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The effects of stabilisation on humanitarian action in Haiti

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Haiti is routinely characterised as an archetypical fragile state. In spite of considerable donor investment in security promotion, real and perceived safety have proven frustratingly elusive. In the years before the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010, the country's capital, Port-au-Prince, was also the site of considerable experimentation to promote security and stability. This paper reviews the discourse, practice and outcomes associated with three parallel stabilisation initiatives undertaken in Haiti between 2007 and 2009. Although they shared many similar objectives, the paper describes how these separate interventions mobilised very different approaches. The specific focus is on United States, United Nations and combined Brazilian, Canadian and Norwegian stabilisation efforts and their implications for humanitarian actors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières. The paper concludes with some reflections on the implications of stabilisation before and after the country's most recent natural disaster.

Keywords: armed conflict, fragile state, Haiti, humanitarian action, protection, reconstruction, security, stabilisation, violence

Introduction

Multidimensional stabilisation initiatives designed to secure and pacify fragile states and cities are gaining in popularity. Notwithstanding growing donor appetites for addressing fragility, the discourse, practice and outcomes associated with stabilisation—even when narrowly conceived in terms of containing and reducing violence—are under-conceptualised (Collinson, Elharawy and Muggah, 2010). Moreover, the consequences of stabilisation missions for humanitarian action (in terms of agency mobility and civilian protection) are a subject of some dispute. The extent to which stabilisation undermines the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence has yet to be critically unpacked.

This paper considers the evolution of stabilisation discourse, practice and outcomes from the time of Haiti's descent into extreme violence in 2004 until late 2009. It focuses on the period before the massive earthquake that devastated the capital on 12 January 2010. As such, it considers the implications of stabilisation for humanitarian space in a situation marked by intense insecurity but with no formal peace agreement. Drawing on field research and key informant interviews in Brazil, Canada, Haiti, Norway, Switzerland and the United States, the paper finds that an assortment of bilateral and multilateral agencies were pursuing at least three distinct stabilisation initiatives prior to the natural disaster. And while these interventions

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varied subtly in form and content, they shared the common objective of achieving short-term stability.

All three parallel stabilisation activities were intended to restore and reinforce the capacity of the state to provide legitimate security. Specifically, stabilisation was expected to engender conditions for the rule of law (such as justice and due process, legitimate policing and penal services) and, ultimately, for 'development' to proceed. In the words of the former Force Commander of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, 'stabilization and development are two sides of the same coin'. To shed light on the varying practices of stabilisation, this paper specifies key differences in how stabilisation was operationally expressed—particularly between the United Nations (UN), the US and a constellation of new and established donors such as Brazil, Canada and Norway.

In contrast to other cases presented in this special issue of *Disasters,* stabilisation generated tentative but nonetheless tangible security dividends. These gains can be measured in relation to real and perceived reductions in the incidence of armed violence and improvements in other metrics of safety and security. Although precarious, stabilisation also produced spaces for certain forms of socioeconomic recovery, including the delivery of certain essential services to previously inaccessible neighbourhoods of the country's capital, Port-au-Prince. Remarkably, some of these improvements endured following the 2010 earthquake. Unlike in Afghanistan and Iraq, humanitarian agencies operating in Haiti since 2004, while initially uncertain about how to engage with proponents of stabilisation, gradually adopted a pragmatic approach to collaboration. Even so, the paper finds that early stability dividends were heavily dependent on a continued (UN) Brazilian-led peacekeeping presence.

The anatomy of stabilisation in Haiti

Even before the earthquake of 12 January 2010, Haiti was alternately categorised as fragile, failing and failed in international humanitarian and development circles (Muggah, 2008). The deepening of collective violence in 2004, which culminated in the (forced) departure of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on 28 February 2004, is frequently attributed to a host of geopolitical and domestic factors, including historically-contingent patterns of political behaviour among the country's elites, the growing impatience of Canada, the European Union, France and the US, and chronic failures in governance and service delivery. While considered a poor performer in the 1990s, during the past decade the country was (re)cast by some international actors as a priority concern in the Western hemisphere (Collier, 2009; World Bank 2008).

Western donors have long experienced a complex relationship with Haitian authorities, elites and sprawling civil society. Despite enthusiastic declarations to 'build back better' and renewed interest and engagement in wider reconstruction following the 2010 earthquake, donors have been steadfastly preoccupied with securing Haiti's

borders, containing so-called unregulated migration, preventing narcotics transhipment and arms trafficking, and controlling gang-related and organised criminal violence (Muggah, 2009). Notwithstanding the appointment of US President Bill Clinton as a Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General and the prominent involvement of Paul Collier, Jeffrey Sachs and George Soros, there is an underlying pessimism about the country's medium- and long-term prospects. Most donor governments are convinced that there is a high probability that external events—from the global financial crisis (and attendant escalation in food prices) to massive hurricanes, storms or natural disasters—and systemic domestic vulnerabilities will ensure that Haiti is trapped in a chronic humanitarian crisis for the foreseeable future.

Haiti has been the target of considerable inflows of overseas development assistance for decades. Investments in the country from 2004–09 converged around security promotion, stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction. This marked a clear departure from the 1980s and 1990s when aid oscillated (sometimes wildly) between the promotion of (democratic) 'good governance' and institutional reform or supporting non-governmental agencies (Muggah, 2008). A proxy of the volume and scale of assistance can be imputed from the growth of Haiti's non-governmental sector. With the highest number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) per capita on the planet by the end of the twentieth century, some commentators began to refer to Haiti as 'the republic of NGOs' (USIP, 2010).

