

# Causes and Effects of Uruguay's Contribution to the United Nations' Peace Operations

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*Latin American States have been ardent defenders of international peace and security for several decades. Preeminent among them is the state of Uruguay, which has contributed a substantial amount of military and police personnel to United Nations peace operations to a degree that cannot be explained by its territory, economic potential, military might or political power. The country was lauded for its efforts in the international community by subsequent secretaries-general of the United Nations. Illustrated by the fact that the small country has provided several force commanders and thousands of personnel, Uruguay is a virtual giant when it comes to contributions to peace operations. The study aims at finding answers to three fundamental questions. Firstly, what kind of tendencies can be observed regarding the contribution of Latin American States and how Uruguay's actions can be compared to other states in the region. Secondly, what are the causes for such a robust presence. Last but not least, could large-scale contributions also have adverse effects in the form of misconduct and crimes committed by peacekeepers and if that is the case, how can such occurrences be remedied.*

**Keywords:** Uruguay, United Nations, peace operations, Latin America, contribution

## Introduction

Uruguay is often regarded as a giant when it comes to contributions to UN peace operations with the country consistently 'punching above its weight' for decades. This is especially startling since the country is located in a relatively armed conflict-free section of the globe and when the country's population is compared to those of other main contributors, the discrepancy becomes obvious. For comparison, the population of India, China, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia and Morocco are at least dozens of times larger than that of Uruguay.<sup>2</sup> Lately, however, other, smaller countries have also joined the fray, with Ghana, Nepal, Rwanda and Senegal rising to the top spots.

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>

Uruguay, however, has been an ardent supporter of this process for decades, practically speaking, ever since the UN’s creation. Understanding how this can be compared in regional context, finding the reasons of this phenomenon as well as its positive – and to some degree negative – consequences form the scope of this paper’s focus. The study aims to bring a breath of fresh air into the discussion by utilising a holistic approach which combines statistical data, historical overview, domestic and foreign policy perspectives as well as an analysis on the ramifications of these events.

## Latin American contributions to UN Peace Operations

The support Latin American States provide to UN peace operations vary greatly both in terms of financial contributions as well as regarding personnel, each having a plethora of reasons for why and to what extent they support peace missions. Generally speaking, contributions to UN peace operations can be traced back to one of five reasons (security, political, economic, institutional, normative). Along this cluster of five, general attitude and perceptions towards the United Nations as well as individual government decisions to contribute to a peace operation constitute the variables in the equation.<sup>3</sup> Political reasons range from acquiring international prestige, to supporting a bid for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council. It can be the result of international pressure from allies or even from the willingness of a country that has been the host state for operations before in order to ‘repay the favour’. For some, it can even be beneficial in domestic policy terms to make sure that the country’s oversized armed forces have something to occupy themselves with. In economic terms, a peacekeeping venture can be lucrative for both the government, private contractors and also on the level of individuals. From a security perspective, regional concerns such as migration and proximity to the conflict along with the fear that the conflict in a nearby state can spill over or spread to one’s country can propel contributions. A compelling institutional narrative can be understood as a live-action training exercise for the countries’ armed forces who can acquire valuable experience and information abroad.<sup>4</sup> A normative reasoning can stem from the country’s motives to promote the values they share with the UN or they might see the UN as a legitimate and politically ideal, neutral terrain.<sup>5</sup> On a side note, illustrating the legalist-normative approach, Latin American countries have been prone to look for judicial settlement of disputes in the past in order to avoid armed conflicts on their territories.<sup>6</sup> A remarkably positive approach when compared to states in other regions.

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<sup>3</sup> Alex J. Bellamy – Paul D. Williams: *Broadening the Base of United Nations Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries*. New York, International Peace Institute, 2012. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Bellamy–Williams (2012): op. cit. 4–5.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of altruistic motives include Canada, legitimacy reasoning can be observed regarding Ghana’s approach and counterbalancing the major powers is seen regarding India’s stance on the matter (see also Bellamy–Williams [2012]: op. cit. 5–6).

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Jorge Ramalho: Predictable Evolutions, Normative Engagements, and their Implications for South American Countries’ Engagement in Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Operations. In Eduarda P. Hamann – Robert Muggah (eds.): *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: New Directions for International Peace and Security?* Brasilia, Igarap  Institute, 2013. 81–82.

