

BRAZIL'S PARTICIPATION IN UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS: THE CASES OF THREE AFRICAN COUNTRIES¹

A participação do Brasil em missões de paz da ONU: os casos de três países africanos

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ABSTRACT

This academical article explores Brazil's participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, with a particular focus on its engagements in African countries. Brazil has emerged as a significant contributor to international peace and security through its involvement in various peacekeeping operations. This study examines the historical context, motivations, challenges, and opportunities of Brazil's peacekeeping efforts in Africa. By analyzing specific case studies, such as South Sudan, Central Africa Republic (CAR), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this article sheds light on Brazil's evolving role and impact in promoting stability and conflict resolution on the African continent.

Keywords: Brazil. UNPKO. Africa.

RESUMO

Este artigo acadêmico explora a participação do Brasil nas missões de manutenção da paz das Nações Unidas (ONU), com foco especial em seus compromissos nos países africanos. O Brasil emergiu como um contribuinte significativo para a paz e a segurança internacionais por meio de seu envolvimento em várias operações de manutenção da paz. Este estudo examina o contexto histórico, as motivações, os desafios e as oportunidades dos esforços de manutenção da paz do Brasil na África. Ao analisar estudos de caso específicos, como o Sudão do Sul, a República Centro-Africana (RCA) e a República Democrática do Congo (RDC), este artigo esclarece o papel e o impacto em evolução do Brasil na promoção da estabilidade e na resolução de conflitos no continente africano.

Palavras-chave: Brasil. UNPKO. África.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, Brazil has progressively consolidated its position as an active contributor to international peace and security through its participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations. As the largest country in South America and an emerging global actor, Brazil has increasingly employed peacekeeping both as a diplomatic instrument and as a means of projecting its commitment to multilateralism. While Brazilian involvement in UN missions spans several regions, its engagement on the African continent has acquired growing relevance and merits closer scholarly scrutiny.

This article examines the scope, motivations, and implications of Brazil's participation in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. It advances the argument that Brazil strategically leverages peacekeeping as a multidimensional foreign policy tool operating simultaneously at domestic, bilateral, and multilateral levels. Particular attention is devoted to Brazil's soft power approach, which privileges cooperation with international and regional organizations—especially the United Nations—and reflects a preference for multilateral security governance. At the same time, the



article distinguishes between different modalities of Brazilian participation, recognizing that troop deployments, staff appointments, and command positions entail distinct levels of operational engagement.

Empirically, the study focuses on three case studies: the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). These cases are selected for three main reasons: (i) they represent major contemporary UN missions in Africa in which Brazil has maintained some level of involvement; (ii) they encompass different modalities and intensities of participation, ranging from command roles to troop and staff contributions; and (iii) collectively, they enable a longitudinal assessment of Brazil's post-MINUSTAH peacekeeping profile.

Methodologically, the article combines quantitative data on Brazilian deployments with qualitative analysis of official documents and recent specialized literature. The paper is organized into five sections in addition to this introduction and the conclusion. Section I revisits key debates on contemporary peace operations; Section II discusses the historical context of Brazil's participation in UN peacekeeping; Section III examines Brazil's approach to African peacekeeping missions; Section IV analyzes the three case studies; and Section V assesses the main challenges and opportunities shaping Brazil's current and future engagement.

UN PEACE MISSIONS

Security has long been a central concern for both states and scholars in the field of International Relations. While the frequency of inter-state wars has significantly declined, the proliferation of internal armed conflicts has brought security issues to the forefront of academic debate (Kaldor, 2012). Mary Kaldor argues that in the final decades of the twentieth century a new form of organized violence emerged—predominantly in Africa and Eastern Europe—as a feature of the globalized era, conceptualized as “new wars” (author's emphasis). The rise in intra-state conflicts coincided with a noticeable expansion in the number and scope of UN peace missions (Ahouangan, 2021).

Within this evolving landscape, a dialogue between classical and critical perspectives remains essential. The Clausewitzian tradition, associated with Carl von Clausewitz, conceptualizes war as a continuation of politics by other means and emphasizes the primacy of the state, organized violence, and strategic rationality (Clausewitz, 1976; Howard, 2002). By contrast, the “new wars” thesis highlights the fragmentation of actors, the blurring of war–crime boundaries, and the growing salience of identity politics in late-modern conflicts (Kaldor, 2012). Complementing this debate, micro-level analyses of civil war violence underscore the importance of local interaction dynamics in shaping patterns of conflict (Kalyvas 2006). Rather than treating these approaches as mutually exclusive, this study employs them as complementary analytical lenses: the Clausewitzian framework helps illuminate enduring logics of political purpose and

military strategy, while Kaldor's perspective captures the changing sociopolitical configurations of contemporary conflict environments in which UN peacekeeping missions increasingly operate. This synthesis is further informed by operational lessons identified in the 2017 report led by Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, which underscores the need to adapt peacekeeping practices to evolving threat environments.

