

Heirs of a(n) (e)state: Brazilian territorial integrity in some works that may influence military political involvement in Brazil

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This article is an attempt to interpret one aspect that usually underlines the political action of the military in Brazil, but that does not receive much attention in academic settings. Usually framed as one of the main vectors of a “national project”, the Brazilian military – and specially the Army – have a deep, underlining ideology about both space and the Brazilian territory. Historians have emphasized the role the military has had as a ‘modernizing force’ within Brazilian society, both at home and in its role in world politics (Rodrigues 2008; Traumann 2016). By their turn, jurists have demonstrated the key aspects the military had in the consolidation of Brazilian sovereignty over its territory (Herzog, 2019; Ugeda 2017). And, even as geographers tried to understand this aspect of military political action within the larger political and economic projects in Brazil, the role geographical ideologies play in military political action usually remains related to early historical periods (e.g., Moraes 2011). We will debate geographical ideologies along the text.

Spatial imaginaries, as a key component of military action in Brazil is, thus, not very much explored. Thus, here we try to explore possible lines of inquiry, seeking to better understand which are the geographical ideologies that emerge from political discourses often referred to by the Brazilian military. We ask if it is possible to find, in political-literary works (political essays), social imaginary related to the integrity of the Brazilian territory in these works. This is not an easy task, since usually – and as we will debate below – space is not usually explicitly debated within these circles. However, some social imagery used in these works can present to us some kinds of reasoning that justifies the way in which the Brazilian military present themselves as guarantors of “law and order” in the country.

There are many analytic lenses through which one might interpret these social imaginaries. Usually, as represented by the inquiries related to historical and social discourses, this interpretation can be made by understanding different series of elements that emerge in this literature in relation to people, and their role in society (Anderson 1991). This interpretation could also be made by analyzing the role that these discourses play on power exercises, as well as their justification and legitimacy (Foucault 2012; Butler 2018; Benjamin 2013). However, specific characteristics of political development in Latin America, and the way in which its territorial and social components are seen within elite circles (both military and civil) might demand a special attention to the geographical content of this analysis.

Thus, using content analysis of three different political thought works that are often referred to by the Brazilian military, both explicitly and implicitly, we try to interpret what kind of geographical ideologies emerge from this literature. We are especially interested in understanding in which ways the category of territorial formation in Brazil appears as a concern in these books and may guide us in understanding the recent military political involvement. According to Antonio Carlos Robert Moraes (2011), political action and institutional projects may be understood as results of “[t]he uses of the soil, settlements, occupation patterns and hierarchical distinction amongst places

[that] also represent the result of struggles, hegemonies, violence, that is, the political process” (p. 17).

Thus, trying to understand the selected works as representatives of a political thought that can be understood by using the category of territorial formation and its representation in political debate. We understand that *A Verdade Sufocada: A história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça*, by Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra; *O Jardim das Aflições: De Epicuro à ressurreição de César: ensaio sobre o materialismo e a religião civil*, by Olavo de Carvalho; and, *General Villas Bôas: Conversas com o Comandante*, by Celso Castro, can be understood through the analytical lenses we present here. We present three possible hypotheses to this process of understanding territorial formation in these works.

Firstly, we argue that the recent involvement of the Brazilian military in politics is based on discourses that underline the possibility of secession in the country at multiple levels. However, the kind of secession presented as the main concern by these works does not relate itself to regional movements of autonomy, but mainly concerns about instability and popular uprising in the country. Thus, control over social imaginaries, indoctrination by controlling educational policies and the “presence strategy” appear as main aspects of the approach of the military in Brazilian politics.

These are the main lines of engagement that can be found in the works analyzed here. Their resonance can be found mainly on territorial concerns related to maintaining stability and command in the whole territory of the country. Moral and political aspects, thus, are a great driving force for keeping the military as a guardian of Brazilian politics, placing themselves as the ones who ‘know better’ about the situation in different locations within Brazilian territory and its specific needs. Global politics appear as well as one kind of concern, but mainly as a condition to rule over the populace and gaining their confidence as the most important institution in the country.

Finally, these two aspects seem to open the possibility of understanding the political action of the Brazilian military as deeply embedded in a spatial and territorial ideology about the world, the country, and their role in politics. Posing themselves as ‘heirs of struggles past’, we can infer that the idea of keepers of the transfer of power serves as a key aspect of their role in Brazilian politics: their role as state institutions allows them to select which are the political factions that may access political offices, which are the components of ‘Brazilian-ness’ that have to be thought in schools and promoted within Brazilian societies, and which kind of debate must be avoided, hence it can promote division and secession in the country. Spatial continuity, and unity in political command, appear as the main concerns relating to territorial integrity for these works – and can be inferred from the current military involvement in Brazilian politics.

We hope that the inquiries that this work may influence help to understand ‘representations, values, interests, mentalities, worldviews’ related to the political action of the Brazilian Armed Forces (Moraes 2011). By tracking the political efficacy of the conflation of discourses in their geographic-ideological aspects, we try to work the interpretation of our present moment relating to political projects put in place by the military and influenced by their interpretation of Brazil’s territorial formation. This might present possible interpretations on perceptions of the country put forward by the military that might justify their current involvement in politics. In analyzing spatial imaginary as a key component of the military reasoning of the state of the country and of the world, we intend to sketch possible interpretations of the relation between culture and politics using spatial representation.

Geographical ideologies and territorial integrity as basis for political action in Latin America

The role of discourses on political action has been prolific in recent decades in academic inquiries. They do play an important role in understanding power relations (Foucault 2012; Butler 2015); they are a key component in geopolitical reasoning and the delineation of international engagement by different countries (Ó Tuathail 1999); and including by justifying the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in war operations (Chamayou 2015). As important a role as they play in different societies, discourses do present a main object for analysis nowadays.

