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# The Brazilian participation in UNIFIL: raising Brazil's profile in international peace and security in the Middle East?

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## Abstract

Brazil's involvement in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since 2011 has allowed for a direct participation as part of international peace and security efforts in the Middle East, strengthening the country's credentials as it presents itself as a 'peace provider'. Informed by academic contributions on issues of responsibility and recognition, the article discusses Brazil's engagement with particular reference to UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force, and the implications of such participation for its broader foreign and defence policy agenda.

Keywords: Brazil, UNIFIL, Middle East.

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## Introduction

In November 2011, Lebanese President Michel Sleiman visited the Brazilian frigate 'União' stationed in the port of Beirut. The visit had a specific symbolic dimension; it was the first time that a Lebanese President was visiting a ship participating in the Maritime Task Force (MTF) of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). President Sleiman did not only visit the ship, but also spoke with the Brazilian officers of Lebanese descent that were part of the ship's crew<sup>1</sup>. This episode touches on two elements that shape Brazil's contemporary engagement with Lebanon; the diaspora connection, as well as the current contribution to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping efforts in the country. While the diaspora connection between Brazil and Lebanon has been covered widely within the literature (Karam 2007), here we concentrate on the contribution to UNIFIL, particularly to the MTF, which has only

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous interview with Brazilian diplomat, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brasília, May 16, 2017.



recently been the focus of scholarly attention by Brazilian analysts (Abdenur 2016; Franco 2016). This involvement is understood as part of a broader Brazilian effort to engage with issues of international peace and security in the Middle East, contributing to project Brazil's role as a responsible actor<sup>2</sup>.

Our claim is that the Brazilian interest not only is limited to a strategic component associated with the deployment of the Brazilian Armed Forces in the Middle East, but part of a broader foreign policy project that involves the projection of Brazilian influence and presence, motivated by a particular understanding of Brazil's potential contribution in the Middle East. The involvement in UNIFIL, particularly in the MTF, is associated with projecting the image of a responsible power capable of having a positive influence in the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in a highly volatile region such as the Middle East. In this article we highlight that the Brazilian participation in UNIFIL, via the deployment of a contingent and a frigate and with the leadership of the MTF, strengthens the strategic goals of the Brazilian state in increasing its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, as outlined in recent defence policy documents.

The article starts with a discussion on responsibility and recognition associated with Brazil's involvement in peace and security, particularly in UN peacekeeping missions. The second part presents a brief discussion of Brazil's involvement in the Middle East, with a specific focus on contemporary efforts. The article then presents UNIFIL and the Brazilian involvement in the mission, including in the MTF, as well as the defence diplomacy opportunities influenced by the participation in the mission. The article ends with a conclusion which revisits the discussion on responsibility and recognition and presents a reflection on Brazil's further involvement in UN peacekeeping. Overall, the article makes extensive use of primary sources such as Brazilian diplomatic communication obtained via the *Lei de Acesso a Informação* as well as interviews with Brazilian diplomats and military officers, including those who served within UNIFIL.

## Brazilian responsibility and recognition within international peace and security

In recent years, contributions within the discipline of International Relations have treated the relationship between countries of the Global South and international responsibility (Narlikar 2011). This debate is in large part influenced by the rise of China and most of the academic contributions on the topic have focused on the Chinese case (Foot 2013; Deng 2014). In the present article, we claim that these contributions help in understanding Brazil's involvement in UNIFIL, particularly on how they conceptualize the notion of responsibility. Narlikar (2011, 1608) defines responsibility as, "the ability and willingness to provide public goods, ie goods that are nonexcludable and non-rival [...] the provision of public goods entails some costs,

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2 Brazilian Embassy in Beirut to *Secretaria de Estado* (SERE), telegram 20, January 12, 2012.

and a responsible rising or great power shows both ability and willingness to incur these costs”. Foot associates responsibility with a state’s capacity to engage in the “provision of international order” (Foot 2013, 23). In Liping’s (2001, 17) account, responsible powers play a role in international society beyond their national interest but also in the provision of public goods such as peace. In addition, these countries “take their obligations seriously” and participate in the formulation of rules.

Our contribution focuses on Brazil’s international responsibility as a self-proclaimed ‘peace provider’, illustrated by its contribution to UNIFIL, particularly to the mission’s innovative MTF. States participate in peacekeeping operations for different reasons (Sotomayor Velázquez 2010) and in this article, we discuss how participating in UN peacekeeping can be understood as part of a state’s efforts to achieve international recognition. Krishnasamy (2001) claims that countries of the Global South expect international recognition due to their peacekeeping engagements and that recognition can be granted on many levels, such as within the UN system, extended in terms of greater participation in decision-making processes, or as social recognition, such as that which derives from the affirmation of a country’s positive attributes by its peers. Drawing on Suzuki (2008), we consider how Brazil’s involvement in UNIFIL can be understood as part of an effort to achieve recognition as a “legitimate great power”. Participating in these missions is, according to Suzuki (2008), a way for states to express their credentials as valuable members of the international community in initiatives that do not challenge the existing status quo. In the case of Brazil, a historical contributor to UN peacekeeping missions (Uziel 2010), the latest draft of the country’s National Defence Policy (Brasil 2016), currently under consideration by Congress, establishes the contribution “to increment Brazil’s projection in the concert of nations and the insertion in international decision making processes” as a national defence objective. According to the same policy, such objective should be characterized by the increase of Brazil’s participation in international organisms and forums and international operations, in order to achieve greater influence in relation to central global questions”<sup>3</sup>.

