Brazil's Military Modernization: Is a New Strategic Culture Emerging?

Marcos Degaut

Political Science Department, University of Central Florida
marcosdegaut@knights.ucf.edu

Abstract

Culture has a profound impact in many different fields of human activity, from political and ideological preferences to religious practices and social habits. It influences the way policymakers and strategists think about matters of war and peace, since a deeper understanding of cultural issues can reduce policy failures and advance national interests. In this context, some contemporary scholarship argues that the strategic culture approach offers highly relevant perspectives on foreign policy decision-making, grand strategy, strategic behavior, and military doctrine, since, by applying that approach to certain cases, scholars have been explaining continuity and change in a country's foreign and national security policies. However, such approach is limited by a substantial focus on major powers, particularly the American, Russian, and Chinese cases. This paper seeks to explain how a rising power such as Brazil, still on the periphery of the international system and on the margins of the global distribution of power, has historically behaved, reacted and constructed a discourse that, at the same time, constrains/motivates its decisions, explains its actions, and legitimizes its behavior.

Keywords

Strategic Culture, Brazil, Foreign Policy, Military Modernization

Introduction

Brazil is an important player both at regional and global levels. It is one of the world's largest democracies, the fifth most populous country, and the seventh-largest economy, accounting for approximately 60% of South America's GDP, 47% of its territory and 49% of its population. These variables, along with the absence of border disputes and ter¬ritorial threats, and its sense of exceptionalism in the region, "have inspired a belief that the country belongs among the global elite" (Brands 2010, p. 6), and that it is destined to greatness and to play a more influential role in global affairs.

Brazil's growing importance has sparked a renaissance of scholarly interest, which, although offering insightful contributions, has focused almost exclusively on the most known aspects of its economy and foreign policy. Very little attention has been paid to analyzing the role of strategic culture in shaping Brazil's security and foreign policy behavior, and how it influences the country's global ambitions.

Despite being depicted by Kennan (1994) as a "monster country" which would help shape global affairs[1] – a qualification that takes into account not only demographic and geographic characteristics, but also economic and political variables – Brazil has never been able to match its material assets with global geostrategic clout. International leadership, after all, involves more than self-aggrandizing perceptions of the self, and demands actions beyond merely criticizing flaws in the global order.

As part of its strategic culture and its preference for negotiated over military solutions, Brazil has traditionally rejected the employment of force in international relations and put a premium on ideational resources of leadership, cultivating the "demonization" of the use of force, and indicating its preference for strategies that favor peaceful means of conflict resolution. As a long-time supporter of the international principles of sovereignty, self-determination, non-intervention, and territorial integrity, Brazil has relied on its soft power resources to forward its foreign policy priorities and to promote international changes conducive to its objectives.

This situation has led the country to largely neglect its military capabilities and needs. Franko (2014, p. 1) sees Brazil as a country that "has come to be seen as a significant economic competitor and dynamic force in world politics", but whose "transformational changes in the economic and political realms have not been accompanied by advances in military power". Likewise, Kenkel (2013, p. 107) suggests that while Brazil has experienced an "unprecedented rise in economic output and political influence over the past decade", its military capabilities have lagged behind. Former Defense Minister Nelson Jobim (2011, p. 4) acknowledged the problem, stating: "I affirm that this gap has now reached worrying proportions, once the defense's limited capacity to support Brazilian foreign policy prevents us from adopting bolder diplomatic initiatives."

However, what happens when a country's traditional strategic culture conflicts with what has been increasingly seen as an aspiring great power identity? This study proposes that despite Brazil's preference for strategies that deploy non-material aspects of power, such as consensus building and persuasion, a recent but noticeable change seems to be under way regarding how Brazilian policymakers understand the legitimacy of the use of power to pursue foreign policy objectives,

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[1] Kennan considered only four other nations as "monster countries": the United States, Russia, India and China.

away from more traditional approaches and towards hard power. Recent Brazilian defense and foreign policies seem to be gradually relying more on hard power capabilities than on ideational factors alone, which might reflect a growing understanding that no country has been able to acquire global power status without a solid military power to complement its diplomacy.

Considering Brazil's relevance to the international system, identifying and analyzing the nature of Brazil's strategic culture becomes vital to understand the logic behind the evolution of the country's geopolitics and military doctrine, its foreign policy preferences, its claims for a greater voice in global affairs, and its quest for greatness. The issue becomes more important when one considers that as rising countries move closer to achieving global player status, their strategic preferences could lead to game-changing effects on the international scenario.

This paper aims to discuss the dynamics of strategic cultural change in Brazil and its implications for the country's security and foreign policy decision-making process. Examining how Brazil understands the concept of security and the security scenario with which the country operates is a *sine qua non* condition to assessing Brazil's positioning as a regional and global security actor and to understanding Brazil's national defense policies, and, changes in its strategic culture.

This paper proceeds as follows. The first section provides a short literature review on strategic culture and examines how such concept can be a determinant of a country's foreign policy. It proceeds to discuss the main characteristics of Brazilian strategic culture, and its influence upon the country's foreign policy decision-making process. Next, it analyzes the Brazilian concept of security and the country's regional and global security scenario. Finally, it advocates that, while the strategic culture approach can contribute to discern tendencies in behaviors or preferences, it can change, affecting security and foreign policies and preferences, and providing the rationale for Brazil's ongoing military modernization.

This paper has sought to bridge an important gap in the literature on the subject, which is limited by a substantial focus on major powers. By studying this perspective through the experiences occurred in an emerging country, this paper seeks to contribute to diversify the literature and enrich the understanding of the sources of strategic culture and its implications to a country's foreign and security policies.

The Strategic Culture Approach

Although cultural approaches to strategic studies have existed for thousands of years, grounded in the writings of Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz, the emergence of the modern idea of strategic culture can be traced back to the 1970s, when scholars such as Snyder, Gray and Jones analyzed Soviet nuclear deterrence policy and concluded that American experts, taking for granted that the Soviets

had the same strategic behavior and would react the same way as the Americans, failed to predict Soviet reactions. As a result, they claimed that each country had a particular way to interpret and react to international events. This conclusion was responsible for bringing national culture issues back to the academic and political agenda, and gave rise to the development of a new analysis tool to understanding and explaining how countries see the world, and what drives their foreign policies practices and preferences.

