



A Brazilian doctor provides medical treatment to a child during a humanitarian engagement. Supported by local authorities, this is one example of civil-military coordination. (Photo by Jorge Cardoso, Brazilian Ministry of Defense)

The Brazilian Army Experience in Civil- Military Interactions

Lessons Learned from Humanitarian Engagements

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Armies are learning organizations, and each new engagement provides opportunities to review doctrine, training, and other processes. This article asks what the Brazilian army learned from its extended engagement in Haiti and from the ongoing humanitarian crisis on Brazil's border with Venezuela. Specifically, how did the Brazilian army improve its capabilities to interact with civilian partners in interagency operations?

Background

Brazil's constitution states that the Brazilian army's mission includes guaranteeing national sovereignty, protecting the constitutional branches of government, providing law and order, preserving national interests, and cooperating with infrastructure development and social well-being.¹ The government employs the army in all missions that require coordination and cooperation with national and international partners in the interagency operations environment. Historically, the government employed the army for public security; for example, during the Pan American Games in 2007, the World Military Games in 2011, the Confederations Cup in 2013, World Youth Day and the papal visit in 2013, the World Cup in 2014, and the Olympic Games in 2016.²

Brazil has also participated in United Nations missions to maintain international peace since 1956. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), from 2004 to 2013, was the largest peacekeeping mission Brazil had ever undertaken. And since 2018, the Brazilian army has employed its military forces to provide humanitarian aid and protection for thousands of Venezuelans along the border during Operation Acolhida.

Civilian-Military Doctrine Around the World

Civil-military theorists largely concur that interagency success depends on a good relationship between military and civilian entities, specifically that success in interagency relations requires robust integration, coordination, self-development, understanding of the operational environment, and empathy to be aware of partners' objectives. As Samuel Huntington wrote, "Any system of civil-military relations thus involves a complex equilibrium between the authority, influence, and ideology of the military, on the one hand, and

the authority, influence, and ideology of nonmilitary groups, on the other."³ Robert Egnell furthered this idea, noting that military doctrine, while considered an internal military affair by many, cannot exist outside political and civilian realities.⁴

But how militaries interact with civilian organizations varies widely. The United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for example, define civilian-military relations differently. But civilian-military interactions are becoming increasingly common in the twenty-first century; and military doctrine must keep pace with that change.

In the U.S. Army, interagency operations are a subset of civil-military interactions. The U.S. military regularly coordinates with any number of agencies during the range of military operations. The military provides capabilities such as logistics; people ready to rapidly respond to multiple global crises; and command and control resources supported by worldwide communications and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance infrastructures. The military further provides robust organizational and planning processes; civil affairs personnel and civilian-acquired skills; and air, land, and sea mobility support for all theaters' requirements.⁵

Approaches to interagency operations are similar in the UK and Canada. The UK Ministry of Defence, in joint doctrine, defines an agency "as a distinct non-military body that has objectives that are broadly consistent with those of a campaign."⁶ Multiagency activities or operations are when multiple agencies, including national, international, and non-state organizations and other actors, participate in the same or overlapping areas with varying degrees of interagency cooperation.

The Brazilian expectation of interagency operations is like that of the other countries mentioned above. The Brazilian minister of defense defines an agency "as

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Military leaders and civilian partners hold a routine meeting. (Photo courtesy of the Brazilian Ministry of Defense)

the organization or institution with a formally defined structure and purpose, which may be governmental or not, military, civil, national, or international.” It also defines interagency operations as “the interaction of the Armed Forces with other agencies to converge interests and coordinate efforts to achieve common objectives ... avoiding duplication of actions, lacking resources, and divergence of efficient solutions.”⁷ Like in the United States and UK, the presented doctrine frames Brazilian army actions in interagency operations, which always require the synergy of military and civilian tasks and robust integration between both components.