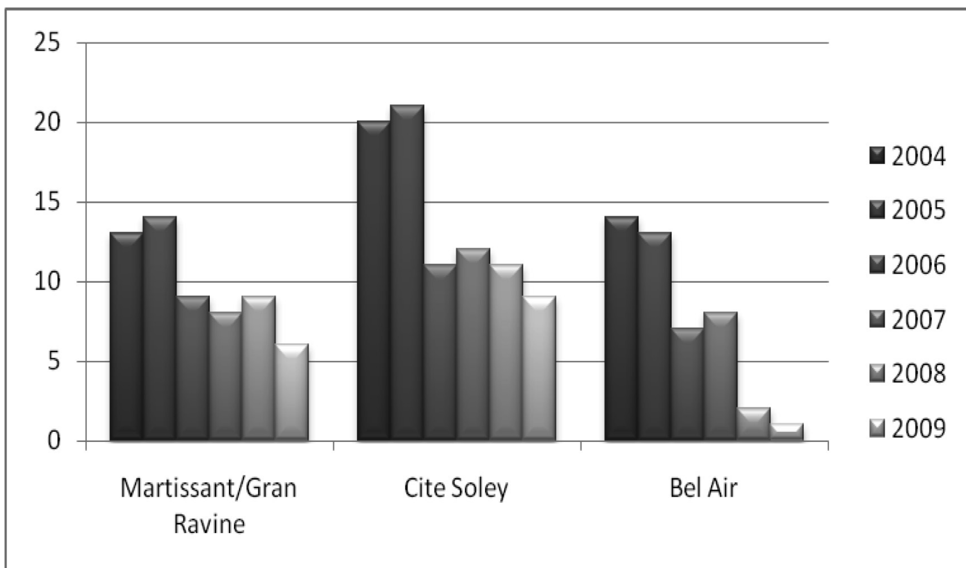
Over the past two decades the UN has repeatedly intervened to restore security and the provision of certain core services to Haitians—with the backing of Canada, France and the US. In the wake of seven successive UN missions since 1991, the UN adopted its first fully integrated peace-support operation in 2004—MINUSTAH. Led by the Brazilian armed forces, MINUSTAH includes more than 8,900 military personnel and 3,700 police from more than 40 countries. 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. To support these efforts, a number of multilateral and bilateral agencies invested in the recruitment, training and deployment of police, prison reform and the control of water/land borders, and simultaneously in restoring state institutions and lessening corruption through rule-of-law programmes and investment in penal and criminal law reform.

Although faced with major challenges and episodic bouts of violence, including some controversial incidents attributed to MINUSTAH itself, security and safety on the ground steadily improved, particularly since 2007. Indeed, there was considerable criticism of MINUSTAH 'occupying' Haiti as part of a wider campaign by Western governments between 2004 and 2007 (Hutson and Kolbe, 2006; Hallward, 2008). These concerns were heightened after a series of high-profile raids in slum areas of the capital, ostensibly in pursuit of known criminal fugitives and narcotics traffickers. Some groups argued that these efforts targeted civilians, and were in fact an attempt to unsettle support for President Aristide's party, Famni Lavalas.

A major emphasis of international action from 2004 was on containing and ultimately reducing armed violence. This was pursued through conventional means such as investment in formal rule-of-law mechanisms, including judicial, police and penal reform. But it was also pursued more proactively—at the community and neighbourhood level—through support for local stabilisation activities in a variety of urban centres seen to be driving wider violence rates (Colletta and Muggah, 2009). These local-level initiatives were increasingly prominent in the wake of so-called pacification operations launched by MINUSTAH peacekeepers between 2004 and 2007 in major urban slums, notably Bel Air, Cité Soleil and Martissant. After a short period, it appears that inter-personal violence began to diminish substantially in areas targeted by local-level interventions.

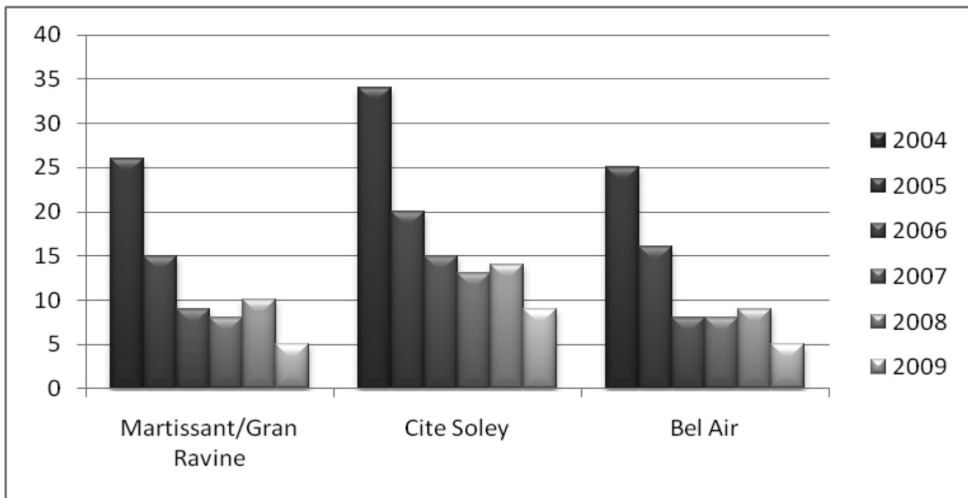
The changes in safety and security were empirically documented. For example, a randomised household survey (n=1,800 households) undertaken in 2009 detected significant reductions in key indicators of armed violence—murder and physical and sexual assaults—across areas previously designated as 'red zones' since the launch of specific initiatives (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). Moreover, smaller-scale evaluations examining individual programmes in particular neighbourhoods also appeared to demonstrate security dividends in terms of reductions in violent death, assault and perceptions of insecurity (Moestue and Muggah, 2009; USAID, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). While statistical correlations require further testing and refinement, empirical findings suggest an undeniable association. What is more, these trends appear to have continued after the January 2010 earthquake. Discussed in more detail in the last section of this paper, a household survey undertaken with the same population groups in March 2010 reported continued reductions in inter-personal violence and improved confidence in police institutions (Kolbe and Muggah, 2010).

