



CENTRE FOR BRAZILIAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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João Roberto Martins Filho

Translated by Daniel Zirker

Working Paper Number
CBS-85-07

Centre for Brazilian Studies
University of Oxford
92 Woodstock Rd
Oxford OX2 7ND

The Brazilian Armed Forces in the Post-Cold War Era: What Has Changed in Military Thinking?

*Dr João Roberto Martins Filho,
Federal University of São Carlos¹*

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Abstract

This article examines changes in military thinking in the post-Cold War era, contrasting the processes that have occurred in the Army and the Navy. It analyses the changes in military conceptualisation regarding relations with the hegemonic power in the Hemisphere, the insertion of Brazil into world and Latin American plans, as well as its role, missions, and hypotheses regarding the use of the Armed Forces. In this regard, it seeks to understand the specifics of how each of those branches has influenced the evolution of military thinking, underscoring the fundamental role of the component of technology, in particular, in understanding the evolution of the Navy. The central thesis is that the ground forces today present the strongest elements of continuity with Cold War era doctrines. Nevertheless, both branches have been influenced by some processes of change in their views.

Resumo

Este artigo examina as mudanças no pensamento militar brasileiro no período pós-Guerra Fria, comparando os processos internos do Exército e da Marinha. O trabalho analisa as mudanças na conceitualização das relações com o poder hegemônico no Hemisfério, a inserção do Brasil na América Latina e no mundo, e visões sobre a missão das Forças Armadas. Nesse sentido, o artigo procura entender como tais aspectos têm influenciado na evolução do pensamento militar, enfatizando o papel fundamental do componente tecnológico, especialmente, para entender a evolução da Marinha. Nossa tese central é que é o Exército que apresenta mais continuidades com doutrinas do período da Guerra Fria. Mas tanto o Exército como a Marinha têm mostrado mudanças nas suas respectivas visões.

This article aims to analyse the evolution of Brazilian military thinking over the past three decades. In this sense, it is consistent with the analytical tradition that recognises in military doctrine an important key to understanding military policy. In the following pages, it seeks to decipher the origins of the changes in military thinking in the post-Cold War era, contrasting the processes that have occurred in the Army and the Navy, the two forces with significant material for analysis. It analyses the changes in military conceptualisation regarding relations with the hegemonic power in the Hemisphere, the insertion of Brazil into world and Latin American plans, as well as its role, missions, and hypotheses regarding the use of the Armed Forces. In this regard, it seeks to understand the specifics of how each of those branches has influenced the evolution of military thinking, underscoring the fundamental role of the component of technology, in particular, in understanding the evolution of the Navy. The central thesis is that the ground forces today present the strongest elements of continuity with Cold War era doctrines. Nevertheless, both branches have been influenced by some processes of change in their views.

THE PATH OF THE NAVY

By the end of the 1960s, in the last days of the Costa e Silva government, a US Department of State document characterised dominant military opinion in Brazil as favourable to a relative independence from the United States.² In this analysis, the rise of a generation of high-ranking officers less touched by the experience of the participation of the country in World War II tended to have a future impact on military perceptions of the alliance with the United States. At the same time, and along with this view, the three branches of the Brazilian Armed Forces developed a perception that the military assistance programme established by the 1952 bilateral military accord no longer addressed the demands of military modernisation of the country: “there is a feeling in the Armed Forces that the United States usually considers only its own requirements and not those of Brazil.”³

In this more general sense, because of its characteristics, the Navy was the first branch where these diffuse perceptions expressed themselves in concrete concerns. The cited document underscored that the Brazilian Navy intended to transform itself into a “small, but modern force” and mentioned the opinion of “at least one top ranking naval officer” that “Brazil’s Navy officers could not sit on the beach and watch US Navy units patrolling its waters” (US Department of State 1969, 61).

Here were the roots of current naval thought that some authors have called “heterodoxy,” in contradistinction to an “orthodox” posture that remained more closely tied to the geopolitical thought of the Superior War College (*Escola Superior de Guerra*, or ESG).

Hegemonic after the 1970s, the most general characteristic of this current of thought was its identification with the stance of Brazilian foreign policy during the Geisel period (1974-1979). In my view, this tendency to affirm a relative autonomy in the face of US policies was emphasised. As an analyst noted, “the preoccupation with defining objectives that are appropriately Brazilian in the South Atlantic question, distinct from Hemispheric or Western interests, these latter having been traditionally perceived in the Navy as identical with national interests, is clear” (Decuadra 1991, 139).

In effect, the spokespeople of this current of thought pressed themselves to re-evaluate the pros and cons of the alliance initiated with the arrival of the US Naval Mission in 1922. The pillars of this revision were summarised by one of the exponents of this group, Admiral Vidigal:

The alliance with the United States—from which comes all of the logistical flow to maintain Brazilian ships in operation—had resolved the difficulties and confusion that had before then afflicted the Navy, but at the cost of its initiative in the process which, briefly, would have fatal consequences. Under the American command, we learned to wage sea war in a modern form, we encountered recent and sophisticated equipment, such as sonar and radar, we came to think more in world than in regional terms, we awakened once again to our Atlantic vocation. Nevertheless, the total material dependency would add up to a sterilizing intellectual subordination in subsequent years (Vidigal 1985, 89).