The Role of the Brazilian Army in Interagency Operations

Interagency operations in Brazil potentially touch all the military’s constitutional roles and can be conducted within Brazilian territory or abroad. One of the most common interagency operations is support to security forces. Such operations involve partnerships among a variety of civilian entities—like intelligence agencies, local government, and security officers—to contain problems related to urban violence and threats to national stability. The Brazilian army participated in sixteen such operations between 1994 and 2005.⁸

The Brazilian military also regularly engages in humanitarian assistance following natural disasters, providing logistical support to include transportation, shelters, and clean water. In addition, the army has been

employed to welcome immigrants from places such as Venezuela, Haiti, and Syria. The army guarantees national sovereignty, constitutional powers, law and order, when it cooperates with different immigration agencies on the border to provide security against drug dealers and smuggling to mitigate transnational and environmental crimes. It supports the national interests when it contributes with civil authorities during the electoral process, mainly in the countryside. And it cooperates with national development and social well-being, when it builds and repairs roads, airfields, and railways in the poor regions.⁹ These endeavors require a strong presence of civilian government agencies and provide

the Brazilian army with opportunities to improve its ability to interact with civilians.

Case Study: Brazilian Army in MINUSTAH

Haiti is a small country of 27,750 sq. km in the Caribbean region. The country occupies about one-third of the 75,000 sq. km of Hispaniola Island, with the remaining land belonging to its neighbor, Dominican Republic.¹⁰ Haiti’s population was around eleven million in 2019.¹¹ The country’s rugged topography, dangerous weather, and the legacy of slavery provided fertile ground for a succession of despots, strongmen, and dictators.¹² According to Marco Aurélio Gaspar Lessa, from the 1950s to the 2000s, around twenty rulers succeeded in power, sixteen of whom were deposed or murdered.¹³

Hope surrounded the 1990 election of Jean Bertrand Aristide. At the time, Haiti was the poorest country in the Americas, dealing with uncontrolled environmental devastation, 70 percent unemployment, a fifty-one-year life expectancy, an illiteracy rate of almost 50 percent, 80 percent of the population below the poverty line, and endemic diseases.¹⁴ Aristide took power in 1991 but, a year later, was overthrown in a military-led coup d’état. An international coalition restored Aristide to power three years later.

By the twenty-first century, the situation had deteriorated. Aristide claimed electoral victory despite minimal numbers of votes/polls.¹⁵ In early 2004, after

fighting with armed groups in the north, Aristide fled. The UN then established a permanent presence in Haiti, setting the stage for MINUSTAH through two UN resolutions: 1529/2004 authorized foreign troops to enter Haitian territory for a maximum period of three months to support the constitutional succession and political process and the promotion of a peaceful and lasting solution to the current crisis; and 1542/2004 established MINUSTAH and allowed the resumption of the democratic process, ensuring a safe and stable environment in the country.¹⁶

MINUSTAH was the first peacekeeping mission led by the Brazilian army under chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows the use of force. According to Kai Michael Kenkel, MINUSTAH is one example of the fifth-generation peace operations, which means missions that deploy troops and police personnel under mixed command.¹⁷ To be successful, this operational design requires advanced civilian-military integration. MINUSTAH's characteristics and its mandate's objectives depended on synergistic civil-military interaction by Brazilian troops, as each component depended on each other, and only that interdependence could accomplish the UN mandate.

The Brazilian Army Mission and Civil-Military Integration

Brazil assigned a two-star general to be the force commander and one army brigade to respond to Haiti. According to Mauricio Valença Cruz, this brigade had a flexible structure to add more foreign capabilities from several troop-contributing countries.¹⁸ It consisted of 6,700 peacekeepers from Argentina, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chad, Chile, Croatia, France, Jordan, Nepal, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Turkey, and Uruguay.¹⁹ The deployment size permitted enough manpower and expertise to stabilize the country.

During the peace process, military forces provided security and fought against insurgent forces, engaged in humanitarian activities such as providing primary medical treatment, and worked on quick-impact projects to improve infrastructure.²⁰ Between 2005 and 2007, the military component set the conditions for humanitarian assistance organized by nongovernmental (NGO) and governmental organizations. After the initial military



Brazilian soldiers from the 3rd Contingent of the Brazilian Infantry Battalion (BRABATT) operate in the streets of Bel Air, Haiti, in 2005. (Photo courtesy of Acervo BRABATT)

operations, troops focused on humanitarian assistance activities to build trust with the local populace. The Brazilian army's cooperation in Haiti went beyond traditional military operations, as forces assisted with food and medicine distribution, road and essential service construction, medical and dental care, garbage removal, and educational and cultural projects.²¹

One of the most challenging missions for the Brazilian forces was to support the political transition through the UN, especially the presidential election. Mistrust and instability had to be managed by UN forces. "Brazilian troops were in charge of providing security for the teams that traveled through Haiti, choosing future locations for electoral registration and voting. [The army] then escorted the material and equipment necessary to install and maintain the separate registration and voting sites."²² Moreover, Brazilian troops had to provide security for political protests with thousands of Haitians clamoring for change. The Brazilian army succeeded thanks to the support of local authorities and set conditions for a trustful and responsible political transition.