Figure 1 Physical assaults (January 2004–August 2009)



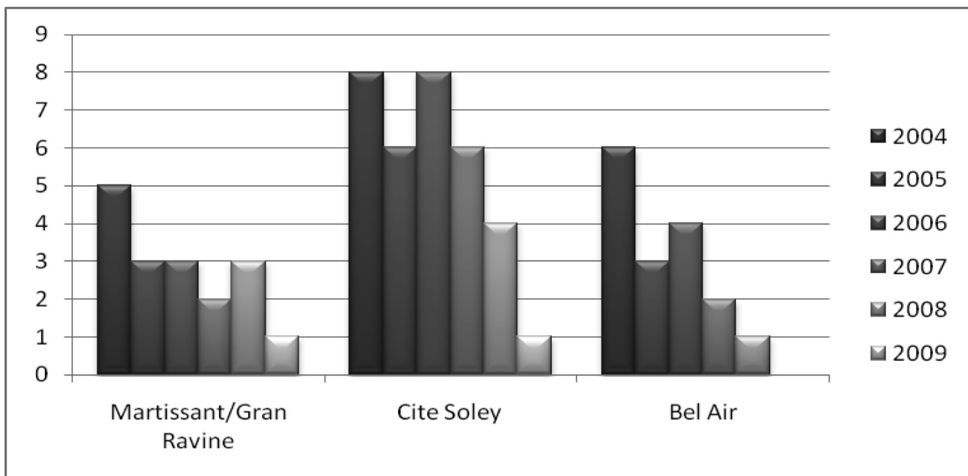
Source: Kolbe (2009).

Figure 2 Sexual assaults (January 2004–August 2009)



Source: Kolbe (2009).

Figure 3 Murders (January 2004–August 2009)



Source: Kolbe (2009).

Despite the rash of activity—or perhaps because of it—the humanitarian sector appeared to keep its distance from the UN and proponents of stabilisation. For example, humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) operated more or less autonomously and according to strict internal standard operating procedures, establishing a presence through the provisioning and maintenance of hospitals/trauma wards, targeted relief assistance, and specific mandated activities. Meanwhile, together with the Haitian National Police (HNP), MINUSTAH and an array of development agencies gradually began consolidating their activities in areas 'seized' or secured from localised gangs since 2007. Delegates then associated with the ICRC and MSF began reducing certain

protection-oriented activities in these areas on the grounds that safety had been restored. Over time, MINUSTAH peacekeepers and civilian actors and a number of humanitarian agencies progressively ameliorated and strengthened cooperation.

With the security situation appearing to improve from 2007 onwards, and notwithstanding the dramatic floods affecting the north of the country in August and September 2008, bilateral donors such as Canada, Norway and the US actively sought to reinforce stabilisation in Port-au-Prince. They launched unilateral interventions such as the 'Haiti Stabilisation Initiative' (HSI) (in the case of the US), or supported UN and non-governmental-led activities such as integrated security and development programmes (in the case of Canada and Norway). While funded by separate donor governments, these interventions were intended to enhance the capacity of the Haitian state—especially its public institutions and service providers—to restore its monopoly over the legitimate use of force. What distinguishes the current stabilisation agenda from earlier efforts to promote security are the following key characteristics:

- it was clearly defined as short-term (+/- two years), emphasising security promotion and police presence (although not necessarily development);
- it involved joined-up operations with military and police actors and development agencies to 'clear and hold' so that others might 'build'; and
- it included municipal and neighbourhood-oriented schemes, underlining 'inclusive' community decision-making.

Although they reveal certain discursive similarities, the practice and outcomes associated with such stabilisation interventions were in fact more different than widely presumed.

UN approach: sticks and carrots

MINUSTAH embodies to some extent the assumptions held by UN member states that violence reduction and stability are precursors to restoring order, democratic governance and development. Discursively, a series of UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions between 2004 and 2009 highlights the expectations of UN member states that stabilisation will engender the basic conditions for security and development to take hold on the ground. Programmatically, the UN approach to stabilisation combines 'enforcement-led' activities administered by UN blue helmets with community-led conflict prevention and the restoration of social cohesion and infrastructure.

The smooth process of 'stabilisation' envisioned by UN policymakers in New York and Geneva was slow to take shape in Haiti. From the beginning there was a notable institutional separation between MINUSTAH peacekeepers on the one side and MINUSTAH civilian and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-led interventions on the other, even while a moderate level of communication between personnel exists. Former MINUSTAH Force Commander Carlos Alberto dos Santos

Cruz lamented that, while there were 'important instances of cooperation, this was a far cry from integration' owing to the lack of political, administrative and financial centralisation to mediate heterogeneous (and often competing) interests and institutions.

Notwithstanding the overarching emphasis of the UN system on stabilisation, its constituent parts pursued separate, albeit parallel, tracks. With respect to UN peacekeepers, the Brazilian-led force sought to establish territorial control and to consolidate its hold through the establishment of a tangible presence in priority or 'red' zones. Its emphasis was on repressive operations where necessary, physical confrontation and forcible disarmament, and latterly, joint-patrols with HNP counterparts. It is important to recall that the Haitian police is the only official domestic provider of public security, as the armed forces were dissolved under former President Aristide in 1995.

