

**THE BRAZILIAN ARMED FORCES AFTER THE COLD
WAR:
OVERCOMING THE IDENTITY CRISIS***

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At the end of the Itamar Franco presidency (1992-94), the Minister of the Navy, Admiral Ivan de Silveira Serpa, told an audience of specialists on strategy and entrepreneurs in the war materials industry that, in Brazil, “the esteem for the armed forces has disappeared” (Serpa, 1994). At about the same time, General Manuel Augusto Teixeira, the former Deputy chief of Staff of the Brazilian Army, characterized the morale of his branch as the consequence of two crises: a “crisis of sociability” and an “existential crisis.” According to Teixeira, the first stemmed from the fact that “in Brazil, the Army is receiving very little [support], salaries are very low, and officers do not have the means to socialize with people of the same intellectual level.” The second crisis, according to Teixeira, derived from a characteristic of the military profession: “the military officer develops [*é atualizado*] through something that never occurs: war” (Teixeira, 1994). His comments are extremely apposite to the dilemma of the Armed Forces in the aftermath of the Cold War.

Wendy Hunter, a perceptive North American scholar, in an article entitled “The Brazilian Military after the Cold War: In Search of a Mission,” commented in 1994 on precisely this problem. She defended the thesis that “the failure to arrive at a well defined consensus of the military’s place in society will perpetuate the identity crisis that currently exists” (Hunter, 1994: 44). Others have noted the re-emergence within the Brazilian military of nationalistic and defensive discourse, seen as possibly a reflex to the declining prestige of the military, to external pressures for reductions in military expenditures, or even to the subtle but pervasive redefinition of the role of the Armed Forces—whether it should turn almost exclusively to combating drug trafficking or assume the functions of a national guard (Martins Filho and Zirker, 1996). It was not surprising, then, that the Second Brazilian National Conference on Strategic Studies, held at the Universidade de São Paulo in August of 1995, and sponsored by a number of universities and military offices, included in its program a panel discussion entitled “Scenario 2000: Armed Forces for What?”

We contend that this era of military confusion and dissatisfaction has largely dissipated over the past three years. Because of the military’s own efforts, the moral and economic support of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and the traditional legislative apathy *vis-à-vis* strategic subjects and the military, it is difficult to maintain that there is a military identity crisis in Brazil today.¹ Overcoming this has required a multi-causal process, of course, the description of some of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it is critical to emphasize the efficacy of the military strategy of adapting to the new era, which implies occasional tactical retreats,² as well as advances into new territory. The success of this process would have been impossible without the support of the president, whose military policy seems to have been dominated by the single purpose of avoiding any hint of a conflict with the military, in order to bolster economic policy formation. Also important in this process was the virtual absence of the legislature, which was incapable of significant interference in military matters, except in the form of isolated protests to already-consummated policies. The retention by the military of some of its more traditional prerogatives, including preeminence in aspects of Amazonian development policy, open ideological support for the rights to unlimited property ownership, and effective political resistance to the redress of human rights violations further attenuated the impact of the change on the institution. Finally, military accommodation with an external influence should be mentioned: the government of the United States actively avoided providing pretexts for nationalistic

responses within the armed forces of the hemisphere, and provided a *quid pro quo* for those establishments that adapted. In the following pages we will examine two lines of analysis that diverge in their predictions regarding the evolution of the problem of civil-military relations in Brazil. In the approach exemplified by the work of Wendy Hunter, an optimistic line suggests that the simple evolution of the democratic electoral processes tends to resolve the question of the political influence of military officers. In the analysis of Jorge Zaverucha, on the other hand, we see a far more pessimistic vision, one whose emphasis falls upon the civilian predisposition opportunistically (and sporadically) to strengthen the political prerogatives of the Brazilian military establishment. Our own approach, to the extent that it can be compared to those of Hunter and Zaverucha, points to the rise of a new kind of military influence, directly contrasting with Hunter's conclusions while remaining complementary to those of Zaverucha.

A PAPER TIGER?

Hunter's book, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil—Politicians Against Soldiers* (1997), constitutes the longest and most consistent defense of the thesis that the military is destined to lose political influence in the new Brazilian democratic system. Hunter emphatically defends the contention that "the strategic calculations of self-interested politicians," and "the unfolding of the rules and norms of democracy" confer upon civil-military relations a dynamic character, one whose principal tendency is the erosion of military influence. This process is said to be reinforced by external conditions related to the end of the Cold War. The sum of these internal and external factors will result, in Hunter's view, in a process of declining military influence in Brazil. She concludes that "at the risk of exaggeration, conditions of the 1980s and 1990s have rendered the Brazilian military somewhat of a paper tiger" (23).

The tension between political/electoral and military interests regarding the democratic competition for resources is said to constitute the principal cause of the decline of military influence. According to Hunter,

like presidents, legislators seek to extend their own power and influence. If the armed forces are judged to interfere with this goal, legislators will want to remove them from relevant institutional spheres and possibly reduce their reach overall.

Moreover, "like legislators, presidents are motivated to remain in good standing with the electorate" (70). Even if these tendencies are counterbalanced by the fear of angering the military, placing at risks the survival of governments, nevertheless, the argument goes, presidents will tend to limit military influence. Only during a crisis of governability or a period of weak popular support are chief executives tempted to make concessions to the armed forces.

For Hunter, the clearest evidence of the diminution of military power is the decline of military expenditures in the national budget: "the share of military expenditures in total public spending has actually diminished considerably under civilian rule" (95). Thus, competition between civilians and the military for budgetary allocations acts, in her view, as a strong (and effective) incentive to cut expenditures for the armed forces: "enduring and widespread are the competing demands for state funds that democracy creates, and the inducements democracy provides for politicians to expand social and economic spending at the expense of military

funding” (96). Although the frequent use of presidential prerogative to make supplementary allocations favoring the military continues to demonstrate that “the armed forces remain an important factor of power in the calculus of Brazilian executives” (99), the strongest tendency according to Hunter is the decline of military participation in federal expenditures: “should the competitive dynamic of democracy continue to be played out, the overall trend toward modest military budgets will persist” (113).

Moreover, in Hunter’s view, political stability is the guarantor of the continuation of this process.

The combined calculation of legislators and presidents suggests that as long as Congress retains ample decision-making power over the budget, and as long as Brazilian executives manage to preside over fairly stable governments, defense shares will remain relatively modest and may even decline further (100).

From this perspective, it could be said that the Brazilian military problem has tended to resolve itself through the political calculations of parliamentarians and presidents. Nevertheless, paradoxically seems to regard military officers as if they were almost incapable of action or reaction, that is, as if they were politically devoid of initiative and condemned to accept passively the decline of their influence within the power system. Surprisingly, not even the Constitutional Convention of 1988, where officers were apparently quite effective in promoting their prerogatives, is regarded by Hunter as evidence of their capacity for independent political action.³ To the contrary, for her, “on balance, the armed forces had mixed success in Brazil’s new constitution,” and, moreover, it could be said that in this process “the military did suffer important defeats” (57; 60).

In the following pages, we will explore these contrasting arguments regarding the military policies of the Cardoso government. From our evidence it appears that neither the Brazilian Congress nor the president have reduced the political space of the military. Moreover, the military establishment has refused passively to accept a gradual decline in its political power. Rather, confronting the new conditions of internal democratic stability and the decline of traditional external threats, the strategists of the three branches of the Brazilian armed forces have developed a new doctrine and new methods of political action. The result has been the emergence of a complex strategy based around political retreats and advances that has allowed them to overcome their budgetary and political crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, and to retain significant influence over the internal state structure. While there are a number of explanations for this, as we will see below, one of them clearly stands out: it was fundamental to the initial politics of the Cardoso presidency to save this part of the state from the wholesale destruction experienced by the social sectors following the implementation of the Real Plan. Before we turn to this, however, it is useful to examine a description of contemporary Brazilian civil-military relations that contrasts sharply with that proposed by Hunter.