Strategic culture is more than an alternative way of explaining strategic behavior. It explains what constrains actors from taking certain strategic decisions, seeks to explore causal explanations for regular patterns of state behavior, and attempts to generate generalizations from its conclusions. As Lantis (2006:29) points out, "[i] f one accepts that there are truly different strategic cultural profiles, and that they shape security policy choices around the world, then major powers should tailor their policies to accommodate these cultural differences to the extent possible".

Jones (1990) identified three levels of inputs which permeated all levels of choice and delimited strategic options: a macro-environmental level, which involves a country's history, geographic conditions and ethno-cultural characteristics; a societal level, formed by the political, economic, and social structures of a given society; and a micro level, encompassing military institutions and their relations with civil society. Barnett (1999, p. 11) emphasizes that

> [T]he narrative of the national identity provides an understanding of the past, present and future, events are symbolic and constitutive of, and subjectively linked to, that identity, and a particular construction of the past will be the umbilical cord to the present and the future. [...] actors will reconstruct the past as they debate the future, and as they act toward the future they are likely to (re) remember the past.

The literature presents two approaches to analyze strategic culture. One is presented by scholars who define it almost exclusively as the military strategies adopted by nations in its foreign policies. This perspective views strategic culture as a deeply held cultural predisposition for a particular military behaviour or thinking, derived from a country's history, geography, resources, historical traditions and political institutions, a concept that includes the "beliefs about the use of force shared by a national community of military and civilian leaders" (Farrel 2005, p. 8). While Glenn (2009, p. 531) identifies the concept as "the preferred military options that states adopt to achieve particular objectives", Booth (1991, p. 121) believes that "it has influence on the form in which one state interacts with the others concerning security measures, [...] and the ways of solution of problems face to face to threats or to using of force." Likewise, Johnston (1995, p. 46) sees strategic culture as an integrated "system of symbols which acts to establish per-

vasive and long lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs".

However, strategic culture is not a mere consequence of military thought, and its influence is felt in areas like foreign policy. Therefore, the second approach sought to expand its scope and has focused on the "grand strategies of states and include aspects such as economic and diplomatic ways of attaining a state's objectives in addition to military ones" (Howlett 2005, p. 2). Eitelhuber (2009, p. 4-5) contends that "how political power is defined, acquired, legitimized and used and how the outside world is regarded and addressed are thus decisive factors in shaping a state's strategic culture". The foreign policy goals that are to be pursued by a state are then established by its strategic culture.

In this regard, the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) understands it as "the combination of internal and external influences and experiences [...] that shape and influence the way a country understands its relationship to the rest of the world, and how a state will behave in the international community" (Bitencourt & Vaz 2009. p. 1). This broader approach seeks to harmonize apparently antagonistic concepts, as strategy traditionally refers to how hard power can be used to reach political ends. This second perspective was adopted in this study, as it seems to perfectly coincide with traditional Brazilian strategic thought, thus summarized by former Defense Minister Jobim (2011, pp. 3-4):

> *Brazil is in favour of a holistic view of international security. Such view addresses not only the literal military problematics, but also the deep causes of conflicts between human groups: poverty, hopelessness, tribal hatred, ignorance, etc. Brazil believes there is a causal connection between situations of disfavour and violence.*

Considering that this study is about the role of strategic culture in helping to shape a country's foreign and security policies, it proposes that there is a Brazilian strategic culture, which derives from geographic, historical, political, economic, and other variables, influences, and circumstances, and which helps explain why Brazilian policymakers have made the decisions they have. It argues that Brazilian strategic culture has traditionally provided the milieu within which strategic thoughts, foreign policy and security concerns are debated, plans are formulated, and decisions are executed. Thus, if strategic culture really impacts a country's geopolitical thought and international behavior, then we will see Brazilian foreign policies conditioned by the national strategic culture. In this context, it might turn out that Brazilian strategic culture has been causing a non-rational pursuit of great power status, expressed in a security and foreign policy behavior marked by tensions and contradictions.

Main Features of Brazilian Strategic Culture

In order to overcome the existing power gap and to reach a military balance compatible with the country's global ambitions, then President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva formulated the new Brazilian National Strategy of Defense (END) in 2008, which would provide the conceptual framework for the country's military modernization. In 2011, President Dilma Roussef announced the publication of the new Defense White Paper, which updated the 2008 END, defining the country's security environment and its military needs. The guidelines provided by both documents were designed to take four core assumptions into account:

1. The protection of Brazilian territorial sovereignty;

2. The prevalence on non-conflictual approaches;

3. The indissociable link between defense and development policies; and

4. The objective of leading without dominating.

Both documents echoed the First Brazilian National Defense Policy, issued by former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1998, built around an essentially defensive deterrent strategic posture, and upon the following principles:

*   "close relationships, based on mutual respect and trust, with neighboring countries and with the international community in general;

*   rejection of war of conquest; and

*   peaceful resolution of disputes, with resort to the use of force only for self-defense".

These documents provide useful insights to understanding how Brazilian decision-makers and the military see the world, what are their political preferences, how they define and practice security, and what is Brazil's positioning as a global security actor, features that are part of Brazilian strategic culture. These documents make clear that two of the most important traits of the national strategic culture are that the country sees itself as a peaceful nation and a deeply held belief that the Brazil is destined for greatness. These two cultural values have a profound impact upon the country's security thought and foreign policy:

> *Brazil is a peaceful country, by tradition and conviction. It lives in peace with its neighbors. It runs its international affairs, among other things, adopting the constitutional principles of non-intervention, defense of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts. This pacifist trait is part of the national identity, and a value that should be preserved by the Brazilian people. Brazil […] shall rise to the first stage in the world neither promoting hegemony nor domination (2008 END, p. 8).*

Joaquim Nabuco, who was the first Brazilian ambassador to the United States, from 1905 to 1910, perfectly captured the essence of the deeply-rooted aspiration for greatness in the country's political thought when he declared that "Brazil has always been conscious of its size, and it has been governed by a prophetic sense with regard to its future" (Lafer 2000:210). Likewise, Ambassador Araújo Castro (1974), who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs during Goulart's administration, stated that "Brazil is destined to greatness, and it is destined to have a great involvement in the affairs of our time".

