



Europeans Lash Out at US Relief Efforts in Haiti

(Published in [Pajamas Media](#), February 1, 2010)

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Análisis n° 7573

February 25, 2010

Europeans have been struggling to come up with a unified response to the earthquake in Haiti. Although the European Union now has a president and foreign minister whose job it is to make Europe “speak with one voice” on the global stage, [Europeans have been reduced to squabbling](#) over the lofty question of why they allowed the United States to take command of the international relief efforts.

But even as sibling rivalry stymies the EU’s humanitarian aid response, Europeans have encountered no problems whatsoever in unifying around anti-Americanism, the time-tested elixir to European disunity. Across the continent, Europeans have been quick to lash out at the United States for a host of perceived wrong moves in Haiti, even as they

secretly admit that the EU response can best be described as inept. (The new EU foreign minister, Baroness Catherine Ashton, initially responded to the earthquake in Haiti by [conveying her “condolences” to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.](#))

A common theme parroted by much of the European mainstream media revolves around the alleged American “military occupation” of Haiti, as if war planners at the Pentagon viewed the earthquake disaster as an opportunity to turn the impoverished island nation into the 51st US state.

Europeans have also spilled considerable ink on second-guessing US motives for providing aid to Haiti, with the underlying idea being that

Americans are somehow genetically incapable of altruism ([even though empirical evidence shows that Europeans are far less charitable than are Americans](#)).

But the most common European grievance faults the United States for “controlling” the Haiti relief operation. Indeed, envy over American power and global leadership appears to lie at the heart of European gall. The United States, by acting quickly and decisively in Haiti, [has embarrassed the Europeans](#), who spend much of their time laying claim to being a “world superpower,” but whose dithering response to the crisis in Haiti has once again demonstrated that the EU is not an equal of the United States on the global stage.

Most of the criticism stems from the European left, which only one year ago worshipped Barack Obama as a messianic figure. The latest outburst of European anti-Americanism provides additional proof that [Europeans have soured on Obama](#), who once promised that he alone could bring an end to the anti-American bigotry flowing from Europe and elsewhere.

Some of the most vocal criticism of the United States has come from European officials linked to governments that are normally friendly to America. For example, the head of Italy’s civil protection department, [Guido Bertolaso](#), said that the US-led efforts in Haiti were a “pathetic” failure that is turning a national tragedy into a “vanity show for the television cameras.” Bertolaso, who holds Cabinet rank in the

center-right government of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, also said: “When confronted by a situation of chaos, they [the Americans] tend to confuse military intervention with what should be an emergency operation, which cannot be entrusted to the armed forces. We are missing a leader, a co-ordination capacity that goes beyond military discipline.” Bertolaso called for the appointment of an international civilian humanitarian coordinator, under the supervision of the United Nations, of course.

French Cooperation Minister [Alain Joyandet](#), a member of the center-right government of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, accused the United States of “occupying” Haiti and demanded that the United Nations investigate US aid efforts. “This is about helping Haiti, not about occupying Haiti,” Joyandet said. He called on the UN to “clarify the role of the United States.” At the same time, French Foreign Minister [Bernard Kouchner](#) lodged a protest with the US State Department, complaining that the airport in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince had become an “annex of Washington.”

Not to be outdone by their political counterparts, newspapers across Europe have been chock full of editorials and commentary debating American motives in Haiti.

In Italy, for example, the center-left La Stampa published an article titled [“America’s Bad Conscience”](#) which asserts that the US decided to embark on the relief effort in Haiti after “taking stock if its role as the parent-harasser-owner of the Carib-

bean.” The article argues: “The wrongs for which Washington must make amends are not simply those of the country: that the American Revolution was a fact of slavery is now past. More painful are the sins accrued by US administrations over the past twenty years – Democrats and Republicans, Clinton and Bush alike... Of the two former presidents, Bush is perhaps the one who bears responsibility for the child – if the child is the sin of forgetting. Bush chose not to focus his attention on Haiti while the US was engaged in Iraq and the Middle East.”

Elsewhere, *La Stampa*, in an article titled “[No Disaster Relief](#),” says: “The US has such a massive presence in Haiti, not because they are better than the Europeans, but because for a century they have been the true government of the island. Since 1915, the year of the first landing of US Marines on the island, until now, Haiti is in fact an American protectorate. And it is precisely the awareness of this history that has moved Obama.”

