

Brazil and conflict-affected states

Global significance

Brazil is an increasingly influential player in the global political and economic system. With roughly 200 million citizens, it is the fifth most populous country in the world and the sixth largest in terms of its GDP. Brazil has long presented itself as a champion of the global South. In its bid to acquire ‘big power’ status, it seeks a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Brazil’s growing economic weight has also enabled it to secure membership in the G20, challenge United States (US) and European Union (EU) positions in the World Trade Organisation, exert more influence on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and begin charting a ‘third way’ in foreign, financial and military affairs.

Approach to conflict-affected states

Contemporary foreign policy in Brazil is conditioned by a number of enduring priorities. These include a principled commitment to: (i) non-intervention and respect for sovereignty; (ii) South-South solidarity and cooperation; (iii) creating space for the expansion of economic interests; and (iv) adapting international and regional mechanisms to support Brazilian interests. These priorities play a critical role in shaping many aspects of the country’s political, economic and military strategies as well as its positions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Brazil articulates its international development assistance and peace-support activities primarily in terms of a South-South strategy.¹ Although Brazil provides technical assistance to a number of conflict-affected states, it does not officially endorse the fragile states, peacebuilding and statebuilding agendas as defined by the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or the g7+ group of fragile countries. There is comparatively little mention of ‘fragile states’ in Brazilian statements at the UN or in regional organisations.² Instead, Brazilian diplomats link conflict and unstable situations to

‘poverty’ and ‘inequalities’, which in turn are described as giving rise to crime, extremism and terrorism.

The geographic spread of Brazil’s development portfolio is far-reaching: between 2003 and 2010 Brazil provided assistance to 80 countries.³ Twenty-three of these 80 countries – more than one in four – were considered to be either ‘failed’ or ‘fragile’ states by either the OECD (2011) or the World Bank (2012).⁴ However, as noted above, Brazil does not use or endorse the terminology or discourse of ‘fragility’ and ‘statebuilding’. Unsurprisingly, Brazil has yet to develop an explicit strategy for so-called ‘fragile states’. Rather, technical cooperation is guided by the same principles in these settings as in other countries. Brazilian technocrats describe a “demand-driven” approach premised on solidarity, non- conditionality, and respect for sovereignty. The predominant formulation of assistance adopted by Brazil in conflict and post-conflict settings is one of “technical cooperation” to alleviate “vulnerability”.

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Brazil is a growing player in terms of the scale and volume of its development aid; however, it distinguishes itself from others in the development community. For example, it has avoided entry to the OECD, much less the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), opting instead to retain a degree of autonomy in its profile. Brazil also avoids direct involvement in the OECD-DAC’s International Network on Conflict and Fragility. Although Brazil did sign the *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation* in 2011, it was reluctant to endorse the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, which it perceived as reinforcing northern donor priorities.

Brazil’s peacekeeping record extends back to the middle of the twentieth century, having participated

in 42 of 65 UN peace missions.⁵ Brazil has also shown support at a diplomatic level for an integrated approach to development and security, and this is being translated into practice, at least partially, in a few cases. In Haiti, which represents by far Brazil's largest overseas development engagement,⁶ it is effectively leading the peacekeeping arm of the UN Stabilisation Mission (MINUSTAH). In this case, Brazilian troops with MINUSTAH are deployed to rebuild wells, roads and housing at the same time as engaging in more assertive stability operations.⁷ This approach is endorsed by Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and funded through the Brazilian Co-operation Agency. However, while Brazilian peacekeepers are trained in community relations and pursue a wide array of relief interventions, investments in the peace operation remain disconnected from Brazil's wider bilateral development assistance in areas such as agriculture and health.

