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*WHAT KIND OF MISSION IS THAT? THE BRAZILIAN ARMED FORCES' PERFORMANCE IN NON-TRADITIONAL OPERATIONS*

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**Abstract**

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increase in the armed forces' participation in non-war operations, including humanitarian emergencies, environmental disasters, and the assurance of public order. Such participation has impacted doctrinal definitions and increased interaction between civil and military agencies. Faced with this phenomenon, this article seeks to identify how the armed forces in Brazil have participated in non-traditional operations within the domestic domain. To this end, three operations were selected: Operation Acolhida, Operation Verde Brasil and Operation COVID-19. Through the three cases, we observed that significant interactions among different agencies and civil society contributed to a particular interagency character of the missions, as well as their relevance, in cases qualified as non-traditional.

**Keywords:** non-traditional military operations; inter-agency cooperation; civil-military relations.

**1. Introduction**

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Since the end of the Cold War, humanitarian emergencies and environmental disasters have often involved the armed forces, both directly and indirectly. In complex situations, the armed forces have been receiving demands from various initiatives engaged in international or national crises. The association of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle with humanitarian interventions has amplified studies on its conveniences and inconveniences.<sup>4</sup> Apart from that, different types of humanitarian participation and interventions have illustrated the doctrinal changes in the possible and desirable participation models of the armed forces in crises where their management capacities are noticeably higher than those of other agencies. As Cook notes, in the case of smaller or developing states, disaster recurrence has promoted the preparation and guidance of the armed forces to provide the first and primary crisis response service.<sup>5</sup>

Such transformations were also relevant in peacekeeping missions, which qualified the armed forces in particular circumstances and demanded a review of their duties. The armed forces were fueled by the diverse pressures related to transparency, efficiency, and compliance with public policies, such as those of human rights. Given Brazil's situation, its armed forces have undergone particular transformations in the last few decades. Those transformations can be seen either in the post-military dictatorship period, throughout the 1980s onwards, or due to the attributions they absorbed in different contexts. Since the creation of the Ministry of Defence (1999) and the launch of the National Defence Policy (1996, first edition approved in 2005), the Brazilian Armed Forces gained multiple responsibilities, affecting how defence policies have evolved. In this context, the National Defence Policy and the National Defence Strategy were reviewed together in 2020, providing for the preparation of the armed forces and their capabilities and the reorganization of the Brazilian Defence Industrial Base<sup>6</sup>.

Many experiences during these 20 years of exercise of the Brazilian Ministry of Defence were also responsible for shaping the armed forces' actions. Some of them were remarkable in terms of the doctrinal evolution of the force: the peacekeeping missions in which Brazil was heavily involved, such as MINUSTAH and the UNIFIL Maritime Task

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<sup>4</sup> Dandeker, C. *Armed Forces & Society*, 353; Runge, P. *Armed forces as humanitarian aid workers*; Mills, K. *Neo-humanitarianism*, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> Ochsendorfe, W., "O indispensável apoio", 155; Cook, "Military engagement", p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/search?SearchableText=livro%20branco%20da%20defesa> Accessed 25 April 2023.

Force (Lebanon 2011-2020).<sup>7</sup> As a result, there was a substantial increase in doctrine work, which included expanding discussions regarding the role of the armed forces in the context of critical and transversal challenges.

Notably, the political conjuncture of Brazil during the pandemic was of a sharp political division, visible in the local press and social networks, amongst supporters and an increasing nucleus of opposition between the left and the right wings. The government of Jair Bolsonaro, elected in 2018 for the 2019-2022 term, arises in a context of political opposition to the Workers' Party, which was responsible for the government in the previous decade. This political dichotomy was aggravated by the process that led to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, in 2017.

Thus, although the Brazilian armed forces experienced renewed relations during the years of the Ministry of Defence, the political scene that involved them in the administration of Jair Bolsonaro may characterize a different phase of the Brazilian civil-military relations history. During President Jair Bolsonaro's term, the civil-military relations were in constant tension, particularly since several military personnel were appointed to public civilian positions. Relations between the armed forces and the government were deepened by their representation in government with several generals in strategic posts, by the interference of active and retired military personnel in Brazilian politics, and in guiding the armed forces' internal governance. Speeches relating to the political use of the armed forces and in favour of a possible institutional coup were constant during Bolsonaro's tenure and the target of criticism on the role of the armed forces in civil affairs.

The so-called "military solution" invokes the spirit of Bolsonaro's government, favouring a troop command structure, which includes being supported by the militaries and supporting the military's power over society, according to Avritzer.<sup>8</sup> It is, therefore, indisputable that this political scene implies the civilian-military operations in which political wear and tear go beyond the transformations that the armed forces have been going through since the 1980s re-democratization process.

The armed forces remain in broad-spectrum assignments that are part of the transformations before 2019, which is the year of Jair Bolsonaro's presidential inauguration. The humanitarian character within defence projects was continuously

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<sup>7</sup> Braga, "MINUSTAH", 711; Hirst, "Haiti"; Teixeira, "Centro Conjunto"; Abdenur, "Rising", p. 390.

<sup>8</sup> Avritzer, "Política e antipolítica."

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promoted in previous governments. In this respect, an important amount of institutional development and incremental evolution was manifested from experiences of internationalization processes and missions.<sup>9</sup>

During the past few years, three cases were selected by this study to express the appropriate institutional increments, while being relatively independent of the political conditionings of the Bolsonaro years. The first case observed is on the armed forces' involvement in Operation "Acolhida" (which means "Welcoming" in English), coordinated by the President's Chief of Staff, with great significance for the refugee crisis management and public policies such as "the interiorization". The second case treated in this study is that of the Amazonian fires, qualified by Verde Brasil operations. The fires mobilized thousands of military personnel who played silent and muffled roles due to the violent political load on the issue during Bolsonaro's government. The case engaged in a significant political and international debate with the leading conflicting position from the first Bolsonaro Ministry of the Environment, Ricardo Salles, who since 2021 has been part of a criminal investigation for creating difficulties for environmental surveillance and hindering the investigation of criminal offences involving criminal organizations<sup>10</sup>.

The third case, Operation COVID-19, was deployed in the initial phase of the pandemic despite Bolsonaro's refusal to acknowledge the existence of the pandemic and the militarization of the government institutions, such as the Ministry of Health.<sup>11</sup>

Our main goal is to systematize operations of a different character – refugees<sup>12</sup>, natural phenomena, and epidemics – and analyze them according to the frameworks of relevant literature. Thus, we will look at the pieces of evidence considering the well-known trends and typologies for the armed forces' non-traditional operations. Our study concentrates on the interagency conditionings and challenges as the main variable of analysis, qualified by the relationship between the involved agencies. The interagency

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<sup>9</sup> Paiva, Mendes & Vieira, "Brazilian New Foreign Policy", p. 137.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-57346129>. Accessed on 6 June 2021

<sup>11</sup> Rodrigues et al., "COVID-19 y la militarización".