One small part of these discourses can be understood as those relating to spatial aspects of power relations. Mainly put forward by English-speaking geographers such as Doreen Massey (2013) and Stephen Graham (2016), this kind of analysis tries to present the role space play in both the living and the political aspects of our daily lives. Different comprehensions of the role space plays in our existence may lead to different approaches as to what are the global and local spheres, as well as what kind of political projects can be put forward by governments. The role of the Columbian Exchange in both creating a new image of the world (O’Gorman 2006), establishing the basis for capitalist economies (Porto-Gonçalves 2006), and providing the spatial basis for the formation of post-colonizing American states with European ‘measurements’ (Moraes 2011) is one of the main examples of the role that space, and scales, have in inducing political action. Reflecting on the encounter between the Aztecs and the Spanish *conquistadores*, Doreen Massey argues that

The way in which we imagine space has its effects – as it had, for Montezuma and Cortés, in different patterns to each one. Conceiving space as it was conceived in discovery voyages, as something to be crossed, and, maybe, conquered, has specific implications. It is implicit that space is conserved as soil and sea, as the land that stretches around us. Implicitly, as well, it makes space seem as a surface, continuous and taken as something given. (...) Thus, this way of conceiving space can, easily, lead us to conceive other places, peoples, cultures, simply as a phenomenon ‘over’ this surface. (Massey, 2013, p. 23)

What Massey presents is the role our own conception of space plays understanding and writing history and politics. Underlining the role spatial conceptions play in political action, Massey gives us a hint on the political aspects related to spatial features of both our daily experiences and the politics people are involved into. The very idea of the *conquistadores* of space as ‘something to be crossed’ helps us understand the ways in which territorial formation of Latin American countries are represented.

Being the result of an extractivist and violent process of space appropriation (Porto-Gonçalves 2006), Latin American countries, their economies, political structures, and institutional organization can be understood as the result of, sometimes, unfinished political projects of which the use of violence is a key component (Amadeo 2019). By understanding that violence can be regarded as both the originator and an instrument through which law enforcement is applied (Schmitt 2014; Benjamin 2013), we can argue that spatial appropriation and organization in Latin America results, in various and different degrees, from the political involvement not only of the Armed Forces, but other security and law enforcement agencies. The components of violence and politics in the formation and development of these projects of political appropriation of space are ‘product of teleological interventions’, the ‘materialization of projects elaborated by

historical and social subjects' (Moraes 2011). Different 'conceptions, values, interests, mentalities, worldviews' are components of political engagement, as the cultural grounds on which interpretations of space (the literal 'grounds') will be concocted with other interpretations of the role politics and violence play in society (Moraes 2011). Thus, '[t]his places the imperative understanding of [collective] motivation on the production of space, since they are the propulsors of social and historical subjects', and different political actors 'are moved by necessities, interests, desires, and dreams' that can be captured on the realm of culture (Moraes 2011).

Considering the 'circulating nature of this process', in which actors motivated by their views on space will act on it accordingly, and new spatial morphologies that will, in their turn, influence ideas on these same morphologies, specific interpretations and projects about space under responsibility of political actors are a good indicator of their main motivations for political action (Moraes 2011). Groups and individuals, thus, create their own interpretation on spatial management, by developing different representation of space and its features – including people, settlements, the role of borders and frontiers, amongst other. The main goal, thus, lies on understanding 'how can conceptions about space act in the material construction of the space of a given country, and how do they act in the very representation of this country?' (Moraes 2011).

There are some genres of geographical ideologies that may represent these intentions of political engagement. They may, for example, infuse within society a specific vision on space, on territory, on one or on many places: they promote ideas as the 'character', the 'destiny' or 'aptitude' of different areas, portions of space or places – from the infinitesimal to the global or even universal. They can also place social questions not as the result of social or political struggles, but as spatial qualities. This can be inferred from time to time from geographical deterministic approaches to social questions, something of which there is a long tradition in Latin American and Brazilian political literature. Finally, geographical ideologies can be normative, in the sense that they may present plans and projects that seek to ordain spatial relations, destroy both physical and ideological aspects about space, rebuild them, and so forth (Moraes 2011). Thus,

Geographical ideologies nourish both the conceptions that regulate territorial policies of a State, as well as the self-consciousness that different social groupings erect relating to their space and their relationship with it. They are the substance of collective representations of places, they promote their transformation or social accommodation on them. They express, finally, locations and identities, primary sources of political action. To get into the formation and consumption movement of these ideologies implicates to better specify the universe of the complex relations between culture and politics. (Moraes 2011, p. 44)

Alongside other ideological framings, geographical ideologies present the ways different groupings of people understand their role within their community, their range of spatial daily accesses, their country and the world. That is why the formation of political landscapes is so important for the development of national and international policies, since they depend upon discourses that present the reality of the world at specific moments (Dodds 2003). Geopolitical discourses are a longstanding example or representations built upon perceptions and identities about the political standing of world affairs and the options available for decision-makers in foreign policy (Ó Tuathail 1999). They can, as well, represent the ideological basis for extremist groups of different nature, since they sow together different aspects of world politics in a conjunction of different factors that justify the employment of violence, exception, and war-like engagement in politics (Appleby 2003). Political landscapes are, then, 'at the same time the result and the source of projects for space production', mobilizing

different political factions into presenting and trying to implement their vision for spatial relations (Moraes 2011).

In the realm of Latin American politics, one might perceive the development of geographical ideologies as a key component of political action by different factions of society.

At different times, the spatial aspect of Latin American society has appeared as a political asset for the territorial formation of States in the region. Being the result of conquest over pre-existing indigenous societies, which are seen as an asset for the maintenance of political and economic power in the region (Moraes 2011), Latin American states have hoarded different kinds of geographical ideologies about spaces under their jurisdiction, as well as other spaces inside and outside the region.

Edmundo O’Gorman (2006) points out the ‘invention’ of the whole American continent and its consequences to political, economic and social thought of European societies. O’Gorman argues that the American continent not only was ideologically constituted by European imagery and according to European standards of political action, but also that the conquest of a ‘continent’ – in the physical sense of the word – would provide the possibility of realization, in America, of all the possibilities of human capacity according to European standards. ‘And so, as it happened in relation to the Ocean Sea in the ancient conception of the world’, writes O’Gorman, ‘the universe was not anymore something to contemplate as a constitutively strange and alien entity in relation to humanity, to convert itself in an indefinite field of conquer, since what allowed this movement was no longer divine grace, but boldness and efficacy’ of human societies (O’Gorman 2006, p. 179).