THE PERSISTENCE OF MILITARY PREROGATIVES

Jorge Zaverucha has underscored the persistent influence and the political privileges of the military officers of the post-dictatorial period (Zaverucha, 1994; 1997). Of central importance in his analysis is the Constitution of 1988, and particularly its Article 142, which defines the military establishment as the guardian of constitutional powers, of the law, and of public order. For Zaverucha, this general prerogative⁴ hangs like the Sword of Damocles over the Constitution, serving as a constant potential source of political crisis (Zaverucha, 1997). Moreover, the constitutional design of ministerial power also favors military influence: five ministerial (cabinet) positions are reserved for the armed forces— one for each of the three branches, one for the Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (*chefe do Estado Maior*), and one for the Chief of the Military Household, or Military Cabinet (*chefe da Casa Militar*). Thus the proposed creation of the Ministry of Defense—which would ostensibly be preceded by the elimination of the positions of the military ministers—with the appointment of a civilian as Minister of Defense, would represent a significant retreat from this complex of political prerogatives. Zaverucha recognizes the intent of Cardoso to make this historic step with his publication of the National Defense Policy (PDN) at the end of 1996, but emphasizes that there has been a profound delay in implementing this policy, and an unwillingness to spell out the terms by which it would occur.

Continued military control over key intelligence agencies—beyond the oversight of the Congress—represents for Zaverucha another institutional factor in the preservation of the political influence of the armed forces. In fact, the secret services of the three military branches apparently function beyond any civilian control, and do not distinguish between domestic and external, or civilian and military, intelligence activities. Although there is an inchoate plan to create a civilian Brazilian Intelligence Agency (ABIN), Zaverucha believes that this problem will persist because “there is no discussion of the way in which the military intelligence services will cease to conduct political espionage” (1997:37). Moreover, the problem is aggravated by the lack of routine legislative oversight of defense matters. The Committees on Defense in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate have been marginalized—participation on them clearly does not produce popular votes.

Finally, Zaverucha points to the risk that the military could become an independent force during an internal policing operation. “Operation Rio”—the coordination of military operations to combat criminal behavior, including drug trafficking, in the slums of Rio de Janeiro at the end of 1994—demonstrated for Zaverucha that “the military acted without any political control,” giving credence to the risk that “federal troops used in public security operations come to subordinate their actions to the military hierarchy, rather than acting as an arm of [civilian] political power” (1997:40).⁵

Zaverucha’s interpretation clearly contrasts with Hunter’s arguments for eroding military influence in Brazil, and directly challenges her characterization of the transformation of the military into a “paper tiger” through the growth of democracy. Zaverucha, rather, continually points to the preservation of military prerogatives, and the unwillingness of civilian politicians to limit them.⁶

Nevertheless, such an institutional view, while necessary, is not sufficient in our opinion to understand the current situation. While it may help us to understand the apparent complicity of

the executive and legislature in preserving some of the non-democratic elements of military influence, and to criticize the perhaps overly optimistic views expressed by Hunter, it does not effectively explain the complex capacity of the Brazilian military to adapt to a new era.

Our analysis should probably begin, then, with a statement of the Chief of the Brazilian Joint Chiefs of Staff,⁷ in the interview mentioned above:

After assuming power, the president made a correct observation. He said that we need to prepare the armed forces for the challenges of the future. That is right. We are trying to adapt ourselves [*nos adequar*] to the future (*Veja*, May 27, 1998).

In our view, this brief statement includes two fundamental aspects of the military policy of the Cardoso government: first, the existence of a clear plan for the recuperation and preservation of the armed forces, particularly in the general context of bitter contention over scarce public expenditures. Second, it underscores the importance of military initiative, its capacity to *adapt itself* [*“se adequar”*] to current and future conditions. These points are particularly relevant as regards four central hurdles in the military’s campaign to overcome its complex material and identity crises of the early 1990s: the salary problem; influencing state investments in their modernization; the routinization of employing troops in matters of internal order; and questions relating to Amazônia. Political controversy over the redress of human rights violations, while of a lesser stature, has also figured prominently during the past two years.

MILITARY PAY

It is highly significant that during the Cardoso administration the military has been able to remain outside of the contentious government salary policies established by the Real Plan (1994). Shortly after Cardoso assumed the presidency in 1995, the military leaders communicated to him that they would not accept a salary policy that they regarded as inappropriate for the institution: “Any solution for the salary of soldiers must come in a block,” the minister of the air force, Mauro Gandra, insisted when studies of the possibility of raising the salaries of high-ranking officers to the level of executive secretaries of the civilian ministries were reported. He averred that “we will not accept a measure that benefits some, leaving subordinates out” (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, January 23, 1995). While such military arguments ultimately proved successful, they created tension between the armed forces and economic policy makers. They were initially raised by the presidents of the three military clubs, who publicly declared that there was serious unrest in the nation’s barracks over military salary constriction. The air force minister spoke out again, noting that the club presidents had expressed the views of the armed forces.⁸ According to Gandra, the clubs had the “freedom to express things that the military minister sometimes could not say, should not say, but would have difficulty justifying to his troops had he not said them.”⁹ It is clear that the new government understood the message. By August of that year, the president announced that his economic team was studying, along with the Joint Chiefs, the possibility of significantly raising military earnings (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, August 19, 1995).¹⁰

It was in March of 1996 that the president took the decisive step of proposing a special formula for resolving the military salary question. He sent to the Congress a constitutional amendment (PEC No. 338) that defined military jobs as “characteristic state careers” (“*carreiras*

típicas de Estado”). This not only allowed him to separate the salary policy for the military from those for civilian agencies, but it proposed that laws dealing with military pay would no longer be at the initiative of the Congress—the president, rather, would now take on this power (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 30, 1996).¹¹ The amendment was approved in December of 1997 by a vote of 15 to 2 in the Senate Justice Committee after having received approval in the Chamber of Deputies in September (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, December 11, 1997).¹²

On the same day that the amendment passed in the Senate committee, President Cardoso announced to 150 general officers of the three military branches that it would be possible in 1998 to raise the Special Work Bonus, a pay category that represented 36 percent of salaries (an increase of 100 percent in this category would boost salaries by 30 percent). The president also promised to support modernization efforts, and emphasized the growing social prestige of the military, which had been demonstrated in public opinion polls showing a credibility rating of over 80 percent (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, December 11, 1997). The press commented that

At the presidential palace, there are guarantees that the raise will go through, despite the opposition of economic advisors, because it was a clear decision of the president. On the military side, officers think it important that the government not delay, since the situation is grave (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, February 12, 1998).

Subsequent events demonstrated that there was, indeed, no delay. While the amendment was still moving through the Congress in February, the president authorized a retroactive pay adjustment.¹³ It was not until May that the increase in bonuses of 113 percent was approved—this was even greater than the initial readjustment of 100 percent that had been implemented by the military, with another predicted increase of 30 percent for 1999 (*O Estado do Paraná*, June 5, 1998). The military dissatisfaction over pay was thus ended, despite the apparent opposition of the Real Plan’s restrictions on the salaries of civil servants.