We argue that, if the specific circumstances associated with UNIFIL are taken into consideration, the possibility of recognition deriving from participating in the missions is maximized for two reasons: (1) UNIFIL was historically perceived as a mission under the ‘responsibility’ of Western European NATO-member states; and (2) the mission takes place in a highly volatile region with high international visibility. Brazil’s contribution to UNIFIL raises the country’s ‘recognition stakes’ even more due to its apparently ‘unexpected’ nature: UNIFIL takes place outside of Brazil’s immediate regional surroundings.

The association between recognition and responsibility is particularly important in the case of Brazil due to its specific profile as an emerging power from the Global South. Brazil is a non-nuclear power with peaceful relations with its regional neighbours and with a small share of

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3 For the version of the National Defence Policy, currently under consideration, see: Brasil. *Política Nacional de Defesa: Estratégia Nacional de Defesa*. Brasília, D.F.: Ministério da Defesa, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2017 [http://www.defesa.gov.br/arquivos/2017/mes03/pnd\\_end.pdf](http://www.defesa.gov.br/arquivos/2017/mes03/pnd_end.pdf)

global military spending. At the same time, Brazil does not disregard the importance of military power, which is important to maintain its presence in the MTF: “The country also believes that the respect and reputation that provide influence [...] are significantly affected by having a modern and capable military capacity” (Mares 2016, 253). Ambassador Celso Amorim, who served as Foreign Minister (2003–2010) and Defence Minister (2011–2015) claims that Brazil requires a grand strategy, combining defence and foreign policy and highlighting Brazil’s role as a ‘peace provider’ (Amorim 2016, 230–231). Amorim’s view involves a particular understanding of how Brazil should pursue an active engagement in the Middle East, where it could provide an innovative contribution to previous efforts that had not been successful in providing peace<sup>4</sup>.

## Brazil’s responsibility and recognition in the Middle East

Brazil’s decision to participate in UNIFIL needs to be understood as part of a broader effort to play a role in issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Middle East. This interest is illustrated by a series of contemporary initiatives in which Brazil made attempts to play a more direct role in influencing dynamics within the region<sup>5</sup>. These initiatives include, for example, the Tehran Declaration of 2009, in which Brazil and Turkey sought to provide an alternative to sanctions against the Iranian nuclear program (Amorim 2015).

It is not possible and neither is the intention here to provide a detailed historical account of Brazil’s involvement in the Middle East. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight a few moments of the Brazilian engagement: in 1947, former Brazilian Foreign Minister Osvaldo Aranha presided the United Nations General Assembly session that approved the UN Partition Plan for Palestine (Santos 2014, 192). Brazil also made an important contribution to UN efforts in the Middle East by contributing with troops in the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) between 1957–1967. By the 1970s, Brazil was more explicit towards its support for Palestinian self-determination, as part of a strategy of developing closer relations with Arab states, due to their economic importance in the context of the oil crisis.

In 2003, when President Lula da Silva came to power, a more direct engagement with the Middle East was initiated. In 2003, Lula visited five Arab countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates. With this visit, Lula became the first Brazilian head of state to visit the Middle East since Brazilian Emperor Pedro II’s visit to the region in 1871. In 2004, Brazil decided to strengthen its support to Palestine by announcing the opening of a diplomatic representation office in Ramallah.

In addition to increasing diplomatic presence in the region, under Lula, Brazil made efforts to play a more direct role regarding issues associated with the Middle Eastern Peace Process.

4 Anonymous interview with Brazilian diplomat, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brasília, May 16, 2017.

5 It is also important to note that Brazil’s interest in expanding this role was met with a degree of recognition from Middle Eastern countries, including Lebanon. In 2003, Brazil was granted observer status within the Arab League (Amorim 2015, 128).

In April 2004, Brazil designated an extraordinary ambassador for the Middle East. Upon an invitation by the Palestinian National Authority, Brazil sent observers to the Palestinian presidential elections of January 2005 and to the Palestinian parliamentary elections of January 2006<sup>6</sup>. At the time, Brazil implemented a specific view of how it could contribute to peace in the Middle East, based on its domestic credentials as well as a perception that the efforts under the leadership of the great powers had not achieved the expected results (peace). In his 2006 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, President Lula mentioned:

In Brazil, millions of Arabs and Jews (*israelitas*) live in a harmonious and integrated way. The Brazilian interest in the Middle East therefore reflects an objective and profound social reality of our country. The Middle East has always been treated exclusively by the actors directly involved and the great powers. So far, these actors have not been able to reach a solution<sup>7</sup>.

