from humanitarian intervention¹¹ to counter-terrorism a coalition of upper-income countries such as Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and the United States are investing in so-called “stabilization and reconstruction” missions in fragile states.¹² These efforts advocate “comprehensive”, “integrated” and “whole-of-government” approaches to consolidating security and development. In certain cases fusing military objectives with development interventions, these stabilization initiatives belie an open commitment by wealthy countries to dealing with the supposed causes and symptoms of fragility. A growing array of stabilization and reconstruction missions have been undertaken in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Timor-Leste with mixed results.¹³ The practical expression of these missions ranges from “joined-up” teams of military and civilian specialists¹⁴ to advisory services provided by clusters of technical experts.¹⁵

Efforts to enhance the effectiveness and reach of development aid in fragile states have focused principally on “repairing” existing systems through the promotion of “good governance” and transposing, albeit with important alterations, democratic models of decision-making and bargaining. Aid providers are also convinced that integrated approaches to delivery can maximise positive outcomes. For example, the UN has encouraged its specialized agencies to act “as one” since the late 1990s while upper-income governments have sought to align their specific defence, diplomatic and development (3D) activities in capital and on the ground. Building on the idea of strengthening “partnerships” between wealthy donor and poorer recipient (and fragile) states and enhancing aid effectiveness, the OECD has also recently called for more coordination, coherence and complementarity (3C). Although offering some glimmers of change, these measures nevertheless unintentionally reinforce comparatively narrow policy agendas, conventional approaches, and old ways of working.

Aware that the status quo is unacceptable, OECD member states have started to rethink their approach to development cooperation. Indeed, a forum on “partnership for more effective development cooperation” was convened in 2005 precisely to this end.¹⁶ In an unprecedented move, the forum assembled the OECD’s Development Assistance committee together with a wide range of non-OECD governments and institutions involved in development co-operation and south-south initiatives. Following a wide-ranging discussion it was conceded that south-south and triangular co-operation could improve aid efficiency and effectiveness through promoting ownership and

¹¹ This spirit is embodied in recent efforts to promote the “responsibility to protect” doctrine in the United Nations and “human security” since the early 1990s. See Muggah (2009).

¹² See for example Canada (2008), France (2005), UK (2008, 2005), US (2009, 2008a, 2008b), and US Army (2008, 2003).

¹³ See, for example, Muggah (2009).

¹⁴ An obvious example of this include Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. PRTs are undertaken in the context of wider efforts to consolidate stability and promote development.

¹⁵ There are many examples of technical experts being dispatched to support stabilization and reconstruction. The Australian government, for example, provides a wider range of financial, policing and military personnel to work with counterparts in countries such as the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

¹⁶ See, for example, http://www.oecd.org/document/49/0,2340,en_2649_33721_34060145_1_1_1_1,00.html.

inclusivity. “Northern” commitment to enhanced south-south and triangular cooperation has since been stressed at countless OECD and multilateral sessions ever since.¹⁷

Enter the southern effect

In some cases building on the efforts described above, alternative approaches to assisting fragile states are quietly emerging from non-OECD quarters. For example, some of the so-called BRICS countries¹⁸ together with others such as Argentina, Chile, Singapore, South Africa¹⁹, and Turkey are experimenting with different models of aid cooperation and delivery in a growing array of contexts. In certain cases interventions are pursued in a ‘triangular’ fashion – in which two countries form a partnership to lend technical assistance to a third country. In other cases, cooperation is strictly bilateral.

An active contributor to the aforementioned OECD debates on south-south cooperation, Brazil’s development agency (ABC) is increasingly courted to partake in “triangular” or “trilateral” missions with the European Union (EU), Germany, Japan, France, Spain, the US and others. ABC is simultaneously doubling its bilateral aid portfolio for Latin American, African and South Pacific countries in 2010.²⁰ Likewise, Brazil’s Ministries of Justice and Health, its military and policing institutions – together with an increasingly adventurous non-governmental sector – are also playing a more assertive role in supporting multilateral peace-support missions and police training efforts around the world. Indeed as “Brazil consolidates its democratic institutions and its emerging role as a player the global economy it is quite natural that it increases its participation as a provider of development cooperation”.²¹

As a result, conventional multilateral and bilateral approaches to stabilizing war and post-war states – focused as they do on establishing official cooperation arrangements with formal institutions, building demonstrated “best practices” and advancing progressive rights-based criteria – are being complemented by newer forms of south-south cooperation. A short list of activities currently supported by Brazil’s security and justice sectors include a (planned) police academy in Guinea-Bissau and support for judicial reforms and increased access to justice in Haiti. The Brazilian Federal Police and the National Secretariat for Public Security have launched police training programmes in Paraguay, Uruguay, Colombia and Suriname.