The stretching of European economic networks that imposed itself on pre-existing political, cultural and economic logics (Quental 2012; Wallerstein 2007) also imposed the geographical representation of the ‘continental’ aspect of territories, specially in Latin America, a region that, according to O’Gorman, ‘Latin America was never the frontier-inspired lands in the dynamic senso of transformation that North American historian, from Jackson Turner, conceive that concept, and it was so in such an extension that, even in the domination of the natural environment, there was no generalized action of reformation of inhospitable, desert or silvan regions, but of exploration of those that seemed destined to their cultivation and the inhabitancy of men’ (O’Gorman 2006, p. 196). Amongst political and cultural elites of Latin America, of which the Armed Forces have been an important part, ‘there persisted the ancient belief that the world was the cosmic parcel that God in His benevolence gave to men without property nor lordship rights’, of which humanity should keep the balance and explore limited possibilities (O’Gorman 2006, p. 196-197).

This limitative approach to the spatial facet of political and economic organization of Latin American societies can be perceived in conflict resolution processes of territorial disputation between sovereign states in Latin America. Tamar Herzog (2019) points out the continuity of an Iberian tradition regarding territorial rights in colonial Latin America. Analysing disputes between Portugal and Spain in South America, Herzog emphasises an understanding of law that ‘encourages [political] actors to protest [against others] even when they were not sure about their rights or when violations happened only on paper, but not on the terrain’, that ‘pushed them to compete for arriving first to any territory’ (Herzog 2019, p. 47). According to Herzog, this created a repetitive pattern in territorial acquisition, in which usability and efficacy in using space was one of the main drivers for disputes of sovereignty over different stretches of land

in South America. Conquest, then, appeared as more important than continuity along geographical areas between different place in the continent. But conquest was derived from a perception of the economic or political value of different places for the colonial enterprise. According to Herzog,

Whenever kings, crown officers or local actors considered [a place] lucrative, new areas were explored, penetrated, used, or inhabited. As, accordingly to the contemporary understanding [of the 18th century, these actions implicated the claiming of rights, rivals could respond in one of these two ways: they could agree with the [territorial expansion], remaining in silence, or oppose it, by protesting. The contending parts could, then, begin 'negotiations', that led either to 'conversations' in which the expanding power extracted from the opposite side a 'confession' that its acts were justified, or to more protests. (Herzog 2019, p. 47-48)

The process of territorial constitution of Latin American states, then, comprised two different kinds of expansion, both related to the extension of territorial rights. One the one hand, the expansion relating to other political entities, be it other colonial empire such as Spain's, or with the States resulting from its fragmentation, was based on battles for the conquest of geographical areas as a whole, notwithstanding the factual capacities of exploring its resources for the colonial enterprise or the need to support local indigenous peoples against it. On the other hand, the extension of rule and rights enforcement *within* territories was seen as a secondary aspect of conquest, leading to a defensive approach to external intervention, and the use violence to consolidate political preeminence amongst peoples from the now-acquired territory. This double aspect of expansion in South America led to the perception that both Spaniards and Portuguese colonizers had that it was 'peace, and not war, the most important moment of territorial acquisition', since '[w]ar pushed military commanders to defend territories, but at peace they were mandated to conserve and increase their jurisdiction' (Herzog 2019, p. 48). As one reported command from that time gathered by Herzog said, 'always at times of peace, [territorial] conservation and increase of terrain, and at war its defense' (Herzog 2019, p. 48).

There is, amongst Latin American military elites a long-lasting perception about territory based in this double action: defense in war, expansion at moments of peace. In *Conversas com o Comandante*, the most outspoken military officer nowadays in Brazil, Gen. Eduardo Villas Bôas, presents this as an inheritance from the colonial times, that the Army seeks to maintain in the present time. According to what is called *presence strategy*, the role the military play within statecraft is fully related to strategies on organizing territorial relations in Brazil: 'we perceive the *presence strategy* as related to the institutional will of controlling a national territory still in formation' (Rodrigues 2020, p. 57). The self-perception of the armed forces, specially by the Brazilian Army, is one of direct representation of the State not only in the development of defense policies, but as the representative of the State in the whole of the national territory, since '[t]he use of the military in development and security policies reveals a direct relation of the State into public affairs. The Army is perceived as the very State in action. The project of the land force [that is, the Army], is not to be present, but support the consolidation of a national State' (Rodrigues 2020, p. 57).

Villas Bôas, by his turn, presents as responsibilities of the Army activities such as 'distribute water in *Operation Pipa* [to arid regions in the Northeastern region of Brazil], [...] clean beaches contaminated by oil spillings [...], and, most importantly, [...] being attributed tasks of law and order [enforcement], that occur frequently' (Castro 2021, p. 140). In other section of his *Conversations*, 'A hundred years ago, we were inducers of knowledge and a reference to different sectors of national society: we

were pioneers in areas such as management, strategy, physical education, veterinary medicine and, even, music'. The leadership of the Armed Forces within Brazilian society, to Villas Bôas, was 'sleepwalking into obsolescence and irrelevance, except, happily, in relation to the values we embody before society' (Castro 2021, p. 143). Proposing a 'much needed rupture that only transformation [of the Armed Forces] could promote', Villas Bôas poses that Brazilian society finds itself in a difficult position due being 'a country that needs to embrace again, and urgently, social cohesion and a sense of project', something that would not be possible while the Armed Forces were not seen as that embodiment of civic and national values. It is possible to investigate the political action of the military as both a continuity of the 'expansion at peace' doctrine, and one of its new facets, that may include also military involvement in law enforcement activities in Brazilian territory.

