

THE ARMED FORCES AND POLITICS: REFLECTIONS FROM INFLUENTIAL  
THEORISTS OF BRAZILIAN AND WESTERN STRATEGIC THOUGHT IN THE  
20TH CENTURY

*AS FORÇAS ARMADAS E A POLÍTICA: REFLEXÕES A PARTIR DE INFLUENTES  
TEÓRICOS DOS PENSAMENTOS ESTRATÉGICOS BRASILEIRO E OCIDENTAL NO  
SÉCULO XX*

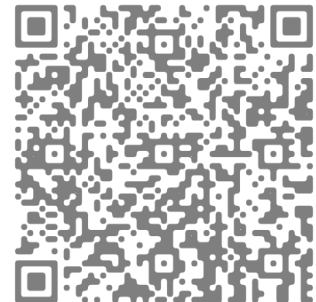
*LAS FUERZAS ARMADAS Y LA POLÍTICA: REFLEXIONES DE TEÓRICOS  
INFLUYENTES DEL PENSAMIENTO ESTRATÉGICO BRASILEÑO Y OCCIDENTAL  
DEL SIGLO XX*



Iago Gonçalves FERREIRA<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: iago\_goncalves14@hotmail.com

**How to reference this article:**

FERREIRA, I. G. The armed forces and politics: Reflections from influential theorists of Brazilian and western strategic thought in the 20th century. **Teoria & Pesquisa: Revista de Ciência Política**, São Carlos, v. 32, n. esp. 2, e023015, 2023. e-ISSN: 2236-0107. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14244/tp.v32iesp.2.1010>



| **Submitted:** 08/05/2023  
| **Revisions required:** 29/08/2023  
| **Approved:** 19/10/2023  
| **Published:** 05/12/2023

---

**Editor:** Prof. Dr. Simone Diniz  
**Deputy Executive Editor:** Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

---

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre – RS – Brazil. Pursuing a Master's degree in the Program of Postgraduate Studies in International Strategic Studies

**ABSTRACT:** The scenario of political and institutional instability experienced in Brazil in recent years, fostered by extreme right-wing political groups, together with the growing participation of the military in the federal government, has raised the debate about the role of the Armed Forces in national politics. Since the end of the 19th century, some Brazilian military currents have defended the role of the Armed Forces in guaranteeing National Security, to support their political engagement. In this sense, the conceptions of the authors Golbery do Couto e Silva, Carlos de Meira Mattos, and Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro had an expressive influence on Brazilian strategic thought. However, in contrast, emerge the views of prominent theorists of Western Strategic Thought, such as Basil Henry Liddell Hart and Charles De Gaulle, who lean towards the military apartment of political affairs. From this perspective, this theoretical-reflective essay proposes a comparative analysis between influential authors of Brazilian and Western Strategic Thoughts in the 20th century regarding the role of the Armed Forces in Politics, in order to propose reflections on the current Brazilian situation.

**KEYWORDS:** Strategic Thought. Military Forces. Politics. Army. Military Strategy.

**RESUMO:** *O cenário de instabilidade política e institucional vivenciado no Brasil nos últimos anos, fomentado por grupos políticos de extrema direita, juntamente com a crescente participação de militares nos quadros do governo federal, suscitaram o debate acerca do papel das Forças Armadas na política nacional. Desde o fim do século XIX, algumas correntes militares brasileiras têm defendido o papel das Forças Armadas na garantia da Segurança Nacional, de forma a respaldar seu engajamento político. Nesse sentido, destacam-se as concepções dos autores Golbery do Couto e Silva, Carlos de Meira Mattos e Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, com expressiva influência para o Pensamento Estratégico Brasileiro. No entanto, em contraste, emergem as visões de proeminentes teóricos do Pensamento Estratégico Ocidental, como Basil Henry Liddell Hart e Charles De Gaulle, os quais inclinam-se ao apartamento militar dos assuntos políticos. Nessa perspectiva, este ensaio teórico-reflexivo propõe uma análise comparativa entre influentes autores dos Pensamentos Estratégicos Brasileiro e Ocidental no século XX a respeito do papel das Forças Armadas na Política, de maneira a propor reflexões acerca da conjuntura brasileira atual.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Pensamento Estratégico. Forças Armadas. Política. Exército. Estratégia Militar.*

**RESUMEN:** *El escenario de inestabilidad política e institucional vivido en Brasil en los últimos años, propiciado por grupos políticos de extrema derecha, junto a la creciente participación de militares en el gobierno federal, han suscitado el debate sobre el papel de las Fuerzas Armadas en la política nacional. Desde finales del siglo XIX, algunas corrientes militares brasileñas han defendido el papel de las Fuerzas Armadas en la garantía de la Seguridad Nacional, con el fin de apoyar su compromiso político. En ese sentido, se destacan las concepciones de los autores Golbery do Couto e Silva, Carlos de Meira Mattos y Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, con influencia significativa para el Pensamiento Estratégico brasileño. Sin embargo, en contraste, emergen los puntos de vista de destacados teóricos del Pensamiento Estratégico Occidental, como Basil Henry Liddell Hart y Charles De Gaulle, quienes se inclinan por el departamento militar de los asuntos políticos. Desde esta perspectiva, este ensayo teórico-reflexivo propone un análisis comparativo entre autores influyentes del Pensamiento Estratégico brasileño y occidental en el siglo XX sobre el papel de las Fuerzas Armadas en la Política, con el fin de proponer reflexiones sobre la situación brasileña actual.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Pensamiento Estratégico. Fuerzas Armadas. Política. Ejército. Estrategia Militar.*

## Introduction

In the 2010s, Brazil experienced an intense process of political and social upheaval, whose initial landmark can be attributed to the June 2013 protests, in which millions of Brazilians took to the streets of major cities in the country, demanding social rights, political morality, and the fight against corruption. Despite attempts at conciliation by the authorities of the time, popular expressions of discontent with the national political landscape gained strength and reach, albeit in an amorphous and imprecise manner.

From this historic event, the subsequent years were marked by various movements challenging the national political *status quo*, fueled by the investigations and corruption allegations of Operation Lava Jato, initiated in 2014, as well as the turbulent re-election of former President Dilma Rousseff in the same year, outlining a contrasting and growing scenario of political and social polarization in the country throughout the decade.

Amidst this adverse context, and in the midst of recurring protests, emerged groups and individuals advocating for antidemocratic and unconstitutional agendas such as military intervention, the closure of the National Congress and the Supreme Federal Court (STF), and the return of military dictatorship. Although they appeared as isolated and incidental demands in 2013, in the following years, the notion of military intervention took shape and momentum, especially with the candidacy of retired Army captain Jair Messias Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential elections.

Jair Bolsonaro's electoral victory and his inauguration in 2019 marked the beginning of an intensification of conflicts against the institutions, especially the STF, both from political groups and electoral bases aligned with the president, as well as from the president himself, who at times made conflicting statements and took conflicting positions against members of the judiciary, challenging the institutional roles of the other branches of the Republic, and invoking supposed support from the Armed Forces for his positions, based on a fictitious interpretation of Article 142 of the 1988 Constitution<sup>i</sup>.

Furthermore, in this context, various controversial and reckless episodes involving the role of the Armed Forces were observed in recent years, including the statement by federal deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro – one of the president's sons – who mentioned the closure of the STF during the 2018 electoral period<sup>ii</sup>, the statement by General Eduardo Dias da Costa Villas Bôas – then Chief of the Army – on a social network on the eve of the STF's judgment of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's habeas corpus in 2018<sup>iii</sup>, as well as the participation of

active Army officer General Eduardo Pazuello in political demonstrations in 2021<sup>iv</sup> – conduct prohibited by the Armed Forces.

Simultaneously, there was an increase in the participation of retired and active military personnel in the Federal Executive, particularly in positions of greater decision-making power. According to a study by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), in the first two years of Bolsonaro's government, there was a 68.3% increase in the number of military personnel occupying civilian positions compared to 2018, with a focus on Special Nature positions, the highest hierarchical levels in the structure of Federal Executive Commissioned Positions (IPEA, 2022).

However, the trend of increased military participation in the Federal Executive is not limited to the current presidential term, as IPEA data also show a progressive expansion of the aggregate presence of military personnel in commissioned positions and functions since 2013 – the beginning of the analyzed series – expressed in both military positions and civilian positions (IPEA, 2022).