Since the post-1945 period, peace operations have evolved significantly and are subject to multiple interpretations. The term encompasses a broad range of activities depending on the mission's objectives, scope, and operational focus. These include conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, robust peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peacebuilding, and multidimensional operations (Andrade, Hamann, and Soares, 2019). Conflict prevention involves the use of structural or diplomatic tools to prevent disputes—whether intra- or inter-state—from escalating into violence. Peacemaking refers to diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving active conflicts through negotiation and dialogue. Peace enforcement, authorized by the UN Security Council, entails the use of coercive measures, including military force. Peacebuilding includes initiatives aimed at reducing the risk of renewed conflict by strengthening a state's institutional capacity and laying the groundwork for sustainable peace and development (UN, 2008: 17–18).

A Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) is typically defined as the deployment of predominantly military personnel by the United Nations, with the consent of the parties involved, in order to maintain a ceasefire and prevent a return to hostilities. These operations occur only when a peace agreement is in place and adhered to. Peacekeepers are expected to remain impartial and may use force solely in self-defense (David, 2006). Over the past six decades, peace missions have expanded considerably in terms of their mandates, composition, and the complexity of the conflicts in which they are involved (ROP, 2010).

Peacekeeping has become a recurring concept in the post-1945 international order, emerging as a key instrument of collective security aimed at fostering a stable global environment (Andrade, Hamann, and Soares, 2019). Over the years, peacekeeping operations have undergone significant transformation. Initially rooted in a traditional approach—primarily focused on ceasefires and formal peace agreements—peacekeeping has evolved into a more complex, multidimensional endeavor. Today's missions often address a wide array of political, social, economic, cultural, judicial, and civil society issues, and may involve the use of force beyond mere self-defense (Andrade, Hamann, and Soares, 2019).

UN peacekeeping operations are guided by three core and mutually reinforcing principles: (a) the consent of the parties involved in the conflict, (b) impartiality, and (c) non-use of force, except in cases of self-defense or defense of the mandate (UNPK, 2020). These principles, often referred to as the “holy trinity” of peacekeeping, underpin the presence of UN forces—commonly known as Blue Helmets—in conflict zones (BELLAMY, WILLIAMS, and GRIFFIN, 2004).

Peacekeeping is also grounded in a robust normative framework, built upon four main elements. The UN Charter – The primary legal foundation for UN peacekeeping, particularly Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, which define the scope of actions the Security Council may take to maintain international peace and security. While most peacekeeping missions have historically been associated with Chapter VI (peaceful resolution of disputes), Chapter VII has increasingly been invoked for operations in unstable post-conflict environments where states lack the capacity to ensure security and law enforcement (UN, 2008).

International Human Rights Law – An essential component that ensures UN peacekeeping operations uphold and promote fundamental human rights standards in all operational contexts. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) – Also known as the “law of war” or “law of armed conflict,” IHL governs the conduct of parties in armed conflicts and protects individuals not actively engaged in hostilities, such as civilians and former combatants. UN Security Council Mandates – Each peacekeeping operation is established through a specific mandate issued by the Security Council. These mandates outline the operational scope, responsibilities, and objectives of the mission (UN, 2008).

Although there are varying interpretations of how peacekeeping should be implemented, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. When combined, they can reinforce one another and contribute to more effective and sustainable peace operations.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BRAZIL’S PARTICIPATION IN UN PEACEKEEPING

Brazil’s involvement in UN peacekeeping missions dates to the mid-20th century, when the country began making modest yet meaningful contributions that laid the groundwork for its deeper engagement in subsequent decades. This section explores the motivations behind Brazil’s participation in peacekeeping operations and the evolution of its approach to international security cooperation.

Brazil’s commitment to peacekeeping was first demonstrated in 1956, when it deployed troops as part of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) during the Suez Crisis. This early engagement reflected Brazil’s support for the newly established United Nations and its willingness to contribute to global peace and stability (Brazil, 2023). Between 1957 and 1967, Brazil participated in six UN peace missions, including operations in the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip (Fontoura, 1999). The country maintained a consistent presence in peacekeeping efforts from 1956 to 1989 (BRACEY, 2011).

Notable contributions in the 1980s and 1990s included Brazil’s participation in the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), which was tasked with verifying the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. Brazil also took part in the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), established to oversee the implementation of the General Peace Agreement signed in 1992 between the Mozambican government and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) (Brazil, 2023).



Brazil's approach to international engagement is shaped by its historical, regional, and political commitment to the principle of non-intervention (KENKEL 2010). At the same time, the country maintains a strong belief in multilateralism, viewing active participation in international organizations as a way to address systemic inequalities within the global order—particularly those that favor wealthier, more powerful nations (MONTERO 2005). In this way, Brazil demonstrated strong reservations about participating in interventions based on Chapter VII³, preferring instead to contribute to those based on Chapter VI, which require the consent of the parties involved in a conflict (Diniz, 2007). This reluctance reflects Brazil's longstanding commitment to the principles of non-intervention, peaceful conflict resolution, and respect for national sovereignty.

