

# BRAZILIAN

Military Culture

2018





## **The FIU-USSOUTHCOM Academic Partnership Military Culture Series**

Florida International University's Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy (FIU-JGI) and FIU's Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center (FIU-LACC), in collaboration with the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), formed the FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership. The partnership entails FIU providing research-based knowledge to further USSOUTHCOM's understanding of the political, strategic, and cultural dimensions that shape military behavior in Latin America and the Caribbean. This goal is accomplished by employing a military culture approach. This initial phase of military culture consisted of a yearlong research program that focused on developing a standard analytical framework to identify and assess the military culture of three countries. FIU facilitated professional presentations of two countries (Cuba and Venezuela) and conducted field research for one country (Honduras).

The overarching purpose of the project is two-fold: to generate a rich and dynamic base of knowledge pertaining to political, social, and strategic factors that influence military behavior; and to contribute to USSOUTHCOM's Socio-Cultural Analysis (SCD) Program. Utilizing the notion of military culture, USSOUTHCOM has commissioned FIU-JGI to conduct country-studies in order to explain how Latin American militaries will behave in the context of U.S. military engagement.

The FIU research team defines military culture as "the internal and external factors — historical, cultural, social, political, economic — that shape the dominant values, attitudes, and behaviors of the military institution, that inform how the military views itself and its place and society, and that shape how the military may interact with other institutions, entities, and governments." FIU identifies and expounds upon the cultural factors that inform the rationale behind the perceptions and behavior of select militaries by analyzing historical evolution, sources of identity and pride, and societal roles.

To meet the stated goals, FIU's JGI and LACC hosted academic workshops in Miami and brought subject matter experts together from throughout the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, to explore and discuss militaries in Latin America and the Caribbean. When possible, FIU-JGI researchers conduct field research in select countries to examine these factors through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys. At the conclusion of each workshop and research trip, FIU publishes a findings report, which is presented at USSOUTHCOM.

The views expressed in *Brazilian Military Culture* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Government, Florida International University, or any other affiliated institutions. This report was funded by the United States Southern Command.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## General Characteristics

- In October 2015, the three Brazilian military commanders jointly aired a video in support of the nomination of Aldo Rebelo — a House Representative from the Partido Comunista do Brasil (Communist Party of Brazil, PCdoB) and a traditional communist and former guerrilla militant — to Minister of Defense. Considering the Brazilian military's traditional aversion to communism, this was a symbolic and important gesture that illustrates the current military attitude toward subordination to the political power and respect to democratic institutions and processes.
- Since the abolishment of the monarchy and the inauguration of Brazil as a republic in 1889, the military has portrayed itself as the guardian of the patria and of democracy.
- Paradoxically though, the military is fundamentally legalistic, and even when it came to power in 1964 upon the sacking of elected politicians it was always with the understanding that it was correcting their errors and preserving the highest national interest in compliance with the law.
- By the same token, the military was effective in lobbying to maintain in the 1988 federal constitution the authorization to intervene domestically when law or order are threatened.
- Therefore, despite several explicit or implicit interventions in the political process, the military is disinclined to seize power. The military culture does not cultivate a passion for political power, but it promotes the notion that it is responsible for the preservation of the basic values of the nation, including democracy, freedom, and sovereignty over the territory. When the military perceives that one of these pillars is threatened, it feels that its duty is to interfere, as the law requires.
- Brazilian armed forces are hierarchically organized and exhibit a high level of discipline, internal cohesion and obedience.
- Although some military may see politicians as fundamentally dishonest and self-serving, overall Brazilian military officers have been respectful of the institutions and political process.
- Officers today demonstrate significant educational and cultural improvement, and a more sophisticated vision of the world, as compared with predecessors who served in the last century.

## Sources of Identity and Pride

- The first source of identity for the Brazilian military culture is Western civilization's values, principles, mores, traditions, history, religion, and customs. These values are cultivated by a solid, well-articulated, and sophisticated military education system.
- Although the distant roots — and the first historical records — of Brazil's military *ethos* have their origin in the colonial Portuguese forces, it was only after Brazil's independence in 1822, that a truly Brazilian military identity began to emerge, in forces initially subordinated to the monarchy and later to the Republic.
- Its first fighting experience came in tandem with the Portuguese military to expel foreign invaders. Then, after independence, for the first time, they fought for Brazil to suppress pockets of resistance to independence.
- The long and bloody Paraguayan War, or War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870), rendered the victorious Brazilian military an identity independent of the monarchy. Leaders and heroes whose achievements were the object of cult followings are still lionized today. Admiral

Joaquim Marques Lisboa, Marquis of Tamandaré, the patron of the Navy, and General Luís Alves de Lima e Silva, Duke of Caxias, the patron of the Army, are among the most notable.

- The termination of the monarchy in 1889, had surprising effects on military identity. On the one hand, it produced the Republic and resulted in institutions and processes consistent with a democratic framework that brought a redefinition of military identity. On the other hand, it produced the first military intervention in the politics of the nascent Republic: the first and second presidents of the Republic were Army Generals, respectively Marshal Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca and Marshal Floriano Peixoto.
- During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the country going through a profound political and economic transformation, the military also tried to modernize, initially seeking German assistance. These initiatives were thwarted by WWI and the subsequent German defeat.
- Between 1919 and 1929, Brazil received several French military missions that influenced the modernization of military education, doctrine, equipment, and training.
- The period between the 1920s and WWII was also a time to redesign the relationship between political and military realms. Young—and better educated—officers ushered in the “tenentismo,” a movement based upon the growing influence of the military over political institutions within the relatively new Republic.
- In 1935, a short-lived Communist uprising (Intentona Comunista) from low-ranking military against the Getúlio Vargas government was quickly put down and ended up strengthening the military anti-Communist views and subsequent support for Vargas.
- In 1937, a year before the presidential elections, Vargas declared a state of emergency “to prevent a Communist revolution” and turned his government into a dictatorship — the “Estado Novo” (New State). The coup d’état was supported by the military and Vargas would remain in power as a dictator until 1945.
- The most important source of identity and pride — as well as modernization — of Brazilian armed forces occurred during WWII and included security cooperation with the United States. Brazil contributed 25,000 troops that were transported, trained, and equipped to fight with the Allied forces in Italy. As a result, Brazil modernized its forces, gained combat experience, and created the Brazilian Air Force.
- By the end of the war, the U.S. was Brazil’s most important defense partner; in 1948, following a Brazilian request, the U.S. assisted in the creation of the Escola Superior de Guerra (Superior War Academy), in Rio de Janeiro. Within the context of a new U.S. strategy for Latin America, this partnership produced in 1952 a bilateral Military Cooperation Agreement. Brazil unilaterally abrogated this agreement in 1977.
- In 1964, with a coup d’état, the military took control of government, imposing a dictatorship that endured until 1985. During this period, the ideas produced at the Escola Superior de Guerra under the rubric “National Security Doctrine” helped create a rationale for military control.
- The post-dictatorship period produced important changes in the military, including its relationship with civilian power, as well as force transformation and deployment. But the initial phase of this modernization process was slow due to the resistance of the military to institutional change. Nevertheless, during the “negotiated and relatively controlled” transition to democracy, the military was able to maintain its integrity and some prerogatives. It kept its archives inviolable, reached an amnesty agreement about human rights violations, and quickly learned how to influence politics in the new democracy.