It is useful to recall that the central element of the military identity crisis of the early 1990s—the salary question—was effectively resolved under the cloud of a highly restrictive economic stabilization policy. The separation of the “military category” from the rest of the bureaucracy was crucial in this. Thus it was likely not coincidental that, in the first few weeks of the Cardoso government, the minister of the air force had already proposed that the recognition of military personnel as “servants of the state” represented “*the administrative and psychological goal [that is] most important to the armed forces today,*” adding that resolution of the “problem” was an “indispensable [factor] to the peace [tranquilidade] of the government itself” (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, January 23, 1995). While a close examination of the course of the draft legislation, Bill PEC338, through the Brazilian Congress is beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that this constitutional amendment was approved in less than two years, with the decisive support of the president.¹⁴

THE MODERNIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

As regards the other key aspect of the military budget, investing in modernizing and reequipping, there is evidence that the Cardoso government has fully satisfied the expectations of the armed forces here as well, to the public praise of the military ministers. These allocations have

been made without any legislative oversight, and seemingly without even following the procedures of the new Policy of National Defense, published in late 1996. Some of the acquisitions have been justified on the basis of opportunities to obtain modern arms at good prices on the post-Cold War international market.¹⁵ This practice has been reinforced by the new policy of the United States to suspend restrictions on arms sales to the continent, which in turn has led to talk of a hemispheric arms race. Military pressure for such purchases, in conjunction with the positive predisposition of the president and the apathy of the legislature, adds an additional risk: that of simply resuming projects that were interrupted, without any assessment of their content or relevance.

The Cardoso government has raised military enthusiasm regarding the prospects for modernization. Recent data, collected by a new institution dedicated to the study of the strategic balance in South America and published in Argentina in 1997, point to a significant resumption of expenditures for the modernization of Brazilian military equipment (Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1997). The study appraised and compared the status of land, naval and air forces in five countries.

As regards land forces, the *Balance militar del Cono Sur* notes that “a good part of the primary materiel in all of the armies of the region, from combat vehicles to armament, is old or, if still operational, is obsolete.” Nevertheless, it emphasizes that “Chile and Brazil lead the way in acquisitions for reequipping and modernization” (41). It should be stressed that Brazil, unlike Argentina (which effectively destroyed its military industry), has been able to maintain its expenditures in this category.

As regards naval power, the document affirms that, in **operating capacity** (which depends in large measure upon the capacity for naval construction), “the Brazilian navy today is the most advanced and evinces a light naval advantage in Latin America, besides being one of five countries in the world capable of building submarines.” Argentine specialists already speak of a “growing imbalance in the region” as regards “offensive power,” which “defines the capacity to carry out naval operations [leading to] projecting power.” For them, “Brazil and Chile have increased [their naval power] significantly by incorporating submarines, amphibious vehicles (naval landing craft, etc.), aeronaval units (helicopters on frigates and destroyers with Exocet AM39 missiles), long-range missiles on destroyers, frigates and corvettes and logistical units to supply task forces” (58).

Finally, in observing military air power, the study warns that “the great potential that favors Brazil with its relatively large number of planes is substantially reduced by total operational capacity, if the levels of training, maintenance and advanced equipment are considered” (67). Nevertheless, there are also signs in this sector of a recuperation of Brazilian military capacity:

Despite budgetary restrictions, [Brazil’s] air force continues programs of modernization and reequipping which were only delayed. Besides this, [Brazil] changed direction in its policy of materiel acquisition, encouraging national production and capturing cutting-edge technologies, creating an industrial infrastructure of great magnitude and large-scale logistical means (67).

Furthermore, it notes that “Brazil plans in 1998 to buy 120 combat aircraft.¹⁶ The American company, Boeing, has offered the F-18 in a deal that has a \$2 billion base.” The study further notes that “the tendency observed as to air combat materiel indicates that the Brazilian air force is

inclined toward co-production or production under licence (AMX-Xavante) and toward modernization (Mirage III and F-5e)” (67). In its conclusion, the Argentine report observes that “Brazil devotes approximately \$550 to \$600 annually to military reequipping, approximately double that of Chile” (94). It is clear from these observations alone that the putative scrapping of the Brazilian armed forces has at least been interrupted.

Nevertheless, we have not yet specifically analyzed the resumption of military expenditures in the Cardoso administration, and the growing military autonomy in defining the priorities of the modernization of the armed forces. In this context, in the first months of Cardoso’s presidency, the military chiefs received the support of the new president in their argument that general cuts in federal government expenditures for 1995 should not extend to the armed forces. This obliged the Minister of Planning, José Serra, to withdraw his plans to cut R\$1 billion in this area (*Folha de S. Paulo*, April 5, 1995). In September of that year, the military ministers celebrated an allocation of R\$5.6 billion in the Pluriannual Plan (1996-1999) to the military portfolios, a total that was greater than that for national education (R\$4.9 billion) or health (R\$4.5 billion) (*Folha de S. Paulo*, September 7, 1995). At the same time, the press noted that the president had promised the military that he would fully approve the projected expenditures for reequipping the armed forces that were contained in the 1996 budget draft legislation (*Folha de S. Paulo*, September 12, 1995).¹⁷ Another campaign by the military ministers took place shortly after the government applied massive resources to the bank protection program. In March, 1996, the Army High Command urgently requested that the president order the Secretary of the Treasury immediately to release R\$120 million to pay the debt to their suppliers (*Folha de S. Paulo*, March 23, 1996).

In May, 1998, a formal project to equip and modernize the armed forces was announced as the result of the projected creation of the new Ministry of Defense. Expenditures for this were forecast to be R\$4 billion by the end of 2015. According to a news release from Agência o Globo, “this money is the product of the use of external credit authorized by the Senate and mediated through the Banco do Brasil” (*O Estado do Paraná*, May 6, 1998b). The largest part of these expenditures will go to the air force, allowing for the purchase of 43 fighters to replace F-5s and F-103 Mirages. The program for reequipping this branch has been named the “Plano Fênix.” Army funds will go primarily to fund radio communication equipment, computer equipment, and vehicle and helicopter support. Expenditures for the navy are projected to be spent for seven UH-12 Esquilo helicopters, the modernization of six anti-submarine helicopters and the acquisition of 23 Skyhawk A-4 attack bombers, to be used on the aircraft carrier Minas Gerais following the recent decision that the navy will again be allowed to have fixed-wing aircraft, previously restricted to the air force.

Such internal developments have, in the context of international changes, provided for increasing speculation regarding a new arms race in South America. One such international policy change, the decision of the United States to resume selling sophisticated military equipment to Latin American countries, is paramount in this regard.¹⁸ It underscores the risks incurred with continuing military autonomy. President Cardoso stridently denied in an interview in September, 1996, that such U.S. arms sales to Brazil had been resumed, and insisted that the final decision in such matters remained his alone: “One thing, I believe, that the Americans do not understand is that I am the supreme commander of the armed forces, an office that I exercise fully.” Cardoso’s

statement was motivated by rumors that Pentagon officials and/or representatives of U.S. arms industries had suggested to the Brazilian air force that they send a request for information regarding their eventual purchase of first-generation fighters to Washington, ostensibly to aid lobbying efforts to revise the restrictive arms sales policy (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, August 7, 1997).

It would appear that Cardoso's words did not translate into effective measures to control military autonomy, however. In mid-1997, the president signed a decree authorizing the armed forces to purchase war materiel, and to contract for technical services, *without submitting such projects to public bids*, "when revealing locale, need, characteristics of its objectives, specifications or quantity would place at risk national security objectives" (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, August 8, 1997). The publication of the decree evoked responses from members of the Committee on External relations and National Defense (CREDN) of the national Chamber of Deputies. Deputy José Genoíno (PT-SP), one of the most knowledgeable civilian intermediaries with the military in security and defense matters, declared that he would "propose a legislative decree in order to revoke the government's initiative," since that measure "allows even the purchase of arms to be carried out in secret" (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, August 6, 1997).

