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Raphael C. Lima, Peterson F. Silva & Gunther Rudzit

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ARTICLE



No power vacuum: national security neglect and the defence sector in Brazil

Raphael C. Lima ^a, Peterson F. Silva ^b and Gunther Rudzit ^c

^aDepartment of War Studies, King's College London, UK; ^bEscola Superior de Guerra, Brasília, Brazil; ^cESPM, São Paulo, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the relationship between national security policymaking and the defence sector. The goal is to understand how a lack of attention to national security policymaking affects the defence sector and vice-versa using Brazil as a case study. Our main argument is that a lack of attention in national security policymaking by civilian elites can weaken political controls over the armed forces, inhibit effective defence reforms that challenge military prerogatives, and, over time, reinforce militarization in national security policymaking, especially in its three main pillars: defence, intelligence, and public safety. We call this process *national security neglect*. Our case study shows that as internal security challenges grew in complexity, civilian political elites pushed the military to dealing with public safety, border security, and national security policymaking. Civilians also delegated civilian posts to the armed forces in defence, public safety and intelligence, instead of engaging in broader reforms. This led to a vicious cycle of military dependency, deteriorated the already fragile political controls over the armed forces, inhibited defence reforms, and increased the military role in the state and society.

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Introduction

How does a lack of attention towards national security policymaking¹ affect the defence sector²? Conversely, how does a defence sector with few political controls and lack of civilianisation³ affect national security policymaking? This paper aims to provide insights into the relationship between national security policymaking and the defence sector using Brazil as a case study. Our main argument is that a lack of attention in national security policymaking by civilian political elites can weaken political controls over the armed forces, inhibit effective defence reforms, and, over time, reinforce militarization⁴ in national security policymaking and in its three main pillars: defence, intelligence, and public safety⁵ policies. This is what we call *national security neglect*.

In 1985, Brazil entered a new phase of democratic transition, ending twenty-one years of military authoritarian regime (1964–1985). The new constitution was signed in 1988 and was supposed to lay out a new relationship between the military and civilian political

life. However, in this paper we argue that Brazilian civilian elites – the president, ministers, members of Congress, heads of parliamentary committees, senior officials – did not engage in sufficient coordinated efforts in national security reforms, thus maintaining military prerogatives⁶ in defence and security. Civilian elites would have been expected to create national security coordination; increase military, law enforcement and intelligence agencies effectiveness; provide efficient use of resources; and assign political control over security agencies. By not doing so, they neglected national security policymaking. Thus, as internal security⁷ challenges grew in complexity, civilian elites delegated⁸ more responsibilities to the military in areas of public safety and intelligence.⁹ Simultaneously, the military, which had already maintained prerogatives in several areas since democratic transition, extended their political spaces in defence, public safety, and national security policymaking. By early 2020 this had resulted in a vicious cycle of military dependency, deteriorated the already fragile political controls, inhibited defence reforms, and increased the military's role in the state and society.

The literature on the military organisation in South America has been mainly focused on the problems of defence sector reform and democratic controls. Few studies exist on national security reforms and on how it affected the defence sector. For instance, several contemporary assessments analysed the current state of the defence sector, using different case studies such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bruneau 2013; Diamint 2015; Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017; Trinkunas 2012). Within these studies, authors tend to argue that defence policy has not been a priority to South American political leaders and, in turn, these states have mostly militarized defence bureaucracies with low civilian expertise (Battaglini 2015; Bruneau 2013; Diamint 2017; Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017). The main explanation of this is that there is a lack of incentive due to the historical precedence of low threat perception among states, low interstate competition in Latin America, the U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere, and low political incentives for civilian political elites to engage with a defence agenda (Bruneau 2013; Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2007). Other studies have suggested that military autonomy¹⁰ has been a common trait in the region since the occurrence of democratic transitions, and, yet, instead of dealing with it, civilian authorities willingly pushed the military to engage in internal security matters, raised the military bargaining power, and led to a resurgence of the armed forces in domestic politics (Diamint 2015, 162).

Though these studies are correct in their assessment, we believe they only show half the picture. The literature considers the lack of attention to the defence sector and national security policymaking to be a problem but does not expand further on possible causal relations between them. We aim to address this gap. We understand that, even if South American states had civilianised, effective, efficient, and democratic controlled defence sectors, these countries' civilian authorities would still delegate responsibilities to the military. This is due to several to growing complexity of the transnational threat environment – such as organised crime, environmental crimes, cybercrime, pandemics – and internal vulnerabilities,¹¹ namely the lack of state capacity of governmental and security agencies as well as corruption problems.

These fragilities must, in general, be tackled through coherent national security policymaking and inter-organizational cooperation, whilst respecting democratic controls and oversight. Thus, if no attention is given to national security policymaking,

defence reforms may not be truly successful and other security reforms might just have limited results. Our point is that there is a broader national security problem that is underexplored and could be the missing link for democratic governance of the defence sector.

To advance our argument, we present a threefold framework for national security policy analysis based on studies in the areas of civil-military relations, security sector governance, and defence studies. We understand the defence sector as a component of a broader security sector. The framework considers that national security policy requires inter-organizational cooperation and clear political direction in several non-national security and security agencies—mainly divided between defence, intelligence, and public safety policies¹² (Chuter 2006, 2011; DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019b).

We apply our framework to Brazil as a plausibility probe case study to sharpen our hypothesis on the relationship between national security policymaking and the defence sector, and to offer foundations for theoretical and conceptual developments (Eckstein 2000, pp. 140–143; Levy 2008, 6–7). Brazil offers interesting insights because the democratic transition took the military away from politics, whilst leaving several prerogatives and ineffective democratic control (Bruneau and Matei 2012; Hunter 1997; O'Donnell et al. 2013; Oliveira de 2005; Pion-Berlin 2010; Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017; Soares 2006; Stepan 1988; Zaverucha 1994). Also, the country did not invest in reforms to national security decision-making and structures or published a national security strategy (Bruneau 2018, 9). Yet, facing growing and complex threats, civilian decisionmakers chose to employ military forces to deal with public safety; to delegate important posts to the armed forces in defence and intelligence; and, more recently, to delegate important governmental posts to military officers. This resulted in the armed forces expanding their role in internal security and returning to politics (Americas Quarterly 2020; Diamint 2015; Lima and Medeiros Filho 2019).

