

# Introduction: Gender in the Global South: Power Hierarchies, Violence and Resistance in the Postcolony

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The pieces collected in this second part of the Special Issue of *Contexto Internacional*, *Gender in the Global South: Dislocating International Boundaries*, shift our attention to questions relating to the power hierarchies underpinning different manifestations of gender violence, with particular focus to the colonial and imperial legacies of those relations. In many senses, the connections between capitalism, imperialism and colonialism (Ballestrin 2017) are brought to the fore in order to understand the historical intricacies of contemporary manifestations of power relations that otherwise can be grasped only superficially.

The first four articles gathered in this Special Issue reflect on gendered power relations in Latin America, calling attention to contemporary dynamics that impact politics in different countries in the region. Together, they build a comprehensive picture of the recurring power hierarchies in the region and how they relate to questions of gender, sex and race, shedding light into the lasting legacies of colonialism and the colonality of power within Latin American countries, as well as between these countries (Quijano 2000; Segato 2012; Lugones 2010).

While most of the articles collected here reflect on dynamics taking place in this particular part of the 'global South' called Latin America, some other contributions move our attention to different sites and relations, taking account of the comprehensiveness of the 'global South' and the multiple manifestations of subaltern subjectivities, reminding us of the persisting effects of colonial relations in the very architecture of the international. Most of all, their joint contribution signals precisely to the persisting effects of colonialism not only in the open system of violences that affect the (gendered, racialized) bodies of the colonized, but also their/our minds (Nandy 1983). In this sense, interrogating the 'global South' opens the possibility of understanding different articulations of power/resistance and invites multiple possibilities of being and resisting otherwise.

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## Organization of the Issue

In the first piece, titled 'Mothers, Warriors and Lords: Gender(ed) Cartographies of the US War on Drugs in Latin America,' Anna Clara Telles presents a gendered perspective on the functioning of the American discourses on the war on drugs from the 1970s until the early years of the 2000s. While grappling with a by-now almost conventional theme in the discussions over security in Latin America, her perspective introduces important nuances, pointing to particular gendered and racial hierarchies underpinning such discourses, offering insights into the colonial/imperial legacy that sustains current dynamics in the field of security, particularly in the relations between the United States and Latin America. In that respect, the author claims that the discursive feminization of drug consumption has allowed the construction of a gendered and racial hierarchization between the hyper-masculine figure of the drug warrior – the American security agent – and the subordinate masculinities and femininities represented by the subaltern Latin American/Andean drug lords. While producing these hierarchized dichotomies, such discourses are legitimated by the logic of protection, which has been extensively criticized by feminists for reproducing certain ideals and norms of masculinity and femininity that have supported Western state-making practices throughout the centuries.

Moving away from more conventional normative theories that try to account for processes of internationalization of norms, the article 'Decolonising Labour, Reclaiming Subaltern Epistemologies: Brazilian Domestic Workers and the International Struggle for Labour Rights' by Louisa Acciari offers a bottom-up perspective on the normative importance of domestic workers activism in Brazil. By looking at the relation between the successful historical mobilization of organized domestic workers in the country in achieving recognition of their status as workers and the approval of ILO Convention 189, Acciari offers a case of a 'subaltern epistemology of rights,' in which the global South appears not only as a transmitter or translator of international norms, but as an agent in the production of rights discourses. Based in two years of fieldwork, the article claims that women's activism in Brazil signals a case of transnationalisation from below, in which domestic workers have been able to defy the gendered and racialized structure of the Brazilian state that historically excluded the domestic work of reproduction – exercised mostly by black women – from the realm of proper work, and therefore, from all kinds of labor regulation, thus having a direct influence on international activism.

José Oviedo Pérez and André Reis Silva, for their turn, present a critical perspective on the gendered power relations of Cuban society in the article 'Cuban Medical Internationalism through a Feminist Perspective.' Their research article highlights the importance of taking account of the high number of women participating in Cuban foreign medical programs, trying to capture their multiple lived experiences and how they impact more generalized gendered social relations. By means of semi-structured interviews, the article makes a remarkable contribution by supplementing more traditional analyses of Cuban soft power in this field with a feminist curiosity that disturbs the public/private binaries that structure Cuban society. By doing so, it offers a critical and interpretive account of how women's participation in these programs affects marriages and family

arrangements, having a direct impact on the country's gendered relations. Some of the most sensitive topics highlighted in the interviews concern the impact on child rearing, women's sense of autonomy and worldliness, as well as on their changed status once they become financially responsible for the sustenance of their families.