Between 1990 and 2002, following the country's redemocratization, Brazil participated in 20 out of the 42 UN peacekeeping operations established during that period, most of which were second-generation missions (DPKO, 2013; SIPRI, 2013). Notable examples include the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET), and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), which was led by Brazilian diplomat Sérgio Vieira de Mello, serving as the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative (Bracey, 2011).

Brazil's decision to join the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) in 1999 and subsequently the UNMISSET in 2002 marked a significant departure from its traditional foreign policy of non-intervention (Santos and Cravo, 2014). President Fernando Henrique Cardoso justified this shift by invoking Brazil's cultural and linguistic affinity with Timor-Leste, as well as the consent of the conflicting parties involved (Cardoso, 2002).

One of Brazil's most significant contributions to UN peacekeeping was its leadership role in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), launched in 2004. Brazil assumed a central role by supplying troops, police forces, and military commanders. The mission aimed to restore stability and support Haiti's reconstruction following a period of intense political unrest. Between 2004 and 2017, Brazil deployed a total of 30,378 personnel, making MINUSTAH the largest overseas deployment in Brazilian history in support of collective security (Brazil, 2023; De Souza, 2015).

In addition, Brazil contributed to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), originally established by the Security Council in 1978 to confirm Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security, and assist the Lebanese government in reasserting authority in the region. Post-2002, Brazil participated in other missions, including ONUCI in Côte d'Ivoire, UNMIS in Sudan, MINURSO in Western Sahara, MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, and UNMISS in South Sudan. By 2022, Brazil

³ Intervention under Chapter VII was basically seen as a violation of the key principle of non-intervention, which was regionally perceived as responsible for keeping the peace in South America over the last 150 years and freeing the region from external influence (See Santos and Cravo 2014)

was engaged in 11 UN peacekeeping missions, including operations in Cyprus, the Central African Republic, Western Sahara, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, and South Sudan (Brazil, 2023).

BRAZIL'S APPROACH TO AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

Brazil's engagement in peacekeeping gained momentum in the 1990s, as the country began to assert a more prominent role in international affairs. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a unipolar world order encouraged Brazil to pursue a more active and constructive presence on the global stage, including increased participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Brazil's involvement in these missions is motivated by both humanitarian concerns and strategic interests. It seeks to contribute to conflict resolution, foster stability, and protect civilian populations in conflict-affected areas. Additionally, peacekeeping serves as a platform for Brazil to reaffirm its commitment to multilateralism and to strengthen diplomatic relations with other states.

Brazil also expanded its peacekeeping efforts to the African continent, contributing personnel to a number of missions, including the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Mission in Sudan, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

However, Brazil's relationship with Africa has historically been characterized by alternating phases of rapprochement and estrangement, depending on the political agendas of successive Brazilian administrations (Castro, 1972). The year 1960 marked a turning point with the beginning of African decolonization, as many nations emerged from European rule and embarked on the path of independent development.

Since gaining independence, security has been a central concern for African states. In 1963, thirty countries came together to form the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the first pan-African initiative aimed at promoting continental integration, state-building, and collective security (Serpa et al. 2019). The first major UN peace operation on the continent was the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), conducted from 1960 to 1964. Despite deploying military force, the mission failed on several fronts and was ultimately withdrawn in 1964. This was followed by nearly two decades of minimal UN peacekeeping presence in Africa (Escosteguy, 2011).

Between 1968 and 1988, Brazil distanced itself from UN institutions, largely due to the authoritarian regime established after the 1964 military coup. During this period, the government sought to avoid international scrutiny over domestic policies, which contributed to its limited participation in global peace and security initiatives (Fontoura, 2005).

Following the independence of African countries, Brazil's Independent Foreign Policy sought to universalize the country's international agenda, expanding its focus beyond the Americas and Europe to include Asia and Africa (Cervo and Bueno, 2010). In the 1970s, a degree of diplomatic universalism allowed sub-Saharan Africa to become part of Brazil's strategic interests, in a period known as the era of "responsible pragmatism" in Brazilian foreign policy (Ferreira and Migon, 2016). However, during the 1980s, recurring economic crises in Brazil weakened the momentum of this rapprochement, relegating Africa to a secondary position on the national foreign policy agenda—an orientation that would later be reversed (Migon and Santos, 2013).

The early 1990s witnessed the rise of neoliberalism and marked a renewed phase of distancing from Africa (Migon and Santos, 2013). Nevertheless, the post-Cold War period and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc ushered in a new chapter for Africa. The wave of democratization across the continent enhanced its attractiveness for international cooperation. At the same time, this period saw the ascent of emerging powers on the global stage.