The Brazilian commemoration of the *Day of the Army*, resulting from a Presidential Decree from 1994, can be seen as a symbol of this double-faced political action of the military within Brazil. The Presidential Decree establishes that on April 19th the *Day of the Army* should be celebrated around the country. The reasoning behind this date can be observed but because of the political transition of Brazil into an increased democratic participation of the people, but also of the self-perception of the Army about its own mission within the country. According to the Presidential Decree, 'the dates of April 19th of 1648 and 1971 register the 1st Battle of Guararapes and the creation of the National Park of Guararapes, respectively, and that the Brazilian Army has its roots deep into the Guararapes region, a fact that is consecrated by military historiography in Brazil'.

The 1st Battle of Guararapes was part of the reclaiming of Portuguese territory conquered by Dutch forces during the Thirty Years' War. The 'Dutch invasion' was a colonial enterprise by the Dutch in the northeastern part of Portuguese America, 'seeking to appropriate and submit a functioning economy, avoiding the disorganization and the destruction of production realized there' (Moraes 2011, p. 359). This effort by the Dutch, however, would be put at risk by the strategy of *guerilla* warfare used by the Portuguese resistance, that sought to destroy economic infrastructure that could be used by the Dutch. 'Notably', affirms Moraes, 'the tactics of destroying equipment and infrastructure in abandoned areas [taken by the Dutch] faced the conqueror with a devastated territory and, thus, incapable to replace the costs of its maintenance in the short-term' (2011, p. 359).

This effort, however, was not limited to the end of the war between the Dutch and the Portuguese for control of that region, since after the expulsion of the Dutch, the military efforts were centered around avoiding the possibility of other 'breaches of sovereignty' within their territory. Thus, as an elongation of the war effort, right after the end of the war, the military efforts were centered around avoiding the creation of what Moraes calls 'extraterritorialities', that is, groupings that could develop themselves without answering to Portuguese authorities within the area the Portuguese would defend against foreign 'invaders'. The existence of the Palmares *quilombo* in the area between Dutch conquered territories and Portuguese-controlled Bay of All Saints, until then the capital city of Portuguese administration in what would become the Brazilian territory. This elongation of war represented that,

On the Portuguese side, a progressive knowledge about the terrain resulting from increasing expeditions acted as a basic element to the final victory of Lusitanian forces. The situation in which 'Nature protected the palmarinos' was gradually surpassed by devastation and visiting ever-more-increasing in that region. The employed tactics of vast destruction of palmarinos'

farming areas and settlements in each destructive invasion also revealed its efficacy in the long-term. The interest on destroying fertile land appropriated by the quilombo helped to encourage its destruction. And this destruction was heavily based on the progressive building of a road, which allowed access to heavy artillery that collapsed the walls of this quilombola citadel. (Moraes 2011, p. 381).

The representation this effort by the Brazilian Army helps to understand how can we understand the role of geographical ideologies in enhancing contemporary justifications for political action of the Military according to the *credo* presented by Villas Boas. One military document focused on providing army officers with information on significant commemorations by the Brazilian Army says that ‘a [movement of] resistance of different nationality and religion of Portuguese Brazilians alternated with acceptance by many owners of sugarcane *engenhos*, specially during the rule of Mauricio de Nassau’ (Brazilian Army [not dated], p. 13). The choosing of April 19th, for the Army, represents ‘[t]he symbolism of union of the three ethnic groups of the Brazilian people’, namely, Portuguese Brazilians, Indigenous Peoples and African individuals still under slavery.¹

Territorial integrity, then, as a political factor for the Brazilian military does not relates itself directly to *regional identities* or the possibility of specific regional political movements for autonomy. What we will present in the next section are the presented political vectors for their current political engagement as the inheritance of this double-faced self-determined role: the expelling of ‘foreign influence and dominance’ by building military capabilities, but also by avoiding the emergency of internal territorial devolution systems, specially to indigenous and *quilombola* groups. Continuing the tradition of ‘defense at war, expansion at peace’, the military seems moved by a sense of external threats, and internal questioning of internal command by granting ‘territorial rights’ and even ‘individual rights’ to groups seen as strange from ‘Brazilian tradition’. To do this, we will focus now on the ‘global effort for tradition’, represented by *O Jardim das Aflições* by Olavo de Carvalho, to analyze, afterwards, the political representation of this need to involve the military in avoiding ‘extraterritorialities’, represented by *A Verdade Sufocada* by Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, to finally return to *General Villas Bôas: Conversas com o Comandante* under the light of these analyses.

The territorial integrity of Brazil as a geographical ideology

If, as we argue, territorial integrity in the view of the Brazilian military does not specifically relates to ‘regional questions’, but rather is focused on keeping a specific level of command unity within the structure of the State (and, therefore, to the Military as its representative), then which are the different perceptions about territorial integrity in Brazil? For such an analysis, the idea of ‘geographical thought’ might be interesting. This concept refers to

... a sum of discourses relating to space, which name the conceptions of a given society, in each temporal moment, about its environment (from the local to the planetary) and the relationships created with it. This idea refers to a historically and socially produced collection, a fraction of the substance of which is made the cultural formation of a people. [...] Amongst these multiple manifestations, certain visions settle, certain values are spread. Ultimately, a sense related to space is developed. It is a mentality about its themes. A spatial, collective horizon. (Moraes 2005, p. 32)

¹ Interestingly, the national day on Brazil that commemorates the Indigenous Peoples of the country is also April 19th.

Some relevant political questions, such as its management, its representation and the projects, as well as its imagery, are a key component of geographical thought within a society. However, in Latin America – a region marked by post-colonial States without full unity of command in their own territory – spatial ideologies usually apply differently than from other parts of the world. While in other places, regional identity is usually a marker of difference and, therefore, an asset for political action in secession, the idea of inheritance of borders in Latin American States creates a different challenge: the challenge of keeping multiple regional identities integrated to broader political projects.