Since the Republic was proclaimed in 1889, a multitude of variables, which include Brazil's continental dimensions, its leading economic and political role, and its strategic geographic position within South America, the absence of border disputes and ter¬ritorial threats, and its sense of exceptionalism in the region have fueled this desire for greatness. These two ingrained and intertwined cultural values, pacifism and quest for greatness, have a profound impact upon the country's security thought and foreign policy. In that regard, for example, Brazilian president from 1995 to 2002, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (2004:255) stated in his memoirs that "of all the misguided quests that Brazil has undertaken over the years, few rivaled our efforts to attain our dream of world prominence."

Over time, Brazil has unequivocally expressed its reliance on and preference for negotiated solutions for conflicts. Even the country's independence from Portugal, in 1822, was more of a negotiated arrangement than a prolonged and violent process. Compared with its Spanish-speaking neighbors, Brazil's independence process was relatively peaceful and uneventful, making the country enter nationhood with considerably less strife and bloodshed, despite some violent reactions recorded in Recife and Salvador, in what are now the states of Pernambuco and Bahia, respectively. Finally, in August 29, 1825, through the medium of a treaty brokered by the United Kingdom, Portugal acknowledged the independence of Brazil, putting an end to Brazil's fear of an impending massive Portuguese attack.

A little less known historic fact, however, and one that clearly reveals Brazilian preference for negotiated solutions over war and conflicts, is that, in exchange for Brazil's recognition, the then Emperor Pedro agreed to settle Portugal's debts with Britain. Secret clauses of the 1825 treaty determined that Brazil would assume the responsibility to pay about 1.4 million pounds sterling of Portugal's debt to Britain, and give some other 600,000 pounds sterling to Dom João VI, King of Portugal, supposedly as an indemnity for the loss of the former colony and as personal reparation.

At any rate, the identifying features of the Brazilian strategic culture became even more discernible with the end of the monarchical regime and the advent of the Republic, in 1889. In 1902, in the early days of the fledgling Republic, José Ma-

ria da Silva Paranhos Jr., most commonly known as Baron of Rio Branco, was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, retaining office until his death, in 1912, under four different Presidents, a feat unequalled in Brazilian history. Rio Branco – curiously, an ardent monarchist who refused to abandon his title – skillfully combined all the elements of the Brazilian strategic culture to pursue his geopolitical view of a singular and powerful, yet peaceful Brazil, reinforcing the belief about a land destined to greatness, a vision of grandiosity which has inspired generation after generation of diplomats, military officers and policymakers.

Considered "the father – or the patron – of Brazilian diplomacy" and one of the most prominent Brazilian statesmen ever, Rio Branco "epitomizes Brazilian nationalism […] his political and diplomatic legacy, especially with regard to the demarcation of national borders, is revered as of great importance for the construction of the international identity of Brazil" (Alsina Jr. 2014:9). In fact, Rio Branco's vision shaped both the boundaries of the country and the traditions of Brazilian foreign relations. His most important legacy was his successful endeavor to negotiate territorial disputes between Brazil and some of its neighbors, including Argentina and Bolivia, and consolidate the borders of modern Brazil in a peaceful, yet somewhat expansionist manner. In the words of Lafer (2000:1), a former Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rio Branco "peacefully drew the Brazilian map", and as McCann (1998:64) explains, "in the heyday of international imperialism, he was instrumental in negotiating limits over which the great powers were not to intrude".

Brazil's preference for negotiated over military solutions then became a hallmark of the country's foreign policy. As meaningful examples of this orientation, Brazil, which once was on the verge of acquiring offensive nuclear weapons capabilities, "communicated its decision not to pursue them in the interests of fostering regional and global peace" (Bitencourt & Vaz 2009, p. 9) in the early 1990s. The Brazilian Constitution limits nuclear activities in the national territory only for peaceful purposes and when previously approved by Congress. The way Brazil handled the nuclear proliferation issue clearly reflects its strategic culture, another example of which is the fact that Brazil was the driving force behind the creation of the South American Defense Council, a mechanism established in 2009 whose objective is to consolidate the region as a zone of peace and democratic stability. The Council also seeks a South American identity in the field of defense, through the strengthening of military cooperation, and the implementation of confidence-building measures.

Both the country's Constitution and the END, guided by pacifist, multilateralist traditions, explicitly emphasize and build perceptions of security upon the peaceful resolution of conflicts and legal-normativist approaches to international security issues. The inscription of a traditional peaceful Brazilian identity became

commonplace in both civilian and military literature, in which the national character is depicted as fair and oriented towards the greater common good. However, in order to have a greater voice in global affairs, Brazil has been seeking to raise its profile, but has done so mostly through diplomatic channels, rarely resorting to the threat or use of force.

The Brazilian Security Scenario

Brazilian decision-makers work with the premise that the Brazilian security scenario is completely different from those that predominate in Europe, the United States, and China, where more traditional Realist notions tend to be predominant in the strategic thinking. Although not necessarily stable, Brazil's regional environment is remarkably peaceful, as, with the exception of the Ecuador-Peru border conflict in 1995 and the 1932 Chaco War, no interstate wars have taken place in South America in the twentieth century. Brazil has not been involved in a regional interstate war for over one 152 years now. Brazil's last border conflicts were settled over one hundred years ago, and the last time when the country engaged in a major international conflict was during the Second World War.

These circumstances have reduced the country's interest in developing the kinds of extensive military capabilities that characterize other emerging powers. The dominant understanding of security in Brazil still relates primarily to the role of nonmilitary phenomena and includes a wider range of potential threats, ranging from development and poverty issues to environment and international trade, leading Kenkel (2013, p. 108) to caution that

> To understand Brazil's role as an actor on the international security stage it is paramount that analysis be based on a broadened conception of security. Though they continue to drive strategic analysis in much of the developed world, traditional, hard power–only analytical approaches to security often fail to account for the real chal¬lenges to both state and human security faced by states outside the North Atlantic core.