President Lula's speech expresses a Brazilian self-perception of having a capacity to live peacefully with difference and a critique of the role of the great powers in the peace process in the Middle East. This vision is related to the idea expressed in documents like Brazil's 2008 National Strategy of Defence that "Brazil is a peaceful country, by tradition and conviction [...] This pacifist trait is part of the national identity, and a value that should be preserved by the Brazilian people"<sup>8</sup>. In affirming that Jews and Arabs live in peace and harmony in Brazil, Lula presents this as a credential that enables Brazil to play a mediating role in the Middle East. This view also informs Amorim's earlier claim of Brazil as a 'peace provider'.

Brazil's profile in the Middle East also included a strong humanitarian component, which again strengthens Brazil's credentials as a 'peace provider'. Brazil's increase in donations to UN humanitarian efforts in supporting the Palestinian people granted international recognition. In December 2014, Brazil was voted by the UNGA to be admitted into the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which raised the country's profile regarding issues related to the Middle East<sup>9</sup>. Brazil was the first Latin American country in this position, which reinforces the country's recognition within the Middle East, including in the provision of 'peace' as a public good in the region.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that while there is a clear support on the part of the Brazilian state for Palestinian independence and for the strengthening of the Lebanese state, Brazil also sees Israel as an important defence partner, especially regarding the purchase of Israeli defence

6 See: "Envio de Missão de Observadores Brasileiros às Eleições Parlamentares Palestinas (4 de janeiro de 2006)." *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 33, no. 98 (1<sup>st</sup> semestre 2006): 210.

7 Author's translation from the original speech given in Portuguese. For the original speech in Portuguese see: "Discurso do Presidente da República Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva na abertura do debate geral da LXI Assembléia Geral das Nações Unidas, Nova York, Estados Unidos, 19 de setembro de 2006." *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 33, no. 99 (2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 2006): 137–140.

8 The official English-language version of the Brazilian National Strategy of Defence is available at: [https://www2.gwu.edu/~clai/recent\\_events/2010/Brazil\\_DefenceDefence/National\\_Strategy\\_of\\_DefenceDefence.pdf](https://www2.gwu.edu/~clai/recent_events/2010/Brazil_DefenceDefence/National_Strategy_of_DefenceDefence.pdf)

9 See: UNRWA 2014.

and military equipment. In recent years, cooperation has intensified as illustrated by an exchange of high level visits: Defence Minister Nelson Jobim and General Jorge Armando Felix, head of the Secretariat of Institutional Security<sup>10</sup> visited Israel in 2010. The Commander of the Israeli Navy visited Brazil in March 2015. Brazilian diplomats mentioned that in spite of the apparent tension in the 2015–2016 period, when Brazil postponed the recognition of the credentials of the ambassador designated by the Israeli government, relations between Brazil and Israel were kept at a normal level and remain particularly strong within the defence component<sup>11</sup>.

## Brazil's involvement with Lebanon

Brazil established diplomatic relations with Lebanon in 1944, and in 1954, the status of its delegation in Beirut was raised to embassy level. Bilateral relations were particularly influenced by the diaspora links between the two countries. Brazil hosts a significant community of Lebanese descendants, between 6–10 million, and around 40.000 Brazilian citizens reside in Lebanon, particularly in the Bekaa Valley region<sup>12</sup>. The end of the Lebanese civil war (October 1990) allowed for a new moment of bilateral interaction. Brazilian Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia visited Lebanon in February 1997. Although Lampreia's visit was important for bilateral relations, it included a perception of Brazil's limited role in the broader Middle East dynamics. According to Lafer, Lampreia's evaluation of the 1997 visit included the following point of view: "The Middle East was a political enigma and at the bilateral level, there was not much that could be done, because the risks were huge and the region was outside of Brazil's sphere of influence"<sup>13</sup>. Lampreia's remarks illustrate that Brazil's self-perception as a 'peace provider' was not part of Brazil's approach towards the Middle East at the time.

While the exchange of bilateral visits is an important component of the bilateral relationship, a key moment in contemporary Brazil-Lebanon relations took place with the Lebanese War of 2006. Brazilian authorities were mobilized to provide assistance to the Brazilian community living in Lebanon. A total of 3,000 Brazilians were evacuated, and Foreign Minister Amorim himself travelled to Turkey to assess the situation of the refugees. After the 2006 war, Brazil attended the International Conference on Lebanon held in Stockholm in late August 2006 and sent a multidisciplinary mission to Lebanon in October 2006 to verify opportunities for both technical cooperation and commercial promotion possibilities<sup>14</sup>.

10 In Portuguese: *Gabinete de Segurança Institucional*.

11 Anonymous interview with Brazilian diplomat, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brasília, May 16, 2017. Brazilian Embassy in Tel Aviv to SERE, telegram 527, August 28, 2015.

12 Brazilian Embassy in Beirut to SERE, telegram 652, July 10, 2015.

13 Author's translation from the original quote in Portuguese. See: "Lafer 2010; Lampreia 2009.

14 See: "Resultados da missão multidisciplinar brasileira ao Líbano (25 de outubro de 2006)." *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 33, no. 99 (2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2006): 328.