One of the main tropes of political elites in Latin America, relating to their geographical thought about their own countries as well as for the region, is ‘spatializing’ loyalty. As heirs of a series of different conquests over different spaces and over different peoples, the use of force, the institution of constitutional changes, as well as political loyalty is mobilized in ways that could allow that different groupings of people could feel integrated by living – if not being born – in the same spaces as their ancestors. Brazilian political history, according to Moraes (2005) is based on this kind of mentality on space as an ‘agglutinator of differences’, and not the reason why people should differentiate themselves and seek political autonomy. Therefore,

Relating to Brazilian history, this [approach to understand political loyalties] acquire even greater emphases. With continental dimensions, Brazil is one of the few countries in the modern world not to have completely built its territory. It has different pioneer fringes with great dynamism. Indeed, Brazilian history is a continuing process of territorial expansion, yet in occurrence nowadays. Such a situation profoundly inscribes this [spatial] particularity. In genetic terms, by its turn, the history of Brazil dates from the Lusitanian expansion. The country has, going back, the sign of territorial conquest. (Moraes 2005, p. 94)

As we debated earlier, the logic of conquest is made up by acquiring pre-existing economic and social circuits through military defeat (Moraes 2011), including the emphasis on legitimacy of this kind of rule. The guarantors of stability, then, are those who, through force, can eliminate dissenting groups, or avoid the creation of ‘extraterritorial entities’ within the country’s territorial boundaries. Inside that reasoning, the role of the colonizer is especially important: the figure of ‘proper’ occupiers of different places that will be loyal to the political establishment is what guarantees the ‘guardianship of the people in the name of spatial integrity’ (Moraes 2005, p. 95). This approach is in no way distant of the reasoning of the Iberian *Reconquista*, or the fight against infidels: ‘[t]he same theological reasoning that sanctions the violent appropriation of land legitimates the ownership of slaves: the thesis of “just war” and the combat to the “unfaithful” lay the grounds for the taking of places and its inhabitants. Indeed, the colonizer do not stablish that distinction, looking upon the conquered populations as a natural resource’ (p. 97). Being the result of an expansion overseen by external intentions and policies, ‘the colonized country [...] is born under the overlook of a conception of *acquirable territory*, that is, under the sign of violence’ (Moraes 2005, p. 97).

Some are the characteristics of this geographical ideologies that have political significance. Firstly, they are based in an idea of a ‘country under construction’, of which the destiny cannot be blocked by an ‘backwards population’, that should be eliminated whenever is identified as the source of friction to the direction into development. The country, therefore, ‘is identified with its space, being the population an attribute of different places’, in a clear anti-human discourse content. In second place, the territorial integrity of the country is intransigently defended, as ‘to guarantee

space is the object that agglutinate interests, the maintenance of territory generally being made against the people', which represents the interest of the ruling class on land, and not on inhabitants of national territories. The very idea of 'internal enemies', the basis for the well-known National Security Doctrine, can be placed within this defense of integrity against challengers of the ruling *status quo*. Thirdly, keeping 'the national as geographical horizon to the elites' allow for the dismantling of any national movement against the established social, economic or cultural dictates, leaving 'to the popular classes, the local or at the most the regional as perspectives of spatializing' of their identities. The conception of territory, then, 'unites or divides political subjects'. Finally, presenting 'the relation between peoples and classes' as spatial features and 'as relationships established by places' allows for the lack of accountability of different political groupings in the violence used for the 'conquering' of the national territory (Moraes 2005, p. 95-102). Bellow, we present these aspects of geographical ideologies that will base our analysis on recent political literature usually refer to by the Brazilian military.

Table 1. Features of geographical ideologies in Brazil

Feature	Reasoning
The idea of the country as a 'project under construction'	Identification of the country with its space, and its population as an attribute of different places
Security of the State by the guarantee of spatial continuity of rule	Territorial integrity is the guarantee of the country as a project, and opposition to centralized projects is seen as opposition to national integrity and then, seen as a political crime
National unity as unequivocal support for the central government throughout space	National unity over economic, cultural and political projects allows for the division of popular projects by adhering them with regional features, and political rights are subject to loyalty to projects by national elites
Regional identities as spatial products	Allowing for regional specificities does not counteract national unity, since these regional identities are not used as a tool for opposing 'national' elites

Source: Moraes 2005.

Is it possible to find these features in political literature works these features that compose geographical ideologies? Are they an important fraction of the motives for military political action in Brazil? To outline these features, we now look upon three books that are often referred to by the military in Brazil as either inspirations or justification for their involvement in institutional politics. These books seem to have their own spatial ideologies, that may clarify some aspects of the recent political action of the military in Brazil.

Geographical ideologies in some works of political essayism in Brazil: *Jardim das Aflições*, *A Verdade Sufocada* and *Conversas com o Comandante*

The works we selected for analysis in this inquiry have both political and ideological significance to understand current Brazilian politics. Two of them were referred to by the incumbent President of Brazil, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, and one of them appeared after the military had to embellish its image after the Coronavirus Pandemic and the disastrous handling of the deadly spread of the disease in the country, overseen by an active Army General, Eduardo Pazuello.

O Jardim das Aflições: De Epicuro à ressurreição de César: ensaio sobre o materialism e a religião civil, written by self-assigned ‘philosopher’ Olavo de Carvalho, was written in 1995, and first published, in 1995. Its stated objective is to present ‘the sketches of a global history of modern Western culture’, point out to ‘the direction in which must be sook the truths that [indoctrinators from the ‘Brazilian left’] deny and, whilst denying, enclose’ (Carvalho 2019, p. 36). Meanwhile, Carvalho’s intention is presented as ‘not to change the course of History but testify that not everyone was sleeping whilst History changed its course’ (p. 37). In a work composed in 10 chapters divided in five ‘books’, Carvalho tries to sew up different lines of thought together, trying to represent Modernity as a project to annihilate individual freedom of thought and of speech. He tries to recreate the history of ideas as a battle between the protection of spiritual freedom as opposed to the modern Nation State, representing the latter with the reign of corruption, that embodies ‘the politics of the Antichrist over the land: to invest the State with spiritual authority, restore the cult of Caesar, banish from this world the interior freedom that is the kingdom of Christ’ (p. 221).