The tendencies above clearly manifest themselves in the Latin American context. From the point of view of state representatives, regional security challenges matter more than global issues, however, it is less clear how that unity is to be achieved. There are raging debates under the aegis of which organisation, or through aligning with which states (USA, Russia, China, India or South Africa) should such a cooperation be best reached.<sup>7</sup> One of the most notable examples to this heightened interest concerning regional security issues can be seen regarding Haiti (MINUSTAH 2004–2017).<sup>8</sup> In this instance, the financial and human contribution has far exceeded that which can be seen regarding peace operations on the African continent.<sup>9</sup> Putting the needs of the continent before the world can occur for obvious reasons as the events on the continent could have greater ramifications in the region than on the far side of the globe. Among the main perceived regional threats are transnational organised crime, poverty and management of the abundance of Latin American natural resources.<sup>10</sup> Lately, not only management but protection of natural resources,<sup>11</sup> rising numbers of human rights violations,<sup>12</sup> populism<sup>13</sup> as well as some mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic have redirected the focus of states on the continent.<sup>14</sup> In global political terms, the issue is further exacerbated by a long-standing grievance of Latin American states, namely that the region does not have a permanent representative in the United Nations Security Council.<sup>15</sup> Despite numerous previous attempts, even the contender with the greatest chance, Brazil, remains without such a recognition of its emerging status.

A regional divide can be observed between Central American and Caribbean States on the one hand and South American States on the other. Regarding the latter, a more closely-knit articulation of interests can be seen (with the exception of Venezuela). Indeed, efforts have both increased and have become more streamlined in the southern part of the continent. This has manifested itself in stronger cooperation with regional organisations as per Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.<sup>16</sup> Prime candidates were the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Union of South American States (UNASUR). The latter

<sup>7</sup> Xenia Avezov: The New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers: South America Regional Dialogue. *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 17 (2013). 163.

<sup>8</sup> Adriana Erthal Abdenur et al.: *Enhancing Peacekeeping Training through Cooperation Lessons from Latin America*. Brasilia, Igarap  Institute, 2018. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Julian Gonzalez Guyer – Nicole Jenne: Controlling Blue Berets: The Consequences of Political Neglect in the Case of Uruguay's Participation in Peacekeeping. *Armed Forces and Society*, 20 (2018). 121.

<sup>10</sup> Avezov (2013); op. cit. 169.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah White: Indigenous Peoples, the International Trend Toward Legal Personhood for Nature and the United States. *American Indian Law Review*, 43, no. 1 (2018). 139–140; Joanna J. Bryson et al.: Of, For, and By the People: The Legal Lacuna of Synthetic Persons. *Artificial Intelligence and Law*, 25 (2017). 281.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch: *Latin America: Alarming Reversal of Basic Freedoms*. 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Nicol s Cachanosky – Alexandre Padilla: Latin American Populism in the Twenty-First Century. *The Independent Review*, 24, no. 2 (2019). 214.

<sup>14</sup> Especially high numbers of fatalities can be seen regarding Peru, according to data at Johns Hopkins University (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>). Notable among these initiatives is the finding of a Brazilian commission of inquiry which has stated that President Jair Bolsonaro should be charged with crimes against humanity for his mishandling of the pandemic (Tom Phillips: Bolsonaro Should Be Charged with Crimes against Humanity, Covid Inquiry Finds. *The Guardian*, 20 October 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Avezov (2013); op. cit. 164.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations: *Charter of the United Nations*. San Francisco, 26 June 1945. Articles 52–53.