Under Lula, Brazil also emerged as a potential ally in the defence sector. In late 2010, the Brazilian Embassy in Beirut reported that several Lebanese authorities, including the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Jean Kahgawi, had made contact indicating Lebanon's interest in strengthening defence cooperation with Brazil. According to the Embassy, this was in light of recent restrictions on the part of the United States in providing Lebanon with military assistance, especially after the US Congress' decided to block resources related to US military cooperation. These restrictions encouraged Lebanese authorities to diversify its partners, including contacting Brazil<sup>15</sup>.

At the multilateral level, the UN was an important forum where Brazilian representatives addressed their position regarding the situation in Lebanon. In April 2010, Brazil's Permanent Representative (PR) to the UN made reference to the need for the international community to support "the strengthening of state institutions in Lebanon as well as the capacity of the central government to control the country's entire territory"<sup>16</sup>. In a speech in October 2010, the Brazilian PR reiterated a similar position, asking the international community to continue providing support to Lebanon, particularly regarding efforts to consolidate peace and reconciliation<sup>17</sup>. In a January 2011 statement, Brazil emphasized how the situation in Lebanon is important for broader issues associated with peace and security in the Middle East<sup>18</sup>. Brazil made reference to the importance of a "democratic, prosperous, stable, and sovereign Lebanon as key to peace and stability in the Middle East"<sup>19</sup>. In a July 2013 statement during a UNSC session on the situation in the Middle East, the Brazilian representative mentioned that "peace and stability in Lebanon must be strongly supported by the international community, with the direct involvement of this Council"<sup>20</sup>.

## A short historical account of UNIFIL

UNIFIL was created in March 1978 and its structure, employment, and direction were, from the beginning, strictly based on the principles of a traditional peacekeeping mission: non-use of force (except in self-defence), impartiality, and consent. For example, a 1986 report of the UN Secretary-General on UNIFIL cited in Murphy (1999, 54) mentioned that: "UNIFIL cannot use force except in self defence [...] its effectiveness depends on voluntary cooperation and consent of

15 Brazilian Embassy in Beirut to SERE, telegram 452, September 24, 2010.

16 See: Debate sobre o Oriente Médio, inclusive a Questão Palestina Nova York, 14 de abril de 2010, Embaixadora Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Representante Permanente do Brasil junto às Nações Unidas. (Viotti et al. 2014, 65–68).

17 See: Debate sobre o Oriente Médio, inclusive a Questão Palestina Nova York, 18 de outubro de 2010, Embaixadora Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti Representante Permanente do Brasil junto às Nações Unidas. (Viotti et al. 2014, 74–77).

18 See: Debate sobre o Oriente Médio, inclusive a Questão Palestina Nova York, 19 de janeiro de 2011, Embaixadora Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti Representante Permanente do Brasil junto às Nações Unidas. (Viotti et al. 2014, 77–80).

19 See: Debate sobre o Oriente Médio, inclusive a Questão Palestina Nova York, 21 de abril de 2011, Embaixadora Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti Representante Permanente do Brasil junto às Nações Unidas. (Viotti et al. 2014, 84–87).

20 Author's translation from the original quote in Portuguese. See: "Debate no Conselho de Segurança sobre a situação no Oriente Médio: intervenção brasileira." *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 40, no. 113 (2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 2013): 134–135.

the parties to the conflict”. The mission’s present general structure, with the Force Commander, instead of a civilian Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), as the Head of Mission (HoM), in contrast with more contemporary multidimensional UN missions, like Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti (MINUSTAH), continues to reflect the traditional approach of the first generation missions.

The Security Council created UNFIL “for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area, the Force to be composed of personnel drawn from Member States”<sup>21</sup>. The mission was later revised in May, 1978, in 1982, and in 2000, with the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon<sup>22</sup>.

In July 2006, after a new crisis erupted between Israel and Lebanon, UNIFIL was reformulated via UNSC resolution 1.701<sup>23</sup>. UNIFIL’s contingent and mandate were expanded. In September 2006, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora made a formal request to the UN for the establishment of a maritime force to prevent the illegal entry of arms and related material via Lebanon’s maritime borders. The UNSC created the MTF on October 15, 2006, with the goal of assisting the maritime branch of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF-Navy) in preventing the entry of unauthorized material. This was essential to guarantee the end of the Israeli imposed comprehensive aerial and maritime blockade of Lebanon, which was harmful to the Lebanese economy.<sup>24</sup> According to Hatto (2009, 189): “one of the most important differences between the two UNIFILs was the heavy cooperation between the UN and the Lebanese army. UNIFIL II was mandated to assist the Lebanese army in its redeployment in South Lebanon and in its tasks of securing the borders against trafficking”.

One final element to consider is UNIFIL’s composition. According to Uziel (2010, 68), UNIFIL has historically included a vast majority of contributions from Western, mainly European states. Uziel’s (2010) remarks are complemented by Cunliffe’s (2013, 129) post-2006 characterization of UNIFIL as “the first UN peacekeeping operation to see a sizeable Western presence since the mid-1990s”. The initial composition of the MTF reflected this trend; from 2006 to 2011, the MTF was commanded by troop-contributing countries from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)<sup>25</sup>. At the moment (2017), the MTF is composed by naval warships from Brazil, Indonesia,

21 See: UN 1978

22 For an academic analysis of the relationship between the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and Hizbullah prior to the launch of the second phase of UNIFIL in 2006, see: Norton 2000.