In the Navy, proponents of heterodoxy and orthodoxy agreed with the need to overcome this external material dependency in the production of armaments; the bone of contention was thus the question of strategic subordination to the United States. In truth, agreement as to the necessity of seeking, *from outside the US*, military resources desired by the Brazilian Navy caused an interesting effect: the search for greater autonomy in strategic planning was preceded by the search for new sources of technological modernisation. Hence, the Ten Year Programme for the Renewal of Waterborne Resources (*Programa de Renovação dos Meios Flutuantes*) of 1967 opened the door to the purchase in Europe of submarines, frigates and mine sweepers, without this implicating reformulation of the existing strategic view. The motive for this switch was the resistance of the US to providing any kind of armament to the navies of the Hemisphere because it included planned missions for these naval forces only within the context of the Cold War (Vidigal 1985, 96ff).

In this regard, the current of thought that became dominant beginning with the Geisel government took a further step in expressing the dissatisfaction of sectors of the Navy with the conceptual straight jacket imposed by the US on its hemispheric allies. In the case of naval forces, these were implicated in the exclusive commitment of hemispheric navies to the collective defence of the Hemisphere against the Soviet Union, and hence an eventual confrontation between the two Cold War camps in a South Atlantic scenario, with

hemispheric navies tasked with anti-submarine defence of maritime traffic. In effect, the thinking that developed in the ESG, with its emphasis on national security and total war, left little space for reflection on national defence and localised conflicts (Oliveira 1988, 241-242). Nevertheless, in the final years of the 1960s, the evolution of the Brazilian Navy took with it important sectors of naval thought in aspiring to broader horizons in its focus, which was extrapolated from the *defensive* and *collective security character* imposed by the United States within the limitations of the Military Assistance Accord of 1952 and the Inter-American Treaty for Reciprocal Assistance of 1947.

The advent of the Geisel government, with its foreign policy geared to affirming Brazil as an emerging power, provided conditions that had been lacking so that the new strategic naval thinking could become the basis of change in the policies of the Navy. In 1977, the country denounced the military accord of 1952, in the context of the tensions provoked by the human rights policies of the Carter Administration, as well as its opposition to the signing of a military accord with Germany (June, 1975). This same year, the new assemblage of *Basic Policies and Directives of the Navy* (*Políticas Básicas e Diretrizes da Marinha*) was published. This document, developed and articulated earlier in the *Strategic Plan of the Navy* (*Plano Estratégico da Marinha*), generated the *Basic Policy of the Navy* (*Política Básica da Marinha*). Its central idea was that Brazil should remove itself from generic concepts of the collective hemispheric defence, and define its own defence interests. Thus it started with the perception that a conflict of huge proportions between the US and the USSR was improbable, committing the Brazilian Navy to prepare itself for localised conflicts within the reach of the region, and this widened the task range of the naval forces, which came to include, for example, aerial and surface threats (Vidigal 1985, 103-107; Câmara 1983, 173-174).

Concern with strategic autonomy was reflected as well in an emphasis which came to consider as a necessity the nationalisation of military resources. These directives first became evident in a lecture by Admiral Henning, Minister of the Navy under President Geisel, at a seminar at the ESG at the beginning of 1978: "special emphasis is merited for consideration of the establishment of a doctrine of deployment that is appropriate to Brazilian conditions, as well as to the growing nationalisation of its armaments and equipment, with support in research and development in concert with a flowering national arms industry" (Henning 1978, 36).

These changes consolidated the support of the Navy for the more general directives of the Geisel government, including the process of opening the military regime. In the words of one of the principal formulators of the new naval orientation: "Beginning in 1977, the Navy for the first time in a fully conscious way formalised through adequate documentation its strategic conceptualisation, in consonance with governmental policy"

(Vidigal 1985, 105). It should not be surprising, then, that asked about his impression of naval forces at the end of the military regime, Admiral Mauro César, Minister of the Navy in the first government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, responded: “I would say that, since the Navy had for a long time already seen the necessity of following this path, it was very natural. There was a certain sense of relief” (Castro e D’Araujo 2001, 262)

In the end, the changes that occurred in the naval forces made it possible, by the end of 1989, to affirm that the Navy was more clearly focused on strictly defensive policies: “the Navy understands that its principal role is that of defence, in the sense of safeguarding and protecting Brazilian interests on the sea. This concern should subordinate everything else.” (Proença Junior and Franco 1993, 152). Based on a series of interviews with mostly superior officers, carried out during the last months of the Cold War, a researcher observed that the Navy no longer identified with the concepts of the ESG, and that, in the view of the interviewees, “there did not exist an internal conflict, which would, in any event, not be the responsibility of the Armed Forces” (Franco 1993, 125). In contrast, high ranking officers in the Brazilian Army still held on to the ESG concepts and regarded as probable the eruption of conflicts over internal order in Brazilian society. This difference introduces the next topic.

THE ARMY’S PATH

If we can say that the need for technological modernisation sent the Navy in search of freeing itself from the “straitjacket” of automatic alignment with the US, in the case of the Army it was an affection for the geopolitical elements of the Cold War that seems to have taken it to the realisation that Brazil needed at least some freedom of action in order to develop its own interests, which ultimately included technological modernisation. This would lead to a military-industrial project that would create new terms for relations with the US.