Flemes and Radseck (2009:8) contend that South America's security agenda is extensive, multilevel, and complex, and require the

> [S]imultaneous management of domestic crises, interstate conflicts and transnational threats. Though located at different systemic levels (national, international, transnational), the three conflict clusters are often interrelated and tend to overlap in the region's border areas, which is why they are often referred to as "border conflicts".

It is, therefore, of essence to discuss the most important perceived threats to Brazil's security and how they influence national strategic thinking. Stuenkel (2010,

p. 105) argues that "the principal international threat Brazil faces is its own inability to assume regional leadership." By not displaying aggressive behavior towards its neighbors, and by emphasizing social and economic development, Brazil contributes to low levels of interstate conflicts in the hemisphere. However, Brazil's lack of political appetite to exercise a more vigorous leadership has narrowed its ability to influence other governments, in order to discourage or prevent the emergence or escalation of crises that might generate regional instability, leading Jobim (2011, p. 7) to declare: "I affirm in a very straightforward way that our current capacity of regional influence is important, even though it is hindered by domestic gaps and by the low density of military power in the country."

This situation undermines the effectiveness of policies designed to address strategic threats and reduce their scope, particularly when such policies involve some form of cooperation from other countries, whose violence – which stems from terrorism and guerrilla activities to weapons and drug-trafficking – might spill into Brazilian territory. In that context, the weakness of neighboring states, unable to ensure basic levels of public order, might pose a threat to Brazil.

Interstate Conflicts in South America

The absence of border disputes involving Brazil does not mean that there isn't some level of interstate conflict in South America. A bellicose colonial legacy seems to have influenced the patterns of behavior of countries in the region, as, with the Brazilian exception, every country presents a border issue with at least one neighboring country, of which the most conspicuous are:

- Venezuela-Guyana: these countries have a longstanding border dispute over the Essequibo region, which covers nearly two-thirds of Guyana, dating back to colonial times and giving rise to occasional military scuffles.

- Venezuela-Colombia: this conflict stems primarily from the presence of non-state criminal actors, such as drug-traffickers, Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries. Colombia has systematically accused Venezuela of providing a safe haven to members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which would then undertake their insurgent activities in Colombia. Bilateral relations reached its lowest level in 2009, when Colombian President Álvaro Uribe instructed his military to prepare for war on that ground. Likewise, Caracas and Bogotá have disputed the maritime border in the Gulf of Venezuela since the 1830s. The discovery of significant oil reserves in the region in the 1980s intensified the conflict, leading both countries to engage in small military skirmishes.

- Colombia-Ecuador: this conflict also stems from the presence of drug-traffickers, Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries. In December 2006,

Francisco Carrión, Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared a Colombian crop-spraying program which reached Ecuadorian territory a hostile act and recalled his country's ambassador. On March 1, 2008, a larger diplomatic crisis broke out when the Colombian Armed Forces bombed some FARC camps in Ecuador and crossed the border to chase combatants. Ecuador, supported by Venezuelan troops, dispatched its militaries to the region. Diplomatic ties were interrupted and were resumed only in November 2010. Tensions, however, remain in the area.

- Ecuador-Peru: these countries share a long border made up largely of jungle and high mountains. The area known as Cordillera del Condor had been the site of armed disputes between both countries for more than 150 years. Despite claims that the land was part of Ecuador, the area of confrontation was recognized as Peruvian by the 1942 Rio Protocol and other international legal instruments. A military conflict erupted in 1995, resulting in a peace agreement signed in 1999.

- Peru-Chile: After winning the Pacific War (1879-1893) against Bolivia and Peru, Chile imposed its sovereignty on the Peruvian province of Arica, which harbors the strategic Arica Port. Both countries have kept strained relations since then. In 2008, Peru demanded the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to rule its claim to redraw the maritime boundary between both countries. On January 27, 2014, the ICJ basically maintained the borders as they were.

- Chile-Bolivia: As a result of the Pacific War, Bolivia lost its access to the Pacific Ocean and to copper-rich lands, annexed by Chile. Since then Bolivia never gave up of its objective of regaining the lost possessions. On April 24, 2013, Bolivia brought the case before the ICJ, which is still pending. These are the only countries in South America that do not have diplomatic relations.

- Chile-Argentina: Since the 1880s, these countries have disputed over 100 miles of a contested territory known as the Southern Icefields, which is believed to contain one of the largest reserve of potable water in the world. Although an accord was signed in 1998, domestic circumstances in Argentina have led the country's rulers to try to reignite old tensions as a diversionary strategy from the Argentina's dire economic situation.

Although none of these issues can be credibly considered a direct threat to Brazil, they represent sources of regional instability. Consequently, it would be in Brazil's best interest to use its diplomatic, military, and economic weight to develop strategies that favor regional cooperation and the maintenance of a stable and

peaceful continent.

The Extra-Continental Scenario

Although "it is evident that South America's borders zones have become 'hot spots' because traditional and new threats tend to overlap and mutually intensify one another in these often poorly patrolled spaces" (Flemes & Radseck 2009, p. 8), Brazil perceives no major threats to its national security. The same cannot be said regarding the extra-continental scenario. Bitencourt and Vaz (2009) argue that the traditional strategy of associating economic development and security as a national goal[2] may have given rise to negative effects, the main downside of which is the emergence of "conspiracy theories". In the Brazilian public mentality, there is a long held belief that developed countries are systematically blocking Brazilian efforts to become a major power. Brands (2010, pp. 11) observes that "Brazilian strategic analysis features a perva¬sive sense of danger – a fear that the strictures of the current global order might impede Brazil's develop¬ment or otherwise limit its potential." Likewise, Bertonha (2010, p. 114) asserts that "the possibility of Brazil making demands in the international scenario has always been blocked by two variables: less power and no chances given to it by the great powers." Gouvea (2015:138) observed that

