

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA AS A RESPONSE TO SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREATS IN LATIN AMERICA

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Abstract

Latin America faces a number of challenges to security and defense. A focus on women's participation in the defense sector in Latin America should be viewed as a way to address these new challenges, rather than as a challenge itself. The region has made some progress towards addressing women's participation in security and defense, but there are still areas of opportunity.

Key words: *Gender, Women, Peace, Security.*

Introduction

As described in this book, Latin America faces a number of unprecedented defense challenges, including increasing demands on the Armed Forces to defend against unconventional and new threats, protect the environment and vulnerable populations, and act in the cyber domain. These challenges are arising as many countries in the region grapple with economic landscapes changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which impose their own constraints. This chapter addresses the issue of the inclusion of women and gender perspectives in the defense sector in Latin America in the context of these challenges. It provides a background on efforts to include women in security and defense at the international and regional levels. It argues that a focus on women's participation in the defense sector in

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Latin America should be viewed as a way to address these new challenges, rather than as a challenge itself.

The chapter begins by outlining the origin of the ideas and commitments around gender inclusion and gender representation in the defense sector, with reference to the relevant academic literature. Recognizing that existing scholarship on this issue as it relates to Latin America is limited, the chapter goes on to describe the status of the issue in the region. It summarizes countries' achievements on gender integration in the Armed Forces as well as the institutional commitments that guide these efforts. The chapter concludes by providing thoughts on how the inclusion of women and gender perspectives in defense in Latin America might lead to more effectiveness in addressing the challenges described in detail in the other chapters in this volume.

Origin of WPS

The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted UNSCR 1325 on October 31, 2000. The resolution is the reference point for efforts to increase the participation of women in security and defense under the banner of “women, peace, and security” initiatives. Though the phrase “women, peace, and security” does not appear in the text of the resolution itself, the resolution is the origin of the “women, peace, and security” (WPS) agenda. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury who served as Under-Secretary General of the United Nations (2002-07) and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UN (1996-2001) at the time the resolution was adopted, has spoken about the name of the resolution. Ambassador Chowdhury commented that “the actual title proposed for this resolution by us is “Women and Peace and Security” with two “ands”. But one of them was dropped and a comma was added.” He added that “the original intent in calling it Women and Peace and Security, however, was to frame the concept as two areas: “women” as one, and “peace and security” as the other – not as three: Women, Peace, and Security, as is now done in the context of the WPS

agenda.”² The idea expressed by Ambassador Chowdhury is manifested in WPS activities which can be described as fitting into three groups: programs that focus on women’s participation, efforts aimed at peacekeeping and peace agreements, and the inclusion of gender perspectives in defense issues. This chapter falls within the first group because it focuses narrowly on the issue of women’s participation in security and defense, even though both of the other issues mentioned are also present and relevant in the region.

UNSCR 1325 then sought to address what has increasingly been understood as two separate issues: the lack of participation of women in peace processes, peace operations, and defense in general, and the lack of awareness of the different needs of protection that women and men have in conflict situations. The resolution was introduced by Namibia during its tenure as President of the UNSCR. The introduction of a resolution on this subject matter in this forum by a non-permanent member of the Council was a great achievement for Namibia and non-permanent Security Council members.

Table 1: United Nations Resolutions related to WPS

UNSCR (Year)	Summary	Sponsors
1820 (2009)	Declares that sexual violence, including rape, is a weapon of war and “can constitute a war crime, crime against humanity, or constitutive act with respect to genocide.” Calls for military training with respect to preventing and responding to sexual violence and calls for increased deployment of women in peace operations.	50 sponsors, including Chile, Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Panama

² Saira Yamin, “UNSCR 1325 on Women and Peace and Security: Assessment and Recommendations”, *The Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* (Honolulu, USA: February 2021), https://apcss.org/nexus_articles/unscr-1325-on-women-and-peace-and-security-assessment-and-recommendations/