In this evolving global context, emerging powers have become increasingly significant for the United Nations Development System in four key respects. First, the structural shifts in the international order, with the prospect of a more multipolar world, spurred emerging powers to push for reforms in global economic and financial governance. Second, many emerging powers became prominent providers of South-South cooperation, which differs in both principle and practice from traditional development aid—often criticized for being asymmetrical and detached from the needs of recipient countries (ABDENUR and WEISS, 2014). Third, emerging powers began enhancing policy coordination and launching joint initiatives, as exemplified by the BRICS. Fourth, these countries diversified their modes of participation in global development, increasingly engaging in contexts of conflict or chronic political instability (Abdenur and Weiss, 2014).

Within this framework, Brazil launched a soft power strategy in Africa, strengthening its development cooperation and diplomatic presence across the continent. To support the expansion of its economic activities, Brasília established a logistical and financial infrastructure backed by domestic support and proactive economic diplomacy (Alves, n.d.). Brazil's improved macroeconomic conditions in the early 2000s coincided with Africa's economic recovery, creating a favorable environment for Africa to regain prominence in Brazil's foreign policy throughout the 2000s.

When President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva implemented administrative reforms within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—most notably by separating the Africa–Middle East division to establish a department exclusively dedicated to African affairs—his intention was to signal a clear governmental commitment to expanding Brazil's presence on the African continent (Visentini, 2013). The reopening and creation of new diplomatic missions significantly benefited Brazilian businesses, as evidenced by the growing number of Brazilian companies operating in Africa, particularly those engaged in exporting services through large-scale projects and investments.

Technical cooperation emerged as one of the primary pillars of Brazil's engagement in Africa, largely facilitated by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), a branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tasked with responding to the specific development needs expressed by African governments. This cooperation spanned numerous sectors, including agriculture—through the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA); public health—via the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ); and education—through CAPES and CNPq, Brazil's leading academic and scientific funding agencies (Serpa et al. 2019: 8). Beyond technical and infrastructure projects, Brazil also engaged through seminars, high-level official visits, and participation in UN peacekeeping missions, which constituted another dimension of strategic importance (Abdenur, 2017).

Of particular note is Brazil's emphasis on defense cooperation, grounded in a shared commitment to the security of the South Atlantic, particularly within the framework of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS). Brazil's defense collaboration with African nations is underpinned by a broader international strategy articulated during the Lula administration. This strategy took institutional form in the National Defense Policy (PND) of 2005, the National Defense Strategy (END) of 2008, and the White Paper on National Defense (LBDN) of 2012 (Serpa et al., 2019: 8).

Between 2003 and 2010, Brazil implemented 481 cooperation projects with African countries, 420 of which were completed within this period (Oliveira, 2015). On the political-diplomatic front, Brazil and its African partners have worked to reduce the asymmetries in South-North cooperation dynamics. This South-South approach allowed Brazil to open new markets and increase its global influence. Notably, Brazil received the backing of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in its bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (Miyamoto, 2011). Strategically, Africa represents both an opportunity and a complex challenge for Brazilian foreign policy.

Brazil does not rely on a single comprehensive policy document that governs its participation in UN peacekeeping operations (Abdenur and Call, 2017). Instead, its approach is shaped by long-standing foreign policy principles such as non-intervention, respect for state sovereignty, and the self-determination of peoples. These principles are historically rooted in Brazil's experience with global power asymmetries—particularly in relation to dominant powers such as the United States and European nations—and its ongoing concern with preserving national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Kenkel, 2008, 2011; Santos and Cravo, 2014).

From this perspective, Brazil's engagement in peacekeeping is closely tied to its adherence to multilateralism and a preference for operations conducted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Brazilian diplomacy prioritizes missions that rely on host country consent and emphasize negotiation and dialogue over coercive measures—contrasting with peace enforcement operations authorized under Chapter VII (Kenkel, 2011).

At the beginning of the 21st century, Brazil began to assert itself more visibly as an emerging power on the global stage. As a contender for a permanent seat on a reformed UN Security Council, the Brazilian government increasingly viewed participation in peacekeeping operations as a strategic tool for elevating its international profile. Beyond enhancing its global standing, Brazil's involvement in peace operations is also framed as a principled extension of its diplomatic tradition (Nasser, 2012).

Brazilian participation in peacekeeping thus reflects a dual rationale: the defense of core foreign policy principles and the pursuit of pragmatic political interests. This duality informs Brazil's selective engagement in specific missions, with strategic priorities and cultural or historical affinities—especially with Lusophone and Latin American countries—serving as key determinants (Nasser, 2012; Abdenur and Call, 2017; Serpa et al., 2019).

Humanitarian considerations also play a vital role in Brazil's peacekeeping agenda. The country aims to contribute to conflict resolution, promote stability, and protect civilian populations in regions affected by violence. Participation in peacekeeping allows Brazil to reaffirm its commitment to multilateralism and strengthen diplomatic relations with a range of international partners. In parallel, Brazil has been active in development cooperation with African countries impacted by conflict, addressing root causes of instability and working toward conditions conducive to sustainable peace and development.

