

Jorge Cardoso / Brazilian Military Defense Archive



Brazilian female peacekeeper in Haiti

# Brazil and UN Security Council Resolution 1325

## Progress and Challenges of the Implementation Process<sup>1</sup>

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**E**merging powers have recently become significant players in promoting peace and stability in unstable settings affected by conflict and violence. These countries have the experience, capabilities, and legitimacy to support counterpart governments seeking to build security and safety in their societies. What is more, the High Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HLP) has emphasized the need for peace operations to become more people centered. This is an important capability that emerging powers—some of the top troop-contributors to UN peacekeeping missions—have arguably developed in the last few years.<sup>2</sup> Peacekeepers from many emerging countries, including Brazil, have been widely recognized for their professional conduct and empathy—which many attribute to their own experiences with economic, social, and political crises.

As the UN and its member states increasingly recognize that peace and stability depend on inclusivity and gender equality, are troop contributors from the Global South adequately prepared to implement gender-sensitive approaches to international peace and security? The UN Security Council has adopted seven resolutions on women, peace, and security (WPS), of which the most sweeping is UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted in 2000.<sup>3</sup> Together these set out a gender equality strategy that attempts to ensure that the particular needs of both women and men will be carefully considered in all UN actions in the field. But the UN faces challenges

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in disseminating these norms among its members and in its peace operations. Gender equality in UN peacekeeping remains a long way off. And a central challenge emerges when member states responsible for carrying out the UN's mandate in the field do not adapt their own national policies on gender norms.

A number of emerging powers have already taken steps to support the UN in this endeavor, and Brazil's achievements and challenges offer valuable insights in this regard. The Brazilian Armed Forces have incorporated some gender approaches in their peacekeeping activities, particularly in Haiti. Brazil is also implementing an array of international cooperation projects with fragile and violence-affected countries. In settings as varied as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau, and Haiti, Brazil has worked to promote access to justice and enhance national capabilities to prevent and reduce sexual violence. These are critical examples of South-South cooperation, and do not necessarily follow the more conventional models of aid assistance practiced by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members. Indeed, such initiatives are based on best practices identified in Brazil including police training, health service provision, and legislation formulation.

Whole-of-government policies undertaken by the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of External Relations (MRE, in Portuguese), and the National Secretariat for Women's Policies (SPM, in Portuguese) have also led to gender mainstreaming commitments and cooperation mechanisms to improve the country's track record on women, peace, and security. The country has further signed up to a range of international efforts to end war crimes and mass atrocities, which include conflict-related

sexual violence. Although at times uncoordinated, these are relevant steps that are likely to have a positive impact on the country's capacity to adapt to the UN's gender equality strategy.

Nonetheless, Brazil has made only partial progress in meeting the UN standards. Just seven percent of the country's military is composed of women, with most of them serving in administrative and medical positions.<sup>4</sup> As a result, less than one percent of all Brazilian military personnel deployed to peace operations are women (out of the 40,000 troops sent to Haiti over 10 years, only 140 were women).<sup>5</sup> A top-down decree to improve women's access to military schools represents a key initiative that could help to change this ratio, but other obstacles remain.

This article analyzes Brazil's efforts to implement the UN's women, peace, and security agenda, and highlights some "southern grown" efforts to promoting peace and gender equality. The article is divided into four sections: 1) women in the Brazilian Armed Forces; 2) Brazilian participation in peacekeeping operations; 3) steps to implement UNSCR 1325 in Brazil; and 4) the question of a National Action Plan. The conclusion focuses on the main obstacles yet to be overcome in order for UNSCR 1325 to be effectively implemented in Brazil.

### **Women in the Brazilian Armed Forces**

Women were initially incorporated into the Brazilian Armed Forces during the re-democratization process, beginning in the 1980s, as a symbol of a less violent political system and a strong democracy. However, efforts to integrate women into the various branches of the military were not guided by a coherent national policy or a coordinated effort.<sup>6</sup> The

first to open its doors was the Navy, followed by the Air Force, in 1980 and 1982 respectively. It was only 10 years later, in 1992, that women were allowed in the Army, when they were permitted to join the service's administration school. Today, the presence of women remains limited in many branches, partly reflecting the persistence of traditional perceptions of women's roles in Brazilian society.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the first efforts to integrate women reflected the traditional gender divide in Brazilian society and perpetuated stereotypes about women's roles. Women in the military were only authorized to exercise functions that were already generally carried out by women, and their participation was justified on the grounds that they are more sensitive and caring than their male counterparts. As such, women initially participated in the military through the "female auxiliary corps" in health and administrative positions.<sup>8</sup> There was a general lack of support for these first female pioneers. The female corps was separated from its male counterparts, and as a result, there were no clear guidelines as to how these women could progress in the military hierarchy.

More recently, women's relative absence from combatant positions has also reflected these divisions and stereotypes. After 1992, women were authorized to join several branches within the professional corps of the military, but at present the only force to authorize women in combatant positions is the Air Force. Since 2003, women have been allowed to serve as aviators.<sup>9</sup> However, there has been a lack of female candidates—a fact that certain military officers have used to justify not opening other combatant positions for them. The Air Force was also the first to allow women to join the logistics branch, followed by the Navy

in 2014. It will only be in 2017 that women will be allowed to join the logistics and weapons branches of the Army.

