

# CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE BRAZILIAN NAVY: ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND SELF-IDENTITY

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to investigate the sense of identity in the Brazilian navy using the concept of naval ontological security, defined as the set of collective practices historically consolidated in warships that enable emotional resilience in face of the anxiety of constant uncertainty when serving at sea. As scholars have predominantly considered the Brazilian military forces a homogeneous group, broadly defined and represented by the social traces of the Army, this research contributes to the literature on civil-military relations shedding light on the impact of the navy upon the social imaginary of Brazil. It addresses the questions of how the Brazilian navy's ontological security functions, what elements are involved, and to what extent Brazil's national features contribute to it. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens's theoretical framework, it will be argued that in the process of ontological security, navies (re)produce international practices inasmuch as they incorporate domestic social traces, constructing their sense of identity by coherently amalgamating biographical narratives, pride and trust. Brazil's postcolonial condition, its stable diplomatic posture and the diversity of its people historically contributed to the consolidation of the navy's self-identity. Naval practices will be empirically assessed via primary and secondary sources, such as naval dispatches, official documents and personal accounts of seamen's experiences. This exploratory analytical framework might provide the basis for a better understanding of civil-military relations in the navy, assessing the social tissue that interweaves the men and women who make up the institution.

**Keywords:** self-identity, Brazilian navy, naval ontological security, civil-military relations

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## Introduction

The Brazilian Navy (Marinha do Brasil, MB)<sup>1</sup> is scarcely present in the social imaginary of the Brazilian people. While, overall, the civil society can arguably say that a Brazilian Army's Major is less senior than a Lieutenant Colonel, the same not would be possible regarding MB's Lieutenant Commander who is equivalently more junior than a Commander. This is because Civil-Military relations in Brazil have predominantly considered the military forces a homogeneous group, broadly defined and represented by the social traces of the Brazilian Army (Exército Brasileiro, EB)<sup>2</sup>. The latter's involvement in domestic politics since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has driven the debate on the military towards a state-centric top-down approach, focusing on their macro-structures and political tendency to intervene (Comblin, 1978; Castro e D'Araújo, 2001; Reznik, 2004; Carvalho, 2005; Zaverucha e Teixeira, 2003; Zaverucha, 2005).

Albeit important, these views have neglected the MB and overlooked another element regarding its social insertion: its collective sense of identity. Understanding how the MB works from a sociological standpoint and how individuals make sense of who they are through the institution might give the transparency to reach civil society's imaginary. The studies of military identity are

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter I will be using the portuguese acronym MB or Marinha do Brasil.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter I will be using the portuguese acronym EB or Exército Brasileiro.

relatively recent in Brazil and started in the 1990s (Castro, 1990; Leirner 1997), not surprisingly, shaped by the EB's social environment and equipped with a theoretical-methodological view which does not fully capture MB's distinctiveness. Hence, to bridge this gap, this paper seeks to present a theoretical apparatus to investigate the sense of self-identity in the MB.

This work will be grounded on the premise that the consolidation of a collective sense of identity in navies differs to that which is produced in the army, due to the social atmosphere on warships. This social atmosphere revolves around the anxiety of being exposed to the unpredictability of an unnatural "terrain" such as the ocean; sharing hermetically closed spaces with people from multiple backgrounds; coping with the always present threat of the enemy and sharing international practices with other navies. Inspired by the work of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu I will assess such a condition using the concept of ontological security, generally meaning the confidence that the existential parameters of self and social identities are what they appear to be (Giddens, 1984, p. 375).

Bringing this concept to the Brazilian context, because ontological security is the emotional process leading to a stable sense of self-identity, I will address the following problem: how does ontological security work in the MB? What elements are involved in such a process? To what extent do Brazil's national features contribute to it?

I will argue that *naval* ontological security can be conceptualised as the set of practices historically consolidated in warships which have conditioned a consistent sense of self-identity when tackling the anxiety of constant uncertainty when serving at sea. In the MB it takes place by a process of coherently amalgamating biographical narratives, pride and trust, based on Brazil's postcolonial condition, its stable diplomatic posture and the diversity of its people.

By bringing these authors together, I will review the current literature on military identity in order to provide the theoretical apparatus to conceptualise naval ontological security. As a preliminary approach to the theme, I will exemplify its empirical assessment by historically analysing the trajectory of the Ordenança Geral para o Serviço da Armada (OSGA), the general regulation that shapes MB institutionally, from its first version to the contemporary one. I will rely on primary and secondary sources, undertaking a discourse analysis to verify whether or when everyday practices led to a sense of ontological (in)security via naval dispatches, memoirs and official documents.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first is devoted to reviewing the body of literature on military identity. In the second part, I bring together Giddens and Bourdieu to conceptualise naval ontological security. The third part consists of the historical analysis of OSGA.

## **Self-Identity in the Brazilian military: the naval void**

The literature regarding the sense of identity of Brazil's Armed Forces is relatively recent and revolves around two overall premises: i) that a common military *ethos* cuts across the Brazilian Navy, the Army and the Air Force; ii) that such an *ethos* is constructed through the experiences at the military academies and institutions of high military education, via hierarchy and discipline.