of which appeared to provide a viable alternative to the Organisation of American States (OAS) and serve as a platform of expressing shared interests; however, by 2019 most of its members have either suspended membership or withdrawn entirely, specifically Uruguay in 2020, making it *de facto* defunct.<sup>17</sup> Regional cooperation has continued nonetheless, albeit via different, mostly bilateral and *ad hoc* channels. A notable example for bilateral cooperation lies in the joint Argentinian–Chilean contingent to MINUSTAH.<sup>18</sup> Another remarkable forum for technical cooperation lies in the establishment of peacekeeping training centres and also in harmonising their training programmes.<sup>19</sup> The establishment of training centres and vetting of adequate staff cannot be overstated. As peace operations are a dynamically changing environment where adaptability is key, sharing knowledge and compiling advanced preparatory materials are becoming a crucial factor for success.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, more robust training for police personnel, engaging with civil society, and promoting an increased role of women along with gender equality and mainstreaming are some of the fields where cooperation can be witnessed.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, military and police contributions are seen as exemplary, even though civilian contributions are seen by states in the region as insufficient. In a clear show of how different agendas can manifest themselves, Brazil has for instance taken part in the UNIFIL operation in Lebanon, reinforcing its commitment along with its belief that a maritime security focus will be a key direction for peace operations in the future.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, it can be assessed that states in Latin America have been active in UN peace operations to a varying degree, each fuelled by a combination of security, political, economic, institutional and normative interests and reasons. Directions and goals are clear and in most states in the region point towards cooperation. On a technical level, joint enterprises are working well but the continent has not found the adequate forum for cooperation. Still, general notions do not fully answer the question of why the contributions of various countries differ so much, especially in the case of Uruguay.

## The role of Uruguay

### *Uruguayan contribution in numbers*

When it comes to financial contributions, the numbers do not show anything extraordinary. Countries with larger territory, population, economic power and political influence contribute more to support the financial background of peace operations. Therefore, from a regional perspective Brazil is leading with 0.58%, followed by Argentina (0.27%),

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<sup>17</sup> El P is: Gobierno anunci  el retiro de Uruguay de la Unasur y el reingreso al TIAR [Government Announces Uruguay's Withdrawal from Unasur and Re-entry into TIAR]. *El P is*, 10 March 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Avezov (2013): op. cit. 168.

<sup>19</sup> Abdenur et al. (2018): op. cit. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Kobi – Eyal Ben-Ari: Contemporary Peace Support Operations: The Primacy of the Military and Internal Contradictions. *Armed Forces and Society*, 37, no. 4 (2011). 671.

<sup>21</sup> Abdenur et al. (2018): op. cit. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Avezov (2013): op. cit. 167.

Venezuela (0.21%) and Chile (0.12%). Uruguay fits into this trend by providing an annual 0.03% financial support, while much larger states such as Colombia (0.05%), Peru (0.03%) and Ecuador (0.01%) appear equally unmotivated to contribute financially.<sup>23</sup> In this context, it does not come as a surprise that the abovementioned states from South America are not enthusiastic about financial support as on the one hand, they do not feel a regional security challenge on their territory regarding which the UN is active and on the other hand, their long-standing grievance, namely the lack of a permanent seat in the Security Council, has not been addressed.

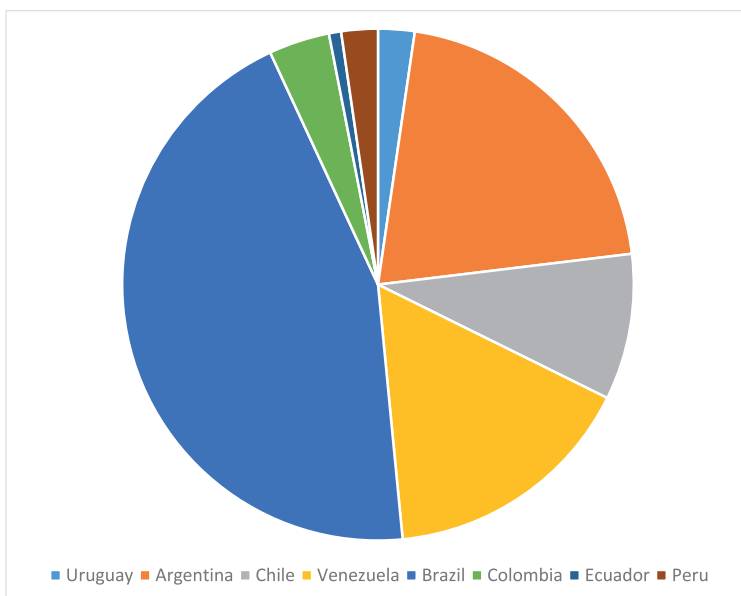


Figure 1: Major contributions from Latin American states to United Nations peace operations regarding finances (July 2021 – June 2022)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the UN's website A/73/350/Add.1, 24 December 2018.