<sup>12</sup> The authors chose to maintain the term "refugee" because international literature recognizes this term to describe a particular type of migrant. However, it should be noted that only a few Venezuelan migrants have officially been classified as refugees. The Brazilian Migration Law offers humanitarian visas, and most Venezuelans fall into this latter category.

aspect of those missions contributed to protecting them from political instability and to the institutional long-term commitment to the state.

The authors conducted fieldwork in Operation Acolhida and collected data from affiliated institutions between 2018 and 2021 to observe the interagency conditions and challenges for each case study. By conducting a thorough qualitative data analysis, the authors gained valuable insights into the specific nature of the conditions and challenges observed. These insights can be used to inform future efforts aimed at addressing these issues.

## **2. Non-traditional Operations and new dimensions**

Traditionally, acting in external conflicts is the most crucial role of the armed forces. However, interstate conflicts began to decrease in the last decades and new attributions arose.<sup>13</sup> In a sense, governments have shown greater interest in their international reputation and, for this reason, are beginning to rethink the function of their military forces. Shemella (2006, p. 126) highlighted that the armed forces had assumed non-traditional missions in the last decades. The author identifies five types of macro roles played by the military, namely<sup>14</sup>: combatant (warfighter); defensive (defender); peacekeeper; civil defence agent (firefighter); and police officer.

As mentioned above, combatant-type countries tend to maintain a vast military apparatus capable of promoting an offensive war. Currently, only five countries fall into this category: the United States, France, China, Russia, and the United Kingdom. Generally, the rulers of these countries try to use their military to assert their interests on the international stage. The empirical evidence shows that these countries have the power

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<sup>13</sup> Although this phenomenon, in quantitative terms, is more representative in developing countries, it is also possible to verify military actions in the fight against organised crime and terrorism in developed nations. As an example, we highlight the operations to guarantee the law of order carried out in the United States in the 1990s due to protests against abuses committed by police in the city of Los Angeles. For further clarification, see Weiss (2006).

<sup>14</sup> At this point, the author differentiates between mission and role. For him, changes in the traditional roles of the Armed Forces began with the delegation of non-traditional missions that, over time, came to characterise the main functions of the military. See Shemella (2006, p. 122).

to choose which type of conflict they will engage in, and therefore, it is possible to observe their performance in the five categories.

Defensives are States where military forces are trained to respond to external attacks. Due to legal restrictions, in the case of Japan, and South Korea, they prepare their military forces to act against offensive operations. Defensive countries retain the ability to fight wars but do not usually start them. It is possible to observe the engagement of these forces in peace operations; however, this type of attribution is smaller compared to the defence function.

In turn, peacekeepers are specialists in supporting peace operations organized by international organizations, which is the prominent role of their armed forces. Countries such as Canada and Argentina have prioritized training their military to work in peacekeeping operations. In the face of the retraction of interstate wars, this type of action has gained much popularity in the international scenario. In a sense, countries with limited power resources would tend to support military missions beyond their borders to increase international prestige.

According to the same typology, States in which armed forces are used for various domestic purposes but do not act in law enforcement are categorized as civil defence agents (firefighters). Since external threats do not directly affect them, the military forces of these countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, are usually employed primarily in developing the nation's infrastructure and in crisis management. Military forces in these countries are often underemployed and operate in non-traditional assignments, such as natural disaster rescue operations, vaccination, and food distribution. These soldiers can sometimes act in law-and-order operations and/or control insurgencies.

Finally, the type of armed forces that play the primary role of police agents. Generally, in countries where the regular police are weak and corrupt, such as Bolivia, Colombia and Indonesia, military forces tend to replace police forces. However, a group of problems involves this employment. First, instead of promoting stability, using the military in public security actions tends to weaken police institutions even further, thus contributing to the deepening of political tensions.<sup>15</sup> The use of the armed forces in actions to guarantee law and order should not exceed ad hoc cases. Otherwise, they tend to confuse the functions related to the military and police forces, hindering the political decision-making process and crisis management in the context of national security.

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<sup>15</sup> Shemella, "The Spectrum"; Weiss, "The blurring border".

When observing the changes that have taken place in the context of national security, other questions arise. The first one refers to the significance and scope of the changes undertaken regarding the roles and missions given to the military. Nowadays, international terrorism, civil wars, drug trafficking, and organized crime have challenged policymakers and international organizations. The concern with the different types of threats contributed to the alteration of the roles traditionally attributed to the military, undeniably changing the nature of their roles and missions. The armed forces, thus, must respond to a historical conjuncture of political and social aspirations; while the empirical analysis points to risks associated with including new tasks in the armed forces.

As Shemella or Weiss suggested, the differences between the traditional and non-traditional missions of the armed forces are significant.<sup>14</sup> Although initiated in developing countries, the shift in emphasis from external to internal security began to be incorporated in developed nations, mainly due to the fight against terrorism. Military forces in charge of supporting or replacing police agents changed their role and the environment in which they usually operate. Traditional military operations require highly trained professionals and large operational units. Combatants conduct themselves with high-tech weapons in an environment where individuals involved in the conflict are potential targets.

Non-traditional missions or operations place soldiers in situations where the targets are mixed with those they must protect. Jenne and Martínez argue that, even in a pragmatic sense of using and developing capabilities to recondition the armed forces' importance in Latin America, such operations may harm civil-military relations with adverse effects on democratic governance.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, humanitarian assistance missions are generally decentralized, combining military personnel from different countries, police forces, local leadership, and non-governmental organizations. This characteristic tends to confuse military personnel who are used to submitting to well-defined command lines.

The selected cases are marked by demands for doctrinal expansion for Humanitarian Supply Chain Management (HSCM), characterized by disruptive events resulting in institutional adaptation.<sup>17</sup> The same authors were dedicated to qualifying the literature about humanitarian logistics management from the preparative, operative, and

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<sup>16</sup>Jenne and Martínez, "Domestic military." p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> Behl & Dutta, "Humanitarian supply chain," p. 1002.



postoperative phases. The studies end up focusing on the procedures, in which traditional and renewed approaches in the humanitarian field allow focusing on experiences and governance instead of operational demands.

Undoubtedly, the indiscriminate use of the military for various purposes can generate a series of non-desired effects. However, when we look at the current reality, the performance of the armed forces in non-traditional operations has become a regular practice. It is not by chance that the armed forces and international organizations have promoted studies and documents that aim to create conceptual limits and rules for their actions in complex emergencies and humanitarian disasters. The selected cases indicate this tendency, while they may also offer insights into how those missions have promoted their institutional development and knowledge.

### **3. The three cases are: environmental, refugee and pandemic crises.**

Adriana Barreto (2022) argues that contrary to what happened in most European countries, the development process of the Brazilian Army was due to the fight against “domestic rebellions,” the terminology used in opposition to “pacification,” which is also of contemporary use when it comes to the operation Ensuring Law and Order (*Garantia da Lei e da Ordem* – GLO) towards the criminal occupation of the *favelas*. For the author, this represented the manifestation of an institutional development based on an apparatus of repression and alignment between the military authorities and the political elites. Thus, the Brazilian Army development was not built on operations against foreign forces. Rodrigues et al. recall that GLO operations have become more frequent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the fight against drug trafficking when requested by local governments (of the federative entities).<sup>18</sup> Still, they have also strengthened the bases of electoral support of former President Jair Bolsonaro, calling for *mano dura* operations. Although we recognize the public opinion dimension of the GLO operations, the non-traditional operations focused in this study are not covered by the same status.

