

STRATEGIC NOTE 25

The Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations from a Brazilian Perspective

(implementing the HIPPO report)

Eduarda Hamann and Adriana Erthal Abdenur



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The Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations from a Brazilian Perspective

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Introduction

The liberal international order is undergoing a major transformation. There are worrying signs of instability across Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and East and Southeast Asia. There are unsettling implications for peacekeeping – from the highest echelons of decision-making to the operational level. There are signs that the world is shifting to a "spheres of influence" model wherein the U.S. is no longer the uncontested global power. Both China and Russia, together with rising powers from the Americas, Africa and Asia, are forging new alliances and developing new rivalries.

The likelihood for a major international conflict and deepening internal conflict has risen sharply. The new geometries of power are also presenting serious challenges to collective action – including through the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, as well as regional entities. The flashpoints are diverse ranging from the sharpening tensions over the South China Sea, confrontation with North Korea or the ongoing conflict in Syria. Meanwhile, arms and ammunition continue pouring in to most peacekeeping theaters. Complex networks of organized crime and extremist actors are also prolonging conflicts. The result is that proponents of peace and security face a wide gamut of old and new challenges with disastrous implications for civilians.

The UN has made some headway in addressing these global challenges. The organization has worked to reform and improve the effectiveness of its response mechanisms. In mid-2015, after months of intensive work and consultations with key stakeholders of the peacekeeping community, an expert panel created by the United Nations Secretary General launched the most comprehensive report on the

topic in over 15 years (A/70/95-S/2015/446). Since then, the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (commonly known as the "HIPPO report") and its wide-ranging set of recommendations on the future of peacekeeping have triggered lively debates not only in New York and Geneva, but also in other parts of the world.

In Brazil, in early 2016, the Igarapé Institute held a major event with Pandiá. Calógeras Institute (a think tank linked to the Ministry of Defense) on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and the women, peace and security agenda, following the call of the 70th General Assembly. But the first event specifically designed to discuss concrete recommendations of the HIPPO report was only organized in November 2016 by the Igarapé Institute, the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Center (CCOPAB), and the Núcleo de Pesquisa de Relações Internacionais of the University of São Paulo (NUPRI/USP). Five key themes were selected as a starting point for the discussions: (1) tailored peace operations; (2) military engagement in UN peacekeeping; (3) monitoring UN peace operations reform; (4) protecting civilians; and (5) women, peace and security. Over 60 professionals attended the two-day event in Brasília, including military, police, diplomats, UN personnel and researchers. The ideas and recommendations shared during the event are summarized in this note, in the hope that good practices and innovations can be picked up by decision-makers in Brasília, but also in New York and elsewhere.

This particular event had two main goals. First, it sought to identify challenges and opportunities for implementing the recommendations of the HIPPO report. Specifically, the intention was to explore the role of Brazil as a generator of ideas, principles, and values that can assist the UN and member states to implement recommendations outlined in the HIPPO report. Second, the event highlighted specific recommendations of the report that are already being implemented by Brazil or that could be easily included in its foreign and/or defense policies. Taken together, the event examined the extent to which the country has incorporated or could incorporate key recommendations of the HIPPO report across its own policies, programs, and activities, reinforcing its role as an active player of the international peace and security system.

¹ For more information, see "Latin American Dialogue on International Peace and Security", Igarapé's Strategic Note 22 (May 2016), available at: https://igarape.org.br/en/latin-american-dialogue-on-international-peace-and-security-2/.

Tailored Peace Operations

Participants raised a number of concerns about implementing HIPPO recommendations in a highly political polarized context. Participants conceded that tailored mandates are central to all peacekeeping operations and special political missions and that the most important player is the Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC is the primary institution responsible for maintaining international peace and security, whether authorizing, withdrawing or renewing UN missions. Yet the way it does business was criticized by some of the participants who suggested that the permanent members should abandon the current "pen-holder" system and that elected members who are also troop/police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) should encourage the informal meetings of other TCCs. Another suggestion was to pay more attention to conflict prevention, including in the UNSC, since prevention is integral to political strategies and responsible leadership.