As for UN civilian representatives and UNDP, one can divide their efforts into two analogous initiatives: the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme and the defunct Community Security Programme (CSP). The former consisted of a completely reformed 'integrated' disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme formerly managed by MINUSTAH and UNDP and which operated in at least 12 areas of the country until early 2010. These activities combined a community forum (essentially representative mechanisms designed to elaborate and implement inclusive violence reduction projects) and close collaboration with Haiti's National Commission on DDR (CNDDR). Meanwhile, the CSP included activities supported by UNDP in nine areas, although the project was closed prematurely by the national authorities owing, some argued, to personality clashes between government and UN officials. By 2009, UNDP had approved a new USD 7 million project with support from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Fund, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and others, in order to pursue a similar programme in selected 'rural' areas.

The highly public (and controversial) interventions by UN peacekeepers and the civilian-led stabilisation interventions achieved mixed returns. For example, while lauded by some host and bilateral government officials, UN personnel and NGOs for enhancing stability in the short term, UN peacekeepers were also heavily criticised. Muscular enforcement-led operations in shantytowns and peri-urban areas appeared in some cases both to disperse and simultaneously to radicalise youth and so-called gangs in much the same way that heavy-handed actions in Central America escalated violence there over the past decade (Jutersonke, Muggah and Rodgers, 2009). At the time, MINUSTAH suffered a decline in its reputation—an observation supported by perception surveys in 2005. Nevertheless, as understanding of the dynamics of gang structures increased—including of the functioning of their so-called *bazes* (or bases, named after fortifications established by the US during its occupation of the country in the early twentieth century)—it appears that their influence was vastly diminished by 2009 in comparison with previous years.

Other challenges to UN stabilisation efforts were more institutional and bureaucratic. For instance, attempts to achieve an integrated approach to stabilisation collapsed on several occasions—described by some insiders as an 'amicable divorce' (Muggah, 2007). Some attributed this to the usual administrative and organisational challenges associated with 'integration' as a UN-wide project more generally. For example, from 2005–09, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) consisted of at least 14 agencies, dozens of separate funds and literally hundreds of distinct programmes and projects. And although the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) served as the permanent link between MINUSTAH and the rest of the mission, the position was frequently overwhelmed. Despite all of these challenges, the MINUSTAH CVR programme made some quiet headway in the 12 areas where it operated from 2007–09.

The US approach: carrots and sticks

Meanwhile, the US government launched the 'Haiti Stabilisation Initiative' in 2007 with a focus on 'crime-affected' areas of Port-au-Prince. The HSI was funded by the Department of Defense—with funds authorised under section 1207 of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act—and managed by the Office of the Coordinator for Stabilisation and Reconstruction (CRS). The HSI programme itself was implemented with support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the IOM and the private security firm, Dyncorp. Taken together, the HSI was designed to pilot a model for stabilisation for other complex environments where the US is currently engaged, including Afghanistan and Iraq.

From the beginning, the initiative concentrated on a large neighbourhood once affected by systemic violence: Cité Soleil. With an estimated 300,000 residents, this neighbourhood was long marked out as a centre of acute criminal and political violence, transitory migration and decaying and dilapidated infrastructure. The settlement emerged from the 1960s onwards in the wake of induced migration under successive Duvalier (François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier) administrations. Importantly, the HSI was intentionally rolled out in geographic areas that MINUSTAH peacekeepers had largely 'cleared' of gangs. Thus, even before the commencement of the HSI in 2007, key informants reported that the presence and authority of gangs had been greatly diminished in comparison to 2004–06.

The US government, with Dyncorp and the IOM as the primary implementing partners, committed more than USD 20 million over two years to a combination of 'bricks-and-mortar' operations and community-driven social welfare projects. According to one USAID programme officer, more than 200 projects were supported (ranging in value from USD 20,000 to USD 40,000) by early 2009. The initiative adopted a two-pronged approach to security promotion. First, it emphasised large-scale infrastructure activities such as road building and the construction of a central

police station and modest police posts. Repeated visits to the principle police station (formerly a covered market) in Cité Soleil revealed considerable expansion of primary and secondary road and tarmac coverage. Second, it promoted development interventions—activities explicitly intended to win the 'hearts and minds' of residents and to undermine the legitimacy and authority of gangs—including, literally, hundreds of small-scale development projects organised and managed by local residents.

It is useful to highlight certain distinguishing features of the HSI programme as compared to other stabilisation approaches in Haiti and elsewhere. For one, it explicitly avoided the option to 'negotiate' directly with so-called gangs and criminal actors, preferring instead to focus on undermining their source of legitimacy and enhancing the credibility of the municipal structures and the police in recovered 'under-governed spaces'. Some USAID officials described how those gang members who remained or returned were 'taken out' as appropriate by MINUSTAH and the HNP but that they were playing a kind of game of 'whack-a-mole' since the heads of many gangs were quickly replaced. This view was also supported by Santos Cruz who added that criminals should be dealt with by law-and-order structures as they are 'not political groups'.

Instead, the HSI identified and funded small- and medium-scale projects with residents in Cité Soleil precisely to offer them alternatives to gang rule. At the same time, the programme sought to promote enhanced rule of law through support for local justices of the peace, training in community–police relations and support for community policing. Likewise, the HSI established a permanent police presence in Cité Soleil through the rebuilding of physical infrastructure together with training and equipping of the HNP and police stations, although it did not include provisions for recurrent expenditure on police, legal clinics or related services and equipment after 2009. Its proponents also expected to introduce a community policing doctrine before phasing out the programme.