Departing from questions of materiality and embodiment within feminist scholarship, Natália Félix de Souza constructs a framework to understand contemporary waves of gender violence and feminist resistance in Latin America. In the article 'When the Body Speaks (to) the Political: Feminist Activism in Latin America and the Quest for Alternative Democratic Futures,' the author argues that recent waves of feminist activism in the region mobilize new accounts of politics and the political precisely by engaging the materiality of women's bodies – both living and dead – producing new forms of political resistance that expand beyond traditional themes of the feminist agenda to encompass multiple forms of activism and subjectivities. Building mostly on Segato's (2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2016) theorization about the effects of coloniality in the gendered power relations in the region and on Spivak's (1988, 2005) claim for building an infrastructure for agency of the female body, Souza offers a critical and provocative interpretation about different cultures of democratic behaviour coming out of contemporary feminist articulations in Latin America.

Shifting our attention to other manifestations of gendered power relations in the global South, the last research article by Shailesh Kumar analyzes the lasting legacies of colonialism in the Indian justice system, particularly in what relates to the treatment of 'children' involved in violent crimes. In light of the historical shifts in the Indian legislative framework of the so-called 'Juvenile Justice System' since colonial times, the article 'Shifting Epistemology of Juvenile Justice in India' offers a poignant critique of the Juvenile Justice Act 2015 for its emphasis on retribution rather than reformation of 'juvenile delinquents.' According to Kumar, this contemporary approach is a throwback in relation to previous national and international legislation, particularly because it sustains a sharp distinction between 'child' victims and 'juvenile' perpetrators, which ignores how many among the latter are themselves victims of a violent (in)justice system that further deepens their victimization. In an important contribution to the theme of this special issue, Kumar's argument highlights the particular ways in which sex, gender and age intersect to affect the changes in the legal framework of Indian juvenile justice, emphasizing the profound interconnections between child delinquency debates and questions of gender.

Two insightful interviews conducted during the Seminar *Gender, Violence and Peace Efforts: Perspectives and Debates in International Politics*, promoted by the International Relations Institute at PUC-Rio in October 2018, close the second volume of this Special Issue. In a provocative conversation with Laura Sjoberg, Thais de Bakker Castro proposes some timely reflections over the rise of conservative agendas and discourses in most of the world, with a particular focus on the American and Brazilian scenarios. During the interview, Sjoberg reflects about the transformation of American discourse under Trump's administration from a liberal pinkwashing agenda that served to create US moral superiority to one that mostly dismisses this narrative. In an effort to interpret Bolsonaro's conservative discourse in Brazil and his homoeroticism (Sjoberg 2016) towards Trump,

the interview also raises questions related to the importance of sexual discourses in foreign policy and the new relations between masculinities and femininities that is being forged by these countries. Finally, the conversation addresses questions concerning the mobilization of women's conservatism by such discourses, the existence of different forms of violence in postcolonial contexts and the role of the state in sustaining them, offering a critical reflection on the role of a politics of empathy in transforming political scenarios.

Finally, Ricardo Prata Filho entertains a very conversational interview with Elisabeth Prügl, picking up on many of the topics discussed during the Seminar. In the interview, Prügl is invited to discuss some central topics of her research agenda, such as the meanings and (im)possibilities of women's participation in peacebuilding efforts, as well as the invisibility of sexual violence against men and the need open up the category of sexual violence to 'include' the issue of sexual violence against men: what gets categorized as sexual violence and what does not; what it means to consider certain kinds of violence sexual and others not; what are the gender norms underpinning such discourses and practices; what is the difference between sexual violence and violence against sexualized bodies and why it matters (Zalewski et al 2018). In the last part of the interview, the author also discusses some questions related to the recent elections in Brazil, including the relationship between authoritarianism and democracy, the patriarchal underpinnings of authoritarian discourses, and the relationship between neoliberalism, inequality and the rise of political conservatism. In conclusion, Prügl makes an important cautionary note about what she calls the 'neoliberalisation of feminism' (Prügl 2015) and the need to remain critical about the pervasiveness of narratives of inclusivity and diversity that have been very much incorporated by liberal and neoliberal discourses.

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**Natália Maria Félix de Souza** is Professor at the International Relations Department of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), and holds a PhD from IRI/PUC-Rio, in which she engaged the limits of critique in international relations theory. Her work focuses mainly on critical approaches to subjectivity and subject formation, including feminist, post-structural, postcolonial and posthuman theories, and on decolonial approaches to knowledge and knowledge production. She is currently engaged in a number of initiatives regarding Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, including: co-editing the *Conversations Section* of the International Feminist Journal of Politics; co-editing a Portuguese-language book on 'Feminism, Gender and International Relations;' and advancing the agenda of *MulheRIs* in Brazilian IR.

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