Although the UNSC is a major stakeholder, there are other players whose role need to be further analyzed. In this sense, participants acknowledged the need to take broader understanding of how the whole UN peacekeeping system operates, from gathering information in the field and among potential (T/PCCs), to debating how much money

Prevention is integral to political strategies and responsible leadership

from the peacekeeping fund will be spent. The UN General Assembly (UNGA), for example, has a role that is often overlooked. The UNGA it is fundamentally involved in issues of international peace and security through its Fifth Committee (which is responsible for administrative and budgetary issues) and through its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (the so-called C-34), bodies that also urgently require strengthening. Likewise, the UN Secretariat – including its Departments of Peacekeeping (DPKO), Political Affairs (DPA) and Field Support (DFS) – must re-think the way it works with peacekeeping especially by improving the provision of transparent and frank assessments of the situations in the field, as well as by providing concrete suggestions for decision-making at both the UNSC and UNGA.

What is more, regional institutions must be more actively engaged. They are not only a source of information and analysis, but also actual and potential counterparts on the ground. Some participants suggested the creation of a special unit within regional and sub-regional organizations that could support the implementation of UN mandates. This unit could also oversee a roster of pre-identified military, police and civilians who work in the field in order to provide expertise, improved assessments, and other assets that could enhance UN planning processes. Regional and sub-

regional organizations could play a greater role in the elaboration of the mandates that they are going to implement or support, especially during their initial phases (e.g. the first six months months).

Participants noted that some of the key recommendations of the HIPPO are currently being implemented. For example, the authorization of phased mandates, as set out in the report, is being applied. For example, there is already an agreement between the UNSC and the C-34 which is shaping the approaches adopted by UN missions in South Sudan and Mali. What is more, at the UN Secretariat a small planning cell was created by the office of the Secretary-General and some of its staff are now receiving training in conflict analysis.

Military Engagement in UN Peacekeeping

The UN has no standing military capacity of any kind. As a result, it fully depends on its member states to implement the mandates of a given mission that requires military engagement. Predictably, national interest is at the core of the debate on military engagement in peacekeeping. Participants noted that each UN member state has its formulation of "national interest". This may also require the adoption of a whole-of-government approach: to the executive may not be the only actor required to sign-off on contributions, but rather the legislative branch of government, among others.

Although it is defined at the highest political level, national interest has very direct (sometimes disruptive) consequences for the military deployed to the field. For example, Force Commanders frequently receive ambiguous, unclear and contradictory mandates (emerging from diplomatic negotiations shaped by national interests). They in turn are required to translate these directives into military operations that involve questions of life and death. Some senior military personnel expressed difficulties in distinguishing between what mandates "expect" and what they can "accomplish". However, participants generally agreed that it is less problematic to have an abstract and unclear mandate than to have no agreement at all, as in the case of Syria. In addition, "ambiguous" mandates allow for more flexibility and responsiveness, and can be positively shaped to conform to national or international interests.

Two important peacekeeping missions stand out when it comes to the use of force: the UN stabilization missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The UN Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which is a military component of MONUSCO, was created to appease national interests of some African

countries. The FIB is a timebound initiative, thus suggesting it is more the exception than the rule. Meanwhile, MINUSTAH, in spite of the repeated use of force by Brazilian troops between 2005 and 2007, was a novel experience and more difficult to assess. Given

Measuring and monitoring performance is a key challenge

the likely draw-down/end of MINUSTAH, some participants suggested deploying Brazilian troops to another Chapter VII mission, such as Mali or to DRC.

Measuring and monitoring performance was also acknowledged to be a key challenge. Some participants suggested that governments that deploy their military to missions abroad should seek independent evaluations, not only to check the overall performance of its own troops, but also to verify whether participating in these missions continues to serve their national interests. Meanwhile, governments that sign the mandates but do not deploy troops (especially the five permanent members) should find ways to become more committed to the implementation of the missions by, for example, deploying assets and enablers such as helicopters to settings with constrained mobility.