- In 1990, Fernando Collor de Mello — a Brazilian president elected by popular vote after 30 years — dismantled the military leadership structure, not because he was seriously concerned about the professional organization of the armed forces, but because he wanted to demoralize and weaken the military and push them away from his Cabinet. Forced by this circumstance the military began a process to redesign its command structure.
- In June 1999, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso created a Ministry of Defense and assigned a civilian as minister. This appointment provoked a cascade of actions that redirected the military toward traditional missions related to the defense of national sovereignty, but in a democratic realm. It renewed the Policy of Defense, launched a national strategy, and produced a White Book of Defense. The military could finally focus on traditional missions and advance projects of modernization, weapons acquisition, and force redistribution.

### **Military and Society**

- Overall, Brazilians have a positive attitude toward the military. Except for the period following the end of the dictatorship when civil society was eager for democracy, the military has always been considered one of the two most respected institutions, along with the Catholic Church. While politicians and political parties usually receive the lowest approval ratings, civilians perceive the military as essentially honest, patriotic, and disciplined.

### **Bilateral Defense Cooperation with the United States**

- As an outcome of higher levels of professionalization, Brazilian military have been increasing in quality and quantity defense cooperation initiatives with the U.S. counterparts. Particularly the military-to-military bilateral agenda is currently very promising and Brazil is a very important strategic partner for the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere.

# INTRODUCTION

In October 2015, the three Brazilian military commanders jointly aired a video in support of the nomination of Aldo Rebelo — a House Representative from the Partido Comunista do Brasil (Communist Party of Brazil, PCdoB) and a traditional communist and former guerrilla militant — to Minister of Defense. Considering the traditional Brazilian military’s aversion to communism, this was a symbolic and important gesture that illustrates the current military attitude toward democracy, particularly concerning subordination of the military to civilian authority and to democratic institutions and processes. Even during the most recent series of political crises unleashed by rampant corruption during the 14 years of PT administration—which culminated with a former president (Lula da Silva) and many politicians in jail, and another president (Dilma Rousseff) impeached — the military has been unyielding to calls from some sectors of civil society to intervene.

To participate in the general elections of 2018, an unprecedented 117 retired military enrolled as candidates (7% of the total enlisted candidates). They entered into politics moved by the same motivations that, in the past, produced military interventions: to fight corruption and “correct” a vicious political system. But mostly they have been encouraged by favorable public opinion that contrasts with the low esteem of professional politicians.<sup>1</sup>

The military’s attitude toward the press and other opinion makers has also changed during the last decades. On August 18, 2018, for example, Brazilian Army Commander General Eduardo Villas Boas published an opinion, “Defesa Para Quê?” (“Why Defense?”), in the newspaper “O Estado de São Paulo,”<sup>2</sup> to explain the reasons why Brazil needs well-equipped armed forces. This was an unusual declaration because the military had previously not felt the need to explain or justify these matters to civil society. In another demonstration of his understanding of the value of social media, Gen. Villas Boas runs an active Twitter account with 305,000 followers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Ao Menos 116 Militares das Forças Armadas Querem Disputar as Eleições de 2018,” UOL, 9 JUL 2018. <http://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticias/2018/07/09/ao-menos-116-militares-das-forcas-armadas-querem-disputar-eleicoes-em-2018.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Eduardo Villas Boas, “Defesa Para Quê?,” O Estado de S. Paulo, Aug 18, 2018. [opinião.estadao.com.br](http://opinião.estadao.com.br)

<sup>3</sup> See Gen Villas Boas’ Tweeter account [https://twitter.com/Gen\\_VillasBoas](https://twitter.com/Gen_VillasBoas)



These actions reveal important changes in traditional Brazilian “military culture.”<sup>4</sup> They reveal acceptance and confidence in democratic institutions; and they show a better level of engagement in the political process, not with the intent of tailoring the process to fit military vision, but instead, to play according to the rules of the democratic game. During the last National Constituent Assembly in 1988/1989, the military was quick to learn how to operate within the political world to protect its prerogatives; but this was a military expeditionary incursion within the political world to advance values precious to the military. Now, in a vastly different move, the military invited civil society to discuss military issues. Indeed, this is a remarkable change in military culture – promoted from within and perhaps ironically – with the aim of strengthening the perception of Brazilian military in its professional military standing...and not in its role as the “guardian of the Brazilian democracy.”<sup>5</sup> This might be due, of course, not to any institutional change, but to the individual attitude of Gen. Villas Boas as a leader particularly devoted to democratic values. Only the future will confirm his intentions. But it is, nevertheless, an extraordinary change in Brazil’s military culture.

These changes and trends in the military *ethos* are particularly important due to the size and strategic relevance of these forces in Latin America.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Along the paradigm originally developed by Almond and Verba (1963) this paper defines the expression “military culture” (as well as “military ethos”) as the set of values, norms, mores, institutions, and habits that identify the military as a peculiar social group within the society. As such, it also draws methodologically on Emile Durkheim’s (1997) systemic and functionalist approach. Our “building blocks” (Almond and Verba) are the perceived orientations of the military as a relatively homogeneous group toward subjects. “Cognitive orientation” refers to the knowledge of and belief toward the political system, its roles, its inputs, and its outputs. “Affective orientation” refers to the feelings about the political system, its roles, personnel, and performance. “Evaluational orientation” refers to judgments and opinions about political objects that typically involve the combination of value standards and criteria with information and feelings.

Finally, Almond & Verba’s model considers political objects (1) the “general” political system, (2) the specific roles or structures in the system (legislatures and bureaucracies), (3) the incumbents of roles (monarchs and legislators), and (4) public policies (decisions or enforcements of decisions).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Frank McCann (2004).

<sup>6</sup> The expression Brazilian Armed Forces include the Brazilian Navy, the Brazilian Army, and the Brazilian Air Force. With about 320,000 active-duty troops and officers it is the second largest in Latin America, behind Colombia; but it is the first if considered the level of equipment (IISS Military Balance 2017). Military Police (organized in each State) as well as Firefighters are considered auxiliary and reserve forces. Military service is mandatory for men (Federal Constitution, art. 143), but because there is a large excess (95%) of enlisted individuals, serving is practically a voluntary choice. Since the early 1980s, women have been serving in the armed forces. In 2003 the first women were allowed to enter the Air Force Academy to be formed as officers and pilots. The Navy inaugurated its first class of women cadets in 2014; and the Army, in 2017. Therefore, soon Brazilian women officers can take part in combat operations in the three branches of the armed forces.