> *In the 1990s and 2000s, Brazil's defense industry suffered a dramatic reduc-tion in size, diversification, and momentum. Beginning in the 1980s and early 1990s, it suffered a missile technology and a supercomputer embargo from the G–7 nations, which hampered the industry's ability to upgrade its defense hard-ware and software; this in turn dramatically compromised its global penetration capability.*

Brazilian policymakers, in general, believe that other nations covet Brazil's natural resources and would take them if necessary. As Amorim (2013), former Minister of Foreign Affairs (1993-1995 and 2003-2011) and Defense (2011-2015) ob-served,

> *Brazil's abundance of energy, food, water, and biodiversity increases its stake in a security environment characterized by rising competition for access to, or control of, natural resources. In order to meet the challenges of this complex reality, Bra-zil's peaceful foreign policy must be supported by a robust defense policy*

The way Brazil assesses the international scenario to formulate its security and foreign policies reflect its strategic culture. Although Itamaraty traditionally de-picts the country as a *satisfied* or *status quo* nation, deprived of major ambitions,

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[2] Brazil's END (2009, p. 8) states that "[t]he national strategy of defense is inseparable from the na-tional strategy of development. The latter drives the former. The former provides shielding to the latter. Each one reinforces the other's reasons."

Brazil is anything but satisfied with the current global order, a stance consistent with its drive for greatness. This concept seems to be instrumental and might mean only that Brazil has no territorial ambitions or border conflicts, an approach designed to be consistent with Brazilian peaceful traditions and "not to stir con-troversy through the identification of neighbours as poten¬tial threats" (Kenkel 2013, p. 112). Brands (2010, p. 10) suggests that Brazil's grand strategy

> *has been rooted in a deeply ambivalent view of the international system. In one sense, Brazil has benefit¬ed enormously from "public goods" that the United States and its Western partners provided during the postwar – and now the post–Cold War – era…[n]onetheless, the prevailing global order still strikes many Brazil-ians as fundamentally inequitable.*

In fact, in its eagerness to achieve major power status, Brazil has sometimes adopted an erratic behavior, implementing ineffective, and often contradictory, piecemeal strategies. At times, Brazil has accepted the current status quo and tied its emergence to the fate of the major powers. At different times, it has adopted a revisionist stance, to improve its position in the international system. Brazil-ians appear to believe that the chaotic, competitive and asymmetric nature of the international system is a source of instability that determines the status of the countries and limit their strategic choices. Consequently, the willingness to pro-voke changes in the *status quo* demands the development of economic, political, military, and diplomatic capabilities. However, the fundamental contradiction in Brazilian foreign policy is the fact that Brazil presents itself as an indefatigable "champion" of the Global South but spares no efforts to be acknowledged as a potential member of the North, longing to be included in the restrict club of global powers.

For that reason, deprived of hard power capabilities, Brazil has systematically advocated the use of soft power resources as a strategy to promote changes in the international scenario to shape a more favorable environment to the realization of its interests. The concentration of power in the hands of a few countries, which goes against the principle of equality among sovereign countries, is something that Brazil has rejected, the reason why the country has displayed a preferential option for the strengthening of international institutions. In that sense, Brazil's perspective of its role in global politics relies heavily on the efficacy of multilateral institutional power, as a way to structure a more symmetric world order. A robust multilateralism is deemed more convenient for an emerging country to overcome its own status quo and find its place among the great powers. The strategic corner-stones of Brazilian foreign policy have followed from this framework.

Trying to make the transition from rule-taker to rule-maker, Brazil is struggling to have a bigger influence on global issues, and Itamaraty seemed to understand

that there were only two complimentary ways to achieve this objective. The first one is an attempt to gain leverage within existing mechanisms, by adopting a more proactive foreign policy and to engage actively in the activities of multilateral organizations within the framework of the current order. Brazil has been an active member of the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, a constant presence in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and a key member in the discussions on climatic change, for example.

The second strategy is twofold. On one hand, the country vigorously advocates reforms in the global governance system, which might favor its interests, working to push for reform of the UNSC structure and multilateral financial architecture and institutions. On the other, Brazil tries to take the lead in building political and economic alliances to maximize and spread its influence. The Union of South American Nations (UNASUL), the IBSA Forum, the South American-Arab Countries initiative (ASPA), and the BRICS, whose affiliation is seen as a passport to global leadership, are examples of this strategy. Certainly, such reformist behavior is addressed by neoliberal institutionalist theory, which argues that some degree of revisionism contributes to strengthen international organizations and regimes by updating decision-making processes, including new actors, and encouraging continuous adjustments regarding important issues, reason why it should not be confounded with systemic confrontation, although it does involve some confrontational elements (Keohane 1984).

The problem emerges when the importance conferred to multilateral institutions, norms, and regimes is mostly instrumental to the self-interested achievement of national objectives and priorities. To some extent, Brazil appears to be more concerned with benefits and power distribution issues than with the maximization of existing benefits, reason why, as important as these two strategies might be to Brazil's foreign policy, and as rooted as they are in the country's national identity, Brazilian policymakers seem to more and more acknowledge that soft power alone will not be enough to move forward the country's interests.

In fact, some scholars and countries, particularly in the developing world, argue that Brazil's diplomatic rhetoric is often at variance with its foreign policy behavior, and its initiatives to reform such international organizations would in reality not be about democratizing or giving greater legitimacy to them, "but rather about creating an 'expanded oligarchy'" (Stuenkel 2010:126). In this context, Brazil, a traditional critic of the system, would spare no efforts to promote the advancement of its own deeper integration into the system and be acknowledged as a member of the global elite.

Despite Brazil's interest in the stability of the system and in reducing asymmetries of power distribution, its participation in such institutions and regimes ap-

parently also follows two distinct but complementary logics. On the one hand, these collective arrangements can provide Brazil with a geopolitical cover, reducing the impression that the country is merely seeking a superpower role in global affairs, while using them as a platform to advance its national geostrategic interests. On the other, Brazil reinforces its image as a leading developing nation among its counterparts, and reiterates its preference for multilateral solutions to international issues. In that context, a third strategy, based on the strengthening of military capabilities and a more active participation in UN peacekeeping missions, has taken shape and is gradually being implemented. As Amorim (2013), observed, "in an unpredictable world, where old threats are compounded by new challenges, policymakers cannot disregard hard power."