In Brazil, regular participation in UN peacekeeping operations in recent decades, as well as participation in different types of domestic operations (ensuring law and order, security in major events, civil-social assistance, and environmental disasters), contributed to doctrinal revisions that led to the elaboration of guidelines focused on the interagency environment. Regarding the missions, the current military doctrine of defence foresees,

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<sup>18</sup> Rodrigues et al., “COVID-19 y la militarización”.



in addition to their primary mission, the use in situations where it is necessary to guarantee the Brazilian institutions, law-and-order, civil-social assistance, prevention and combat of terrorism, as well as participation in humanitarian actions (Brazilian Ministry of Defence, 2007).

The relationship between humanitarian operations and complex emergencies poses challenges presented at the national and international levels of operations. Civil-military relations and the scope of each institution weigh the effectiveness of those operations regarding the responsibilities and limits of each of those involved. In the last decades, the complexity linked to the operations points to operational and logistical needs of a significant proportion. The armed forces are mostly better prepared and capable of providing effective and fast service.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the characterization of environments endowed with civil-military operational relations is a recent object marked by political interference. In the international environment of operations, it is essentially an impediment to deep civil-military relations.<sup>20</sup> Once in the national environment, such operations cannot be more vulnerable to interference, especially when the objects in question affect vital universal interests. This is the case for operations that deal with natural heritage, such as the Amazon, the COVID-19 pandemic, or the case of refugees from Venezuela on the northern border, in which operations are characterized by civil-military relations and complex emergencies.

The expansion of the armed forces' scope of action and their involvement in non-traditional tasks and missions has created an operational environment that is becoming increasingly complex and challenging. This has led to a growing need for actors to interact and collaborate with each other during operations. In the past, singular type operations were more common, but in the post-Cold War context, joint and interagency operations have become more prevalent. This shift has required greater coordination, communication, and cooperation among various actors, including military and civilian entities. As a result, building effective partnerships across agencies and sectors is crucial to addressing the challenges of contemporary security environments.

According to the literature, interagency operations are more effective for several reasons. One key advantage is that they allow for a more comprehensive and coordinated

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<sup>19</sup> Rosa & Bandeira, 2016, p. 3

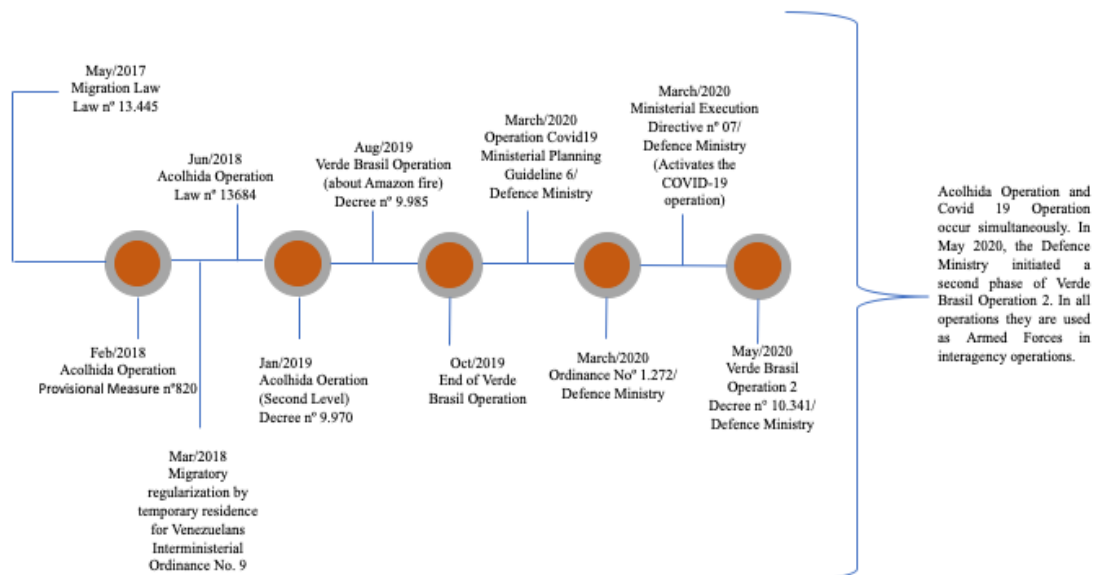
<sup>20</sup> Runge, "Armed forces as humanitarian aid workers, p 4.

approach to addressing complex problems that require the expertise and resources of multiple organizations. Interagency operations can facilitate communication and information sharing between different organizations, which can lead to more accurate and timely situational awareness and more effective decision-making.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, interagency operations can help identify and address gaps in coverage or overlaps in responsibilities, which can lead to a more efficient use of resources. Interagency operations can also help build trust and collaboration between different organizations, which can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions to complex problems. Overall, the literature suggests that interagency operations can improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of responses to complex problems.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 1 shows the chronology of Operation Acolhida, Verde-Brasil, and Operation COVID-19.

**Figure 1 - Operation Acolhida and Operation COVID-19**



### 3.1.Operation Acolhida

<sup>21</sup> Bardach, "Getting agencies to work together," chap 3.

<sup>22</sup> Bardach, "Developmental Dynamics", 163.

In March 2018, in the face of humanitarian challenges imposed by the steep increase in the immigration of Venezuelans on the northern border, the Brazilian government recognized the situation of vulnerability in the region (Brazil, 2018).<sup>23</sup> An Inter-ministerial Committee was established to assist and protect the vulnerable from Venezuela. Although Operation Acolhida is coordinated by the President's Chief of Staff, given the logistical difficulties in the Amazon region, the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces have assumed a predominant role in this operation.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, the Brazilian Army has coordinated a task force that aims to systematize different agencies' actions, be they governmental, non-governmental, domestic and/or international. In general, the activities carried out can be classified into three categories: 1) border management; 2) shelter; 3) interiorization).<sup>25</sup>

Based on the Brazilian Defence Military Doctrine, Operation Acolhida can be seen under the humanitarian approach and as a joint and interagency scheme. Combining these characteristics makes it one of the most relevant military operations carried out in the national territory.<sup>26</sup> The complexity contained in Operation Acolhida involves a series of requirements of a normative-legal nature, international assignments and surveillance and logistical resourcefulness.<sup>25</sup> The recognition of the situation of vulnerability concerning refugees occurred via Presidential Decree No. 9285, of March 15, 2018, and with the establishment of the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee. In the municipality of Pacaraima (in the state of Roraima – RR), the following structures operate with the coordination between Governmental Organizations (GO), International Organizations (IO), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO): Reception and Identification Post, Interior and Screening Post, Advanced Service Post, Pacaraima Base, Janokoida Shelter, and BV-8 Accommodation.