It is critical to stress that the HSI was designed not so much to promote development as an 'end', but rather more instrumentally as a 'means' of opening the door for international and national agencies to consolidate activities. The Achilles heel of the programme, however, was in its 'transition' strategy. The overall success of the US approach ultimately depended on whether the police—specifically, the HNP—were capable of sustaining security gains, a reality that before the January 2010 earthquake had yet to emerge. According to USAID officials in 2009, the HNP was graduating too few new recruits for stabilisation to genuinely take hold. Part of the problem was the pace of recruitment, training and deployment of police. For example, the 2007 graduating class from the national police academy included just 300 officers, but most were deployed to an area of interest to the then Commissioner. Fewer than 30 police officers were present in Cité Soleil, although USAID expected to expand this dramatically to 200 by the end of 2010.

Nevertheless, the HSI advanced several straightforward objectives, many of which were achieved. These included the generation of the necessary security conditions

to enhance the police presence and to reduce the military presence in volatile areas and the marginalisation of spoilers via community action (through 'community forums', a social technology borrowed from MINUSTAH CVR). According to USAID, metrics of success included a reduction in threats from gangs, a decrease in the use of security forces for political repression, enhanced performance of security forces, strengthening of subordination of communities to legitimate government authority, enhanced public confidence in security forces, and consent for MINUSTAH (USAID, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).

It is worth noting that HSI personnel prefer the concept of *transition* to exit. According to key informants, transition was gauged by the extent of the police presence and real/perceived reductions in violence. Secondary impacts—from improved socio-economic livelihoods to increased access to justice—were considered less central to overall success. Metrics included a decrease in 'social disintegration', population displacement and demographic pressures as well as an increase in access to basic needs and related social services (USAID, 2008a). Indeed, the HSI programme applied certain clear forms of conditionality to its delivery of assistance in parts of Cité Soleil where gang activity persisted or threatened the outcomes of funded interventions—in some cases withholding assistance or threatening to end small grants and investments prematurely to induce compliance. Observers close to the process claim that some of these actions generated meaningful results and lasting changes in the behaviour of urban residents.

Although its benefits were heavily publicised (principally by the US government), the overall outcome of the US approach to stabilisation is mixed. Indeed, to the credit of the US, the intervention featured a clear theory of change and a robust surveillance mechanism to track outcomes over time (USAID, 2008a, 2008b, and 2008c). Moreover, violence appeared to have dramatically declined during the course of the project, and plans were underway to establish a major road that would have transformed formal and informal market trading. Since the expectation was to reduce violence to analogous rates as in other areas of the country—that is, to normalise and contain crime rather than take account of upstream or national issues—the intervention had at least partially fulfilled expectations. But the extent to which the police presence was enhanced and development resumed in a fundamental sense was harder to ascertain by late 2009. Some critics have claimed that dividends were limited due to a more unilateral approach favoured by the US and noted a subsequent push-back from the national and domestic authorities that were likely more sensitive to issues of foreign interventionism.

The 'others': carrots and more carrots

When it comes to security promotion, other bilateral donors, such as Canada, Norway and to some extent Brazil, appear to support both multilateral interventions emphasising justice and police reform and more voluntary and community-oriented projects on the ground. Although these activities are often characterised as 'stabilisation', their

shape and character are nonetheless different from the interventions outlined above. Indeed, middle-power donors are often inclined to invest heavily in a range of 'soft' stabilisation activities such as 'conflict mitigation', 'civic mediation' and 'community development', even if they also support the state's capacity to deliver formal security and justice services. One example of this alternative approach to stabilisation is the 'integrated security and development programme' launched in early 2007 by a Brazilian NGO, Viva Rio, in Bel Air, the veritable heart of Port-au-Prince.

The stabilisation programme combined direct gang mediation together with myriad development activities to positive effect. These latter interventions—including rainwater harvesting, water collection and distribution, sanitation and hygiene activities, solid waste and sewer management, education and recreation for at-risk youth, and women's health promotion—were key to reinforcing the dividends of non-violence. Funded by Canada's Stabilisation and Reconstruction Team (START), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), and supported by the Brazilian government and some funds from MINUSTAH CVR, the intervention married security with development (rather than addressing security *or* development).

In contrast to UN or US activities that were implemented predominantly by foreign agencies, the programme purposefully harnessed informal actors and institutions, including gangs. Brazilian and Haitian programme implementers negotiated and mediated with the 'bazes' in Bel Air, including community and gang leadership. While this approach offered an important entry point to community structures, some critics contend that it unintentionally reinforced informal and possibly illegitimate actors and activities. The intended and unintended consequences of this approach were also assessed, suggesting that such engagement was in fact a precondition of durable violence reduction (Moestue and Muggah, 2009).

Physically located in the inner-city neighbourhood of Bel Air—with a catchment of some 90,000 residents—the programme blended thick evidence-based and cultural understanding with an incremental approach on the ground. For instance, on the basis of household surveys, ethnographic research and outreach, the programme implementing agency—Viva Rio—brokered a peace accord between more than a dozen different gang-affected zones in 2007–09. It negotiated an arrangement whereby lotteries and bursaries were held for every month there was no reported murder in the neighbourhood. It is important to note that the general population, and not gangs per se, received direct benefits from the lotteries in 2007. As of 2008, however, gang leaders were also entitled to receive benefits from the monthly lotteries, an issue that has raised some concern among local NGOs and observers.

Viva Rio was thus able to engage communities early on in an informal way, establishing relations with (formal and informal) MINUSTAH and HNP officers more directly involved in stabilisation. Instead of marginalising gangs, they explicitly brought 'les bazes' into a dynamic process of negotiation, dialogue and ultimately self-regulation. Likewise, Viva Rio consciously drew MINUSTAH peacekeepers into the process, complementing their activities described above with training in community relations/outreach and encouraging a 'softer', less coercive approach.