In this essay, Carvalho seeks to deconstruct arguments used by a Brazilian philosopher, José Américo Motta Pessanha, about the relevance of the thought of Epicurus. ‘Meditating on the events under the light of Hegel’s precept, according to which the essence of something is that in which it becomes’, Carvalho finds in Pessanha’s intervention, a part of a series of lectures on Ethics during the early 1990s, the seed of the ‘following ascension of the lefts [sic] to a dominant position’ in Brazilian politics. The essay is concluded by stating that ‘religion and religion only, understood as the symbolic bearers of universal truths and objective values, can offer an effective resistance to the growth of unlimited political growth’ that affects society. Fearing the possible rise of the left to political power in Brazil, Carvalho states that ‘religious law, as the only law that cannot be changed by human will, is the superior instance where are judged all conflicts between factions, be they religious or political, while every political legislation, being the expression of the ideology of a winning group, is a partial judge when the time comes to rule over the defeated’ (p. 380-381). In the lecture by Pessanha, Carvalho identifies ‘an intellectual tragedy of a whole country and a complete era’ (p. 386).

Another work of political literature that bases the far-right rhetoric in Brazil is *A Verdade Sufocada: A história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça*. It was written by Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra (2012), a military officer that oversaw one of the most active repression departments of the civil-military dictatorship. Ustra oversaw the incarceration, imprisonment, and dispensation of torture on members of the political opposition between 1970 and 1974, during one of the most repressive periods of the military regime. He was the Commander of the DOI/CODI, the political repression and intelligence department of the Army, that acted on the state of São Paulo, the most populous state in Brazil. His intention in publishing *A Verdade Sufocada* is stated at the beginning of the memory-inspired oeuvre: ‘by opening my archives, I explain the reasons that motivated civil and military actors to unleash the Counterrevolution of 1964, on March 31st, 1964, neutralizing the Second Attempt to Seize Power by the communists’ in Brazil (Ustra 2012, p. 28).

According to Ustra, the history of politics in Brazil could be told by understanding the role of communist parties and groups that tried to seize power in the 20th century. By mixing his own reminiscences about his own personal history, and that of Brazil during his lifetime, Ustra essays to draw the force lines that led to the use of violence and repression by the military in Brazil: communist takeover on the country. His inspiration

was a perception that the ‘history as told by the losers’ of the political struggle during the civil-military exception regime, promoted by high education researchers and the left-leaning Partido dos Trabalhadores, and not the history as told by the victors – the very military dictatorship. His objective is to change this perception, stating that ‘[those] presented as the defeated in the armed conflict as heroes that fought for liberty, fought against the dictatorship, omitting the main motivation that led them to take up weapons: the implementation of a dictatorship of the proletariat, an attempt tried since the 1930s’ (Ustra 2012, p. 30).

According to Ustra, four such attempts have happened in Brazilian history: (1) the failed *Intentona Comunista* in 1935, (2) the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959, (3) the election of João Goulart as President of Brazil in 1961 and the reestablishment of the Presidential regime in 1963, leading to the implementation of Goulart’s left-leaning policies, and (4) the urban and rural military *guerillas* created by armed groups that acted against the civil-military dictatorship, specially between 1968 and 1978, during the period with the most acts against personal and collective freedoms in Brazil. Ustra places the election of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva as the Fifth Attempt, and the subsequent election of Dilma Rousseff, a former *guerrilla* fighter, as the continuity of the long-term attempt of the radical left to take-over power within the country. In Ustra’s worldview, the use of violence by the communists in 1935 and during the civil-military regime between 1964 and 1985 represented the nature of their project: to dominate ideologically Brazilian society, and, whenever this is out of their reach, use violence to install a dictatorship of the proletariat. Ustra was declared the inspiration by then-Congressman Jair Messias Bolsonaro for his vote to impeach President Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

Finally, *General Villas Bôas: Conversas com o comandante* is a collection of interviews by anthropologist Celso Castro with General Eduardo Villas Bôas, former Army Commander in Brazil, and the responsible for the increasing political involvement of the Brazilian Armed Forces. Taken in 2019, but increased with notes by Villas Bôas afterwards, the book was edited in 2020, but released only in 2021. It must be understood, then, as the vision of both Villas Bôas and the Brazilian military in the early Bolsonaro presidency before their deeper involvement in the handling of the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020-2021 and the decrease in respectability amongst Brazilians the Armed Forces suffered because of that. Presenting ‘a kind of kaleidoscope of themes’, the main goal was to ‘register everything that came to mind’ the General Villas Bôas who, suffering from a degenerative disease, would not be able to talk after 2019. The book’s 16 chapters follow more or less the model of *A Verdade Sufocada*, in which the history of the main ‘character’ – in this case, Villas Bôas himself – is placed in the context of Brazilian political history along the way.

As the most recent of the works we selected for analysis, *Conversas com o comandante* is full of important perceptions of the military and their role in contemporary Brazilian politics. Mainly, much of the impact the book had in public debate was the statement by Villas Bôas about a *tweet* he and other Army Officers posted about consequences due to the possibility of former President Lula da Silva being released from prison before the 2018 general elections in Brazil. According to Villas Bôas this action was not an attempt at changing decisions made by the Supreme Court Judges that could vote in favor of Lula. However, in his own words, ‘it wasn’t a threat, but, really, an alert’ (Castro 2021, p. 191) to the highest court on the land. To Villas Bôas, their main target was the individual components of the Brazilian Army, motivated by two reasons:

Outside our [institutional] boundaries [that is, outside the Army], we were concerned with the consequences of the overflow of resentment take took over [Brazilian] population. We had continuous reports of a growing demand of military intervention. It was more prudent to prevent them than, afterwards, be deployed to contain them. Inside [the Army], we acted due to the porosity of our internal audience, that was all immerse in Brazilian society. Therefore, we shared a similar anxiety. We were not afraid of losing cohesion or of a thread to discipline [within the Army ranks], but it was convenient to appease it. (Castro 2021, p. 188)

Due to their political relevance, and their influence in the political action of the military, these books can be used as references to understand spatial imaginaries that circulate not only within the Brazilian military, but also amongst political factions that support their involvement in politics, inside or outside their ranks. They can be considered, then, good sources to understanding the geographical ideologies related to military political action in contemporary Brazilian politics.