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the literature on civil-military relations, defence reform, and national security to present our general framework for analysis. Second, we present the contemporary path of national security policymaking, intelligence, and public safety policies using Brazil as a case study. Third, we discuss how this path affected defence policy developments and vice-versa. Finally, we conclude explaining our results and their implications to both the existing literature and policymaking.

Civil-military relations, security sector, and defence reform: a framework for analysing national security policymaking

In the Post-Cold War era, scholars and policymakers identified problems with traditional approaches to military reforms in developing countries. Initially, some assessments verified a changing character of threats in the security environment that led to a consistent trend of expanding military roles and the transformation of armed forces to meet them (Edmunds 2006; Sloan 2008). These reorganization processes were related to new operational demands affecting all countries, such as expeditionary war-fighting, peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, disaster relief, military assistance, state-building

activities, and, in some cases, internal security (Edmunds 2006). Traditional territorial defence became just one of several other roles.

Likewise, post-authoritarian countries, mainly in Eastern Europe, underwent processes of democratic transition and reforms aiming to develop democratic control over the armed forces and the reorganization of military roles (Edmunds and Malešič 2005; Farrell et al. 2010). An important causal factor present in Europe that is not reflected elsewhere is the prospect of joining NATO and other regional organisations, such as the European Union and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which forced these countries to adopt certain standards of civil-military relations (Bruneau 2013; Farrell et al. 2010; Serra 2010).

This new environment also affected civil-military relations studies worldwide even as other states faced different challenges. Scholars identified a severe gap in these studies. Despite recognizing the merits of a first wave of scholarship concerned with military professionalism, praetorianism, military coups and regimes (Feaver 1999; Finer 1962; Huntington 1981; Janowitz 1960), scholars argued that previous authors focused excessively on democratic control of the military and overlooked an important issue: democratic governance of the defence and security sectors¹³ (Bruneau and Matei 2008; Bucur-Marcu et al. 2009; Cottey et al. 2002). Cottey, Edmunds and Forster highlighted that focusing too much on political control over the armed forces to the detriment of other variables was problematic because it: (1) emphasized subordination and did not consider differences among political regimes; (2) presupposed a confrontational relationship between civilians and the military; (3) assumed that military autonomy was the main problem; and (4) ignored other issues such as parliamentary oversight or civil society engagement on security and defence (Cottey et al. 2002, 35).

Thus, issues such as defence policymaking, the role of civilians, parliamentary control, oversight mechanisms, civil society engagement, and the relationship between foreign and defence policies became centre stage of the literature. New studies would then include military effectiveness and efficiency¹⁴ alongside democratic control of the defence sector as variables to analyse military-democracy relations (Brooks 2007; Bruneau and Matei 2008). This new conceptualization furthered our understanding of how states generate and manage military power, and framed defence as a realm of public policy (such as health, education, finance), thus making it susceptible to political and financial constraints.

Later on, the new approaches would then expand these studies further to also include national security and interagency coordination as important variables to civil-military relations. Bruneau argued that a plan capable of linking strategy to resources, and central institutions responsible for interagency coordination were chief elements to democratic civil-military relations – among other criteria (Bruneau 2013, pp. 147–148). Similarly, Pion-Berlin and Martínez posited that general national security structures also play a crucial role. They argued that these institutions should be civilian-dominated, have significant powers, meet in a regular basis, and hold a “working secretariat that produces defence and security-related documents” (Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017, 172). Also, these authors reinforced the challenge to get many more civilians educated in defence topics and to create career paths that facilitate their entrance in defence and national security-related government posts (Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017, 212).

These studies supported deeper policy debates in the growing field of security sector governance and defence management.¹⁵ This area incorporated elements from previous studies as important layers to analysing defence policies and civil-military relations, such as legislature changes, policymaking challenges, and implementation difficulties (Bucur-Marcu et al. 2009; Cleary and McConville 2006; DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019c; Rudzit and Casarões 2015). That is, defence sector governance became a new policy and academic field that considered the security sector as a large set, composed of all structures, institutions, and personnel responsible for security provision, management, and oversight at national and local levels.¹⁶ According to this view, the security sector can be divided into (1) state security providers – armed forces, police, gendarmeries, border and customs agencies, law enforcement and corrections agencies, intelligence services etc; (2) security oversight and management bodies – audit offices, ministries, parliamentary committees, justice authorities etc; (3) civil society actors – media, academia, think tanks etc¹⁷ (DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019d).

The concept of national security has also faced transformations. After the Cold War, the concept gradually shifted from a state-centric approach to being more focused on the protection of the people and their well-being (DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2012). Contemporary national security documents followed this trend of broadening the security concept away from a purely military dimension. That is, defence “cannot provide for security alone and that it can only be a part of the overall response of government” (Dorman and Kaufman 2014, 283). Thus, both national security and human security tend to be mutually reinforcing and “cannot be realistically separated as security among states and security within states,” (Reveron and Mahoney-Norris 2018, 27).

The defence sector was then framed as a smaller piece of the security sector. Studies recognized a tangled hierarchy between government, foreign, interior, security, intelligence, defence, public safety, policymaking. In other words, “defence policy cannot be considered in isolation but as part of a hierarchy of government policies” (Chuter 2011, pp. 18–20), where each level affects the others (Bucur-Marcu 2009; Chuter 2006, 2011; DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019a).

Figure 1 describes how a security policy formulation ideally occurs in a government and how policies influence one another, as described below:

- Level 1 – *Government policy* refers to a larger perspective or view of policy set by a government allowing policy variance among different administrations or legislatures.
- Level 2 – *Foreign and interior policy* deal with how these larger views are implemented domestically and internationally regarding other cross-national policies, such as health, education, economy, security, etc. Some of these policies also have national security dimensions and thus affect the security policy and vice-versa.
- Level 3 – *National security policy*, also referred to as security policy, is a larger policy formulation that brings together the disparate parts of the security agenda. It may or may not rely on centralized national security institutions for policymaking, such as