In a text dated 1987, an independent military analyst registered that “the current Brazilian geopolitical doctrine was elaborated in the 1950s and 1960s. In the following decade, it incorporated new concepts without abandoning its ideological premises and without altering its political-strategic premises” (Cavagnari 1987, 84). The mentioned incorporation of new concepts refers to the rise, in the mid-1970s, of the military view that Brazil would be ready to begin its effective trajectory in the direction of its construction as a *world power*, an old postulate of the Brazilian geopolitical doctrine that gained new currency with the economic growth of the country after 1968. Nevertheless, it is interesting to underscore here that the ambition to become a world power before the end of the Twentieth Century did not begin, in the dominant thought of the Army, with the questioning of alignment with the US. Contrary to what happened with the Navy, the thinking of the ground forces included the belief in the possibility of reaching major strategic autonomy with the permission

of the US: “Coherent with its theoretical matrix, military conceptualisation elects as its goal for power the exercise of regional hegemony with American consent” (Cavagnari 1987, 80).

The pronounced conservatism of the Army was also reflected in its affection for the ideological dogmas of national security. Up until the end of the Cold war the Army still considered maintenance of internal order as its fundamental mission, and resisted more than did the Navy the idea of civilian control over the Armed Forces. This factor should not impede us, however, in identifying some important changes that occurred after 1977 in the views of the Army *vis-à-vis* its North American ally. Hence, while the abrogation of the military accord of 1952 had not signified a more radical revision of the idea of strategic subordination to the US, some processes hinted at change in the evaluation of the terms of the alliance. In our hypothesis, the question of military technology returns at this point as an explanatory factor.

In effect, the intention of building itself up as a world power inevitably put on the table the need of developing Brazilian strategic capacity and of diminishing its vulnerabilities. It is worth remembering in this regard that the geopolitical doctrine already affirmed the need of endowing the country with a more sophisticated industrial base, augmenting its technological capacities, refining its infrastructure, and modernising the Armed Forces, objectives which, in the ideology of national security, were included in the binomial motto, “security and development.” Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, the *military* aspect of these needs gained disproportionate weight in the dominant thinking of the ground forces: “the modernisation of the military forces, technological-military development and the domination of nuclear technology for military ends” (Cavagnari 1987, 82). Or, in other words,

The militarization of the principal programmes of advanced technology...would come to reveal the determination of the Armed Forces to obtain the technology of [certain] vectors: nuclear submarine, mid-range ballistic missile and fighter-bomber...the possession of these vectors would be one of the principal motives for the tension in relations with the United States (Cavagnari 1994, 28-29).

For purposes of this study, it is worth recalling the difference between the processes that occurred in the Navy and in the Army. In the case of the former, the necessity of technological modernisation preceded the change in strategic thinking. In the case of the latter, without changing its strategic orientation, the Army came to the need for technological autonomy. In both cases, the result was an increase in tensions in relations with the US.

This line expressed itself with more clarity in the negotiations that were established between the Reagan administration and the Figueiredo government in the first half of the 1980s, and which resulted in the signing of a “Memorandum of Understanding of Industrial-Military Cooperation,” on February 6, 1984. This document was the result of the

efforts of one of five working groups created for President Reagan's visit to Brazil at the end of 1982, and expressed the intentions of the US to reactivate military relations with Brazil thirty years after the signing of the accord that had defined military relations between the two countries during the first part of the Cold War, and five years after its abrogation by the Geisel government.

The 1984 memorandum represented the failure of the US to convince the military government to accept a broad enough agenda for the Reagan Administration, which included: 1) agreement of Brazil with the creation of the South Atlantic Treaty Organisation (SATO); 2) the assignment of Trindade Island for the establishment of an American base; 3) the formation of a new combined military mission of the two countries; 4) reversing of Brazilian policy in Central America, where the US was compromised by the undermining effects of Sandinismo; 5) the resurrection of an inter-American peace force, with the objective of acting in Central America (Bustamante 1987, 64).⁴ It is easy to understand why this agenda, which flowed from a denial of the most elementary principles of Brazilian foreign policy, was not accepted. From the perspective of my argument, it is more significant to explore the reasons that led the Figueiredo government to refuse the more limited agenda of military technology transfer, the touchstone of American efforts to reactivate preferential inter-military relations.

Contrary to the conjuncture at the beginning of the 1950s, - when an important sector of the Brazilian Armed Forces was frankly favourable to the establishment of military accords with the US - at the beginning of the 1980s the North American intent came face-to-face with a significant group of obstacles. These expressed the new terms in which the Brazilian Armed Forces collectively conceived of their interests *vis-à-vis* the American ally. We have already seen that, in the Army, the bone of contention was not about diverging strategic concepts. Instead, the disagreement was around the limits that US military technology transfers imposed on the freedom of action of modernisation projects sponsored by this military branch.

Profoundly compromised by the project to consolidate a national arms industry, through exports to Third World countries, the Army was not interested in accepting this, whether it was based on limits that American legislation imposed on re-exporting arms with American technology, or whether it was based on whatever other North American project for reconverting military technology employed in Brazil. This position was hardened in February of 1984 when, six days after signing the Brazilian-US memorandum of understanding by foreign ministers Saraiva and Shultz, in Brasília, the six Brazilian military ministers released a note in which they affirmed that the country should not accept American military technology if it was tied to restrictions on exports to third countries (Bustamante 1987, 74-75). Thus it was possible to affirm that the "lend-lease" era, which had been marked by

military cooperation according to the terms of the 1952 accord, was over. It is not surprising, then, that the understandings initiated in 1982 have resulted in almost nothing in subsequent years. As an analyst noted, “the Memorandum of Understanding on Industrial-Military cooperation was in effect until the 6th of February of 1989, without concrete results” (Cavagnari 1994, 45).