After a devastating earthquake in 2010, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted Brazil's offer to send an additional battalion to Haiti to provide additional relief. The additional forces increased on-the-ground capabilities for humanitarian assistance such as transportation and shelter. The additional forces further supported medical and dental assistance for the population, mainly for children and elders, necessitated by the lack of infrastructure due to earthquake damage.

The Brazilian army also engaged its engineering group to rebuild basic infrastructure anywhere in Haiti. Its mission was to provide engineering support in field construction, protect peacekeeping force contingents, handle explosive ordnance disposal, maintain traffic routes, conduct rescue operations, and provide technical engineering assistance.²³ In this role, the military was essential to survivability, military operations mobility, and the reestablishment of everyday life within Haitian territory.



Brazilian leaders coordinate with local authorities to secure the population during protests against human rights violations in Haiti. (Photo courtesy of Acervo BRABATT)

Brazilian doctrine improved notably from 2010 to 2017. The army published Manual de Campanha C85-1, *Operações de Garantia da Lei e da Ordem* [Field

Manual C85-1, Law-and-Order Operations] in 2010. It was the first manual that mentioned civilian-military interactions. After that, in 2012, the minister of defense approved MD33-M-12, *Operações Interações* [Interagency Operations] for all services, which emphasized

the interaction between the armed forces and other agencies to unite efforts to achieve common objectives or purpose, avoiding duplication of actions or resources.²⁶

Beyond that, by 2017, the army approved EB70-MC-10.223, *Operações* [Operations]. It defined “civil-military cooperation as activities that seek to establish, maintain, influence, or explore the relationships between military forces, agencies, authorities, and the populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area.”²⁷ The army also published a Civil-Military Cooperation Manual in 2017.²⁸ As Lucas Bastos Souza notes, “Operation Acolhida is the first mission in which Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) doctrinal concepts are being tested for humanitarian assistance.”²⁹

The civil affairs section, created as part of the general staff in MINUSTAH headquarters, was another legacy essential to strengthening relations with civilian organizations.³⁰ This section planned activities with civilian partners, represented the military component, and presented the military capabilities to support UN missions.

The Brazilian army’s experience in Haiti, therefore, directly begot improvement of infrastructure, approval of field manuals, expansion of military education, and reorganization of staff officers.

The Legacy from MINUSTAH

MINUSTAH was the Brazilian army’s most prolonged participation in UN peacekeeping. It necessitated that the army adapt and evolve:

MINUSTAH is responsible for improvements in the army’s operational systems, such as the improvement of urban operations techniques, the combined logistical system to support international operations, command and control system, and psychological operations, social communication, intelligence, and civil-military coordination integration.²⁴

For instance, the origin of the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Center (CCOPAB), created in 2010, can be traced to MINUSTAH. It grew out of the Peace Operations Center in Rio de Janeiro set up by 2005 to provide better military services during MINUSTAH. The center’s mission is to provide training for combined military organization commanders, military observers, staff, military police, civilians, and journalists in a conflict area, framed by UN training curriculum.²⁵ This center of excellence, under army command, is still preparing peacekeepers for UN missions around the world and is one of the most important legacies from MINUSTAH.



Figure 1. Brazil and Venezuela Border and Main Routes

Case Study: Operation Acolhida

Operation Acolhida was the largest humanitarian assistance endeavor in Brazilian history. It is happening still in 2022 on the border between Brazil and Venezuela.

Historical context and Brazilian response.

Venezuela in the twenty-first century faces a humanitarian crisis unprecedented in the Western Hemisphere, with origins in political instability, authoritarianism, corruption, unemployment, inflation, and economic recession.³¹ The current president, Nicolás Maduro, elected in 2013 after Hugo Chávez died, continued his predecessor's doomed economic policies, the consequences of which culminated in socioeconomic collapse.³² By 2016, Venezuela was in a real political and economic crisis. After years of conflict, the scarcity of essential resources and institutionalized violence cause the displacement of waves of people to its borders with Brazil and other neighboring countries.³³ As of end 2021, according to data released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 5.6 million Venezuelans had fled

their country, creating an accelerated and disorganized migration of Venezuelans to Brazil.³⁴

Brazil and Venezuela's shared border is around one thousand kilometers long, with dense vegetation in the west and dryer, less dense land in the north. The latter facilitates the displacement and mobility of persons. The Brazilian state of Roraima is the entry point for the displaced persons from Venezuela, as seen in the map in figure 1.