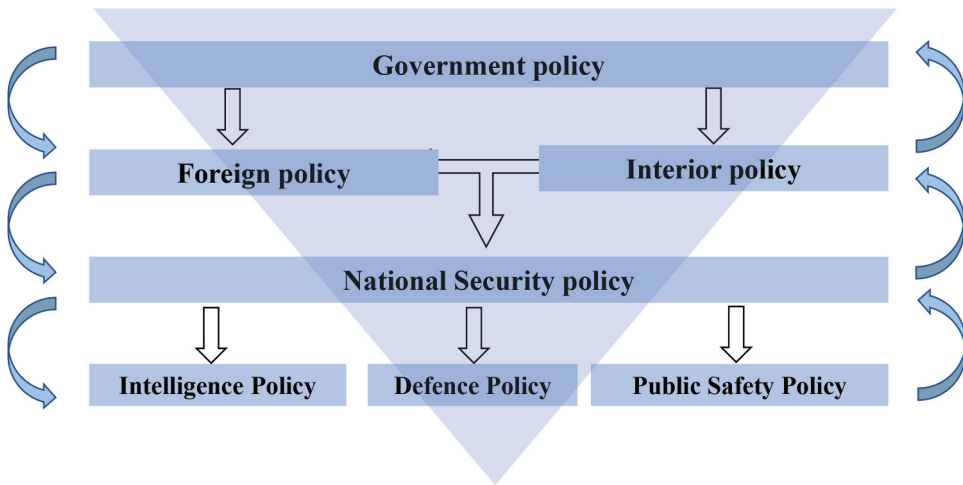


Figure 1. Hierarchy of security policy formulation. Based on Chuter (2011, adapted).

national security councils or committees, but integration plays a key role (Bearne et al. 2005).

- Level 4 – *Intelligence, defence, and public safety policies* are considered by many authors at the same hierarchic level. They vary only according to their roles, missions, and contributions to the larger national security policy (Chuter 2006, 2011; DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019c; Rudzit and Nogami 2010).

Building a national security policy also demands effective national security decision-making process and structures. There is no one size fits all form for these structures. The most common ones are national security councils or committees, that vary greatly in their organisational capabilities worldwide (Bearne et al. 2005). Since national security problems tend to differ from developed to developing countries, demands and issues of national security institutions also diverge. While the former tends to deal with more externalised security problems (Bearne et al. 2005), the latter tends to involve issues related to state vulnerabilities and internal problems (Ayoob 1995; Krause 1996; Azar and Moon, 1998).

The main goals of these national security structures are similar, nonetheless. They usually aim to provide integrated assessments to base policy and decision-making; to optimize resource allocation so to deal with national security threats; to provide oversight in national security management; to define security priorities and emergency coordination (Bearne et al. 2005). Additionally, these government structures can formulate a national security policy/strategy. These documents provide political direction and are usually composed of: (1) visions and goals; (2) values and principles; (3) national interest and strategic environment; (4) international obligations; (5) current and future threats, risks, challenges, and opportunities (Chuter 2011; DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019b).

All these elements highlight how important the issue of national security policymaking is to the defence sector. Considering recent developments in the literature, in the next sections, we will employ the framework presented in [Figure 1](#) to our case study. We will focus mainly on the evolution of national security policymaking (policies and structures), and the interaction among the three main policies (defence, intelligence, and public safety). We aim to understand the linkages between a lack of attention to national security policymaking and the defence sector.

National security policymaking, intelligence policy, and public safety policy in Brazil

Historically, national security has been a difficult concept for Brazilian society. The idea is closely related to the rise of military influence as a political actor and its role in Brazilian state-building. Different from European states, for example, there was an inward-focused military professionalisation in which the idea of national security played a central role. The concept was thus used as “a way of institutionalizing and providing legal legitimization for the scrutiny of civilian life by the armed forces” (Lima 2014, 276).

During the military authoritarian regime (1964–1985), there was an militarised and overarching concept of national security supported by the National Security Doctrine and by the National Security Council. Both the concept and this national security structure had a major role in determining and implementing government decisions. Like previous historical moments, the military and national security had an inward focus and authoritarian roots but with a novel ideological angle, which aimed to “fight Marxism” and “defend Western-Christian values” (Oliveira de 2005; Pion-Berlin 1989; Stepan 1988). To achieve this, the country created the National Information Service (SNI) in 1964. This intelligence institution had “an extraordinary degree of legally sanctioned prerogatives and bureaucratic autonomy found neither in other democracies nor in the other bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes” (Stepan 1988, 25).

This historical legacy generated a stigma for dealing with national security policymaking, defence, and intelligence in post-authoritarian Brazil. In the 1988 Constitution, the term national security practically disappeared¹⁸ and there was no mention of intelligence either. The former National Security Council turned into a National Defence Council, and the Constitutional chapters on national defence and public safety became the fundamental legislations for the Brazilian security and defence sectors. Similarly, after democratisation civilian governments did not update the 1983 National Security Law, which had only been revised twice since its first publication in 1935¹⁹. Consequently, national security policymaking did not have a civilianised, institutionalised, integrated or effective national security council or national security strategies (Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017). Decisions in the area were then reliant on lower ministerial levels. For example, contemporary mentions to national security are only present within the defence policies published by the Minister of Defence (MoD) – an institution created only in 1999.

However, there still is a great demand for increasing the levels of cooperation between security agencies. This stems from the nature of threats to Brazil in South America. The region has high social violence levels whilst simultaneously having to deal with both internal and external security challenges, such as interstate militarized disputes; growing

interest of great powers in the region, namely China, Russia, and the U.S.; transnational organised crime and paramilitary groups; and “no-go zones” governed by illegal groups where the state is unable to establish its rule (Diamint 2015, 2017; Lima 2019; Mares 2001; Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2011). Some of these challenges are considered to be mid-level security problems that cannot be solved with either the military or the police (Lima and Medeiros Filho 2019; Pion-Berlin 2010).

Contemporary Brazil has high levels of crime and holds a violent death rate of 27.5 per 100,000 (Forum Brasileira de Segurança Pública 2019). This places Brazil’s death rate as the second-highest in South America, only behind Venezuela (UNODC 2019, 17). Arms trafficking also fuels criminal factions across the country, such as the *First Command of the Capital* (PCC) and the *Red Command* (CV). These factions are behind several public safety crises and illegal activities, including corruption of public agents, prison rebellions and threats to authorities, journalists and public figures (Cueto 2020). They have also been consistently expanding their activities to other South American countries, such as Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru.