FROM ARGENTINA TO THE CALHA NORTE

The year 1982 appears as an important date in another regard as well. The War of the Malvinas, which presented the Argentinean military dictatorship with an enemy from outside the hemisphere, put on trial the efficacy of one of the central pillars of the Hemisphere security arrangement of the Cold War: the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (1947). Moreover, the defeat of Argentina concerned the military because it clarified the “incapacity of the Brazilian Armed Forces in a conventional war of medium intensity” (Cavagnari 1994, 52). Nonetheless, on a regional level, the South Atlantic war contributed in the end to a process that had been unfolding since 1977, when areas of disagreement regarding approval of the hydro-electric potential of the rivers of the Plata basin had been resolved: the relaxation of military tensions between Brazil and Argentina.

Hence, although the deployment of military force had never figured as a real possibility in the relations between the two countries, one of the four hypotheses of war of the Joint Chiefs of the Brazilian Armed Forces—Hypothesis Delta—had predicted a conflict with a Northerly neighbour (Cavagnari 1994, 48). As he recalled from a lecture that he gave in 1992, General Manuel Teixeira, who was Deputy Chief of the Joint Chiefs of the Army in the mid-1980s, noted that

For 80 years, since the [military] schools were well organised, they have regarded as doctrine the hypothesis of a war of Brazil with Argentina and vice-versa. The officers who designed the courses at the Escuela de Estado Mayor...in Buenos Aires, until 4 years ago, participated in war games where the enemy was Brazil, and this was not hidden from our officers. In Brazil, we did this differently, calling it the Southern enemy or identifying it with a colour (Teixeira 1992, 14).

If these dates are correct, only inertia can explain the retention of these exercises until almost the end of the 1980s. Already in 1977, military analysts perceived “indications that in Brasília the military Joint Chiefs tended to react positively to the idea of a major coming together of the Southern Cone countries” (Góes 1978, 160). The posture assumed by Brazil in 1982 contributed to a deepening of these tendencies: “Brazilian diplomatic behaviour, [expressing] solidarity with Argentina and directed at seeking a peaceful solution to conflict, helped to dissipate old fears and to end an historic rivalry”

(Cavagnari 1994, 39). In the Army, this project was continued under the administration of General Manuel, responsible for strategic planning in the Army in the mid-1980s.

An understanding of the evolution of military thought requires a return to 1977, however. At that time, regarding changes in external policies sponsored by the Geisel government, which included a major concern with South America, it was a relaxation of tensions in the South that allowed for the concentration of military efforts, principally those of the Army, in an area that began to become the major focus of its concerns: *Amazônia*, the target of the Treaty of Cooperation (TCA) between the countries of the region, signed in March 1977. The connection between the two processes appeared in statements by the Minister of the Army, General Fernando Belfort Bethlem at the end of that year: “the Southern borders are consolidated, whereas those of the North can be called live borders” (*Folha de S. Paulo* 1977). In effect, concluding the task of occupying the North was of principal interest to the Army; this had been predicted in the classic reflections on Brazilian geopolitics. In the end, for General Golbery do Couto e Silva (1981, 47), this would “inundate with civilisation the Amazon rainforest, covering over our border points, beginning with a forward base in the Centre-West, in a coordinated action with the progression E-O, according to the axis of the great river.”

In May 1985, at the beginning of the Sarney government, this work was furthered with the proposal of the Secretary-General of the National Security Council of an action plan in the region north of the banks of the Solimões and Amazon rivers. The plan seemed to express primarily the dominant views of the Army. Its entire justification was couched in the language of the doctrines of National Security and of geopolitics. Within these parameters, it brought together the concerns of the Army with the Northern borders, following the elimination, after 1975, of internal threats of subversion. In keeping with traditional concepts of Brazilian geopolitics, Project Calha Norte—as it was later named—also expressed with greater force military concerns with avoiding foreign interference in the Amazon region, considering *Amazônia* to be the responsibility of the countries of the region, within the spirit of the TCA.

Hence, it is possible to see in this as much the calculated perceptions of the Cold War (the interference of Cuba in the internal politics of neighbouring countries, considered in this case to be improbable), as “also the direct intervention of the North American government, which tended to overestimate the possibility of communist expansion in the area” (Conselho de Segurança Nacional 1985). It was in this way that the current concerns of the Army with the defence of *Amazônia* were delineated. Resistance to American intentions of limiting Brazilian programmes from sensitive technology came to be lumped together with perceptions of threats centred on international greed for *Amazônia* (Martins Filho 2003).

The five years following 1987 were not a propitious time for strategic reflection. During this period, the Armed Forces initially concentrated on their activities *vis-à-vis* the Constitutional convention of 1988, with the principal objective of guaranteeing their institutional prerogatives, which they achieved with considerable success (Zaverucha 1994, 193ff.). At the beginning of the Fernando Collor government in 1990, they confronted a political agenda of budget cuts and civilian control over the military, along with the disestablishment of the National Information Service (SNI), the primary national intelligence agency, which was controlled by the military. Externally, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union created a surprising disruption of the world order as it had been structured since 1947. Along with these events, the Gulf War, at the beginning of 1991, alerted the military to the new conditions of military intervention in the post-Cold War period. The resume of an article on strategy on the threshold of the Third Millennium defines quite well the Brazilian military view of these processes: "The end of the Cold war, the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and the collapse of communism inaugurated a period of transition in the world order, [one] characterised by de-polarisation, by hegemonic dissociation and by transnationalisation" (Gigolotti 2005, 55).