1888 (2009)	Builds on UNSCR 1820 in reaffirming that sexual violence is an obstacle to international peace and security and intensifies war. Calls for the appointment of a Special Representative on sexual violence in war and for the deployment a team of experts where sexual violence takes place.	68 sponsors, including Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Panama
1889 (2010)	Addresses post-conflict peacebuilding and women’s participation in such processes. Requests the creation and development of indicators to measure the implementation of UNSCR 1325.	21 sponsors, including Costa Rica and Mexico
1960 (2011)	Calls for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict and urges the Secretary-General to list those credibly accused of sexual violence in annual reports. Calls for referral of those accused of sexual violence to the ICC and UN Sanctions Committee as well as reparations for victims.	68 sponsors, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Peru
2106 (2013)	Emphasizes the implementation of obligations/ initiatives rather than creating new ones. Addresses women’s role in combating sexual violence and supports resorting to justice system in cases of sexual abuse.	46 sponsors, including Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, and Guatemala
2122 (2013)	Emphasizes addressing root causes of armed conflict and security threats women face. Lays out approaches to increase women’s participation in peace and security.	46 sponsors, including Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Uruguay
2242 (2015)	Urges evaluation of progress of the WPS agenda and calls for more funding of gender-responsive training, analysis, and programs. Emphasizes the need to collaborate with civil society.	72 sponsors, including Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela
2467 (2019)	Urges member states to address the root causes of sexual violence and to create a survivor-centered approach when addressing this issue. Encourages states to challenge notions of male invulnerability in these situations and advocates for justice for women who are victims of sexual violence in the form of reparations and strengthened criminal law.	Germany

2493 (2019)	Urges member states to implement all measures of the WPS agenda and increase the number of women in peace and security processes. Encourages member states to promote women's rights (economic, political, and civil) and increase funding of WPS programs, including aid during and post-conflict.	22 sponsors, including Uruguay
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Moreover, UNSCR 1325 recognized that how peace was implemented could have different effects for men's and women's respective access to resources and power. That is, "peace" does not automatically have the same "quality" for women as it does for men.³ Thereby, there was a need for gender mainstreaming, that is, adapting all work to create peace, ensuring that men and women benefited equally. Hence, participation, protection, and gender mainstreaming have become three themes in the implementation of the resolution. Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, 9 resolutions have been adopted on these themes. Table 1 summarizes the UN Security Council resolutions on the theme of women, peace, and security.

Why is WPS important?

The arguments for the importance of the issues addressed in UNSCR 1325 come from three different areas corresponding broadly to Aristotle's three types of persuasion: emotional appeals, emphasis on democratic norms, and arguments about the effectiveness of the military. Emotional appeals focus on the role of women in society. Appeals like the one made by UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson asking that we "finally recognize the role and power of women to help us build a peaceful world"⁴ fall into this camp. Other examples include appeals by male leaders discussing what they would want for their daughters or their sisters, and portrayals of women as caregivers. Emotional appeals are similar to persuasion based on emotion

³ Louise Olsson and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, "Gender, Peace and Security: Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325", (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁴ United Nations, "'Wherever There Is Conflict, Women Must Be Part of the Solution,' Security Council Told in Day-Long Debate Urging Their Inclusion in Restoring Fractured Societies", *Meetings Coverage and Press Releases* (November 30, 2012), <https://press.un.org/en/2012/sc10840.doc.htm> (Accessed July 5, 2022).

as described by Aristotle. The aim is to call attention to the role women play in security issues by associating words like “peaceful” with women.

There is also an ethos argument for WPS, that is, an argument based on shared values. The argument for the importance of WPS from this perspective focuses on how central WPS aims are for a successful democracy. Michelle Bachelet, former president of Chile and current UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, often argues for WPS by appealing to democratic values. For example: “Decisions on peace that do not reflect women’s voices, realities and rights are not sustainable. Addressing discrimination, inequality, denials of women’s civic space and gender-based violence must be a priority for building peace.”⁵ The European Parliament lists “equality between women and men” as one of the values shared by its member states.⁶

Lastly, perhaps the most persuasive argument regarding WPS is a logic-based argument, an appeal to the importance of WPS for effectiveness in security and defense. Research into the participation of women has yielded important insights. According to an analysis of 181 peace agreements between 1989 and 2011, when women are involved in negotiating peace agreements, these agreements are 35 % more likely to last 15 years or more.⁷ Additionally, a study of forty peace negotiations since the end of the Cold War reveals that agreements are more likely to be reached when women hold significant influence in the peace-making process.⁸ Furthermore, when women exerted significant influence in negotiations, agreements were more likely to be implemented.⁹ From the 1998 Good Friday Agreement

5 United Nations News, “Bachelet: Women’s participation forging peace worldwide, ‘vastly worse’ post pandemic”, *Global perspective Human stories* (June 18, 2022), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/01/1109992> (Accessed July 5, 2022).

