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Exploring Brazilian foreign policy towards women: dimensions, outcomes, actors and influences

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Abstract

Mostly, although not exclusively under Workers' Party governments (2003-2016), Brazil has carried out gender-sensitive, women-focused policies in at least three dimensions of its foreign policy: diplomacy, development cooperation, and security. This article examines the foreign-policy outcomes in those three dimensions and identifies the actors and influences responsible for them, with particular attention to the contribution of civil society organizations and the role of the Secretariat of Policies for Women, until recently the main Brazilian state-feminism agency at the federal level.

Keywords: Brazil; foreign policy; women; state-feminism

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Introduction

In recent years, countries such as Sweden and Canada have adopted explicitly feminist foreign policies with objectives, goals, and instruments aimed at supporting the fight against gender discrimination and violence against women (Aggestam and Bergman Rosemond 2016; Tiessen and Swann 2017). Others have not applied this label, but to varying degrees their foreign policies have still shown sensitivity (as opposed to neutrality) toward gender issues and women. Particularly under the Workers' Party governments (2003-2016), Brazil was one of these countries. Beginning with Itamar Franco's and Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administrations (1992-2002), it signed all of the international and regional agreements against violence and discrimination against women (Barsted 2004), and until recently it adopted clearly progressive positions in international forums which deal with women's rights (Sardenberg 2015) and lately in the area of sexual

orientation and gender identity¹. In March 2017, it launched its National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (Brasil 2017), a significant step in the process of involving itself with the United Nations Security Council's Women, Peace and Security agenda, inaugurated in 2000. Brazilian peace operations have also consistently applied measures for gender-mainstreaming (Giannini 2014), and several South-South or trilateral cooperation agreements in which the Brazilian Cooperation Agency has partaken have carried out actions aimed at promoting the rights of women and girls.

In sum, while Brazil neither before nor during the Workers' Party (WP) governments ever defined a foreign policy towards women as such, at least three gender-sensitive, women-focused dimensions of foreign policy were progressively developed. The first dimension is that of the official positions on women's rights in international organizations and forums, aligned since the 1990s with those of transnational feminism. A second includes South-South development cooperation projects and actions focused on women, which began to be implemented by Lula's government, when South-South development cooperation gained a considerable weight in Brazilian foreign policy. A third, also initiated during WP governments, is the involvement in the UN Security Council's agenda on Women, Peace, and Security. This article identifies the foreign-policy outcomes in each dimension and the actors and influences most relevant to their achievement. As far as we know, this is the first contribution on this transversal issue-area of Brazilian foreign policy as such.

The article also provides input to the debate among analysts of Brazilian foreign policy regarding the extent of the increase of openness in the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) to the influence of civil society actors after redemocratization (França and Sanchez Badin 2010; Cason and Power 2009; Pinheiro and Milani 2012; Farias and Ramanzini Jr. 2015). According to the prevailing point of view, since the adoption of the 1988 Constitution, Brazilian foreign policy has been more pluralistic, participatory, and hence more democratic, with new stakeholders contributing to its formulation along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Cason and Power 2009). In areas such as development and global health, post-1988 Brazilian foreign policy undeniably increased its openness to the influence of powerful domestic activism (Pinheiro and Milani 2012). In addition, practically all bodies within the executive branch (especially ministries and secretariats under the Presidential Cabinet) have some degree of competence to act on an international level (França and Sanchez Badin 2010). Nevertheless, questions have been raised as to the extent of this "horizontalization" and the need to distinguish influence from mere participation (Farias and Ramanzini Jr. 2015). Indeed, analyses of specific areas (Pomeroy 2016; Santoro and Borges 2017; Duarte and Lima 2017) show major differences among them.

This article is basically a foreign-policy study, but it also speaks to the subject of gender and politics, specifically to the theorization on state-feminism by feminist institutionalism, which

¹ Brazil submitted a draft resolution on Human Rights and Sexual Orientation at the 60th session of the UN Human Rights Commission in 2004, but later withdrew it. In 2011 it voted in favor of a pioneering resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity approved by the UN Human Rights Council (Resolution 17/19).

studies the role of agencies in promoting policies for women and the advocacy by the feminist movement within the state (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Lovenduski 2005; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007). Research on Brazil (Bohn 2010; Avelar 2013) has shown that in areas of domestic policy, linkages between the feminist movement and state-feminism worked fairly effectively, particularly following the creation of the Secretariat of Policies for Women (*Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres*, SPM) in 2003. Here, the partnership will be examined in reference to foreign policy. Besides attempting to evaluate horizontalization in each foreign policy dimension, – that is, if and how civil society contributed to their foreign policy outcomes, – the role played (or not) by the collaboration between the feminist movement and SPM – the main exponent of Brazilian state-feminism in this horizontalization - will also be the object of reflection.