As for Amazônia, the Collor government initiated a process of dismantling the policies of regional integration conservative modernisation established during the military regime, as well as fulfilling a constitutional obligation to demarcate the Yanomami territories which put on the back burner the Army's Calha Norte project. In the political context that preceded the hosting of ECO-92 in Rio de Janeiro, Collor's policies sought to demonstrate to the world that Brazil was a country in alignment with the goals of the world ecology movement. None of this affected the Army's policy of deploying large operational units in the Amazon region, in which emphasis was placed on transferring an infantry brigade from Petrópolis (in the State of Rio de Janeiro) to Tefé (in the State of Amazonas) in 1992-93, and a brigade from Santo Ângelo (in the State of Rio Grande do Sul) to Boa Vista (in the State or Roraima) in 1992-93 (Máximo 1999, 199-200; Silva 1999).

THE ARMY AND RESISTANCE IN AMAZÔNIA

The Collor government (1990-1992) marked a decisive change in the political thinking of the military. Even while a crisis in military identity was then being discussed, the Army was formulating a new doctrine, one that addressed the adaptation of the Army to the immediate post-Cold War conjuncture. Among the dominant military views, the principal characteristics of this conjuncture was the rise of the US as the only world superpower, no longer compromised by the bipolar system of alliances, and now in a context in which overcoming the traditional notions of national sovereignty was debated. And all of this was within the context of Brazil's domestic politics, in which the Collor government seemed to

align itself with the forces that were associated with diminishing the role of the Armed Forces of the peripheral countries (Martins Filho 2003, 264ff.).

Early in 1991, the military commander in Amazônia declared that the Army “would transform this [region] into a Vietnam” if there was an invasion of this part of the country (Martins Filho 2003, 272). At the beginning of 1992, in an address to the troops during the departure ceremonies for the Rio Grande do Sul brigade, which (as noted above) was being transferred to the North, its commander, General Luiz Nery da Silva, alluded not only to the rapprochement with Argentina, but to “alien pressures that threaten our sovereignty over Amazônia,” such that “the priority of deploying the Armed Forces would be directed at that rich and coveted area, bravely conquered and maintained by our predecessors” (Silva 1999, 266).

There is no official history of the formulation of this doctrine. Nonetheless, there are among its principal authors military officers who participated in combating guerrillas in Araguaia (in Amazônia) during the first half of the 1970s; they had had experience with the approach of the Jungle Warfare Instruction Centre (Centro de Instrução de Guerra na Selva, or CIGS), headquartered in Manaus.⁵ What appears to have happened was an interesting and possibly unprecedented process of transforming an anti-communist combat experience, with roots in the French doctrine of *guerre révolutionnaire*, into a doctrine that sought to extract strategic and operational lessons from the forces that they had earlier fought, based on a hypothesis of the future conflict of Brazil with a major power. In reality, the idea of mirroring the methods of the enemy was not new, and constituted the heart of the French doctrine (Martins Filho 2004). The new thread was in the effort to integrate the methods of irregular guerrilla warfare with conventional war and regular forces, in “the face of an incontestably stronger military force.”

Around 1991, a strategy capable of being employed in Amazônia was already under discussion at the Army Joint Chiefs and Command School (*Escola de Comando e Estado Maior do Exército*, or ECEME), which included protracted manoeuvres and the temporary transformation of regular forces into guerrilla forces (Silva 1992). Its theoretical foundation was the strategy of “wearing down” *lassidão* of Audré Beaufre:

If the margin of action is great, but the available means of obtaining a military decision are excessively weak, one can revert to a strategy of prolonging the duration, seeking to promote a wearing down of morale, and the exhaustion of the enemy. In order to endure, methods employed will be very rustic, but the technique of deployment (generally a total war supported by a generalised guerrilla force) will oblige the adversary to maintain considerably larger forces than it will be able to support indefinitely. This model of a *total prolonged struggle of low military intensity* was generally employed with success in the wars of de-colonisation. Its principal theoretician is Mao Tse-Tung (Beaufre 1998, 33).

In this regard, in a book published in 1995, then Aviator-Colonel Álvaro Pinheiro referred for the first time to a strategic directive of the Army Joint Chiefs which, in order to confront the “possibility of the occurrence of conflict against an extra-continental multinational force endowed with superior combat power,” defined the strategy of Wearing Down (*lassidão*) or of Wasting (*usura*), conceived of as one that would “develop through a prolonged conflict, of the total kind, which would tend in a majority of cases to be of low intensity, normally based on guerrilla forces and seeking to obtain a decision through lowering morale and material exhaustion. In this kind of action, it is fundamental to know how to endure” (Pinheiro 1995, 13). According to a version offered by General Paulo Roberto Corrêa Assis, former commander of CIGS and the headquarters of the Joint Chiefs of the Military Command of Amazônia:

The study of this strategy began in Brasília in 1994, when General Pedrozo, then vice-chief of the General Services Department, for whom I was his assistant, knowing in advance that he would be promoted to Army General to take over the Military Command of Amazônia [CMA], issued his first directive, which was a type of guerrilla war in CMA. We initiated a joint study with the Land Operations Command, where we counted on a rich collaboration with Col. Álvaro Pinheiro, in order to develop this strategy in anticipation of a far superior force before which we would be incapacitated in confronting a case of intervention in Amazônia (Assis 2003, 159).