The suspension of the open bid process does not bode well for the future of civilian oversight and control over military expenditures. With the loss of parliamentary controls prior to purchases, the power to define priorities is also lost (Pereira, 1997). Indeed, this extensive broadening of military largesse is recognized by key officers. Admiral Mário César Flores noted, for example, in arguing for the creation of a Ministry of Defense, that the armed forces

are largely free within their budgetary constraints, as defined technocratically and politically, and do not have objective concerns. This freedom has not assured an integrated military power indisputably in tune with the needs of the country; rather, it has given Brazil the naval, land and air power seen as necessary and practicable within the respective budgets of the Branches (Flores, 1997).

There is abundant evidence that the Cardoso government has not altered this state of affairs, even after the establishment of the National Defense Policy. The purchase of A-4 Skyhawk attack bombers by the navy is an example of the persistence of this tendency (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, December 30, 1997). According to a journalist who specializes in defense matters, "what is serious is the form which the purchase of the Skyhawks took and, finally, the way in which it was presented to the president of the republic as a politically consummated fact" (Pereira, 1997). The same writer maintained that the navy's decision "deprecates the National Defense Policy sanctioned by the president...and consecrates the complete lack of cooperation between the branches." The Skyhawk case, in his view, "characterizes a degree of autonomy incompatible with the nature of a democratic regime." The navy, in this interpretation, made three assaults on the president: in the first, without refusing to seek authorization, it sought to gain time, arguing that the National Defense Policy was not yet defined; in a second, there was another delay in adhering to the PDN based on the argument that it was first necessary to resolve major problems in reequipping the air force.

The third request was presented as an irreplaceable business opportunity, not to be left to

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso without confirming the terms of the previous meeting and adding that the navy planes should only go into operation after the Ministry of the Air Force renovated its planes...(Pereira, 1998).

But, for this analyst, in view of the major difficulties confronting the air force, “it would not be surprising if the Skyhawks began operating before the agreement [stipulated]” (Pereira, 1998).

The resumption of military expenditures without curbing levels of military autonomy deeply affects the question of civilian control over military projects, which, incidentally, thus remain largely secret. A key example of this was the reactivation of the army’s gas-graphite reactor project, capable of producing plutonium, which was located inside the Guaratiba ecological reserve in Rio de Janeiro. The so-called “Atlantic Project” had been suspended by the Collor government; its reactivation was noted in news reports in mid-1997.¹⁹

It is useful to note that in all of the occasions in which military autonomy has recently been reaffirmed, the reaction of the legislature has been late and inarticulate, with some exceptions.²⁰ While Deputy Arlindo Chinaglia (PT-SP), chair of the Committee for Fiscal Inspection and Control of the [Congressional] Chambers, promised to summon the Ministry of the Navy to explain the purchase of the Skyhawks (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, January 2, 1998), his protest apparently had few consequences. Deputy Paulo Bornhausen (PFL-SP) sent the president a petition requesting that he avoid involving Brazil in an international arms race. This occurred just before President Clinton arrived in Brazil (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, October 7, 1997). A month before this, Deputy Paulo Delgado (PT-MG), a member of the CREDN of the Chamber of Deputies, had taken aim at the suspension of the U.S. arms embargo on Latin America and the selection of Argentina as a non-NATO U.S. military ally in proposing to President Cardoso that he request clarification from the U.S. (*O Globo*, September 1, 1997).

While these observations do not preclude the value of a study of the activities of the CREDN, they do support the hypothesis that in the Cardoso government, both legislative inertia and the ability of the military to anticipate civilian policies largely explain why it is that civilian control over military initiatives has not significantly increased. Rather, what appears to have happened is an increase in military autonomy in budgetary matters based upon presidential continued support of military appropriations.

THE FUNCTION OF INTERNAL SECURITY

We can now move to another significant aspect of the military policy of the Cardoso government: the routine employment of the armed forces, principally the army, in functions of internal order.²¹ It should be emphasized from the start that this subject continues to occupy an important place in Brazilian military thought. Of the three branches, the army is the center of such concerns. The air force and the navy seem to be increasingly dedicated to the role of external defense.²²

In August, 1995, as part of the activities of the Second National Conference of Strategic Studies (ENEE-held at the Universidade de São Paulo), General Benedito Leonel, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defined the parameters for the deployment of the armed forces, dividing them into four situations: war, prevention of war, “insecurity,” and peace (Leonel, 1995:29-30). In the situation of “insecurity,” he included a series of threats previously

understood to fall within the concept of “national security:” historical, religious, racial and socio-economic antagonisms; urban violence; and the performance of the police forces. In the situation of “peace,” the minister mentioned “the importance of information (intelligence) as ‘warning’ and as the basic constituent in the process of decision making” and “preventative actions” in internal matters. Finally, in a reference to military “concerns,” he underscored “the achievement of ‘internal peace’ as an essential condition” (31).

These views help in understanding the reaction of that same general to a subsequent major conflict between workers of the landless movement and the military police (who are not directly part of the military in Brazil) at Eldorado dos Carajás, in April, 1996. Leonel explained at that time that “there are two views of the conflict—one political and the other military. I will only respond to the military view. The Landless Movement is a low-intensity conflict.” General Alberto Cardoso, Chief of the Military Household of the president, declared at the time that he was “shocked by” the attitude of the (civilian controlled) military police (*Jornal do Brasil*, April 20, 1996).

At the same conference, General Paulo Aquino (military commander of the Southeast region) referred at a roundtable discussion entitled “Scenario 2000—Armed Forces for What?” to low-intensity conflict in the context of the “New World Order,” in which there are said to be no more conventional ideological threats. Among low-intensity conflicts, he included “unconventional forms of taking power,” understood to include social movements and even class-based organizations. In referring to high-intensity threats, the general mentioned revolutionary movements, adding that, in this category, the real threats were uncertainty and instability (Aquino, 1995). In contrast, representatives of the other branches, Vice-Admiral Arlindo Vianna Filho (Naval Commission) and Major-Brigadier Valter Brauer (IV Regional Air Command) made no reference to problems of internal order in their presentations (Vianna Filho, 1995; Brauer, 1995).²³

Considering that II ENEE took place in the first year of the Cardoso government, it is worth examining a similar debate that occurred at IV ENEE in May, 1998, at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). At a roundtable discussion, “Modernizing Brazilian Strategic Military Planning,” those responsible for strategic military planning with the Joint Chiefs of Staff publicly stated their views of the positions of the three branches.²⁴ The representative of the army, Division General Gilberto Pimentel, was again the only one to emphasize threats to internal order as strategic military concerns; he mentioned increasing internal conflicts (narcotrafficking, organized crime and land struggles) as a focus of attention of the army (Pimentel, 1998). In contrast, the presentation of Flight Colonel Delano Menezes only spoke of combatting internal crime through collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, “in response to a presidential directive,” and the use of the Amazon Surveillance System (SIVAM) in internal defense “without the use of arms” (Menezes, 1998). The representative of the Naval Joint Chiefs, Rear Admiral Wellington Liberatti, preferred to emphasize the speed with which the navy adapted to the National Defense Policy, citing the development and publication of the document “National Defense Policy: The Brazilian Navy” (Naval Public Relations Service, 1997). Virtually all of his emphasis was upon the external mission (Liberatti, 1998).