We have used primary sources (minutes of the meetings of the National Council for the Rights of Woman, National Plans for Policies on Women, material from the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (*Agência Brasileira de Cooperação*, ABC), and international organizations dealing with South-South cooperation projects, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, among others), secondary literature, and also five semi-structured interviews with officials and activists who participated in relevant ways in the three dimensions considered. Two of them requested anonymity, for which reason they are cited only in terms of their function.

Beside this introduction, the article consists of three sections and the conclusions. In each of the sections, a different dimension of Brazilian women-focused foreign policy is examined. The time period under analysis mainly covers the Workers' Party administrations, when all three dimensions were present. However, reference is also made to prior developments going back to the 1990s (in diplomatic positions on women's rights) and the results of the processes previously initiated but made more concrete in the post-impeachment period (in the area of Women, Peace and Security).

Brazil's diplomatic positions on women's rights in international forums

Brazil has signed both global and regional commitments on women's rights² and has also been an active participant in the discussion forums in which they are periodically debated and revised, including the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the OAS Inter-American Commission on Women, the ECLAC Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Mercosul Meetings of Ministers and Higher Authorities on Women.

Official Brazilian delegations have been very active at UN-sponsored intergovernmental conferences which in the 1990's made significant advances on reaching an international consensus on women's rights. The defense of women's rights as human rights in tune with the results of

² On a global level, the most important one is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol (1999); and on a regional level, the 1994 OAS Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women.

the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the defense of sexual and reproductive rights in terms of the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (Cairo, 1994) and the approval without reservations of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) placed Brazil in the progressive bloc in the ever more intense confrontation between governments favorable to women's rights from a feminist perspective, and conservative governments, led by the Vatican (Otto 1996; Soares 1995; Corrêa 2018). Brazilian activism ran parallel to the country's recovery of its international role as defender of multilateralism and human rights once redemocratization began.

Until the recent change of course by the Bolsonaro government³, Brazil maintained a consistent, coherent diplomatic stance, in tune with domestic and transnational feminist positions and with its broader stance on human rights (Alves 2009). In the words of Sardenberg (2015, 115), Brazil was "radical in Beijing in 1995 and still radical in Beijing +20," leading efforts to move ahead with the women's rights global agenda or, at a minimum, to avoid setbacks, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive rights, the main target of conservative attacks. Thus, by way of example, at the 49th session of the CSW in 2005, convoked to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform (Beijing + 10), the Brazilian delegation joined with others to block the U.S.' proposal to add a paragraph against sexual and reproductive rights and abortion to the declaration, which finally was withdrawn⁴. While on other occasions similar efforts were not as successful⁵, it becomes important to note Brazil's decisive role in the formulation of the "Brasilia Consensus" at the 11th Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which developed the concepts of comprehensive health, sexual health, and reproductive health (Miguel 2014, 44) and also in the building of the "Montevideo Consensus" which linked sexual and reproductive rights with sustainable development at the first Meeting of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2014) (Barsted 2014, 34).

Collaboration between civil society organizations, including feminist organizations, and the government in the construction of Brazil's international positions on human rights had begun in October 1993, with Itamar Franco as president and Fernando Henrique Cardoso – to be succeeded by Celso Amorim – as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Itamaraty henceforth established participatory mechanisms in preparation for the UN's intergovernmental conferences on social issues by means of which the reports required by the organization were written and Brazil's positions in the

³ In March 2019, at the 63rd session of the CSW in New York, the Brazilian delegation stated that it had reservations regarding the conference's final draft because the mentioning of sexual and reproductive rights could be construed as promoting abortion. It also dissociated itself of the use of the term "gender" as different from "sex," i.e. the biological differences between man and woman (Quero 2019).