This security environment led to some ad hoc efforts of security agency coordination. During the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, for example, Brazil structured a temporary operational integration among security and non-security agencies. The Federal Government released the *Integrated Security Plan* (PESI) coordinating activities from public safety, defence, intelligence, civil defence, urban planning, and private security. The plan was very effective on the operational level, since the events had no security problems, but did not result in any structural change in interagency integration (Silva 2018). Another example are the *Strategic Borders Plans* (PEF from 2011 to 2015, and PPIF from 2016 onwards). These policies coordinated intelligence systems with military and law enforcement operations to tackle border security problems, such as transnational criminality and drug-trafficking. These plans created a good dynamic between law enforcement agencies and the military, but most border security operations were still heavily reliant on the military (R. C. Lima and Medeiros Filho 2019). These examples illustrate how security sector coordination occurs in an ad hoc manner and only on the operational level. The main problem is that these interagency efforts did not necessarily spill over to an integrated take on security policy.

Intelligence policy: low effectiveness and military gatekeeping

In 1999, a new intelligence system was created. It was composed of the *Brazilian Intelligence System* (SISBIN)²⁰ and its central organization, the civilian-led *Brazilian Intelligence Agency* (ABIN) (Bruneau 2015; Cepik et al. 2017a). However, the new system did not mean a rising civilian interest in the topic. For example, although the same law that created SISBIN in 1999 also demanded the publication of a *National Intelligence Policy* (PNI) but this document was only published in 2016. Effectiveness is still far from achieved. A major issue is that Brazilian legislation prohibits ABIN to intercept communications, not even if a judicial order is granted.²¹ This makes it difficult to conduct signals intelligence activities. Also, it is important to highlight that solely after years of increasing pressures from the international Financial Action Task Force, the Brazilian Government enacted an anti-terror law to fight international terrorism in 2016²². These examples illustrate general problems in the intelligence activity. In addition

to this low political direction and low effectiveness, oversight activities were not truly considered for years. For instance, the *Joint Congressional Committee on Intelligence* (CCAI), also announced in the 1999 law, was only officially regulated in 2013.²³

Since its creation, ABIN has been subordinated to the president's *Institutional Security Cabinet* (GSI). GSI's various renditions since 1930 – Provisory Government Chief of Staff (1930–1934), Government Chief of Staff (1934–1938), Military Office (1938–1992), Military Cabinet (1992–1999) – have been historically led by high-rank Army officers.²⁴ GSI acts practically as the military gatekeeper between ABIN and other organisations and has been led by retired four-star Army general officers since 1995 – except for a short period during the government of Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016) when the 2015 administrative reform removed ministerial status of GSI and placed ABIN under the Government Civil Secretariat (institution that holds ministry status).²⁵

Differently from ABIN's director, GSI's minister is a military officer that does not have to be approved by Senate hearings, and who is directly appointed by the President (Cepik et al. 2017b). As a consequence of the prestigious role at the government, the military-led GSI became a bureaucratic area of dispute between the three military branches – Navy, Army, and Air Force. Currently, the heads of the three GSI's secretariats²⁶ – at same hierarchical level of ABIN – are active duty general officers from each branch.²⁷

As Brazil's security challenges grew, so grew GSI's roles in national security and defence matters. The *Institutional Security Cabinet* coordinates the Brazilian Nuclear Program Protection System (SIPRON), the federal intelligence activities, and communications security activities. Among other institutional responsibilities, GSI protects the President and the Vice-President and their immediate families. GSI is also considered the main security coordinator of the Executive Committee of the *Strategic Border Plan*.²⁸ These issues illustrate a high military prerogative in the intelligence system that was not tackled by the creation of the civilian-led ABIN. Rather differently, the military role in the intelligence policy has been expanding over the years, especially, in interagency security coordination. In practice, GSI started to occupy important spaces in national security policymaking, such as border security.

Public safety policy: low law enforcement capacity and fragmentation

Another element of the Brazilian incomplete national security policymaking lies in the field of public safety. Since the 1988 Constitution, debates on public safety were marked by incomplete changes and reforms. First, the new Constitution practically left public safety responsibilities for the subnational level. This has made it difficult for the Federal Government to engage in integrated reforms. Second, military influence is still seen in the security agencies. In the Article 144 of the Constitution, the state military police forces and military firefighter corps are still considered auxiliary forces and reserve of the Brazilian Army.²⁹ Third, the National Congress branch has struggled to advance effective reform agendas (R. S. de Lima et al. 2016). When the Legislative branch acts, it mainly limits itself to deal with punitive issues. This led some authors to define that there is an absence of the National Congress in public safety and criminal policy affairs in Brazil (Carneiro et al. 2011).

Yet, some important incremental reform attempts occurred at the national level. For example, in 1997, Fernando Henrique Cardoso's Administration created the first-ever

Secretary of Public Safety (SENASP) under the Ministry of Justice to coordinate efforts and policies on the national level. This would become the central federal agency dealing with public safety. However, *SENASP* was not able to coordinate subnational units successfully since it had no means to subordinate them. In 2004, the Federal Government created the *National Force for Public Safety (FNSP)* to deploy during internal security crisis country-wide. The new force does not have a permanent corps but instead relies on state polices for its personnel—inspired by the UN peacekeeping force structure. This seemed like a simpler option at the time but became very expensive. *FNSP* personnel is paid daily for training and deployment, and, additionally, being a non-permanent force makes it lack *esprit de corps*, doctrinal maturity, effectiveness and institutionalization.³⁰

In 2007, Brazil tried to tackle these problems creating the *National Public Safety Program with Citizenship (PRONASCI)*. However, despite efforts, the core of federal public safety policy has remained the same. In early 2018, the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro faced a severe public safety crisis with rising levels of criminality and prison rebellions. Faced with the problem, the Federal Government took more assertive action and established a *National Public Safety and Social Defence Policy* and the *Unified Public Safety System (SUSP)*.³¹ This was the first effective initiative that coordinated and unified public safety systems. The result of this program is yet to be seen. With regards to public and civil society oversight, researches and debates emerged in non-profit organizations such as *Forum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública*, *Instituto Igarapé*, and *Viva Rio*. Despite civil society efforts, researches point out that societal participation, and internal/external oversight mechanisms are still undeveloped (*Forum Brasileira de Segurança Pública 2019; Trindade 2015*).

At the operational level, police and criminal justice institutions have not experienced significant structural changes. This lack of reforms maintains long-standing problems like police corruption and bureaucratic disputes between the state civil police forces, responsible for the investigation of crimes, and state military police forces, which are in charge of preventive patrol and the preservation of public order.³² These subnational disputes among state police branches create a wide variety of interoperability challenges to tackle security issues like money laundering and drug-trafficking, such as redundant and disconnected databases in each of the twenty-six Brazilian states and the Federal District.