Operation Acolhida, therefore, is inter-ministerial and dependent on inter-agency cooperation systems and subsystems; it is a Coordination between the President's Chief of Staff and an Executive Secretariat of the Federal Committee linked to the Ministry of Defence (MoD). An Operational Coordinator of the Brazilian Army manages emergency actions using the military component in collaboration with other agencies. The current

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<sup>23</sup> Mendes & Fernandes, "Interiorização", 224.

<sup>24</sup> Oliveira, "A Utilização do Componente Militar", 12.

<sup>25</sup> Lourenço, "Logística em operações de ajuda humanitária"; Ochsendorfe, W., "O indispensável apoio".

<sup>26</sup> Paiva et al., "The Brazilian armed forces", 8; Ochsendorfe, W., "O indispensável apoio".

governance structure was based on strategic planning with profound influence from the Brazilian Army's experiences in complex emergencies.<sup>27</sup>

In Boa Vista, the capital of the state of Roraima, there are ten shelters, an Interiorization Area (Rondon II), the Boa Vista Base, and an Interiorization and Sorting Station. There is also a Reception and Support Station that has three structures located in an area adjacent to the bus station: a left-luggage office, information points, chemical toilets, an overnight area, a bathing area, a space for children and laundry, and an area for distribution and consumption donated meals.

In the municipality of Manaus (in the state of Amazonas – AM), there is a Transit Accommodation, which operates as a “hub” in the interiorization process, a Support Base, a Reception and Support Post, and an Interior and Screening Post. In terms of derived policies, Ministerial Guideline No. 03/2018/MD characterizes the humanitarian aid operation, while Ministerial Guideline No. 04/2018/MD focuses on parameters and responsibilities for the execution of Host and Control Operations. Control Operation was held to support the Federal Police in migratory control and to prevent cross-border crimes.

Therefore, the Brazilian Military Doctrine for Humanitarian operations is designed to alleviate human suffering from natural or human-made disasters<sup>28</sup>. In particular, the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force Roraima is responsible for planning and executing Operation Acolhida and cooperating with the federal, state, and municipal governments. As a contingent of 226 military personnel<sup>29</sup>, formed by the 3 Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force), the Task Force has general actions such as receiving, identifying, screening, immunizing, sheltering, and interiorizing unassisted Venezuelans.

This Operation is a milestone within Civil-Military Cooperation since it enables migration and border management with humanitarian actions, such as welcoming, identifying, screening, immunizing, sheltering, and interiorizing immigrants.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Paiva et al, “Movimentos Populacionais”, p. 151.

<sup>28</sup> For this study, we have considered the Brazilian Military Defence Doctrine (2007) and the Brazilian Army Doctrinal Coordination Note on Humanitarian Operations (2014).

<sup>29</sup> At the beginning of the operation, the military contingent reached 500 military personnel (Oliveira, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Oliveira, “O emprego da cooperação civil militar”, p. 17.

The classification as a humanitarian joint and interagency operation enabled the planning and conducting of actions, creating a Joint Interagency Staff, which advises the Task Force's Operational Coordinator and keeps them informed continuously about the evolution of events and results of actions. The complexity of the Operation Acolhida can be seen under some of the numbers:

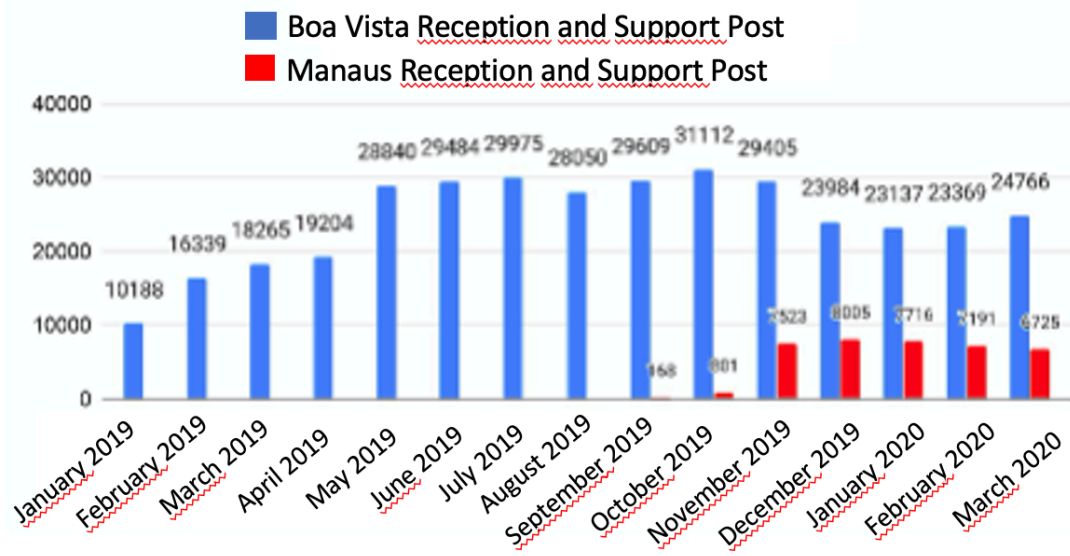
- 1) On how many people they are dealing with.
- 2) The amount and types of agencies that are involved.
- 3) What are the political frameworks for the whole Operation?

Figure 2 shows the progressive increase in the number of people. Nevertheless, the sanitary barriers created by the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way the military dealt with the mission and people's protection.

**Figure 2 – Daily numbers of people in different shelters**



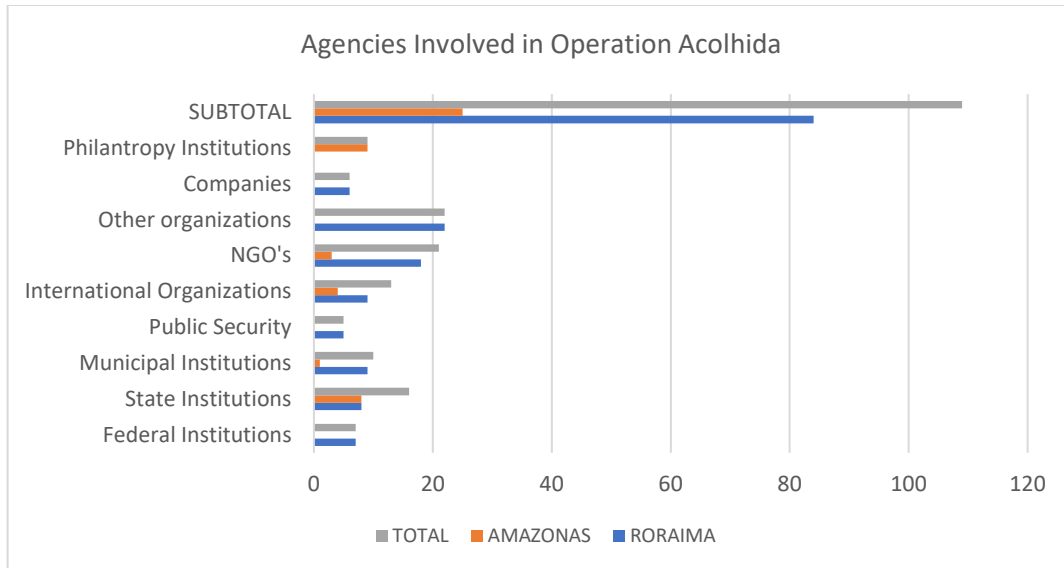
**People who spent the night in a Reception and Support Post**



Source: Brazilian Ministry of Defence, April 2020.