The Cardoso government’s use of the military in maintaining internal order began early on: the first order from the presidential palace came in May, 1995, as part of the government’s

efforts to end the national petroleum workers' strike after it had paralyzed the industry for 23 days, and following a Supreme Court decision that labeled the strike as an abuse of power. It is important to note, however, that one week after the strike had begun the government had already ordered a state of alert in five of the six military commands. It was clearly assessing whether this strike constituted a crucial test of the capacity of the unions to resist privatization, a key part of the follow up policies of the Real Plan (*Folha de S. Paulo*, May 13, 1995).²⁵ On May 24, Cardoso ordered army troops to occupy four of the 11 Petrobrás refineries at dawn, following a meeting with the Ministers of the Army and Mines and Energy, and surprising the union movement. Three of the refineries were in São Paulo and one was in Paraná (*Folha de S. Paulo*, May 25, 1995). The operation at the refinery in Paulínia alone required "300 soldiers armed with machine guns, rifles and tear gas" (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 25, 1995). To justify the occupations, the government claimed the need to "protect the public patrimony" and to "provide guarantees to those who wished to return to work." In a statement on a national radio and TV network, the Minister of Mines and Energy said that the troops that occupied the refineries were called in to assure that the resumption of work occurred without incident (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 25, 1995).²⁶

The **legality** of the use of the army in civil affairs is not a question in our analysis: this is assured in the Constitution of 1988. Our central focus is upon the facility with which the president turned to the armed forces at the first sign of the mobilization of the unions.²⁷ It was thus left up to the army to avoid a repetition of the tragic Volta Redonda episode of late 1988. The minister of the army thus advised the press of his concern that the troops should be withdrawn as soon as possible. To avoid confrontation, the army ordered that suppression of protestors at the refinery gates be carried out only by the largely civilian "military police." The minister of the army declared loudly that the occupation was on the orders of the president, and that it in no way implied the views of the army regarding the merits of the strike. Nevertheless, he admitted that the plans for the operation could be implemented rapidly because the armed forces had a permanent plan for occupying "strategic points" in the country (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 25, 1995).

Following the refineries action, which concluded with the defeat of the strike but without pitched battles with troops, yet another example occurred of the use of the army against social movements. Soldiers were used in Eldorado dos Carajás (Pará) to sweep the locale after the assassination of several militants of the Landless Movement (MST) in conflicts with the largely civilian "military police." This measure was taken by President Cardoso, following a meeting with the Ministers of Justice, the Army, and the Civilian household, as a way of investigating the causes of the conflict and helping to find possible victims who had not yet been identified (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, April 20, 1996). The president also decided to send the chief of the military household to the region to assess the situation.

While this represented further evidence of the facility with which the executive resorted to the military to deal with social crises, the later comments of General Alberto Cardoso seem rather surprising: he spoke out against the police violence, and assured the president of the Central Workers' Union (CUT), Vicente Paulo da Silva, that the incident could represent "a turning point for agrarian reform" (*Jornal do Brasil*, April 20, 1996; *O Estado de S. Paulo*, April 20, 1996). One should recall, however, the comments (mentioned above) of General Leonel characterizing the conflict between the MST and the military police as a demonstration of a low-intensity

conflict—this underscores the dangers latent in militarizing social questions of this sort.

The same holds true for the subsequent decision to send three detachments of the army, of more than 300 troops, “with the objective of rendering services in landless settlements 350 kilometers south of Belém, Pará (*Folha de S. Paulo*, June 11, 1996).²⁸ There is abundant evidence, moreover, that army intelligence has permanent files on the MST, in keeping with its definition of the problem as a “low-intensity” conflict. The army’s Center for Social Communication recently admitted the existence of “Intelligence Companies” (CIAIntg.), although they were described as having no “ideological function” (*Jornal do Brasil*, July 24, 1997).²⁹ Sources in the Army High Command also admit to the press that Satellite images have been used to monitor the activities of the MST (*Correio Popular*, December 11, 1996).³⁰

The presence of the army in activities related to the MST has been a constant feature of the Cardoso administration. In May, 1997, a plan to impede the occupation of lands of the Vale do Rio Doce (parastatal) Company (CVRD) in Parauapebas, southern Pará, came to light. Military activity included the encampment of 600 troops of the 52nd Battalion of the Forest Infantry at Clube Serra Norte, on CVRD property (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, May 5, 1997). This occupation was the repeat of an operation that had occurred in October, 1996, in Curionópolis, Pará, involving 1000 army troops and 63 federal police, to dismantle the Serra Pelada Liberation Movement, formed by prospectors who obstructed local mineral exploration by the CVRD (*Folha de S. Paulo*, October 25, 1996; *O Estado de S. Paulo*, October 25, 1996).

In April, 1998, the army was again asked to conduct a so-called “Operation Presence,” with the purpose of preventing conflict between landowners and landless peasants in Parauapebas. Again, troops of the 52nd Forest Infantry Battalion were used, including a company of 140 men, seven jeeps, one ambulance, and 13 trucks (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, April 1, 1998). The fact that workers sought out the lieutenant colonel in charge of the operation in order to ask that the troops protect a landless movement encampment apparently did not lessen the risk of military intervention in this social conflict (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, April 2, 1998).

Moreover, this operation inaugurated a new pattern of behavior on the part of the government: in this case, the federal Minister of Justice transferred to the Governor of Pará the power to call up military force to deal with “situations that involve land conflicts,” without previously consulting the president. The governor activated the Amazônia Military Command (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, April 10, 1998). A week later, on the anniversary of the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás, the army reinforced its contingent in the Parauapebas region with an additional 150 soldiers, bringing the total in the region to 550 troops, according to the army (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, April 16, 1998). By the end of May, the new policy appeared to have been consolidated. According to *O Estado de S. Paulo* (May 7, 1998),

The army has already begun to coordinate all government activities in southern Pará, with the power to intervene even in agrarian reform and with an attitude of “zero tolerance” in conflicts.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the army’s **intervention** in the rebellion of the largely civilian “**military police**” in June, 1997, or the use of troops in 1998 to escort food convoys to the drought regions, where frequent looting had occurred with the participation of the MST (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, May 27, 1998; June 1, 1998). Nor will we explore the topic of

civic action, including “Operation Asa Branca III,” which involved 1500 troops in a series of military exercises on the *sertão* of Pernambuco, a region of extensive marijuana cultivation.³¹ This action was described by the military as an effort to “demonstrate to the population of the cities that the presence of the organization [*corporação*] will serve to resolve urgent problems whose solutions would otherwise be delayed for years” (*Diário de Pernambuco*, October 28, 1997). In our view, this reinforces another of our hypotheses: the surprising agility with which the army is able to occupy political spaces (relative to the executive and legislature), without any sign that this will change in the near future.

AMAZÔNIA AND OTHER TRADITIONAL MILITARY CONCERNS

Another category of evidence points to the persistence, and even strengthening, of traditional military tendencies toward authoritarianism in certain limited areas. It includes ongoing institutional concerns with: the Amazon region and questions of national security (reminiscent of the 1960s and 1970s); the maintenance of unrestricted property rights in Brazil; the treatment of past and present allegations of human rights violations by the military; and direct political involvement--statements and threats--by military officers. While limited in scope and character, these manifestations of military behavior remain frankly authoritarian in character, and they may indicate the degree to there has been a permanent and substantive break with the past.