Furthermore, Brazil's rotating membership on the UN Security Council has at times amplified its influence over peacekeeping mandates and international security decisions. This position has encouraged Brazil to further develop its peacekeeping capacities, investing in the training of military and police personnel in skills essential to modern peace operations, such as conflict mediation, humanitarian response, and the protection of civilians.

BRAZIL'S PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Brazil's approach to African peacekeeping missions is primarily based on multilateral cooperation and partnership with regional and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). The country believes in the importance of collective security efforts and recognizes the significance of addressing conflicts and promoting stability in African nations. Brazil contributes significantly to UN peacekeeping efforts in Africa. This contribution often involves military, police, and civilian components aimed at restoring peace, protecting civilians, and supporting post-conflict reconstruction efforts. This section will analyze Brazil's role in United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO).

Brazil and the Mission in South Sudan

In 1983, civil war erupted in Sudan following the collapse of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. For decades, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the principal rebel group in the south, engaged in a protracted conflict over control of resources, political power, the role of religion in governance, and the right to self-determination. The conflict resulted in the deaths of over two million individuals, the displacement of four million others, and the forced migration of approximately 600,000 people as refugees (UNMIS, 2023).

On 9 July 2011, South Sudan emerged as the world's newest sovereign state. The creation of the Republic of South Sudan marked the culmination of a six-year peace process initiated by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 9 January 2005 between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM. The CPA effectively ended more than two decades of civil war and stipulated the holding of a referendum to determine the status of Southern Sudan. The referendum, conducted in January 2011, resulted in an overwhelming majority of 98.83% voting in favor of independence. In response to South Sudan's independence, the United Nations Security Council established the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (UNMISS, 2023).

UNMISS operates under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and is mandated to use all necessary means to fulfil its objectives. Brazil has contributed to the mission through the deployment of military observers, Military Liaison Officers (MLOs), staff officers, and United Nations Police Officers (UNPOs) drawn from various states within the Brazilian Federation. Historically, Brazil has expressed a preference for participating in peace operations authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Nevertheless, Brazil's involvement in UNMISS—governed by Chapter VII—does not signify an abandonment of its longstanding foreign policy principles. Rather, it reflects an adaptation to evolving global security dynamics and underscores Brazil's sustained commitment to international peace and security.

A quantitative analysis of Brazil's engagement in UN peacekeeping missions highlights the country's emphasis on multilateralism. Brazilian participation is characterized by its involvement in multiple operations, often in regions that do not have a direct strategic relevance to Brazil's immediate national interests (Hamann, 2016). From a pragmatic standpoint, however, it is important to recall that the United Nations is the primary provider of peacekeeping positions. In this sense, Brazil's posture raises an analytical question: does it reflect a genuine multilateral commitment, or a form of pragmatic realism that takes advantage of the opportunities available?

In the early 2000s, Brazilian foreign policy regarding peacekeeping under Chapter VII of the UN Charter underwent a paradigm shift. Notably, in 2004, Brazilian diplomatic discourse began to align with the protection of civilians (PoC) as a core component of peace operations, advocating for the responsibility of peacekeepers to actively implement PoC strategies (Hamann, 2016). The UNMISS mandate explicitly incorporates the protection of civilians, which entails ensuring the effective, timely, and dynamic safeguarding of populations under threat of physical violence, through a comprehensive and integrated approach, regardless of the source or location of such

violence. Consequently, Brazil's participation in UNMISS aligns with the criteria established for the engagement of Brazilian forces in peace operations.

Furthermore, Brazil's involvement in UNMISS reflects its broader strategic interests in the Africa, a region of significant geopolitical importance for the country. Although South Sudan does not fall within Brazil's traditional sphere of influence, the diversification of Brazil's peacekeeping engagements—endorsed by national decision-makers—accounts for the deployment of Brazilian personnel to South Sudan. This diversification also illustrates Brazil's willingness to extend its peacekeeping role beyond its customary partners, notably Lusophone countries in Africa. However, Brazilian participation in UNMISS does not necessitate the use of force beyond acts of self-defense.

In addition to the protection of civilians, the UNMISS mandate includes the facilitation of conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, support for the implementation of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, advancement of the peace process, and the monitoring, investigation, and reporting of violations of humanitarian and human rights law.

MINUSCA activities

Brazil's engagement with MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic) primarily reflects its commitment to contributing to international peace and security through participation in UN-led peacekeeping operations. By deploying both military and civilian personnel, Brazil seeks to support several key objectives of the mission.

First, the protection of civilians constitutes a central component of MINUSCA's mandate. The mission is tasked with safeguarding populations at risk of violence and human rights abuses. Brazil, alongside other contributing nations, plays a crucial role in enhancing security and ensuring the protection of vulnerable communities in the Central African Republic (CAR).

Second, Brazil's participation aligns with efforts to support the peace process and foster political dialogue among various stakeholders within CAR. The Brazilian diplomatic tradition emphasizes the pursuit of peaceful and negotiated solutions to conflicts, and the country's involvement in MINUSCA reflects its broader foreign policy orientation towards Africa, which prioritizes conflict resolution through dialogue and multilateral cooperation.