The present challenge in terms of complexity is also related to the group of agencies involved, including federal entities, public security, health surveillance, and NGOs. Figure 3 shows a chart with the different types of agencies involved in Operation Acolhida, with the number and diversity of agencies involved.

Figure 3: Graphic of different types of Agencies involved in Acolhida



Source: Brazilian Ministry of Defence, 2020

### 3.2 The Amazon Fires

In 2019, Brazil experienced one of the most dramatic episodes of forest fires in recent years. The fires that spread throughout the north and west of the country exposed a series of illegal mining and deforestation activities that corroborated the fire outbreaks, which quickly gained proportion. During periods of drought and with less rainfall, the Amazon rainforest region is vulnerable to fire outbreaks. According to data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), the body responsible for satellite image mapping, the most vulnerable period is between July and September.

INPE data are relevant and efficient to ensure that government actions and public policies in environmental control are carried out. According to INPE, when compared with 2018 data, fires in the Amazon increased by 30% in the Legal Amazon region (composed of the states of Acre, Amazonas, Amapá, Pará, Roraima, Rondônia, Maranhão, Tocantins, and Mato Grosso)<sup>31</sup>.

After being notified by INPE about the Amazon fires, there was instability in the Brazilian government, who argued that the fires were periodical. International and activist pressure led to policies to combat and control the fire outbreaks. The Brazilian government instituted, using Decree no 9.985, an operation involving the Armed Forces

<sup>31</sup> [http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal\\_amazon/rates](http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal_amazon/rates). Accessed on 20 May 2020.



that lasted from August 24 to October 24, 2019. The environmental operations for Ensuring Law and Order Operations (GLO) were implemented to combat illegal timber trafficking, among other cross-border illegal activities, as well as with the main objective of reducing the impact of illegal activities and destruction of the environment in the Amazon region.<sup>32</sup>

The Operation with the Armed Forces and other firefighting agencies, such as IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources), ICMBio (Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation), local and federal police (local Military Police, Federal Highway Police, Federal Police, local Civil Police), Civil Defence, Fire Department, Secretariats for the Environment, State Foundation for the Environment and Water Resources, and National Public Security Force. The agencies' engagement in Operation Verde Brasil resulted in an interagency model for exchanging experiences and information. However, it was not enough to overcome the challenges of building the trust relationships necessary for the effectiveness of the operation.<sup>33</sup>

Table 1 was elaborated by the authors from data collected from the Ministry of Defence and the Brazilian Army and it concerns the quantity of equipment and human resources in Operations Verde Brasil 1 and 2:

**Table 1: Capabilities at the disposal of the Operation Verde Brasil**

<b>Operation Verde Brasil 1 and 2 – Final Numbers</b>	
Military personnel engaged	Other agencies personnel
9772	1065
Military Aircrafts	Other agencies aircrafts
14	4
Military Helicopters	Civilian Helicopters
23	4
Military boats	X
159	0

<sup>32</sup> from Almeida Paim, "Operações de Garantia", p. 299.

<sup>33</sup> Botelho, "As atividades de inteligência"; Paiva et al, "Movimentos Populacionais", p. 151.

Military vehicles	Vehicles
467	137

**Source: Brazilian Ministry of Defence**

In addition to the agencies, other ministries were active alongside the Ministry of Defence in fighting the fire: the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Citizenship, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply. The inter-agency structure of the operation favoured the execution of several actions against the illegal trafficking of wood and deforestation, as well as for the application of fines, instruction and education for fighting fires and against deforestation, among other diversified activities.<sup>34</sup> As Araújo stated, the efforts associated with complex environmental emergencies are part of the recent engagements that modified how they should operate regarding subsidiary attributions.<sup>35</sup>

The international support offered by Chile, Japan, Israel, and the United States came through operational and logistical activities such as aircraft provided by Chile, Israeli brigadiers, American experts, and equipment donated by Japan.

Considering that Operation Verde Brasil fought a series of illegal activities and encouraged the local population to learn how to fight fires as first responders, the expectations of success from this operation gained more space in the union with society and in benefit of the preservation of the environment.

The interagency model was instituted under the governance of the Ministry of Defence, which activated the Joint Commands of the North and the Amazon. Its first actions were based on the military and agencies' training and mobilization to combat and control fires in the region. Activities were coordinated and executed by the Joint Operations Centre installed by the Ministry of Defence in Brasília. Thus, decision-making was carried out in the office with the joint commands and agencies. In September 2019, the Joint Command of the West was installed, operating in the regions of Mato Grosso and Goiás to combat fires and environmental crimes.

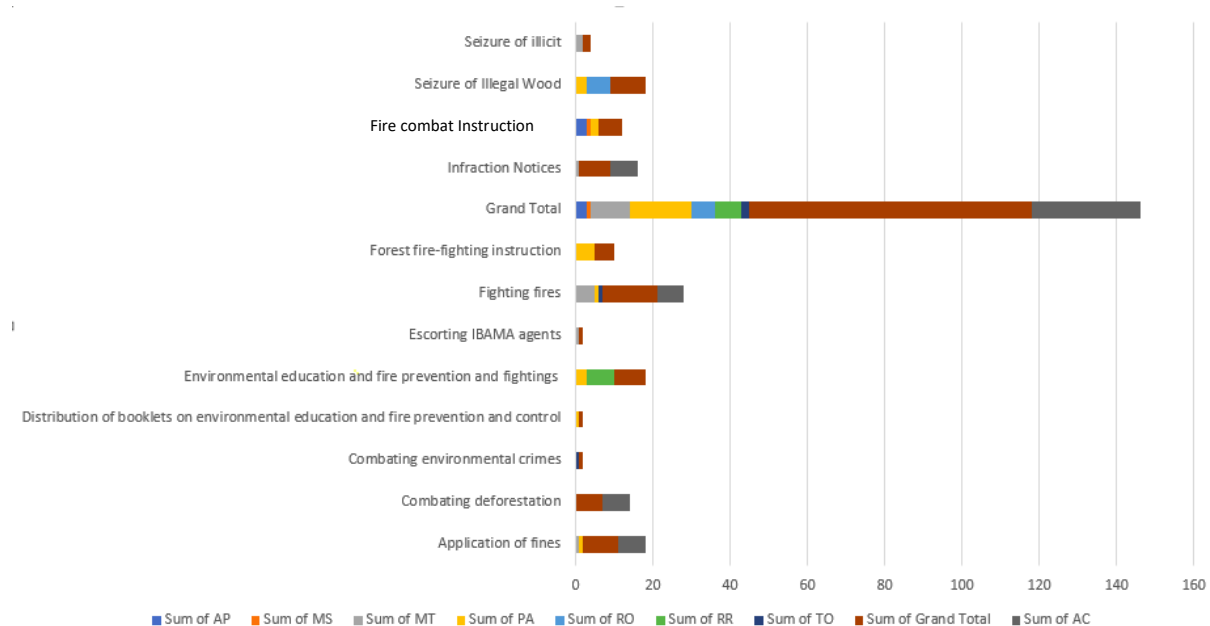
Over the course of three months, more precisely 63 days, of Operation Verde Brasil, the actions developed were logistical support, aerial patrolling, combating and controlling fires, seizure of illicit materials, environmental education, infraction notices,

<sup>34</sup> Rosa, Bandeira, & Leiras, "O papel das Forças Armadas".