Given this situation, various debates have been raised in academic, political, and social circles regarding the role of the military in national politics. Therefore, this essay proposes a theoretical and reflective analysis of the role of the Armed Forces in politics, starting with a comparative exploration between prominent theoretical currents of Strategic Thinking in Brazil and the West. However, considering that the terms “military doctrine” and “military thinking” often overlap and have imprecisions in the literature, it is relevant to make a conceptual distinction.

According to the “Military Doctrine of Defense”, a normative publication by the Ministry of Defense in 2007, military doctrines consist of:

Doctrines represent an integrated and harmonious exposition of ideas and understandings on a particular subject, with the purpose of organizing lines of thought and guiding actions. They can be explicit or implicit. They are explicit when formalized in documents, and implicit when practiced according to customs and traditions. [...] Doctrine formulations consist of various levels, composed of principles, concepts, norms, and procedures. Principles are the highest levels and result from intuitions, idealizations, or perceptions influenced by values and worldviews of their own... (BRAZIL. MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, 2007, p. 11-12, our translation).

In a consonant sense, the French Army officer and military strategist André Beaufre elucidates in his work *“Introduction à la stratégie”* (1963) that “strategy should not be a single doctrine, but a method of thinking, allowing the classification and prioritization of events, and

then the selection of the most effective procedures" (BEAUFRE, 1963, p. 20, our translation). In this sense, it can be inferred that military doctrines encompass a scope of guidelines and perspectives that guide and organize the conceptions and actions of the Armed Forces, while military thoughts represent the principles and ideas that underpin the formulation of doctrines.

Furthermore, the concept of Strategic Thinking is worth addressing. From Conke's perspective (2013), the term has a comprehensive character, referring to the "study of economic, cultural, demographic conditions [...] at a specific moment in history, which facilitates the understanding of strategic decisions made in organizations" (CONKE, 2013, p. 213, our translation). In a more specific military context, Santos (2003) conceives Strategic Thinking as "intellectual activity aimed at the preparation and application of National Power to achieve or maintain objectives, overcoming obstacles of all kinds" (SANTOS, 2003, p. 45, our translation).

Thus, based on these concepts, this essay proposes a comparative analysis of the theoretical perspectives of prominent authors in Brazilian and Western Strategic Thinking in the 20th century regarding the role of the Armed Forces in politics. The breadth of the authors and their respective works adopted the time frame from 1930 to 1985, decades in which important historical moments marked the national and international political-military contexts.

Internally, the period was marked by institutional ruptures and the rise of military regimes in the Brazilian government, in the Revolution of 1930<sup>v</sup> and the Military Coup of 1964<sup>vi</sup>, the latter event marking the beginning of 21 years of Military Dictatorship in Brazil. Furthermore, the decades from 1930 to 1960 characterized a phase of restructuring of the Armed Forces and intense theoretical production in the field of Strategic Thinking, with significant influences from events such as the French Military Mission<sup>vii</sup> and the founding of the Superior War School (ESG) (AMARAL; PINTO; BERGER, 2019; LENTZ, 2019; MARTINS FILHO, 2008). In light of this understanding, the study included Brazilian theorists Golbery do Couto e Silva, Carlos de Meira Mattos, and Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, whose works provided foundations for the education of generations of military personnel.

Externally, the period covered in the analysis includes World War II and the Cold War, geopolitical events that had a profound impact on theories and ideas in the field of Western Strategic Thinking. Given this context, the analysis incorporated the works of authors such as Basil Henry Liddell Hart, whose notable intellectual production in the military field inspired many other Western military theorists (DANCHEV, 1999), and Charles De Gaulle, one of the most relevant figures in French political and military spheres in the 20th century (Jackson,

2018). Furthermore, considering the legacies of the French Military Mission on theoretical currents and military education in Brazil (AMARAL; PINTO; BERGER, 2019), De Gaulle's thinking proved relevant to the scope of the study.

### **The Armed Forces and Brazilian Politics: The Emergence of a Military Identity and the Proclamation of the Republic**

Following Brazil's Independence in 1822, the process of organizing national military institutions began, with primary objectives including the consolidation of independence from the former Portuguese metropolis and the defense against other foreign threats. During the reign of Dom Pedro II, the outbreak of the Paraguayan War in 1865 propelled the consolidation of the Armed Forces, which began to gain greater prominence in the Brazilian political landscape (GONÇALVES, 2019; MATHIAS; GUZZI, 2010; MELLO, 2020).

In this context, the end of the 19th century marked the emergence of the "Military issue" in the national political context, stemming from tensions between military sectors and the Imperial Government, which arose after the conclusion of the Paraguayan War in 1870. Fueled by a sense of pride and triumph, war veterans started demanding the acknowledgment of their professional, social, and institutional aspirations (BENTO, 1989). Adding to the complexity of this situation was the perception of the Army's diminishing prestige compared to the National Guard, as perceived by the imperial elite, along with rumors of its dissolution after the war (Cunha, 2018).

Amidst this situation, members of the Army and Navy (Marine) acted through alliances with civilian sectors, the formation of associations like the Military Club, and public expressions in the press to voice their discontent with the Imperial Government, seeking greater recognition and participation in the country's political decisions (BENTO, 1989; GONÇALVES, 2019; MELLO, 2020; NASCIMENTO, 2009).

In this way, led by Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca, with significant support from the Army Garrison of Rio de Janeiro, these military movements culminated in the removal of Emperor Dom Pedro II and the Proclamation of the Republic on November 15, 1889 (BENTO, 1989).

In the decades following the Proclamation, the involvement of the military in national political processes became more pronounced, representing either the interests of social groups or dominant ideologies, or corporate demands (MELLO, 2020). Such interference manifested itself through movements and rebellions, such as the *Tenentismo* and the 1930 Revolution, as well as through political interventions and institutional ruptures, such as the dictatorships of

1937-1945 and 1964-1985 (CUNHA, 2018; GONÇALVES, 2019; MELLO, 2020; SVARTMAN, 2020).

To support the political engagement of the Armed Forces, throughout the 20th century, Brazilian military theorists sought to build a theoretical framework that would legitimize this involvement. In this perspective, the doctrine of National Security and the concept of “moderating power” stand out. These concepts advocated the role of the military as defenders of political stability, whose ultimate duty would be to ensure the order of Brazilian society, preventing social and economic disruptions caused by political movements influenced by foreign governments and/or ideologies, especially communism (DREIFUSS; DULCI, 2008).

Under this pretext, the military would have the legitimacy to act as a moderator when there were significant disagreements and conflicts between the branches of the Republic and society, which contributed to democratic ruptures and the installation of 20th-century dictatorships in Brazil. Given this context, the ideas of Brazilian military theorists Golbery do Couto e Silva, Carlos de Meira Mattos, and Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro are highlighted.

### **The Doctrine of National Security: The Conceptions of Brazilian Military Theorists Regarding the Role of the Armed Forces in Politics**

In the early years of the Republic, the Armed Forces — comprising the Army and Navy at the time — faced an adverse internal situation marked by disputes among military groups and challenges to hierarchy and discipline by young enlisted personnel and officers, such as the “*Tenentismo*” movement in the 1920s (BRETAS, 2008; GONÇALVES, 2019). Furthermore, the structure and organization of the Armed Forces still revealed limitations and deficiencies, including the lack of well-established career plans and the need for professionalization (BRETAS, 2008).

With the “1930 Revolution”<sup>v</sup> and Getúlio Vargas's rise to the presidency, Tenentista segments gained more prestige within the republican government, ascending to public positions and ministries. Among the military figures in the Vargas government, General Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro stood out for his concepts and proposals to strengthen and professionalize the Army, as well as for his advocacy of the role of the Armed Forces in national politics (BRETAS, 2008; GONÇALVES, 2019; GUSMÃO, 2020).

General Góes Monteiro, born in São Luiz do Quintude, Alagoas, in 1889, entered the military career at the age of 14, more out of financial necessity than vocation, eventually

reaching the rank of lieutenant colonel before 1930 and later ascending to the position of Chief of Staff of the Ministry of War in 1931. Self-taught in military matters, Góes Monteiro became known as the precursor of the “Doctrine of National Security” for Brazil (BRETAS, 2008; CARVALHO, 1990; GONÇALVES, 2019, our translation).