Therefore, as has been seen, there were strong indications that the principles of the new doctrine had already been defined in 1991. It is possible that the General was referring to a deepening of aspects of the doctrine under the aegis of the CGIS.⁶ In any event, when the Army Planning System (SIPLEX) became known publicly, the Wearing Down strategy (*lassidão*) had already been consolidated (Ministério do Exército 1996). At the operational level, as one of its principal authors explains, it presupposed the adoption of irregular warfare as a principal form of the conduct of conventional warfare against a military power clearly superior to Brazil in material and scientific-technological resources. The larger objective of the new strategy was “to demonstrate to the invader that the price to pay to maintain domination over a determined region was not compensated by the benefits that flowed [from this]” (Pinheiro 1995, 13).

For Pinheiro, the Brazilian Army shared with that of the US the same doctrinal concept of deployment of special forces—where it promotes Detachments of Special Forces that will establish Operational Areas of Irregular Warfare (AOGI). The difference is that, in the Brazilian case, they do not foresee actions by Special Forces (FEs) abroad, linked in some way to a National Revolutionary Movement. Rather, commanders of national FEs would establish AOGI in the context of a Resistance Movement, “working with Brazilian communities during a threat or occurrence of an invasion of our territory.” The political

objective to be obtained is “to re-establish Sovereignty and the Integrity of the National Patrimony.” In the end, the doctrine is based on the idea that the centre of gravity of the invader is its national will. Hence, the Wearing Down strategy would have as its objective to last until the national will of the enemy was weakened (Pinheiro 1995, 13-14).

This new concept of the Army elevated some Marxist texts to the category of recommended reading at the military training schools. It should not be surprising, then, that *Strategic Problems of Revolutionary War*, by Mao Tse-Tung, had already been cited in 1992 in a monograph by Col. Pinto Silva. Another monograph, by Major Fernando Velôzo Gomes Pedrosa, cited Mao’s text *On Protracted War*, “as a model that, with adequate adaptations, can be applied to other conflicts of a similar nature” (Pedrosa 1995, 6). This officer’s text also inaugurated the study of the struggle of the Vietnamese Army against France and the US, and affirmed that “considering the justness of the cause and the level of mobilisation of the Vietnamese people, the final victory of the Vietminh was only a question of time.”⁷ In this regard, the military texts themselves underscored that it would not be possible to seek in the experiences of major countries reflections on strategies of resistance: “the countries from which Brazil has traditionally sought direction in formulating its military doctrine do not evince a *modus operandi* that can serve as a basis for an operational doctrine” (Abreu 2003, 28).

In any case, by the mid-1990s a new doctrine had already been consolidated. Since then, besides renaming it the Doctrine of Resistance, the Army has worked hard to sustain it within the strategic and tactical-operational plan. “*The Doctrine of Resistance* is being developed with its own character, by means of encouraging the promotion of symposia and discussions—in military schools and units—and the conduct of doctrinal experimentation that incorporate the inventive genius and the capacity for improvisation of the men that make up the ground forces,” said an officer of the Joint Chiefs (Abreu 2003, 28-29).⁸

Hence, neither the publication of the National Defence Policy, in 1996, nor the Creation of the Ministry of Defence, in 1999, altered this previously defined course. In the manual, *C-124-1 Strategy*, the Army maintains that *resistance* “consists in exhausting, through prolonged conflict, a superior military power, seeking the weakening of its morale through continued deployment of non-conventional and innovative actions as, for example, guerrilla tactics” (Ministério da Defesa 2001, 3/12). Already, the manual *MD-33-M-04 Military Defence Doctrine* “recognises that the *strategy of resistance* is characterised by the development of military actions in a prolonged conflict, of a limited character, in a majority of cases low intensity, where normally tactics and techniques of guerrilla [warfare] are used” (Abreu 2003, 27).

Since this document has already been elaborated in the ambit of the Ministry of Defence, the continuity mentioned above appears to be evident. It can only be presumed, thus, that the secret documents that constitute the “Military Defence Policy” and the “Military

Strategy for Defence,” to which this analyst does not have access except very indirectly, through inferences taken from military monographs, would evince the same line of reasoning.⁹ It was possible to affirm in a military analysis at the end of 2005 that “the doctrine under development by the Brazilian Army for the defence of Amazônia based on guerrilla actions is unprecedented in military history. Never before has a regular army prepared itself for an irregular long-term war, from instruction to raising involved logistical aspects” (Gigolotti 2005, 63-64).

THE NAVY: TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGY

As we have seen, since the mid-1970s the dominant thought in the Brazilian Navy has emphasised the necessity of strategic autonomy—what would be translated into the definition of a doctrine of deployment unlinked from the imperatives of hemispheric defence—as well as the creation of an autochthonous technological capacity. The 1990s saw a Navy confident in the potential for regional integration, principally with Argentina—which would permit it to define concepts of common defence “unlinked from the specific interests of the regional hegemonic power” (Vidigal 1995, 60) and convinced of the correctness of its policy of seeking technological autonomy. Nevertheless, it admitted the importance of the adaptation of the naval technological evolution to the specific conditions of Brazil, which would require a compromise between the modernisation and the nationalisation of war materiel. In its most general aspects, the post-Cold War world awakened in the Navy concerns similar to those of the Army: the new strategic situation was the expression of “a gradual shift in the axis of world tensions,” which substituted for the old East-West tensions the “unjust and, as it could not otherwise be, distancing of the countries of the ‘North,’ developed, powerful, rich and arbiters of the world order, and the countries in development or underdevelopment of the ‘South’” (Flores 1992, 99).