<sup>35</sup> Menin, "Ações subsidiárias das Forças Armadas"; Araújo, "A coordenação dos esforços colaborativos".

fines, combating deforestation, and command-and-control.<sup>36</sup> According to the graph developed by the authors (Figure 4), elaborated from information from the Ministry of Defence sites, all these actions took place in the states of the Legal Amazon.

**Figure 4: Actions and States involved in Verde Brasil Operation per federation (state)<sup>37</sup>**



The cost dimension of Operation Verde Brasil 1 was more than R\$124 million<sup>38</sup> (around 30 million US dollars) applied to logistical activities developed by the armed forces and agencies. The presence of the armed forces in the Amazon region is already marked by the Amazon Protection System (SIPAM), which uses technologies to monitor the area and the environment. In this way, coordination through the Ministry of Defence

<sup>36</sup> Castelo, "Brazilian forestry legislation", 232.

<sup>37</sup> Federation States Acronyms: Amapá (PA), Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), Mato Grosso (MT), Pará (PA), Rondônia (RO), Roraima (RR), Tocantins (TO), Acre (AC).

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.poder360.com.br/brasil/operacao-das-forcas-armadas-na-amazonia-custara-r-60-milhoes/> Accessed 12 August 2020 .

and the experience of the military in the region contributed to the success of actions with different agencies.

The Verde Brasil operation had several integrated agencies under the coordination of the Defence Ministry, according to which and from its crisis office, it established the parameters to be executed. Regarding the perception of firefighting actions in the Amazon, there was a response from the international community, concerned with the fires and the impacts on the environment, as well as with the local population, which helped and was guided by the instruction and educational mechanisms for the preservation of the environment and fighting fires.

However, in 2020, the fires in the Amazon Forest area continued, which led the authorities to institute a new operation. Thus, on 6 May 2020, by Decree No. 10, 341, the government instituted Operation Verde Brasil 2 to prevent and repress illegal activities and fire in the Amazon region. Once again, the operation was modelled on interagency relations for combating fire and illegal activities and directly affected the use of the armed forces in an integrated manner with environmental and security agencies within the Legal Amazon region.

Operation Verde Brasil 2, unlike Operation Verde Brasil 1, lasted 354 days, with consistent performance by the agencies. The impact of national and international public opinion mobilized the federal government so that actions to combat illegal activities and fires in the environmental protection region were immediately controlled; however, the delay in responding to the emergency crisis was critical.

In addition to the temporal extension in Operation Verde Brasil 2, this second operation was coordinated by the Vice-President of the Republic, Hamilton Mourão, and no longer by the Ministry of Defence as in the first operation. This representation demonstrates that the Vice-President of the Republic, also in the capacity of head of the National Council of the Amazon, prioritized actions and public policies for the Amazon and the environment with various ministries.

Faced with several criticisms from an international context regarding the fires in the Amazon, the federal government tried to demonstrate the interagency effort to combat illicit activities and fires with Operation Verde Brasil 2, which lasted almost a year in the region. After starting the GLO by presidential decree, the armed forces and institutions specialized in environmental issues and border security carried out their activities in regions with fires.

Institutions such as the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) continued to play a vital role in providing accurate and emergency information, indicating fire spots, and sharing information so that actions could be carried out efficiently. Like INPE, the Integrated Multi-agency Center for National Operational Coordination (*Centro Integrado Multiagências de Coordenação Operacional Nacional – CIMAN*) used a virtual fire monitoring system via satellites, and the Management and Operational Center for the Amazon Protection System (*Centro Gestor e Operacional do Sistema de Proteção da Amazônia – CENSIPAM*) also implemented new research centers for sharing information. The Integrated Group for the Protection of the Amazon (*Grupo Integrado para Proteção da Amazônia – GIPAM*) brought together more than ten institutions dedicated to protecting the Amazon, such as the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples (*Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas – FUNAI*), the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (*Instituto Chico Mende de Conservação da Biodiversidade – ICMBio*), the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária – INCRA*), the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (ABIN), to generate information via reports, focusing on priority areas for the action of the agencies involved in Operation Verde Brasil 2.

The implementation of new monitoring, research, and study groups on the issue of the Amazon and the impact of fires and illegal activities in the environmental protection region is an essential factor for a new model of environmental governance that has as a parameter the interagency schemes. Thus, it covers the use of intelligence, information sharing, geospatial and geo-intelligence studies. Finally, the production of reports serves as guidance for actions and public policies to prevent and combat environmental crimes.

Operation Verde Brasil 2 ended after 354 days with a decrease in deforestation, according to the Ministry of Defence data on its official website. According to published figures, the final balance of the operation achieved a significant total of apprehensions, arrests, and application of fines, among others.<sup>39</sup> Table 2, elaborated on 2021 data from

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<sup>39</sup> Considering the comparative analysis methodology proposed by Marcel Detienne and March Bloch, it is possible to explain differences and similarities between two series of similar natures, especially when it comes to case studies. In the case of the article, there is a difference in the durability of the actions, but between the two operations, the structures used were similar as well as their objectives. See Trencsényi, B., Iordachi, C., & Apor, P. (Eds.). (2021). *The Rise of Comparative History*. Central European University Press.

the Ministry of Defence, shows the numbers on the actions carried out during the operation.

**Table 2: Table of Actions and Indicators of Operation Verde Brasil 2**

Materials seized	2131 vessels 990 vehicles and tractors 751kg of drugs 506,136 m <sup>3</sup> of wood
Prisons	335 records of arrest in flagrante delicto
Disability / Destructions	843 vehicles, mining engines, ferries, excavator tractors, and agricultural machinery.
Infractions	5480 fines applied (total of BRL 3.352 billion in fines)
Actions taken	105,135 inspections, naval and land patrols, surveys and searches.
Result in Fire Fighting	16,435 fire spots fought

Continuous public policies had to be implemented in the fight against illegal activities and fires in the Amazon with these two operations. Therefore, the Brazilian government decided that prevention and combat actions would be carried out by the Amazon Plan 2021/2022. The military will provide logistical support to public security and environmental security agents.

The Amazon Plan 2021/2022 establishes the “guidelines for the continuity of inspection actions and the fight against environmental and land illicit activities, particularly illegal deforestation and burning in the Legal Amazon” (our translation). The actions to be developed by the Amazon Plan prioritize areas with a greater occurrence and impact of environmental offences; illegal containment; sustainable development; and strengthening and integration between inspection and combat bodies.