In 2014, women comprised seven percent of the Brazilian military, amounting to 23,787 personnel. Their presence is usually in technical, administrative, and health-related areas—with the exception of the aviators in the Air Force. Although the latter has the smallest proportion of women in comparison to the other military forces, the presence of women in absolute numbers is the highest: there are currently 9,927 women in the Air Force, as compared to 6,700 in the Army and 5,815 in the Navy.<sup>10</sup> These numbers are likely to increase significantly after 2017, particularly in the Army, where they will be allowed to take on an expanding number of roles.

As shown in the graph below, most women in the Brazilian Armed Forces are lower-ranking officers. The main reason for their low rank is that these women are frequently from the professional corps, primarily serving as doctors, lawyers, translators, etc. Because Brazilian women are not allowed to serve as non-commissioned officers, this category is not considered in the graph below. However, this is another key issue for consideration in the debate over women's presence in the Armed Forces in Brazil.

Despite the limited number and reach of women in the Brazilian military, the progress that has been made is worth celebrating. In 2012, a woman reached the upper echelons of the military hierarchy: Dalva Mendes, a doctor in the Navy, was granted the rank of Admiral in 2012, opening up the way for others to follow suit. Both the Air Force and the Army have women as Colonels, the highest rank achieved by women in those services. The recent initiative to extend women's access to the logistics

and weapons branches of the Army, mentioned above, also represents a significant step since women will finally be allowed to join the most traditional of the military schools.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, obstacles to women’s full participation persist, not least in terms of resistance to changing the modus operandi that has been in place for centuries. Including women in the military is important for gender equality, but there is also growing recognition that it matters for operational effectiveness—including the effectiveness of international peace operations.

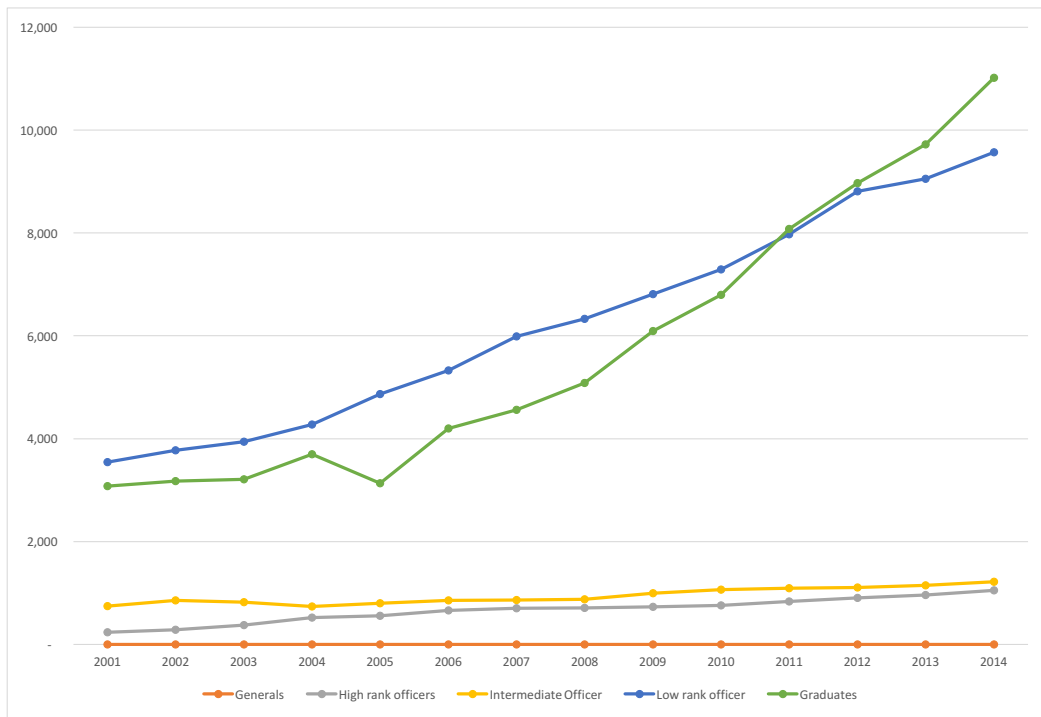
**Brazil in Peacekeeping Operations: Incorporating a Gender Perspective**

Women’s roles in national militaries have a direct effect on the quantitative and qualitative participation of women in international peace

operations, which rely on troop contributions from participating states. Brazil has long been a strong supporter of multilateral efforts to promote peace. In recent years, its contribution (with police, military experts, and troops) to peace operations has increased steadily (by more than 1,500 percent from 2000 to 2015), becoming a major pillar in Brazil’s foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> The country currently has one battalion in Haiti and one company in Lebanon. Brazilian military observers serve in at least seven missions: Western Sahara, Cyprus, Central African Republic, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan.<sup>13</sup> Yet, Brazil’s efforts to mainstream a gender approach in its international peace operations are below optimum.

The absence of Brazilian women in combat positions means that few Brazilian military

Figure 1: Women in the Brazilian Armed Forces



Ministry of Defense, Jan. 2014

women are in the field. For example, in 2014, the UN Mission in Lebanon, where a Brazilian Frigate is stationed, had one woman from the Brazilian military (the Navy) in a contingent comprised of 267 troops. Only one Brazilian woman has ever served as a military observer in a peace operation, deployed from the Navy in 2013 to the UN's Mission in Côte d'Ivoire. For women in other military branches, beyond the Navy, a range of limitations in terms of what kind of arms, training, and rank officers should have in order to join a UN mission as a military observer prevents them participating in this role.