⁴ See the report on Beijing + 10 by the director of SPM's Sub Secretariat for Institutional Relations at the 5th Meeting of the National Council on the Rights for the Woman, April 5, 2005 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

⁵ Brazil unsuccessfully supported keeping mention of "sexual and reproductive rights" in the document coming out of the 2012 meeting in Costa Rica of the OAS Inter-American Women's Commission. The expression was replaced by "access to sexual and reproductive health while respecting national legislation." See the report of SPM's Chief Minister at the 34th Meeting of the CNDM of December 12-13, 2012 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016). Equally unsuccessful was the attempt to include the expression "sexual and reproductive rights" in the Sustainable Development Objectives.

negotiations were defined. Itamaraty needed the social organization's specialized knowledge in order to prepare reports and positions on various issues (Alves 2001, 207), and the UN required the involvement of civil society in the conferences. Some NGOs specialized in promoting women's rights through lobbying the Brazilian government which had emerged in the 1970's (well aware of the potential domestic impact of international norms) now became actively involved in these mechanisms.⁶ Their contribution was crucial both to the official preparatory processes⁷ and to the process of networking and building common positions among the feminist organizations in Brazil and Latin America (Álvarez 1998).

Thus, a common agenda of demands from the Brazilian feminist movement – in coordination with that of Latin America – facilitated the work of the official negotiators at the conferences. For example, the Brazilian position at the International Conference on Population and Development was based on the “Letter to Brasilia, our rights for Cairo 1994” a document containing the common feminist position in defense of reproductive rights. The approval without reservations of the Beijing Platform of Action was in large measure a result of advocacy work by Brazilian feminists, who established a common national position and together with Latin American feminists constructed a regional position. These groups also interacted intensively with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before and after the conference, while participating in large numbers in the official delegation (Haddad 2007). These results, particularly the coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and feminist organizations, were favorably assessed by activists (Soares 1995; Oliveira 2004).

Since Brazilian progressive diplomatic positions did not depend on legislative approval – except in case of treaty ratifications, – they were not generally affected by the fierce confrontation on women's rights (with focus on sexual and reproductive rights) taking place in the National Congress (Matos and Biroli 2018). When – as in the ratification process of CEDAW optional protocol in 2002 – legislators had to give their endorsement, polarization mirrored the domestic debate⁸.

Under WP governments beginning in 2003, cooperation between feminist organizations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was handled by the Presidential Cabinet's Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM). With its broad competencies to formulate policies towards women in all areas, SPM became Brazil's main state-feminism agency at the federal level. Public agencies engaged with women's rights ideally operate as conveyor belts for the demands of women's movements to the state as a whole (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Lovenduski 2005). The strategic collaboration among *femocrats* (feminists within the state bureaucracy who promote women's causes) and feminist organizations

⁶ Among the most active were *Cidadania, Estudo, Pesquisa, Informação e Ação* (CEPIA) and the *Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria* (CFEMEA), with a generalist scope, along with others specialized in more specific areas, particularly reproductive health, such as the *Rede Feminista de Saúde* (Feminist Health Network).

⁷ The National Preparatory Committee for the Beijing Conference, presided over by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the participation of several ministries, CNDM and the states Councils on Women's Rights, organized a series of seminars on various themes where the main contributions were those of feminist activists and academics. The country report presented by Itamaraty at the conference was based on the seminar's reports (Soares 1995; Alves 2001).

⁸ Fearing that it could be used to soften Brazilian legislation on abortion, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops asked to delay deliberations on the protocol in the Senate. Some Senators –among them the then WP Senator Marina Silva - agreed, although following the clarifications by the women's movement the postponement was rejected and CEDAW optional protocol approved (Diniz 2012).

and women/feminists occupying other positions in the administration has been conceptualized as a “strategic feminist partnership” (Mazur 2002, 190, 191), a state-feminism mechanism proved effective in promoting policies for women in numerous national contexts, particularly those where the women’s movement did not manage to penetrate the structures of formal political representation. This is the case of Brazil, where despite the limited representation of women in the legislative and executive branches of government, there have for decades existed both a strong and diversified feminist movement (Alves and Pitanguy 1985; Álvarez 1990; 2014; Pinto 2003; Sardenberg and Costa 2017) and a dense network of government agencies and political mechanisms for women, of which the SPM is the prime example. Avelar and Rangel (2017, 270-271) corroborated the findings of studies on state-feminism in other national contexts in showing that substantive political representation of women in Brazil occurs fundamentally through extra parliamentary venues, including bureaucratic agencies and participatory institutions made up of members of civil society and governments. Sardenberg and Costa (2017) refer to the Brazilian model of representing women’s interests developed during the WP governments as “participatory state-feminism.”

Research on SPM by Bohn (2010) confirms these assessments. According to Bohn, the status of the SPM within the government⁹ and the relationship of cooperation (as opposed to cooptation or capture) which it had with the women’s movement made it a fairly effective agency of state-feminism. The conveying of feminist demands was promoted by the integration of the National Council on the Rights of Woman (*Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher*, CNDM) within its structure¹⁰, as well as by the participatory manner in which SPM formulated its action plans (National Plans for Policies for Women) through broad consultative processes (Conferences on Policies for Women). This participatory methodology produced undeniable advances in policies for women (in the fight against domestic violence, welfare rights, and comprehensive health care, among others).