A Changing Strategic Culture?

Considering that foreign policy choices are mediated through a set of core ideas, beliefs and doctrines that decision-makers use to justify preferences, the traditional focus of this approach has been on continuity or semi-permanence in strategic culture. Although those variables undergo changes along the years, they tend to evolve slowly, becoming semi-permanent features of the national identity. Such relative continuity allows a country to articulate a coherent grand strategy which reflects its world views, to define its foreign policy priorities, and to identify all instruments of power available to pursue its objectives.

However, strategic cultures do change, sometimes radically, due to external shocks, internal constraints, and/or the behavior of rival elites that could influence strategic identities in a state.   As part of its strategic culture and its preference for negotiated over military solutions, Brazil has traditionally rejected the employment of force in international relations and put a premium on ideational resources of leadership. As a long-time supporter of the principles of sovereignty, self-determination, and non-intervention, Brazil has historically relied on its soft power resources to forward its foreign policy priorities and promote international changes conducive to its objectives. As Hamann (2012, p. 72) explains,

> *Brazilian foreign policy is molded by strong non-material aspects **and** lack of material capacity. When translated into foreign policy, these two conditions act in favour of the use of soft power to deal with international politics, which justifies Brazil's preference for non-coercive measures to maintain or restore international peace and security.*

Such stance, however, has led the country to neglect the development of its military capabilities. When it comes to hard power, there is an apparent mismatch between Brazilian global ambitions and its military capabilities. In comparison to its economy and size, Brazil "underspends on its defense" (Franko 2014, p. 10).

Over the course of the last decade, Brazil has spent on average only 1.5% of its GDP annually on defense[3], ranking only 65th in terms of military expenditure as a percentage of GDP[4] in the world, and 11th in terms of total dollars spent[5]. Its military expenditure reached US\$ 32 billion dollars in 2014, nearly 5% of the United States defense budget and less than one quarter of China's. Over 70% of that amount, however, was allocated to the payment of salaries and benefits, impairing its capacity to modernize military hardware, equip its armed forces, and project force outside its borders. Brazil has also spent less than the other BRICS countries. While military expenditures in Brazil increased only by 22 percent from 2002–2011, China's, Russia's, and India's spending grew by 170 percent, 79 percent, and 66 percent, respectively (Franko 2014).

Within such framework, Brazil's traditional non-confrontational politics might reflect the weakness of its military power. Brazil's perception of its own identity was historically that of a weak marginal state seeking the assistance and protection of more powerful nations. Hamann (2012, p. 75) notes that, "the lack of materiality in Brazilian power has at least two consequences. First, it emphasizes that Brazil does not have the credentials of a global power; Second, Brazil still has to recognize that climbing up to a new level involves responsibilities that go beyond pure diplomacy."

Table 1: Brazil's Defense Budget as a percent of GDP 2005-2014

Year	Budget in U.S. Dollars (billions)	% of GDP
2005	26,502	1.5
2006	27,441	1.5
2007	29,595	1.5
2008	31,488	1.5
2009	34,334	1.6
2010	38,127	1.6
2011	36,932	1.5
2012	37,751	1.5
2013	32,875	1.4
2014	32,860	1.4
2015	31,954	1.4

Source: SIPRI[6]

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[3] SIPRI Yearbook 2014.
[4] IndexMundi. Available at [http://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?t=0&v=132&l=en].
[5] SIPRI Yearbook 2014.
[6] Available at [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Milex-GDP-share.pdf] and [https:// www.

What then happens when a country's traditional strategic culture conflicts with what has been increasingly seen as an aspiring great power identity? Despite Brazil's preference for soft-power strategies, a slow but noticeable change seems to be under way regarding how Brazilian policymakers understand the legitimacy of the use of power to pursue foreign policy objectives.

This changing perception suggests that Brazilian policymakers seem to be relying more on hard power capabilities than on ideational factors alone, as a foreign policy "excessively based on negotiation may show signs of weakness and may generate more damage than benefits" (Bertonha 2010, p. 12). That shift appears to mirror a growing perception among Brazilian decision-makers that if Brazil wants to increase its standing in international politics it must be able to flex its muscles and display military and power projection capabilities and resolve. As the Brazilian END (2008, p. 11) states, "in order to dissuade, one needs to be prepared to combat", and "if Brazil is willing to reach its deserved spot in the world, it will have to be prepared to defend itself not only from aggressions, but equally from threats" (Ministry of Defense 2009, p. 8). Jobim (2011, p. 7) also highlighted this "new" stance: "Soft power separated from hard power means a diminished power or a power that cannot be applied to its full potential." Likewise, former Navy Minister Admiral Mário Flores stated that "pacifism is not conformity, and modern military power should not be improvised. It will be too late if we think of it only in times of need"[7].

This stance also seems to reflect a growing understanding that no country has been able to acquire global power status without a solid military power to complement its diplomacy. The American support for India's aspiration to a permanent seat on the UNSC illustrates this point, by fostering the impression that the achievement of the seat depends largely on a country's military power and nuclear status. Compared to stronger players, the renunciation of the use of force can perpetuate asymmetries of power that could block a country's path towards great power, as "without military power, the country is constrained in its relations and autonomy relation to the great powers and even its own national 'soft power' and diplomacy decrease in credibility" (Bertonha 2010, p. 114).

In this context, the development of its nuclear submarine program, the more active participation in UN peacekeeping missions, the purchase of 36 new combat aircraft, with prospects of acquiring another 72, and the ongoing process of modernization of its armed forces seems to fit within the framework of a country that, although tied to its traditions, is recognizing that it must develop its military capabilities if it wants to one day be considered a major power.

sipri.org/sites/default/files/Milex-constant-USD.pdf]

7 O Estado de São Paulo. Available at [http://opiniao.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral, defesa-nacional-imp-,1658121].