Participants deliberated over the creation of an improved capabilities system. Such a system was recommended by the HIPPO report in order to identify what the UN effectively has at its disposal so that agencies can render better choices to achieve the best possible results. A participant provided concrete information on the new "UN Peacekeeping Capabilities Readiness System" (UNPCRS) that replaced the UN Standby Arrangements System in July 2015. The new mechanism features three "levels". The first level identifies member states have to offer and includes a "roster" of capabilities and resources of each UN member state. The second level includes an *in loco* assessment evaluation and – subject to approval – the creation of a memorandum of understanding signed between the UN and a member state. The third level refers to actual deployment – in the Brazilian case, this step can only take place after the formal approval by the National Congress.

² For a brief discussion on Brazil's engagement in peacekeeping, particularly its participation in Chapter VII missions, see Hamann (2016), "A Força de uma Trajetória: Brasil e as missões de paz da ONU (1947-2015)", *Military Review*, Jul-Sep., available at (in Portuguese only): https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Hamann-Military-Review-jul-set2016.pdf.

Finally, participants debated the advantages and disadvantages of creating regional hubs for rapid deployment. One of the challenges is the fear of being dragged into the tricky and intractable political agendas of specific regions. On a more positive note, participants noted how regional hubs can build confidence and strengthen local partnerships. The potential role of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was singled out as a potential hub in the region. UNASUR could have a key role in, for example, developing a rapid deployment force and in training military and civilian personnel to be deployed to short-missions only (up to 3 months). Humanitarian emergencies, particularly in the region, but also elsewhere, could easily benefit from this mechanism.



Photo: Social Communication/ CCOPAB

Keeping Track of UN Peace Operations Reform

The HIPPO report was launched with a remarkable 166 recommendations. The focus now has understandably turned to the ways to implement these prescriptions. The International Peace Institute (IPI) recently launched a scorecard to monitor and evaluate the implementation phase. According to IPI research presented during the seminar, the areas that received most attention and support from UN member states and UN bodies are: (1) military engagement in peacekeeping; (2) prevention; and (3) leadership and accountability. Other areas that register mixed results and room for progress include: (1) primacy of politics; (2) regional partnerships; (3) women, peace and security; and (4) field-support. Researchers also indicated who was responsible to implement each recommendation – usually the UN Secretariat or the member states, but most recommendations require action from both.

³ See Boutellis and Connolly (2016), "The State of UN Peace Operations Reform: An Implementation Scorecard", IPI. Available at: https://www.ipinst.org/2016/11/un-peace-ops-implementation-scorecard.

Notwithstanding progress over the past 18 months, a few challenges remain that could frustrate the pace and scale of peacekeeping reform. For one, at the UN Secretariat, there is the question of continuity. The HIPPO panel was appointed by Ban Ki-moon, but most of its implementation will be overseen by the new Secretary-General's administration. Ensuring the smooth implementation of HIPPO must be treated as a priority. Also, at the UNGA, member states were divided over some of the HIPPO recommendations when the report was debated in sessions of the C-34 and Fifth Committee. Finally, reforming such a complex system takes time and some of the recommendations can only be implemented in three to five years. A degree of patience is required.

Taken together, Brazil has an important role to play when it comes to advancing progressive peacekeeping reform. Together with other member states, Brazil could nudge the new UN Secretary General in a positive direction. The Brazilians could call on the Secretariat to periodically assess implementation progress and outcomes. Moreover, Brazil could take advantage of its role as a diplomatic broker to bridge some of the divides within the UNGA, or to build membership support around certain (controversial) issues.

Protection of Civilians

In 1999, the UNSC first authorized a peacekeeping mission to use force to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. Ever since the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), several UN peacekeeping mandates were explicitly tasked to protect civilians. After two decades, the concept of protection of civilians (PoC) has evolved considerably, but it still generates controversial debates and acrimony. Even though PoC entails not only the actual use of force, but also unarmed strategies, participants elected to focus on the use of force to protect civilians.