It can be argued that during WP governments a feminist strategic partnership also became evident in the specific foreign policy dimension of the construction of international positions on women’s rights. The partners were the women’s movement, SPM, and Itamaraty, with CNDM as the institutional arena where their interaction took place. The content of the positions basically draw on the feminist consensus reached during the preceding decade and already conveyed by Itamar Franco’s and Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s diplomacies, although on issues such as the fight against violence against women there was a stronger emphasis on the interaction of gender violence with economic and racial factors, in line with the domestic discourse and politics. Thus,

⁹ Created as an autonomous secretariat under the office of the Presidency of the Republic, SPM had ministerial status between 2010 and 2015. As state ministers, the ministers of SPM had the same rank as other ministers, a fact that, along with SPM’s strategic position within the Presidency of the Republic, made easier the tasks of coordinating gender-mainstreaming policies through the administration.

¹⁰ CNDM was created in 1985 by the Sarney government as a consultative body and was crucial in channeling the demands of the women’s movement to the Constituent Assembly. After 1989 it lost weight, but reemerged in 2003, when it was incorporated into SPM. It now had a tripartite structure which included representatives of government bodies, civil society organizations, and individual experts. During the WP governments, the organizations and networks of the feminist and women’s movement considered participating in the CNDM a strategic priority in their efforts to influence the federal government (Avelar and Rangel 2017, 280).

there were not significant differences between the positions adopted by WP governments and their predecessors'. What changed with WP was how feminist consensus were translated to diplomatic positions: through SPM (set up by Lula da Silva government to meet feminist demands) and with the agreement of the two other members of the feminist strategic partnership. In turn, the feminist strategic partnership worked thanks to its institutional basis of participative state-feminism (SPM plus feminist movement represented in CNDM) which didn't exist before. We look now at the role of each of the members of the partnership in their building.

Although SPM's formal areas of competence did not include that of negotiating and defining a Brazilian position (França and Sanchez Badin 2010), from 2004 onwards Itamaraty ceded to its Chief-Minister the presidency of Brazilian delegations to international forums (Miguel 2014, 45) beginning with the UN, the OAS, ECLAC, and Mercosul and later the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) and the Commonwealth of Portuguese Speaking Countries (*Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa*, CPLP). More significantly, SPM was given broad autonomy in fixing Brazil's position in negotiations, without having to consult with the government¹¹ and for the elaboration and presentation of the reports required by international organizations. Thus, SPM had both domestic responsibilities as the main promoter of women's rights and policies within government and the external responsibility of establishing Brazilian positions on the global agenda of women's rights.

The minutes of CNDM meetings document the good reception with which the SPM's international initiatives were met. Between 2003 and 2015, SPM regularly informed counsellors on its participation in international forums¹². The interventions of the councillors representing civil society organizations strongly supported the SPM's diplomatic activities¹³. Beyond the substance of the positions, also hailed as positive was the government's willingness to include civil society representatives in its delegations and as independent participants in international forums.¹⁴ CNDM, where the organizations of the women's movement were well represented, granted legitimacy to SPM's international performance. There was an attempt to go even further and make it a formal body for channeling the demands of civil society on foreign policy issues. To this end, a Technical Chamber on International Affairs (*Câmara Técnica de Assuntos Internacionais*) was established within CNDM in 2004¹⁵. With a tripartite makeup, it benefitted from the participation of individual

¹¹ See talk given by Minister Nilcéa Freire at the 3rd Meeting of the CNDM on September 2, 2004 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

¹² The first extensive report on the international area was presented by the Director of the SPM's Sub Secretariat on Institutional Relations at the 2nd Meeting of the CNDM, April 3-4 2003 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016). Points regarding the international agenda were discussed at almost all the CNDM meetings until 2015.

¹³ See, for example, the contributions of council members Bethânia Ávila and Maria José Araújo at the 37th Meeting of the CNDM, October 1-2 2013 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

¹⁴ At the Specialized Meeting of Women of Mercosul (*Reunião Especializada de Mulheres do Mercosul*, REMM) in November 2004, SPM proposed the admission of NGOs in that forum. See SPM contribution at the 3rd Meeting of the CNDM on September 2, 2004 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

¹⁵ CNDM's Technical Chambers, including the Technical Chamber for International Affairs, were approved at a special session of the CNDM in December 2004 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

activists and civil society organizations with international experience, as well as that of government representatives. However, while a list of issues for a possible agenda was produced¹⁶, there was little further progress¹⁷. In any event, activists and organizations present in CNDM collaborated closely with SPM's diplomatic activities, either by participating in official delegations, – a practice which had been in place since the 1990's, – or by acting as specialists in international bodies on women's rights as directed by SPM¹⁸.