The center-left *La Repubblica* published an article titled “[USA Invades Haiti, Paratroopers Deployed on Roads](#).” It says: “Within hours of the disaster, the US Air Force seized control of the skies above Haiti. US Special Operations Forces have taken over the airport of Port-au-Prince. The US military decides what airplanes can and cannot land. It is a breach of Haiti’s national sovereignty, which in any case was a fiction even before the earthquake, and is today totally non-existent.”

In Germany, media elites have been fixated on the idea that Obama has ulterior motives in Haiti. For example, the center-right *Die Welt*, in a story titled “[Obama’s Help to Haiti not Entirely Selfless](#),” says: “In addition to humanitarian reasons, Obama has other motives. He fears a flood of refugees from the poor-house Haiti to the United States – America’s backyard will not be allowed to become a source of illegal immigrants.”

The center-right newsmagazine *Focus*, in a story titled “[Obama’s Help to Haiti Includes Political Calculations](#),” argues that Obama’s decision to send aid to Haiti is designed to help him reassert his political power following his “lack of resolve in the wake of the attempted terrorist attack on the Delta airliner in Detroit.” *Focus* also says: “With the humanitarian assistance, the United States wants to prevent a new wave of refugees. Moreover, it is a strategic goal to avoid government unrest in its backyard, which could become a hub for drug trafficking... The world policeman USA wants order in its backyard.” Elsewhere, *Focus*, in a story titled “[USA Sends Earthquake Refugees Back to Haiti](#),” reminds its readers that “the catastrophe will not become an opportunity for immigration.”

In Switzerland, the country’s second-largest newspaper, *Blick*, published an article titled “[Obama’s Help not Based Only on Humanitarianism](#),” which argues: “It is cheaper for the US to stabilize the situation on the ground, rather than having to accept tens of thousands of refugees.” The paper debates

whether Haiti is of “strategic interest” to the United States and concludes that it is not, because with “Puerto Rico, Washington already has a strong presence in the region.”

In France, the Journal L’Alsace, in an editorial titled “[How to Pay the Debt?](#),” says the United Nations, not the United States, should be running Haiti. “The take-over of Port-au-Prince airport by the American military is a bad sign which indicates that the big guys are once again preparing to impose their law,” the paper says. In another story titled “[The United States in Power](#),” L’Alsace provides a detailed summary of “a century of American interference” in Haiti, recalling that occupying Americans “killed thousands” of Haitians in the years after their intervention there in 1915. The article avoids mentioning Haiti’s experience as a colony of France.

In Britain, the leftwing [Guardian published a picture on its front page](#) of an American cruise ship docking at Labadee Beach, some 40 kilometers from Haiti’s earthquake zone. The photograph shows American tourists frolicking in Haitian waters, although readers posting comments seem divided over whether Americans are really as insensitive as the Guardian insinuates.

Elsewhere, the Guardian published an opinion article titled “[Haiti Needs Water, Not Occupation](#).” The author, an American left-winger who regularly bashes the United States in foreign newspapers, asserts: “The US has never wanted Haitian self-rule, and its focus on ‘security concerns’ has hampered

the earthquake aid response.” He continues: “Haiti’s plight has been comparable to that of many homeless people on city streets in the US: too poor and too black to have the same effective constitutional and legal rights as other citizens...Washington’s fear of democracy in Haiti may explain why the US is now sending 10,000 troops and prioritising ‘security’ over other needs.”

In Spain, the Barcelona-based La Vanguardia published an article titled “[Haitians Believe Massive Arrival of Troops Instead of Civilians is Unnecessary and Humiliating](#).” The article asserts that “with the arrival of so many outside forces, the Haitian government is losing its institutional role and powers of the state... Haiti is becoming a protectorate of foreign powers.”

The leftwing [Cadena Ser radio broadcast an interview with Bill Clinton](#), during which he was told: “There were many voices from around the world and all areas who have criticized the US military deployment in Haiti. Far from interpreting it as aid, there are many who do not trust US leadership in the management tasks and the organization of flights arriving at the airport in Port-au-Prince.” Clinton responded by saying: “We are not interested in occupying Haiti.”

The leftwing Público, which is close to the ruling Socialist Party, published an article titled “[US Actions in Haiti Provoke Strong Criticism](#).” It includes an open letter to the participants of the upcoming [Haiti Donor’s Conference in Montreal](#). The

letter says: “We reject the militarization of Haiti as a false response to the growing disaster, and also US

unilateral action to send more than 20,000 troops to safeguard its economic and geopolitical interests.”

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