In Góes Monteiro’s perspective, National Defense encompassed both external and internal defense of the country, with the Armed Forces having the responsibility, “*in their vocation as maintainers of internal order and national unity*” (MONTEIRO, 1934, p. 109, our translation), to ensure security against threats to national sovereignty from other states, as well as threats to internal social and political order. In light of these responsibilities, the general advocated for the political role of the Army, as the institution was interested in all aspects of “truly national” politics (MONTEIRO, 1934).

In his major work, “*A Revolução de 30 e a finalidade política do Exército*” (1934), Góes Monteiro’s views on the involvement of the Armed Forces in politics become clear in the following passage:

General politics, economic policy, industrial and agricultural policy, the communications system, international policy, all branches of activity, production, and collective existence, including the education and instruction of the people, the political and social system — everything, in short, affects a country’s military policy (MONTEIRO, 1934, p. 133, our translation).

As a justification for military leadership in politics, Góes Monteiro pointed out the lack of commitment by political factions to national interests, prioritizing individual and regional interests over strategic objectives, and the scarcity of values and patriotism among Brazilian society, as can be inferred from the excerpt:

A change in collective mentality as flawed as ours, due to the imperfections of each individual’s character, our defective political-administrative organization - a sad legacy dating back to the distant past of colonial times, the ignorance of the popular masses, the inconsistencies and lack of integrity of our ruling elites, our evident poverty, struggling in the hope of awakening and exploiting supposed latent riches that never appear; our tropical imagination that excessively exalts questionable virtues with which we adorn ourselves and try to hide our terrible flaws; the lack of a sense of reality of things; the lack of organizational capacity, mental indiscipline, and other psychological causes, not to mention unpatriotism and the incapacity of the majority of the rulers we have had, worsen the solution of vital issues that interest us, such as the social issue, the economic-financial issue, the cultural issue, and so on (MONTEIRO, 1934, p. 97-98, our translation).



In this passage from Góes Monteiro's work, the author's negative perception of the mentality and character of Brazilian society, stemming from the country's colonial past, becomes evident. He believed that these factors hindered the development of national potential. Therefore, he believed that only the Armed Forces, with their patriotic values, could ensure Brazil's realignment towards development.

However, the general also emphasized the organizational and structural challenges faced by the Armed Forces in pursuing the goals of National Defense:

[...] outdated, insufficient, unsuitable material for our needs, in the air, on land, and at sea, a lack of industries that can prepare and supply it in the desired conditions, both in terms of quality and quantity; insufficient troops in number and combat value, even in their usual distribution, often deviating from their true mission, poorly organized, poorly structured, poorly commanded, ill-equipped, although, as raw material, they could be on par with top-tier forces, inept leaders, incapable of cooperation, characters poorly formed, corrupted from the beginning of the hierarchical scale (MONTEIRO, 1934, p. 107, our translation).

When analyzing the texts of "*A Revolução de 30 e a finalidade política do Exército*", Bretas (2008) emphasizes that while during the Old Republic, there was a discourse of depoliticization of the Army, after the Revolution of 1930, conceptions in defense of the political role of the Armed Forces gained prominence, as extensively addressed in the work of Góes Monteiro, as well as the need for the unification of these forces for the centralization and strengthening of the military regime (BRETAS, 2008).

Between 1930 and 1945, the military was involved in various political processes of the Vargas government, demonstrating strong cohesion and influence over the Executive branch (GONÇALVES, 2019; SVARTMAN, 2020). According to Gonçalves (2019), the cohesion of the military, along with Getúlio Vargas's vulnerability, contributed to the prominence of the Armed Forces during the Estado Novo, both in the establishment of the regime in 1937 and in its overthrow in 1945 (GONÇALVES, 2019).

However, despite the military's influence on the Executive branch, the Armed Forces still revealed marked political and ideological divisions, sometimes reflecting on the national political scene. In this regard, as argued by Góes Monteiro, military leadership began to show concerns about the need to homogenize ideological views, both in the corporate and social spheres (DREIFUSS; DULCI, 2008).

In this context, the potential for articulation between the military and civil society around the project of national development and security was perceived. Thus, the Superior War

School (ESG) was established in 1949, amid the international context of the post-World War II era and the emergence of the Cold War (DREIFUSS; DULCI, 2008; GONÇALVES, 2019; SILVA, 2013).

Inspired by the *United States National War College*, the ESG aimed to train an “intellectual elite” in the field of national security and strategy, with a view to developing the knowledge framework necessary for the direction and planning of national security. Through these objectives, the theoretical concept of “National Security” was solidified among ESG theorists, a strategic perspective broader in scope than “National Defense”, extending beyond the military realm to encompass political, psychosocial, and economic dimensions (DA-SILVA; DAL-MORO, 2017; SILVA, 2013).

The theoretical concept of “National Security” had one of its main proponents in General Carlos de Meira Mattos, one of the most influential military theorists in the doctrinal views of the ESG (DA-SILVA; DAL-MORO, 2017). Meira Mattos was born in São Carlos (São Paulo) in 1913 and joined the Army in 1933, starting his military career at the Realengo Military School, thus building a prestigious military career in the following decades. In the 1950s, he served as an instructor at the Army Staff College, and from the 1960s onwards, he gained prominence for his intellectual production (COSTA, 2021; FGV, 2007).

In one of his most prominent works, “*Brasil: Geopolítica e Destino*” (1975), Meira Mattos presents his understanding of the concept of “National Security”:

[...] the concept of national security, which is quite different today from the more restricted concept of national defense. The difference is twofold. The traditional concept of national defense places more emphasis on the military aspects of security and, correspondingly, on problems of external aggression. The notion of national security is more comprehensive. It includes, so to speak, the global defense of institutions, thus incorporating psychosocial aspects, the preservation of internal political development and stability; furthermore, the concept of security, much more explicitly than that of defense, takes into account internal aggression, embodied in ideological infiltration and subversion, even in guerrilla movements, forms of conflict and external aggression that are more likely today (MATTOS, 1975, p. 61-62, our translation).

In this excerpt from the work, one can observe the author's concern about internal security in the country, highlighting the risks of “infiltration and ideological subversion” and the formation of “guerrilla movements”. Based on this understanding, the ideas and intentions aimed at the social and political intervention of the Armed Forces were grounded, assumed as a means to guarantee National Security.

In the early years of the ESG (Superior War College), the Doctrine of National Security had little impact on the federal government. However, with the Military Coup of March 31, 1964, the political formulations of the ESG gained greater prominence in the newly installed military regime, especially in national development projects (LEWANDOWSKI, 1985). On this aspect, Meira Mattos supported the involvement of the Armed Forces in political processes under the argument of socioeconomic development, considered essential for achieving “true security”:

[...] true security presupposes a process of development, both economic and social. Economic, because military power is also essentially conditioned by the country’s industrial and technological base. Social, because even satisfactory economic development, if accompanied by excessive income concentration and growing social inequality, generates tensions and conflicts that hinder the proper functioning of institutions and end up compromising both economic development and the security of the regime (MATTOS, 1975, p. 62, our translation).

Regarding the work “*Brasil: Geopolítica e Destino*”, published in 1975, one can notice Meira Mattos’s favorable stance toward the military regime in place at the time. In the author’s perspective, military control over national politics was vital for the accelerated development of a country with vast geographical dimensions like Brazil. Thus, the concepts of power and evolution were inseparable, with the former being crucial for achieving the latter, as stated by the author: “It is power that leads society to evolution [...] the greater the aspiration or need for evolution, the greater the power must be” (MATTOS, 1975, p. 101, our translation).

In this sense, Meira Mattos considered challenges to the regime and demands for democracy as “controversial” issues that should not hinder or divert the “political-revolutionary process” from its purposes. He argued that the sacrifices necessary for national development would be rewarded, as expressed in the passage:

Our pace of development must be maintained. All sacrifices will have just compensation. We have chosen the right path, one of development through democratic means and the construction of a democratic society with authority. We will not deviate from it. A monumental, gigantic work like transforming this country into a powerful, prosperous, and happy nation, elevating it to the level of those that make decisions at the world level, cannot be built without sacrifices. We will make these sacrifices, and we will get there (MATTOS, 1975, p. 107, our translation).