The idea of the country as a ‘work in progress’ and the Security of the State as spatial continuity of rule

In the three works we analyze, the *unfinishedness* of Brazil appears as one of the main aspects of politics. While in *O Jardim das Aflições*, it appears not as only related to Brazil, but also to any kind of human society, in all these works the idea of nation building appears as a core argument for the engagement in institutional politics. To Gen. Villas Bôas, ‘[f]or a long time, national matters and the role of institutions of the State were forgotten [in Brazil]. Maybe what contributed to that omission was the lack of a national project’ (Castro 2021, p. 215). Villas Bôas asserts that this national project can only be achieved by ‘internal cohesion’, something that allowed successive fractures within ‘the social tissue of Brazil’, and what could be a danger in the next decades: ‘We do have signs of a new Cold War becoming inevitable, due to Chinese [economic] growth’ (p. 216). According to Villas Bôas, this ‘Chinese threat’ made him promote a ‘round of interviews’ with the candidates to the Presidency, during which he ‘exposed themes related to the relevance of rebuilding a national project’ and debated topics such as ‘the Amazon, problems, and fitting solutions and, finally, dealt with Defense, with the Armed Forces, and relevant matter that befitted them’ (p. 216). Villas Bôas points out that the lack of popular adherence of the project is due to the poor conditions of living of Brazilians, hence ‘[i]n a country ruled by sharp economic, social, regional inequality, apart from being living its most prolonged crisis in its history, the population suffering with high unemployment rates, *becomes hard to make people interested in such abstract and distant questions, so far away from their daily lives*’ (p. 216, highlighted by us).

The need for an elite interested in forming a ‘national project’ is also the matter of *O Jardim das Aflições*, in which Olavo de Carvalho states that ‘[w]hat is at play in our times is not the product of a mere conflict *between* ideologies, but the possibility of a spiritual survival of humanity as a whole in a world where all uneven and antagonistic ideological options united under a pact between enemies to wipe out from the surface of this world the legacy of ancient religions – at least of the three great religions from the Abrahamic group -, of which these ideologies nurtured themselves as parasites’ (p. 372). The only way to recover a project for Humanity, that is, the way in which it would be possible to put people on the way forward, became, then, the overthrow of laicity and the return of religion as a moderating power between politics and the individual conscience (Carvalho 2019).

A Verdade Sufocada, for its turn, does not present specifically a national project, but in it Ustra states that his main target are young audiences, to whom he dedicates his oeuvre. 'I offer this book to the youth', states Ustra,

... so they can seek truth, with freedom to find it, freedom conferred upon them due to our struggle. However, nowadays 'half-truths' prevail and, in their opposite face, are complete lies. I worry when I see them being influenced by leaflets that assume the air of contemporary history and are presented to them as the definite truth. Is not upon lies that a country can ground its future. I trust that the youth, in their thirst for justice, will know how to find truth and how to be free, opposing outdated ideologies that again try to soften their senses, and offer violence instead of peace, lies in lieu of truth and dissention instead of solidarity. Thus, with a clean spirit, they will build the Country that we pacified with blood and tears of many Brazilians.' (Ustra 2012, p. 15-16)

Although Ustra does not present any proposed national project, his intention in writing *A Verdade Sufocada* is stated as demonstrating how 'communist always took advantage of crises to occupy spaces, enlist cadres, indoctrinate the masses and spread their ideology', and, whilst 'under the justification of redemocratizing the country', they always 'sook the seizing of power' in Brazil (Ustra 2012, p. 44). The possibility of this attempt at seizing power by the Communists in Brazil is seen as an 'immediate action to restore order to Brazilian society', that could 'stop the Communists of seizing power' (p. 85). That is way Ustra is one of the main proponents of the argument that the civil-military dictatorship that ruled over Brazil between 1964 and 1985 was nothing but a *counterrevolution*: '[t]here was, truly, a Counterrevolution: a hard hit against the will of turning Brazil a Communist country' (p. 117). Thus, the use of violence was aimed at stopping the Opposition of using 'weak points in governmental action to gather the support of the population' and install a different government instead of the Junta (p. 130).

This reasoning can also be found in Villas Bôas' assessment of the Brazilian government's handling of the Indian territories within Brazilian territory. According to Villas Bôas, Brazilian society got 'unused' to military involvement 'in matters relating to the safety of society and State security'. He complains that

For an example, at the time of demarcation of the Indigenous Territory of the Yanomami, and the one of Raposa Serra do Sol latter, both located on the [Brazilian] Borderland Strip, and that present, consequentially, national security implications, the [Armed] Forces were not invited to join debates. [...] We, the have been there for the last decades, were not even consulted [for the demarcation process]. (p. 185-186)

According to Villas Bôas, the possibility of an ever-increasing process of demarcation of ethnic lands presented, to Brazil, a threat, that should be countered by the engagement of the military in public discourse. Ustra (2012) presents the menaces over territorial rights granting in Brazil, focusing on the possible liaisons of the granting of territory to Indigenous Peoples or *quilombolas*, and the action of *guerilla groups* such as FARC in Colombia – the group that, according to Ustra, was behind the expansion of left-leaning governments in South America through an international organization uniting political parties call the São Paulo Forum. The creation of territorial exceptions for certain groups is presented by Ustra – and seems to resonate in Villas Bôas' *conversations* – as a toolkit to implement Communism in South America. This 'deeper meaning' of the left-leaning administrations in the region would be 'concealed' under 'politically correct' movements, such as

- *‘Indigenismo – when they [the left-leaning governments of South America] claim to defend indigenous rights, they are actually stimulating the formation of guerilla groups (Zapatist Army of National Liberation);*
- *Secession – by arguing that the territories occupied by Indigenous peoples belongs to them, and not the State;*
- *Radical ecologism – by pretending to protecting the environment, they justify terrorist action, building up obstacles to public groundwork on infrastructure such as highways and electric energy [power plants];*
- *Liberation theology – with the intention of breaking up the Catholic Church [in opposing factions] and justify the violence committed with supposedly Christian motivations.’* (Ustra 2012, p. 596)

The defense of this ‘concealment’ should come from personal belief, an spiritual fight that would only be possible through a double standard of loyalty to the political establishment: a situation in which individuals do as they should do not because they believe in the values represented by, for an example, democracy, but because by obeying the rituals of democracy they could, afterwards, reclaim power and be finally the ones that could dictate the future of Brazil (Carvalho 2019). The formula used for this kind of double-pattern loyalty is that the loyalty of the Armed Forces is tied to the State, and not the temporary government (Ustra 2012, Castro 2021).