Brazilian cooperation with Guinea Bissau similarly reveals an effort to link security and development approaches. Brazil has historically provided bilateral assistance to Guinea Bissau in a variety of sectors, but more recently it has also engaged in support of the country's political reconciliation process.⁸ Since 2007 Brazil has overseen aspects of Guinea Bissau's activities as part of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, as well as providing police officers to the UN Mission. Brazil has also contributed to Guinea Bissau through the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund to support South-South cooperation.⁹ Brazilian expenditures in Guinea Bissau between 2005 and 2009 amounted to US\$3.3 million with the budget for 2012 increasing to US\$5 million.¹⁰

Brazil's position on the issue of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) - a doctrine endorsed by the UN in 2005 - is aligned with the country's core principles of non-intervention and respect for sovereignty. Brazil resists the idea of R2P as a licence for military intervention, particularly when undertaken unilaterally or outside the framework of the UN. In September 2011, President Dilma Rousseff introduced the concept of "responsibility while protecting" (RwP) during her speech at the UN General Assembly. This concept endorses key aspects of R2P, while highlighting a number of related principles and rules of international humanitarian law that emphasise a "focus on prevention", a "proportionate response", "the use of force as the last resort", the importance of "do no harm", and the critical place of "monitoring and accountability".¹¹ Some other developing countries have welcomed both Brazil's resistance to the doctrine of R2P and the RwP formulation; although this concept has found less favour with Western actors, and at times with China and Russia.

Implications for addressing conflict in the post-2015 framework

Brazil's explicit focus on conflict prevention and its track record of proactive preventive diplomacy and mediation initiatives, both in its own neighborhood and overseas, should be conducive to the general aim of bringing peace into the post-2015 development framework. Brazil has arguably reinforced this commitment by setting out the concept of RwP, which emphasises non-military means to resolve conflicts and the protection of all civilians when intervention is pursued. This view is consistent with a large proportion of global civil society, as well as with many developing countries.

The extent and direction of Brazil's involvement in the broader post-2015 development agenda is currently difficult to determine, although there are signs that the MFA is actively reflecting on the issue. Given its engagement on issues of international intervention and its expanding development portfolio, there is an expectation that Brazil will take a more active role in post-2015 development debates. While it has considerable capacity and willingness to provide technical assistance for overseas development, Brazil has diverged from established development actors on the aid effectiveness agenda. Its involvement in the sustainability agenda and the inclusion in the High Level Panel of Environment Minister Izabella Teixeira suggest that it will prioritise sustainability. Therefore the relationship between peacebuilding and sustainability could be a key factor.

Based on its existing policy and practice, Brazil is likely to sympathise with recent civil society calls to "*address key drivers of conflict – not only its symptoms*".¹² The emphasis of Brazil's approach in conflict-affected states is on alleviating social and economic inequalities. These are considered to generate the conditions for criminal and political violence, so by reducing inequalities you help to prevent violence. Thus Brazil's approach to conflict-affected states can be seen to focus on 'key drivers' of conflict rather than just its symptoms.¹³

Another point of convergence may be Brazil's long-standing commitment to the transformation of wider economic relations – globally as well as domestically – as a fundamental pre-condition in shaping a more peaceful order. This commitment to redressing the global imbalance between the North and the South suggests common ground with the call from civil society actors to "*include commitments to address regional and global factors that fuel conflict*".

In practical terms, Brazil has adopted an approach in Haiti and Guinea Bissau that at least partially connects development and security objectives. This

has prompted some reflection on the possibilities of a more concerted peacebuilding approach in these and other settings – seeking to shift from a technical cooperation approach to one that is more integrated. Moreover, Brazil prides itself on its ability to export ‘social technologies’ and innovations developed internally to its development partners. The country’s wide array of experiences in reinforcing South-South and triangular aid modalities may offer some valuable lessons for the wider post-2015 development agenda.¹⁴

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At the same time, there are real possibilities of Brazil obstructing the post-2015 peacebuilding agenda. Brazil does not explicitly endorse the discourse of ‘fragile states’ and ‘statebuilding’ in the way it is used by many Western countries - although it does refer to ‘peacebuilding’. Indeed, Brazil purposefully avoids and tacitly rejects the language and intentions of the international ‘peacebuilding and statebuilding’ community. While it has endorsed the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in official statements – particularly in relation to Guinea Bissau – it has shown a marked reluctance to engage with the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

Nor has Brazil actively supported the g7+; weighing such support against its commitment to non-alignment and continued influence within the wider G77. Given Brazil’s history and on-going resistance to perceived neo-colonial discourses, there is a risk that the association of this peacebuilding agenda with such a perspective may prove an obstacle to engaging Brazil. For instance, it objects to the *Paris Declaration* on the basis that its principles for aid effectiveness reinforce, rather than reform, Northern aid modalities.