For each of the actions mentioned above, the Amazon Plan 2021/2022 document describes the guidelines for the effective and efficient reach of the fight against illegal activities in the region. It establishes the sectoral responsibilities describing the role of the ministries involved, such as the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply, the Ministry of

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Defence, the Institutional Security Office, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation, the President's Chief of Staff, Government Secretariats, Ministry of Mines and Energy, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Communications.

This cooperation network represents highly complex inter-ministerial and inter-institutional work at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, coordinated by the National Council for the Legal Amazon (*Conselho Nacional da Amazônia Legal* – CNAL), applying the policy of “zero tolerance” in combating illegal deforestation in the Amazon. However, several denunciations were made in the media by representatives of environmental agencies, reporting that the armed forces were not directing actions according to the guidance of environmental specialists and the fight against illegal trafficking in the Amazon region.

Regarding the effectiveness of Operation Verde Brasil 1, the success of joint and interagency actions by the armed forces and security agencies has been achieved in several categories, from controlling and fighting fires to the writing of fines for illegal activities in the region. However, it came to public in 2023, during the first months of the Lula government's, allegations against the armed forces for ignoring illegal mining in Indigenous territories. This lack of response from the armed forces led to the starvation of Indigenous peoples and to a deep humanitarian crisis caused by Bolsonaro's government's political interference to cut programs and assistance to the affected regions.

### **3.3 The COVID-19 case**

Operation COVID-19 was implemented based on a directive by the Ministry of Defence. On 18 March 2020, the Brazilian armed forces announced readiness for a set of efforts in the face of the declaration from the World Health Organization for Emergency of Public Health (ONU, 2020). A legislative decree of 20 March 2020, recognizes the state of public calamity, configuring the need for a set of actions to deal with the upcoming issues (Brazil, 2020). Based on these guidelines, the Ministry of Defence organized the main actions among regional Joint Commands with the necessary logistical support to transport oxygen, respirators, vaccines, medicines, health professionals and patients, but some of the armed forces were still mobilized in activities throughout the Brazilian territory.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> de Lima Batista et al., “Ações empreendidas”, p. 222.



None of the documents can be considered an orientation regarding the type of mission to be undertaken by the armed forces. Based on the available capacities, with attention to the number and type of human resources and some specialized services, the joint forces and commands organized recurrent and temporary actions.

The activities related to Operation COVID-19 have this military character associated with work directed by the Executive, which is also currently occupied by a General. In some way, knowing the projection, reputation, and logistical capillarity of the armed forces, the most immediate actions – despite the crises related to health and economic policies – were attributed to the armed forces. Meeting these expectations is related to the plan designed to reach the various corners of the territory and immediate service in which the armed forces are the dominant institutional and empowering imperative.<sup>41</sup>

These imperative harbours the humanitarian character of these operations, which, according to the database set up for this study, consists of six essential types of operations already set. The first one is the establishment of the ten regional Joint Commands. This database was made by the authors, and it was possible to account for 63 operations of amplified regional distribution between March 2020 and May 2020, including actions subordinated directly to the joint regional commands and others led by the singular force. There is no information on the resources employed by the federal government as public data on COVID-19 spending does not show the investments related to the Ministry of Defence.<sup>42</sup>

The six types of operations were defined in the Naval Military Doctrine (Brazil, 2017): 1–exercise, 2– civic-social action (ACISO), 3– law and order guarantee (GLO), 4– joint operations; 5– cooperation, and 6– peace and humanitarian operations. Furthermore, the concept of cooperation has the following subdivisions: actions against transboundary and environmental crimes; cooperation with federal agencies; cooperation with federal development; cooperation with civil defence; participation in institutional campaigns of public utility or social interest; social programs for defence; naval inspection; safety of waterway navigation; relief operations; humanitarian operations; security of naval installations.

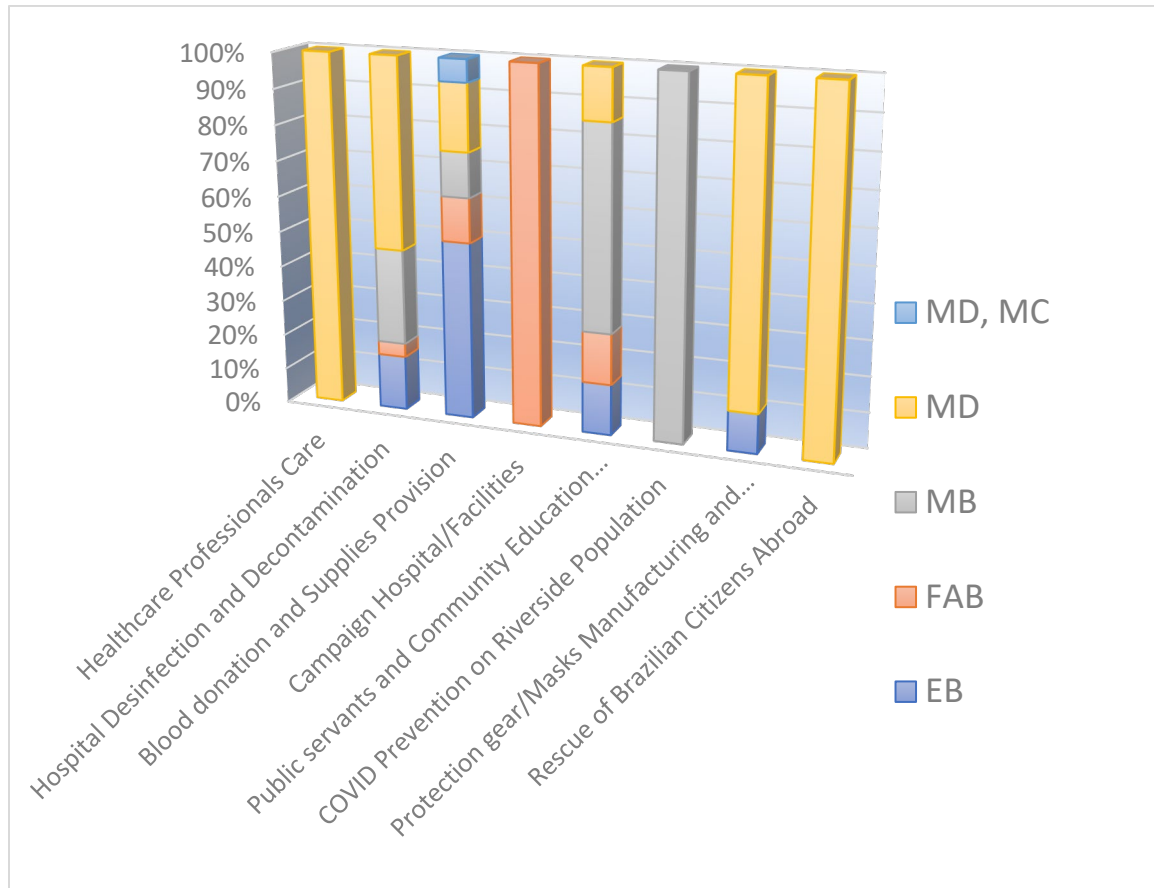
Figure 5 shows a chart elaborated by the authors with the types of actions coordinated by the Brazilian armed forces in the fight against COVID-19.