Brazil's Military Modernization

Adopting the perspective that military power does not need to be used but it needs to be solid and dependable, Brazil is seeking to strengthen its military capabilities in a number of strategic areas, to convey the message that it will be ready to exhibit military power to complement its political-diplomatic and economic capabilities. In that context, the END (2009, pp. 11-23) is based on the main guidelines:

1. To dissuade the concentration of hostile forces in the terrestrial borders, in the limits of the Brazilian jurisdictional waters, and prevent them from using the national air space [...].

2. To organize the Armed Forces under the aegis of the monitoring/control, mobility and presence trinomial [...].

3. To develop the ability to monitor and control the Brazilian air space, the territory and the jurisdictional waters [...].

4. To develop the capacity of promptly responding to any threat or aggression backed by the capacity to monitor/control [...].

5. To deepen the link between technological and operational aspects of mobility [...].

6. To strengthen three strategically important sectors: cybernetics, space and nuclear [...].

7. To enhance the presence of Army, Navy and Air Force units in the border areas [...].

8. Prioritize the Amazon region.

9. To develop logistic capacity, in order to strengthen mobility [...].

10. To develop the concept of flexibility in combat to meet the requirements of monitoring/control, mobility and presence [...].

11. To structure the strategic potential in terms of capabilities. [...].

12. To prepare the Armed Forces to perform growing responsibilities in peacekeeping operations. [...].

13. To expand the country's capacity to meet international commitments in terms of search and rescue [...].

14. To develop the potential of military and national mobilization to assure

the dissuasive and operational capacity of the Armed Forces. [...].

15. To qualify the national defense industry so that it conquers the necessary autonomy in indispensable technologies to defense purposes.

These guidelines indicate that the END is based on three perspectives: national, regional, and global. The national dimension involves the reorganization of the Armed Forces, and the development of hard power capabilities that can be used as an effective deterrent against any threats to Brazil's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The regional level envisages Brazil as an element of unity and stabilization in South America, while promoting its integration. The third dimension reflects the country's ambition of playing a major role in international affairs, including a more active presence in UN peacekeeping missions.

Brazil is expected to spend US$190 billion between 2013 and 2019 to upgrade its military capabilities, having already implemented "an offset policy and strategy forcing foreign defense companies to transfer technology and to use local Brazilian domestic companies to produce and assemble defense hardware and software" (Gouvea 2015, p. 139). The strengthening of an indigenous defense technology industry, intrinsically linked to national development, is the central pillar upon which these perspectives are built. The END (2009, p. 18) explicitly called for a robust domestic defense industry with the "technological capacity [...] to gradually rule out the need to purchase imported services and products".

Such endeavor has led the government to establish partnerships not based on ideology and that allows for growth of the defense technology sector. The insistence on offsets and technology transfer in its military modernization process is a crucial part of this effort. A key tenet of the END is the perception that the country will only achieve international prominence through mastery of sensitive technologies in the following strategic sectors: cybernetics; an autonomous space program, including the development project of geostationary satellites to ensure secure communications and to monitor Brazilian territory; and the strengthening of peaceful nuclear capabilities, whose main focus is the development of a nuclear submarine and the generation of energy. In this regard, the END (2009, p. 33) explicitly calls for the following initiatives:

a) Regarding the nuclear-propelled submarine program, Brazil should complete the full nationalization and the development – at industrial scale – of the fuel cycle (including gasification and enrichment) and of the reactor construction technology for exclusive use of the country.

b) Speed up the mapping, ore searching and utilization of uranium deposits.

c) Develop the potential of designing and building nuclear thermo power

plants with technology and capacities that may end up under the national domain, even if they are developed by means of partnerships with foreign companies and States. [...] and

d) Increase the capacity to use nuclear power for a broad range of activities

Likewise, Brazil is making substantial investments in military hardware, with the objective of not only being able to project power, but also as a message that the country aspires to assume greater responsibilities in global affairs. As Jobim stated, "[w]hat we want is to have voice and vote in the international arena, and this only goes to countries that have a defense structure to deter and to express national power" (Brands 2010, p. 15).

As part of its modernization program, Brazilian Navy signed a contract with a French company for the construction of five highly modern submarines of the *Scorpene* class, one of them nuclear-powered, which could put Brazil ahead of regional competitors regarding the "dispute" for a permanent seat on the UNSC, as no other Latin country possesses that equipment. Navy officers have drawn attention to the fact that all UNSC permanent members possess nuclear submarines. A former Brazilian Admiral, for example, contended that "when Brazil becomes the sixth [member of the UN to possess a nuclear submarine), it will be much bigger as a nation from both military and strategic points of view. It will have solid means to claim a seat on the Security Council" (Rodrigues 2009).

The Navy has also sought to invest in the construction of six escort ships, equipped with up to 12-ton helicopters, eight ocean patrol ships and 15 river patrol ships. It is also modernizing the country's single aircraft carrier, while seeking to acquire another one. The AF-1 Skyhawk jetfighters operating in the São Paulo aircraft carrier are also undergoing a modernization process.

The Army has been developing projects to enhance its power projection capabilities, such as *Combatant of the Future*, which seeks to develop communications and location systems, weapons and night vision equipment, and *Strong Arm*, aimed at acquiring a new caliber rifle model to equip soldiers. As part of its *Guarani* project, the Army has already signed a contract with an Italian company for the construction of two thousand tanks for transportation of their troops. Likewise, 250 German tanks, model Leopard 1A564, have already been purchased.

The Air Force has invested in the purchase of last generation jetfighters and the development of technology to manufacture its own fighter aircrafts, while modernizing all its AMX units. A multi-billion dollars contract was signed with Sweden for the acquisition of 36 Gripen NG jet fighters, of which 15 will be manufactured in Brazil. An important part of this agreement is the transfer of technology to the Brazilian defense industry. Brazil has also acquired the latest

generation of Russian attack helicopters AH-2 Sabre, while Embraer has developed two projects which are already international sales success: the Attack Aircraft A-29 Super Tucano and the medium-sized KC-390 tactical airlifter.

