



# THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE OPERATIONS: A DIALOGUE WITH EMERGING POWERS

## South America Regional Dialogue

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On 22–23 November 2012, a regional dialogue meeting of the project ‘The New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers’ took place in Brasília, Brazil. The meeting, which was jointly organized by SIPRI and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), brought together a range of leading experts, government officials and representatives of international organizations to discuss the future challenges for peace operations and the future role that South America will play in peacekeeping.

### A CHANGING WORLD ORDER: A SOUTH AMERICAN VIEW OF THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF PEACE OPERATIONS

In general, participants viewed the changes in international conflict management since the end of the cold war and the acceleration towards multipolarity in the international system as indications of the changing interests, challenges and needs of global peace and security. Although this shift was viewed as not necessarily being detrimental to multilateralism, growing interdependence among states and regions will require some reform in the international system to enable it to face complex environmental and social challenges in an effective and legitimate manner. The possibility of persistent stalemate over the Syrian crisis, both in the United Nations Security Council and among the international community in general, was of particular concern. Participants were not convinced that additional permanent seats on the Security Council or the retraction of veto rights would resolve the current stalemate over the Syria conflict.

Some participants noted that the Security Council would become less prominent unless it includes permanent seats for countries such as Brazil that could act as facilitating states by encouraging diplomacy with—rather than isolation of—states such as Iran or Syria. South American states, it was argued, have a strong aversion to using force or tough sanctions, reflecting the importance of state sovereignty in the region. One participant suggested that the UN is not advancing clear solutions to the Syrian crisis because it is waiting for the global and regional turbulence to settle.

\* This report summarizes the contents of each workshop session. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of SIPRI or of the majority of the participants.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

● In the past 20 years there has been a far-reaching shift in the nature of international conflict management. Within this context, the traditional notion of peace operations has been broadened by ever more robust missions, the expansion of mandates towards peacebuilding, and by an unprecedented growth in both the number and the size of operations.

Today, many are questioning the sustainability of the paradigm of peace operations that has emerged since the cold war. It is becoming evident that shifts in international power relations as a result of rapid economic growth in parts of the Global South are calling into question the existing structures of international conflict management, including peace operations.

SIPRI has launched the ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers’ initiative with support from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in partnership with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The initiative aims to identify potential future challenges for peace operations and new initiatives that will strengthen the legitimacy of peace operations and create greater capacity, enabling peace operations to meet these future challenges. SIPRI, in cooperation with FES, will be conducting a series of dialogue meetings around the world to support these aims.

**Agenda. Day 1, 22 November 2012***Opening remarks*

Yesko Quiroga, FES; and Dr Neil Melvin, SIPRI

*Overview of project and presentation of initial findings*

Xenia Avezov, SIPRI; Marius Müller Hennig, FES; and Jaïr van der Lijn, SIPRI

*A changing world order: what implications for the future of peace operations?*

Facilitator: Dr Neil Melvin, SIPRI

Presenter: Prof. Antonio Jorge Ramalho, Universidade de Brasília

Commentators: Carlos Parker, former Chilean ambassador; and Prof. Mónica Hirst, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes

*Norms and concepts: a fragile consensus?*

Facilitator: Marius Müller Hennig, FES

Panelist: Norberto Moretti, Brazilian Ministry of External Relations

Commentators: Maria Inés Ruz Zanartu, formerly Chilean Ministry of National Defence; Prof. Sandra Borda, Universidad de los Andes; and Julián Gonzáles Guyer, Universidad de la República, Uruguay

*Engagement objectives: high politics and interests of stakeholders*

Facilitator: Prof. Alcides Costa Vaz, Universidade de Brasília

Panelists: Rodrigo Estrela, Office of the President, Brazil; Gerónimo Cardozo, formerly Uruguayan Ministry of National Defence; and Wolf Grabendorff, FES

*Day 1 wrap-up*

Prof. Alcides Costa Vaz, Universidade de Brasília

Regional integration is perceived as a priority that will facilitate a common response to international peace and security challenges. However, the framework for such integration is debated. Some call for a South American power bloc, others for cooperation among the Latin America, South–South, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) states or cooperation with the United States. It was argued that despite attempts to create cohesion through various regional structures, the broader South or Latin American region and the Global South in general are barely presenting a coherent set of complementary positions on the variety of national strategic choices involved. However, although there is no agreement on the framework for concrete action, there is some convergence over principles in the region. Some see an especially promising future for the South American Defence Council (Consejo de Defensa Suramericano, CDS); others say that there is still a long road ahead for South American integration and identity. While Brazilian participants largely favoured regional integration to address common challenges, it was unclear whether the Brazilian position on regional integration is driven by Brazil's interests or by rising international and regional expectations. Brazil is in a sense playing the challenging, and at times incompatible, role of both a regional and an international emerging actor.