## BRAZIL'S MILITARY CULTURE GENERIC TRAITS

In 1957, Samuel Huntington suggested a model to assess the professionalism of the officer corps as a way to ensure effective civilian control of the armed forces while providing adequate national defense. His model — based upon the observation of technical orientation, discipline, and esprit de corps of the officer corps — would later become the basis for many scholars to analyze the “militarism” in Latin America from the 1960s to 1980s. Although Huntington’s three indicators leave room for subjective interpretations, they are a useful starting point in identifying Brazil’s generic military cultural traits and its level of professionalism.<sup>7</sup>

However, in the Brazilian case, strong professionalism does not equate to less intervention in politics. Conversely, for as much as the military exhibits clear technical orientation, high levels of discipline, and a robust esprit de corps, it also perceives itself as more patriotic and nationalist than politicians. Consequently, throughout history, very “professional” military also believed their duty was to “correct” what they perceived as wrongdoings in the political sphere. Therefore, for a better understanding of the Brazilian military culture, we need to add another variable to Huntington’s model: the military’s acceptance and trust of democratic institutions and the political process.

It is the observation of this variable that makes the present moment of Brazilian history particularly remarkable. In the past, military interventions occurred when the high command concluded that democratic institutions were not strong enough to maintain political stability. Nevertheless, despite several explicit or implicit interventions in the political process, the military cannot be tagged as prone to engage in coups. The military culture does not cultivate a passion for political power, but it does promote a notion of responsibility for the preservation of the nation’s basic values, including democracy, freedom, and sovereignty over the national territory. Every time the military perceives that one of these pillars is threatened, it feels that its duty is to interfere, “according to the law.” Beginning in 1964, however, the intervention lasted for 21 years — until 1985.

In contrast with these past intrusions, the military, as an institution, was remarkably silent before the current political crisis. Despite evidence of blatant, widespread corruption in political institutions, the military maintained its distance from delving — at least institutionally — into the

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<sup>7</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

political realm. Rare statements by military leaders have just been aired to reinforce their confidence in the ability of the political institutions to resolve the crisis. These attitudes are a good sign that the military establishment is adapted to democratic procedure. To this point, the Brazilian military has demonstrated acceptance of the pace of democratic institutions to resolve the crisis.

Still, considering civil-military relations, it is also important to observe the reaction of the politicians and Brazilian Congress, who have traditionally shown only scant interest toward defense and military issues. In the aftermath of the military dictatorship, the major interest of the political class was, understandably, to reduce the powers and prerogatives of the military. It would be fair to expect that after 21 years of military intervention, in 1985 the first civilian president of Republic would redefine the political relationship with the military and fully redesign the defense sector. But the indirectly elected president, Tancredo Neves, fell ill and died before being inaugurated. Consequently, Vice President José Sarney became the president who would conduct the transition between the military regime and democracy. Yet, the commotion over the death of Neves had completely changed the political climate, the political forces, and the priorities for the civilian administration. As a result, nothing really changed until the 1988/1989 National Constituent Assembly. By then, however, the military recovered the initiative to operate and be influential within the democratic political sphere, making these changes more form than substance.

Indeed, this moment offers an excellent example of the military's ability to rapidly adapt itself to the rules of the democratic process, advance its views, and protect its prerogatives. The three military branches officially registered representations ("parliamentary advisors") to the Constituent, and, in a purely political process designed to channel all the anxieties and ideals of the society repressed for over two decades, the military effectively organized a lobby to present and defend its interests. As such, it succeeded in keeping the authorization in the 1988 constitution for the military to act if the preservation of law and order is threatened.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding, defense and security have never been among the themes of interest in the National Congress, perhaps because of the lack of importance of these topics in Brazil's national agenda. Movements to modernize Brazil's defense conception were usually initiatives of the

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<sup>8</sup> Federal Constitution of Brazil, 1989: "article 142. the armed forces, comprised of the navy, the army and the air force, are permanent and regular national institutions, organized on the basis of hierarchy and discipline, under the supreme authority of the president of the republic, and are intended for the defense of the country, for the guarantee of the constitutional powers, and, on the initiative of any of these, of law and order."

executive branch, initially with President Fernando Collor de Mello in an erratic way, and later with Fernando Henrique Cardoso in a more thoughtful and rational way. Collor dismantled the concept of the old military order and did what he could to dwarf the military's influence on politics. Cardoso actually launched the basis for a concept consistent with democracy and the strategic relevance of Brazil. All this, however, did little to change the overall apathy of the Brazilian Congress with respect to defense and security.

Brazilian armed forces are — as a part of the military *ethos* — hierarchically organized with internal structures and relationships between branches clearly defined. Although history records some moments of division and rebellion between ranks, these rebellions were rapidly suffocated and did not produce long-standing effects on military discipline and institutional cohesion. Rivalry between branches exists, as in most Western military institutions, but they are contained and range from humorous competitions to efforts to gain influence over budget slices. Nevertheless, military lobbies in the Congress usually work in coordination and consistently to defend the joint interests of the armed forces.

Another typical trait of Brazilian military culture is rather peculiar. Different from most of military cultures, which naturally value the preparation for war and conflicts, the Brazilian military culture spouts peace at every opportunity. For example, Brazil's National Defense Strategy, published in 2008, begins with:

*Brazil is a peaceful country, by tradition and conviction. It lives in peace with its neighbors. It runs its international affairs, among other things, adopting the constitutional principles of non-intervention, defense of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts. This pacifist trait is part of the national identity, and a value that should be preserved by the Brazilian people.*<sup>9</sup>

Overall, Brazil's defense is oriented to the defense of the territory and sovereignty rather than to project power abroad. Traditionally, at least until the early 1990s, Brazil had described itself as a *status quo* and “satisfied” country that always privileged the multilateralism and the negotiated solution of conflicts. In addition, over the last decades, the military establishment increased its

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<sup>9</sup> Brazil's National Defense Strategy, Ministério da Defesa, 18 de dezembro de 2008. See also Brazil's Política Nacional de Defesa (PND), updated in 2012: “Papel da Defesa Nacional: Há quase 150 anos sem se envolver num conflito bélico – à exceção da Segunda Guerra Mundial, quando entrou na contenda após sofrer agressão direta das tropas do Eixo –, o Brasil tem consolidado sua vocação de país provedor de paz no cenário internacional.”