6 European Parliament Liaison Office in Washington DC, “Shared Values”, *European Parliament* <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/unitedstates/en/eu-us-relations/shared-values> (Accessed July 21, 2022).

7 Marie O’Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin and Thania Paffenholz, “Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes”, *International Peace Institute* (New York: June 2015), <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf>

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

to the 2006 peace talks in Uganda, real-life successes in securing peace affirm again and again the value and necessity of women’s participation in the peace process.¹⁰

WPS in Latin America

Though the region celebrates a number of heroines for their contributions to early battles for independence – María Remedios and Juana Azurduy in Argentina, Maria Quitéria de Jesus in Brazil, Manuela Beltrán in Colombia – the contributions of these celebrated heroines two centuries ago didn’t translate into immediate gains for women in security and defense. Notwithstanding the periods of inaction, Latin American countries have embraced UNSCR1325. Leaders from nearly every country in the region and of every political orientation have voiced their support for the goals laid out in the UN document over twenty years ago. Most notably, since 2000, women in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Chile have been elected president. Women have made even more significant inroads as Defense Ministers: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela have all appointed women to this post.

Though the election and inclusion of women in top jobs is a very visible indicator of progress in the region, often these very celebrated milestones don’t necessarily reflect progress (or lack thereof) being made in security and defense more broadly. There are two widely used indicators of progress on WPS: the adoption of a National Action Plan (NAP), a requirement under UNSCR1325, and the percentage of women participating in security and defense-related activities, like participation in the Armed Forces, peacekeeping missions, and peace processes, when applicable.

In the region, six countries have adopted a National Action Plan. Three more are currently engaged in an effort to draft their first NAP (see Table 2).

¹⁰ United States Agency for International Development, “The United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security”, *usaid.gov* (June 2016), <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/National%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Women%2C%20Peace%2C%20and%20Security.pdf> (Accessed July 5, 2022).

The regional leader in drafting a NAP was Chile, which adopted one in 2009, coming even before Canada (2010) and the United States (2011). Recognizing deficiencies in women’s participation in peace and security, Chile’s NAP calls for a gender perspective when analyzing conflict prevention as well as during and following the conflicts themselves. It emphasizes the protection of women’s rights during and post-conflict, particularly protection from sexual violence in accordance with the UN’s Zero Tolerance Policy. It also stresses the importance of increased women’s participation in peacemaking and security decisions, notably in overseas peacekeeping missions.

Table 2: National Action Plan Status in Latin America and the United States

National Action Plan					
N°	Countries	Year	N°	Countries	Year
1	Argentina	2015	11	Guatemala	2017
2	Bolivia	none	12	Honduras	none
3	Brazil	2017	13	Mexico	2021
4	Chile	2009	14	Nicaragua	none
5	Colombia	none (i)	15	Panama	none
6	Costa Rica	in development	16	Paraguay	2013
7	Cuba	none	17	Peru	none
8	Dominican Republic	none	18	United States	2011
9	Ecuador	in development	19	Uruguay	in development
10	El Salvador	2017	20	Venezuela	none

(i) Ministry of Defense published its own plan

In addition to its progress on creating a framework for WPS, Latin America has also made some progress on increasing female participation in its Armed Forces, though overall rates of participation remain low. On average, female participation in the Armed Forces in the region is 4 %, a number far below parity and below the 30 % threshold of participation needed for minority

participation to be significant.¹¹ Though nearly every country has opened all its forces and specialties to women, participation remains low and uneven. Across Latin America, as is true of other regions, the Air Forces boost the highest rates of female participation (28.7% in the Dominican Republic, the highest of any service in any country in the region.) Table 3 summarizes the rates of female participation in the Armed Forces in Latin America. Most countries declare intentions to increase rates of participation in their NAPs, and Mexico set a threshold of at least 15%.