While the process of forming a cohesive regional response to international conflict management is still in its infancy, there are already indications of the role that South America will play in shaping it. One presenter noted that the South American response will not entail a revision of the traditional Western agenda but will rather advance new approaches and priorities, such

**Agenda.** Day 2, 23 November 2012*South American experiences: lessons learned*

Facilitator: Hans Mathieu, FES

Panelists: Dominique Rumeau, University de la República, Uruguay; Gen. Antônio Marcos Moreira Santos, Brazilian Ministry of Defence; and Brig. Gen. Omar J. Salinas Ortuño, Commander Bolivian Army Military Academy

*South American experiences: preparing for the future*

Facilitator: Wolf Grabendorff, FES

Panelists: Iduvina Hernandez, Association for the Study and Promotion of Security in Democracy, Guatemala; Librado Orozco Zapata, Peruvian Ministry of Defense; and Prof. Andres Serbin, CRIES

*Towards a new peacekeeping landscape?*

Facilitator and introduction: Dr Jaïr van der Lijn, SIPRI

*Closing remarks*

Hans Mathieu, FES; and Dr Neil Melvin, SIPRI

as focusing on the nexus between security and development. However, the risk of securitization of international development and humanitarian agendas was also mentioned, referring to a growing international trend of using development tools to address security challenges. Some argued that this is diminishing the importance of the development and humanitarian agendas. It was unclear how a regional approach to international conflict management that focuses on the security–development nexus could help the region respond to certain contemporary challenges, such as the Syrian crisis, where global, regional and local political factors are the primary drivers of conflict. As one participant noted, looking at the risk of securitization of development is probably more relevant in Afghanistan than in Syria.

**NORMS AND CONCEPTS: NO REVISION BUT SOME NEW EMPHASES**

While participants did not put forward clear alternatives to core elements of the liberal peace agenda, several questioned the relevance of the liberal peace agenda for current and future peace operations and stressed the need to move away from rigid templates and towards conflict- and context-specific approaches. In some conflict situations, advancing state-building rather than democratization should be the focus; in others, local ownership or security might be more appropriate. Some also suggested that current UN peace operations do not have the capacity, and perhaps resources, to address increasingly prevalent challenges such as organized crime. One participant noted that UN peace operations are still predominately focused on inter- or intrastate conflicts with relatively clear parameters, which are inapplicable to South American peace and security challenges such as organized crime. Other participants noted that it is important to learn from UN expertise in peace operations even in situations where the UN cannot have an operational role. To facilitate such knowledge transfer and to share capacities, relations between the UN and regional organizations must be clarified.

Several participants were concerned about the proliferation of the use of force in the international system following the UN-mandated operation by



the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Libya. While the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P) itself was not questioned, its implementation in the case of Libya was strongly criticized as cover for objectives beyond the protection of civilians.

Some proposed raising the threshold for the use of force in order to avoid its excessive use, which would lead to counterforce escalation and could therefore delegitimize international institutions. With regard to protection of civilians (POC) in classical peacekeeping missions, earlier reservations about sending peacekeepers under Chapter VII of the UN Charter were overcome with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), primarily through the gradual use of force with non-lethal weapons. Participants stressed that the regional view on the normative notion of POC is no longer controversial, but concrete implementation still requires examination.

The concept of responsibility while protecting (RWP), which was put forward by Brazil, is seen as a way to operationalize the R2P concept by clarifying when international intervention with the use of force is appropriate and by emphasizing the importance of international accountability in cases where intervention is necessary. Participants stressed that what is lacking in the current debate over R2P is a clearer distinction between R2P as a normative concept, POC as a peacekeeping tool and RWP as an attempt to realistically operationalize the minority of instances where force should be used as a last resort. Moving forward, however, Brazil is likely to opt for less open advocacy for RWP so that the concept can be embraced as a global rather than Brazilian concept.