From this excerpt, one can observe an authoritarian and centralized view of the role of the state by the author, a hegemonic position among the top ranks of the military regime. Regarding the authoritarianism of the exceptional years, Dreifuss and Dulci emphasize the

military's intention to strengthen the authority of the state through political and administrative centralization, aiming to exert greater control over the country's social and economic life. Consequently, they argue, "the motto 'Order and Progress', dear to the positivists who helped establish the Republic, was updated in the idea of Security and Development" (DREIFUSS; DULCI, 2008, p. 139, our translation).

Regarding the centralization of state power under the military, the conceptions of General Golbery do Couto e Silva, one of the main theorists of Brazilian military thought, stand out. Born in Rio Grande (*Rio Grande do Sul*) on August 21, 1911, Golbery do Couto e Silva joined the Army career in 1927 when he entered the Military Academy of Realengo. After a long military career, with assignments in the Third Military Region, the School of Staff, and missions abroad, Golbery took on the role of adjunct at the Department of Studies at the Superior War College in 1952 (OLIVEIRA, 2015).

Golbery do Couto e Silva developed various analyses and projects regarding strategies for Brazil's development, advocating for the political involvement of the Armed Forces. Concerning the processes of state centralization and decentralization, the author states:

This succession, which seems endless, of phases of centralization and phases of decentralization emerges as a characteristic always present in the evolution, not only of Brazil but of all modern states [...] In reality, the life of the State is multifaceted, with its promotional, control, and inhibitory or coercive action extending to various fields and multiple sectors, all of which are independent in fact and hardly fit into any of the customary, mostly didactic demarcations - such as political, economic, psychosocial, and military fields, for example (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 13-15, our translation).

When considering the author's position expressed in the work "*Conjuntura política nacional: o poder executivo e geopolítica do Brasil*" (1981), one can infer a perception of a certain degree of 'naturalness' regarding state actions of democratic suppression, authoritarianism, and social control, thus endorsing the practices of the regime at the time. Furthermore, one can also notice Golbery's view on the boundaries between the political, economic, psychosocial, and military fields, which he considered "no more than didactic", supporting the concepts of the National Security Doctrine.

In this work, Golbery also expresses a negative stance regarding the political-organizational structures of the state during the period before the 1964 coup, criticizing their paternalistic nature and extensive scope:

The federal structure was weakened, already severely compromised, and municipalism would become nothing more than a mere concept to which

homage would continue to be paid, now devoid of any deeper content [...] The paternalistic state machinery, whose interference would be increasingly sought in all circumstances and from the most remote corners, would expand each day further to meet these demands and the demands for permanent and effective control of its growing tentacular ramifications (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 22-23, our translation).

As an alternative model, Golbery do Couto e Silva proposed the strengthening of the National Power of the State through the “integration of all national forces, all physical and human resources available to each nation” (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 13, our translation). In this regard, the author highlights:

However, the State does not always possess a National Power commensurate with the responsibilities arising from war or even those assumed during peacetime. Therefore, it is imperative to strengthen this Power, to develop it at the right time and through all means, so that, in the vital balance between possibilities and necessities, means and ends, obligations and resources, there remains no fatal deficit that foretells defeat, servitude, and death for the nation (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 13, our translation).

In this sense, Couto e Silva supports the involvement of the Armed Forces in national politics from the perspective of National Security. According to the theorist, this perspective should gradually permeate “the entire domain of state politics, conditioning, if not promoting or determining, all planning” (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 23, our translation). Consequently, strategic actions should operate in various domains of the country, “whether economic, social, or political, not to mention the purely military plans, both in war and peace” (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 23, our translation).

In the face of these propositions, it becomes evident Golbery do Couto e Silva’s expanded conception of the role of the military, which would be responsible for National Security in both the internal and external dimensions of the country. However, the author recognizes the relatively peaceful geopolitical context in which Brazil was immersed in its immediate surroundings, without territorial ambitions or conflicts with neighboring countries, while also needing to exploit its wealth and potential through interior expansion:

(Brazil) is now a territorially satisfied country, with vast spaces that are still almost entirely empty and practically unexplored in terms of their as-yet-unknown riches and presenting, to the discerning eye, a profound economic and cultural imbalance among the regions of its various quadrants, the various Brazils into which the continental panorama of Brazil truly unfolds. Thus, our geopolitics must necessarily, at this juncture in our national historical life, be geopolitics of interior expansion, territorial integration and valorization, without any taint of baseless and grotesque imperialism beyond its borders,

for a nation that has within its habitat an immense empire to build (COUTO E SILVA, 1981, p. 170, our translation).

In this excerpt, once again, the theme of national economic development as a subsidy for centralization and state interventionism is evident, in line with the discourses of Meira Mattos and Góes Monteiro, reflecting a predominant current of ideas within the Superior War College. However, it is worth noting that, in the context of the Cold War outlined on the international stage, the state intervention proposed by the author should converge and rely on the sectors of the industrial bourgeoisie, considered capable of promoting Brazil's development, integration, defense, and security (DA-SILVA; DAL-MORO, 2017).

Taking into account the most prominent conceptions of the Brazilian military theorists discussed, it becomes clear that these authors converge towards the political role of the Armed Forces, justified by a negative view of the capabilities of Brazilian society and political groups, along with the perception of a chronic situation of “backwardness”, underdevelopment, poverty, and illiteracy, extensively prevalent in the country.

On the other hand, considering the Armed Forces as bastions of nationalism, discipline, hierarchy, morality, and civic ideals, these authors argued for the urgent engagement of the military in the Brazilian development process, supported by the National Security Doctrine.

### **Under the prism of Western Strategic Thought: the perceptions of Charles de Gaulle and Basil Liddell Hart**

In a contrasting scenario to Brazil, the Western Strategic Thought of the 20th century, shaped under the influence of total wars — World War I and World War II — that ravaged Europe in the early 1900s, reveals divergent understandings from Brazilian military theoretical currents regarding the role of the Armed Forces in politics. For this analysis, the military theorists Charles De Gaulle, a general and former president of France, and Basil Liddell Hart, a military historian whose works significantly influenced Western Strategic Thought, were considered.

Basil Henry Liddell Hart was born in Paris in 1895; during his adolescence, he moved to the United Kingdom and entered Corpus Christi College (Cambridge) in 1913. With the outbreak of World War I, he served in the British infantry on the Western Front. After the war, he began his career as a military theorist by writing articles for military journals, gaining prominence in the field of Strategic Thought (DANCHEV, 1999; HOLDEN REID, 2011; SEARLE, 2016).

In the late 1930s, with the emergence of World War II, Liddell Hart advocated the importance of defensive strategy over offense. However, during the conflict, he distanced himself from direct involvement, focusing solely on his journalistic activities. After World War II, he regained academic prominence, producing works about the wartime years (DANCHEV, 1999; HOLDEN REID, 2011; SEARLE, 2016).

Considered by military thinkers as the “Clausewitz of the 20th century”, Liddell Hart’s main work is the book “Strategy” (1954), in which he outlines his conceptions and concepts of military strategy. Regarding the involvement of the Armed Forces in politics, he diverged from the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz, considering that politics should guide strategic and military affairs:

A defect of this definition is that it trespasses on the sphere of politics, or the superior direction of war, which must necessarily be the responsibility of the government and not of the military leaders it employs as its agents in the executive control of operations. Another defect is that it restricts the meaning of “strategy” to the mere handling of battle, thus conveying the idea that battle is the only means to the strategic end (HART, 1954, p. 319, our translation).

Furthermore, Hart also presents a broader concept of Strategy. From his perspective, Strategy would encompass not only the application of military resources on battlefields but also battles as a means to execute Strategy. This notion is significant regarding the role of the Armed Forces in politics because, unlike Brazilian military theorists, Liddell Hart does not believe that military perspectives should dictate actions and decisions concerning national defense.

Based on this understanding, the theorist warns of the risks of failing to distinguish military and political strategy, as not having these roles concentrated in a single figure would lead to substantial disputes and interference between those responsible for these tasks:

Breaking down the distinction between strategy and politics would not matter much if the two functions were normally combined in the same person, like Frederick or Napoleon. However, such autocratic soldier-statesmen have been rare in modern times and temporarily extinct in the 19th century. The effect, therefore, was insidiously harmful. It encouraged soldiers to make the absurd claim that politics should be subservient to the conduct of their operations and, especially in democratic countries, induced politicians to overstep the definitive boundary of their sphere and interfere with their military in the actual use of their tools (HART, 1954, p. 320, our translation).