If we look at contributions concerning personnel, a completely different picture comes to view with Uruguay's contribution amounting to an impressive 42.87% (or 1057 individuals) of the regional total. Larger than that of the five greatest – Brazil (76), Argentina (294), Peru (232), El Salvador (265) and Guatemala (176) – combined. It is a fairly common tendency that states who are 'paying with blood' will not be contributing with money, as well. Utilising this context, Uruguay will still be one of the main supporters of UN peace operations in Latin America even if the 'only' substantial aid the UN is via troops and not necessarily through money.

<sup>23</sup> UN's website A/73/350/Add.1, 24 December 2018.

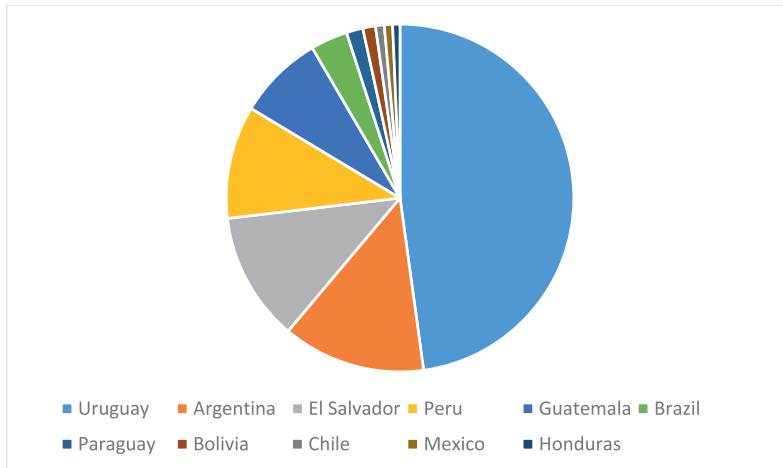


Figure 2: Contributions concerning personnel to United Nations peace operations (March 2022)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the UN's website A/73/350/Add.1, 24 December 2018.

### History and domestic background

Uruguay stands out among the states of the region from two notable perspectives. First of all, because it has been a supporter of UN peace operations right from the start and save for a few years of hiatus, provided over 45,000 troops who have been deployed to various environs, as the need dictated.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, as a mostly stable, democratic country, its domestic tranquillity served as a model for its neighbours. While this latter statement appears to paint an ideal picture, the country is not without bumps on the road when it comes to its history of democracy, nor has the relationship between the civilian government and the upper echelons of the military been ideal. A pivotal moment occurred during the period between 1973 and 1984, when President Jose Maria Bordaberry initiated a *coup d' tat* and established military-civilian rule.<sup>25</sup> The military was not only instrumental in the *coup* of 1973 but also in dismantling the military-civilian regime. Based on a compromise between senior officers and opposition leaders, amnesty was granted to the armed forces regarding their role in the previous regime. This agreement has been reinforced in later agreements, namely in 1989 and 2009,<sup>26</sup> even though the 2005 victory of Frente Amplio or the Broad Front and President Tabar  Vazquez did re-interpret the *status quo* by bringing some key supporters of the previous regimes to justice.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Diego Esparza et al.: Peacekeeping and Civil–Military Relations in Uruguay. *Defence and Security Analysis*, 36, no. 3 (2020). 318.

<sup>25</sup> Esparza et al. (2020): op. cit. 318.

<sup>26</sup> Esparza et al. (2020): op. cit. 318.

<sup>27</sup> Guyer–Jenne (2018): op. cit. 5–6.

Some might argue that the political compromise was necessary to ensure a bloodless transition, but it did little to establish trust from the side of the local population. Subsequent presidents have therefore relied on peace operations in order to raise the standing of Uruguay’s armed forces in the eyes of the population as well as to assert civilian control over the military.<sup>28</sup> Civilian control could be measured in how the elected administration is able to exercise oversight regarding military personnel and how goals that are important for civilians are executed by the military.<sup>29</sup> In the words of Trinkunas: “Civilian control exists when politicians and bureaucrats can determine defence policies and approve military activities through an institutionalised professional defence bureaucracy”.<sup>30</sup> Uruguay has set three goals for its armed forces: protection from external sources such as Brazil and Argentina, enforcing laws and maintaining control as well as providing a rapid response regarding emergencies.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, using the money the UN provides is channelled towards training which improves all three areas. Financially speaking, participation in peace operations used to be quite a lucrative venture. Since military expenditures have been reduced drastically by the state after 1985, and especially less so since 2005, participating in UN peace operations and obtaining reimbursement from the organisation was essential for the armed forces.<sup>32</sup> However, as recent studies show, peacekeeping is only a lucrative venture for states under special circumstances and previous assumptions on how GDP per capita can be directly linked to contributions have been refuted by in-depth data analysis.<sup>33</sup> Taking part in robust peacekeeping and peacebuilding ventures also builds experience in how to maintain control over a territory and engage multiple actors. Exposing part of the armed forces to unpredictable environments and building a problem-solving capacity that can be relied upon in emergencies at home can also be considered to be an asset.