In essence, an ongoing South American debate over the right balance between national sovereignty and human rights accounts for the diversity of views within the region about which principles should govern international intervention. Despite the importance of state sovereignty in the region, participants stressed that non-indifference—a principle that was first adopted by the African Union (AU)—rather than non-intervention should rule in conflicts where severe human rights violations against civilians occur. This suggests that there has been a subtle but significant normative shift away from rigid sovereignty in South America.

### **OBJECTIVES OF ENGAGEMENT: TAKING ON REGIONAL AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY WHILE BUILDING REGIONAL TRUST AND CAPACITY**

There was a strong agreement among the group that participation in UN peace operations facilitates regional political and institutional cooperation as well as confidence and capacity building, thus allowing for South American states to have greater influence internationally. Regional leadership in MINUSTAH also points to greater independence in regional security and development matters, which were previously dominated by political alliances with the USA or the Soviet Union. After the Organization of American States (OAS) was tainted by the 1965 US invasion of the Dominican Republic and its institutional ideological connotation of ‘countering Communism’, participation in peace operations went hand in hand with the creation of new and more legitimate regional institutions such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Participation in peace operations has also



allowed states in the region that had moved from authoritarian to democratic political systems to improve civil–military relations, although participants still identified room for improvement in this sphere. Notably, ideological or financial considerations for participation were not often mentioned. However, one participant suggested that South American contributions to UN peace operations reflect a general normative commitment to global peace and security as reimbursement rates do not cover the costs of troops deployed. In fact, even if reimbursements covered troop costs, participation based on financial motivation alone would likely still not be justified in particularly challenging and dangerous missions like the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Brazil's unprecedented increase in international engagement was marked by its advance of the RWP principle, an attempt to facilitate a peaceful solution to the tension around Iran's nuclear programme, and significant financial and operational leadership in MINUSTAH. A minority of Brazilian participants hinted at the possibility of a future decrease in Brazilian activism in the UN and perhaps a move towards greater activism regionally and in other global forums, focusing on environmental and development issues. Such a reorientation may be partly due to Brazil's view that the UN-mandated NATO operation in Libya was a victory of force over diplomacy and its growing concern over the shifting global balance of power. Alternatively, as many participants suggested, the reorientation could be due to a need to refocus on regional security and integration.

During the discussions an understanding emerged that Brazil has a complex identity: it views itself as a special member of the BRICS, where it stands out for its generally Western orientation and has a rather moderately sized military but well-known soft power capabilities. It is not clear, however, whether the new Brazilian administration will rethink contributions of military personnel to UN peace operations and its financial contribution to MINUSTAH. The Brazilian Navy has also recently assumed command of the Maritime Task Force of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which suggests that it is still committed to participation and that it is perhaps expanding involvement to operations outside the Americas. Participation in UNIFIL is also in line with the Brazilian perception that maritime security operations will further gain in prominence in international conflict management in the future.

### **SOUTH AMERICAN LESSONS LEARNED: THE CENTRAL ROLE OF MINUSTAH AND THE NEED FOR CIVILIAN PEACEBUILDING EXPERTISE**

MINUSTAH has served as South America's central contemporary peacekeeping experience and so figured prominently in the debate. On an operational level, participants noted the importance of each state maintaining a national deployment doctrine, which will differ among states in the region. One participant mentioned that his country would only participate in operations that have clear consent from the host state and that are not interventionist in nature. The transition to the use of force that was stipulated in a recent change to MINUSTAH's mandate was a central challenge in the mission. A panellist noted that Brazil and other participating countries were



experiencing pressure from Western countries to use force in order to fulfil the mandate in Haiti, while in South America there was great hesitance and in some cases objection to the use of force in the mission. This challenge was addressed by the gradual use of force with non-lethal weapons.