Celso Castro was arguably the first scholar to directly address this problem, focusing on the military *per se* rather than providing a state-centred top-down view of how they fit in a larger historical-societal context and politically intervening in its functioning. In *O Espírito Militar: Um Antropólogo na Caserna* (The Military Spirit: An Anthropologist inside the Barracks) he undertakes ethnographical research at the *Academia Militar das Agulhas Negras* (AMAN) (Brazilian EB's Academy)<sup>3</sup> examining the creation of military identity by closely engaging with cadets' everyday activities in a 36-day-participant-observation journey (Castro, 1990).

After expanding his research on the EB's historical symbolism and tradition (Castro, 2002), and exploring the challenging atmosphere of doing field research on them (Castro e Leirner, 2009), Castro contends that the military's sense of identity goes beyond the experience of living in a "total institution" as Erving Goffman had suggested. He alleges that the institution itself is "totalising", as it becomes part of the life of its inmates, holistically pervading every aspect of their social environment, from their daily vocabulary and codes of conduct, to their family-members' careers and emotional resilience (Castro, 2007).

This argument was further elaborated by Piero Leirner (1997), who investigated the cleavage between the military and the civilians caused by the former's consolidation of social identity. By conducting field research at the *Escola de Comando e Estado Maior do Exército*<sup>4</sup> (ECEME) (EB's War College), Leirner concludes that such a boundary is presented by the specificity of the Army's hierarchy, the general principle that segments individuals, ordering their capabilities by the sense of merit and therefore separating who belongs to the institution (Ibid, p. 111).

Since the 2000s, Castro and Leirner's research has inspired other scholars to address Brazilian civil-military relations through a socio-anthropological lens (Gomes 2018; Carvalho, 2019; Miranda, 2019; Castro e Monnerat, 2019). However, this growing body of literature has preponderantly emphasised the Brazilian Army as the main object of analysis and particularly overlooked the Navy. A rapid research in the CAPES thesis catalogue<sup>5</sup> using the term "military identity" between 2000-2021, filtered through the area of humanities, finds 24 results, none of these regarding uniquely the Navy. The 2009-book edited by the authors, *Antropologia dos Militares* (*The Anthropology of the*

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<sup>3</sup> AMAN is the institution where officers are formed, being admitted at the age of 18. After a four-year period of training, they go from cadets to officers.

<sup>4</sup> ECEME is the institution where officers receive further education at the rank of major.

<sup>5</sup> Available at < [https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses/#!/>](https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses/#!/) access on May 15th 2021 16:50.

*Military*) (2009) recognises this gap in the literature; nonetheless, it does not include a single article regarding the Navy. The journal *Militares e a Política* (The Military and Politics), active from 2007 to 2011, only includes a brief research note regarding a historical account of the Navy and its ideological alignment with the Republic in Brazil (Neto, 2009). Castro himself chairs a course at Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) called *Sociologia da Profissão Militar* (The sociology of the Military Profession), with its main objective being to examine the process of military socialisation experienced by the Army Officers<sup>6</sup>.

It is worth noting that some scholars have tried to approach the problem of social identity in other Armed Forces in an insightful perspective. Maria Ribas d'Àvila deAlmeida studied the process of admission of women in the Marinha do Brasil (2010), and the outcomes regarding the decision-making process. Vanessa Reis and Luciana Zucco analysed feminine naval officers' leadership when exercising command (2020). Albeit persuasively accounting for the growing importance of women in the institution, her studies are largely focused on a macro-perspective, still not assessing MB's distinctiveness.

Emilia Takahashi's (2000) research on the sense of identity of the Air Force cadets, and its interconnections with gender relations at the *Academia da Força Aérea* (AFA) (Air Force Academy). and Thaís Melo's dissertation approaching women's social insertion at the *Escola Naval* (EN) (MB's Academy)<sup>7</sup> (2017) are insightful examples more inclined to everyday practices. Castro himself, in 2009, published a paper based on research prior to his field work at AMAN, where he analysed hazing experiences at the Colégio Naval<sup>8</sup> (*Naval College*) which admittedly inspired his further research, as the hazing for him is "the dramatization of what structures and provides the style of the military life: hierarchy" (Castro 2009, p. 589). Yet, this work still relies on the two overall principles above mentioned, namely, the idea of a common military social identity created during the officers' period of formation, analysed through Castro's analytical framework tailored to understand the Army.

This overemphasis on the Army brings political and methodological impacts that affect the national social imaginary on the Navy. In a 2020 interview with BBC Brazil<sup>9</sup> regarding the political involvement of the military in Bolsonaro's administration, Leirner suggested that the Exército Brasileiro has set in motion a "master plan" seeking to reboot the country, whereby Bolsonaro's chaotic administration would function as the *leitmotif* for military intervention. By referring to the EB as "the military" Leirner seems to consider the latter as a homogeneous group shaped by what he

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<sup>6</sup> Available at < [https://cpdoc.fgv.br/curso\\_sociologia\\_da\\_profissao\\_militar](https://cpdoc.fgv.br/curso_sociologia_da_profissao_militar) > access on May 15th 2021 16:50.