Naval strategists also view with a lack of confidence the new rhetoric of limited sovereignty and the emergence of “global themes”—the environment, minority rights, human rights—which will permit the bypassing of classic concepts of national sovereignty and self-determination. These themes justify proposals to reform the military apparatuses of less powerful countries: in the dominant view of the Navy, they hide the hegemonic intentions of the powers, above all the US, in the sense of imposing its own agenda of national security on countries such as Brazil. This is evident in the proposal to use the Brazilian military in combating the illegal narcotics trade: “the reduction in the capacity for classic defence is equivalent in practice to the adoption of a model that sanctions the defence of one country by another power, generally a greater power, not in the traditional terms of mutual defence, [which is] now in decline, but simply as the product of the unilateral understanding of the greater power and its associates” (Flores 1992, 105).

Nevertheless, the specificity of the naval forces conferred on the thinking of the Navy some of its own characteristics. Above all, following the line of thought that we have seen since the beginning of the 1970s, naval thinking was concentrated on the tendency of the new order to consolidate what was configured as a kind of technological apartheid:

It is increasingly difficult to transfer complete technology, [because] of the allegation that it capacitates the receiver, the same as a middle-range power that produces weapons of mass destruction and develops long-range missiles so that, from the viewpoint of developed countries, [these might fall] into the hands of 'politically immature' people and governments, and threaten world peace (Vidigal 1995, 56-57).

At the same time, with the end of nuclear deterrence, technological innovations in areas such as the improvement of missiles and satellites acquired new relevance, as did increasing the control over and cargo capacity of airplanes, improvements in submarines, the development of torpedoes and mines, as well as the revolution in electronic warfare, among others. Without access to the new technologies, the Navy would continue to have its hands tied, and to see itself as unable to develop its own project that might equate the necessities of modernisation with the possibilities of nationalising its equipment (Vidigal 1995, 72).

However, the most original aspect of the thinking of the Navy in the post-Cold War era seems to be in the reformulation of doctrine. I refer here to the development of the concept of *conventional deterrence* "as the principal mission of military power of the less powerful countries, which cannot consider a confrontation with countries of far greater national power than theirs" (Vidigal 1995, 59). Apparently, then, this expresses itself here as an evolution similar to what we observed in the Army. But there are important differences. Starting from the idea that the Navy has an important role to fill, as much during peacetime—through the political use of military power—as in war, naval thinking came to propose the abandonment of the concepts of "hypotheses of war" and "hypotheses of conflict," "faced with the lack of objectivity of these hypotheses and the ambiguity of the situations that could arise." In their place, it was suggested that the concept of *strategic vulnerabilities* be adopted, or in other words, "the principal points in which a country is vulnerable to the action of any external enemy, where an attack can cause damages that are difficult to repair and totally disproportional to the force applied" (Vidigal 1995, 62).¹⁰

With this new conceptualisation, the strategic thinking of the Navy intended to take account of the "inherent instability of the international order" and, at the same time, define with greater precision a military policy for the country: "a combining of the missions resulting from all of the strategic vulnerabilities accepted as valid will serve as the basis for defining necessary military power" (Vidigal 1995, 65). From our perspective the new focus

has important consequences in terms of military thought. In directing fire at the definition of the Armed Forces as a permanent instrument of national foreign policy, the Navy rendered unnecessary the justification of the existence of these forces with regards to any activity not in national defence. It made it possible, therefore, in all cases that the hypotheses of war in the pre-1989 period would be bypassed and it removed with greater rigor the need to define internal enemies. These new concepts opened a pathway so that the Navy could anticipate the Army in other innovations. Thus naval strategists had by 1995 already predicted the major collaboration of the armed forces of the Southern Cone, and the need of progressing military doctrine in the sense of combining military forces and the positive role that the Ministry of Defence could fill in the formulation of a new doctrine of deployment.

The following years saw the consolidation of these views. At the end of 2002, the Commander of the Navy, Admiral Sérgio Chagasteles, affirmed that the new document outlining Brazilian military strategy, then being drafted by the Joint Chiefs of the Armed Forces, incorporated the idea of bypassing the concept of “hypotheses of war,” adopting instead the “hypotheses of deployment,” which no longer required the identification of a specific enemy. In the same text, the Commander of the Navy reiterated the centrality of the notion of “strategic vulnerabilities” in defining the responses and strategies of the Armed Forces in the new conjuncture. This new conceptual picture would confer on the Navy greater capacity to define its Strategic Concept and its needs. From this point on, it would establish the importance of the notion of rapid deployment that, based on the capacity to complete missions with broad spectrum deployment, would open a space for flexibility, versatility and mobility in Navy planning (Chagasteles 2003).

THE FORCE OF INERTIA

In this final topic, we intend to suggest that at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century and despite the changes analysed in this article, there remained in the Army some concepts that had been elaborated in the Cold War period and that seemed to have survived the shocks of the 1990s. Hence, although the Army had abandoned the concept of hypotheses of war and adopted that of the hypotheses of deployment,¹¹ everything indicates that it had still not significantly changed the explicit vision in 1996, when the System of Planning of the Army (SIPLEX) was published. In its Alpha Doctrine, the Army continued to consider the possibility of acting in internal defence, in “permanent actions of a PREVENTATIVE character, favouring strategies of NATIONAL PRESENCE and DETERRENCE, as well as seeking to contribute to the government with force to inhibit the performance of Adversarial Forces (F Adv) and avoid that such crises evolve to a level threatening to institutional stability” (Ministério do Exército 1996; capitals for emphasis in the original). Such a doctrine would require that the Army be “present in all of the National

Territory, with the purpose of being familiar with the area and following situations with the potential to generate crises” (Ministério do Exército 1996,12).