Third, MINUSCA's mandate includes the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups. Brazil contributes to these efforts by providing technical expertise, logistical support, and human resources aimed at assisting DDR programs and promoting stability.

Fourth, the mission focuses on monitoring, documenting, and addressing human rights violations. Brazilian participation reinforces MINUSCA's capacity to investigate abuses and

promote accountability, thereby strengthening human rights protection mechanisms within the country.

Fifth, Brazil's involvement supports the consolidation of the rule of law and the reinforcement of governance structures in CAR. This includes assistance in strengthening state institutions, enhancing judicial systems, and promoting principles of good governance.

It is important to highlight that the Brazilian contingent intended for MINUSCA was expected to constitute the country's second-largest peacekeeping deployment abroad, following its leadership of MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti). Notably, in November 2017, then-Defense Minister Raul Jungmann announced Brazil's intention to deploy approximately 1,000 troops to CAR (Victor and Alencastro, 2018).

However, domestic developments significantly altered these plans. The 2018 federal security intervention in Rio de Janeiro, combined with the deployment of military personnel to address the humanitarian emergency caused by the influx of Venezuelan refugees along the Roraima border, absorbed substantial government attention and financial resources. Additionally, an assessment conducted by ten Brazilian officers who visited CAR between January 21 and February 3, 2018, raised serious concerns regarding the risks associated with the mission. The reports underscored the likelihood of casualties due to challenging terrain, poor logistical infrastructure, and adverse weather conditions, particularly during the rainy season. These findings contributed to the Brazilian Army High Command's decision to reject large-scale troop deployment to CAR.

Despite Brazil's growing reputation in Africa, cultivated through its engagement in peace operations in Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the cautious stance regarding MINUSCA reflects broader strategic considerations. On one hand, an expanded presence in CAR could have bolstered Brazil's influence in the South Atlantic and the strategically significant Gulf of Guinea region. On the other hand, decision-makers were wary of becoming entangled in a conflict perceived by some as a potential "new Vietnam" for foreign forces.

Ultimately, Brazil's withdrawal from plans for a substantial military deployment to CAR coincided with a period in which Africa had diminished in strategic importance within Brazilian foreign policy, particularly under President Michel Temer's administration (Victor and Alencastro, 2018). However, it is important to emphasize that the approval—or rejection—of peacekeeping deployments results from institutional interactions among the Executive (Presidency), the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty), and must subsequently be authorized by the National Congress. In this process, the main bottlenecks have tended to lie within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than the other actors.

MONUSCO as break of paradigm



In 2004, Brazil assumed a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) during a period marked by the revitalization of peacekeeping operations as a preferred instrument of UNSC action. By the end of Brazil's two-year term in 2005, the number of peacekeepers deployed globally had increased by nearly 45%, driven by the establishment of new missions such as the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB), and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). As a member of the UNSC, Brazil not only actively participated in the negotiations that led to the creation of these missions but also voted in favor of all corresponding resolutions. During this period, Brazil deployed troops, military observers, and police personnel to several peace operations, reflecting its growing willingness to assume a more active role in UN peacekeeping as part of its tenure on the Security Council (Uziel, 2015).

Brazil's role on the Security Council is consistent with the broader strategic objectives of its foreign policy. During this period, Brazil significantly intensified its diplomatic engagement with the African continent. The emphasis on South-South cooperation and the principle of "non-indifference" in international affairs informed Brazil's approach to Africa, with a particular focus on strengthening ties with Portuguese-speaking countries. As part of this strategy, Brazil sought to enhance its international profile and expand its influence in Africa by signing defense cooperation agreements with seven African states (De Souza, 2015). Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is not a Lusophone country, it occupies a distinctive position within Brazil's Africa policy, partly due to its membership in the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS). In 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the then Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Amorim, and his Congolese counterpart, Alexis Thambwe-Mwamba, further consolidating bilateral ties (De Souza, 2015).

The DRC has been affected by persistent internal conflict for decades. In 1998, a major rebellion against the government of President Laurent-Désiré Kabila erupted in the eastern Kivu provinces. While Angola, Chad, Namibia, and Zimbabwe provided military support to the Kabila government, rebel forces retained control over significant portions of the eastern territory. Moreover, Rwanda and Uganda lent their support to the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), further exacerbating the crisis. In response, the Security Council called for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign forces, and respect for the DRC's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Following the signing of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in July 1999 between the DRC and five regional states (Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe), the Security Council established the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). On 1 July 2010, through Resolution 1925, MONUC was reconfigured as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to reflect the country's transition into a new phase of stabilization (MONUSCO, 2023).