<sup>7</sup> Escola Naval is the analogous institution to AMAN, where midshipman are trained for four years to become officers.

<sup>8</sup> The Naval College is the institution that prepares its students for the Naval Academy. It covers the period of what is the high-school at the United States, admitting individuals from the age of 15.

<sup>9</sup> Available at < <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-52926714> > access on May 15th 2021 16:53.

believes is the Army's self-identity trace. This would suggest that the MB, for instance, also aspires to the same political interventionism.

Hence, while grasping the micro-social elements concerning the reality of the military and exploring a different dimension in civil-military relations, the current literature fails to address the specificities of the historic and professional practices that distinguish the MB's self-identity. By presupposing a common military *ethos* and centring the analysis on military academies, scholars have neglected what lies at the heart of navies' social practices: life onboard warships. Although nowadays bureaucratic aspects render similar practices across the Armed Forces, historically these practices were built independently, creating a set of dispositions that induce collective emotional conditions, rituals, traditions, and codes of conduct. However, what exactly differentiates warships, and therefore navies, from other activities/Armed Forces?

Three elements can be highlighted: the interconnection with the ocean; the skills required to operate warships and the atmosphere inside them. Ontologically, the territoriality of the oceans differs to that of land, due to its dynamic and often unpredictable character. The oceans' "hydro-materiality" composes a holistic system, or a marine assemblage that incorporates mobile biota (humans and non-humans), as well as technologies and objects (Peters, 2012; Steinberg, 2013). Therefore, warships are not only exposed to the oceans, but compose such an assemblage, historically requiring a specific set of practices, skills and knowledge to be operated: from ringing sails and "learning the ropes", undertaking astronomical calculations, keeping internal sanitary conditions to prevent diseases such as typhus and scurvy; to operating sophisticated radars, GPS-based navigation systems and increasingly automated propulsion machinery. Although this kind of knowledge nowadays operates through a regime of discipline and hierarchy it is far from being created by them. Rather, they are the outcome of the social relations at sea, via manual labour and technology.

Furthermore, warships provide a very specific physical environment where individuals relate to one another in a necessarily hermetic space. Sailors cannot desert the ship when at sea; Captains are constantly observed and judged by their crew; there is no hospital, or fire station to provide assistance when at sea, and engaging the enemy has always been a collective endeavour. What is more, as traditional instruments of diplomacy, and due to the nature of their missions, navies are deeply internationalised, sharing practices world-wide, from uniforms and vocabulary to operational procedures (Till, 2018).

Hence, operating in the oceans, the correlate naval practices, and the internal atmosphere on board hold the elements to create social identities unlike any other Armed Force. The *Marinha do Brasil* has its own characteristics, shaped by the nature of its riverine operations; Brazil's multi-ethnic population; post-colonial experience and diplomatic posture. Therefore, the common *ethos* suggested by the current literature on military identity, does not suffice to assess the MB. In other words, the

practices that pervade the Brazilian Navy coalesce into a specific social *ethos* shaped by the life in warships.

Consequently, then, the *locus* of the Brazilian Navy’s self-identity cannot be the *Escola Naval* (Naval Academy) nor the *Colégio Naval*. This is because the emotional conditions experienced in warships which underlie practices on board, cannot be learnt academically, but experienced and shaped by practices when serving at sea. What makes a good naval officer is not only his/her adherence to hierarchy and discipline acquired during Naval Academy, but the emotional resilience to cope with uncertainty and the corresponding anxiety of life onboard and its practices. Not randomly, the architecture of the Escola Naval mimics the shape of a ship, indicating its utmost objective of replicating the conditions of life at sea. Hence, the social identity of the MB is not consolidated at the Escola Naval, but arguably onboard warships.

Premises concerning military identity	Navies’ distinctiveness	Gaps in the current literature
There is a common military <i>ethos</i> that cuts across the Brazilian Navy, the Army and the Air Force.	Warships Interconnection with the ocean.	A common military ethos does not account for the socio-anthropological aspects of warships in the Brazilian Navy
The Brazilian military <i>ethos</i> is constructed through the experiences at the military academies and institutions of military education via hierarchy and discipline.	Skills required to operate warships Social atmosphere onboard	Hierarchy and discipline experienced at the Brazilian Naval Academy cannot provide the emotional condition onboard.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Current Literature on military identity in Brazil.  
Source: the author

Therefore, as the current literature is ill-equipped to capture the practices that induce the emotional condition of life onboard, in the next section I shall conceptualise naval ontological security and try to begin filling this gap.

### Conceptualising Naval Ontological Security

Ontological security relates to the construction of a consistent sense of selfhood, whereby agents pursue not only physical security, but also a stable “sense of being in the world” (Vieira, 2016) by feeling comfortable with who they are. As Giddens explains, this process “brackets” the nearly infinite range of possibilities opened to individuals, lying at the heart of social life, as it “presumes a tacit acceptance of the categories of durations and extension, together with the identity of objects, other persons and the self” (Giddens, 1991, p. 37). Hence, ontologically secure individuals are emotionally resilient to cope with contingent situations that can potentially bring chaos and anxiety, being consequently able to anchor the cognitive framework of everyday life and consolidate their

sense of identity (Laing, 1969). In a nutshell: ontological security is the emotional process whereby agents build the sense of continuity of their self-identity (Giddens, 1990, p. 92).