Moreover, despite dedicating 1.34% of GDP to public safety, Brazilian state military police and civil police lack effectiveness and local governance. They frequently face problems of corruption, impunity, shortage of basic equipment, and training (*Trindade 2015*). Likewise, other security agencies, such as the *Federal Police*, still complain about the lack of resources and personnel to fulfil their roles in remote and distant border areas.³³ These problems have been overloading current federal border inspection capacities and state and federal law enforcement agencies, such as the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources—IBAMA.

Another effort to deal with these growing problems at the federal level was the creation of the Ministry of Public Safety,³⁴ which brings together institutions such as *Federal Police (PF)*, *Federal Highway Police (PRF)*, *National Public Safety Secretariat*, and the *National Penitentiary Department*. Interestingly enough, the first Public Security Minister was Raul Jungmann (2018–2019), former Minister of Defence (2016–2018).

Linkages between national security policymaking and the defence sector in Brazil

Civilian push of the armed forces to public safety

Since the creation of the Ministry of Defence in 1999, Brazilian civilian elites gradually granted new roles and missions to the military to deal with internal security fragilities without investing in security policymaking. This growing military role in internal security did not come from autonomous military action like previously in history, but from civilian decisions that called upon the military for support (Diamint 2015).

Several countries have been deploying military forces for internal security roles, such as counterterrorism or border security. France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, for instance, deployed troops internally to operate in support of police and gendarmery forces in counterterrorism efforts in the operations *Sentinelle* (2015), *Vigilant Guardian* (2015), and *Temperer* (2017). However, in Brazil, operations of this sort started without wider security coordination among agencies. This occurred because subnational governments had been pressuring the Federal Government for support to deal with police strikes,³⁵ public safety crisis, and public rallies since the late 1980s.

Named *law-and-order operations* (*GLO*), these internal security military missions can only be performed by express order of the Presidency of the Republic, and only occur in cases where traditional public safety agencies cannot fulfil their roles. However, *law-and-order operations* have become a frequent and overused resource. Studies show that the main changes over time were the distribution on Brazilian territory – which at first were too concentrated on Rio de Janeiro and then became nationwide; and the increasing duration of these operations – which varied from a few weeks to more than a year (Lima and Medeiros Filho 2019).

This growth occurred from 2008 onwards. The Minister of Defence at the time, Nelson Jobim (2007–2011), defended long-term military operations in certain areas arguing that “forces would deal with urban problems like they dealt in Haiti” (R. C. Lima and Medeiros Filho 2019, 122), referring to the Brazilian leadership of the military component of the United Nations Mission of Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH) – from 2004 to 2017. These narratives of success in MINUSTAH increased domestic military pressure for more permissive domestic rules of engagement and reinforced the need for a relationship between robust peacekeeping and internal security operations (Alsina Junior 2018; Harig 2019; Sotomayor 2014). As a result, military doctrinal changes occurred, such as the publication of the MoD joint *Law-and-Order Doctrine* in early 2014.

Since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Eco-1992) in Rio de Janeiro, every presidential administration (four-year term) had at least fifteen *GLO* operations deployed (Table 1). These operations have been put in place to deal with the following issues: (1) urban violence and prison inspections, (2) police strikes, (3) support to national elections, (4) security for events, (5) others (e.g., the 2018 nationwide truck strike; 2019 and 2020 operations against environmental crimes; operations at indigenous populations areas; and security of federal facilities).

However, *GLO* operations are not the only case of role expansion of the military. A second expanded role lies on border security challenges. Though the armed forces have always had important state-building and territorial defence missions in Brazilian borders,

Table 1. Number of law-and-order operations by presidential legislature, 1990–2020.

Presidential cycle	Political Party	Number of Operations
1990–1994	PRN/PMDB	4
1995–1998	MDB	19
1999–2002	PSDB	29
2003–2006	PSDB	25
2007–2010	PT	15
2011–2014	PT	24
2015–2018	PT/MDB	19
2019–2020 ³⁶	PSL	6

Source: Brazilian Ministry of Defence

https://www.defesa.gov.br/arquivos/exercicios_e_operacoes/glo/2.TABELAS_GLO_atualizada_em_MAR_20.pdf.

they did not necessarily act against transnational crimes. In 2004 and then 2010, a new legislative framework allowed first the Army and then all military branches to act against transnational and environmental crimes.³⁷ This trend was deepened by the 2011 and 2016 *Strategic Borders Plans*, which created interagency intelligence and repressive operations against drug-trafficking and other kinds of border crimes. Despite being considered interagency, the military contribution was far larger than that of any other state security agency (Lima and Medeiros Filho 2019).

The *Integrated Border Monitoring System (SISFRON)* is an example of the expansion of the public safety and crime-fighting agenda within the Army (Alsina Junior 2018). Expected to be fully operational by 2035 and estimated in USD 2.8 billion (Barreira 2020; Silva 2017; Zaparolli 2019), this systems of systems (radars, sensors, drones, communications etc.) will monitor 16,886 km of terrestrial borders with 10 countries in an interagency context. However, the *SISFRON* was initiated and is led by the Brazilian Army, instead of being supervised by larger government unit, such as the MoD, the Ministry of Justice, or *GSI*.

In the absence of larger national security policymaking and integrated security reforms, these expanded military roles have posed a major challenge to defence reform and democratic controls. Civilian elites grew to depend greatly on military deployments in internal security. The military, in turn, while initially not satisfied with this new missions and law-and-order, saw internal security missions as sources of extra-budgetary resources, political influence, legitimization for their activities, and preservation of institutional image (Alsina Junior 2018).

Timid defence reforms and military autonomy

This process of attributing public safety missions to the military gathered momentum during the first major defence reform in Brazil. In 2007–2008, there was a large crisis in the airport sector. At the time, the MoD was responsible for civilian air traffic control, which led president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to demand reforms in the defence sector. The defence reforms spurred by the 2008 *National Defence Strategy* (NDS) did not fulfil most of its promises to enhance democratic controls, effectiveness and efficiency.