Itamaraty's contribution to the functioning of the feminist strategic partnership was also highly important. As mentioned, it (informally) delegated competences to SPM so that the latter could define Brazil's diplomatic positions autonomously. In addition, it became directly involved in the participatory processes of formulating and overseeing externally oriented policies towards women. Starting with the reestablishment of CNDM within SPM and in response to an explicit request by Celso Amorim, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Chief-Minister of SPM¹⁹, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly participated in the meetings of the CNDM and in its Technical Chamber for International Affairs. They also participated in the four Conferences on Policies for Women (2004, 2007, 2011, 2016) and gradually took on responsibilities related to the implementation of the few but ever more numerous actions with an international dimension called for in the three National Plans for Policies on Women²⁰, while also taking part in the committee monitoring the third National Plan (Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres 2013). On a day-to-day basis, cooperation between SPM and the Foreign Ministry's Division of Human Rights and Social Issues, responsible for the organization of Brazilian delegations, was described as very fluid, as was the cooperation between SPM and the Brazilian delegations to the UN in New York and Geneva²¹. In sum, during WP governments, the Brazilian diplomatic apparatus, in collaboration with activists and *femocrats*, continued promoting feminist values and demands internationally, as it had been the case with previous governments since 1993²².

¹⁶ See meeting of the Technical Chamber of International Affairs on August 28, 2011 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

¹⁷ At the 31st Meeting of the CNDM, April 1-2 2012, it was noted that the Technical Chambers had been created but were paralyzed (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

¹⁸ One example is the appointment in 2005 at SPM behest of Leila Linhares Barsted, the director of the feminist organization CEPIA, as expert coordinator (independent of the government) of the mechanism for monitoring the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women. See Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the CNDM, April 5, 2005 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

¹⁹ See Minister Emilia Fernandes' report at the 2nd Meeting of the CNDM, December 3, 2003 (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher 2016).

²⁰ The first National Plan on Policies for Women (2005-2007) provided for only one action of an international nature: Action 5.1.6. on the inclusion of a gender module in the training courses of the Instituto Rio Branco (SPM 2004). See in Notes 28 and 30 the actions foreseen in the Third National Plan on Policies for Women (Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres 2013) on development cooperation and security.

²¹ Interview with diplomat assigned to the Foreign Ministry Division of Human Rights and Social Issues, June 8, 2016.

²² Plausibly, institutionalization contributed to keep both the consistency of positions and Brazilian leadership in a more and more demanding context, marked by the multiplication of international forums on women's rights, an increasingly complex agenda (intersecting with issues like development, security, work, environment, etc.) and the need to confront, in each negotiation - in particular in the revisions every five years of the implementation progresses of the Beijing Platform - coalitions of conservative states contesting the rights already agreed. Without the intervention of SPM *femocrats* and without their institutionalized links with the feminist movement and Itamaraty, the agenda could have hardly been managed with equal efficiency.

Of this dimension of Brazilian foreign policy, it can be said that state-feminism helped achieve a considerable degree of horizontalization²³.

Initiatives with focus on women in South-South development cooperation

In partnership with multilateral agencies (particularly the United Nations Population Fund – UNPF –, with which Brazil has had a cooperation agreement since 2002) and/or national development cooperation agencies, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency has participated in South-South development cooperation projects by means of which some of the practices or “social technologies” in the areas of women’s health and the fight against gender violence successfully developed in Brazil have been disseminated in African and Latin American countries. The implementation of the Brazilian model of human milk banks in 24 countries, which began in 2005 (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação 2018), or the creation of a specialized police force for dealing with women who are victims of gender violence in Haiti (United Nations Population Fund 2014) are examples of this effort.