23 While it is not possible to provide here a detailed analysis of the factors leading to UNSC resolution 1.701, Makdisi (2011) provides a comprehensive account of the different dynamics leading to the approval of resolution 1.701, including how different actors interpret the resolution.

24 See: UN 2006.

25 The list of MTF commanding countries includes: Germany (15 October 2006–29 February 2008), Italy (29 February 2009–1 September 2008), France (1 September 2008–28 February 2009), Belgium (1 March 2009–30 May 2009), Italy (30 May 2009–1 September 2009), Germany (1 September 2009–30 November 2009) and by Italy again (30 November 2009–31 August 2010). Between 31 August 2010 and 24 February 2011, the MTF was commanded by a German Captain serving as head of the Maritime Operations Section. Information provided during interview with Brazilian officers, Brazilian Ministry of Defence, Brasília, May 15, 2017. A detailed account of European contributions to UNIFIL is provided in: Makdisi et al. 2009.



Bangladesh, Germany, Greece, and Turkey<sup>26</sup>. This illustrates that the commander of the MTF has to manage the diversity of contributing countries, including the existing tension between Turkey and Greece, which prevents the two countries from operating together, as well as Israeli concerns about the presence of Muslim countries with no diplomatic relation with Israel<sup>27</sup>.

## Brazil's engagement with UNIFIL

In mid-2010, Italy signalled that it would be leaving the leadership of the MTF, and the UN invited Brazil to contribute to UNIFIL, which indicated the status and recognition granted to Brazil by the UN at the time. When commenting on the invitation, Brazilian representatives mentioned the:

[...] special interest of the UN in a Brazilian participation in the highest command offices within the mission. Such interest was justified by Brazil's current standing in the international arena, and by the high level of Brazilian performance within UN peace operations and the level of acceptance by the contributing countries and the surrounding countries.<sup>28</sup>

The invitation reflected Israel's recognition of Brazil as an "acceptable" actor in UN efforts in the region. After resolution 1.701 was approved, Israel opposed the participation of Indonesia and Bangladesh in UNIFIL. Indonesia and Bangladesh do not formally recognize Israel, and in 2010 Indonesia was under consideration by the UN to take over command of the MTF<sup>29</sup>. Brazil's involvement in the MTF was interpreted as less hostile to Israel<sup>30</sup>. This reinforces Brazil's credentials, supporting its role as a responsible power in the region. Israel's 'acceptance' of Brazil's participation in the MTF should not be underestimated, especially in light of Israel's perception of UNIFIL as a "biased, anti-Israeli organization" (Nachmias 1999, 105).

In light of the UN invitation, the Brazilian government decided to appoint a Brazilian Admiral to serve as commander of the MTF, including with a number of Brazilian officers serving in his military staff, initially based at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura (Southern Lebanon) but with the possibility of boarding any ship of the MTF. This involvement increased the attention given by Brazilian authorities to UNIFIL. In addition to supporting the mission within debates at the Security Council, Brazil was able to include discussions about UNIFIL in some of the initiatives

26 Information provided during anonymous interview with Brazilian military officers, Brazilian Ministry of Defence, Brasília, May 15, 2017.

27 Anonymous interview with senior Brazilian military officer with experience in UNIFIL, Rio de Janeiro, July 04, 2017.

28 Office of the Military Advisor (*Conselheiro Militar*) at the Brazilian Permanent Mission to the UN to the Brazilian Ministry of Defence, Fax no. 197, July 30, 2010.

29 See: Katz 2010.

30 While there were discussions regarding the possible normalization of diplomatic relations, the Indonesian government condemned the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli military action in Gaza in 2008-2009 and conditioned the normalization of relations with the granting of full independence to Palestine. See: Angriani 2016.

created as part of the Brazilian-led diplomatic efforts towards the Middle East. For example, the final document of the III Arab-South America Summit (2012) mentioned support to the “independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon, urging Israel to immediately implement resolution 1.701”). The document also urged “all parties to fully cooperate with UNIFIL”<sup>31</sup>.

Brazil’s involvement in UNIFIL needs to be understood in light of its geopolitical implications, - particularly the high visibility of developments in the region. As a Brazilian officer who served within the Spanish brigade in Lebanon commented: “Everything that happens anywhere in the world has a direct impact there [in the Middle East] and vice-versa”.<sup>32</sup> This perception is also shared by Brazilian authorities. In 2012, Minister Amorim mentioned Brazil’s engagement in the MTF as part of the country’s follow up of different crisis around the globe, which is a key component of Brazil’s self-perception as a ‘peace provider’: “Brazil, who currently has military observers in Syria and leads the Maritime Task Force in Lebanon, cannot stop following these developments. More importantly: Brazil should construct its own analysis about the facts, an analysis which is not contaminated by the geopolitical or geoeconomic interests of third parties”<sup>33</sup>.

Amorim’s remarks should come as no surprise; they illustrate a perception shared by Brazilian authorities that the Middle East is a geopolitical theater with high visibility, which could be of use in the promotion of Brazilian interests associated with claims of international responsibility, allowing for recognition of Brazil’s positive international presence, particularly its claim of being a ‘peace provider’. In addition, Amorim’s 2012 remarks reinforce Brazilian criticism of the role played by the ‘great powers’, already stated by Lula in 2006.