The *NDS* was oriented around the axes of (1) military reorganization, (2) Brazilian defence industrial base restructuring, and (3) force structure improvement (maintaining a conscription model). The document provided important advances such as a new defence legislation (136/2010), new military projects, and better aligned goals for the service branches (Cepik and Bertol 2016). Nonetheless, they never leapt to challenge military autonomy in defence policymaking, institutional-capacity, or created an effective planning cycle (Cortinhas da and Okado 2018).

Resistance and organised lobbying played an important role. Since the early 2000s, military service branches invested a great deal in institutional lobbying towards municipalities, sub-local governments, and the National Congress to gain political support for their agendas and oppose proposals contrary to their interests. For instance, in 2000, the Army created Parliamentary Advisors for each of its Regional Commands³⁸ and approved in 2016 general instructions for tracking the activities of the federal, subnational and local legislative branches³⁹.

In general, initiatives that provided the military with more resources and operational capabilities have advanced – such as the development and acquisition of the Guarani armoured personnel carrier, the KC-390 aircraft and the nuclear-powered submarine. Conversely, proposals that challenged too many of the institutional spaces of the military were not taken forward, such as civilianisation, centralization of authority, jointness and, resource allocation. Each of these will be now analysed below.

1. Civilianisation. Since 1999 the most relevant positions in the MoD⁴⁰ have been held by active duty and retired military officers. To date, there are still no civilian defence careers, which is against the directives of the 2008 *NDS*. Thus, staff turnover in the MoD is unusually high because most of its posts are filled by political appointees, active/retired military personnel, and civil servants from other ministries. In this last case, it is common that they do not necessarily hold expertise on defence affairs. In 2016, for instance, the MoD had 1,385 posts from which there were 856 military personnel and 529 civilians.⁴¹ From a total of 529 civilians, 85 were servants from the former Armed Forces General Staff (an institution that existed before the joint staff), 88 were retired military personnel, 147 were civil servants from other agencies, and 209 were political⁴² appointees – between low-level and high-level advisory positions (Brasil 2016, 154). That is, only 32% of the MoD workforce was civilian personnel. The MoD's organizational structure also reinforces this imbalance: it is divided into two main areas: (1) one supposed to be “civilian” and comprising mainly policy and administrative missions; and (2) another composed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (*EMCFA*), comprising most of the relevant strategic planning, such as Capability-Based Planning implementation (indicated in the 2008 *NDS* and that is still in progress).

Additionally, since the early 2000s, there has been growing engagement of Brazilian academia in security and defence affairs. In 2005, for example, scholars created the Brazilian Defence Studies Association (*ABED*). Despite its name, the organisation aimed to bring together studies about both security and defence affairs (Marques and Fuccille 2016). Simultaneously, the government provided grants to support research areas such as security, defence, and strategic studies, which had a positive impact on the academic interest in these topics. Nonetheless, there still are few institutional channels which have been able to translate civilian expertise into evidence-based policy in the security and defence sectors.

2. *Centralization of authority.* The MoD also never acquired the intended centralised authority or became an effective defence planner. The quadrennial defence reviewing cycles have proven to hold uncertain decision-making processes. Despite being defined by law, the role of governmental agencies, civil society, and parliament in the political process is still largely undetermined. The 2012 defence reviews faced problematic policy-making processes and were not able to focus on legislative debates.⁴³ Likewise, the 2016 reviews were approved in a secret session without any significant discussion from either the National Congress or civil society, even though foreign affairs and defence committees exist in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate – respectively *CREDN* and *CRE*.⁴⁴

3. *Jointness.* Organisationally, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is placed at the same hierarchical level as the other three military commanders of the Navy, Army, and Air Force, and is therefore unable to provide directives to subordinate other branches. This status has an obvious negative effect on jointness and operational effectiveness. Though the 2008 *NDS* aimed to unify different military organizations into joint commands this has not yet happened. Only during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 that something like it eventuated. The nine naval districts (Navy), the eight area commands (Army), and the eleven operational organisations (Air Force) worked as ten temporary joint commands to support public safety, logistics, and health activities in national-level responses.⁴⁵ Its effectiveness is being analysed as we speak, but it seemingly has proven its worth.

Furthermore, each of the three branches maintains their individual strategic planning, project management offices and different life cycle regulations for defence acquisition. For example, the Secretary of Defence Products (*SEPROD*) in the MoD was created in 2010 to define a joint acquisition policy and to benefit the Brazilian defence industrial base. Nonetheless, the first Brazilian Defence Equipment Plan (*PAED*) was far from a joint acquisition plan. The document only put together acquisition goals from each military branch without any realistic funding prospect (Silva 2019).

4. *Resource allocation.* Military spending in Brazil is characterized by relative high Personnel expenditure, which includes pensions paid to retirees, and low Equipment/Investments spending. According to the SIPRI database, since 1999 around 1.5% of GDP went to the defence budget in the country. In 2019, for example, the MoD was granted a budget increase, but approximately 73% of that amount went to Personnel, roughly 14% to Equipment/Investments and nearly 13% to Operations and Maintenance (Gielow and Patu 2020). This was possible because, according to the law 97/1999, the Navy, the Army and the Air Force individually manage the resources allocated to them in the MoD budget.⁴⁶

The Personnel expenditure is linked with the organisational restructuring debate and defence priorities. However, like other countries, the social security system reform is a controversial topic. Thus, changes in the armed forces careers (e.g. the effective use of reserve personnel) and military pensions have traditionally been left aside in governmental agenda. In 2019, changes in military pension contributions from members of the armed forces, military police and firefighters were followed by career adjustments with salary compensations.⁴⁷ All these examples illustrate how a lack of national security policymaking inhibited defence reforms that tacked military prerogatives. Rather

Table 2. Military personnel in civilian political positions in the Brazilian Government, 2016–2020.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Var. 2016–2020
Political appointees	1965	1946	1934	2324	2643	34.50%
Total	2957	3020	2767	3515	6157	108.22%

Based on Tribunal de Contas da União (2020).

differently, civilian elites depended more on the military for internal security issues and, over time, they even granted more spaces to the armed forces in several areas.

Weakening democratic controls: delegation of civilian posts to the military

This lack of attention to national security policymaking in a context of military autonomy and growing military engagement in public safety ultimately led to the problem of delegation. In 2018, the growing public safety crisis in Rio de Janeiro state led to a Federal Intervention – supported by Article 34 of the Constitution. This intervention, the first ever of its kind, was led by an active-duty four-star Army general,⁴⁸ and his appointed State Public Safety Secretary, an active-duty three-star Army general, coordinated military action and police reform in the Rio de Janeiro state. This delegation of civilian posts to active military officers also affected the defence sector. Since 2016, every Minister of Defence have been a retire four-star Army general officer, and the number of military officers within the MoD have been rising. Both Presidents Michel Temer and Jair Messias Bolsonaro have followed this trend.