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<sup>41</sup> Franchi, “As Ciências Militares”, p. vi.

<sup>42</sup> <https://portaldatransparencia.gov.br/coronavirus?ano=2020>. Accessed 25 April 2023.

**Figure 5: Types of actions coordinated by the Brazilian armed forces against the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>43</sup>**



Interestingly, the detected actions demonstrate a degree of commitment to two military capabilities: biological warfare (decontamination); and military logistics (distribution of material, supplies, and various donations). According to the Ministry of Defence<sup>44</sup>, about 29 thousand military personnel were involved daily in Operation COVID-19 in 2020. In addition to highly complex activities such as decontamination tasks, working with riverside populations and training public officials seems to have a significant local impact.

Other crisis containment actions that were imminent at the beginning of the pandemic were distributing meals to truck drivers and maintaining the viability of their

<sup>43</sup> Figure 5 acronyms: Ministry of Defence (MD), Ministry of Citizenship (MC), Brazilian Navy (MB), Brazilian Air Force (FAB), Brazilian Army (EB)

<sup>44</sup> <https://twitter.com/DefesaGovBr/status/1259272566541291524> Accessed on 15 May, 2020.

work in a logistic system that depends on the road model. Reference centers for social and hospital assistance are among the focuses of some of the actions. In contrast, others are based in cities in the interior or with a high degree of isolation.

The armed forces have been linked to COVID-19 operations as much as the assistance provided by their hospitals and related institutions and the application of extra funds for national cooperation and development. Humanitarian reception and interiorization of migrants in situations of vulnerability and strengthening of control borders were ways to face the public health emergency in its programs.<sup>45</sup>

Considering that the mission's reputational image is also linked to its specific capabilities, the missions for Operation COVID-19 also have a reasonable level of interface with other agencies and the populations directly affected. In this case, it is not the special missions that have the most significant impact in the case of anti-COVID-19 missions, but those that have a significant role in transferring knowledge, goods, and inputs to other agencies and the community.

Operation COVID-19 aims at specific qualification actions, among which are those with great logistical capillarity and with high-level use of specific abilities, such as decontamination using biological warfare techniques. In general, there is a comprehensive reputational consideration that specific tasks can only be assigned to the armed forces, given the high proportion of confidence they enjoy in Brazilian society and their capacities.<sup>46</sup>

However, COVID-19 politics were characterized by the militarization of the scene, fully involved with the political dimension of the pandemic in Brazil.<sup>47</sup> Still, the political interferences within the technical operations towards the pandemics conditioned the way the stakeholders acted. Misinformation and the spread of fake news about COVID-19 by enlarging the contamination potentially contributed to the limitations of the operations.

Therefore, it is pertinent to say that the armed forces operations against the COVID-19 pandemic were focused on the technical capabilities of decontamination and significant territorial penetration. In this way, the armed forces were involved in what was perhaps one of the greatest sources of institutional contribution, primarily with the

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<sup>45</sup> Matheus, "Aquisições centralizadas".

<sup>46</sup> <https://exame.com/brasil/datafolha-forcas-armadas-e-a-mais-confiavel-para-os-brasileiros/>. Accessed: May 15th 2020.

<sup>47</sup> Rodrigues et al., "COVID-19 y la militarización".

involvement of military personnel in other bodies in which the ideological guidelines were denying the effects of COVID-19.

#### **4. Results**

Evaluating the set of cases chosen for the current study, we can state that they are consistently grouped as non-traditional missions since they are unique experiences of national/regional operational scope and international repercussions. In other words, the observed evidence seems to be key for understanding the relationships of inter-agency character.

Interagency relations are defined by the system of cooperation between agencies, in which, in most cases, the interagency model establishes coordination and planning so that relations between different agencies with different natures and organizational cultures are consolidated. In this perspective, some values are essential in this interagency architecture, among them, the configuration of a leadership that will coordinate multitasking, the construction of common procedures, information sharing and organization in networks.

However, the interagency structure in Brazil is not institutionally defined and actions are largely carried out by ad hoc coordination. The limitations of this model make it challenging to observe and establish a repository of good practices in interagency operations; which, then, hinders the development of strategic plans for sensitive areas of National Defence and has far-reaching repercussions on various topics. For example, it affects interagency actions in the areas of public security, natural disasters, and combating environmental crimes, among others. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complexity of interagency operations and the need for effective collaboration across multiple stakeholders.

We emphasize the experience of the Brazilian armed forces in emergency crises, in which it is necessary to plan and execute tasks to achieve the objectives in a short time. In this perspective, the performance of joint operations by the armed forces with other agencies is also relevant, demonstrating the need to build an interagency environment with institutional trust, a wide exchange of information and a guarantee of joint execution between participating agencies. The capillarity of the agencies, especially of the armed forces within the national territory, and the knowledge of Brazil's cultural and socio-

environmental particularities are also relevant for the population's support of these institutions, expanding their reputation and increasing acceptance in crises.

However, despite aligning themselves on these aspects, we consider that the impact on each of the dimensions of our analysis varies among the Operations in question. These impacts reflect the scope of operations, their success, and the ability to implement new public policies to achieve good practices, good governance, and effective results through interagency activities and constant evaluations.

## **5. Final Remarks**

As analyzed above, the armed forces in Brazil have taken on many missions with humanitarian and social impacts, not just nationally but also in different countries worldwide. This current phenomenon can be understood from two explanatory keys. First, we highlight the relationship between changes in the international system and the new roles of the armed forces. From a domestic point of view, involvement in internal operations with social impact is a characteristic of the Brazilian military since, historically, the country is not involved in external conflicts. Although the Brazilian armed forces are considered the institutions with the highest levels of reputation and capillarity in the national territory, we must acknowledge that the frequent use of the armed forces in domestic missions, as well as the involvement of military personnel in state positions – as observed during the Bolsonaro government – are factors that can compromise the level of trust these institutions hold with civil society.

The cases observed throughout this study confirm part of the debate produced by the specialized literature about the new missions and roles of the armed forces in the post-Cold War era. Although the dangers of expanding the scope of military missions are notable, the current reality suggests that this will be a recurrent scenario. As a result, we empirically verified the increase in this type of operation and doctrinal changes in the performance of the military.

By orienting the focus to the case studies, we emphasize that one of the main characteristics of current operations is their interagency nature. Thus, we highlight the importance of increasing the relationship between different agencies to increase the effectiveness of operations. We believe that it is essential to develop communication channels with local communities and civil society, thus increasing the degree of

transparency of operations. In a sense, the success of Operation Acolhida, compared to the other two, has resulted from a clear definition of mission, a good governance structure among the agencies and the existence of communication channels that contribute to transparency and accountability.

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