“presence” in civil society with the creation of a Ministry of Defense, and the publication of the Brazilian Defense Policy, a strategy of defense, and the White Book of Defense. This reveals an enormous change — truly cultural — in the way the military sees itself in the political arena, and along with other democracies in the world.

Finally, in 2004, Brazil adopted a more robust role in the United Nations during the Haiti crisis, providing the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) with the largest military and police contingency. This was a classic case of operations under the Chapter VII mandate of the UN Charter, and was a considerable change in Brazil’s approach to multilateral decisions. Previously, Brazil had always refused to participate in peacekeeping operations under Chapter VII of the UN charter, because Brazil considered it an “intervention” in the affairs of another state. MINUSTAH was operational until October 2017, when it was replaced by a smaller UN operation.<sup>10</sup>

This experience added another important trait to Brazilian military culture. It provided opportunity for preparation, doctrine improvement, and real operational experience. In addition, it offered the Brazilian military an extraordinary opportunity to finally change the narrative to discuss and present results in a noble mission as opposed to the years following the military dictatorship in which the military was constantly on the defensive to explain the past. It could now talk about the future. The role expansion contributed to an improved image of the armed forces to society and even improved military morale.

## SOURCES OF IDENTITY AND SOURCES OF PRIDE

Brazilian military history, aristocratic in its birth, has its most distant roots in the Portuguese colonial army.<sup>11</sup> Both the Brazilian Navy and Army were created in the process of independence from Portugal in 1822. But both services consider the colony years under Portugal’s flag, as part of their respective history. The transfer of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil in 1808, to escape from the Napoleonic wars in Europe, is also an important date, because part of the Portuguese

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<sup>10</sup> See Charles T. Call and Adriana Erthal Abdenour, A “Brazilian Way?” Brazil’s Approach to Peacebuilding. 2017.

<sup>11</sup> See Alain Rouquie’s “The Military and the State in Latin America.”

Navy brought to Brazil would become the cell for the establishment of the Brazilian Navy, when Dom Pedro I declared Brazil's independence from Portugal in 1822.

The deepest roots of Brazilian military culture can be found in the fights of the Portuguese colonial army to expel invasions of Brazilian territory. But it was the arrival of the royal family in 1808 that began to produce a truly Brazilian military ethos that would take shape independently from Portugal in 1822, with Brazil's independency.

The most influential event in this pre-Republic period was the Paraguayan War, or War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870), which was a long and bloody conflict whose beginning caught the Brazilian forces completely unprepared and poorly equipped. The final victory of the Triple Alliance reached after 6 years, helped the Brazilian military to define an identity that was independent from the monarchy. It also left a record of remarkable battles, important exhibitions of patriotism, loud affirmations of sovereignty, and the emergence of leaders and heroes whose memories became the object of cult followings that endure today. Among those are Admiral Joaquim Marques Lisboa, Marquis of Tamandaré, the patron of the Navy, and General Luís Alves de Lima e Silva, Duke of Caxias, the patron of the Army.

The termination of the monarchy and installation of the Republic in November 15, 1889, had unexpected effects on military identity. On the one hand, it produced the Republic and demands for institutions and processes consistent with the new political framework, which propelled the redefinition of the military identity. On the other, it produced the first military intervention in the politics of the nascent Republic: the first two presidents of the Republic were army generals, respectively Marshal Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca and Marshal Floriano Peixoto.

### **Swinging between the Barracks and Politics: An Ambiguous Influence**

During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with the profound political and economic transformation affecting Brazil, the military also tried to modernize, initially seeking German assistance. These initiatives were thwarted by WWI and the subsequent German defeat. From 1919 to 1929, Brazil received several French military missions that influenced military education and doctrine and helped modernize equipment and training.

The period between the 1920s and WWII would also be influential for the development of a military ethos. Brazil's domestic politics went through tremendous political turmoil and disputes

among old and new oligarchies produced revolutions in 1930<sup>12</sup> and 1932.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, within the armed forces, discontent was growing. New, young and better-educated officers disagreed with old Army officers. The “lieutenants” could not accept what they saw as leadership lethargy toward political corruption and incompetence to address the economic and political imbalances in the Republic.

In 1935, a Communist uprising (“Intentona Comunista”) from low-ranking military against the Vargas government was quickly suppressed and ended up strengthening the military’s anti-Communist determination. Henceforth, anti-communism would become one of the strongest traits of Brazilian military culture. In 1937, a year before the presidential elections, as a way “to prevent a Communist revolution,” President Vargas, supported by the military, turned his government into a dictatorship — the “Estado Novo” (New State)—a dictatorial regime that would influence military culture and last until 1945.

Participation in World War II was also an important source of identity and pride — as well as of modernization — for the armed forces. Brazil contributed with 25,000 troops that the U.S. helped transport, train, and equip to fight alongside the Allies in Italy. As a result, Brazil modernized its forces, gained combat experience, and created the Brazilian Air Force. By the end of the war, the U.S. was Brazil’s most important defense partner, and in 1948, following a Brazilian request, the U.S. assisted in the creation of the Escola Superior de Guerra (Superior War Academy), in Rio de Janeiro. Prompted by a new U.S. strategy for Latin America, this partnership would also produce a bilateral Military Cooperation Agreement in 1952 that stood until 1977 when Brazil abrogated it unilaterally in reaction to the pressure from the Carter Administration toward Brazil’s nuclear program and human rights violations.<sup>14</sup>

## Non-Belligerence as a Foreign Policy Rule and a Source of Military Culture

Brazilians are proud of their relatively peaceful history. Even prior to a clear definition of military culture, which was, since its origin more concerned with domestic problems and the defense of the territory, the Brazilian foreign policy was recognized because of its non-belligerence. In practical terms, it maintained Brazil’s integrity and sovereignty while advancing

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<sup>12</sup> See Boris Fausto’s “A Revolução de 1930.”

<sup>13</sup> See Herculano C. Silva’s “A Revolução Constitucionalista.”

<sup>14</sup> See Sonny B. Davis. “Brazil-United States Military Relations in the Early Post World War II Era.” *Diálogos*, DHI/UEM, v. 6. p. 13-29, 2002

national interests abroad. Consequently, the Brazilian military culture has not been cemented upon an impressive participation in major conflicts, as is often the case, particularly in comparison with Western major powers.

Since the foundation of the Republic in 1889, which marks the beginning of the modern Brazilian state, a trait of the Brazilian military is its concern with internal politics rather than external affairs. This issue produced several military “interferences” in politics and culminated with a 21-year military dictatorship (1964-1985). One might have the notion that the most evident trait of the Brazilian military culture is the “*golpismo*,” or the tendency to produce coups d’état with little respect for democracy. Curiously though, reality is more nuanced.