The continuation of Amazonian development has remained perhaps the last bastion of an orthodox military mission.³² Over the past two decades, a particularly invasive form of developmentalism has been adopted in Amazônia; civilian economic interests linked to slash-and-burn cattle ranching, large- and small-scale mining, and massive forestry and agricultural enterprises have come to see themselves, along with the military, as the nationalistic heroes of a nation threatened by international ecological imperialism. “National security,” a term that has been repeatedly defined and redefined by military ideologues over the past three decades, has recently come to include this kind of colonization in the region: populating, although not necessarily democratizing, what is regarded by them as a zone of likely future threats to national security while intensifying radar and direct surveillance. Growing suspicions of U.S. intentions in the Amazon region had swept the Brazilian officer corps by the early 1990s, with “ten out of ten officers believ[ing] that the gringos want to take over Amazônia....” (*Istoé*, July 21, 1993:41).³³

To the rallying cry “*A Amazônia é nossa*” (“Amazônia is ours”), borrowed from the nationalism of the 1950s,³⁴ a loose civil-military political pact emerged in the early 1990s in support of this kind of regional development. The current ideological bases of military hegemony in Amazonian policymaking dates at least back to the 1950s, when the geopolitics associated with such military ideologues as General Golbery do Couto e Silva began to shape military institutions such as the Superior War College (ESG). The “natural permeability” of Amazônia figured prominently in Golbery’s conclusion that the region would have to be penetrated, integrated and “valorized” as national territory Golbery do Couto e Silva, 1967:47). A series of development plans for Amazônia were launched by the military dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s, most of which related to a master program, the National Integration Plan (PIN). This called for the building of a road network, the TransAmazônica, a related colonization scheme, and the intensification of large-scale mining and forestry projects, ostensibly to be based upon foreign

investment and geared toward export.

The overriding question of land ownership had come to be a central concern in this and other regional development programs. Conflicts, particularly between peasants and major landowners, long a problem in the Northeast,³⁵ had gradually increased in Amazônia, and by 1980 "land conflicts [began] to be regarded as a question of national security." (Berno de Almeida, 1990:233).³⁶ Military encouragement of large mining and agricultural investments in Amazônia, reinforced with fiscal incentives, increasingly became the primary stimuli of violent conflicts over land (Bakx, 1990:67) because of the consequent displacement of Indians, peasants and forest workers (such as the rubber tappers). Furthermore, the military itself was Brazil's largest landowner, with the army directly controlling five million hectares in Amazônia, and the General Staff of the Armed Forces another four million (*Veja*, June 8, 1988: 49). The military expressed unqualified opposition to agrarian reform when it was first launched in earnest in 1985.

The subsequent explosion of the Landless Movement (MST) has reinforced these concerns, while occasionally putting the armed forces into policing roles. Mutual hostility has grown. In July, 1997, for example, the Minister/Chief of the Military Household, General Alberto Cardoso, expressed concern that the participation of MST and industrial union members at police strikes represented a plot by leftist opposition parties to destabilize the military and put them in a "difficult situation" before the population (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, July 23, 1997). Numerous "invasions" of (largely unproductive) landholdings over the past decade have intensified military concern. President Cardoso has taken a surprisingly inflexible position regarding the invasions, given his prior political and academic background.

In its concerns with the Amazon region and with preserving unrestricted rights to private property ownership, the military has frequently employed the language of "national security." The military and the National Security Council (CSN) drafted the *Calha Norte* (or "Northern Trench") Project shortly after the transfer of power to civilian government in 1985 "to promote the occupation of the frontier strip along Brazil's northern borders" (Santilli, 1989: 42). The proximity of the traditional lands of the Yanomami Indians to the Venezuelan border, the growth of drug smuggling in the region, and the fear of a recurrence of guerrilla activity similar to that experienced in Araguaia (in the Amazon region) in the 1970s--or even alleged international attacks from Colombian guerrillas--served as formal, although decidedly unconvincing, justifications for the project, which was launched as a "confidential" document, and whose very existence remained unknown to the Brazilian Congress for two years after its creation (Oliveira Filho, 1990: 156).

While some observers suspected that the CSN had posited the unlikely scenario of a future war in a relatively narrow 150 km frontier strip (Santilli: 43), this "Northern Trench" is far larger, encompassing as much as 14 percent of the territory of Brazil and 24 percent of Amazônia (Hecht and Cockburn, 1990: 136), and hence its implications for military autonomy in defining national security "threats" much broader. It appears to represent the most nationalistic aspirations of the armed forces. Nevertheless, the US-based multinational corporation, Raytheon, was awarded the contract for the electronic surveillance program for the region, SIVAM, which was conceived during the Sarney presidency, and had become a central artifact in military planning for Amazônia (*Veja*, March 15, 1995: 44).³⁷ Scandals have surrounded the program. In late 1997, the Brazilian air force was openly opposing the Boeing Corporation's interest in taking over the Brazilian

missile launching sight at Alcântara, Maranhão (*Folha de S. Paulo*, November 1, 1997).

Tension between the military and environmentalists has been the norm since 1985. Although the military has reluctantly become involved in attempts to limit the annual burning of forests, and even trained special environmental agents to police illegal burning (*New York Times* (March 26, 1991), strong criticism of international efforts to save the rain forest have figured prominently in statements by the Superior War College (ESG); the implication has been that there is an international plot to take over the region (*Latin American Weekly Report*, October 10, 1991: 8). Extreme hostility toward José Lutzenberger, the first environmentalist to occupy a Brazilian cabinet position, became the norm prior to his firing as Minister of the Environment in March, 1992, and was tinged--significantly--with the language of anti-communism.³⁸ If anti-communism had become an obsolete buttress of military prerogatives, anti-environmentalism seemed poised to replace it.

The military continues to manifest evidence of continuity and resistance to change in two important areas: past and present human rights violations; and the public expression of strong policy preferences in the national arena. Recent moves to redress human rights violations during the dictatorship publicly angered senior military authorities, while continuing neoliberal policies, including the sale of key state corporations, have evoked strident military responses. In a historical context, such responses are necessarily perceived as threats, of which senior military personnel are well aware.

Recent legal decisions involving indemnification to the families of leftist guerrillas killed during the dictatorship immediately drew strong response from retired military officers, who argued that the amnesty law of 1979 should preclude such recognition (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, September 23, 1996). In September of 1997, the representative of the armed forces, General Oswaldo Pereira Gomes, on the Commission on Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice lamented the decision of President Cardoso to indemnify the families of Carlos Marighella and Carlos Lamarca, the latter regarded as a deserter and traitor by the military (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, September 6, 1997). The indemnification decree included 40 other families of deceased political prisoners and guerrillas, who were publicly characterized by “sectors of the armed forces” as “traitors being transformed into heroes” (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, September 6, 1997). Earlier, the president of the Military Club, retired General Hélio Ibiapina de Lima, had declared that “the soldiers that fought against terrorism were paid by the state for this; it doesn’t make sense to indemnify the family of terrorists and enemies of the fatherland” (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, September 23, 1996). The Military Club was a center of military activism prior to 1964.

In April of 1993, an organization of retired senior military officers, the “Grupo Guararapes” (named after the seventeenth-century battle that expelled the Dutch from Northeast Brazil), declared in a manifesto to the nation the need for the “restoration of morality” to the Brazilian Congress.³⁹ In 1996, the group, which was said to include 20 generals and 115 other senior officers, expressed their “loss of confidence” in the military ministers because they had not sufficiently resisted the indemnification plan.

The sale in 1997 of the huge state corporation, CVRD, likewise drew the strident criticism of some retired officers, who signed the petition of opposition drafted by former president José Sarney. One prominent retired general, Ivan Frota, declared that “since our Armed Forces are fragile, Brazil must have at least one trump, which is the Vale, to negotiate in the

strategic field with other countries.”⁴⁰ Later Frota declared that he and his comrades were involved in a “judicial war” against the “disaggregation of national territory.” Frota claimed to have over 30 military adherents, including generals and colonels (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, 4 May 1997). Today, of course, there is predominant support for the privatization efforts within the military.