While some of these practices were originally developed through participatory processes involving the collaboration of the women’s movement with the government, their dissemination as South-South development cooperation projects and actions (foreign policy outcomes) followed an intergovernmental logic which left little space to contributions from civil society. In fact, the same can be said of the activities of ABC as a whole (Milani 2017, 70-71). In other national contexts, participation of civil society in the formulation of policy on international development cooperation occurs principally on the basis of collaboration between NGOs responsible for the design and execution of cooperation projects (funded wholly or partially by governments) and government agencies for international cooperation. The NGOs’ technical staff and activists form a community of practices with a great degree of specialization that usually plays a fundamental role in the formulation and oversight of policies on development cooperation. But Brazil’s South-South development cooperation does not fund NGO projects. It operates either directly (government agencies make their technical staff available for projects) or it is channeled through international agencies with their own technical staff such as the UNDP or the UNPF. NGOs may be called on to collaborate in the execution of projects, but their margin of autonomy is restricted and they do not influence policy formulation (Leite et al. 2014; Berrón and Brant 2015). Most Brazilian NGOs that work on development cooperation do so through projects funded by third countries/organizations in Brazil. The small number that carry out projects in third countries do so either by employing resources of their own or those that come from sources outside the Brazilian government (Santos and Kraychete 2016).

²³ The feminist strategic partnership among the feminist movement, Itamaraty and SPM was broken off abruptly with President Rousseff’s impeachment. When the Temer government came to office, the *femocrats* were displaced from the SPM, which thus lost its status as an agency of state-feminism.

Thus, the foreign policy outcomes considered in this section (South-South development cooperation projects and actions focused on women) are the product of the collaboration among Brazilian governmental bodies, international organizations, and/or national cooperation agencies in partner countries which fund trilateral cooperation projects. The network of collaborators varies from case to case depending on the type of project (bilateral, trilateral, trilateral + international body). There are also variations in ABC's degree of involvement in the projects, which can range from a mere channeling of resources to an organization to the actual coordination²⁴. The rules applying to Brazil's South-South development cooperation require that the partnership be demand-driven (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação 2012), meaning that the cooperation process should be initiated by a request from the other Southern partner. Only after this request ABC would initiate the cooperation process, including the elaboration of the project and the designation of those governmental agencies which should participate in its implementation. However, things do not always work this way, neither in general nor in relation to the projects targeting women.

The project "Brazil and Africa: fighting poverty and empowering women through South-South cooperation" focused on Mozambique (United Nations Population Fund 2018) exemplifies the distortion that sometimes takes place between theory and practice, in addition to the excessive prominence that funding partners in the North can gain. This project, carried out between 2015 and 2017, belonged to the category "trilateral + international body," with the participation of the British government as the principal source of funding through its international cooperation agency, the Department for International Development (DFID) and also as co-executor along with the UNDP. It sought to transfer Brazilian good practices to Mozambique in the areas of social protection, the economic empowerment of women, and the combatting of violence against women and girls. In spite of being framed as (trilateral) South-South cooperation, the project was entirely formulated and proposed by DFID, which even entered into contact with the prospective Brazilian government bodies which could be in charge of its implementation (the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics and the Institute of Applied Economic Research) before presenting the project proposals to ABC itself or to Mozambican authorities²⁵. As has been noted by other analysts (Abdenur and Fonseca 2013), the North-South mindset is still more present in South-South development cooperation than it at first glance might seem to be the case.

Two other factors limit ABC's capacity to develop initiatives targeting women: on the one hand, the lack of gender-mainstreaming guidelines for South-South cooperation²⁶, and on the other the dispersion of projects among the Agency's various sectors (technical coordinations) without a common oversight body²⁷.

²⁴ Interview with Cecilia Malaguti do Prado, general-coordinator, General Coordination of Trilateral Technical Cooperation with International Organizations, ABC, July 18, 2016.

²⁵ Interview with Cecilia Malaguti do Prado.

²⁶ There is only a generic commitment made in signing the Beijing Platform to apply gender mainstreaming to all public policies and in some declarations approved in the context of CPLP.

²⁷ Interview with Cecilia Malaguti do Prado.

The top-down, externally-dominated logic described above left little space for SPM's *femocrats* to shape this dimension of Brazilian foreign policy towards women. They were responsible, however, for some relevant initiatives, such as (in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) the inclusion of several goals for South-South development cooperation targeted at women in the Third (and, to date, last) National Plan on Policies for Women, (2013-2015)²⁸. However, given the lack of civil society input, SPM acted here more as a governmental body than as a member of a strategic feminist partnership.

The Agenda on Women, Peace and Security: the National Action Plan

On March 8, 2017 (the International Women's Day), Brazil made its National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security public (Brasil 2017) in a powerful show of the country's commitment to the agenda laid out in the series of resolutions beginning with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). This and nine further resolutions²⁹ direct governments to promote the participation of women and the protection of their rights throughout the entire cycle of armed conflicts in the various roles they play or might play (among others a greater participation in decision-making in peacetime), in addition to gender-mainstreaming policies in all dimensions of the agenda.

