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**Review: Sotomayor, A. C. *The Myth of the Democratic Peacekeeper. Civil-Military Relations and the United Nations. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014.***

**Camila De Souza Pires<sup>1</sup>**

Recently, there has been a large increase in the number of United Nations peacekeeping operations deployed around the world. Research in the field usually focuses on the impact that these troops have on the host country, however, little is known about the impact that these operations have on the soldiers of the countries that send those troops. Sotomayor's book raises the important question of how soldiers that participate in Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) are affected. Moreover, it gives an interesting insight into how, or if, these Peacekeeping Operations might reform military institution. In this regard, Sotomayor's book gives an interesting argument that breaks international relations' current discourse which states that PKOs democratize military institutions, as this showed little evidence in two out of the three countries studied. However, it does not analyse why there was a need to reform those military institutions in these specific countries or the internal structure of these institutions. Analysing three major Latin America contributors to troops, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, Sotomayor's major conclusion is that although it did in Argentina, the deployment of blue helmets had none or little impact on reforming the military of Brazil and Uruguay.

The book is framed on the theories and conventional wisdom of international relations which state that engagement in PKOs may help new democratic states to reform their military. In Sotomayor's analyses of these three countries, he concludes that as they were all still in the process consolidating democracy when taking on PKOs, their

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participation was one that eagerly contributed to reshaping their governments in a post-authoritarian regime. Due to the history of the three countries (where the military was used to control internal security), the primary reason for contributing troops to PKOs should have been the post-dictatorship reform of the military, as a way of dealing with the army. However, in all these cases this was not the primary reason for participating in operations. Domestic politics, for example, played a more important role in this decision. Also, in all three cases the engagement provided attractive economic incentives.

The importance of military reform for Sotomayor is to upgrade and enhance professional skills and to modernize doctrines, tactics and capabilities through UN training and exercises. He emphasizes the importance of training to reform the military and of the use of the “soldiers as diplomats” model to professionalize the army. In addition, in order to improve civil-military relations, decision makers must be involved and the military must be willing to comply. Sotomayor also addresses two other important questions: the first question refers to whether peacekeeping operations can teach soldiers to become more liberalized and civilised. According to IR conventional wisdom, interaction with different agents, such as NGOs, may socialize the blue helmets, and this socialization will eventually affect a military reform.

However, this study shows that participating in PKOs instead achieved mixed goals. Drawing upon the different types of PKOs (peacebuilding, peace-enforcement, observation missions, and peacekeeping), it was possible to understand that each type of operation has its own impact on the soldiers, both positive and negative, depending on their interaction with different agents and the success of the mission. All soldiers from the three countries from under the same institutions but nevertheless were exposed to different types of missions. The socialization process had more impact in

operations where the soldiers learned a new skill. In other words, the soldiers were more socialized in the operations that gave them new roles. However, socialization in peacekeeping operations did not provide incentives strong enough to change identities or interests. Instead, it appears to have reinforced traditional behaviours.

Using primary and secondary data from MINUSTAH, the UN stabilization mission in Haiti, allowed Sotomayor to analyse the socialization process of all the countries' troops in the same mission. The importance of this mission in particular, was the way it attempted several different types of peacekeeping mission over the years. The author claims that because of this it was possible to observe the differences in the socialization process of the troops. Some of his main findings regarded the socialization experience of the troops and how their experiences diverged. Due to their regional proximity and common foreign policy, the three countries were expected to converge, however, just the opposite occurred in MINUSTAH. Sotomayor observed that in Haiti the role of the police was delegated to the military, therefore problems such as impunity, lack of civilian control, and problems with accountability occurred.

The second question he poses is whether peacekeeping improves defence and foreign policy integration. Conventional wisdom suggests that PKOs can strengthen civilian control over the military. The study conducted showed that this is not necessarily the truth. In all cases, this only happened when the foreign ministries assumed an active role in the decision making process. Stating that civilians should be involved in the key decisions regarding PKO, Sotomayor argues that there is no homogenous model for foreign and defence policy integration. All the evidence indicates that integration and segregation depends on the will of diplomats to interact in the decision-making process of PKOs.

Brazil and Uruguay did not reform its military doctrines. In the case of Uruguay, the biggest per capita contributor, there was almost no reform in the military, and foreign and defence policies are segregated. Although Uruguay modified its military orientation, it did not modify training or civilian control. Brazil has been the largest contributor, however, this corresponds only to less than 10% of its overall force. Furthermore, Brazil's integration between foreign and defence policies is bigger than in Uruguay: Brazil kept their traditional orientation and did not modify training or civilian control. Despite Argentina being the smallest contributor per capita, it appears to be the only country for Sotomayor that, having transformed military training and orientation, eventually improved civilian control.

Furthermore, the socialization process appears to be stronger in Argentina than in Brazil and Uruguay. Socialization for Argentineans had positive effects on military professionalism in soldiers participating in observation mission and peace enforcement, where they performed roles that they had not previously held. This effect also occurred in Brazil and Uruguay albeit not to the same extent: the result was the opposite for the peacekeeping mission where the soldiers performed police duties and counterintelligence, similar to their roles during the dictatorships in those countries.

Sotomayor offers several policy strategies. First, he suggests that the UN should give incentives for military institutions to change and for diplomats to be active in PKOs. One of the ways this could work would be by taking ownership of the training centres and beginning to certify or decertify them. He pushes for a more homogenised and quality training, and redesigned training programme and workshops. Second, the use of trained police forces for public security and law enforcements instead of military troops in peacebuilding and enforcement missions is suggested as another approach. In fact, Sotomayor rejects the use of military troops to undertake police functions, by

concluding that the troops will never conduct themselves as police forces. Third, Sotomayor states that the UN peacekeeping system should change where member states do not offer the UN enough authority to punish troops when misbehaviour occurs. In addition, the choice for the force commanders is defective: Sotomayor concludes that the force commander should not come from the largest troop contributor, but from a non-vested party in the mission. Finally, that consolidated democracies such as the US and Europe should engage more in peace operations, not only because they share the responsibilities, but also because their participation could reinforce socializing experiences.