The evidence in this category suggests that the political influence of the military, even in relatively traditional areas of expression, has not necessarily waned during the Cardoso administration.

CONCLUSIONS

The Cardoso government has routinized the use of the military in situations of social conflict, establishing a new pattern of interrelations, principally involving the army, and has done relatively little to curb traditional spheres of military influence. This attitude of the executive reinforces the army’s tendency to view social questions as part of its strategic concerns and, confronted with the crisis of the police structure and with the apathy of the legislature, this could become a permanent feature of Brazilian politics. Here again, it is very difficult to accept the argument that the military is losing influence within the Brazilian state structure.⁴¹ It should not be surprising, then, that the military ministers have declared themselves to be satisfied with the government of President Cardoso. As we have seen, their salary question has been resolved, and the military has been differentiated from the rest of the federal bureaucracy. Moreover, the legal means and the political autonomy necessary to launch major investments in new armaments have been granted, and the funds necessary to do this have been released. The executive has initiated a policy of routinizing military intervention in civilian conflicts apparently unrelated to national defense. Finally, it has done little to attenuate the authoritarian remnants still evident in such areas as Amazônia, and the redress of human rights violations.

In the midst of a profound shortage of federal resources stemming from current economic policies, the present government has found the means to eliminate the most immediate causes of military unrest. It is in this context, in our view, that the prospective creation of a new Ministry of Defense, and of a new kind of (civilian) intelligence agency (Abin), measures, incidentally, that remain to be enacted in a second Cardoso administration, must be seen. Thus the apparent retreat of the military from these prerogatives should not distract us from further examination of the apparent emergence of a new form of military influence, nested within the framework of Brazilian democracy at the end of the millennium.

NOTES

¹This change is illustrated in the statements of the Brazilian Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Benedito Onofre Bezerra Leal, to a widely circulated Brazilian news magazine. In response to the question, “are the armed forces having a honeymoon with President Fernando Henrique?” the General responded, “I can confirm that we have never been so well” (*Veja*, May 27, 1998). Some time before this, in an interview with the financial newspaper *Gazeta Mercantil*, the Chief of the Military Household of the president, General Alberto Cardoso, questioned about possible differences that the military chiefs might have with the government’s privatization policies—an earlier focal point of military opposition—affirmed that, “in a word, the Brazilian armed forces are perfectly in accord with this philosophy of President Fernando Henrique.” This virtual barrage of supportive statements probably began in September, 1995, when the Minister of the Navy, Mauro César Pereira, recognized that the resources committed by the government for defense for the subsequent four years was “almost paradise” compared to their previous shortfalls (*Folha de S. Paulo*, September 9, 1995).

²As in the question of the recognition of official government responsibility for deaths and disappearances during the dictatorial period, a central theme of the interview with General Leonel (cited above).

³This happened before the crisis at the beginning of the 1990s. For one analyst of the period, “the armed forces made the Constitutional Convention hear its voice regarding its interest in reordering the country...it did so in an ordered and disciplined [*escalonada*] way on the Subcommittee for Defense....When it judged it to be necessary...the military ministers forced the Constitutional Convention to feel the full weight of their political pressures” (Oliveira, 1994: 170).

⁴Alfred Stepan originally defined this focus upon “prerogatives,” with special attention to it in his 1988 book).

⁵As a detailed description of this operation demonstrates, the avoidance of tragic consequences in Rio stemmed from the serendipitous good sense of specific military commanders (Fuccille, 1996).

⁶The remaining prerogatives that Zaverucha mentions appear to us to be less important in defining military influence: absence of Congressional participation in the promotion of military officers; the placing of the (mostly civilian) military police and firefighters under partial military control; the low probability that active military personnel will be tried in civilian courts for common crimes; the role of the military in presidential security; etc.

⁷General Leonel was born in 1930, as were General Zenildo Lucena (Minister of the Army for both Itamar Franco and Fernando Henrique Cardoso) and President Cardoso. He is the member of a generation of officers whose military careers took place, for the most part, during the military dictatorship. Generational cohorts offer an interesting insights into sources of changes in mentality within the military. An interesting, if contrasting, example is that of General Alberto Cardoso, Chief of the Military Household and perhaps the most visible officer in the Cardoso administration, who was born in 1940 (*Ministério do Exército*, 1975).

⁸Some observers dispute this contention. See, for example, Guedes da Costa, 1998:228.

⁹In his view, the new Cardoso government was “a child who had not yet learned to walk,” and thus deserved a modicum of forbearance (*Folha de S. Paulo*, March 24, 1995).

¹⁰In October of 1997, military morale dipped when the senate, in voting on social welfare reform, retracted from the text the article that referred to the special retirement status of military personnel. *O Estado de S. Paulo* (October 14, 1997) noted that the president, “who is familiar with the peculiarities of the profession, supports the special retirement status of military personnel, and was surprised by the decision of the senate.” The same newspaper, in an editorial on October 11, 1997, regarded it as “an error not to give special retirement status to the armed forces.”

¹¹See, in this regard, “Armed Forces and Civilian Power,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, March 30, 1996). Federal Deputy José Genoíno (PT-SP) pointed to the democratic potential in the amendment in that it defined military personnel as “servants of a public character whose function consists in defending national sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional powers” (Genoíno, 1997).

¹²Final approval took place in a special session of Congress, and Constitutional Amendment Number 18 was promulgated on February 5, 1998.

¹³The *Jornal do Brasil* (February 12, 1998) called the attention of its readers to the nature of the decision: “At the Planalto Palace, there was discomfort with the repercussions from the raise given to the military and, still further, to the critical response to the way in which the government made the readjustment payment possible in

February, when the draft legislation that instituted it had hardly been introduced in the National Congress. The president sent the draft to Congress, the military ministers included the pay raise in the counter checks for that month, and [President] Cardoso brought down a decree allowing the readjustment to be paid in advance. In other words, [it was] a complex of advantages and even illegalities that the government did not concede to other civil servants.”

¹⁴By way of comparison, two recent government initiatives—social welfare reform and administrative reform—proceeded through the legislative process in two years and ten months and in over three years, respectively.

¹⁵In an article in *O Globo* (October 9, 1996), entitled “Neoliberalism, Globalization and the Armed Forces,” physicist Luís Pinguelli Rosa argued that “the reequipping of the armed forces is necessary and should be defined according to national needs...but not to please the military establishment or to attend to a model of globalization, for which there will be no shortage of foreign arms dealers to sell here [in Brazil] whatever they can. This is not the real question in redefining the role of Latin American armed forces.”

¹⁶The likely source for this statement was an article published in the *New York Times* and reprinted in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, August 8, 1997.

¹⁷To understand the significance of this measure, it is important to note that the military ministries, unlike other claimants upon the budget, are generally able to spend the resources designated for them in the draft legislation. In their case, as a specialist in military affairs explains, “the difference between the budgeted and expended [amounts] in the last five years has been minimal. They have lost little in the last four years and gained a bit in 1993” (Pereira, 1996).

¹⁸U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, speaking in October, 1996, at the Second Conference of Ministers of Defense of the Americas in Bariloche, Argentina, confirmed that his country was ready to reexamine restrictions on arms sales stemming from the 1960s and 1970s (*Folha de S. Paulo*, October 8, 1998). This theme soon reappeared in statements by the U.S. secretaries of State (Warren Christopher) and Defense (*Estado de S. Paulo*, January 17, 1997). At the end of July, 1997, President Clinton finally authorized the sale of arms to the countries of the hemisphere, contingent upon an examination of each request (*Washington Post*, October 2, 1997).