Indeed, the types of functions women can pursue in the Brazilian national context pose an impediment for effective deployment of women in international operations more generally. Given the restrictions on the types of jobs women in the Brazilian Armed Forces may hold, those who do participate in international peace operations (as in Haiti, discussed below) have very limited contact with the local population. According to the UN resolutions on women, peace, and security, the presence of female peacekeepers on the ground is an operational necessity. The participation of women affects a range of military tasks, from checkpoints and search operations to more complex activities such as engaging with victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Uniformed women can also serve as role models for women and men in the local society, showing that women and men can pursue the same careers, even those often associated with the dominant construct of masculinity.

In stable conditions, Brazilian military women are allowed to participate in patrols and play key roles as doctors, nurses, or dentists when the troops offer medical services to the local population. However, health

professionals sent on peace operations are usually dedicated to their own internal personnel, within the battalion, so it is only on the rare occasions when specific civil-military actions in the field are organized that they treat the population directly. According to soldiers who have been to the field, these interactions have been key to identifying actual and potential victims of sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, though women's participation remains limited, there are now signs that a broader gender mainstreaming approach is being implemented by Brazilian troops in the field. This is particularly true in Haiti, where the Brazilian contingent is the largest among troop-contributing countries.

#### **Attempts at Gender Mainstreaming in Haiti**

Women started joining the Brazilian troops on the ground in Haiti in 2006; since then 124 women in the Army have deployed to that country, mostly dentists, nurses, translators, and engineers.<sup>15</sup> As of April 2015, out of 1,678 Brazilian troops deployed globally, only 18 (about one percent) are women, and are all in Haiti.<sup>16</sup> Field research carried out by the authors in 2011 and 2012 uncovered a variety of attempts to mainstream gender considerations in Brazilian troops' actions there.<sup>17</sup>

For example, Brazilian peacekeepers have implemented Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) designed to empower local women and improve their status in Haitian society. There is a conscious effort to use local female translators in patrols and in QIPs targeting women's empowerment. Coordinated activities with the gender unit associated with the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) were also observed, including lectures on pregnancy, use of contraception, breastfeeding, and violence against women. These are key outreach activities that



have the potential to decrease women's vulnerability and strengthen their status in society.

Fort Liberté, a clinic in one of the Brazilian bases, has treated several victims of gender-based violence. This same base also hosts a UN Police commissariat and a Haitian Police Unit, both of them specialized in sexual and gender-based violence. Though the UN Police commissariat does not have the executive mandate, it exercises an important mentoring role, including on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence.

In some cases, access to justice was facilitated by this close contact with police institutions. However, Brazilian soldiers also commonly expressed the view that violence against women, which is so prevalent in Haiti, was a cultural trait, and as such very hard to address.

This counterpoint affects their perception of the relationship between a lasting peace and gender equality. In addition, the issue of peacekeepers exchanging sex for protection or food emerged in some interviews; here, officers believed that the presence of military women could potentially curb that kind of behavior. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) is a major concern for the United Nations. It is unfortunately common and must be thoroughly addressed. Although no case against Brazilian troops has ever been brought to the public, it is an issue that deserves further attention.<sup>18</sup>

Interviews with military women in the field indicated that overall they perceive a positive impact from their presence in Haiti. For example, interviewees of different nationalities



Courtesy of Renata Giannini (2011)

Jean Marie Vincent IDP camp, where Brazilian troops often carried out patrols.

underlined that they usually receive “a lot of attention” from the host population and that this has a positive effect on their interactions with locals.<sup>19</sup> What is more, they felt that they served as positive role models for local women, and that their presence showed local communities that women can play a decisive role within their societies and be an active part of the peacebuilding process. Among doctors and nurses that participated in civil-military activities and offered health services to the local population, interviewees noted that many would come with sexually transmitted diseases and that the presence of female peacekeepers was fundamental to treating those cases.

However, female officers from all nationalities underlined that because of their relatively low numbers within each battalion they are constantly “watched.” Most seemed unhappy about the attention of their male counterparts. That did not necessarily indicate sexual harassment or abuse, but rather that their actions were constantly monitored.

Women in the Brazilian military in particular had very limited contact with the population. Interviews with them were mostly carried out in the presence of male counterparts and commanders. In some cases, it was emphasized that there was no difference between a female and a male officer, and that the host population praises the Brazilian troops. In other cases, Brazilian women underlined their role in the medical service as being beneficial to local women. In particular, they highlighted that the lectures they conducted attempted to transmit key ideas of gender equality. In fact, in the case of the Brazilian contingent, between 2011 and 2012, understanding of gender mainstreaming generally improved. It may be that the training on

gender improved or that it was the personal leadership of that commander that enhanced the knowledge within that battalion.

There are two key takeaways from the Brazilian experience mainstreaming gender in military operations. First, a significant change in the impediments to women’s participation in the military at home—and their access to combatant roles, in particular—would greatly contribute to improving the presence and participation of Brazilian women in peace operations. Second, the lessons learned from these early gender-mainstreaming initiatives in the Brazilian battalion in Haiti should be expanded and adopted as part of its regular activities. After all, gender equality goes beyond gender balance to empowering women and addressing their specific needs.