Some time before the launching of its NAP, Brazil had already made signals of adapting to the agenda. Particularly, as coordinator of the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Brazil consistently applied UN's gender-mainstreaming guidelines for peace missions (a requirement for taking part in such missions) and enjoyed a cooperative relationship with MINUSTAH's gender unit (Giannini et al. 2015). The decision to increase the participation of women in the peace missions of which Brazil was a part, included in the Multiyear Plan (*Plano Plurianual*) covering 2012 to 2015, is another example of Brazilian conformity to the agenda.

Conformity was not driven from below by feminist and women's organizations. Significantly, the WPS agenda was never discussed at CNDM. And though the last National Plan on Policies for Women (2013-2015) contained goals as to the participation of women in peace missions³⁰,

²⁸ Goal 1.1.8. Supporting bilateral cooperation on policies for women, in the countryside and the city, among the countries of Mercosul; Goal 1.2.6. Supporting bilateral cooperation on labor policies for women, particularly in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean; Goal 4.4.7. Promoting international cooperation and new bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperation to attend to Brazilian women in situations of violence, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation abroad; Goal 6.1.7. Creating processes of international exchange and cooperation, particularly in the South-South context, for the dissemination of practices and policies in sustainable development from the perspective of equality between men and women; Goal 7.1.4. Supporting bilateral cooperation regarding policies for rural women among South-South countries and particularly in the context of Mercosul (Brazil 2013).

²⁹ Security Council Resolutions 1829 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019).

³⁰ Goal 4.3.28. Identifying the functions to be performed and mapping the competencies necessary for the execution of the functions by women with Peacekeeping Forces. 4.3.29 Contributing to the skill-building and training of Peacekeeping Forces in the perspective of gender; Goal 4.3.31. Establishing partnerships in the process of preventing STDs/HIV and the combating gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts.

they were proposed at the behest of the Ministry of Defense (rather than by representatives of the women's movement³¹) as the result of external demands, particularly from the UN and UN Women, with which the Ministry of Defense in 2012 had signed a Letter of Intent regarding possible cooperation on the training of peacekeepers on gender issues (Ministério da Defesa 2012).

The initiative for the formulation of the NAP was taken by Itamaraty³², which in October 2015 – before President Rousseff's impeachment – began to coordinate a working group to this end with the participation of the Ministries of Defense, of Justice and Public Safety, and of Human Rights³³ as well as of a representative of UN Women. Also participating as the only representative of civil society was the Igarapé Institute, a small Rio de Janeiro-based think-tank specialized in security which played and continues to play an extremely important role in the promotion of the WPS agenda in Brazil.

The specialized knowledge required to manage the WPS agenda and particularly the specialized knowledge needed for the formulation of the NAP explains the leading role of the Igarapé in the process. The researcher in charge of gender and security at the Institute, experienced in the WPS agenda through her work with the Security and Defense Network of Latin America (*Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina*, RESDAL) acted almost on her own as *norm entrepreneur*. She gradually came into closer contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which quickly recognized her expertise and made her an indispensable collaborator in the process of the formulation of the National Action Plan. She produced reports and organized seminars and other training activities, some of them jointly with the Pandiá Calógeras Institute, a think-tank under the Ministry of Defense³⁴.

Beside contributing significantly to the public process of formulating the NAP, the Igarapé Institute promoted civil society oversight of the plan and of the WPS agenda as a whole. Feminist and women's organizations had not participated in the preparatory seminars nor contributed to the formulation of the NAP. The channel which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created for collecting suggestions from civil society, an email address, was not really effective³⁵ and there is no evidence of any more substantial efforts to invite in traditional organizations that might have been interested³⁶.

After the publication of the NAP, the Igarapé Institute, following the examples from other national networks, took the initiative in organizing a network of activists and academics with the goal of promoting the WPS agenda through civil society, the Brazilian Women, Peace and Security Network, constituted on March 29th, 2017 in Brasilia. It did so by using the personal contacts of the researcher in charge of the area (which thereby became a *movement entrepreneur*)

³¹ Interview with diplomat assigned to the Ministry of Defense, May 4, 2016.

³² According to those interviewed at Itamaraty, Brazil's participation in UN missions played an important part in the decision to formulate a National Action Plan.

³³ When the process started, SPM was part of the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights, created by the Temer government in October 2015 by merging three secretariats. In May 2016 it was transferred to the Ministry of Justice and Citizenship.