## Brazil and the Maritime Task Force

As previously mentioned, Brazil’s direct involvement in UNIFIL began on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2011, when Brazilian Admiral Luiz Henrique Caroli took over as the command of UNIFIL’s MTF. This was the first time that a non-NATO member state was taking over command of the MTF, which was signalled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an indication of the recognition granted to Brazil as a ‘peace provider’<sup>34</sup>. Admiral Caroli’s involvement raised expectations about the possibility of a Brazilian Navy warship participating in the MTF, including in the Brazilian press<sup>35</sup>.

After congressional approval in late September 2011<sup>36</sup>, the Brazilian frigate *União* (F45) was incorporated into the MTF on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2011. It was the first time that a warship of

31 Author’s translation from the original version in Portuguese. See: “III Cúpula América do Sul-Países árabes: Declaração de Lima.” *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 39, no. 111 (2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 2012): 153-176.

32 Anonymous interview with Brazilian Army officer who served in the Spanish Brigade at UNIFIL, Brasília, 16 May 2017.

33 Author’s translation from the original statement in Portuguese. See: Amorim 2012.

34 See: “Participação brasileira na UNIFIL.” *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 37, no. 108 (1<sup>st</sup> semester 2011): 110.

35 See: Kawaguti 2011.

36 See: “Participação brasileira na missão de paz da ONU no Líbano: Nota Conjunta do Ministério da Defesa e do Ministério das Relações Exteriores.” *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 37, no. 109 (2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 2011): 135.

the Brazilian Navy had been incorporated into a UN peacekeeping force, which again, reinforced the recognition and responsibility granted to Brazil<sup>37</sup>. In pursuit of UNIFIL's mandate, the MTF has avoided the “unauthorized entry of arms or related material by sea into Lebanon”. The MTF, and particularly the Brazilian contingent in the task force, provides technical training for the LAF-Navy, and contributes to UNIFIL's role as a communication channel between the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). In addition to fulfilling its mandate, the MTF has patrolled the disputed maritime border between Israel and Lebanon, contributing to prevent the escalation of direct conflict between the two parties. The Brazilian warships deployed to the MTF have, on different occasions since 2011, detected several violations of the Lebanese air and maritime space by the Israeli Armed Forces. For example, between 2011–2012, the Brazilian frigate detected 320 violations of the Lebanese airspace by Israeli planes and reported these violations to the UN<sup>38</sup>. This reinforces the MTF's role in monitoring the situation in UNIFIL's area of deployment, including the maritime space, as specified in resolution 1.701.

It should also be noted that the involvement in the MTF has implications beyond the immediate area of operations, since it allows Brazil to contribute to the development of new international norms related to the deployment of maritime resources within UN missions. This should not be underestimated since the UN recently has produced a manual that provides guidelines for military maritime task forces in UN missions (UN 2015). Since UNIFIL's MTF is the only existing UN Maritime Task Force, Brazilian actors were able to directly contribute to the development of UN doctrine regarding maritime operations. Brazilian officers participated in the formulation of the manual, which consolidates the procedures at the operational and tactical levels associated with such missions<sup>39</sup>. The manual is relevant to ongoing debates about the future of UN missions because it supports member states in the “reorientation of their maritime elements from national tasks to more fully integrated UN operations” (UN 2015, 4).

## Brazil's defence diplomacy within UNIFIL

For Brazil, participating in UNIFIL, particularly within the MTF, grants considerable opportunities not exclusively related to the tasks and responsibilities identified by resolution 1.701. These opportunities include the interaction with NATO member states, especially European states, increasing Brazil's defence diplomacy interactions (Silva 2015), as will be further discussed below. The first level of interaction is related to the logistical requirements involved in sending a ship from a Brazilian port in the South Atlantic Ocean to its area of deployment in the Mediterranean

37 See: Brasil [s. d]. Marinha do Brasil. “UNIFIL: Força Interina das Nações Unidas no Líbano.” *Comando-Geral do Corpo de Fuzileiros Navais*. Accessed May 12, 2017. <https://www.marinha.mil.br/cgcfm/?q=unifil>

38 See: Kawaguti 2012

39 Information provided by Brazilian military officers during workshop on peace operations, *Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro*, May 29, 2017.

Sea. Before reaching its designated area in Lebanon, different Brazilian ships involved in the MTF have made technical stops for refueling in Italian, Greek, and Turkish ports, which are strategically located in close proximity to the MTF area of operations. Interacting with these countries was not only important due to the need to have a logistical stopover, but also due to the opportunity it creates for additional interactions between the armed forces of the countries involved<sup>40</sup>. These states have been historical contributors to UNIFIL and have acquired significant experience regarding the local context and the dynamics associated with the mission. In addition, the interaction with these NATO-member states shows that these countries value the Brazilian contribution to the MTF.