### Recent Steps to Implement UNSCR 1325

Although Brazil experienced a threefold increase of women in its Armed Forces between 2000 and 2014, the country has no comprehensive policy or plan to promote women’s full participation in its forces.<sup>20</sup> However, political momentum appears to be leading to a change in the status quo. As a country that considers international peace one of its top foreign policy priorities, Brazil has been influenced by international pressure surrounding the women, peace, and security agenda and bilateral efforts by a handful of countries in the field of peace and security. As a result, it can no longer continue to ignore this issue. In addition, one significant top-down decision at the national level will undoubtedly influence the country’s implementation of UNSCR 1325: a presidential decree has now obligated the Armed Forces to accept women in their military schools beginning in 2017.



Against the backdrop of this international and domestic momentum, there is an increasing understanding that Brazil's efforts internationally are a reflection of its national context. If Brazil is to reaffirm its commitment to international peace, then it needs to adapt its approach to gender and security. As such, although Brazil has not adopted a national action plan based on UNSCR 1325 (discussed in the next section), the country has developed converging actions in the three main axes of the resolution: participation of women in peace processes, protection of women in conflict situations, and prevention of violence against women. In addition to these three pillars, the fourth, unifying element mandated by

UNSCR 1325—gender mainstreaming—also plays a role and is reflected in the country's new Gender Commission.<sup>21</sup>

### Participation

As outlined above, the limited participation of Brazilian military women in peace operations is a direct result of their limited presence in the country's Armed Forces. At the same time, Brazil has been increasing its efforts to enhance women's participation in different levels of decisionmaking processes in peacekeeping operations, and this is likely to have a positive impact in the country's gender balance in the field. The participation approach can be



Courtesy of Renata Giannini (2012)

Bolivian peacekeeper providing medical and dental support for internally displaced persons in Cité Soleil, Haiti.

analyzed on two levels: national and international.

At the national level, four main initiatives have contributed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Brazil: the Multi-Annual Plan (PPA, in Portuguese), the National Plan on Policies for Women (PNPM, in Portuguese), the establishment of a Gender Commission in the Ministry of Defense, and the creation of a Gender and Race Steering Committee in the Ministry of External Relations, also known as Itamaraty.<sup>22</sup>

The current Multi-Annual Plan, which guided the government's annual budget preparations between 2012 and 2015, does not have any high-level objectives concerning gender. However, two proposals address gender under

the objective relating to international peace and security: (1) greater cooperation between the Itamaraty and the Brazilian Joint Center of Peacekeeping Operations (CCOPAB, in Portuguese) to improve gender training of Brazilian contingents in peacekeeping operations and special political missions, and (2) increased participation of civilian and military women in peacekeeping operations.<sup>23</sup>

Under the rubric of the National Plan on Policies for Women 2013-2015, the Secretariat of Policies for Women and the Ministry of Defense signed a memorandum of understanding in 2014, which identified six necessary actions:



Courtesy of Renata Giannini (2011)

An all-female Formed Police Unit from Bangladesh, serving with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

- Identify skills women in the Armed Forces already possess and map those that are necessary for peace operations;
- Enhance peacekeepers' capacity and training on gender perspectives;
- Strengthen sport practices as an instrument of peace in places where Brazilian military personnel are deployed;
- Establish partnerships to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and combat sexual violence as a weapon of war;
- Develop strategies to combat gender-based violence in the context humanitarian crises; and
- Develop a more articulated process for South-South cooperation, more precisely with Haiti.<sup>24</sup>

The establishment of a Gender Commission in the Ministry of Defense and of the Gender and Race Steering Committee in the Ministry of External Relations can also be considered an important step in increasing the value placed on women's participation in both defense and foreign policies. Taken together, these are significant mechanisms not only for improving gender balance in these government structures, but also, potentially, for supporting coordinated efforts to implement a National Action Plan in Brazil.

At the international level, Brazil has been following the UNSCR 1325 prescriptions by engaging in multilateral initiatives. In 2012, during the Rio+20 Conference, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Ministry of External Relations signed a cooperation agreement with UN Women to promote gender equality in two programs: the Executive Program for the promotion of South-South technical cooperation, and the Brazil-UN Women Partnership Program. The programs aim to contribute to

gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean by sharing the Brazilian experience. The implementation of the Brazil-UN Women Partnership Program takes into account Brazil's principles concerning South-South cooperation, which is demand driven and based on the dissemination and exchange of successful experiences, best practices, and lessons learned, adapted to each country's particular context. Some projects have already been implemented and others are underway.<sup>25</sup>

Also on the multilateral front, Brazil has been active in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, in Spanish) South American Defense Council (CDS), which is undertaking an assessment of women's integration into the defense sector across South America through its Defense Center for Strategic Studies (CEED). Member states first raised the issue and placed it on CEED's agenda in 2012, and the center has since been collecting data on the situation of women at all levels of the defense sectors across the region.<sup>26</sup> These efforts will not only enhance understanding of the situation in each national context, they will also inform the elaboration of a South American common regional policy for better inclusion of women in different areas of defense.