The entry of large numbers of Venezuelan migrants between 2016 and 2018 degraded public services in the state of Roraima and led to the collapse of health and social support systems.³⁵ Moreover, the violence rate increased significantly, and unemployment became a critical issue for the local authorities. Bureaucratic wrangling among federal, state, and municipal spheres to establish a welcome policy negatively affected the state and its cities. Streets and public squares became visibly disorderly, occupied by unassisted and vulnerable Venezuelans.³⁶ Eventually, the federal government had to intervene to reestablish order.

The Brazilian government created the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee on 15 February 2018 to deal with border issues and provide support to both the unassisted Venezuelans and the state of Roraima.³⁷ This legal framework defined ten priority areas to focus on:

- social protection;
- health care;
- educational activities;
- professional training and qualification;
- guarantee of human rights;
- protection of women, children, teenagers, elders, disabled people, indigenous population, and affected traditional communities rights;
- infrastructure and sanitation;
- public security and border control;
- logistics; and
- mobility, distribution within the national territory and support for resettlement.³⁸

The minister of defense tasked the Brazilian army to lead the effort, later called the Humanitarian Logistic Task Force.

Brazilian Army mission and civil-military integration. The ministry of defense led the planning effort and all civil-military interactions with partners.³⁹ Hundreds of civilian agencies worked together with the

army, such as federal, state, and municipal institutions, security agencies, UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs, beneficent and religious institutions, and the private sector.⁴⁰

Under the operations cell, a civil affairs section is responsible for coordinating, controlling, and synchronizing all actions carried out by the civilian and military components. Furthermore, a resettlement cell oversees coordinating the movement process of Venezuelans to other Brazilian states and cities through local authorities' coordination, allowing their socioeconomic inclusion in Brazilian society. They all directly connect with civilian institutions or authorities, which requires military personnel to be compatible with their civilian partners. For this reason, the army tried to standardize procedures in existing manuals during the planning process.

The mission coordinator, a two-star general, task-organized the staff and units following the 2017 *Interagency Operations* field manual.⁴¹ In the beginning, the Brazilian army set up a forward command in Boa Vista, Roraima's capital, to coordinate all the operations with governmental organizations, international organizations, and NGOs. The army had to evacuate victims and constitute teams to do search and rescue, reestablish the lines of communication, carry out water treatment and supply, distribute food, support health and firefighting endeavors, address the homeless emergency, provide road construction, and decontaminate/disinfect any chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.⁴² Civilian agencies worked in a supporting role.

"The Brazilian Army set up all the areas and had until the beginning of 2019, ten shelters, an internalization area, a support area, screening station, a public information office, a luggage claiming area and a controlled overnight area, the last three structures located in close to the Boa Vista International Bus Station."⁴³ All these allowed the agencies to welcome the Venezuelan immigrants with security, water, and food distribution and prepare them for the resettlement process within Brazilian territory or abroad.

After the welcoming process, the task force started the resettlement process, identifying states or cities ready to receive and socialize migrants, considering the socioeconomic situation, public opinion, institutional capacity, and local authorities' interest.⁴⁴ From the military perspective, this process provides an opportunity

to understand the socioeconomic situation of each state, interact positively with local authorities, and support civilian agencies.