Military roles in other public policies also contributed to a growing legitimacy in the eyes of the population. The military is recurrently deployed to support the Federal Government in road construction, water distribution in North-eastern region, sports programmes, and other national development activities. The Armed Forces also remain as one of the most trusted institutions in the country, in a better position than the Congress, the media or the Presidency (Magalhães 2019). This set of domestic missions provided the background for an increasing political engagement. In 2016 and 2017, for instance, the Army Commander at the time also made several public statements regarding domestic politics, such as the impeachment process of President Dilma Rousseff and the trial of former president Lula da Silva (B. Brooks 2018). These examples illustrate the increasing political influence of the military. This delegation problem started that had been growing steadily peaked during the Presidential administration of Jair Bolsonaro (2019). Ever since, active and reserve military officers gained key posts in his Presidential Cabinet. According to the *Brazilian Federal Court of Accounts (TCU)*, there was a growth of 34.5% of civilian political appointee posts occupied by military active and retired officers.

In term of the total amount of civilian posts occupied by the military, there was a growth of 108.22% of governmental posts from 2016 to 2020 (Table 2). In 2020, 9 out of 23 Bolsonaro's ministers were retired or active armed forces officers (equalling 39%), including posts such as Government Secretariat, Health, GSI, and MoD. These examples illustrate how the political vacuum left in national security policymaking negatively affected the defence sector and ultimately led to a steady trend of weakening political controls and increasing military involvement in political affairs.

Conclusions

The goal of this paper was to analyse how a lack of attention regarding national security policymaking affects the defence sector and vice-versa. We used the Brazilian as a plausibility probe case study to test our hypothesis that a lack of attention towards national security policymaking from civilian political elites can weaken political controls over the armed forces, reduce incentives to defence reforms that challenge the armed forces' prerogatives, and reinforce militarization of national security and defence policymaking. We called this process *national security neglect*.

In Brazil, political elites have faced two simultaneous challenges. First, a problem of control over the armed forces and political direction. Since the democratic transition, they did not tackle several military prerogatives, did not properly civilianise structures in intelligence and defence, or presented effective political direction. Overall, civilian political elites omitted and neglected national security policymaking. Second, there was the problem of dealing with internal and transnational security challenges whilst having low law enforcement capacity. The choice was to push the military to support border security, law-and-order operations, and intelligence activities. As a result, these two dynamics established a cycle of dependency on the military to deal with these challenges, reinforced military influence, and inhibited defence reforms that challenged military prerogatives. As our title suggests, there is no power vacuum. The main decisions on national security were then left to a militarized defence and intelligence sectors. Though there were some ad hoc operational efforts of coordination between defence, intelligence, and public safety, they were weak, temporary, and tepid. The most contemporary result of these processes was a general weakening of civilian controls in defence policy and growing military influence in the state and society.

Our argument has both academic and policymaking implications. First, this hypothesis should still be tested in other places beyond Brazil to sharpen the causal relations presented here. Second, it reinforces a strand of scholarship focusing at a larger take on civil-military relations and opens up possibilities for a new research agenda on national security policymaking and security sector governance in countries facing similar challenges to Brazil. Third, it makes the political case for security and defence sector reform and for building effective security sector structures, national security strategies, operational and strategic integration among security agencies, and institutional means to channel civilian expertise. Brazilian civilian elites should aim to move beyond this *national security neglect*. Building civilianised and institutionalised national security and defence structures and national security policies would be important initial steps.

Notes

1. National security policymaking refers to the "the process of maintaining, coordinating and employing the assets of the security sector so that they contribute optimally to the nation's strategic goals" (Chuter 2011, 13). We here consider there are two main axes of national security policymaking: (1) effective national security structures or institutions (e.g. committees, councils etc) with decision-making/coordinating powers; and (2) national security documents (policies and strategies to provide political direction). These national security documents provide "an official description of how a state aims to provide for its own security" and it has "an overarching national vision as the basis for

the development of other documents” (DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019b).

2. Defence sector refers to “the domain of public administration responsible for military power”. It should be considered as larger than just the armed forces or the Ministry of Defence to include political leadership, executive authorities, defence industry and other agencies involved in defence affairs (DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019a).
3. Here civilianisation means “a transfer of control and/or a selected number and type of working positions from military to civilian personnel” (Ratchev 2011, 14).
4. For our argument, we consider militarization as growing military influence in decision spaces and decision-making process. See: Flores-Macías and Zarkin (2019).
5. Here “public safety” and “public security” are used as synonyms and basically refer to the basic set of domestic governmental policies and organizations (federal, states, municipalities etc) primary responsible for protecting the public and upholding their rights and freedoms (e.g., crime prevention, law enforcement and policing, fire and disasters prevention and response, emergency medical services and criminal justice system).
6. Military prerogatives refer to “those areas where, whether challenged or not, the military as an institution assumes they have an acquired right or privilege, formal or informal, to exercise effective control over its internal governance, to play a role within extramilitary areas within the state apparatus, or even to structure relations between the state and political or civil society” (Stepan 1988, 93).
7. In this paper “internal security” and “homeland security” are used as synonyms and essentially refer to the coordination across all national level policies and organizations responsible for national security and the safety of the public within national territory. In this sense, the “public safety” policies and organizations, as well as parts of the “intelligence” and “defence” policies and organizations can be understood as components of the broader “internal security” policy area, that is, ‘comprising police and law enforcement measures, judicial tools, intelligence, border and transportation security, and critical infrastructure and civil protection measures (Anagnostakis 2017, 6).
8. Delegation is the voluntary transfer of civilian positions to the military. In general, “it implies that civilians in positions of governmental leadership not only have the authority to do so, but have done so voluntarily, uncoerced” (Pion-Berlin 2020, 82).
9. The problem of civilian delegation of posts to military officers also occurs in more developed states and affect civil-military relations worldwide. See: Gibson and Snider (1999) and Pion-Berlin (2020).
10. Military autonomy ultimately refers to institutional decision-making authority and is closely can be related to institutional interests to preserve prerogatives (Pion-Berlin, 1992, p. 84).
11. Militaries in Latin America have several other missions beyond defence. Among them, “support to national development” or support to public policies in whatever area the state has a weak capacity is a very common one. See: Pion-Berlin (2016).
12. Other public policies may also have national security dimensions. According to Kaunert et al. (2012, 5) “[t]he new security environment that appeared in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks has led to the development of a security dimension in a growing number of policy areas, such as asylum and migration, transport, critical infrastructure protection and civilian crisis management among others.”
13. Democratic governance of security and defence sectors refers to “democratic management and implementation of defence and security policy” (Cottey et al. 2002, 32).
14. We understand efficiency as “the best possible defence within a socially acceptable level of allocated resources” (Ratchev 2011, 4) and effectiveness as “institutions fulfil their respective roles, responsibilities and missions to a high professional standard”(DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019c, 3).
15. We understand governance as the “exercise of power and authority affecting the provision of any public good” and referring to a “general concept that includes governmental decisions