Table 3: Women's Participation Rates in Latin American Armed Forces (2008, 2016, 2020)¹²

Participation of Women in Armed Forces								
Country	Armed Force		Army		Navy		Air Force	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Argentina	17.3%	13,507	14%	6,930	19%	3,177	26%	3,400
Bolivia(2)	2%	663	2%	N/A	1%	N/A	2%	N/A
Brazil	7.6%	25,507	4%	8,110	13%	1,552	15%	9,848
Chile	10%	6,172	9.8%	3,971	8.4%	1,601	3.16%	600
Colombia	6%	3,654	3.75	1,512	7.9%	899	18.2%	1,243
Costa Rica	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dominican Republic	20.8%	12,309	15.5%	4,420	21.2%	2,540	28.7%	5,349
Ecuador	2.7%	1,173	1.73%	462	4.28%	429	4.21%	282
El Salvador(2)	5.46%	1,312	6.5%(1)	1,070(1)	5.1%(1)	34(1)	10.3%(1)	72(1)
Guatemala	7.7%(3)	1,704(3)	7.7%(3)	1,395	6.7%(2)	122(2)	1%(2)	187(2)

¹¹ Drude Dahlerup, "The Story of the Theory of Critical Mass" Politics and Gender, *Cambridge University Press* (Cambridge: November 28, 2006), 511-522, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X0624114X>

¹² Marcela Donadio, "Women in the Armed and Police Forces", *RESDAL* (Buenos Aires: 2010), <https://www.resdal.org/genero-y-paz/women-in-the-armed-and-police-forces.pdf>; Marcela Donadio, "A Comparative Atlas of Defence in Latin America and Caribbean", *RESDAL* (Buenos Aires: 2016), <https://www.resdal.org/ing/atlas-2016.html>; Women in International Security, "Enhancing Security in Latin America and the Caribbean", *WIS* (2020), <https://wiisglobal.org/programs/enhancing-security-lac/> (Accessed July 21, 2022).

Honduras(2)	4.2%	642	2.5%	373	1.4%	217	0.34%	52
Mexico	12.4%	37,958	11.8%	25,395	14%	12,100	11.6%	463
Paraguay	8.6%(2)	908(2)	N/A	129	N/D	55	N/D	48
Peru	10%	7,830(3)	9%(1)	N/A	7%	N/A	1%	N/A
Trinidad and Tobago	14.3%	726	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Uruguay	11%	2,465	10%	1,432	13%	595	17%	438
Venezuela(2)	21%	76,860	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Panama	N/A	N/A	National Aeronaval Service		National Borders Service		National Migration Service	
			9.3%	367	38.9%	566	N/A	129

Unnumbered: Women in International Security (WIIS)

(1) Came from RESDAL 2008

(2) Came from RESDAL 2016

(3) Calculated using a mix of RESDAL and WIIS information

N/A: Not available

In the context of eroding trust in the Armed Forces and the challenges faced by the security and defense sectors in Latin America, increasing female participation should be viewed as a way to directly address these issues. A number of countries in Latin America, including Peru and Mexico have tried to increase the number of female police officers as a way to improve trust and decrease perceptions of corruption.¹³ Though the Armed Forces in the region generally enjoy high levels of trust,¹⁴ increasing female participation could further fortify this perception. Maintaining high levels of trust will be important for security and defense forces as they prepare to face new and ever more complex challenges.

13 Marie Chêne, “Anti-Corruption and Police Reform”, *Transparency International: The Anti-Corruption Knowledge Hub* (Berlin: May 31, 2010), https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/247_Anti_corruption_police_reform.pdf; Sabrina Karim, “Madame Officer”, *Americas Quarterly* (August 9, 2011) <https://www.americasquarterly.org/fulltextarticle/madame-officer/> (Accessed July 20, 2022); UN Women, “Women’s Police Stations in Latin America Case Study: An Entry Point for Stopping Violence and Gaining Access to Justice (Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua)”, *Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls* (New York: 2011), https://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/security_wps_case_study.pdf

14 Daniel Montalvo, “Do you trust your armed forces?” *AmericasBarometer Insights: 2009* (Vanderbilt University: 2009), <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/10827en.pdf> (Accessed July 20, 2022).