¹⁷ It is useful to note, however, that the expression of south-south and triangular cooperation continues to be more rhetorical than practical. For example, conventional donors continue to dominate as can be seen in the G10 donor group in Haiti where Brazil and Chile only occupy a rotating seat. See, for example, http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_4759_en.htm and http://www.oecd.org/document/23/0,3343,en_39406396_39406575_43138071_1_1_1_1,00.html.

¹⁸ The BRICs include the [fast-growing developing economies](#) of [Brazil](#), [Russia](#), [India](#), [China](#) and South Africa. The acronym was coined by [Goldman Sachs](#) in 2001. According to current estimates, by 2050 the combined economies of the BRICs could eclipse the combined economies of today’s wealthiest countries.

¹⁹ South Africa is currently establishing a formal development cooperation agency in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Communication with liaison for Ms Sue van der Merwe (Deputy Minister – MFA, South Africa), September 13, 2009.

²⁰ In what was arguably the countries first triangular mission in March 2000, ABC signed the Japan-Brazil Partnership Program, in which the two nations pledge to collaborate in providing technical assistance to Lusophone countries in Africa and to East Timor. Since then, Tri-lateral projects have been launched in Mozambique with JIKA; GTZ in Peru; Mexico in Central America; and USAID in Haiti and Africa, on HIV and agriculture. Interview with Marco Farani (Director of ABC), August 28 2009 in Brasilia.

²¹ Correspondence with former President Henrique Fernando Cardoso, September 20, 2009.

In the meantime, Brazil's development agency is investing in model farms to strengthen cotton production in Mali, factories to produce retroviral pharmaceuticals in Mozambique, and projects to promote technical training, renewable energy, tropical agriculture and prevention of malaria and HIV/AIDS. While these efforts are innovative and demand-driven, they do not necessarily result from a clearly articulated "fragile state" policy from within the Brazilian government. Moreover, notwithstanding considerable positive feedback from recipient states, many of these initiatives have yet to be formally evaluated and so it is still difficult to demonstrate their overall effectiveness.

Taken together, Brazil's approach to security and development can be summed-up as "demand-driven". Interventions are articulated primarily on the basis of needs identified in partner countries and also capacities available at home. Some development specialists believe that the principled and demand-driven approaches adopted by non-OECD donors such as Brazil are only possible due to the comparatively modest scale of their contribution.²² Others argue that the approach adopted by Brazil is not dissimilar to that adopted by most OECD members²³ except that Brazil exhibits a particular comparative advantage with respect to its "supply" of assistance.²⁴ Indeed, Brazil's identity as a diverse multicultural society "adds value to its dialogue with countries of the South and facilitates the building of more horizontal platforms of collaboration, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa".²⁵

Analogous to whole-of-government approaches endorsed by the OECD, the Brazilian government routinely identifies relevant skills, human resources and social technologies across multiple sectors (e.g. agronomy, urban planning, vocational training, etc.) within its own public and private sectors. After at least three decades of international support to Brazilian non-governmental agencies working in areas such as social development, environment and human rights, these groups are now in a position to share their expertise with lesser developed societies.²⁶ Not surprisingly, Brazil's diplomats and policy makers are also increasingly looking to support the international reputation and expertise of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Viva Rio, Sou da Paz, Luta Pela Paz, Oi Futuro, Afro Reggae and others. Social technologies supported by these groups range from urban and community policing models extracted from Brazil's favelas to alternative forms of agriculture, energy production and waste management.

Like all OECD countries, there are geopolitical interests shaping Brazil's growing engagement in lower-income countries, fragile or otherwise.²⁷ It is no secret that Brazil is seeking a seat on the United

²² Indeed, "there are many small projects financed by [OECD-DAC] donors which respect [these principles] fully". The question arises of how Brazil will manage to ensure that this highly personalised approach is sustained when their cooperation portfolio doubles or triples in size. Correspondence with Felix Zimmermann, September 14 2009.

²³ Correspondence with Bathylle Missika (OECD), Corrado Scognamillo (OECD), Rory Stewart (OECD), Naoko Ueda (OECD), and Felix Zimmermann (OECD), September 14-23 2009.

²⁴ What sets Brazil apart is that it shows up to market with some comparative advantages in relation to cultural goods and aid agencies and NGOs that have grown up and operate in institutional contexts (marked by non-consolidated democracy, corruption, endemic violence) that are similar to conditions experienced by aid recipients. Correspondence with Ben Lessing, 19 September 2009.