The idea of self-identity here does not relate to an immutable transcendent ideal type always-never to be reached. Rather as Viera writes, “ontological security derives from constructive attempts to (re)create and consolidate collective self-identities” (Vieira, 2016, p. 07). This concept is relevant for navies, as sailors when serving at sea are exposed to the unpredictability of innumerable hazards such as storms, fires, floods and the presence of the enemy. The anxiety resulting from this frequent sense of ontological insecurity might jeopardise their physical security, as it compromises the normalised practices that skilfully render warships operative. Put differently, albeit largely neglected, emotions matter for seamen, as they condition the set of naval practices that guarantee their survival at sea. How is it possible, then, to assess this emotional construction?

When theorising about ontological security, Giddens indicates three mutually interwoven elements composing it: biographical narratives, basic trust and shame. While biographical narratives accommodate one’s personal experiences by the relational process of understanding and communicating them to others, shame is one of the manifestations of anxiety through which self-identity is eroded by its inadequacy to its corresponding biographical narrative (1991, p. 67). The “emotional inoculation” against this conundrum is basic trust, a psychological condition cultivated in the early stages of life. Trust starts between new-borns and their caretakers and binds together time and space so as to indicate that absence does not mean desertion. Eventually, thus, the consolidation of trust nourishes bodily control with predictable routines (Giddens, 1984, p. 53). Therefore, biographical narratives, trust and shame (or pride, as shall be explained later) enmeshed together sway a consistent sense of selfhood. However, how is it possible to empirically verify these elements in social practices as specific as the navies’?

Whereas Giddens’ theory lacks a precise answer for such a question, Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual apparatus is of relevant use. Bourdieu believes in a theory of practice that effectively connects sociology to practical reality, in a “preoccupied active presence in the world, through which the world imposes its presence” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 52). Practices are the relational operators that compose the seemingly invisible micro connections which make agents visible, because “by acting, agents are shaped by the relations in which they engage. Their identities, personalities, and even bodies are not autonomous points, but points in relation to other points” (Bigo, 2011, p. 236).

This largely means that for Bourdieu there is no “representation” of practices through generic categories, as they can only be grasped, literally, “in practice”. His standpoint permits an assessment of Giddens’ elements of ontological security in a “micropolitical” sense, tailored to the specific naval environment, and grounded on the assumption that practices are the unit of analysis to comprehend emotions. I contend that Bourdieu’s concept of field, doxa, habitus and social capital, are the

“thinking tools” (Leander, 2008) to reconcile both perspectives, as “concepts are designed to work empirically and in systematic fashion” (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1992, p. 96).

### *Biographical narratives and fields*

In this sense, I argue that *biographical narratives* structure the *field* where navies cement their sense of identity. By constantly creating and recreating discursive structures of meaning via narratives that explore the specificities of naval life, self-biographies robust the ever-changing network of the social configuration that presupposes and enables the relation of heterogeneous agents who (re)produce regular naval practices. This is regularly associated with foundational myths of heroes who overcame the perils of naval life through symbols of courage, honour and self-sacrifice, and therefore have inspired national virtues. By narrating these practices, navies create a collective historical tissue that emanates from every sailor that replicates them. Notably it is not entirely possible to admit that this is a genuinely “endogenous” state-centred process. States’ national biographies are also inspired by the narrative of successful “other” naval powers and consolidated via international practices historically developed with other navies. This interconnection of fields is particularly conspicuous in South American navies, due to their post-colonial condition.

### *Habitus, doxa and trust*

If fields are always embedded in different fields (either nationally or internationally) they can only make sense if related to their corresponding habitus. When it comes to navies, fields induce social practices onboard which have to be congruently orchestrated through an implicit order coherent enough to mobilise the whole crew uniformly. This composition between the objective order on board and the corresponding individual naturalisation of it, is constructed via a particular naval doxa. I call it *naval doxa* as it corresponds to the specific skills and knowledge required to operate warships. Historically, navies have developed a world-wide similar body of techniques to calculate the speed of wind, the position of warships based on the stars, and how to effectively utilise their cannons. While technological developments changed the way this doxa is produced, its utmost objective remains the same: to foster bodily movements stemming from taken-for-granted objective procedures. Everyone in the ship – from its Captain to the most junior sailor – has to perform a specific task, expecting his colleagues to do the same.

The several layers of doxa accommodated throughout centuries of history can easily be overestimated as creating “docile individuals”, in Foucault’s terms. Nonetheless, naval doxa does not always render practices onboard predictable, as if individuals were mechanically dictated by them. Instead, they modulate the principles that organise naval practices, creating tensions, resistance and shaking the composite field in the process. To put it simply, naval habitus, is “the generative principle



of regulated improvisations” (Bigo, 2011, p. 242) on board. This is what sometimes naval officers in Brazil regard as the “artistic” side of the navy, complementing its scientific (doxic) background. Thus, albeit varying according to the empirical often unpredictable situations the oceans can address, *habitus* provide *trust* and the mutual expectation that every sailor holds in one another that their specific task onboard will be fulfilled accordingly.