### Protection

Brazil's protection efforts carried out in the field include gender-sensitive practices undertaken by Brazilian troops in host nations, such as foot and mobile patrols to dissuade threats, QIPs focused on empowering and benefiting local women, and the use of female translators to facilitate contact with possible victims.

Training is a key component of Brazilian contributions to UN peacekeeping operations.

CCOPAB is responsible for “support(ing) the preparation of military, police, and civilian personnel from Brazil and friendly nations for peace missions and humanitarian demining missions.”<sup>27</sup> Currently the training center does not have a specific training module on gender-related issues. Nonetheless, gender is considered as a cross-cutting theme and is included in most courses and preparatory stages for military personnel who will be employed in peacekeeping operations, either in individual missions or as part of a contingent. Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases/HIV, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual violence as a weapon of war, and gender-based violence are some of the topics raised to commanders during training, while a UN standardized course on the subject is passed on to the contingent as a whole.

Gender-sensitive training is an important tool for instructing the military and preventing improper actions by the troops in the field. It can also facilitate and improve discussions on practical measures for increasing the participation and protection of women in the context of peacekeeping operations, as well as gender mainstreaming across all peacekeeping activities in the field. Another important tool in this regard is the Military Prosecutor Office, which is responsible for the prosecution and trial of members of the Brazilian military, including those deployed in peacekeeping missions. According to one military prosecutor, disciplined troops are essential; once a deviated behavior is identified, it must be quickly and effectively investigated, so that Brazil’s credibility and operational effectiveness are not undermined.<sup>28</sup> To date, there have been few cases tried within the context of the military justice system concerning Brazil’s performance in peacekeeping missions—none related to

sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or SEA; on the contrary, the performance of the Brazilian troops is considered a source of pride.

### Prevention

Prevention efforts by Brazil are identified first and foremost in its Federal Constitution. It affirms the need to promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and the need to address human rights violations in conflict situations. Other Brazilian documents, such as the National Defense Strategy (2008, 2012) and the Human Rights National Program (2010), also provide guidelines for the incorporation of human rights, including women’s rights, in the curricula of both civilian and military schools and colleges.

Brazil also seeks to operate through multilateral mechanisms and South-South technical cooperative agreements (for example, transfer of social technologies), as discussed before.<sup>29</sup> In 2002, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) established a project in Haiti focused on addressing violence against women. Since that year, actions towards improved coordination on health, justice, and security services for victims of violence have been emphasized. For this purpose, in 2011, 185 Haitian professionals were trained in health and public safety aimed at curbing violence against women.

Brazil also established trilateral cooperation with Guinea-Bissau and UNFPA for the “Strengthening and Technical Training of Health Care Institutions for Women and Adolescents Victims of Gender based Violence and Health Promotion.” The project started in 2010 with an 18-month term and had three main axes: (1) health care for women and

adolescents in situations of violence; (2) youth mobilization and promotion of sexual and reproductive health for youth and adolescents; (3) monitoring and evaluation. Interchanges between Brazilian and Guinean technicians were held by means of eight missions to Guinea-Bissau for conducting technical capacity building activities about the two components of the project: women's health in violence situations and furtherance of juvenile and adolescents' health. Unfortunately, Brazil's cooperation projects with Guinea-Bissau were suspended in 2012, after a coup d'état in the country. Internationally recognized presidential elections were held in May 2014; currently, Brazil is analyzing the possibility of resuming cooperation with the country.

### Gender Mainstreaming in Defense: The Gender Commission

The creation of a multi-sector Gender Commission at the Ministry of Defense could prove central to the advancement of the women, peace, and security agenda in Brazil, especially within the military. The Commission was created in September 2014, with a reasonably well defined mandate and membership. According to the normative document that launched it, the body has a consultative and not deliberative mandate. Its purpose is to incorporate a gender perspective in the formulation and execution of public policies within the Ministry of Defense's areas of work. Its membership configuration includes almost all



Courtesy of Renata Giannini (2011)

Brazilian soldiers of the MINUSTAH peacekeeping contingent on a routine patrol in Cité Soleil, Haiti.



sectors of the ministry: the Minister's cabinet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, the Strategic Affairs department, the Joint Operations department, the Human Resources and Education department, the Pandiá Calógeras Institute,<sup>30</sup> and the Navy, Army, and Air Force Commands, among others. It can also occasionally host representatives of civil society and nongovernmental organizations in its meetings, but only through an official invitation.

The Commission's creation was one of the most important steps in a series of initiatives undertaken during the term of former Minister of Defense Celso Amorim (2011–2014) and the current Minister Jaques Wagner (2015–present). One of these initiatives was a Letter of Intent signed in 2011 between the MoD and UN Women's office in Brazil. This articulated UN Women's interest in cooperating with the MoD on: (1) incorporating a gender perspective into the training of Brazilian peacekeepers in CCOPAB, (2) advancing South-South cooperation on this matter (mainly through other regional training bodies), and (3) promoting programs focusing on sport activities with a gender dimension. The letter also set forth the possibility that UN Women would cooperate with the MoD to find ways in which the Ministry could promote the implementation of UNSCR 1325. It had some significant results, such as the incorporation of mandatory activities on gender into CCOPAB's curriculum and the promotion of the campaign "Unite to End Violence Against Women" during the World Military Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2011. However, many of the objectives set forth in the letter have not been achieved. These include the incorporation of a robust gender module in peacekeepers' training and the promotion of a broader dialogue between

the MoD and UN Women regarding how the Ministry might best implement UNSCR 1325.