The restructured mission was authorized to employ all necessary means to implement its mandate, which included the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights



defenders under imminent threat, as well as support for the Congolese government's stabilization and peacebuilding efforts. Brazil played a significant leadership role within MONUSCO, with General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz serving as Force Commander from July 2013 to December 2015. His tenure coincided with the establishment of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), a specialized unit created to enable MONUSCO to respond more decisively to the resurgence of armed groups in eastern DRC. In May 2018, General Elias Martins Filho assumed the role of Force Commander, followed by General Ricardo Augusto Ferreira Costa Neves in January 2020. Since 2019, Brazil has also contributed a Mobile Training Team (MTT) to MONUSCO, tasked with disseminating expertise in jungle operations to the mission's troops (Brazil, 2023).

The FIB was established by Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013), which unequivocally condemned the activities of armed groups such as the March 23 Movement (M23), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), among others. The brigade was mandated to conduct offensive operations—independently or in coordination with the Congolese Armed Forces—in a robust, mobile, and flexible manner to neutralize the threat posed by these groups (MONUSCO, 2023).

The creation of the FIB was met with considerable controversy, particularly in Brazil, where the government initially expressed reservations regarding the use of force beyond traditional peacekeeping mandates. This development marked a significant paradigm shift in Brazil's historical approach to peacekeeping, traditionally characterized by an emphasis on non-coercive measures and strict adherence to the principles of consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defense.

The Military Counsellor of Brazil's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York highlighted growing international commitment to strengthening peacekeeping training. In this context, the Brazilian Army—Brazil's main contributor to such missions—established the Brazilian Peacekeeping Operations Training Center (CI Op Paz) through Directive No. 090 – 23 February 2005). Following Brazil's engagement in MINUSTAH, the center began by preparing the Haiti Brigade's 3rd Contingent and, from then on, standardized pre-deployment training under Chapter VII mandates, improving troop performance in the field. In June 2010, Directive No. 952-MD expanded its mandate and renamed it the Brazilian Peacekeeping Operations Joint Center (CCOPAB), responsible for training military and civilian personnel from Brazil and partner countries (CCOPAB, 2026).

CCOPAB provides specialized training in areas such as peace operations logistics, civil-military coordination, humanitarian demining, and mission preparedness. Given Brazil's credibility in peacekeeping, particularly its leadership of MINUSTAH, the international recognition of CCOPAB as a center of excellence, and the positive evaluations of Brazilian military leadership within MONUSCO, Brazil's contribution to robust peace operations has proven both viable and effective (De Souza, 2015).

Table 1- UN peacekeeping missions in Africa under Chapter VII and Brazil's participation

PLACE	Mission	Period	Number of the contingent
CAR	MINUSCA	April/2014 – Ongoing	10 from the Brazilian Navy 51 from the Brazilian Army, 10 from the Brazilian Air Forces, and 4 from the Military Police
DRC	MONUC	Nov/1999 – Jun/2010	
	MONUSCO	May/2010 – Ongoing	4 from the Brazilian Navy, 102 from the Brazilian Army, 8 from Brazilian Air Forces
South Sudan	UNMISS	July/2011 – Ongoing	10 men and women from the Brazilian Navy, 85 from the Brazilian Army, 24 from the Brazilian Air Forces, and 40 from the Military Police

Source: Brazil, Ministry of Defense (2023)

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section will explore the challenges Brazil faces in contributing effectively to United Nations peacekeeping missions in African countries.

Chapter IV of the United Nations Charter outlines the structure of the Security Council, composed of five permanent members (P-5) and ten non-permanent (elected) members (E-10). It also defines the mandate of the elected members and establishes basic voting procedures, including the requirement for concurring votes from all P-5 members. As the principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council—and its member states—holds the authority to determine where and when a UN peacekeeping operation will be deployed. Typically, as a crisis unfolds, worsens, or nears resolution, consultations are held among member states, the UN Secretariat, stakeholders in the field, regional actors, and potential troop-contributing countries (UN, 2008).

Given that the United Nations lacks its own standing army, cooperation with contributing countries is essential. Both permanent and non-permanent members play significant roles in these processes. However, experience has shown that such consultations are often more effective in theory than in practice. In reality, the design and strategic direction of peacekeeping missions tend to be dominated by the P-5. Most peace operations are located in Africa, particularly in former colonies of Western powers such as France and the United Kingdom. As a result, these nations are frequently the originators of draft resolutions, thereby shaping the mandate and scope of the missions. This imbalance becomes especially visible in missions such as MINUSMA and MONUSCO. In both cases, ambitious mandates—particularly regarding the protection of civilians and the neutralization of armed groups—have not always been matched by the military capabilities and operational enablers available to troop-contributing countries. As Rupert Smith argues, contemporary conflicts are fought “amongst the people,” requiring finely calibrated uses of force embedded within political strategies. The experience of MINUSMA and MONUSCO suggests that when mandate design is politically centralized while force generation remains fragmented and capacity-constrained, significant gaps can emerge between strategic expectations and field performance (Smith, 2005).