National unity of command and regional diversity of identities

The idea that the Armed Forces should ‘lead the country’ in its political processes is, therefore, related to these capacities described above. Having an Euclidian perception of space, perceiving Brazilian territory as the surface over which people and resources are disposed and can be moved according to their plans, the Armed Forces focus on prevent that any kind of regional identity can be turned into a secessionist movement. That this possibility is not a probability in urban centers, composed mainly of Brazilians that are indoctrinated within this worldview, the Armed Forces perceive ethnic groups as the greatest dangers to the capacity of the State to rule over Brazilian society, in an imperial fashion. At times, this approach appears as the possibility of disposing certain groups to different areas due to their expertise: Villas Bôas credits Southerners in Brazil as having the ‘industrious capacities of modern agriculture’, and states that they should be given land in areas that are still ‘unexplored’ (Castro 2021, p. 170). Ustra also highlights the need of a ‘cultural enterprise’, so the ‘opposing ideologies’ could be countered by ‘the rightful claims’ (Ustra 2012, p. 640).

The way presented as the one that can tackle this matter seems to always surround political, social, and moral indoctrination of the Brazilian people. The unity of command would come from ‘exemplary action’ and the ‘moral upstanding’ of the Armed Forces (Castro 2021); it could emerge from ‘demonstrations of the truth’ about the civil-military regime of 1964-1985, preventing ‘the defeated [in the battle of weapons] from keep on re-writing History’, putting an end ‘to the Myth that we killed innocent people and buried them in clandestine cemeteries’ (Ustra 2012, p. 643). But, above all, by allowing religious groups to be the judges of governmental actions, as religion ‘and religion only’ is the one true moral guidance that could base ‘a fair trial’ of political actions (Carvalho 2019).

The need to compose, at the national level, unity of discourse, based on moral grounds and on the long-standing anti-communism of the Brazilian Armed Forces led to a kind of neurosis, in which their main concerns ‘was always aimed at what could harm what the Constitution states as duties and destinations of the Armed Forces. Napoleon said that an army could be defeated, but never be surprised. Hence our concern in creating a

capacity of anticipation' (Castro 2021, p. 180). The possibility of violent clashes between the people – specially when the post-2016 administrations tried to pass unpopular reforms in Brazil – and the State could lead to the deployment of the military, what is presented as a justification for their political engagement, and their self-proclaimed role in overseeing political parties. Regional identities, then, could not reach the level of ethnic divergence within Brazil, keeping all social groups tied to the central government's decision. The actions of the administrations of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) in granting rights to minority groups – above all, judicial rulings on those matters – presented itself as dangers to the central unity of command, and is also an important aspect of the political engagement of the Armed Forces in creating a 'truly moral society', based on traditional values, patriarchy and religion as its constitutional forces (Carvalho 2019). The table bellow outlines some of these arguments, and their role as *geographical ideologies* that politically mobilize the Armed Forces into institutional politics in Brazil:

Table 2. Features of geographical ideologies found in *O Jardim das Aflições*, *A Verdade Sufocada* and *Conversas com o Comandante*

Feature	Problem	Necessary political intervention
The idea of the country as a 'project under construction'	The possibility of deviation or destruction of a 'national project' in Brazil	Overseeing politicians and making sure they follow the political perceptions and intentions of the Armed Forces
Security of the State by the guarantee of spatial continuity of rule	The granting of rights to individuals pertaining to minority groups, or collective ownership of land, represent the possible expansion of non-State jurisdiction in Brazilian territory	Decrease or modify already-made rulings, and making sure judicial and political decisions are made accordingly to moral and geopolitical perceptions of the military
National unity as unequivocal support for the central government throughout space	Possible fractures within the 'social tissue' represent a breach for foreign powers to interfere in internal matters whenever they instrumentalize differences amongst Brazilians	Unifying the nation behind a sense of nationality, indoctrinating the people as 'what means to be Brazilian', and being able to prevent possible questioning on Brazilian nationalist identity
Regional identities as spatial products	Local cultural habits cannot be the source of political identification of difference between Brazilians, hence it could break the idea that the space unites people in their differences	Tackling discourses that present possible differentiation amongst Brazilians, specially in written and audiovisual media, fomenting 'national art' as a symbol of Brazilian-ness

Closing remarks

This draft presents one of many possible interpretations on the motives for current political action by the Brazilian military. Far from settle all possible interpretation from this phenomenon, here we tried to present motivations that could be inferred from geographical thought that bases this kind of political engagement in the country. The reach this goal, we sought to verify if there was any geographical ideology that could be found in three political literature works that are usually referred to by the military, as well as by supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro. *O Jardim das Aflições*, by Olavo de

Carvalho; *A Verdade Sufocada*, by Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra; and *General Villas Bôas: Conversa com o Comandante* were chosen as primary sources due to their political, ideological, and cultural significance within some groups of Brazilian society, as well as their role in settling the discursive framework over which the military bases its political action. Due to the longstanding tradition of the Armed Forces in justifying their political involvement due to their perceived ‘reality’ of the country, and the role spatial reasoning plays in both their actions and doctrines, we sought to analyze these works under the light of the concept of geographical ideologies.

Many lines of inquiry emerge from a research effort such as this one. However, we do think that spatial reasoning, and geographical ideologies, play an important role in military political action not only in Brazil, but in South and Latin America as a whole. The arguments we presented here – that country ideation, State security as the guarantee of spatial continuity of State jurisdiction, national unity as unequivocal support to the central government, as well as regional identities as deprived from political force – seem to be relevant not only to understand the current, but also the former, ways in which the Armed Forces try to interact and engage in Brazilian politics.

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