### *Symbolic capital and pride*

Fields and habits also compose relations of force, often creating asymmetries and unbalanced relations in warships. Mediated by the doxic rules of conduct, these relations of force make room for symbolic capital to circulate, leading to prestige and authority. Overall, in warships, Captains retain the highest level of symbolic capital, as they usually hold an image of respectability widely recognised by the symbols of the institution itself, through uniforms, medals, badges, and others. However, as a MB saying suggests, “no medal overcomes the importance of your name”, that is, throughout their carriers, seaman are required to “earn” their reputation through practices and years of experience in order to successfully “couple” it with their personal stories. *Habitus* and biographical narratives, hence, must create the conditions for Captains to maintain their symbolic capital. Once achieved, Captains can determine their subordinates’ life, being the driving force animating the redistribution and circulation of symbolic capital.

This dynamic is particularly important when analysing navies’ sense of *pride*. As Giddens observes, pride is the opposite of shame, that is, the “confidence in the integrity and value of the narrative of self-identity” (Giddens, 1991, p. 66). However, simplistically avoiding shame is an assumption incapable of yielding the adherence to self-identity navies need in order to cope with their constant risk of ontological insecurity. In other words, pride cannot be grasped merely by denying shame. Rather, it is an affirmative process relying on the circulation of symbolic capital on board, based on prestige, authority and honour as the rewarding sense of being part of a collective and enduring naval self-biographical narrative.

Therefore, pride exists when Captains legitimise their subordinates’ practices whenever they artfully and arduously perform their duties. However, as a result of the cooperative nature of the warship environment, where each seaman depends on one another, captains themselves are also inserted in this mechanism. This is because being recognised as a leader by his crew contributes to the captain’s reputation, triggering pride and rebalancing symbolic capital on board. When feeling pride, seamen condense their own biographical narrative to their nation's and to the navy’s, immediately (re)producing the complex chains of *habitus*, *trust*, biographical narratives and the interconnections of different fields.

Therefore, based on Giddens's theoretical perspective and Bourdieu's praxeology I believe that the sense of self-identity of navies can be more nuancedly understood, via the everyday practices that pervade their existence. I define, then, naval ontological security as the set of collective practices historically induced from warships that seek to coherently amalgamate a navy's self-identity, interweaving and sedimenting their biographical narratives, pride and trust in order to cope with the experience of being exposed to the oceans.

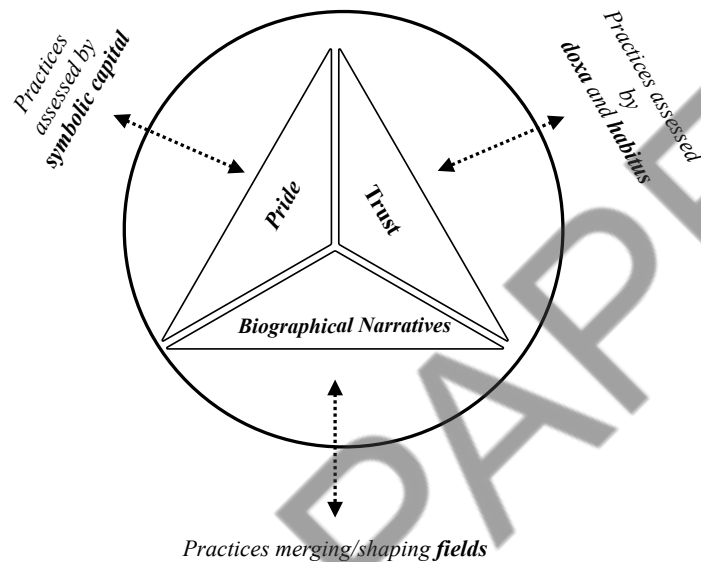


Figure 4: Naval ontological security scheme  
Source: author

As Figure 3 schematises, I do not argue that these elements are only one-way rigidly related, as for instance, habitus would only connect to trust, and equally, fields could indicate biographical narratives. Rather, the somewhat “approximation” of these concepts are merely their point of consistence, the resonances between their systemic approaches. Not only are Giddens's elements part of an entirely interconnected triangle, but practices are assessed via Bourdieu's concepts by a porous circle indicating the manifold ways in which they can relate.

Moreover, each navy has its specific trajectory, and it is not my intent in this piece to provide a universal ideal type in order to impose abstract similarities. Rather, I am interested in “tracing lines” in order to map the main features that distinguish this process. Also, naval ontological security is a dynamic process which intuitively cannot be thought of as a definite state of self-identity. By giving a definition and its underlying elements I intend to provide the instrument to analyse the emotional condition in the *Marinha do Brasil*, rather than judging whether it has a permanent sense of identity.