Coordination between troops deployed and humanitarian organizations on the ground presented an additional challenge in Haiti. However, a participant noted that lack of understanding and ability to coordinate security and humanitarian activities were greatly improved in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. One of the core lessons learned from Haiti, which was emphasized by most participants, was that too few South American civilian staff had been deployed. Some participants ascribed this to a lack of regional civilian peacebuilding expertise; others pointed to a global division of labour whereby Southern countries contribute military personnel while donor countries take up most high-level civilian positions. It was suggested that regional integration around peacekeeping issues would both facilitate the building of civilian capacities and create leverage to negotiate a more equitable share of civilian positions. Some participants argued that civil society organizations in South America should be more proactively involved in the policy debate on peace operations, which could strengthen peacebuilding capabilities and institutions in the region. Despite limited civilian deployment, military personnel in MINUSTAH have gained a variety of expertise over the years, including under the current mandate that also requires policing and development tasks. The relative lack of female participation in peacekeeping missions was also highlighted, even though one participant remarked that the particular role to be played by women in missions needs elaboration. The importance of stricter vetting of personal and adequate training to avoid misconduct was also stressed. One participant noted that avoiding misconduct has become particularly crucial in missions such as MINUSTAH, where every uniformed personnel can put the success of the mission and its increasingly complex mandate at risk.

MINUSTAH was also crucial in creating operational and political capacity in the region while facilitating trust and confidence building among participating states. The joint Argentinian–Chilean peacekeeping contingent was especially regarded as a remarkable example of bilateral cooperation. Participants also noted that MINUSTAH was instrumental in the setting up of the CDS, a platform that could facilitate greater regional consensus around participation in UN peace operations and potentially act as a regional conflict-management instrument. It was also noted that with regional fatigue with MINUSTAH, and with still divergent points of view about participation, it seems unlikely that there will be a broad consensus on participation in a regional mission in the near future.

### **SOUTHERN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE: DEALING WITH INSTABILITY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CHALLENGE OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

The discussion about scenarios for the future of peacekeeping focused strongly on the threats and challenges within the broader region around South American. Central America was described as a post-conflict society where high homicide rates, rampant gang activity, transnational criminal



networks and a culture of impunity for human rights violations are still affecting countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, as well as Colombia in South America. Future territorial disputes over renewable and non-renewable natural resources are expected to grow, and the role of transnational corporations in fuelling these disputes is of concern. One participant noted that the prosecution of human rights violations should become a regional priority, and that regional and individual state institutions are threatening regional progress around human rights through the imposition of overly strict criteria for prosecution of violations. It was also noted that it is irresponsible for states to deploy personnel to peace operations at the same time as they deal with the aftermath of military human rights abuses.

The topic of the most relevant framework for regional cooperation on participation on peace operations was raised repeatedly. Several participants advocated for UNASUR, with its recently established CDS. One suggestion that resurfaced several times was to also consider the building of regional civilian peacebuilding capacities at the UNASUR level. Nevertheless, the diversity of forums and regional identities, among them ‘South America’, ‘Latin America’ and ‘hemispheric America’, reflect a diversity with regards to strategic choices in the region. In contrast, some argued that the South, whether South America or the Global South in general, need not represent a cohesive position in order to effectively contribute to the debate on the international peace and security agenda.

## **CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A NEW PEACEKEEPING LANDSCAPE?**

The dialogue meeting in Brasília on the new geopolitics of peace operations emphasized regional integration as South American strategy to prepare itself for future global and regional challenges. A more cohesive and clear regional framework for participation in UN peace operations will probably be a part of this strategy. One participant remarked that regional integration is simply a matter of time and that the only choice is the pace of such integration. Ultimately, the gradual movement towards interdependence will lead to convergence of interests around shared challenges and opportunities. The main perceived regional threats are transnational organized crime, poverty and management of the abundance of South American natural resources.

Although some countries and clusters in the region have achieved a high level of cooperation through participation in MINUSTAH, regional integration in South America is still in the early stages despite growing activism in regional forums. The tasks of building sustainable and legitimate regional governance mechanisms, balancing the still-strong prevalence of traditional sovereignty with a humanitarian vision, and overcoming political and historical barriers will continue to present a formidable challenge.

While regional governance efforts are the priority, there is still a significant commitment to multilateralism and UN peace operations in South America. The discussion about the need to increase civilian capacity for operations illuminates this commitment. South America is also likely to continue to play a central role as a mitigating actor in the international system. Despite internal challenges, relative stability in the region, economic and democratic growth, and the absence of geographical threats will continue to lead to a progressive regional stance on disarmament and responsible use of force.

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