First, the 1964 coup d’état was successful and bloodless.<sup>15</sup> But, soon, as was common of the Brazilian military culture, the military in control needed a narrative, a rationale, to justify the intervention and its permanence in power “to correct the many ‘wrongdoings’ of the previous administration.”

This rationale was backed by the “National Security Doctrine” coined at Escola Superior de Guerra.<sup>16</sup> Highly influenced by Army General Golbery do Couto e Silva, it helped create a narrative that explained the need for an intervention and a justification of the military’s permanent political control. But it could not avoid the impact of the internal distortions in the military culture. Moreover, because the military stayed in power for such a long time, positions in the political structure, typically civilian ones, were perceived as available for military leaders. Therefore, this permanence in political control began to undermine the very nature of the military *ethos*, particularly concerning the military’s relationship with civilian political power.

The second important nuance is that the 21-year military dictatorship in Brazil was very peculiar when compared to other dictatorships. Every four years, there was a new Army general appointed as the president and the Congress was functional during most of the time. Although

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<sup>15</sup> See the excellent Elio Gaspari’s “A Ditadura Envergonhada”: “According to Ernesto Geisel, the 1964 coup d’état could not be defined as a Revolution because “Revolution are made around an idea, to advance a doctrine. We simply moved to overthrow João Goulart. It was a movement against, and not to push something forward. It was a movement against the subversion and against the corruption. But, first of all, neither the subversion nor corruption end. You may repress them, but you cannot destruct them. What we did aimed at correct, not to build something new and this is not revolution.” (translated by this author). GASPARI, Elio. A ditadura envergonhada. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002. p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> See Ailton Laurentino Caris Fagundes’ “From the Coup to a Dictatorship: The National Security Doctrine and the Construction of Military Regime. OPSIS: Catalão-GO, v. 14, n. 1, p. 60-78 - jan./jun. 201.



eventual initiatives to dismantle the dictatorship were repressed with swift power and violence, the military reaction cannot be compared, for example, with those of the Argentine or Chilean military. Moreover, the return to democracy was carefully crafted and kept under relative control by the military.

A third nuance refers to the difference of pace between the development of the military as an institution and the development of the Brazilian political system and democracy. Since the beginning of the Republic — following the relatively peaceful end of the monarchy, until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the military, as a relatively homogeneous elite, was highly influential in the fragile Brazilian democracy and eventually interfered directly in the political process. While military leaders considered interference in the political process as necessary, not to grasp and maintain power, but to “correct” a corrupt and weak political system, for most of the century, Brazilian democracy was slow to improve as a political regime based upon trusted institutions capable of effectively addressing the critical imbalances in society and to demonstrate interest in exerting effective control over the military.<sup>17</sup>

So, to correctly interpret the meaning of these historical events, one must understand that Brazilian military institutions and leadership developed faster than Brazilian democracy, which is, in large measure, still struggling to correspond to the needs of Brazilian society. Thus, the armed forces, as a relatively robust institution formed upon a clear code of values, discipline, and nationalism, cultivated from the very beginning the notion that the “protection and the correction of course” of the democracy was among its fundamental missions.

For this paper however, it is important to recognize that as much as these two decades “of exception” produced a tremendous distortion in the political sphere they also distorted profoundly the military sphere. And this made the re-adaptation to “normal” democratic standards — of which, Brazil does not exhibit a strong record — more difficult.

### **Aftermath of the Long Dictatorship: A Difficult Withdrawal from Politics**

The moments following the military dictatorship were also influential to the redefinition of Brazil’s military culture. In 1985, when upon indirect elections authorized by the military, a civilian

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<sup>17</sup> See Victor Nunes Leal’s “Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto,” Editora Forense, 1948; Raymundo Faoro’s “Os Donos do Poder: Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro,” Biblioteca Azul, 2012; and CARVALHO, José Murilo. “Forças Armadas e Política no Brasil,” 2005.

president of the Republic was elected; the military had to revise its role, having an important effect on its political culture. The first, yet surprising impact was perplexity. Indeed, due to the circumstance of the presidential transition, major changes happened only at the onset of the Collor administration.

The post-dictatorship period produced important changes in the armed forces, including in their governance, their relationship with civilian power, and their doctrine for force transformation and deployment. Interestingly, despite the magnitude of the transformation, the military maintained a relative control over this process. As noted by Wendy Hunter:

*The military as an institution emerged from the authoritarian governments of 1964–85 in a favorable position. Notwithstanding the legacy of financial debt, the economic successes the public associated with Brazil’s military governments, the comparatively low incidence of human rights violations they committed, and the public support they managed to command allowed the last two military presidents, Generals Ernesto Geisel (1974–79) and João Figueiredo (1979–85), to keep a firm grip on the transition back to democracy and to preserve important institutional prerogatives for the military in the process.*<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, during the “negotiated and relatively controlled” transition to democracy, the military preserved its integrity and some prerogatives. It kept its archives inviolable, reached an amnesty agreement about human rights violations, and quickly learned how to influence politics in the new democracy. But, at least during the José Sarney administration (1985-1990), it proved more resistant to internal change.

The military’s ongoing reluctance to adapt and modernize its own governance model proved to be costly during the re-adaptation to democracy. The slow and controlled return to democracy allowed the military to avoid the same kind of “dismantling” suffered, for example, by the Argentine military in the aftermath of its dictatorship. But it also made it more difficult for the military to devise and anticipate a new governance model that would reduce its influence over the civilian central government. This explains the military trauma when in March 1990, President Collor de Mello, on the first day of his administration, demolished and downgraded some military institutions, such as the Serviço Nacional de Informações (National Information Service)—a

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<sup>18</sup> Wendy Hunter, “State and Soldier in Latin America: Redefining Military Roles in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile.” USIP, 1994.

complex, broad, and sophisticated domestic intelligence system, created in 1964, which had ramifications in every government agency “to assist in their respective decision-making”<sup>19</sup> and the Secretaria de Assessoramento da Defesa Nacional (SADEN—previously National Security Council Secretariat). Even though Collor would be impeached two years later, the impact of these decisions in the military culture could not be reversed: essentially, the military lost political ground and prestige within the government and had no plan “B” to implement a new model, so the military had to adjust ad hoc to this new reality.

This situation changed in June 1999, when President Fernando Henrique Cardoso established the Ministry of Defense and named a civilian to be minister. This appointment provoked a cascade of decisions in the military realm that redirected it toward traditional missions related to the defense of the country’s sovereignty but in a democratic realm. In the following years, the military learned quickly to live in the new model and approved, respectively, a revision of the Policy of Defense, a national strategy, and a White Book of Defense with extensive civilian participation.