In the specific case of Turkey, the use of Turkish ports for the refueling of Brazilian ships can be understood as part of a broader bilateral defence cooperation dialogue, which was initiated in 2007<sup>41</sup>. The development of interactions within the context of the MTF has a positive impact in the strengthening of the partnership, as acknowledged by Brazilian diplomats serving in Turkey<sup>42</sup>. Visits to Turkish ports for logistical support are used to strengthen the cooperation between Brazil and Turkey. For example, in February 2012, during a logistics stop at the Turkish port of Mersin, Admiral Caroli met with Turkish military authorities<sup>43</sup>.

Greece is another country participating in the MTF with a potential to intensify relations with Brazil. In 2015, the Brazilian Ambassador to Greece visited the Souda Naval Base located on the island of Crete, where the NATO Maritime Interception Operations Training Centre (NMIOTC) is based. On the occasion, Greek authorities mentioned an interest in hosting a visit by the Brazilian frigate participating in the MTF and alluded to the possibility of cooperation between the NMIOTC and the Brazilian Navy<sup>44</sup>. This reflects recognition of Brazil's involvement in the MTF. Maintaining direct contact with Greek authorities is also important because Greek authorization is required for Brazilian Air Force planes delivering personnel and armament to UNIFIL that need to fly over Greek airspace<sup>45</sup>.

Spain is an example of another NATO country with a presence in UNIFIL, which has intensified defence cooperation with Brazil. In 2010, Brazil and Spain celebrated a defence cooperation agreement, and in early 2011, Spain and Brazil agreed to send Brazilian Army officers and privates to serve within the headquarters of the Spanish-led multinational brigade in UNIFIL<sup>46</sup>. This has allowed for Brazilian Army personnel to train in Spain prior to their

40 Brazilian Embassy in Rome to SERE, telegram 302, March 09, 2011.

41 See: Brazilian Embassy in Ankara to SERE, telegram 921, September 28, 2011.

42 See: Brazilian Embassy in Ankara to SERE, telegram 457, April 27, 2012.

43 See: Brazilian Embassy in Ankara to SERE, telegram 457, April 27, 2012.

44 See: Brazilian Embassy in Athens to SERE, telegram 146, March 26, 2015.

45 See: Brazilian Embassy in Athens to SERE, telegram 166, April 09, 2014.

46 See: *Acordo Técnico entre o Ministério da Defesa do Reino da Espanha e o Ministério da Defesa da República Federativa do Brasil com relação à integração de militares do Exército Brasileiro no contingente espanhol no Setor Leste da Brigada Multinacional (MNB\_E) desdobrado no Sul do Líbano nas Forças Interinas das Nações Unidas no Líbano (UNIFIL)*. In addition to the multinational brigade under Spanish control, it is important to note that military officers from East Timor have served within the Portuguese contingent at UNIFIL. See: "Debate sobre Timor-Leste", Nova York, 22 de novembro de 2011 Embaixadora Vera Machado Vice -Ministra para Assuntos Políticos, Ministério das Relações Exteriores". Troops from El Salvador have been participating in the Spanish contingent in UNIFIL since 2008 and El Salvadoran troops are trained in Spain prior to their deployment, including in de-mining activities. See: Viotti et al. 2014, 248–25; Cárcamo Baires 2016.

deployment in Lebanon and to interact in a multinational environment. This experience could provide subsidies for a potential future Brazilian troop deployment in UNIFIL's land component<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, participating in the Spanish brigade allows an exchange of experiences with contingents from NATO member states, about their respective engagements in missions such as Kosovo and Afghanistan and the Brazilian involvement in Haiti<sup>48</sup>. Brazil's participation within the Spanish brigade is another indication of the recognition of Brazil's contribution.

Participating in the MTF also allows for an interaction with non-NATO contributing member states. In the case of Bangladesh, the country started its participation in the MTF in May 2010<sup>49</sup>. Similar to the case of Brazil, this deployment proved to be an opportunity for the Bangladeshi Navy to train its logistical capability since the Bangladeshi ships had to travel more than 7,000 nautical miles to reach Lebanon. Joint participation allows for greater interaction, and in recent years, the Brazil-Bangladesh relationship has expanded, including in the defence sector. In February 2017, the Brazilian weapon manufacturing company Taurus sold 2,500 small arms to Bangladesh's National Police<sup>50</sup>. In March 2017, Brazil and Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to create a platform that would lead to further cooperation, as part of the first bilateral consultation between the two countries. The MoU includes consultations within the defence sector<sup>51</sup>.

Joint participation in the MTF facilitates greater defence cooperation between Brazil and Indonesia. Indonesia has been participating in the MTF since 2009. Indonesia contributes with ground troops to UNIFIL and Indonesian officers have occupied high-level positions within the MTF and in the land component of UNIFIL (Hutabarat 2014). Brazil created a defence attaché office in Indonesia in 2014, which includes officers of the three forces. In 2014 and 2015, Indonesia became a major buyer of Brazilian defence equipment<sup>52</sup>. In 2017, the two countries signed a defence cooperation Mou, indicating an expanding defence cooperation portfolio, even beyond the realm of the UNIFIL<sup>53</sup>.

The direct involvement in the MTF also raised Brazil's profile with Lebanese authorities, indicating recognition of Brazil's contribution. During a June 2012 visit to Brazil, Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati thanked the Brazilian participation in the MTF and the training provided to the LAF-Navy<sup>54</sup>. In addition to the training provided within the context of the MTF, Brazil has offered training opportunities in Brazilian military institutions to Lebanese officers<sup>55</sup>.