For instance, the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and its contentious mandate were largely driven by France, which authored the key resolutions with support from the United Kingdom and the United States. France, leveraging its colonial legacy, effectively asserted its influence over the Security Council and the Ivorian population through its control of the mission’s terms. Other missions—such as MINUSMA, UNMIL, and MINUSCA—have similarly been initiated under the leadership of Western P-5 powers.

This dynamic presents a fundamental challenge for Brazil. Without a reform or restructuring of the Security Council—an objective long advocated by emerging powers—it remains difficult for countries like Brazil to play a meaningful role in shaping peacekeeping operations in Africa. One of Brazil’s motivations for engaging in such missions is to uphold the principles enshrined in Article 4 of its Federal Constitution, which emphasize multilateralism and the inclusion of Brazilian perspectives in international decision-making. To address issues such as the Security Council’s perceived double standards (Uziel, 2015), comprehensive reform of the Council is essential.

Brazil can increase its visibility and, to some extent, become indispensable to peacekeeping missions in Africa by expanding its contingent for these missions. Beyond traditional troop deployments, Brazil has also sought to project its military relevance through specialized capacity-building initiatives. A notable example is the ongoing Jungle Warfare Mobile Training Team (JWMTT), a multinational instructional effort focused on jungle warfare expertise. Rather than relying solely on numerical troop contributions, this initiative enables Brazil to demonstrate high-value niche capabilities, particularly in environments similar to many contemporary peacekeeping theatres. In line with Rupert Smith’s argument that the utility of force in modern conflicts depends increasingly on adaptability and context-specific skills, the JWMTT illustrates how military



effectiveness in peace operations is also shaped by qualitative competencies and training diplomacy. This trend is consistent with broader patterns in Brazilian defense cooperation with the Global South, where technical military assistance and training have become important instruments of international projection (Ferreira; Migon, 2016; Smith, 2005). Such initiatives reinforce Brazil's profile within UN peacekeeping not only through presence on the ground but through the projection of specialized military know-how. As a Global South player, Brazil could have a say in shaping and implementing peacekeeping missions by being one of the largest contributors of peacekeepers.

Another significant challenge Brazil must overcome is increasing its influence within UN decision-making bodies—particularly the Security Council—regarding peacekeeping missions. This is especially complex given that Brazil, unlike France or the United Kingdom, has no colonial history in Africa and thus lacks the same degree of geopolitical influence on the continent. Nevertheless, Brazil has already demonstrated its capacity to lead and successfully complete a peacekeeping operation, as seen in its leadership of MINUSTAH in Haiti. However, Haiti represents a region of lesser strategic interest for the traditional Western powers.

Brazil also faces the challenge of its relatively limited presence on the African continent. While historical ties exist between Brazil and several African nations—particularly through the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade—meaningful influence today requires far more than shared history. In recent years, Brazil has strengthened its presence in Africa through development cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, education, and health. These efforts are valuable contributions to the continent's development and reflect Brazil's commitment to solidarity-based diplomacy.

The current geopolitical context—marked by deteriorating relations between France and some of its former colonies, such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic—presents a strategic opportunity for Brazil to expand its soft power in Africa. In a landscape where China is active in infrastructure development and Russia in military cooperation, Brazil can offer an alternative model of engagement. It can act as a bridge toward more balanced, cooperative relations between African countries and the broader international community.

Greater involvement in African peacekeeping missions could significantly enhance Brazil's connection with its African partners. By playing an active and constructive role in peace efforts, Brazil could position itself more prominently as a representative of Global South countries in the quest for a more equitable and inclusive international order.

CONCLUSION

Although Brazil is not among the top ten troop-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions, it has taken advantage of its non-permanent terms on the Security Council to engage actively in debates within both the Security Council and the General Assembly on peace and security.



Its involvement in Africa, particularly in relation to peacekeeping, remains limited. Nonetheless, Brazil views participation in UN peace operations as a strategic tool of its foreign policy. Domestically, its engagement aligns with the principles outlined in Article 4 of the Federal Constitution, which emphasize peaceful conflict resolution, international cooperation, and the training and professionalization of Brazilian military personnel.

At the bilateral and regional levels, Brazil contributes to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, while also strengthening diplomatic ties. Institutionally, its involvement supports broader goals such as reinforcing multilateralism, promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes, and bolstering its long-standing bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

However, to fully realize these objectives, Brazil must expand its presence on the African continent—not only in Lusophone countries, but also in others where it has historically had limited engagement. The current geopolitical context in Africa provides a window of opportunity. Brazil's participation in missions such as UNMISS (South Sudan), MINUSCA (Central African Republic), and MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo) marks a significant step forward in asserting itself as a global actor and forging deeper ties with African nations.

As several African countries distance themselves from traditional Western powers, Brazil has the opportunity to enhance its role through development cooperation grounded in mutual respect and long-term sustainability. This moment presents a valuable chance for Brazil to help shape a more equitable international order—one in which Africa's development is pursued not through dependency, but through genuine partnerships.

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