²⁵ Correspondence with former President Henrique Fernando Cardoso, September 20 2009.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Triangular cooperation is increasingly regarded as an effective aid modality by countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, India, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey (ECOSOC 2008). In addition to offering pragmatic solutions, triangular cooperation is also viewed by some scholars as a tactic for national self-promotion within a broader strategy of foreign relations (Abdenur 2007). See also Foley (2009) and Hirst and Llenderozas (2008).

Nations Security Council and President Lula has made a more muscular foreign policy central to his overall agenda.²⁸ There are also clear economic imperatives: the country is rapidly expanding trade with Africa, the Middle East and China as well as pursuing regional integration through the creation of bodies such as the Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUL) and the India Brazil South Africa (IBSA) initiative.²⁹ Emerging from decades of authoritarian rule, Brazil clearly aims to assume responsibilities (and advantages) as a global citizen commensurate with its growing political and economic potential.³⁰

A visible expression of Brazil's aspirations includes its political and military leadership of the United Nations Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) in Haiti. Together with Chile and Uruguay, Brazil provides the vast majority of all blue-helmets on the ground.³¹ Brazil has made important diplomatic and development inroads in the country – many of which are publicly (and privately) acknowledged by Haiti's President and Prime Minister.³² Alongside considerable political support to a number of Brazilian NGOs such as Viva Rio³³, the Brazilian government manages several modest projects in Haiti amounting to more than USD14 million (2008-2011).³⁴

The Future?

Although its global development portfolio is comparatively modest by OECD standards – Brazil's entire aid budget amounted to roughly USD 40 million in 2009³⁵ – it is the *way* aid is delivered (“jeito de fazer”) that offer glimpses into the future and can in particular make a difference in fragile environments where traditional aid has showed its limits. According to Brazilian diplomats and practitioners, the country's assistance is specially tailored to the variegated needs of its Latin American and African partners. Crucially, assistance is based on non-conditionality, solidarity, empathy, and sensitivity to multi-cultural values – a clear break from the past.

When Brazilians speak of strengthening civil society in the shanty towns of Port-au-Prince or Dili and enhancing state-society bargaining in places like Guinea Bissau or Mozambique they do so from direct experience, which allows for a better understanding of other realities and needs. Put succinctly, a Brazilian police officer or community development expert – bringing with her a particular historical

²⁸ With President Lula's terms coming to an end and national elections due in 2010 some OECD governments privately wonder whether Brazil's current efforts are sustainable.

²⁹ For example, IBSA has established a “joint-fund” of some USD12 million though few resources appear to have been disbursed at present.

³⁰ Marco Farani (Director of ABC) explained that this is a change from more narrowly defined interests driving Brazilian engagement in the 1960s and 1970s such as private sector interests, safeguarding markets and expanding influence in post-colonial areas. Interview, August 28 2009, Brasilia.

³¹ A Brazilian, Da Costa, is also the Special Representative of the Secretary General.

³² Interviews with the Prime Minister of Haiti and the Haitian liaison for development agencies, Leslie Voltaire. September 7 2009.

³³ It should be noted that by far the larger share of support for NGOs such as Viva Rio and others is from OECD-DAC members such as Canada, Norway and Sweden.

³⁴ What is more, the ABC Haiti desk in Brasilia includes some 14 personnel whose salaries are covered separately by Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

³⁵ This represents a doubling from 2008 and it is expected that the budget will grow rapidly from 2010 onwards. It is important to stress that these funds are directly invested in programmes and do not account for personnel and logistics.

experience and expertise – is likely better placed to read the landscapes of a fragile city and its inhabitants than a similar specialist from the Swedish countryside. Speaking in the context of Brazil’s involvement in Haiti, one Brazilian scholar observed how “we [Brazilians] empathize [with Haitians] because they are just like us ... we look at their society and see our own”.³⁶

The recognition and affirmation of cultural affinities seems to play a critical part in expanding space for the consolidation of stability and ultimately reconstruction efforts, a lesson gradually being learned by more conventional OECD donors. Ultimately, while ostensibly “fragile states” like Haiti, Guinea-Bissau or East Timor are certainly priorities for Brazil, Brazilian authorities stress that they are more intent on prioritizing investment in societies where they share geographic and cultural affinities such as Latin America and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Asia. Yet Brazil’s approach offers a promising alternative. As stressed by former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso “Brazil is not burdened by a colonial past [and] hopefully its international development cooperation will be less driven by hard economic interests and be more consistent with shared values such as democracy, human rights and sustainable development”.

³⁶ Interview with Professor Antonio Jorge Ramalho (Advisor to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), July 24 2009 in Rio de Janeiro.

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