Changing perceptions from soldiers to peacekeepers has reinforced this positive change.<sup>34</sup> In some ways, this ‘rebranding’ of military forces and shifting their role in society was successful. From a societal standpoint, sending soldiers abroad has improved the perception of the military by society, transforming the general notions of a soldier maintaining military rule in the country to that of a peacekeeper working to aid those in dire situations abroad. It is hard to measure the perceptions of the general population and there is a debate among scholars as to the extent of changed perception in society.<sup>35</sup> Civilian oversight is not exactly an ideal situation. As some scholars point out, there is a palpable lack of interest from civilian governments and administrators regarding military matters. As a result, on the one hand, the military has retained considerable autonomy, but on the other hand, they do not receive sufficient funds to support their own

<sup>28</sup> Esparza et al. (2020): op. cit. 318–319.

<sup>29</sup> Esparza et al. (2020): op. cit. 319.

<sup>30</sup> Harold A. Trinkunas: *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela. A Comparative Perspective*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 58.

<sup>31</sup> Esparza et al. (2020) op. cit. 323.

<sup>32</sup> Am lcar Andr s Pel ez: Country Survey XX: Defence Spending and Peacekeeping in Uruguay. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 18, no. 3 (2007). 297.

<sup>33</sup> Katharina P. Coleman – Benjamin Nyblade: Peacekeeping for Profit? The Scope and Limits of ‘Mercenary’ UN Peacekeeping. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55, no. 6 (2018).

<sup>34</sup> Esparza et al. (2020) op. cit. 326.

<sup>35</sup> See also Esparza et al. (2020): op. cit. versus Guyer–Jenne (2018): op. cit.

agenda.<sup>36</sup> Consequences of this can be seen concerning the status of the aerial capacities of Uruguay, which is rapidly becoming out-of-date, expensive to maintain and prone to accidents.<sup>37</sup> Indirectly, the lack of funds can also end in lower intensity participation in peace operations as lacking funds for equipment at home will mean fewer forces that can reliably be sent abroad.

From a historical perspective, there has been continuous support for peace operations since 1952, albeit for the first decades, sending military observers abroad was the largest contribution of Uruguay to UN missions. The most visible of these have been deployment in the Sinai Peninsula and border surveillance until 1988 during the Iraq–Iran war. In the 1990s, Uruguay has been an active participant in the second generation peace operations in Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola with an increased number of personnel when compared to previous operations. Since the 2000s, the country has had a robust contribution to the operations in Haiti<sup>38</sup> and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>39</sup> At its peak between 2006 and 2010, between a quarter and a third of the country's armed forces have been engaged in United Nations peace operations at a given time.<sup>40</sup> After around 2010, the tendencies appear to have been shifting with Uruguay downsizing its contributions. From an all-time high between the years 2007 and 2010 of roughly 2,500 personnel, lately, the country has been sending between altogether 1,000–1,100 personnel by 2022. Nonetheless, Uruguay remains among the top 20 contributors and the most ardent supporter of UN peace operations in a regional context, even though it has been dethroned from the absolute top of the pyramid.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Tangible results and foreign policy perspectives***

Some results of such a continuous and strong cooperation can be seen in various fields. As mentioned before, the country houses a key training centre where experiences can be shared not only with Uruguayan forces but based on bilateral and regional agreements, with other partners as well. It can also be stated/declared that Uruguay is being recognised for its efforts by the UN itself, not only through public displays of support, but also by allowing the country and its citizens to fill key leadership roles.<sup>42</sup> A prime example can be observed in the case of Major General Jos  Eladio Alca n, who has been leading the observer mission between India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) since 2018.<sup>43</sup> A cautionary

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<sup>36</sup> Esparza et al. (2020) op. cit. 330.