Like the UN and the US, the 'other' approach deliberately located its interventions within a security-first approach. Viva Rio personnel recognised that a community's development potential is often most usefully tapped after real and perceived violence is diminished. Unlike the UN and the US, though, the approach integrated development interventions directly into the programme rather than leaving them to other municipal actors or NGOs that were expected to assume responsibilities after real and perceived security was fully restored. It is also critical to note, however, that Bel Air offers a comparatively more 'stable' social and economic environment than Cité Soleil, even if violence rates there are allegedly higher than the national average.

Notwithstanding some important gains in promoting security, there were also many clear challenges associated with transferring and embedding activities into what were frayed and predominantly illegitimate public institutions. For example, Viva Rio promoted the development of a multi-pronged water management system that entailed the introduction of water kiosks in under-serviced areas, rain-water harvesting in primary schools, and the strengthening of municipal (piped/kiosk) water delivery, but their durability required that state authorities eventually take them over. According to Viva Rio, less than 20 percent of residents in Port-au-Prince had access to piped water before the January 2010 earthquake. Other, ostensibly 'developmental' activities included informal education training in schools (including 'vocational' education), recreation and sporting alternatives ('soccer diplomacy'), and concerts by the wildly popular 'ra ra' bands.

Taken together, the 'other' approach offers an example of south–south social technology transfer. Specifically, experiences and skills learned from engaging gang-affected urban slums/*favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, were adapted and transferred to the Haitian context (Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho, 2009). And while this approach endorsed many of the same objectives as UN and US activities, including the prevention of and a reduction in violence and the shoring-up of MINUSTAH and more legitimate and accountable policing, it also exemplified an adaptive and highly culturally-sensitive approach to security promotion. Viva Rio has also been criticised for crowding out other NGOs and for being *too* flexible and close to the military. For instance, UNICEF stated that its encouragement of summer camps for children in MINUSTAH bases was a high-risk activity.

Even so, the NGO has consciously sought to reinforce, in many ways, alternative nodes of legitimacy and authority through investment in local institutions. For example, the rain-water harvesting systems were installed in and managed by the schools and the health programme was implemented in selected schools. Viva Rio coordinated closely with the mayor's office on different issues and collaborated closely with the public water utility company, CAMEP, and with Ministry of Public Works on solid waste management. This collaboration featured elements of (informal or formal) capacity-building, but also reinforced its legitimacy and leverage to promote core stabilisation activities. Moreover, valued at a total of USD 4.5 million (between 2006 and 2009), it offered a low-cost alternative to the UN and the US.

Implications of stabilisation for humanitarian action

In the meantime, the humanitarian community operating in Haiti surveyed the emergence of multiple stabilisation agendas with indifference and, in some cases, apprehension. While instinctively suspicious of more aggressive activities such as those supported by MINUSTAH and the US, there was a gradual softening of attitudes over time, especially among (civil) UN agencies, NGOs, the ICRC and some MSF entities. A range of debates have taken place since at least 2004 within various coordination platforms—including the Cadre de Liaison International (CLIO) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee—as well as between agency directors and high-level personnel.

The sheer diversity of actors engaged in various ways in the humanitarian and development enterprise in Haiti is bewildering. Estimates range from 3,000–20,000, but no one knows for sure (Schwartz, 2010). And it should be recalled that many of these actors have confronted various guises of 'instability' before and after 2004—from acute violence to hurricanes and floods. Thus, while the perceptions and attitudes of certain members of the humanitarian community with regard to stabilisation may have shifted over the past five years, they were by no means homogeneous.

While difficult to generalise, humanitarian agencies harboured a complex love–hate relationship with the security sector, including MINUSTAH, the HNP and private security companies. Owing to their diversity and competing mandates, it is perhaps of little surprise that attitudes and operating procedures were also heterogeneous. Indeed, such tensions were hardly unique to Haiti: persistent divisions in agency approaches to civil–military engagement in Haiti were analogous to those reproduced elsewhere, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan.

Put simply, on the one hand were the more conservative or orthodox agencies. These actors, including the ICRC and MSF, in principle opposed 'integration' with political and military actors and (publicly) maintained their autonomy and principled approach. In 2009, for example, MSF completed an internal ethical audit of procedures and operations in order to provide guidance on the conduct of international and national staff. In practical terms, the agency determined that soldiers cannot enter centres with guns (armouries are set up outside), no military or policing actors can enter an MSF car, no military escorts are allowed, and no travel on military planes or in military cars is permitted. On the other hand, the more multi-mandated NGOs, including Care, Concern and Oxfam, appeared to adopt a differentiated and pragmatic approach that in some cases entailed tentative, yet more visible, forms of cooperation with military and policing actors, MINUSTAH or otherwise.

Between 2004 and 2009, and across the humanitarian sector, attitudes towards proponents of stabilisation began to warm. With the exception of the ICRC and MSF, most relief agencies acknowledged that they had virtually no capacity to operate effectively in urban and rural areas affected by systemic violence between 2004 and 2005. The humanitarian 'agency' space was practically closed (Muggah, forthcoming). Likewise, nearly all agencies conceded that between 2007 and 2009 collective

violence had dramatically declined even if other forms of violence—that is, sexual and gender-based—began to appear more visible.