A second related initiative was the Protocol of Intent signed in 2013 between the MoD and the National Secretariat for Women's Policies (the ministry for women's affairs), which commits both parties to coordinate efforts while identifying, analyzing, and implementing actions and policies to promote gender equality in all phases of peace and security processes. Although the Protocol has produced few concrete results since its signature, one sign of progress is the generally fluid coordination between the MoD and the National Secretariat. This is because the Ministry leads on gender matters and selects the participants in all general meetings held by the secretariat with other governmental and nongovernmental actors, as well as who is invited to the periodic discussions on the broader National Plan on Policies for Women.

Since its creation, the MoD's Gender Commission has had one training seminar on the Commission's role in creating gender equality in the Brazilian security sector and two operational meetings. Its Plan of Action was approved in June 2015. Although the members have not yet had the opportunity to discuss matters regarding gender equality in the Ministry or in the Armed Forces more deeply, one of the Commission's first activities will be a research project to assess the status of the Ministry and the Armed Forces in terms of gender equality. Even at this preliminary stage, it is quite clear that some issues that are perceived as taboos, such as sexual abuse, are not going to be tackled easily. The Commission's work is probably going to be more challenging when it comes to the phase of effectively planning concrete actions or proposing



| Brazil's primary initiatives for implementing UNSCR 1325 |  |
|--|--|
| Participation  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ South-South cooperation in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establishment of an evaluation mechanism of the participation of women in all levels of the defense sector by the South American Defense Council.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Multi-Annual Plan 2012-2015: Expansion of women's participation, both civilian and military, in peacekeeping operations.</li> <li>■ National Plan on Policies for Women: Identify the skills women in the Armed Forces already possess and map those necessary for carrying out peace operations.</li> </ul>                        |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The participation of women in the Brazilian contingent deployed to peace operations is only one percent.</li> <li>■ The admission of women in military academies is likely to positively impact their participation in peace operations, but the impact of this development will not be seen for another 10 to 15 years.</li> </ul> |
| Protection   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ National Plan on Policies for Women: Enhance peacekeepers' capacity and training on gender perspective.</li> <li>■ National Plan on Policies for Women: Build strategies to combat gender-based violence in the context of humanitarian crises.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Military Prosecution Office overseeing of Brazilian troops' performance abroad, to maintain the country's credibility and operational effectiveness in peace operations.</li> </ul>   |
| Prevention   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Brazilian Joint Center of Peacekeeping Operations training considers gender as a cross cutting theme and includes it in most courses and preparatory stages for the military to be employed in peacekeeping operations, either on individual missions or as part of a contingent.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ National Plan on Policies for Women: Establishment of partnerships to prevent sexually transmitted diseases/HIV and combat sexual violence as a weapon of war.</li> </ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ South-South technical cooperation (for example, transfer of social technologies).</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Civil-military coordination activities (CIMIC) and quick impact projects (QIPs) designed to benefit local women.</li> </ul>   |
| Gender Mainstreaming                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Ministry of Defense's Gender Commission and Itamaraty.</li> </ul>   |

recommendations, though they will not be compulsory due to its consultative mandate.

Some of the Commission members, representing both the military and MoD internal sectors, support the position that each Force is already developing its own path to incorporate women, and that additional measures to accelerate women's inclusion in the combatant branches are unnecessary and could undermine efficiency. They argue that: (1) women's inclusion will jeopardize military missions since men are naturally protective of women and therefore will be distracted from their mission objectives if a woman gets hurt; or (2) women simply do not have enough physical strength, meaning that admission and evaluation parameters would have to be relaxed and operational effectiveness in the field may be compromised.

The counterarguments are also exposed and debated during the Commission's meetings, including through presentations of studies and research that undermine those positions. For example, some months ago the Commission received a legislative consultant who is a former military officer from the Army's Special Forces and now covers public security and national defense themes at the Parliament. He had just finished a study about female presence in the Brazilian Armed Forces and presented very objective counterarguments to defend the elimination of limitations on women in the Armed Forces and the operational contributions they can make. According to him, guaranteeing unlimited access to women is a "matter of equality and justice."<sup>31</sup>

In sum, the Brazilian MoD finds itself at a curious juncture in the gender inclusion debate. On the one hand, the creation of a Gender Commission and some strategic documents and institutional partnerships have

advanced the discussion around gender, along with the personal interest of some key staff members. On the other hand, some important challenges persist, not least the fact that the Commission includes many members without much influence in the Ministry and retired military officers who are very resistant to gender inclusion or who believe that gender equality has already been achieved within the Armed Forces and the MoD.

### **A National Action Plan for Brazil?**

The initiatives outlined above show that Brazil's efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 and promote the women, peace, and security agenda can have a real impact on the participation of women in the country's peacekeeping activities and have the potential to contribute to the promotion of gender mainstreaming at all levels. At the same time, however, these actions are diffuse and uncoordinated. This lack of coherence deeply compromises their effectiveness, especially in the long run, as well as their accountability.