At the tactical level, peacekeepers do not always know how to implement UN mandates in light of PoC principles. The HIPPO report highlights a growing expectation of UN missions to protect civilians. However, a 2009 independent study indicated that most missions do not use force even if they have the mandate to do so. Participants could not agree on why this is happening. Some argued that the problem is due to the language of these legal obligations, which often is unclear, and not on whether peacekeepers are sufficiently well trained enough or courageous. Others suggested that the legal framework for PoC is very clear: it derives from the UNSC mandate and is interpreted through rules of engagement (RoE). Still other participants argued that, although RoE

⁴ A soldier receives training based on international humanitarian law (IHL). However, most of the time, the contexts in which PoC needs to be applied request policing functions, that is, functions that are closer to human rights (HR) rather than to IHL. Ultimately, the UN needs to improve its mechanisms on the matter.

are important, they can not anticipate all possible situations. With or without RoE, peacekeepers have a moral duty to act, if he/she has the capacity to do so, when a crime happens during a mission (e.g. massacres, rape, illegal taxation, looting, etc.). This is a moral duty even if the mission does not have a mandate to protect civilians, that is, even if it a mission is under Chapter VI.

When discussing accountability and criminal responsibility of those responsible to implement UNSC mandates the most complicated cases of PoC are related to inaction, rather action. Participants reinforced the need for leadership and improved training. The former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, sent a clear message on the importance of command responsibility. In November 2016 he dismissed the Force Commander of the UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for not responding effectively when his subordinates failed to protect civilians.

The debate on performance included references to Brazil. Participants agreed that the country has a good record in dealing with polemic issues, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). In light with his zero-tolerance policy, the former UN Secretary General (UNSG) made several recommendations for member states that are being implemented by Brazil. First, the UNSG asked for more training in SEA, and the Brazilian Peacekeeping Training Center has taken the initiative. Second, he also asked for a deadline of six months to finish investigations on SEA – to respond to that challenge, Brazil is developing a culture of peacekeeping operations within key judicial institutions, such as military investigators and the military justice. Finally, the UNSG asked that states amend national law to recognize all forms of SEA as misconduct. While Brazil does not include a concept of SEA in its military code, the military prosecutor office is sensitizing the National Congress to amend the country's criminal military code.

Women, Peace and Security

A separate review was carried out by the UN of its Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), based primarily on Security Council Resolution 1325. The HIPPO report also advocates for the strengthening of the role of women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and related practices. Some of the main ideas emerging from the report on WPS include (1) increasing the appointment of women to senior leadership positions; (2) more effectively integrating women (alongside peace and human rights) throughout mission lifecycles and across mandated tasks; (3) responding to gender-specific violence, for instance mass abductions, forced conversion, marriage and sexual slavery; and (4) strengthening the role of women in prevention and mediation efforts.

The debate focused in part on the role of women in the Brazilian armed forces, especially in functions that are directly relevant to its current contributions to UN peacekeeping. In 2016, Brazil had some noteworthy "firsts" with respect to the participation of women in the

Armed Forces. For instance, the first Brazilian woman marine assumed a combat position and was deployed in a peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) after successfully completing a series of demanding training modules, including amphibian war specialization course.

While these landmarks are important, it is also essential to measure and enforce the progress of broader participation of women in the different branches of its military. This is critical not just to enhance the effectiveness of Brazilian peacekeeping, but also to strengthen Brazil's capacity to champion the cause of women, peace and security in UN as it has done over the past few years (for instance, by chairing the Commission on the Status of Women). The ongoing debate associated with the country's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was noted as an important step in this direction.