Although estimates vary, a 2009 survey detected a murder rate of some 14–15 per 100,000 in key slums of Port-au-Prince, among the lowest in Latin America, which averages approximately 30 per 100,000 (Geneva Declaration, 2008). US officials contend that rates may be higher in Cité Soleil, but lack reliable time-series data to substantiate their claims. MSF asserts that violence decreased in the wake of stabilisation activities introduced since 2008. Agency officials, for instance, have pointed to the absolute decline in murders in Martissant—the then Director for MSF-Holland noted 35 cases per month in 2007 and under 12 in 2009. He argued at the time that 'other forms of violence – domestic violence – may well be on the rise, but not organised or collective political violence'.

That MINUSTAH, and to a lesser extent the HNP, regained the humanitarian space through force is widely recognised as a critical, if controversial, achievement. Indeed, Santos Cruz observed that, while the peacekeepers defeated gangs by force, the humanitarian space was regained through transparency, competent deployment, a focus on results and clear criteria to work in an objective fashion with civilians. Most prominent humanitarian and development NGOs observed that, while they may have been able to access certain areas, they would never have been able to do so as quickly or on an equivalent scale without military intervention and stabilisation. In other words, humanitarian agencies acknowledged that the security sector regained spaces previously inaccessible to them. According to the then Directors of MSF-Belgium and MSF-France, MINUSTAH opened up a humanitarian space with implications for less well-known agencies. As noted by one official, 'MSF operates in areas where others do not go. The question is who comes in after MSF leaves – smaller and other NGOs who otherwise don't have the authority or capacity to engage'.

The particular case of MSF provides a glimpse into how civil–military relations changed between 2004 and 2009. Specifically, from 2004–07, there was virtually no contact between MINUSTAH and MSF. In fact, MSF imposed hard directives purposefully to reduce formal and informal exchange between its personnel and peacekeepers and police. Santos Cruz asserted that 'some people in MSF did not have the commonsense [sic] to adapt to the Haitian reality . . . they held on to a radical and irrational interpretation of neutrality [that led to] an absurd misinterpretation and very serious mistakes'. This was considered an especially sensitive area since MSF was operating in Cité Soleil where MINUSTAH was active and many civilians were arrested or killed. Indeed, certain MSF hospitals were the site of considerable violence between 2004 and 2005 (Muggah, 2005). The relationship between MINUSTAH and MSF reached a low point when the latter denounced the Sri Lanka peacekeeping contingent for paedophilia, resulting in the removal of more than 100 soldiers.

Between 2008 and 2009, however, the MINUSTAH–MSF relationship steadily improved. Paradoxically, according to MSF-Holland's then Country Director, 'the

storms changed everything'. Following major floods in August–September 2008, MSF was provided with UN air transport and used MINUSTAH bases for coordination. Personal relations between commanders, officers and senior MSF staff manifestly improved, largely credited to personalities rather than more fundamental internal institutional adaptations. Indeed, today, according to MSF-Belgium, MINUSTAH contacts MSF for information on and to gain a better understanding of local challenges (MSF does not provide names or identifying information).

The ICRC approach, while similar to that of MSF, shared more in common with the stabilisation activities noted above than is widely appreciated. Much like the US approach, the ICRC conceived of Haiti as a 'laboratory' for new engagement in urban areas affected by armed gangs. The then senior delegate at ICRC-Haiti argued that the experimental value may be somewhat overstated since urban violence was comparatively low in Cité Soleil even before 2007 after 'successful' operations by MINUSTAH. Indeed, the ICRC official contended that the gang structures had more or less disappeared by 2007, and exerted weak influence with low levels of popular support. Likewise, detained gang leaders were frequently quickly replaced—a phenomenon very different to more established groups in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Beginning in 2006 and 2007, for example, the ICRC explicitly linked its prison outreach activities (with detained gang leaders) to wider community mediation and access. Through discussions with former gang members, the ICRC determined the most appropriate location for its field clinics and the strengthening of water provision in Cité Soleil. Over time the ICRC worked to reinstall local water boards in Cité Soleil, collecting funds at key water distribution points and thus providing local resources for the national water authority to make routine repairs. Between late 2008 and late 2009, the ICRC also began to reduce direct actions, supporting instead the Haitian National Red Cross in neighbouring slums, such as Martissant. Meanwhile, an expansion of operations was planned for 2010, before the January earthquake, including the establishment of a functioning ambulatory service and health posts in Bel Air.

Overall, the ICRC found little to complain about in relation to the stabilisation agendas. Indeed, delegates observed that stabilisation of various types expanded (rather than closed) the 'humanitarian space', particularly with respect to civilian protection. More provocatively, ICRC officials hinted that perhaps the goals of the the ICRC and MINUSTAH were more unified than was often believed. In practical terms, while collaboration with ongoing stabilisation activities (UN, US or others) was initially limited until 2007, it expanded dramatically in 2008. For many outsiders, the ICRC often appears to adopt a high level of autonomy and independence from other agencies. In reality, however, it often works closely with proponents of stabilisation, including military actors. It is also possible that Haiti represents a uniquely special case where tight civil–military integration is more feasible than elsewhere owing in part to the 'absence' of conventional warfare.

Notwithstanding the experiences of the ICRC and MSF, some humanitarians registered concern that supporters of stabilisation were insufficiently apprised of

humanitarian mandates. Many MINUSTAH military actors were described by humanitarian NGOs as lacking a clear understanding of the value of or requirements for preserving the 'humanitarian space'. In some cases, humanitarian agencies resented their 'forced' integration—the collapsing of relief, development and security promotion agendas—as expressed by the UN or other multilateral and bilateral agencies. Some NGOs found that MINUSTAH and policing actors (as well as certain bilateral agencies) applied considerable pressure to NGOs, including humanitarian agencies, to adopt a more assertive political agenda and become involved in 'civilian' activities in the wake of military operations. Meanwhile, non-UN agencies feared being co-opted or perceived by civilians as appendages of the UN. Indeed, some complained that MINUSTAH effectively superimposed a host of new 'civilian' activities over what was already being undertaken by NGOs and the UNCT.