Both indicators have shortcomings. National Action Plans indicate a high-level commitment to WPS at a specific point in time but don't necessarily come with enforcement and accountability mechanisms. Rates of participation are indicative of one of the objectives of UNSCR1325 and are singled out as an objective in many NAPs, such as in Brazil's NAP published in 2017.¹⁵ Rates of participation in specific missions like peacekeeping are in turn affected by broader dynamics. Gender equality, whether or not a state is democratic, population size, modernization, and the size and location of a mission all impact the likelihood that a country chooses to deploy female personnel in peacekeeping missions.¹⁶ States might also be compelled to increase women's participation in peacekeeping missions to defend their reputations, set an example for what women's military participation should look like, or out of a sense of obligation to the international community.¹⁷

Operationalizing WPS to Face Security and Defense Challenges in Latin America

The challenges facing the defense and security sectors in Latin America are multifaceted and complex. Meeting the challenges will require that every country in the region take careful account and consideration of its resources and marshal them appropriately. As such, women should be considered as an asset that can play an important role in addressing these challenges. Rather than treating the WPS agenda as a separate issue, it should be thought of as a way to strengthen the security and defense sectors to better counter threats and guarantee the safety of the citizens of the country and the integrity of its territory.

Consider the challenge of cybersecurity, an issue very important to the security and defense sectors in the region. Cyberdefense is a mission

15 Government of Brazil, "National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security", *Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão* (2017), http://funag.gov.br/loja/download/1220-PNA_ingles_final.pdf (Accessed July 20, 2022).

16 Kerry F. Crawford, James H. Lebovic and Julia M. Macdonald, "Explaining the Variation in Gender Composition of Personnel Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations", *Armed Forces and Society* (2014), 258-281, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609188>

17 Ibid.

area that is well-poised for increased female participation. In the United States, this appears clear to the U.S. military. The U.S. Department of Defense created a television ad titled “hackers” that appears to be aimed at increasing female participation in the cyber domain. The ad shows a young woman in a military uniform confidently working at a computer. The young woman is then shown explaining to her mom that she wants to do this because she “wants to take on the world’s toughest hackers.” She then asks her mom for support. The tagline for the ad is “Their Success Tomorrow Begins With Your Support Today.” In the U.S., currently 24 % of the cyber defense force is made up of women,¹⁸ a rate higher than any of the uniformed services. The U.S. Air Force, which boasts the highest female participation out of the services, has a female participation rate of 20.2 %. The goal of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency is to achieve equal participation by women and men in cybersecurity by 2030.¹⁹

There are examples of success in nearly every mission area in every country in the world. In 2007, an all-female police unit deployed to the UN Peacekeeping mission in Liberia, the first of its kind. This group of women, all from India, played a large role in addressing security issues the country faced, particularly sexual and gender-based violence, passing on their knowledge to the Liberian national police and instructing Liberian women in self-defense.²⁰ As a result of this deployment, Liberian women were inspired to join the country’s security sector: 17 % percent of Liberia’s security sector is made up of women as compared to 6 % nine years before.²¹

18 Nicole Sganga, “Women make up just 24% of the cyber workforce. CISA wants to fix that,” *CBS News* (March 20, 2022), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cyber-workforce-cisa-director-jen-easterly/> (Accessed July 20, 2022).

19 Ibid.

20 UN News, “Hailed as ‘role models,’ all-female Indian police unit departs UN mission in Liberia”, *United Nations* (February 12, 2016), <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/hailed-role-models-all-female-indian-police-unit-departs-un-mission-liberia> (Accessed July 20, 2022).

21 Ibid.

Conclusions

Latin America is on track to add many more examples of success in WPS. To continue to make progress in this area, countries in the region must understand and accept the importance of the WPS agenda as described in the effectiveness arguments for it. It is the logos argument, the effectiveness argument, that matters most for security and defense. Progress on the WPS agenda and on the inclusion of women in the security and defense sectors especially, will lead to progress in addressing the challenges facing the region.

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