Peacekeeping and International Projection

States have different motivations to engage in peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Some view them as an opportunity for achieving self-interested objectives. Others believe that it can be translated into greater international prestige. Some consider PKOs as a shortcut to important positions within the structure of an international organization, while some take part merely in the hopes of getting some financial compensation. Peacekeeping can, therefore, be highly useful for states which see international institutions as a means for the pursuit of national interests, as " in no small way peacekeeping has developed as a way for middle powers to demonstrate their power in and their importance to world politics" (Neack 1995, p. 183).

This might be the case of Brazil. A more active participation in PKOs, to raise the country's international profile, increase its involvement in global affairs, and promote a stronger presence in the UN debates is another course of action present in Brazil's END – and something that might change the profile of its strategic culture. The END (2009, p. 62) states that "Brazil shall expand its participation in peacekeeping operations [...] according to the national interests." Likewise, the 2005 Brazilian National Defense Policy (2005, p. 9) states that

> *To enlarge the country's projection in the world concert and to reaffirm its commitment with the defense of peace and with the cooperation among the peoples, Brazil should intensify its participation in humanitarian actions and in peace missions with the support of multilateral organisms.*

Therefore, Brazilian policymakers "have quietly worked on the belief that would-be permanent members of the UNSC need to develop their hard power in order to be able to engage in military interventions and thus meet any potential challenges to international peace and order" (Valença & Carvalho 2014, p. 79). To Hirst and Nasser (2014, p. 1), Brazil's involvement in PKOs "has evolved from being a selective troop contributor to an ambitious innovator in terms of its political approach and stabilisation methods." As Brazil has performed well in PKOs, the END underscores the need for the country to be even more prepared to assume greater responsibilities, to meet UN collective security requirements worldwide. Couching the country's ambitions in diplomatic language, Amorim (2013) argues that

> *By deterring threats to national sovereignty, military power supports peace; and, in Brazil's case, it underpins our country's constructive role in the pursuit of global stability. That role is more necessary than ever. Over the past two decades,*

> *unilateral actions in disregard of the UN Security Council's primary responsibility in matters of war and peace have led to greater uncertainty and instability. [...] Even as Brazil hardens its soft power, it remains deeply committed to the path of dialogue, conflict prevention, and the negotiated settlement of disputes.*

Amorim's words mean that as international norms and practices regarding humanitarian intervention are evolving towards a greater willingness of major powers to intervene militarily in the internal affairs of other nations, Brazil can reliably present itself as a country able to fulfill a mandate received from the UNSC and contribute to international peace and stability, with responsibility and effectiveness.

This new stance began to be adopted in June 2004, when Brazil accepted the command of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), as until then Brazilian contributions were mainly symbolic and concentrated in Portuguese-speaking countries. This change from a secondary participation to an active leadership underscores Brazil's self-perception of its changing international role, leading to shifts in the geographical distribution and scale of involvement of Brazil's participation in PKOs which reflect the reorientation of its foreign policy in its search for greater global influence. Since then, now participating in nine of the 17 UN-led PKOs, with 1,229 troops, Brazil's engagement in PKOs has become one of the central pillars of its search for a new international status.

By accepting greater international responsibilities in the preservation of peace and security, Brazil seeks to assume a role more consistent with its global ambitions. Such reorientation, however, has led Brazil to become involved in controversial external interventions, revealing an unusual power-politics side to Brazil's role in PKOs, beyond the soft power rhetoric. This stance not only contradicts some principles of traditional Brazilian strategic culture, but also seems to indicate a readjustment in the country's international behavior and a shift in the capabilities, tactics, and doctrines of its Armed Forces.

Conclusions

This study has argued that the impact of strategic culture is important to understanding Brazil's security and foreign policies. Its primary objective was to explain how Brazil has historically behaved, reacted and constructed a discourse that has constrained and motivated its decisions, explained its actions, and legitimized its behavior. It argued that Brazilian strategic culture has traditionally provided the milieu within which strategic thoughts, foreign policy and security concerns are debated, plans are formulated, and decisions are executed.

However, as strategic cultures are not immutable, this study discussed the dynamics of strategic cultural change in Brazil and its implications for the country's

security and foreign policy decision-making process. It examined how Brazil understands security and the security scenario with which the country operates, and found that this is a *sine qua non* condition to assessing Brazil's national defense policies, military strategies, and the changes in its strategic culture.

This research sought to explain that, as part of its strategic culture and its preference for negotiated over military solutions, Brazil has historically rejected the employment of force in international relations and put a premium on ideational resources of leadership. Brazil has not only clearly indicated its preference for strategies that favor peaceful means of conflict resolution, but also relied on its soft power resources to promote international changes conducive to its objectives, a stance that has led the country to neglect the development of its military capabilities.

However, a slow but noticeable change seems to be under way regarding how Brazilian policymakers understand the legitimacy of the use of power to pursue foreign objectives. Brazilian policymakers seem to be gradually relying more on hard power capabilities than on ideational factors alone, what seems to be reflected in the process of military modernization currently being undertaken, which fits within the framework of a country that is gradually recognizing that it must develop and display military and power projection capabilities if it wants to one day be considered a major power.

This behavior might also reflect a growing understanding that no country has been able to acquire global power status without a solid military power to complement its diplomacy. In that context, only historical perspective will be able to tell whether current changes in Brazil's security and foreign policy behavior, and its persistence through time, will have given rise to the emergence of a new strategic culture.

Bio

Marcos Degaut (marcosdegaut@knights.ucf.edu), Ph.D. in Security Studies (University of Central Florida), is a Political Advisor at the Brazilian House of Representatives, Co-President of the Kalout-Degaut Institute of Politics and Strategy, and former Intelligence Officer. He served as Assessor to International Affairs at Brazil's Presidency of the Republic, Deputy Head of International Affairs at the Superior Court of Justice, and Secretary General of the National Judicial School. Currently a Research Fellow in the Political Science Department at the University of Central Florida, Marcos has published articles in highly-respected outlets such as Intelligence and National Security Journal, Harvard International Review, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

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