Thus, Liddell Hart proposed that military commanders should fulfill the missions assigned to them by the rulers, adopting the means they considered most appropriate in theaters of operations based on their technical-military knowledge. If they deemed such objectives

unattainable or the allocated resources insufficient, they should report to the rulers, refusing or resigning from command, but it would exceed their jurisdiction if they attempted to dictate to the government which objectives to pursue (HART, 1954).

In this perspective, it is clear that the author established a clear hierarchy between political and military powers, with the latter being subordinate to the former; thus, they should adhere to the objectives and strategies set by the rulers. Furthermore, Hart advances by arguing that the government, when formulating wartime policy, should adapt it to any changes that may occur, altering objectives and even commanders in whom they lose confidence (HART, 1954).

In this context, Liddell Hart proposes the differentiation between “Grand Strategy”, “Pure Military Strategy”, and “Tactics”:

Just as tactics are an application of strategy on a lower plane, so the strategy is an application on a lower plane of “grand strategy” (...) The term “grand strategy” is used to give the sense of “statecraft in the conduct of war”. The role of grand strategy – higher strategy – is to coordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war - the goal defined by fundamental policy. The grand strategy must calculate and develop the economic resources and manpower of nations to sustain the fighting services. [...] It must also regulate the distribution of power between the several services and between the services and industry. Moreover, fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy – which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure and diplomatic pressure, as well as the force of arms, to weaken the will of the enemy (HART, 1954, p. 322, our translation).

From these concepts, it can be seen that Liddell Hart’s idea of “Grand Strategy” somewhat resembles Meira Mattos and Golbery do Couto e Silva’s elaboration of “National Security”. However, the view of responsibility for directing these spheres differs among the authors. While Brazilian theorists advocate such attribution to the Armed Forces, Liddell Hart recognizes that, in 20th-century democracies, this competence would belong to governments or, in other words, political groups, as seen in the passages:

Normally, it is for the government, responsible for the grand strategy of war, to decide whether the strategy shall make its contribution by achieving a military decision or otherwise, just as military means are one way to the end of grand strategy – one instrument in the surgeon’s case – the battle is one way to the end of strategy (HART, 1954, p. 323, our translation).

[...] grand strategy must control strategy; its principles often run counter to those which prevail in the field of strategy (HART, 1954, p. 353, our translation).



Although in these passages Liddell Hart was addressing a wartime scenario, this understanding can be extended to the relationship between the Armed Forces and Politics. By proposing the overlap of “Grand Strategy”, established by the political sphere, with “Pure Strategy”, the responsibility of military generals, Hart reinforces the division of tasks between politicians and the military, highlighting the political supremacy over the Armed Forces.

Regarding General Charles de Gaulle, his work and history present a degree of ambiguity about the role of the Armed Forces in Politics, as the author played both roles: general and president.

Charles de Gaulle was born in Lille, France, in 1890, moving to Paris with his parents when he was still a newborn. In 1905, at the age of 15, he decided on a military career, the same year he wrote his first essay: a fictional story imagining how the characters General de Boisdeffre and General Charles de Gaulle defended France from a war declared by “Europe”, referring to Germany, demonstrating both his military vocation and his aspiration for leadership (JACKSON, 2018).

In 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, Charles de Gaulle served in the French army, being captured by German forces as a prisoner of war during the Battle of Verdun in 1916. During the interwar period, he worked as a professor at the *École de Guerre* and wrote several works on military matters: “*Le discorde chez l’ennemi*” (1924), “*Le Fil de l’épée*” (1932), “*Vers l’armée de métier*” (1934) e “*La France et son armée*” (1938) (WILLIAMS, 2018).

During World War II, he served in the French military as a specialist in armored warfare, and for his military achievements in the war, he became a symbol of French resistance against Nazi Germany. After the victory of the Allies, he assumed the presidency of France in the Provisional Government from 1944 to 1946. Later, he returned to the presidency during the Fourth and Fifth Republics, from 1958 to 1968 (WILLIAMS, 2018).

Regarding his perspective on the role of the Armed Forces in Politics, an analysis can be made of one of his major works: “*Le Fil de l’épée*”, a book originally published in 1932, based on General de Gaulle's lectures at the *École de Guerre* (WILLIAMS, 2018). In this work, he discusses the nature of the soldier, describing their moral, intellectual, and civic attributes. Moreover, in various passages, he addresses, albeit in a somewhat subdued manner, the role of the military in relation to Politics.

From a viewpoint similar to Brazilian theorists, de Gaulle also outlines a negative analysis of national society, criticizing the pursuit of money and comfort, characteristics of “peaceful days” without wars:

French society lived for a hundred years fearing what was risky, distant, and mutable. But here is where the desire to undertake, the longing for adventure, and the need for renewal grow. Being a civil servant, settling down at home, and imitating those whom success consecrates was our ideal for a century. Making money, covering distances, and avoiding beaten paths, such is our taste today. Instead of custom, regulation, and clichés, we need different criteria for thought and action (GAULLE, 1944, p. 33-34, our translation).

Given this scenario, the author emphasizes that the characteristics of French society at the time also impacted the Army. Therefore, the military had to counter the diffuse values in French elites, showing a preference for responsibility and initiative:

While the activity of the French takes this direction, how can the army maintain its moral trends from the past? Since our century demands and takes nothing more than personal action and the courage to take risks, it is appropriate that, in turn, and at the risk of isolation, the military order should honor above all initiative and a taste for responsibilities (GAULLE, 1944, p. 34, our translation).

On the other hand, the general reflects on the difficulties of establishing authority in the social sphere, where “*Les mœurs la battent en brèche, les lois tendent à l’affaiblir*” — “Customs breach it, and laws tend to weaken it” (GAULLE, 1944, p. 40, our translation). Thus, he reports the predominance of impatience and criticism over trust and subordination in various social contexts.

In view of this, Charles de Gaulle advocated for a more authoritarian role of the state, in line with the propositions of the National Security Doctrine, which should “organize” citizens under the control of order and leaders:

A crisis like this, however general it may seem, can only last for a while. In reality, men do nothing more than eat, drink, and sleep without being directed. These political beings need organization, meaning order and leaders. If authority falters on shaky foundations, the natural balance of things will provide it with others, sooner or later, better or worse, suitable in every case for the establishment of a new discipline (GAULLE, 1944, p. 40-41, our translation).

On the other hand, the author reflects on the recognition that in a “*société bouleversée dans ses cadres et dans ses traditions*” — “society disrupted in its frameworks and tradition” (GAULLE, 1944, p. 41, our translation), only the personal prestige of a leader could act as a source of command. This understanding reinforces the idea of the “moral fortitude” of the Armed Forces, also expressed by Brazilian military authors. Charles de Gaulle’s view of the ‘moral superiority’ of the military becomes quite evident in the following passage:

(The soldier) has the duty to employ weapons, but his power must be organized. From the day he takes them up, the soldier is subject to the rule: it never leaves him. A generous and jealous lover, it guides him, supporting his weaknesses and multiplying his skills, but it also constrains him, forcing his doubts and restraining his impulses. What it demands makes him suffer to the depths of his human nature: to renounce freedom, money, and sometimes life, what sacrifice could be more complete? But at this price, it opens to him the empire of strength. That is why, even though he often complains about the rule, he guards it much better: he loves it and rejoices in what it costs him. “It is my honor!” he says (GAULLE, 1944, p. 82-83, our translation).

Regarding politicians, de Gaulle states that they are exposed to constant instability, arising from intrigues in government councils, parliamentary movements, and opposition criticisms, thus facing the imminent risk of public ingratitude and historical injustices. In contrast, soldiers experience a career of stability and progressive recognition, supported by rigor and discipline, so their authority reveals a superior quality (Gaulle, 1944). Therefore, “*Sous la férule et l’égide de la règle, le long d’une route austère mais sans détours, le soldat marche d’un pas assuré*” — “Under the rule and the aegis of order, along an austere but straightforward path, the soldier marches with a confident step” (GAULLE, 1944, p. 82, our translation).