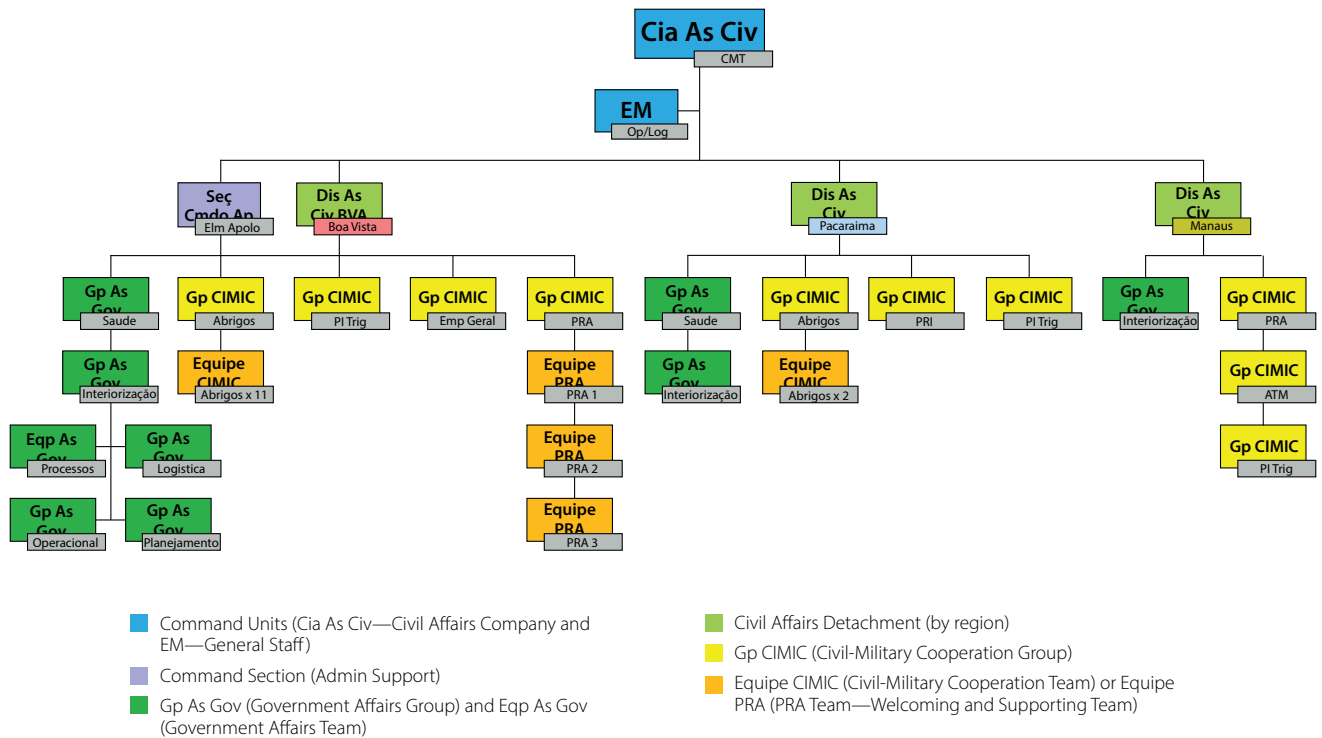
The Brazilian army during Operation Acolhida has interacted with hundreds of agencies through Venezuelans' reception, lodging, and resettlement process. It created interdependences among components to accomplish the mission. As Souza wrote, "the operation has demonstrated how vital cooperation and synergy among all the agencies for humanitarian aid are, which characterized the mindset of civil-military cooperation."⁴⁵ This idea highlights the civilian perspective about civil-military interaction, which must have substantial interaction, empathy, and cooperation.

Opportunities for innovation in Operation Acolhida. Operation Acolhida provided the Brazilian army an opportunity for reflection. Some events became lessons learned or were used to develop capabilities for humanitarian assistance.

From the preparation perspective, the army tasked the training center, CCOPAB, to conduct the training for military personnel to join the task force.⁴⁶ This touchpoint with soldiers is an opportunity to keep CCOPAB updated on the challenges and best practices related to humanitarian assistance. Beyond that, the CCOPAB has used this opportunity to review its curriculum of courses to prepare militaries and civilians for peacekeeping operations.

Given the needs on the border, the task force had to implement a new cell, named Resettlement Cell D-12, which was "responsible for coordinating the immigrants moving process to other Brazilian states and cities, through registration and screening, which allows their socioeconomic inclusion in the Brazilian society."⁴⁷ The success of the D-12 cell increased the interaction with civilian partners through its cooperation with local authorities and agencies to find an affordable community to receive the immigrants.