<sup>37</sup> Esparza et al. (2020) op. cit. 324.

<sup>38</sup> Juli n Gonz lez Guyer: Punching above Its Weight. Uruguay and UN Peace Operations. In Kai Michael Kenkel (ed.): *South America and Peace Operations. Coming of Age*. London, Routledge, 2013. 115.

<sup>39</sup> Franz Kernic – Lisa Karlborg: Dynamics of Globalization and Regional Integration: South America and Peace Operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 17, no. 5 (2010). 725.

<sup>40</sup> Kai Michael Kenkel: Stepping out of the Shadow: South America and Peace Operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 17, no. 5 (2010). 589.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>

<sup>42</sup> Uruguay lauded by the UN Secretariat (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/02/1003401>).

<sup>43</sup> UNMOGIP leadership (<https://unmogip.unmissions.org/leadership>).



approach is warranted though at this point as Uruguay’s emerging role is not to be confused with a dominant position which the country does not hold in the UN.

Moral support for the liberal world order is a constant theme in the country’s foreign policy agenda. Since Uruguay was one of the founders of the League of Nations after the First World War and also has supported the United Nations since its creation, it can be established that the country has a long history of promoting multilateralism. Uruguay has also been actively campaigning for seats in the UN Security Council. In the highly competitive Latin American context, it has managed to win non-permanent seats twice, in 1965–1966 and 2016–2017 respectively.<sup>44</sup> Foreign policy perspectives can also be aligned along the lines of self-determination and non-intervention with a focus on peaceful dispute resolution. As Guyer points out, this political leaning is not only due to an interest in maintaining the norms set out by the United Nations but also because of the country’s location as a buffer between Argentina and Brazil and its history of navigating the waters between two much larger states.<sup>45</sup> These notions are reflected in the speeches before the UN General Assembly. The latest of these addressed by President Luis Lacalle Pou in 2021 has highlighted support of democratic values and individual freedoms, taking a stand against human rights violations, promoting the principle of non-intervention, the freedom of trade, and “protection that did not become protectionism”.<sup>46</sup> The latter statement is a breath of fresh air and can be understood in the context of several countries’ refusal to share Covid vaccination stockpiles. It can, however, also be translated as a warning that there was the weakening of the multilateral framework over the course of the last two years in favour of singular promotion of state interests – ideas which are contrary to the foreign policy agenda of Uruguay, which remains a staunch supporter of the international system and the United Nations.

### *Negative consequences*

Sending a large number of troops to peace operations also raises the chance for misdemeanours or crimes to be committed during the mission. As a result, some negative consequences will also need to be drawn attention to. In 2011, during the MINUSTAH operation in Haiti, news has surfaced that Uruguayan soldiers were involved in sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) against locals.<sup>47</sup> SEA is unfortunately not a rare phenomenon in UN peace operations and wherever it sprouts, victims suffer, the mission’s goals and the reputation of the organisation are jeopardised and if it meets with a lack of accountability, a sense of impunity can spread which can seep into the military system of the sending state. In 2011, when Uruguayan peacekeepers were involved, President Jos  Mujica has issued an apology and promised to conduct a full-scale investigation in order to bring the perpetrators to justice. Indeed, three separate investigations were conducted: one by the

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<sup>44</sup> Non-permanent seats of Uruguay ([www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/uruguay](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/uruguay)).

<sup>45</sup> Guyer (2013): op. cit. 113.

<sup>46</sup> Official record of the 76<sup>th</sup> session, 6<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, A/76/PV.6, 22 September 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Guyer (2013): op. cit. 113.