Six years later the Strategy of Presence is still considered to be fundamental, keeping in mind the pioneering role of the Army in the formation of the country, even if the possibility of a necessary “slow withdrawal” from this is considered. According to the then-Commander of the Army, General Glauber Vieira, “today the capacity to make [ourselves] present has become more important than being present,” and that “presence should be selective.” In this view, “the process of withdrawing from a selective presence should be slow, but observing that pioneering role that, for some time, we will have to exercise” (Vieira 2003, 138-9). In the new version of SIPLEX (Ministério da Defesa 2002), the Alpha Doctrine remains the same, omitting only the term “adversarial forces.”

In our hypothesis, what one sees here is the major difficulty of the Army in freeing itself from its historic concern with *order*. The view that continues to predominate in this branch seems best expressed in an article defended at the ECEME and published in 1995 in *A Defesa Nacional* by the title of “The Armed Forces in the Twenty-First Century:”

Even if the law would not foresee such a situation, it would be difficult for society to accept that the Armed Forces remain passive in the face of chaos and disorder. It would be illogical and utopian for the State to forego its armed wing in confronting any threat, external or internal. The old French-Masonic aphorism that the Armed Forces are a “big mute” [*grande mudo*] only finds a home among those of poor intentions. Muteness is an organic deficiency incapable of constituting itself as a military quality” (Carvalho 1995, 64).

In the same sense, the attachment to the concept of *security* is in contradistinction to that of *defence*. In effect, it is possible to infer from the text of the then-Deputy Commander of the Joint Chiefs of the Army, General Rui Monarca da Silveira, written in 2003, that the Army is included, through revisions to the Policy of National Defence (written in the context of the civilian Ministry of Defence), in the proposal to insert into the new version of the document the traditional notion of the ESG. This sees National Security as “the condition that regards the obtaining and maintenance of the objectives and interests of the Nation, by means of integration and coordinated deployment of the various expressions of National Power” (Silveira 2004, 170).

The same text recalls the reflections of Marshall Castello Branco regarding the differences of application between notions of security and defence, of which he considered the concept of national security as the most encompassing, understanding it as “the global defence of institutions, incorporating within this psychological aspects, the preservation of development” (Silveira 2004,171). It should not be surprising that a recent military monograph points out that “the military structure is conditioned to respond to past

challenges, or rather, it is coated by history. The mentality is eminently retrospective, defensive and endogenous, not corresponding to that which is desirable to those aspiring to the circle of nations of the first ranking” (Alves 2004, 33).¹²

Hence, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the analyst of Brazilian military thought confronts aspects of change and aspects of continuity, whose evolution must be closely followed over the next few years in order to gain a better understanding of the changing military mentality. In any event, the principal thesis of this study—that the understanding of military thought is fundamental to understanding the military question in Brazil, and to give some basis to whatever attempt is made at formulating a critical dialogue with the military—seems to be supported.

NOTES

¹ Professor of Political Science at the Federal University of São Carlos. This article is part of the project “The Armed Forces in the Post-Cold War: A New Operational Code?”, supported by CNPq.

² “The present trend of foreign policy, with its independence on key issues and firm but basically friendly give and take with the United States on bilateral issues, appears to correspond do majority military opinion” (U.S. Department of State 1969, 33).

³ “Because some officers wish to show Brazilian independence from the United States or because the services are seeking advanced types that the US is not ready to supply, considerable interest is presently being shown by the armed forces in attractively packaged sales offers from third countries” (U.S. Department of State 1991, 61).

⁴ Bustamante’s work, while fundamental to understanding this phase of Brazilian-US military relations, is flawed by its lack of understanding the internal debate within the Brazilian Armed Forces in the 1970s and 1980s, about which there is much more evidence available today, such as that provided by the project for the recovery of military memory of CPDOC.

⁵ Two examples are Álvaro de Souza Pinheiro, who was wounded in Araguaia and Carlos Alberto Pinto Silva, instructor at CIGS in 1973-74 (Silva, 1992:89), both colonels at the beginning of the 1990s.

⁶ From a formal point of view, the definition of the Land Military Doctrine fell to the Army Joint Chiefs, under the auspices of the Terrestrial Operations Command.

⁷ See also, among others: Forjaz (1999; 2000); Forjaz (2003); Abreu (2003) and Gigolotti (2005).

⁸ See: Machado Filho (2000); Salvani (2000); and Plum (2005).

⁹ Some consistent ideas of the Brazilian Military Strategy can be inferred from the writings of General Márcio Berço (2005, 11-12).

¹⁰ Examples of these vulnerabilities would be the dependency on importing energy, the riches of Amazônia or the length of Brazil’s borders.

¹¹ The new version of SIPLEX defines the hypotheses of deployment as “stemming from accepted scenarios and the politico-strategic directions of the country, that do not select or characterise any [other] countries as a potential enemy, and that represent the strategic options of National Defence” (Ministério da Defesa 2002, 33).

¹² This author, a lieutenant colonel in the cavalry and the Joint Chiefs in 2004, wrote the only text that we can find that criticises the current strategic concepts of the Army.

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