Participants noted that enhancing the participation of women in peacekeeping-related capacities is vital. For instance, few Brazilian women occupy civilian UN posts. What is more, there are still limited numbers of Brazilian women among its diplomatic leaderships related to peace and security and the proportion of women police officers (including those serving in UN peacekeeping missions) should expand further to ensure

Women's participation in UN peacekeeping must be not only quantitatively larget, but also qualitatively meaningful

participation in all aspects of peace operations. An increased participation of women in Brazilian domestic institutions will not automatically lead to a rise in their participation in peace operations. Rather, specific policies are required to ensure that this participation carries over into UN peacekeeping in the field. For instance, gender issues can be included in the military curricula in a meaningful way, through course modules, lectures, and seminars. In addition to the curricular content, institutions can innovate by boosting the role of civilian and military women instructors in peacekeeping training.

Another key theme that emerged during the discussion is the need to make women's participation in UN peacekeeping not only quantitatively larger, but also qualitatively more meaningful (and thus, effective). For instance, tasks assigned to Brazilian women peacekeepers should be diversified for soldiers, police officers and civilians alike, rather

⁵ On March 2017, Brazil launched its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. For details (in Portuguese only), see: https://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/notas-a-imprensa/15838-lancamento-do-plano-nacional-de-acao-sobre-mulheres-paz-e-seguranca. For a comparison of several National Action Plans, see Giannini (2016), "Construindo Planos Nacionais de Ação Eficazes: coletânea de boas práticas" (in Portuguese only), available at: https://igarape.org.br/construindo-planos-nacionais-de-acao-eficazes/.

than limited to administrative and caretaking roles that largely restrict women to the base. In political missions, there is a need for more engagement with and by women. Women personnel can become more directly involved in community relations as part of informal and formal mediation efforts, and local women and women's organizations should be engaged with as part of peacebuilding efforts.

Finally, participants noted that Brazil could also work to improve the role of the Gender Units in UN peacekeeping missions. At the UN, there is a need to appoint senior and mid-level experts to take up posts in UN civilian Gender Units, and for member states such as Brazil to work as an advocate of these units in order to strengthen their role on the ground. For instance, Gender Units are often not consulted when projects and operations are being planned, and, as a result, women/girls concerns are not properly addressed. Brazil could also champion of key norms, especially given its brokering role between Western and Non-Aligned blocs across the C-34. Brazil could leverage this credibility to promote solutions and best practices for tackling SEA, drawing on its own experiences, in dialogue with other major TCCs and PCCs. Brazil could also help promote the WPS agenda as part of conflict prevention, by pushing for mandate design that mainstreams gender.

Participants agreed that none of these efforts should be carried out in isolation. Rather, Brazil could draw on South-South cooperation, including the expanding network of Latin American peacekeeping training centers, ALCOPAZ (Latin American Association of Peacekeeping Training Centers), to exchange ideas, best practices, and generate innovative solutions.



Photo: Social Communication/ CCOPAB

Conclusions

The consultation identified four important changes underway that crate new windows of opportunity for countries like Brazil to strengthen the implementation of the HIPPO report. These four opportunities can also help improve UN peace operations in an increasingly perilous century.

First, the change of the Secretary General offers a moment to undertake critical institutional change. The new Secretary General, Antonio Gutérres, has considerable political capital to expend on key priorities, including reforming peace operations.

The second change relates to monumental transformations in Brazil itself. The change of government in 2016 has also reoriented foreign policy. It is essential that government institutions – including the Ministry of External Relations and the Armed Forces - work closely with civil society to build on the momentum for peace operations reform.

Third, the retraction and possible end of MINUSTAH also presents an opportunity. Brazil was a major contributor to operations in Haiti, having also learned a range of lessons since 2004. Brazil will now need to decide what to do next in the context of a dramatically scaled-back role in Haiti. There are ample opportunities in a dramatically changing world.

A fourth change relates to the new United States administration and its likely downscaled role in multilateral - and especially UN - activities. There is likely to be a significant reduction in budgetary contributions from the US to the UN. Related, there are signs of China increasing presence in issues of peace and security, including contributions of troops, police and funding. Developments that necessarily generate pressures on peace operations and on the calculations of countries.

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