Instead, Brazil has long embraced the concept of South-South development cooperation which emphasises solidarity, respect for sovereignty, and non-intervention. It has not formally projected an approach to aid that is “*inclusive, responsive, fair and accountable to all people*”. Its emphasis on the principle of respect for sovereignty – which has predominated even in cases of gross human rights violations – suggests that it would not be in sympathy with any aspects of the post-2015 peacebuilding agenda that may challenge the legitimacy of the state.

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

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¹ See Muggah R, Hamann EP, ‘Brazil’s Generous Diplomacy: Friendly Dragon or Paper Tiger?’ *International Development Policy Series* (March 2012), available at igarape.org.br/brazils-generous-diplomacy-friendly-dragon-or-paper-tiger/ accessed 7 November 2012; Cabral L, Weinstock J, *Brazilian Technical Cooperation for Development: Drivers, Mechanics and Future Prospects* (ODI, London, 2010).

² A review of statements made by Brazil to the UN General Assembly found that terms such as “weak”, “post-conflict”, and “threatened” were more commonly used than “fragile”, “conflict-affected”, or “failed”.

³ See Itamaraty *Balanço de Política Externa 2003-2010* (2011) available at www.itamaraty.gov.br/temas/balanco-de-politica-externa-2003-2010 accessed 7 November 2012.

⁴ These countries include Afghanistan, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comores, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, North Korea, Palestinian occupied territories, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Timor Leste, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

⁵ See Rezende L, ‘O engajamento do Brasil nas operações de paz da ONU: Um Estudo Comparativo’. Dissertação (Mestrado, 2010), PPGRI, PUC Minas. Belo Horizonte.

⁶ According to Hirst, by 2011 Haiti had received approximately US\$14 million in development assistance from Brazil. Hirst M, ‘Aspectos Conceituais e Práticos da Atuação do Brasil em Cooperação Sul-Sul: Os casos de Haiti, Bolívia e Guiné-Bissau’, IPEA Texto para Discussão 1687, (2012) ipea.gov.br/agencia/images/stories/PDFs/TDs/td_1687.pdf accessed 7 November 2012.

⁷ “The latest mission was intended to merge peacekeeping activities more clearly with civilian activities associated with the delivery of core services so as to facilitate, among other things, a smooth transition and ultimately the exit of peacekeepers from the country ...” Muggah R, ‘Stabilization and Humanitarian Action in Haiti’, *Journal of Disasters* 34 (1) 2010b.

⁸ See Itamaraty, Note n. 627, 20 December 2007, available at www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2007/12/20/brazil-to-

[coordinate-the-work-of-the-un/?searchterm=peacebuilding](#) accessed 7 November 2012.

⁹ For details on the IBSA Fund and its project in Guinea Bissau, see www.itamaraty.gov.br/temas-mais-informacoes/saiba-mais-ibas/fundo-ibas/?searchterm=quin%C3%A9-bissau accessed 7 November 2012.

¹⁰ *Op cit* Hirst.

¹¹ The convergences and dissonances of R2P and RwP are the subject of an Igarapé Institute and CEBRI workshop in Brasilia in November 2012. See www.igarape.org.br

¹² Saferworld et al, 'Bringing peace into the post-2015 development framework – A joint statement by civil society organisations', (2012), available at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/692

¹³ For example, then Foreign Minister Amorim (2003) described how "poverty and inequality create an environment propitious to the dissemination of extreme ideas and actions... It is impossible to speak about peace and reconciliation without mentioning also economic issues". Amorim C, (2003), *Foreign Minister Amorim's Opening Statements at the Seminar, Brazil-Norway: Peace, Reconciliation and Mediation – New Themes of Foreign Policy*, Brasilia, 7 October.

¹⁴ Muggah R, Carvalho I, 'Brazil's Southern Effect in Fragile Countries' *Open Democracy*, (2009) www.opendemocracy.net/robert-muggah-lona-szab%C3%B3-de-carvalho/brazils-southern-effect-in-fragile-countries.