Considering the intrinsic differences in experiences, processes, and roles played by politicians and soldiers, de Gaulle emphasizes that at times, these characters demonstrate difficulties in understanding each other:

This dissimilarity results in some misunderstanding. The soldier often considers the politician insecure, inconstant, and fond of publicity. The military spirit, driven by imperatives, is astonished by so many feints to which the statesman is forced. Warlike action, in its terrible simplicity, contrasts with the deviations inherent in the art of governing. This passionate mobility, this dominant concern with the effect to be produced, this appearance of valuing in others not so much their merit as their influence—inescapable traits of the citizen who holds authority for the people—never fail to disturb the professionals of the arms accustomed to harsh duties, selflessness, and respect for services rendered (GAULLE, 1944, p. 34 our translation).

However, it is worth noting that, despite the differences between the military and politicians, the author highlights the disciplined nature of the Armed Forces. Although they may have difficulty in giving unconditional support to public authorities, they subordinate themselves to Politics, even if discontented: “*Sans doute aussi, l’habitude d’obéir intimide les soldats dans leurs objections*” — “Without a doubt, the habit of obeying intimidates soldiers in their objections” (GAULLE, 1944, p. 87, our translation). This understanding of the hierarchy between Politics and the Armed Forces converges with Liddell Hart’s view, in which

“Grand Strategy” led by Politics should supersede “Pure Military Strategy” undertaken by the military.

Differently, Charles de Gaulle emphasizes the need for collaboration between politicians and soldiers, especially since the outbreak of a war causes instability, uncertainty, and threats, making “*le gouvernant et le soldat s'accordent, le plus souvent, sans peine*” — “governor and soldier, most of the time, agree without difficulty” (GAULLE, 1944, p. 88, our translation). Furthermore, in line with Liddell Hart, de Gaulle also delineates the roles of politicians and military in a wartime context: “*Certes, la conduite de la guerre appartient à l'homme d'État, les opérations sont le fait du militaire*” — “Certainly, the conduct of war belongs to the statesman, operations are the work of the soldier” (GAULLE, 1944, p. 88, our translation).

In light of Charles de Gaulle's reflections and propositions, the author presents a pendular understanding of the role of the Armed Forces in Politics. At times, he defends the moral attributes of the military and the disciplined and hierarchical organization of the forces. In other instances, he delimits transparent spheres of action between politicians and the military, proposing dialogue between these characters. However, he also expresses notable criticisms of French society, sometimes manifesting authoritarian views and social control of the population.

### **Armed Forces and Politics: Thinkers and Paradigms in Contrast**

The theme of the relationship between the Armed Forces and Politics still shows notable limitations in national literature, having been confined to military training schools and theorists throughout the early decades of the 20th century. However, starting with the military coup of 1964 and the beginning of the Brazilian military dictatorship, the involvement of the military in national politics gained greater prominence among analysts and researchers in the fields of political and social sciences. They sought to understand the recurring military interventions in Brazilian political regimes during the Republic (DREIFUSS; DULCI, 2008; FREIRE; HEYE, 2016).

The process of democratization and the 1988 Constitution somewhat subdued discussions about the role of the Armed Forces in the national political landscape and civil-military relations. However, recent institutional contestation movements, threats to democracy, and calls for military intervention by supporters of the Bolsonaro government, as well as the

increased participation of retired and active-duty military personnel in the federal administrative structure, have once again raised the issue.

The comparative analysis of Brazilian and Western Strategic Thinking demonstrates marked differences regarding the participation of the Armed Forces and military personnel in political processes. Brazilian authors such as Góes Monteiro, Meira Mattos, and Golbery do Couto e Silva introduced views and propositions in favor of the active participation of the military in the defense and development of the country, under the argument of the National Security Doctrine. On the other hand, thinkers like Liddell Hart and Charles de Gaulle present more distinct delineations of the scopes of action for political agents and the Armed Forces.

From the perspective of Western Strategic Thinking, the concept of “National Security” has traditionally been associated with notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation-state in defense against external threats (SANTOS, 2004). However, the views of Brazilian military theorists presented a broader conception of “National Security”, encompassing, in addition to the military sphere and territorial sovereignty, national development, and the confrontation of internal threats, which included a subjective spectrum of actors and objects.

In this perspective, according to Dreifuss and Dulci (2008), the Brazilian Armed Forces were traditionally influenced by a particular interpretation of “National Security”, determined by particular understandings within the officer corps. They claimed to be “interpreters of national will” and believed they should establish the objectives and appropriate means to guarantee National Security (DREIFUSS; DULCI, 2008).

Considering the political elites and Brazilian society as inept and corrupt, certain military factions attributed to them the responsibility for perpetuating the historical traits of underdevelopment in the country. Therefore, military intervention became essential not only for the defense of national sovereignty but also for promoting economic growth and development. Based on these interpretations present in the works of the analyzed authors, authoritarian, interventionist, and anti-democratic actions by the Armed Forces were supported, which materialized with the 1964 coup and the military dictatorship.

The advancement of Brazilian Strategic Thinking towards socio-political and economic scopes may have been favored by the regional context of relative geopolitical stability, as well as the international context of the 20th century, marked by socialist-communist<sup>viii</sup> revolutions and the polarization between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Faced with this scenario, Brazilian military theorists focused their analyses and propositions on the

internal, intra-border sphere, aimed at combating “threats” from national movements and groups.

In contrast, the conceptions of Liddell Hart and Charles de Gaulle mainly address the strategies and organization of the Armed Forces in the face of external threats and wars with other nations, reflecting the historical context and geopolitics of Europe, marked by recurring wars, military invasions, territorial disputes, and, primarily, the epicenter of the First and Second World Wars. Therefore, despite the particularities of their works, the authors demonstrate more circumscribed and specific perceptions of the role of the Armed Forces, attributing to their responsibility for strictly military strategies, tactics, and wartime operations. Thus, the politics of the nation-state would be the responsibility of the political group.

The contrasting interpretations between Brazilian and European theorists reflect the historical and cultural context from which their analyses and propositions originated. In this sense, the conceptions of authors Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein (1996) in the work “The Culture of National Security” contribute to the understanding of such dissimilarities. According to these scholars, the notions of “National Security” of states not only express the dynamics of power balance and geopolitics in which the states are embedded but also denote cultural and institutional traits of these countries (JEPPERSON; WENDT; KATZENSTEIN, 1996).

In light of this perspective, Brazilian military theoretical currents reveal historically significant aspects of the formation process of the state and national society. Thus, on the one hand, it is observed that paternalism, centralization, and state interventionism — traditionally present in Brazilian history — reinforce the views of Brazilian Strategic Thought theoretical currents regarding the need for a strong, and even oppressive, state to address the chronic underdevelopment of the country.

Yet, elitism, national pride, and corporatism<sup>ix</sup>, also rooted in the formation of the Brazilian state, support the idea that Brazilian society, especially the lower-educated and popular strata, would not demonstrate competence and aptitude for guiding the country’s destiny, necessitating the military — “true” patriots — for the execution of this “arduous mission”.

Still, these particular views of “National Security”, advocated by Brazilian military theorists throughout the 20th century, proved detrimental and counterproductive to the very purposes they sought to defend: national sovereignty, development, and stability, which were deteriorated repeatedly by the attempts and successful interventions by groups of military personnel from the Armed Forces in Brazilian politics.

In contrast, when examining the trajectory of Charles de Gaulle, despite his military background and career, the retired general rose to the position of prime minister of the French Provisional Government in 1945, following the end of the Second World War, and later returned to lead the French government in 1958. He was responsible for leading the formulation of a new constitution for the country. Elected as President of France in 1959, de Gaulle served in that capacity for a decade (JACKSON, 2018). From the notable separation of military and political careers of Charles de Gaulle, it can be inferred that the theorist reveals distinct conceptions of the roles and delineations of the military and political scopes of the state, which were expressed in his trajectory and contribution to the French state.

From another perspective, it is worth noting that the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 does not envision the involvement of military personnel and/or the Armed Forces in the political arena, either as endorsers of institutions and constitutional powers or as a “Moderating Power”, despite certain far-right social groups erroneously claiming such a role for the military, based on a supposed endorsement in Article 142 of the Constitution. In view of this interpretation, it is relevant to observe the wording of the aforementioned article:

Article 142 - The Armed Forces, comprising 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 Homeland, the guarantee of constitutional powers, and, at the initiative of any of these, the law and order (BRASIL, 1988, our translation).