Against this backdrop, the adoption of a National Action Plan (NAP) to implement UNSCR 1325 could have many positive impacts on the Brazilian case, not least by strengthening the women, peace, and security agenda nationally and enabling this agenda to evolve independent of any given leadership's political will or the wider political conjuncture. At the same time, the process of creating a NAP itself could be transformative, especially if it is inclusive and democratic, so that broader swathes of society can engage with it and be represented by the plan. Specific indicators and accountability mechanisms could bolster the implementation process and the efficacy of the plan itself, in turn impacting the

continuity of Brazil's engagement with the WPS agenda.

However, Brazil has not formally decided if it will adopt a National Action Plan or instead continue to undertake ad hoc measures to implement the UNSCR 1325—a debate that is not unusual in the South American context. The countries that have adopted a NAP so far are largely northern countries and conflict-affected countries. In South America, a generally peaceful region,<sup>32</sup> Chile is the only country that has adopted a NAP to date, though Argentina has now written (if not yet adopted) its plan.

Many actors who directly engaged in the decisionmaking process on this matter argue that Brazil already takes enough measures to implement UNSCR 1325, even without a specific plan of action. Indeed, the federal government has already approved and implemented three editions of the Brazilian National Plan of Policies for Women, a broad document that guides Brazilian policies in a way that comprises all ministries and sectors. This Plan does not have, however, significant measures in the field of peace and security or women in peacekeeping. Its main focuses are economic empowerment and fighting domestic violence in a domestic rather than the international context.

## Conclusion

Even if uncoordinated, Brazil has taken important steps towards the implementation of UNSCR 1325. At the same time, societal constructions of femininity and masculinity impose practical obstacles to effective implementation. It is widely accepted that certain constructions of masculinity are closely tied to power and the use of force, especially within very patriarchic institutions such as the Armed

Forces. In Brazil, this has been consistently used as a justification for not opening up the military to women, as if their presence would impact Brazilian troops' capacity to act and its operational effectiveness. In fact, comments regarding women's physical capacity to be in the front line and how their demise would impact the morale of the troops are constantly cited as impediments to their effective integration in combat positions.

As such, a primary challenge to implementing UNSCR 1325 is the construction of masculinity itself within Brazilian society. Arguing that the demise of female officers has a bigger impact than that of a male counterpart, for example, may indicate that female officers are quickly and often associated with wives, sisters, and mothers, rather than colleagues. In fact, women's image is commonly associated with vulnerability and thus the need for protection. Having women in combatant positions is an inversion of this logic and entails certain challenges for its overall acceptance.

Addressing this challenge requires a long-term process of cultural change, not only in the military, but also more broadly. A generalized reconstruction of the role women can play socially is needed so that, on the one hand, more women consider themselves as an absolutely fundamental part of peace and security processes and of their country's defense sector and, on the other hand, more men recognize the importance of including women to achieve sustainable peace and representative defense policies.

Beyond changing mentalities, logistical changes are also needed—as well as the time and financial investments to implement them. At a very basic level, infrastructure needs to be adapted so that women can play a role in

traditionally all-male places, such as military schools and ships. Although the common excuse that “there are no female restrooms” may seem flippant, it is true that some of these structural changes are costly and require planning. In Brazil, however, it is clear that normative changes are fundamental to accelerating both attitudinal and structural change.

The limited participation of Brazilian female officers in peacekeeping operations is a direct consequence of the obstacles facing women at home as they attempt to enter the highest and most traditional schools of the Armed Forces, mainly the Army, and the combatant branches. At the same time, Brazil has not traditionally contributed civilian personnel to UN peacekeeping missions alongside its military contributions, which also reduces women’s participation in international peace and security processes. Therefore, the country should pursue a double strategy of accelerating equal access for both men and women to the highest levels of the Army and Navy’s combatant branches and promoting civilian participation in peacekeeping as well.

Brazil finds itself at an interesting juncture regarding the WPS agenda. Although the subject’s impact in the general media and the Parliament is still limited, some important institutional actors such as the MoD, CCOPAB, and the Ministry of External Relations are considering new possibilities and inclusive policies in peacekeeping. Brazilian think tanks such as the Igarapé Institute and the Pandiá Calógeras Institute, alongside international organizations such as UN Women, are also helping to advance the agenda in the country through collaboration, research, and debate. A significant question that remains is whether Brazil will adopt a National Action Plan to unify and accelerate its efforts in this field.

Regardless of which specific strategies are adopted, it is paramount that the evolution of this agenda and its policies become progressively independent of particular decisionmakers and be strengthened as a foreign and defense policy priority in favor of sustainable international peace. [PRISM](#)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The authors are fully responsible for the opinions and ideas presented here, which do not correspond necessarily to the official positions of the Brazilian Ministry of Defense.

<sup>2</sup> More than 90 percent of military and police contributions to UN operations come from developing or less developed countries. For a complete relation, see The United Nations, "Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations," (2015). <[http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/aug15\\_2.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/aug15_2.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> UN Security Resolution 1325 was adopted in October 2000. The text of the resolution can be found at <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement>>.

<sup>4</sup> Data retrieved from the Ministry of Defense by e-mail, January 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there was a ten-year gap between the incorporation of women in the Navy—the first to open its doors—and the Army, the last one.

<sup>7</sup> Mariza Rivas D'Ávila Almeida, "Contexto político-institucional do processo decisório sobre a admissão da mulher militar," in Eduardo Svartman, Maria Celina d'Araújo, Samuel Alves Soare (eds), *Defesa, Segurança Internacional e Forças Armadas: II Encontro da ABED* (Campinas: Mercado das Letras, 2008): 9.