47 In an April 2017 interview with a Brazilian weekly magazine, the Commander of the Brazilian Army signaled that Brazilian authorities were studying possible scenarios for further deployment after the return from Haiti and mentioned, as part of these studies, the case of UNIFIL, where according to the General, Brazilian troops "could be deployed starting in 2018". See: Oyama and Bonin 2017.

48 Anonymous interview with Brazilian Army officer who served in the Spanish Brigade at UNIFIL, Brasília, May 16, 2017.

49 In 2014, these two ships were replaced by the Bangladesh Navy Ship (BNS) Ali Haider (FFG) and corvette BNS Nirmul. See: Ahmed 2014.

50 See: Grupo Amanhá 2017.

51 See: Bangladesh 2017.

52 See: Wiltgen 2015.

53 See: Brasil 2017.

54 Brazilian Embassy in Beirut to SERE, telegram 288, June 28, 2012.

55 After Defence Minister Amorim's visit to Lebanon in 2012, Brazil offered training opportunities for Lebanese officers at the Escola Naval located in Rio de Janeiro. See: Brazilian Embassy in Beirut to SERE, telegram 238, May 28, 2012.

## Conclusion

As we presented here, the Brazilian participation started with an initial invitation by the UN, which already recognized the Brazilian credentials and experience associated with UN peacekeeping. Its acceptance by the different actors associated with UNIFIL, including troop contributing countries and surrounding countries, signals a recognition of Brazil's positive role in international peace and security, including in the Middle East. Brazil's continuity in the leadership of the MTF reinforces the UN's initial recognition. Brazil's commitment to UNIFIL has survived the recent changes in political leadership in the country and the continuity of Brazil's commitment has been acknowledged by Brazilian authorities. In a 2015 visit to Lebanon, Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira mentioned that "The Brazilian engagement in UNIFIL shows our unbreakable determination to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security"<sup>56</sup> This reinforces Brazil's claims as a 'peace provider'. Moreover, Brazil's involvement in an innovative mechanism such as the MTF provides the country with an opportunity to actively engage in the ongoing debates about the evolution of UN peacekeeping missions, as illustrated by the UN manual on maritime operations. This reinforces Brazil's international responsibilities and support for the international order.

Brazil's departure from the MINUSTAH in late 2017, will likely raise the profile of the Brazilian participation in the MTF, which will become Brazil's largest contribution. In light of these changes, it is important for Brazilian decision-makers located within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and in the Brazilian Congress to engage in a debate, especially as Brazil considers the possibility of contributing to another UN mission. More recently, the Brazilian Ministry of Defence prepared a comprehensive study of all existing UN missions, in order to assess the characteristics of each mission, including UNIFIL<sup>57</sup>. The purpose of the study is not to suggest the deployment in a specific mission but to provide Brazilian decision-makers with the appropriate amount of information required to adopt a well-balanced decision once an invitation to participate is presented to Brazil<sup>58</sup>.

At the academic level, Brazil's involvement in the Spanish brigade suggests a potential research agenda related to military cooperation in multinational peace operations<sup>59</sup> (Soeters and Manigart 2008). The deployment of Brazilian Army personnel within a contingent from a NATO member-state (Spain), provides interesting insights on North-South bi-national military cooperation within UN missions.

56 Author's translation from the original quote in Portuguese. See: 'Discurso do Ministro Mauro Vieira por ocasião da imposição da insígnia da Ordem do Rio Branco à Corveta Barroso Beirute, 15 de setembro de 2015.' Accessed May 12, 2017. <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/discursos-artigos-e-entrevistas-categoria/ministro-das-relacoes-exteriores-discursos/11593-discurso-do-ministro-mauro-vieira-por-ocasio-da-imposicao-da-insignia-da-ordem-do-rio-branco-a-corveta-barroso-beirute-15-de-setembro-de-2015> (Brasil 2015).

57 This refers to the *Seleção de Emprego de Tropas Adjudicadas* (SETA) Project, prepared by the Brazilian Ministry of Defence and which is now under consideration by authorities at the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

58 Anonymous interview Brazilian officials, Brazilian Ministry of Defence, Brasília, D.F., May 15, 2017.

59 Brazil's involvement in the Spanish-led multinational brigade is not the first such initiative in which Brazil is involved, Brazilian military officers have served within the Argentine Task Force in the UN mission in Cyprus (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus- UNFICYP) since 1995. See: Bertolloto 1997.

One final consideration involves the use of the Brazilian Navy as part of a foreign and defence policy strategy. Brazil's involvement in the MTF has positioned the Navy well beyond the immediate strategic environment of the South Atlantic. The involvement in the MTF's command and real life naval operations faced by the Brazilian ships and their crew allows for training in activities which could be conducted in the future to guarantee the protection of the Blue Amazon. The accumulated experience after five years of commanding the MTF and the continuous deployment of a warship in the Mediterranean region contributes to the efforts of the Brazilian Navy in guaranteeing the preservation and protection of Brazilian strategic interests in the South Atlantic.

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