Defence Ministry of Uruguay, the second by Haiti and the third by the UN.<sup>48</sup> However, due to states exercising exclusive jurisdiction in criminal matters committed by their peacekeepers, the sole investigation which could have resulted in adequate justice in the form of a prison sentence could only be done by Uruguay. Indeed, the state has conducted the investigation, but as the allegations could not be substantiated due to the fact that the victim could not be traced, the five alleged perpetrators were released.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, it had internal ramifications domestically. As Guyer has put it: “[the case] not only placed a focus on the conduct of Uruguayan soldiers abroad, but led to a strong questioning of military education methods and institutional culture, as well as highlighting civilian sins of omission regarding democratic control”.<sup>50</sup> Since then, we can see that SEA continues to exist with Uruguayan peacekeepers continuing to be implicated while steps are also taken to combat the phenomenon. In 2017, Secretary-General Ant nio Guterres has praised Uruguay for appointing a national investigative officer quickly: within 5 days of notification of the allegation. It has also been highlighted that the country has cooperated well with the Secretariat and the Office for Internal Oversight Services responsible for handling the allegations within the UN. It was shared as a ‘best practice’ that Uruguay was the first state not only to set up a focal point for paternity claims but establishing a whole protocol on the role of the focal point.<sup>51</sup> Even so in 2017, 8 peacekeepers from Uruguay have been accused of engaging in transactional sexual relations with 2 local beneficiaries of assistance which fall under the category of SEA but the allegations were ‘unsubstantiated’ as the investigation has concluded.<sup>52</sup> In 2019, an allegation has surfaced where an Uruguayan peacekeeper has engaged in an exploitative relationship with a local.<sup>53</sup> In 2020, a case concerning rape against a minor was reported.<sup>54</sup> Whereas in 2021, an exploitative relationship concerning transactional sex has allegedly taken place with an adult victim that resulted in a paternity claim.<sup>55</sup> As it can be deduced from the information disclosed by the Secretariat, Uruguay is responsive towards claims of SEA and communicates well with the UN, even though it has not managed to effectively eliminate serious misconduct and crimes committed by its peacekeepers.

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<sup>48</sup> Al-Jazeera: Uruguay Apologises over Alleged Rape in Haiti. *Al-Jazeera*, 07 September 2011.

<sup>49</sup> PeaceWomen: Haiti: U.N. “Outraged” at Sexual Abuse by Peacekeepers. *IPS*, 23 January 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Guyer (2013): op. cit. 113.

<sup>51</sup> Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach, Report of the Secretary-General, A/71/818, 28 February 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/751, 15 February 2018, Allegations reported to the Office of Internal Oversight Services in 2017 involving civilian personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions, by field mission (as at 31 December 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, Report of the Secretary-General, A/74/705, 17 February 2020, Allegations involving military personnel, by field mission.

<sup>54</sup> Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, Report of the Secretary-General, A/75/754, 15 February 2021, Allegations involving military personnel, by field mission.

<sup>55</sup> Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, Report of the Secretary-General, A/76/702, 15 February 2022, Allegations involving military personnel, by field mission.

## Concluding remarks

When compared to contributions from other Latin American States, Uruguay does indeed stand out as one of the largest supporters of UN peace operations when it comes to personnel but necessarily regarding finances. Even though the number of personnel has decreased significantly since its peak in 2010, Uruguay's support remains constant for the organisation and towards the maintenance of international peace and security. The reasons for this exceptional contribution are manifold. On the one hand, it is caused by the economically feasible nature of the venture and the political benefits through which a country of less than 3.5 million can have a loud voice in international affairs. On the other hand, Uruguay's activity in the field is also influenced by regional security challenges, as seen regarding its leading role in the MINUSTAH operations. The support is also due to traditions, as Uruguay has been involved in peaceful settlement of disputes since 1936 and has had a continuous presence in peace operations since 1952. It is also due to the country's (and its populations' as well as its elected leaders') belief in the altruistic mission of the United Nations. Despite political populism becoming widespread on the continent and the extraordinary challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, Uruguay's liberal and cooperative outlook on international affairs remains constant. Providing a task for its comparatively large military as well as shaping a softer, more humane image for the armed forces has substantially underlined Uruguayan presence in peace operations. No coin is without a flip-side, however. In this case, it is somewhat of a necessity for the military to support its revenues by engaging in peace operations as support from the state remains wanting. Another field where the possibilities are not used to their fullest extent, is civilian oversight, which was established since the change of regime, but effective control and policy-level reforms remain to be seen. Due to the lack of interest concerning oversight, sexual exploitation and abuse has also proven to be a phenomenon that continues to persist despite continued attempts to stem its recurrence. Overall, Uruguay remains a beacon of cooperation and devotion towards a multilateral world order in a Latin American context, even though room for improvement exists when it comes to transparency regarding domestic process for crimes committed in peace operations and stronger civilian oversight exerted over the armed forces.

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