### **Ontological Security in the *Marinha do Brasil*: a historic assessment of the OGSA**

A preliminary assessment of how ontological security works in the Brazilian Navy can be empirically presented by what is known as *Ordenança Geral para o Serviço da Armada* (OGSA)

(General Ordinances for the Armada Service). This document is the set of general principles and rules regarding the practices in MB's warships, and other Naval Military Organisations – in the MB they are simply called “Building”, as opposed to “ships”. The OGSA also “brings the preservation of values that were crystallised in naval traditions, allowing for a continuity of uses, costumes and naval language” (OGSA, p. 07), thus directly contributing to the practices that characterise the institution.

Although seemingly a top-down approach, OGSA actually presents the historical set of habitus, social capital and pride that underlined the ontological security practices in the Marinha do Brasil's warships even before Brazil's independence. It is worth noting, thus, that these practices did not appear genuinely anchored in the national character, but as fractal composition of different navies interacting for centuries.

In this sense, the OGSA can be traced back to the period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, when western navies started to consolidate their naval doxa. It stems from the Portuguese Navy's 1796, the “*Regimento Provisional, para o Serviço, e Disciplina das Esquadras, e Navios da Armada Real, que por Ordem de Sua Majestade deve servir de Regulamento aos Commandantes das Esquadras, e Navios da Mesma Senhora*”<sup>10</sup>. This Regiment was directly influenced by the British 1731 *Regulation and Instructions Relating to his Majesty's Service at Sea*<sup>11</sup>, seeking to normalise almost the identical practices the British had indicated. After Brazil's independence from the Portuguese in 1822, the *Regimento Provisional* was still the main document observed in Brazil's Imperial Armada and would be reviewed in 1873, as I shall explain.

In order to permit the emotional resilience on board, the *Regimento* expressed what seamen should do in virtually every daily activity. It was broadly divided into four chapters: (1) orders regarding discipline and punishment; (2) orders for anchored warships; (3) orders for methods of rigging sails; (4) methods for distributing sailors during combat and the distributing of officers. The *Regimento* introduced routinised services of cleaning, eating, sleeping, fighting, and exercising. It meticulously described tasks sailors should perform when ships set sail or when moored, as well as the honours and responsibilities Captains and officers should follow. For instance, in its chapter 4:

“The officer commander of the service who determines all the manouvers, and will make sure that they are executed always promptly and actively in every situation, always having to strictly observe the utmost silence, and severely castigating any individual who annoys him with their voice. This relaxation will be maintained until it reaches the whole ship and its most well observed discipline” (Regulamento, Chap. 04, LXXVIII, p. 150)

The *Regimento* also mentioned the Artigos de Guerra (War Articles), which had been incorporated in 1799 as a disciplinary instrument on board. It formalised the physical punishment by

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<sup>10</sup> Available at <https://archive.org/details/regimentoprovisi00port/page/n57/mode/2up> access on 28 march 2021 13:30.

<sup>11</sup> Available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433009332291&view=1up&seq=41> access on 28 march 2021 13:30.

deprivation of food, prison and whips to be decided on the basis of Captain's judgment (Castro, 2013, p. 19).

The elements that characterise naval ontological security practices were at least formalised by The Regimento. Trust was expected to take place via the thorough descriptions of daily activities; the basis for a biographical narrative and a more specific field were indicated by the normalisation of vocabulary, cementing the same symbols through which experiences were shared; and pride through the authority upon which officers and Captains should foster symbolic capital. A naval despatch from the Captain of the Parnayba Corvette describing the Riachuelo Battle at the Paraguay War (1865), Lieutenant Aurelio Garcindo Fernandes de Sá, gives an empirical assessment of practices and the emotional condition of the Brazilian Navy based on the Regimento:

“As the fight became increasingly desperate, and our situation more critical as Marques de Olinda had approached us from behind, and, after perhaps more than one hour under heavy fire, we all made a supreme patriotic effort, enthusiastically applauding the order from the First-Lieutenant Felipe Firmino Rodrigues Chave [...] when we happily listened the odes ‘Long live the Brazilian Nation, the Emperor, Admiral Tamandaré and the Parnayba crew’ [...] Those were voices of our sailors and soldiers fighting the Paraguayans which had fled when realised that the [frigate] Amazonas and [the gunboat] Belmonte came to help us” (Brasil, 2015, p. 173)

Fernandes de Sá's words describe the micro-practices indicating the general sense of pride on board invoking the singular emotion of belonging to a larger whole, the Brazilian Nation. This was triggered by the First-Lieutenant Felipe Firmino's order, and later extended when Admiral Tamandaré<sup>12</sup> and the Brazilian Nation itself were mentioned along with the crew. Tamandaré's symbolic capital is reflected on the powerful inspiration his name (re)produced, enabling the sedimentation of pride in Parnayba's seamen. Pride was consolidated also because trust was well sedimented by naval habitus, as the latter enacted the dispositional strategies that foster innovative practices capable of dealing with the uncertainties of being at sea. Arguably, then, the Regimento, as the result of the habitus, and field on board during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, would now be the shaping a different field, conditioning a naval ontological security.