³⁴ Interviews with Renata A. Giannini, researcher, Instituto Igarapé, June 24, 2016; and with Mariana F. Lima, former researcher, Instituto Pandiá Calógeras (Ministry of Defense), April 18, 2016.

³⁵ Interview with Renata A. Giannini.

³⁶ The association *Mulheres Pela Paz*, for example, is one of the established feminist organizations that promote the WPS agenda.

to summon a set of young activists with little relationship with traditional feminist or women's organizations and also some academics interested in the intersection of the areas of international relations, security, politics, and gender. The makeup of the network³⁷ reflects the pluralization and multiplication of the feminist camp in Latin American societies (including Brazil) or, to use the term coined by Sonia Álvarez, their "side streaming" (Álvarez 2014). The first result of the creation of the network was a study by two members (Drumond and Rebelo 2018) which analyzed the NAP and made suggestions for a future version³⁸.

While it may be too early to draw definite conclusions, particularly given the changes currently occurring in foreign policy following the coming to power of the Bolsonaro government (Casarões and Fledes 2019), it would appear that Brazilian involvement in the WPS agenda is starting gradually to show more openness to the influence of actors from civil society. Interestingly, this would be happening through non-institutionalized channels and without the mediation of a state-feminism agency.

Conclusion

This article examined the three dimensions which comprise Brazilian foreign policy towards women: diplomatic positions on women's rights, South-South development cooperation projects and actions targeting women, and the WPS agenda. It identified the foreign policy outcomes in each and also the actors and influences responsible for them. It assessed the contribution of civil society, if any, to each dimension and, specifically, the role played (or not played) by the feminist movement and by the Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM), which was the main state-feminism agency in Brazil during WP administrations.

The dimension most open to civil society influence, and hence more horizontalized, was that of women's rights diplomacy, where official positions were based on points of consensus previously achieved by national feminist organizations and oriented by transnational feminism at large. During WP governments, a feminist strategic partnership among the women's movement, Itamaraty and the Secretariat of Policies for Women, under the leadership of the latter, was responsible of Brazil's progressive position and leading role in international forums. In this dimension, then, horizontalization was made possible through a mechanism of state-feminism.

In the dimension of South-South development cooperation, the projects and actions targeting women in which Brazil participated followed an intergovernmental logic, not different from the one that guides the Brazilian model of South-South cooperation as a whole. While several of the disseminated practices and social technologies were indeed built with the active participation of

³⁷ In addition to academics in the area of International Relations, also participating in the early meetings of the WPS network were representatives of the *Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil*, the *Associação Libertária Travestis e Mulheres Transexuais*, the association *Elas Existem*, the NGO Promundo, and the *Rede de Juventude Religiosa*, among others.

³⁸ In March 2019 the NAP was renewed, unmodified, for four more years.

social actors, their international diffusion through South-South development cooperation, in large measure a result of the demands of external partners and donors, was not promoted by those same actors. The government's reluctance to fund development NGOs has so far discouraged the formation of a civil society constituency capable of influencing and overseeing Brazilian South-South cooperation. This is true in general and also in relation to women-focused projects and actions. Without direct civil society input (feminist or other), this dimension was the least horizontalized of the three. SPM, for its part, had a propositive, though limited role in the shaping of South-South cooperation goals targeting women.

In turn, Brazilian involvement in the WPS agenda, including the formulation of the first NAP, was mainly the result of a combination of interagency cooperation and international influences, in this case the UN. Still, Itamaraty's receptivity to the Igarapé Institute's contributions in the formulation of the National Action Plan does show that in the recently constituted WPS agenda the Ministry of Foreign Affairs values and needs the specialized knowledge of civil society. While more traditional feminist organizations have specialized in the agenda of international women's rights, we seem to be observing the emergence of a specific constituency with a strong component of specialists in security/foreign policy that defend feminist values without belonging to the traditional organizations of the feminist movement. It remains to be seen if it will survive in the context of the change in course in foreign policy under the current ultraconservative, explicitly anti-feminist Bolsonaro government.

Indeed, both the evolution of the WPS agenda in Brazil and the continuity of South-South cooperation projects with a focus on women are at present difficult to predict. In contrast with Brazil's diplomatic position on women's rights, which has already changed dramatically, there has been no clear indication thus far of significant changes in these two other dimensions. This is perhaps due to the strong influence of external actors in their shaping, although it seems unlikely that, for example, references to "gender" remain in the official foreign policy documents. Be that as it may, change and continuity will have to be evaluated by future research.

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