The Brazilian army published directives to create a civil affairs company in 2020. Its mission was to develop the civil affairs doctrine, guide the task organization for a civil affairs company, review field manuals and other doctrinal products, verify the feasibility of doctrinal documents of a civil affairs company, consider a table of organization and material, and create a planning data for future employment. As seen in figure 2 (on page 8), the company consisted of civil affairs detachments



(Figure adapted by author; original from Portaria Nº 019-COTER, March 2020)

Figure 2. Task Force Organization of the Civil Affairs Company in Portuguese

located in different regions, CIMIC groups, and governmental affairs groups.

As a result of this experiment, the army published new field manuals in 2021, EB70-MC-10.251, *Civil Affairs*, which presents the civil affairs concepts, structure, and tasks; and EB70-MC-10.250, *Protection of Civilians*, which covers international law, basic concepts, risks for a civilian in military operations, standard operational procedures, and collateral damage.

What Did the Brazilian Army Learn?

MINUSTAH was a UN mission in a modern environment that included several governmental and non-governmental agencies and multiple actors, each with different interests and capabilities required for success. It was a peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance mission with an interagency operations framework and close civilian-military interactions over thirteen years. Comparatively, the ongoing Operation Acolhida has fewer military personnel than MINUSTAH, but the nature of the operation is the same—humanitarian

assistance in a complex environment with many organizations and actors—even though it is occurring within Brazilian territory. The similarities provided many opportunities for the army to improve its capabilities and reflect in action to carry out its missions. Process tracing shows the evolution of the Brazilian army's capabilities during both operations.

The following analysis employs the U.S. Army's doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) methodology to identify how the Brazilian army has improved its relations with interagency and international partners. It looks in more detail at the Brazilian army's experience from a DOTMLPF perspective.

The Brazilian army is improving its *doctrine* by implementing multiple new manuals to address a capability gap related to civil-military interaction. Firstly, the army used the civil-military cooperation field manual, updated in 2017, to test some doctrinal concepts in Operation Acolhida, like civil-military activities planning and interactions basic concepts. Moreover, the army conducted a

doctrinal experiment by employing a civil affairs company to test the civil-military cooperation field manual concepts and develop civil affairs doctrine. This experiment produced two new field manuals in 2021, *Civil Affairs* and the *Protection of Civilians*.

Further, the creation of the civil affairs company is one of the most significant improvements in the army from the *organization* and *personnel* perspectives. Additionally, the army amended its staffing structure when it created the Resettlement Cell D-12, which represents a significant innovation from Operation Acolhida.

The army is conducting *training* to prepare the troops to accomplish the mission of the task force using the CCOPAB, which was created because of MINUSTAH. CCOPAB implemented tailored training for Operation Acolhida based on specific needs and lessons learned from MINUSTAH.

The army is using *leadership* and education to develop personnel capabilities to more effectively work with civilian partners. The necessity during Operation Acolhida to interact with hundreds of civilian agencies and local authorities at the political level requires education and practice for leaders in the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of the army. Using lessons from MINUSTAH, CCOPAB has a specific leadership preparation program for leaders who must assist the coordinator in the decision-making process and solve diverse problems, which rarely are military ones.

Conclusion

The Brazilian army's experience in two extended civil-military interactions at different times and in

different environments shows how the Brazilian military evolved in recent years. These recent humanitarian assistance missions improved the Brazilian army's capabilities, doctrine, facilities, training, and readiness. Humanitarian interventions are getting more complex with multiple actors and organizations, and the Brazilian army is evolving to continue to be at the forefront to lead such missions.

The Brazilian army was in MINUSTAH for thirteen years. Such a long duration provided many opportunities for the army to reevaluate its success related to civil-military interaction because MINUSTAH was essentially humanitarian assistance with hundreds of governmental organizations and NGOs. Its legacy is substantial—the army got a center of excellence, specialization courses, professional exchanges, and new doctrine regarding civil-military cooperation. This modernization further led to more changes in military culture and today still serves as a reference point for conducting military operations and for military participation in events such as the World Cup in 2014, the Olympic Games in 2016, and the ongoing Operation Acolhida. Operation Acolhida provides an opportunity to apply the lessons learned from MINUSTAH in humanitarian assistance and opportunities for the Brazilian army to innovate in the moment.

The Brazilian army's reputation as a credible partner is essential to success in civilian-military relations. Evidence from both missions suggests that the Brazilian army is establishing a new mindset to work with civilian partners, succeed in its constitutional missions, and prepare for future challenges by leveraging opportunities and developing its capabilities. ■

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