Stabilisation before and after the earthquake

Although the stabilisation discourse is advanced in general terms by a wide variety of government and non-government actors, in practice it features a high degree of variation. More important for the purposes of this special issue of *Disasters,* the case of Haiti offers an example of where 'stabilisation'—while aggressively pursued and criticised—generated a meaningful reduction in violence and measurable increases in certain indicators of stability. Indeed, it appears that stabilisation efforts may have endured even after the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010.

Before considering the implications of stabilisation in 2010, one should recall that the 'effectiveness' of stabilisation in 2009 was perceived to be heavily contingent on a sustained MINUSTAH peacekeeping and police presence. As of late 2009, Santos Cruz confided that there was no 'peacekeeping strategy' without the military—'it is the heart of the mission . . . but after a certain point the military will withdraw and development becomes the key'. Problematically, the restoration of a legitimate physical police presence, much less community policing, was moving more slowly than expected. Indeed, most, if not all, Brazilian, Canadian, UN and US supporters of stabilisation interviewed between 2007 and 2009 were concerned that their efforts would fail if adequate policing was not restored.

The experience of 2007–09 suggests that, in contrast to Afghanistan or Iraq, Haiti is a case where stabilisation did not severely compromise humanitarian action. To the contrary, while initially reluctant to engage, both humanitarian and development actors welcomed stabilisation. Although some humanitarian agencies engaged with military actors less than others, most adopted pragmatic strategies while seeking not to compromise mandates or standard operating procedures. Likewise, exogenous shocks, including major hurricanes in August–September 2008, appeared to hasten more 'integration' between military and humanitarian actors, suggesting that the reality of 'stabilisation' is being accepted by most on the ground.

What is more, levels of real and perceived security following the 2010 earthquake suggest that earlier investments in stabilisation may be at least partially sustained.

For example, a randomised household survey (n=2,940) undertaken by Kolbe and Muggah (2010) in the months after the earthquake indicated that crime and victimisation rates were much lower than trumpeted in the global media. Contrary to media claims of widespread looting and organised theft, the vast majority of Port-au-Prince residents reported that neither they nor any members of their household had had property stolen from them or intentionally destroyed by others since the earthquake.

Only an estimated 4.1 percent of all Port-au-Prince households (95 percent confidence interval) experienced some form of theft, vandalism or destruction of property in the first three months after the earthquake. The most common thefts reported were of water and/or food, unsurprising given the high levels of food insecurity. These incidents tended to be geographically concentrated in certain neighbourhoods and of relatively modest value. Notably, Bel Air and Cité Soleil were considered 'average' in terms of safety and security with other neighbourhoods ranked as more dangerous (see Table 1).

Table 1 Perceptions of security: 2009 and 2010

General population: how serious of a problem was insecurity/crime before the earthquake?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Very serious	425	24.2	24.3	24.3
Serious	674	38.4	38.6	62.9
Moderate	333	18.9	19.1	82.0
Minor	266	15.2	15.2	97.2
Very minor	48	2.8	2.8	100
Total	1,747	99.4	100	
Missing	10	0.6		
Total	**1,758**	**100.0**		

General population: how serious of a problem was insecurity/crime after the earthquake?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Very serious	208	11.9	11.9	11.9
Serious	143	8.1	8.1	20.0
Moderate	267	15.2	15.2	35.2
Minor	302	17.2	17.2	52.4
Very minor	834	47.5	47.6	100.0
Total	**1,754**	**99.8**	**100.0**	
Missing	4	0.2		
Total	**1,758**	**100.0**		

Source: Kolbe and Muggah (2010).

Table 2 Confidence in security institutions: 2009 and 2010

General population: who would you turn to first if you were robbed?				
	2009		2010	
	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent
Turn to relative/friend/neighbour for help	208	12.0	667	38.5
Police	706	40.7	980	56.6
Go to former members of Haitian army	13	0.7	1	0.1
Go to the foreign military	168	9.7	6	0.3
Go to private security company or similar	5	0.3	0	0
Turn to community elders	65	3.7	40	2.3
Turn to the head of the family	10	0.6	13	0.8
Seek assistance from an armed group.	7	0.4	4	0.2
Other (specify)	8	0.5	0	0
Nothing/no point in doing anything	519	29.9	10	0.6
Don't know	26	1.5	11	.6
Total	**1,735**	**100.0**	**1,732**	**100.0**

Source: Kolbe and Muggah (2010).

Likewise, the survey allowed for a careful reading of attitudes towards security providers more generally. In fact, the preferred security provider for addressing crime and victimisation was, overwhelmingly, the HNP. This view was sounded by both members of the general population and residents of displaced person camps. Notwithstanding widespread support for the police, members of the general population and camp residents offered more nuanced responses for specific types of victimisation and crime. What is perhaps most interesting is the way in which resident's appreciation of the police has improved since the previous year—suggesting heightened confidence in state institutions—a critical objective of the stabilisation enterprise more generally (see Table 2).

Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents held that strengthening the capacity of police would make their community safer. Almost 64 percent of general population residents believe the police are the primary actors responsible for security in 2010—up from 50 percent in 2009. Likewise, camp residents echo this sentiment, with almost 63 percent claiming that they would turn to the police for their security. In a country where the police had previously been implicated in widespread human rights abuses and where confidence in public institutions is regarded as extremely low, these findings, while preliminary and tentative, offer some grounds for limited optimism in an era of extreme discontent.

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