However, José Miguel de Arias Neto demonstrates that six months after the Riachuelo's Naval battle, the perceptions among sailors and sergeants in the Brazil's Imperial Armada were rather different, as they considered the service an act of punishment and torment (2001). Similarly, Paulo Castro when analysing the Imperial Armada's “general disciplinarisation” via the Trajano Corvette in 1873, explained that Captains in general, in an attempt to express their authority, utilised physical punishment at the beginning of their term, and eventually considered the social origins of sailors as criteria for it (2013, p. 214). Interestingly, Felipe Firmino – the first Lieutenant at Parnayba – almost

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<sup>12</sup> Brazilian Navy's Patron, and by the time, a seaman widely recognised by his accomplishment during the Brazilian Independency and other internal political fights.

a decade later was the last Captain of the Trajano, and the individual who punished sailors most frequently: 182 times in nearly two years, nearly three times as much as the Commander João Antonio Alves Nogueira, the Captain who followed him (Ibid).

Hence, although is not possible to say the Regimento was the necessary condition for naval ontological security, at least it created the basis for a biographical narrative, as the naval despatch at the Riachuelo Battle expressed, setting the stage for a specific naval field. However, the emotional condition on Brazil's warship was rather precarious and instable, hardly coalescing into a strong sense of self-identity. It is worth remembering that the end of slavery was only observed in Brazil in 1888, and until then, physical punishments on board abounded on black sailors who constituted 75% of the MB's sailors (Nascimento, 2016). Hence, slavery divided the crew, and pride and trust were not able to be fostered by the naval habitus of the time.

The Regimento was replaced in 1874 by the General Ordinances for the Armada Service (OGSA 1874), also based on the naval practices of France, Italy and Portugal, and was much more detailed than its predecessor, divided into 34 articles and 100 chapters (OGSA, 2009, p. 116). It was only in 1890, after the proclamation of republic that a law was passed formally putting an end to physical punishments<sup>13</sup>. However, the emotional condition and the social *ethos* of the institution remained articulated on the social conditions of Brazil<sup>14</sup>, and the physical punishment continued as routine practice, particularly by whip. This explains why, in 1910 the so called *Revolta da Chibata* (The Whip Revolt) took place in the Dreadnoughts Minas Gerais and São Paulo. Oppressed by the racist Brazilian social-Darwinist society of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schwarcz, 1993) the rebels were claiming to simply abide by the same law as normal citizens', instead of being the "slaves of naval officers and take the whip as punishment" as the sailor Francisco Dias Martins stated (Nascimento, 2016, p. 157).

The mutiny was led by João Candido, the "black Admiral" whose words are worth quoting:

"We sailors, Brazilian citizens and republicans cannot stand the slavery in the Brazilian navy, and the lack of protection our homeland gives us [...] as twenty years of republic was not enough for us to be treated as Brazilian citizens defending our homeland we send this honourable message in order to provide the Brazilian sailors the rights that the Brazilian Republic should enforce [...] such as reforming the imoral and shameful code we abide in order to extinguish the whip punishment and similar measures, increase our payments [...] educate the sailors who do not have the ability to wear our uniform"<sup>15</sup>

Candido's message expressed the flagrant ontological *insecurity* pervading the Brazilian Navy's practices: he asked for education – capable of bringing trust via naval habitus – and to be treated as a proper Brazilian citizen – which would allow for the sense of belonging which conditions

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<sup>13</sup> Available at < <https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/decret/1824-1899/decreto-330-12-abril-1890-524468-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html>> access on 28 march 2021 15:30

<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that the Navy was ideologically and politically more aligned with the Monarchy.

<sup>15</sup> Available at < <http://www.gptec.cfch.ufjf.br/pdfs/chibata.pdf>> access on 28 march 2021 10:00.

pride on board. Candido's words also showed the inability of black sailors to be part of a vibrant biographical narrative, and that everyday practices were not able to circulate symbolic capital. This was largely because of the whip punishment, dividing the crew, increasing the level of anxiety, an emotional instability already brought by life at sea. This lack of a cohesive self-identity reinforced the fragility of the Brazilian Navy at the time, hindering long term strategic policies.

The OGSA 1873 was later changed in 1910 being called the Ordenança para o Serviço da Armada Brasileira (OSAB), with no mention of physical punishments anymore. In 1942 it changed again to OGSA, widening its scope and depicting much of MB's practices today. Now composed of 500 articles, it introduced the contemporary administrative departmental division on board, indicating the corresponding practices of seamen. This period, during World War II, the *Marinha do Brasil* became increasingly professional because of the practices learnt via the exchange programme with the US Navy (Vidigal, 1985).

Helio Leôncio Martins in his memoirs depicts the naval practices of the time. Whilst being the Captain of the Minesweeper *Juruena*, Martins depicts the occasion when a malfunctioning on the rudder, due to the severance of the yoke line<sup>16</sup>, was sending the *Juruena* towards a merchant ship part of the convoy, and a collision was increasingly imminent. The crew were expecting a decision from Martins:

“The watchers, plus all the men at the bridge were steadily gazing at me, waiting for the saviour decision, rendering concrete, on those anxious expressions, the responsibility of the Captain [...] The feeling that the conditioning of the system transforms the figure of the Captain into the ultimate hope when perils arise, is nearly an unsurmountable weight to carry. A simple trembling voice, or a small gest that indicates insecurity, instantaneously breaks the current of trust cemented after years, consequently morphing a disciplined crew into a bunch of desperate men. This is what I felt in that minimum fraction of time, being fixedly gazed at. There should be any order [...] So I said the first thing that came to my mind: hard a starbord...” (Ibid, p. 87)