¹⁹“Without the knowledge of the population or any public debate, the federal government decided to reactivate an old army project” (*Jornal do Brasil*, June 4, 1997). In a joint official communique of the Ministers of the Army and Environment, Water Resources and Amazônia, the ministers explained that “in the context of the project, the construction of the reactor with a maximum potential of .5 megawatts, which is characterized as an experimental reactor, looks toward the acquisition of autonomous nuclear technology, for peaceful ends....The low output planned for the reactor and the observance of international accords supported by Brazil, which has submitted to international inspections, will guarantee that the project will not be used for the production of any nuclear arms” (*Jornal do Brasil*, June 5, 1997).

²⁰Deputy José Genoíno’s criticism of the suspension of competitive bids is mentioned above.

²¹It is useful to recall that such military activity is beyond the scope of the new National Defense Policy, which, “...directed at external threats, has as its goal to establish the objectives of defending the nation, as well as directing the preparation and employment of national capacity, at all levels and spheres of power, and with the involvement of the civilian and military sectors” (Presidency of the Republic, 1996).

²²As early as 1994 the Minister of the Navy of the Itamar Franco government, Admiral Ivan Serpa, mentioned “revolutionary wars” and separatist movements as threats to the security of the country in a speech about “The Strategy of the Navy at the End of the Decade” (Serpa, 1994).

²³Interestingly, at the IV ENEE (May, 1998) no panel had a similar topic. In the second ENEE, in the midst of the identity crisis of the Brazilian armed forces, General Leonel had clarified that “disinformation about the armed forces in our society, especially on the part of the elites, has represented a great impediment to balance in questions regarding the three branches and officers....it is necessary that our system of social communication be perfected” (Leonel, 1995:23-24). Significantly, at the 1998 conference all officers appeared in mufti. In 1995, the use of uniforms clearly distinguished military from civilian participants.

²⁴Two civilians participated in the discussion: Thomaz Guedes da Costa (CNPq) and René Armand Dreiffuss (UFRJ).

²⁵Thus, for example, Governor Mario Covas declared to the press that “the strike reinforces the thesis that it is necessary to make the monopolies flexible” (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 25, 1995). For columnist Marcelo Pontes, “the

true battle behind the strike is that of the monopoly of Petrobrás. Strikers and the government are acting in the context of this cause. The government acted in two ways: while it suffocated the strike with all of its resources, including the occupation of the refineries with army troops, it sealed an agreement with rural parliamentarians, a bloc of 140 votes in the Congress, to vote the following week to break the Petrobrás monopoly” (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 26, 1995).

²⁶The reaction of the press was easily assessed in the titles of columns by Jânio de Freitas (“Armed Nonsense”) and Clóvis Rossi (“Almost a State of Siege”), in the *Folha de S. Paulo*, May 25, 1995, and in the comments by Marcelo Pontes in the *Jornal do Brasil* on May 26, 1995: “there is no doubt about the good intentions of the president, but it is impossible not to find it strange how soon he, with his biography, had recourse to a vice from the period of the military dictatorship in calling in the army to resolve social conflict.” Pontes recalled when, during the dictatorial period, marines had taken charge of the port of Rio de Janeiro.

²⁷Pontes noted, in this regard, that while it was “clear that the president did everything within the law and the rules that democracy permits...nothing [would have] stopped him from organizing the entering of the refineries by repentant strikers using only military police” (*Jornal do Brasil* on May 26, 1995).

²⁸The intensification of the use of the military in activities of agrarian reform—to construct roads, water systems, reservoirs and in surveying plots of land—was a topic at the meeting of the National Defense Council in mid-1996 (*Folha de S. Paulo*, June 22, 1996).

²⁹The note from the army refers to documents divulged by a former agent and announced by Deputy Pedro Wilson (PT-GO) at a meeting of the Committee on Human Rights of the federal Chamber of Deputies. For Deputy Fernando Gabeira (PV-RJ), the revelation that the official secret service continues to operate undermines the proposed creation of the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Abin). “The government cannot create one transparent structure and another clandestine one,” Gabeira said (*Jornal do Brasil*, July 24, 1997).

³⁰According to this material, “the increasing interest of the army in rural landless workers has intensified since 1994. That year, agents of the Strategic Intelligence Service (SAE) prepared a report for the presidency...with foreboding conclusions regarding a supposed ‘paramilitary organization’ of agricultural workers.

³¹Previous operations (1995 and 1996) had involved fewer soldiers. This time, in order to block roads and examine suspects, they used battalions from Recife, Garanhuns, Petrolina, Maceió, and Natal. The operation also involved civic action: the donation of medicines, bricks and cement, along with bus transportation to the sertão for university students of dentistry, medicine, nursing, and veterinary science. The chief of the communications section of the Northeast Military Command said at the time that “all of us hope that the state will never need this, but we must be ready for an eventual action along the lines of what occurred in Rio de Janeiro three years ago” (*Diário de Pernambuco*, October 28, 1997).

³²Hunter notes in this regard that “...the defense of the Amazon borders is probably the most credible external role the Brazilian military could perform in the late twentieth century. The military institution’s marginalization in the sphere of Brazil’s political life renders its Amazon claims especially vital. The armed forces do not appear to have any expansionist designs in the region, but they do make much ado of anything that can be construed as a threat. There is virtual consensus within the armed forces for fortifying security in the region.” *State and Soldier*: 23.

³³Nevertheless, the US-based multinational corporation, Raytheon, was awarded the contract for the electronic surveillance program for the region, SIVAM, which was conceived during the Sarney presidency, and had become a central artifact in military planning for Amazônia. Scandals surrounded the program.

³⁴The cry at that time was “O petróleo é nosso” (“the oil is ours”).

³⁵One of the primary rationalizations of military intervention in 1964 had been the alleged threat to national security posed by the Peasant Leagues (*ligas camponêsas*) in the Northeast region.

³⁶Questions relating to land ownership and Indian affairs were increasingly “militarized,” and “the closer the military rulers came to the date set for the ‘change of regime,’ and the ‘the beginning of the democratic transition under civilian government,’ the more they applied authoritarian mechanisms in the countryside, and particularly in Amazônia. These new measures, together with those related to the earlier creation of [regional programs], made it clear that democracy would not be allowed to prevail in the countryside, and especially not on the frontier.” *Ibid*: 233-4.

³⁷The US contractor was additionally burdened with cost overruns and charges of kickbacks, as the Brazilian media ironically noted.

³⁸The ex-Minister of the Army under Sarney, General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves, proclaimed in late 1991, in significant language, that Lutzenberger was guilty of “selling out” (*entreguismo*), and that he inspired in Gonçalves “the same hatred that I felt for the communist leader, Luiz Carlos Prestes.” *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 11 October 1991, p. 5.

³⁹*Latin American Weekly Report*, 13 May 1993, p. 214.

⁴⁰Marcos Magalhães and Gilse Guedes, “Sarney adere a movimento contra venda da Vale; Para o presidente do Senado, empresa é estratégica para o comércio exterior do País,” *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 18 November 1996.

⁴¹The federal example has begun to stimulate similar requests from municipal authorities. See, for example, the cases of Campinas, which had preventative roadblocks erected around it by the 11th Armored Infantry Brigade (*Correio Popular*, June 6, 1997), and of the mayors of the *sertão* of Pernambuco, who asked Governor Miguel Arraes for help in bringing army intervention against crime and marijuana trafficking in the region (*Diário de Pernambuco*, October 29, 1997). This request resulted in a meeting the following day between the governor and the president, in the presence of the Chief of the Military Household, to decide about the use of troops in the region. Nothing came out of this meeting, however (*Diário de Pernambuco*, October 30, 1997).

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