Although some military officers (usually retired officers in events organized by social Military Clubs) criticized these moves – perceived as dwarfing even more the influence of the military in politics – the military establishment accepted and quickly adopted the modifications. The military leaders benefited from having a politician to defend their interests as they could focus on traditional missions and advance projects of modernization and weapons acquisition, and force redistribution without getting involved in the political parties’ skirmishes over budget.

## **Relevance of Military Education and its Influence on Military Culture**

By far, the most important and influential source of the Brazilian military culture is military professional education. Brazil counts upon an impressive, well-articulated, and comprehensive education system with a myriad of institutions that provide military education at all levels and for all services. This system offers specific formation and specialization for officers and for sergeants. It also relies upon specific staff schools and high school education and research schools in each service (respectively, the Engineering Military Institute-IME, the Navy War College-EGN, and the Aeronautics Technological Institute-ITA). At the strategic level, it counts upon the Escola Superior de Guerra (War Superior College), which is subordinated to the Ministry of Defense.

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<sup>19</sup> See Marco Cepik and Priscila Antunes, “The Brazilian Intelligence Law: An Institutional Assessment”, 2001.

The system still requires the service of temporary military who receive specific training and education, and upon 13 military colleges for middle and high school students, initially intended for relatives of military but also accepting civilians. Temporary military may stay in service for up to eight years; they serve in typical military activities but mostly as physicians, laboratory technicians, dentists, and veterinary doctors. When these temporary military return to civilian life, they are usually strong disseminators of military values and military culture, therefore contributing to civilian respect toward military values.<sup>20</sup> Military colleges contribute to the military culture by cultivating values cherished by the military since the beginning of formal education of those individuals, who often will continue in the military career.

### **Military Justice as a Source of Military Culture**

Another important institution that influences Brazil's military culture is the military judicial system, which was initially established in 1808 upon the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in Brazil. By 1934, the "military justice" was included as a special branch of the Judicial Power (others are respectively Labor and Electoral). It was originally conceived to judge crimes committed by military personnel. Notwithstanding, as observed by Souza and Silva, these pioneer initiatives were impregnated by efforts to maintain the then-aristocratic power of military officials. Only the establishment of a military forum would slowly correct this bias. Interestingly, the first Brazilian Penal Code, published in 1890 at the outset of the Republic, was an adaptation of a Brazilian Navy Code later extended to the Army. Throughout history, and particularly during times of military intervention, the military judicial system broadened its attribution to judge civilians implicated in crimes against national security. Its structure covers all levels of justice, and even counts as the Superior Tribunal Militar (Military High Court, STM).<sup>21</sup> Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution preserved the Military Justice System (art. 122) and defined its power to "try and adjudicate the military crimes defined by law" (art. 124).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, by keeping the prosecution of crimes committed by military personnel within the military sphere, the Military Justice helps reinforce the notion of the military culture as a "closed system," which is relatively impervious to external influences.

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.eb.mil.br/web/ingresso/militar-temporario>

<sup>21</sup> See Adriana Barreto Souza and Angela Rodrigues Domingues da Silva's "A Organização da Justiça Militar no Brasil: Império e República," 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution.

## BRAZILIAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE MILITARY

A quote often used by the military with the calculated intention of blurring the distinction between the military and civil society is “The military is the people in uniform.” It could be merely a public relations ploy. But there is a good deal of truth in the statement because the Brazilian armed forces are based upon conscripts who come from all regions of the country. Every year 125,000 new conscripts enlist. The military is made of a very diversified sample of the population. In addition, because candidates interested in attending military service exceed open positions by 3:1, the remaining force is practically formed by individuals who really want to serve. These young Brazilians come mainly from the lower economic classes and many of them stay in service and progress up to non-commissioned officers. Officers come mostly from the middle (34.4%) and lower middle class (45.9%).<sup>23</sup>

Overall, Brazilians have a very positive vision of the military. Even the coup d'état in 1964 enjoyed extraordinary popular support. After the first decade of military dictatorship, with the hardening of the regime, an increase of censorship and repression of a growing subversion, the military began to experience a decay in the levels of public confidence and support, proportionally to the civil society's impatience to return to a democratic regime. Particularly by the mid-1980s, when the end of the military regime was turning into a concrete possibility, the society's anxiety was evident. Yet the military was not pushed away from government by a popular revolt. Actually, President Ernesto Geisel started the “abertura” (opening) process in the 1970s; he announced that he would initiate a “slow, gradual, and controlled” process to end the military regime. Therefore, when the military finally handed over the government to a civilian president, it was still through a controlled and indirect election.<sup>24</sup>

By the mid-1980s military credibility was battered. But over the last three decades, the popularity of military institutions has been fully restored and currently, particularly because of the wake of corruption by the political establishment, the military is considered the country's most

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<sup>23</sup> See: Celso Castro. “Diversity in the Brazilian Armed Forces” in “Cultural Diversity in the Armed Forces: An International Comparison,” Joseph L. Soeters and Jan Van der Muelen (eds.), Routledge, 2007. See also, F.D. McCann. “The Military,” in M.L. Conniff and F.D. McCann (eds.) “Modern Brazil: Elites and Masses in Historical Perspective.” Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989; and C. Castro, “O Espirito Militar,” (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) RJ: Jorge Zahar, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> See “A General Loosens the Reins in Brazil,” The New York Times Magazine Archives, Page 06110, 1981.

reputable institution. Indeed, for most of its recent history when “confidence in Brazilian institutions” has been measured by reliable polls, the military is considered one of the most respected institutions along with the Catholic Church, and, more recently, the press. Politicians and political parties usually receive the lowest grades. Civil society perceives the military as essentially honest, patriotic, and disciplined. Recent polls show that 78% of Brazilian civil society considers the military the most reliable institution in the country, in evident contrast with political parties and the National Congress, that appear among the least reliable institutions (68%).<sup>25</sup>

By the end of 2017, following a sequence of corruption scandals involving the political class, the press reported an uproar in different sectors of society that begged for a military intervention to sanitize the political system. However, Commander of the Army General Villas Boas, in a clear effort to put a stop to that sentiment declared that a military intervention would be a disaster.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, by the time this paper was in its final stage, in the election for president of the Republic, the candidate best positioned in the polls was Jair Bolsonaro, a retired army captain, who has, as a running mate, a retired army general. Although Bolsonaro has been retired for over two decades and is a congressional representative, he clearly identifies himself as military and his political platform is identified with military values that enjoy extraordinary popularity.