<sup>8</sup> There is an important and exceptional historical participation of women during World War II, when a considerable number of nurses voluntarily enlisted. They received basic military training and were sent to Europe to support medical teams.

<sup>9</sup> Renata Giannini, Mariana Lima, and Pérola Pereira, "Implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 in Brazil," <<https://igarape.org.br/implementing-uns-resolution-1325-in-brazil>>.

<sup>10</sup> See: Defesanet "As mulheres estão cada vez mais presentes nas forças armadas brasileiras," (2013). <<http://www.defesanet.com.br/defesa/noticia/9978/Mulheres-estao-cada-vez-mais-presentes-nas-Forcas-Armadas-brasileiras>>.

<sup>11</sup> Law 12.705 /2012 will allow women—from 2017 onwards—to join certain military schools that are still closed to them.

<sup>12</sup> See: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "Troop and Police Contributors," data 2000-2015. <<http://www.un.org/>

[en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml)>.

<sup>13</sup> Eduarda Hamann, "A força de uma trajetória: O Brasil e as Operações de Paz da ONU (1948-2015)." Igarapé Institute Strategic Note 19 (2015). <<http://www.igarape.org.br/pt-br/a-forca-de-uma-trajetoria/>>.

<sup>14</sup> Interviews carried out in fieldwork coordinated by the Latin America Defense and Security Network (RESDAL) in May 2011 and September 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Data retrieved from the Ministry of Defense by e-mail, January 2014.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country," April 2015. <[http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/apr15\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/apr15_3.pdf)>.

<sup>17</sup> Interviews carried out in fieldwork coordinated by the Latin America Defense and Security Network (RESDAL) in May 2011 and September 2012.

<sup>18</sup> "Proceedings from 'Promoting Gender and building Peace: bridging gaps and overcoming challenges' Conference." Igarapé Institute, Pandiá Calógeras Institute and the UN-Women (March 2014). Military Justice representatives confirmed that there has not been, up to now, any case of misconduct related to SEA or SGBV to be tried in Brazil, against Brazilian peacekeepers.

<sup>19</sup> Interviews were carried out between 2011 and 2012 through a project coordinated by RESDAL. Interviewed troops included: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay.

<sup>20</sup> Data retrieved from the Ministry of Defense by e-mail in January 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik, and Aisling Swaine, "Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and Implementation." IGIS WP 13/GGP WP 09, (2014): 2. <[http://www.gwu.edu/~igis/assets/docs/working\\_papers/igis\\_wp13\\_ggp\\_wp09.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~igis/assets/docs/working_papers/igis_wp13_ggp_wp09.pdf)>.

<sup>22</sup> The Multi-Annual Plan is a mid-term governmental planning, valid for four years. It establishes guidelines, goals, and initiatives of the federal public administration for the period it is in force.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. and Ministerio do Planejamento PPA 2012-2015, Anexo I, (2012): 254.

<sup>24</sup> Haiti has been the main recipient of technical cooperation from Brazil.

<sup>25</sup> All projects are available at <http://www.abc.gov.br/Projetos/pesquisa>.

<sup>26</sup> The final report is expected to come out by the end of 2015.

<sup>27</sup> "Mission of the Center." Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Center <<http://www.ccopab.eb.mil.br/index.php/en/ccopab/missao>. Retrieved June 12, 2015>.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with the military prosecutor Najla Palma to NU Radio. "Atuação do Ministério Público Militar em missões de paz da ONU é tema de oficina no Rio" ONUBR, August 18, 2014. <<http://www.onu.org.br/atuacao-do-ministerio-publico-militar-em-missoes-de-paz-da-onu-e-tema-de-oficina-no-rio/>>.

<sup>29</sup> Social technologies could be defined as methods, techniques, or products designed to solve any kind of social problem, attending to criteria such as simplicity, low cost, easy applicability, and high social impact.

<sup>30</sup> The Pandiá Calógeras Institute is a governmental think tank created by the Minister of Defense in April 2013. Its mission is to approach national defense and international security strategically and to provide the MoD with qualified research and information on these matters. A team of one director, five researches, and one administrative staff currently composes it.

<sup>31</sup> Vítor Hugo de Araújo Almeida. "Mulheres nas Forças Armadas Brasileiras: situação atual e perspectivas futuras," Estudo para Consultoria Legislativa (2015). <[http://www2.camara.leg.br/documentos-e-pesquisa/publicacoes/estnottec/areas-da-conle/tema21/2015\\_291\\_estudo-sobre-mulheres-nas-forcas-armadas-vitor-hugo](http://www2.camara.leg.br/documentos-e-pesquisa/publicacoes/estnottec/areas-da-conle/tema21/2015_291_estudo-sobre-mulheres-nas-forcas-armadas-vitor-hugo)>.

<sup>32</sup> South America is a reasonably peaceful region with no interstate war or civil wars. The only exception is Colombia, and even then, a peace agreement is underway.

## Photos

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Page 178. Photo by Ricardo Stuckert/PR. 2004. Brazilian Army soldiers, part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. From <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EB\\_Haiti.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EB_Haiti.jpg)>. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil, <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/br/deed.en>>. Reproduced unaltered