In a legal opinion by the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), Scaletsky, Coêlho, and Binenbojm (2021) emphasize that the extraordinary faculty to “restore law and order” does not give the Armed Forces the authority to intervene in potential conflicts between the branches of government but “demands their utmost deference to the entire Federal Constitution, which unequivocally encompasses the principle of the separation of powers”. Consequently, the authors clarify that “the objectives of stabilizing the legal and institutional order are now guaranteed by mechanisms for resolving political conflicts that ensure the supreme authority, not of any power but of the Constitution itself” (SCALETSKY; COÊLHO; BINENBOJM, 2021, p. 238, our translation).

In this sense, according to the Brazilian Constitution, the Armed Forces do not have and cannot perform roles or functions in the realm of Politics, nor do they hold the prerogative of being “guarantors” of the law and national order, which are supported by the Constitution itself.

Thus, despite the perceptions of Brazilian military theorists and recent calls for the involvement of the Armed Forces in the Brazilian political landscape, the functions of these important institutions are limited to the defense of national sovereignty against external threats — under the command of the constitutional authorities — thus converging with the views identified in the works of notable figures in Western Strategic Thinking.

In consideration of the analyses and reflections of this essay, it is observed that the most influential theoretical currents in military thought of the 20th century, both nationally and in the Western — particularly European — contexts, present disparate conceptions of the role of the Armed Forces in Politics, demonstrating significant influences from the historical, geopolitical, and cultural contexts that shaped their respective nation-states.

Regarding the Brazilian case, although military theoretical conceptions reflect, to some extent, the historical and cultural processes in Brazil, overcoming the structures and colonial legacies manifested through authoritarianism, elitism, corporatism, and interventionism — factors that had the Armed Forces as one of their sources of perpetuation and replication — is crucial for the true development of Brazil.

## REFERENCES

AMARAL, Alexandre Sauzem do; PINTO, Pedro Henrique Meurer; BERGER, Gustavo Kormann. A vinda da Missão Militar Francesa para o Brasil e suas influências na doutrina da Arma de Infantaria do Exército. **Revista do Exército Brasileiro**, [S. l.], v. 155, n. 2, p. 110–121, 2019.

BEAUFRE, André. **Introdução à Estratégia**. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 1963.

BENTO, Cláudio Moreira. **O Exército na Proclamação da República**. 1. ed. [S. l.]: Confederação Nacional da Indústria, Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial, 1989.

BRASIL. [Constituição (1988)]. **Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988**. Brasília, DF: Presidência da República, [2016]. Available at: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/Constituicao/Constituicao.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Constituicao/Constituicao.htm). Accessed in: 11 Feb. 2023.

BRASIL. **Doutrina Militar de Defesa**. Brasília, DF: Ministério da Defesa, 2007.

BRETAS, Marcos Luiz. O general Góes Monteiro: a formulação de um projeto para o Exército. **Militares e Política**, [S. l.], v. 2, p. 31–61, 2008.

CARVALHO, L. P. Macedo. Repensando o General Góes. **A Defesa Nacional**, [S. l.], v. 748, p. 7–18, 1990.



CASTRO, Celso. **General Villas Bôas: conversa com o comandante**. [S. l.]: Ed. FGV, 2021

CONKE, Leonardo Silveira. O Pensamento Estratégico no Século XX: Explicações Históricas. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estratégia**, [S. l.], v. 12, n. 4, p. 210–234, 2013. Available at: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=331231868009>. Accessed in: 11 Feb. 2023.

COSTA, Luiz Alexandre Vieira da. **A Estratégia Nacional de Defesa (END), sob a perspectiva do pensamento geopolítico do General Carlos de Meira Matos, e sua influência para a defesa da Amazônia Legal**. 2021. 92 f. Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (Altos Estudos de Política e Estratégia) -. Escola Superior de Guerra, Rio de Janeiro, 2021.

COUTO E SILVA, Golbery do. **Conjuntura política nacional: o poder executivo e geopolítica do Brasil**. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José, 1981.

CUNHA, Paulo Ribeiro Da. Militares na política ou política entre os militares: uma falsa questão? *In*: ENCONTRO NACIONAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE ESTUDOS DE DEFESA, 10., 2018, São Paulo. **Anais [...]**. São Paulo: Associação Brasileira de Estudos de Defesa, 2018. p. 1–37.

DANCHEV, Alex. Liddell Hart's Big Idea. **Review of International studies**, [S. l.], v. 25, p. 29–48, 1999.

DA-SILVA, Jussamar; DAL-MORO, Nataniél. Geopolítica e Fronteira Oeste: diálogos com Meira Matos e Couto e Silva. **Revista Geográfica de América Central**, [S. l.], v. 1, n. 58, p. 125, 2017. DOI: 10.15359/rgac.58-1.5.

DREIFUSS, René Armand; DULCI, Otávio Soares. As forças armadas e a política. *In*: SORJ, Bernardo; ALMEIDA, Maria Hermínia Tavares de (org.). **Sociedade e política no Brasil pós-64**. Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Edelstein de Pesquisas Sociais, 2008. p. 132–181.

FREIRE, Ricardo Rodrigues; HEYE, Thomas Ferdinand. O controle civil sobre as forças armadas brasileiras nos dias de hoje, sob duas óticas. **Revista da Escola Superior de Guerra**, [S. l.], v. 31, n. 63, p. 36–52, 2016. DOI: 10.47240/revistadaesg.v32i63.475.

FUNDAÇÃO GETÚLIO VARGAS (FGV). **Carlos de Meira Matos**. 2007.

GAULLE, Charles de. **Le Fil de L'épée**. 2. ed. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1944.

GONÇALVES, Rodrigo Jurucê Mattos. Passado e presente das forças armadas brasileiras. **Tensões Mundiais**, [S. l.], v. 15, n. 29, p. 185–189, 2019. DOI: 10.33956/tensoesmundiais.v15i29.2054.

GUSMÃO, Sanzio Ricardo Rocha. **O General Góes Monteiro e sua contribuição para a modernização do Exército Brasileiro**. Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 2020.

HART, Basil Henry Liddell. **Strategy: the Indirect Approach**. International Affairs. [S. l.]: New YorkMeridian Book, 1954. DOI: 10.2307/2604619.

HOLDEN REID, Brian. The British Way in Warfare. **The RUSI Journal**, [S. l.], v. 156, n. 6, p. 70–76, 2011. DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2011.642691.

INSTITUTO DE PESQUISA ECONÔMICA APLICADA (IPEA). **Presença de militares em cargos e funções comissionados do executivo federal**. Brasília, DF: IPEA, 2022

JACKSON, Julian. **A certain idea of France: the life of Charles de Gaulle**. 1. ed. Londres: Penguin UK, 2018.

JEPPERSON, Ronald; WENDT, Alexander; KATZENSTEIN, Peter J. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security. In: KATZENSTEIN, Peter (org.). **The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics**. 1. ed. Nova York: Columbia University Press, 1996. DOI: 10.4324/9780203872482.

LENTZ, Rodrigo. O Pensamento Político dos Militares Brasileiros: a Doutrina de “Segurança Nacional” revisitada (1930-1985). **Revista da Escola Superior de Guerra**, [S. l.], v. 34, n. 70, p. 39–71, 2019.

LEWANDOWSKI, Enrique Ricardo. Notas sobre o conceito de guerra revolucionária e sua expressão legal. **Revista da Faculdade de Direito, Universidade de São Paulo**, [S. l.], v. 80, n. 0, p. 210, 1985. DOI: 10.11606/issn.2318-8235.v80i0p210-217.

MARTINS FILHO, João Roberto. A influência doutrinária francesa sobre os militares brasileiros nos anos 1960. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, [S. l.], v. 23, n. 67, p. 39–50, 2008.

MATHIAS, Suzeley Kalil; GUZZI, André Cavaller. Autonomia na Lei: as forças armadas nas constituições nacionais. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, [S. l.], v. 25, n. 73, p. 41–56, 2010.

MATTOS, Carlos de Meira. **Brasil: Geopolítica e Destino**. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olímpio Editora, 1975.

MELLO, Wallace da Silva. Relações civis-militares no Brasil: interpretações sobre o “poder moderador” e as forças armadas brasileiras. **Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais e Filosofia**, [S. l.], v. 8, n. 2, p. 160–176, 2020.

MONTEIRO, Pedro Aurélio de Góes. **A Revolução de 30 e a finalidade política do exército**. São Paulo: Adersen Editores, 1934.

NASCIMENTO, Carla Silva do. A “Questão Militar”: indisciplina e crise política em meio à crise hegemônica imperial (1868-1889). **Militares e Política**, [S. l.], v. 4, p. 7–22, 2009.