## BRAZILIAN MILITARY CULTURE FROM A SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

From a systemic analysis, Brazilian military culture is a closed system. It begins with a robust educational formation, continues with a clear definition and communication of a military doctrine — which includes structure and values clearly shared and consistent with Brazilian traditions and history — and is framed by an independent military justice, which includes a specific legal code, a set of processes, and an organic structure. This stands for a robust professional military culture,

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<sup>25</sup> Datafolha, 15 junho 2018, “Partidos, Congresso e Presidência são instituições menos confiáveis do país”, <https://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaopublica/2018/06/1971972-partidos-congresso-e-presidencia-sao-instituicoes-menos-confiaveis-do-pais.shtml>

<sup>26</sup> “Intervenção Militar Seria Enorme Retrocesso, diz Comandante do Exército” Agência Brasil, 23 de janeiro de 2018.

highly impermeable to external influences...and, on occasion, to decisions from the civilian political structure.

As such, this close institutional culture contributes to the notion that the military is somewhat superior to the rest of Brazilian society — and, eventually, superior to the political class. As we have previously underscored in this paper however, since the end of the military dictatorship, political authorities — as well as military leaders — have been promoting a significant adjustment in military culture to underscore trust upon the democratic institutions to resolve Brazil’s endemic imbalances. It has become quite clear over the last few years that the education of military leadership has dramatically improved. Experience in multilateral missions around the world has also contributed to this improvement. Primarily, though, the attitudes of military leaders who defend democratic institutions have been vital for such progress. And, curiously, even the present serious political crisis is offering an extraordinary test for this renewed military culture. So far, it seems to be working.

## DEFENSE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND BRAZIL

The problem of defense cooperation between the United States and Brazil begins with the word “between.” Defense cooperation has been never “between,” but rather “from” the United States to Brazil. If one does not accept this reality, it will be nearly impossible to design and advance effective bilateral cooperation projects. There is here, an obvious problem of asymmetry, which stems not only from the power asymmetry but also from different views of world problems and their resolution. In addition, there is a problem of mutual perspective between — now it is really is “between” — these two players. For the U.S., cooperation entails following the U.S. lead, but for Brazil, it means figuring out what may be “the vested interests behind the American agenda”. Thus, prospects of effective cooperation must be assessed with an eye on technical arguments that could justify motivations toward cooperation initiatives, and another on ways to assuage these prejudices on both sides.

Calculation of mutual benefits is frequently made at different levels of interest and include diplomatic alignments, positions in multilateral fora, access to military materiel, etc. However, the

calculation also includes a more nebulous factor: for the lesser power, defense associations often carry prospects of dependency and limitations on future strategic choices. For example, a key variable in the Brazilian Air Force's decision to buy 36 new combat aircraft was the prospective supplier's ability to transfer the related technology. This explains why the Brazilians decided on the \$4.68 billion contract in favor of the Saab Gripen from Sweden, over the Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet.<sup>27</sup>

Conversely, in asymmetrical bilateral relations, the major power often reveals considerable difficulty in understanding and respecting the interests and stakes of the "weaker" partner. The result is restraint and reticence toward more ambitious cooperation initiatives.

World War II produced convergence of interests between Brazil and the United States that motivated the two nations to sign a cooperation agreement in May 1942. Yet, defense cooperation "between" the United States and Brazil, has had difficulties.<sup>28</sup> One constant has been the difficulty of Americans to understand Brazil's interests, opportunities, and limitations, and to align to consistent strategy when there are no crises.

On the other hand, it is difficult for Brazilians to deal with prejudices and suspicions of U.S. initiatives. The prolific cooperation during WWII, as reported before in this paper, was possible because both sides could perceive important gains. Brazil allowed the establishment of a U.S. base in Natal (Rio Grande do Norte), which would be key for the Allies' campaign in Africa. Whereas Americans could have access to minerals and rubber, critical for the war effort, the Brazilian military enjoyed considerable progress in training and equipment modernization. Finally, thanks

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<sup>27</sup> See Stephen Trimble's "Brazil Finalises \$4.68 bi Saab Gripen NG Deal," FlightGlobal, September 10, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> With more elegance and from a broader perspective (beyond defense relations), Monica Hirst (2013): "Throughout the 20th century, the bilateral relationship occupied a central position among Brazilian external issues and in the hemispheric agenda of the United States. It is possible to identify clearly different phases. The first one became known as an informal alliance (unwritten alliance), starting from the first few years of the Brazilian First Republic and remaining until the beginning of the 1940s. The second one is characterized by the automatic alignment of Brazil with the United States, which, despite some hitches, comprises the period from 1942 to 1977. In the third phase, Brazil assumes an autonomous policy vis-à-vis the United States that remained so until 1990, when Brazil started a period of readjustment of its relations with the U.S. This latter phase is characterized by a more flexible stance toward American expectations in the realm of economic-commercial, diplomatic and international policies. Finally, one might say that in recent years a fifth period was opened in the relationship, marked by its affirmative character, often interpreted as a sign of maturity. It started with the affirmative tone of the Lula government, with proud and pragmatic positions that set the limits for the concessions and the scope of Brazilian ambitions, both in the relationship with the United States and with other relevant actors in the international system. This relationship, however, also came to reflect an effort to reach certain agreements, sustained by the identification of mutual interests, revealing a reciprocal acknowledgement of international responsibilities and political preferences."



to the approximation produced by the convergence of defense interests, Brazil was able get a loan from the Export-Import Bank<sup>29</sup> to install its first steel mill (in Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro).<sup>30</sup>

The post-WWII period, however, produced frustration among Brazilian military leaders, who expected more recognition from the United States. Such recognition did not materialize as America's focus was then on the reconstruction of Europe and soon on the Cold War and then on the Korean War.<sup>31</sup> In addition, adding to the Brazilian disappointment, by the mid-1950s the U.S. had defined a strategy of "balancing" the relationship with Brazil and Argentina, as a way to maintain the strategic status in South America's Southern Cone; Brazil, although important, was just one more partner.

From the 1970s, the Brazilian military, then in control of politics, drafted more ambitious strategic goals. With the big powers preoccupied with the Cold War rivalries, Brazil perceived that it could build autonomy by selecting defense partners whose partnership would not automatically mean diplomatic alignments or limitations in defense technology transfer. Therefore, in the vacuum left by the fluctuations of U.S. attention to Latin America—and particularly to frame a specific bilateral agenda—Brazil defined a more independent strategy based upon the diversification of defense partners.<sup>32</sup>

Brazil's return to democracy and the slow repositioning of its military and defense establishment opened room for the renovation of the bilateral defense agenda. Again, the nuances are important here. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso initiated the reform with the creation of

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<sup>29</sup> See FGV CPDOC. "A Era Vargas - 1o. Tempo - 20-1945.