Martins depicts the symbolic capital of a Captain on board, and the corresponding relevance of trust. The habitus involved in the mundane practice of ordering “hard a starboard” amalgamated the trust and pride that almost insurmountably weighed on his shoulders as a captain. He remarkably depicts the fragility of such a situation and the assemblage of micro-behaviours such as a “trembling voice or a small gest of insecurity” not only saturating the field, but potentially “breaking the current of trust” indicating that chaos was lurking. The emotional resilience of the crew permitted his actions and vice versa, conditioning the manoeuvre to avoid the collision.

After WWII, the OGSA changed again in 1987, after a swift review and research carried out by the *Marinha do Brasil*. Since then, it has been reflecting the overall practices of the Brazilian Navy. It is currently divided into ten parts, covering the rights and duties of Captains, officers and sailors;

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<sup>16</sup> The Yoke line is the cable responsible for connecting the rudder to the timon.

the overall administrative life of the whole institution, shaped by the vocabulary and organisation of ships; and naval traditions, religious assistance and verbal treatment.

The changes of the OSGA reflect the changes in the MB itself, especially when it comes to its contemporary missions. Brazil's somewhat privileged geostrategic position in South America, a relatively peaceful continent, in addition to its stable diplomatic history, rendered WWII the last wartime experience. As a result, the Brazilian Navy mostly engages in maritime security operations, especially concerning illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in its Exclusive Economic Zone, ZEE and contributing to peacekeeping operations (such as UNIFIL) and cooperative multinational missions, such as the Combined Maritime Forces in Bahrain.

However, contemporary social elements are still worth to be comprehended, especially when it comes to affirmative role of women, the involvement with sustainable development and the role of technology on board. These elements, if neglected again by the MB can become a source of ontological insecurity – analogously to Brazil's slavery condition – compromising the relevance of the institution and its interconnections with civil society. Contemporary OSGA still do not directly address this topic, hence, a further assessment must be made in order to elucidate contemporary practices on board, indicating the elements of ontological security.

## **Conclusions**

Navies are made up of people, whose lives are inclined to the unnatural activity of exploring the oceans. This is not a romantic statement, but a fact that has shaped navies' self-identities and, surprisingly, has been scarcely approached by scholars. In Brazil, the literature on civil-military relations is predominantly anchored in the Army, either by investigating its potential political interference from a top-down approach, or by analysing its sense of identity based on the life in military Academy.

This piece aimed to demonstrate that these perspectives still cannot fully capture the elements that constitute navies' sense of self-identity, an important aspect of the institution capable of closing the ties with civil society. By merging Giddens and Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus and grounded on the premise that warships differentiate navies' practices, I presented a theoretical framework to fill this gap, carving the concept of naval ontological security. Naval ontological security was conceptualised and defined as the set of collective practices historically induced from warships that seek to coherently amalgamate navy self-identity, interweaving and sedimenting their biographical narratives, pride and trust in order to cope with the experience of being exposed to the oceans. Field, symbolic capital and habitus/doxa, respectively relate to these elements, permitting practices to indicate the emotional process involved in ontological security.

Bringing this concept to Brazil, I analysed the historical trajectory of the OGSA. I showed that the document was born out of inner practices on board, internationally influenced by the Royal Navy's Regiment and the Portuguese Navy's Regimento. This expressed the international character of the institution, as well as its post-colonial condition. Historically, OGSA provided the overall framework for practices on board, and its internalisation by agents provided the empirical relational approach I exemplified. However, I demonstrated that ontological security cannot emanate solely by a top-down approach. Although OGSA's first version meticulously depicted a normative view on practices on board, the Brazilian social environment, marked by slavery, deprived MB of coherent sense of self, as practices such as whip practices divide the crew. The 1910 Whip Revolt was the empirical example of this. On the other hand, the experience of WWII, reinforced by Brazil's stable diplomatic posture with the US, arguably changed the field, and based on the example of Martins' memoire, a sense of ontological security was found on board Juruena. This sense of ontological security, born out of practices on warships, is what the OGSA tries to formalise, and normatively emanate to the institution as a whole. Further assessments have to demonstrate whether ontological security occurs via contemporary micro-practices in warships.

I believe that my Giddens-Bourdieu-inspired theoretical framework might bring closer observation of the human element in navies, specifically in Brazil where few scholars have analysed this issue. If slavery and the awfully aversion of black sailors compromised naval ontological security in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nowadays in a deeply polarised socio-political Brazilian environment, similar risks can take place, hindering civil-military relations. Therefore, the concept of ontological security could be supplemented by "praxigraphical" research on board Brazilian warships to verify this stance and give an original academical and political contribution. What is more, it may even provide an important comparison between the Brazilian Navy and other navies around the world. Therefore, civil-military relations can be strengthened and, internationally, it might help the Brazilian Navy to operate in cooperation with other navies, boost its moral and be more aligned with contemporary socio-political issues.



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