but also informal practices, actors and values that shape their implementation” (DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance 2019c).

16. Some may argue that discussions of security sector governance can be considered a liberal and western-centric perspective towards the security sector. This could lead to a military and security isomorphism worldwide. Debating these issues is not the focus of this article. See: Pretorius (2008).
17. Some authors consider the “justice sector” as part of the “security sector”. Though there are close links between them, we adopt a less broad definition.
18. National security’ appears only in Art. 173: “Except for the cases provided in this Constitution, the direct exploitation of economic activity by the State will only be permitted when necessary for national security imperatives or for relevant collective interest, as defined by law”.
19. Lei 7.170/1983.
20. 42 organizations were part of SISBIN in 2019 (e.g., ministries and security, defence, health, transport, telecommunications, agriculture and the environment agencies).
21. Lei 9.296/1996.
22. Lei 13.260/2016.
23. Resolução 2/2013-CN.
24. See: <https://www.gov.br/gsi/pt-br/aceso-a-informacao/institucional/historico>.
25. Medida provisória 696/2015.
26. Systems Coordination Secretariat, Secretariat for Defence and National Security Affairs and Secretariat for Security and Presidential Coordination.
27. See: <https://www.gov.br/gsi/pt-br/assuntos/acervo/imagens/2019/organograma-2019-vf.jpg>. (accessed:October2020).
28. Decreto 8.903/2016
29. Despite being reserve of the Brazilian Army, the military police and the military firefighter corps are subordinated to the governors of the states, the federal district and territories.
30. Decreto 5.289/2004.
31. Lei 13.675/2018.
32. The division between military and civil police has deep historical roots in Brazil (e.g. 1831 – Military Police of São Paulo and 1841 – Civil Police of São Paulo). The demilitarization and the unification of the police are two frequent points in the Brazilian debate on public safety.
33. Ministério da Justiça/DPF. Prestação de Contas Ordinária Anual Relatório de Gestão do Exercício 2014.
34. Under Jair Bolsonaro’s administration, the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety were merged.
35. Despite being constitutionally illegal, police strikes are rather common.
36. Data: January/2019-May/2020.
37. LC 117/2004, and 136/2010.
38. Portaria 597/2000, Comandante do Exército.
39. Portaria 996/2016, Comandante do Exército, “Instruções Gerais do Sistema de Assessoramento Parlamentar do Exército”.
40. The Brazilian Ministry of Defence is responsible for the political direction of the Armed Forces. However, directives are very difficult to implement because the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force have administrative, budgetary, and financial autonomy according to the LC 97/1999. Each Force Commander can decide about structures, strategies, doctrines, personnel, resources, and defence diplomacy. In reality, there are overlapping and unclear roles and functions between the MoD and the service branches (e.g. strategic planning, doctrine and operations, budget and finance, joint professional military).
41. There are no typical civilian posts or civil service within Brazilian MoD.
42. Political appointees refer to non-permanent posts appointed by ministers, and that do not have to be approved by the Congress. These posts range from higher to lower levels.
43. Parecer 51/2012-CN.

44. Decreto Legislativo 179/2018
45. Diretriz Ministerial de Planejamento 06/2020.
46. LC 97/1999.
47. Lei 13.954/2019.
48. General Braga Netto became Chief of Staff (Casa Civil) of the Bolsonaro Government in 2020.

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the Brazilian government.

Notes on contributors

Raphael C. Lima is a PhD student in War Studies at King's College London. He holds a MSc. in International Relations at the Interinstitutional Graduate Program San Tiago Dantas (São Paulo State University, Campinas State University and PUC-SP) (2015) and a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations from São Paulo State University (2012). He was a Research Coordinator at the Brazilian Army's Strategic Studies Center – CEEEx (2017-2019), researcher at the Institute for Applied Economic Research – IPEA (2016-2019), and technical advisor for National Defence at the Secretary of Strategic Affairs of the Brazilian Presidency (2015). His most recent articles have been published at Defence Strategic Communication (NATO, Latvia) and IPEA (Brazil). He is the co-editor of the volume “*Desafios Contemporâneos para o Exército Brasileiro*” (2019) published jointly by the Institute for Applied Economic Research and the Brazilian Army.

Peterson F. Silva is a Professor at the Brazilian War College (Escola Superior de Guerra - ESG, Ministry of Defence). PhD in International Relations (University of São Paulo – USP, Brazil). Associate-researcher at the Aerospace & Defence Industries Studies Laboratory (LabA&D/ UNICAMP) and at the Brazilian Army's Strategic Studies Center – CEEEx (2016-2018). Researcher (volunteer) at Pandia Calogeras Institute (IPC, Ministry of Defence) (2015-2016). His most recent articles have appeared in such journals as *US Air Force Journal of the Americas*, *Escenarios Actuales* (Chile), and *Revista Transformación Militar* (Colombia). The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the Brazilian government.

Gunther Rudzit is an Associate Professor of International Relations at ESPM and an invited professor at Brazilian Air Force University. His articles have appeared in peer-review journals such as *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, and *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de Defesa*. He was director of Brazilian Association of International Relations (2009-2013) and advisor to the Minister of Defence of Brazil (2001-2002). He holds a PhD in Political Science from University of São Paulo and a M.A. in National Security Studies from Georgetown University.

ORCID

Raphael C. Lima  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5489-6074>

Peterson F. Silva  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3305-3921>

Gunther Rudzitis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8335-0975>

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