<sup>30</sup> See Thomas C. Mills. "Post-War Planning on the Periphery." 2012

<sup>31</sup> Frank McCann summarizes superbly the Brazilian frustration in his superb piece "Brazil and World War II: The Forgotten Ally. What did you do in the war, Zé Carioca?" *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* (<http://eial.tau.ac.il/index.php/eial/article/view/1193/1221>):

"Brazil took an active part in World War II as a supplier of strategic raw materials, as the site of important air and naval bases, as a skillful supporter of the United States in pan-American conferences, as a contributor of naval units, a combat fighter squadron and a 25,000 strong infantry division. It lost 1,889 soldiers and sailors, 31 merchant vessels, 3 warships, and 22 fighter aircraft. It came out of the war with modernized armed forces, thanks to its receipt of 70% of all United States Lend-Lease equipment sent to Latin America.

Zé Carioca, Walt Disney's dapper parrot, who was Hollywood's cartoon characterization of Joe Brazilian, taught Donald Duck how to samba in the film *Three Caballeros*, but the Americans, like Donald, could not quite catch the beat. So with the restoration of peace, instead of the wartime alliance heralding an era of two national destinies bound together for mutual benefit, as Foreign Minister Oswaldo Aranha had dreamed, the Cold War turned Americans in other directions and left Brazilians with a vague sense of having been exploited. Brazil's rejection of further overseas military operations in the Korean and Vietnam wars is partly related to a national perception that the United States did not adequately appreciate its contribution in World War II."

<sup>32</sup> See Carl Meacham, 2015.

the Ministry of Defense and the assignment of a civilian as minister. However, it would be under President Lula (with Nelson Jobim as the Minister of Defense) that Brazil undertook a more protagonist role in regional defense. In April 2008, Brazil proposed jointly with Venezuela and within the context of the UNASUR (União Sul-Americana de Nações)<sup>33</sup>, the establishment of the South American Defense Council (CODESUR), which was officially approved and launched in December 15, 2008.<sup>34</sup> Such a move was consistent with Lula's agenda of broadening Brazilian "South-South foreign policy," which would increase Brazil's autonomy and independence of the U.S. It was also consistent with the Foro de São Paulo's<sup>35</sup> agenda to establish a regional ideological stronghold in Latin America.

### Toward a More Mature Defense Cooperation?

Interestingly, during the last two decades, even as Brazil was ruled by the nationalistic and leftist governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, military cooperation with the U.S. continued, and actually improved. Although the official discourse reassured Brazilian independency and favored regional partners not sympathetic to U.S. interests, the bilateral cooperation reached some progress. To begin with, the Brazilian military enjoyed respectful attention from Lula, eventually translated into – if not generous – at least, fair budgets. Clearly, perhaps in reason of realistic political calculations, the PT administrations pushed a very leftist agenda, domestically and regionally, but simultaneously did not block military projects or military interests to renew the bilateral defense agenda with the United States.

Over 2016 and 2017, with the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and the imprisonment of Lula da Silva and many of his political partners for corruption, PT was sacked out from the government. In which perhaps attest the current level of professionalism of Brazilian military, such a serious political crisis did not affect the bilateral defense agenda and its future looks promising. Although general elections will happen in 2018, its results are not prone to alter the prospects of the bilateral defense agenda between Brazil and the United States.

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<sup>33</sup> UNASUR (South American Union of Nations) was launched in May 23, 2008, with the aiming of promoting regional economic integration. However, in April 2018, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, and Peru informed about their suspension from the treaty. In August 2018, Colombia announced its withdrawal from UNASUR.

<sup>34</sup> See Abdul-Hak, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Foro de S. Paulo (FSP) was launched by the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in 1990. It gathers leftist parties interested in debating forms to counter "neoliberal" policies. In Latin America, it became a notorious political and intellectual hub to coordinate regional policies in favor of leftist and populist governments.

## CONCLUSIONS

“Brazilian military culture” stands for a very robust code of values, principles, norms, and procedures that guide the Brazilian military. It is an institutional-code that has been strengthened throughout a consistent and almost non-interrupt trajectory, since the inception of the military institutions to the modern dates. “Brazilian military” represents, therefore, individuals and institutions erected upon a vivid sense of nationalism and patriotism, which proudly see themselves as truly professional militaries.

Although along the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil did not participate in major conflicts at the same proportion of biggest Western powers, the Brazilian military was able to overcome this relatively smaller war experience with clear and well-articulated doctrines. So, to address prospective external threats, Brazilian military developed a doctrine based upon non-belligerence, non-intervention, and dissuasion, which is supported by a very strong professional and systemic model – framed by sophisticated educational parameters, rigid discipline, and legal and judicial specific frameworks. Domestically, this relatively strong institution moved from an interventionist model toward a more modern system based upon the acceptance of the political democratic process and institutions. Thus, Brazil offers a very interesting case in which the very existence of a robust “military culture” proved to be extraordinarily relevant for both the modernization of the military doctrine and for the redefinition of the relationship between the military establishment and democratic institutions.

From the U.S. perspective, Brazil emerges as a very reliable partner for cooperation initiatives in the region, and, as defense cooperation between the U.S. and Brazil has considerably improved in breadth and quality in the past two decades. There are however, historical, strategic, and structural factors that still inhibit initiatives for a more robust bilateral defense engagement. The history of the U.S. relationship with Latin America and with Brazil is composed of patronizing attitudes, interventions, and inconsistencies that breed neither trust nor confidence. Strategically the U.S. global interests and use of hard power contrast with Brazil’s traditional emphasis on negotiation and multilateralism to resolve conflicts.

To be effective for the U.S. interest, and accepted by Brazilians, bilateral defense cooperation programs with Brazil must be designed jointly by Americans and Brazilians, as the

U.S. Army South has been doing lately with Brazilian counterparts. These initiatives are working today at the operational level because they were preceded by the building of confidence through educational, academic, and training activities conducted over many years. Resulting programs, however at the tactical level, seem to respond well to interests and realities of both the U.S. and Brazil – which is very different from previous U.S. initiatives that tried to “push” for existing “capacity building” packages tailored for different realities.

Finally, I must observe that the moment is particularly inviting for a renewal of the U.S. – Brazil bilateral defense cooperation. There are two important variables – one strategic and another tactical – that should encourage such a renewal. The strategic variable is suggested by the perception of a growing presence of respectively China and Russia in Latin America, and this is certainly a point of concern for the U.S. strategic interests in the region. The tactical variable is suggested by the perception of opportunities eventually stemming from the current good level of military-to-military relations between the U.S. and Brazil.

Upgrading the bilateral agenda requires designing and implementing clear policy decisions. However, particularly over the last decade, the USDOD did not demonstrate effective interest in renewing its policy approach toward the Western Hemisphere, as a whole. The focus was upon the “negative agenda” – i.e. countries and regions problematic to the U.S. interest. But, due to the strategic changes in the Hemisphere, and due to the redefinition of Brazilian defense establishment, this is a moment of opportunity to push forward a “positive agenda” with Brazil.

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