OLIVEIRA, Adriano Moura de. O pensamento geopolítico na construção da doutrina das Forças Armadas brasileiras (1945-1964). In: SIMPÓSIO NACIONAL DE HISTÓRIA, 28., 2015, Florianópolis. **Anais [...]**. Florianópolis: Associação Nacional de História, 2015. p. 1–22.

SANTOS, Jorge Calvario. Evolução do Pensamento Estratégico Brasileiro Santos (2003). **Revista da Escola Superior de Guerra**, Brasília, v. 20, n. 42, p. 41–66, 2003.

SANTOS, Maria Helena de Castro. A nova missão das forças armadas latino-americanas no mundo pós-Guerra Fria: o caso do Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, [S. l.], v. 19, n. 54, p. 115–128, 2004. DOI: 10.1590/s0102-69092004000100007.

SCALETSKY, Felipe Santa Cruz Oliveira; COÊLHO, Marcus Vinicius Furtado; BINENBOJM, Gustavo. Inconstitucionalidade das propostas de intervenção militar constitucional. Forças Armadas não exercem papel de Poder Moderador. **Revista de Direito Administrativo**, [S. l.], v. 280, n. 1, p. 235–248, 2021.

SEARLE, Alaric. Liddell Hart, Basil Henry, Sir. **International Encyclopedia of the First World War**, [S. l.], p. 4, 2016. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.11008.

SILVA, Juacy da. Doutrina e método da Escola Superior de Guerra: uma visão global. **Revista da Escola Superior de Guerra**, [S. l.], v. 28, n. 57, p. 34–63, 2013.

SVARTMAN, Eduardo Munhoz. Relações civis-militares no Brasil. In: **O papel das relações civis-militares na Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa**. [S. l.]: [s.n.]. p. 1–15.

WILLIAMS, Andrew. Charles de Gaulle: The Warrior as Statesman. **Global Society**, [S. l.], v. 32, n. 2, p. 162–175, 2018. DOI: 10.1080/13600826.2018.1437395.

### *CRediT Author Statement*

---

**Acknowledgments:** Not applicable.

**Funding:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** There are no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical Approval:** Not applicable to the study design.

**Data and Material Availability:** Study based on publicly accessible data and materials.

**Author's Contributions:** Iago Gonçalves Ferreira - Conception and design of the study; Literature review; Analysis and interpretation of data; Preliminary writing; Critical review; Final writing.

---

**Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**  
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.



<sup>i</sup> Article 142 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 deals with the composition, competencies, and purposes of the Armed Forces, as well as defines their subordination to constitutional powers. However, far-right political groups have claimed that this article would endorse an intervention by the Armed Forces in the event of disruptions of 'law and order' in the country.

<sup>ii</sup> In October 2018, one week before the second round of the 2018 Elections, a video became public where federal deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro, while giving a lecture in July 2018, when asked about a hypothetical possibility of the Army taking action if the Supreme Federal Court prevented the inauguration of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, the father of the federal deputy and presidential candidate at the time, responded, "Dude, if you want to close the Supreme Court, you know what you do? You don't send a single jeep. Send a soldier and a corporal. I don't mean to disparage the soldier and the corporal. What is the Supreme Court, man? Like, take away a Supreme Court justice's pen, what is he on the street?". Available at: [<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2018/10/basta-um-soldado-e-um-cabo-para-fechar-stf-disse-filho-de-bolsonaro-em-video.shtml>](<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2018/10/basta-um-soldado-e-um-cabo-para-fechar-stf-disse-filho-de-bolsonaro-em-video.shtml>). Accessed on January 10, 2023.

<sup>iii</sup> On April 3, 2018, the eve of the trial of the habeas corpus of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva by the Supreme Federal Court, General Eduardo Dias da Costa Villas Bôas, the Commander of the Army at the time, made the following statement on a social network: "I assure the Nation that the Brazilian Army shares the desire of all law-abiding citizens to repudiate impunity and respect the Constitution, social peace, and democracy, as well as remains attentive to its institutional missions (...) The Brazilian Army shares the desire of all law-abiding citizens to repudiate impunity and respect the Constitution, social peace, and democracy, as well as remains attentive to its institutional missions. In this situation that Brazil is experiencing, one must ask the institutions and the people who is really thinking about the good of the Country and future generations and who is only concerned with personal interests?". Source: <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/comandante-do-exercito-diz-que-compartilha-anseio-de-repudio-a-impunidade.ghtml>](<https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/comandante-do-exercito-diz-que-compartilha-anseio-de-repudio-a-impunidade.ghtml>).

Despite not directly mentioning the trial of former President Lula, General Villas Bôas's statement was understood as an attempt at intimidation and coercion of the Supreme Court since the military seemed to contest, prematurely, a judicial decision that had not yet been reviewed by the Court's justices. Moreover, even if it had been timely, legal challenges were not within the purview of the Armed Forces or their commanders.

Regarding the controversial episode, in the book 'General Villas Bôas: Conversations with the Commander' by Celso Castro (2021), Villas Bôas claims that, upon reassessing the context of the tweet's publication, he still considers it appropriate. In defense of this viewpoint, the general argues that, at the time, there was a diffuse sense of outrage in society that could spill over and disrupt social order, as well as influence the "internal public" of the Army, given the porosity between society and the military environment. Furthermore, in this passage of the book, Villas Bôas reveals that the decision to publish the message, as well as its authorship, did not originate entirely with him, involving officers of the Army High Command in Brasília (CASTRO, 2021).

In view of these statements, the episode of General Villas Bôas's tweet gains even more notoriety — and apprehension — given that, despite the alleged lack of intention to coerce or modify the decisions of Supreme Federal Court (STF) ministers, as claimed by the general, the message explicitly represents a manifestation by the Armed Forces on a matter within the legal and national political spheres, in which military involvement would not be appropriate.

<sup>iv</sup> On May 23, 2021, active-duty Army General Eduardo Pazuello, then Minister of Health, participated in a rally with motorcyclists in support of President Jair Bolsonaro in Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro. According to the Statute of Military Personnel and the Army Discipline Regulation, military personnel are prohibited from participating in political party-related rallies while on active duty and are subject to penalties by the institution. Available at: [<https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/comandante-do-exercito-decide-abrir-procedimento-contra-pazuello-por-presenca-em-ato-com-bolsonaro-25031841>](<https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/comandante-do-exercito-decide-abrir-procedimento-contra-pazuello-por-presenca-em-ato-com-bolsonaro-25031841>). Accessed on January 10, 2023.

<sup>v</sup> The '1930 Revolution' consisted of a civil-military movement that ousted President Washington Luís on October 24, 1930. The term 'Revolution' is used due to its widespread use in Brazilian academic and historiographical contexts, even though the nature of the movement is more accurately described as a rupture or coup.

<sup>vi</sup> The '1964 Coup' was a process of institutional rupture initiated with the removal of President João Goulart — elected as vice president in 1959 and assuming the presidency after Jânio Quadros' resignation in 1961 — orchestrated through collaboration between the military and segments of civil society. Given the characteristics of the process, the term 'coup' is used, a nomenclature widely adopted in literature and by historians of that period.

<sup>vii</sup> The French Military Mission was a strategic partnership established between the governments of France and Brazil in 1919, aimed at promoting a modernizing reform of the Brazilian Army through technical assistance,

military training, and the encouragement of organizational and doctrinal innovations. The French Military Mission lasted for 20 years, from 1920 to 1940, and is considered successful, contributing to the development of the Brazilian Army and the conditions for the emergence of the Brazilian Air Force, while substantially influencing Brazilian Strategic Thinking in the 20th century (AMARAL 2019; MARTINS FILHO, 2008).

<sup>viii</sup> Concerning the socialist-communist revolutions of the 20th century, I refer to the Russian (1917), Chinese (1949), and Cuban (1959) revolutions, which had significant repercussions on the views and perspectives of Western 'National Security' doctrines, especially in Brazil.

<sup>ix</sup> When discussing the historical characteristics of the formation of the Brazilian State and society, I refer to the valuable interpretations conceived by illustrious authors Sérgio Buarque de Holanda in 'Raízes do Brasil' (1932), Raymundo Faoro in '*Os Donos do Poder*' (1958), and Caio Prado Jr. in '*A Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo*' (1942).