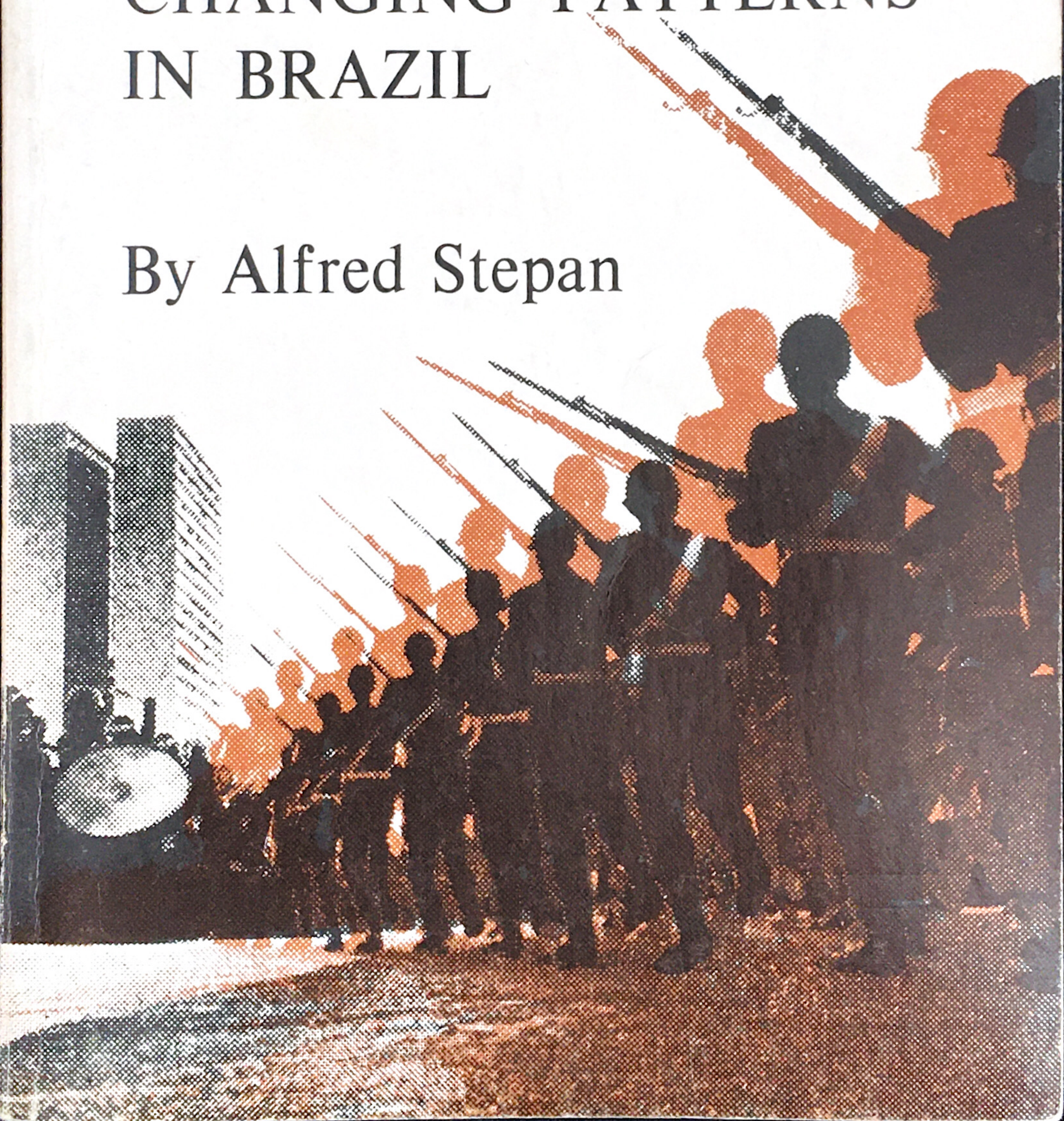


*The Military  
in Politics*

CHANGING PATTERNS  
IN BRAZIL

By Alfred Stepan



ogy: the military were going to be the directors not the moderators of politics.

Any analysis of the political and military context in which a major boundary change occurs must take into consideration international as well as domestic forces. Because of the immense controversy over the role of the United States in the overthrow of Goulart, the international context must be discussed before an analysis is made of all the other aspects that played a role in the boundary change. Two important views on the United States role are diametrically opposed. The first holds that the United States was the major force behind the military coup. This position is summed up in the title of a widely read book in Brazil, *O Golpe Començou em Washington* (The Coup Began in Washington.)<sup>4</sup> The opposite opinion is epitomized in the congressional testimony of the former ambassador to Brazil, Lincoln Gordon:

The movement which overthrew President Goulart was a purely 100 percent—not 99.44—but 100 percent . . . Brazilian movement. Neither the American Embassy nor I personally played any part in the process whatsoever.<sup>5</sup>

Both these positions distort the reality, and oversimplify the complexity, of events. The United States *did* play a supportive role in the boundary change, but U.S. pressures were rendered more influential in Brazil than they might have been because, to a significant extent, unlike in Cuba after 1959 and Peru in 1968, U.S. policies were congruent with and found reinforcement in some powerful conservative domestic political and military trends.

Turning first to United States policies toward Brazil, although probably no definitive account can ever be given of the U.S. role (the accounts of key U.S. participants are only just beginning to be published), the record is already clear that the United States official policy—economic, political, and military—was to weaken the Goulart government, especially in its last nine months, and to strengthen the military government of General Castello Branco

<sup>4</sup> Edmar Morel, *O Golpe Començou em Washington* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> See his testimony in *The Nomination of Lincoln Gordon to be Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs*, Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., February 7, 1966, pp. 44–45.

that succeeded Goulart.<sup>6</sup> By mid-1963, the U.S. government, afraid of the growing radicalization of the Goulart government, moved from a position of mild support to one of opposition. Almost no new grants of aid were made to the central government, while political opponents of the president, such as Carlos Lacerda, governor of Guanabara, received preferential treatment. This policy of aiding the opposition forces was known by State Department officials as one of strengthening “islands of sanity” in Brazil. In May of 1964, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, Mr. Thomas C. Mann, candidly described this policy to Congress.

We were aware in January by the time I got there—I do not know how much earlier—that the erosion toward Communism in Brazil was very rapid. We had, even before I got here, devised a policy to help certain state governments. We did not give any money in balance of payments support, budgetary support, things of that kind, which benefit directly the central government of Brazil. That was cut back under Goulart.<sup>7</sup>

On the purely military level, the U.S. military attachés—men such as General Vernon Walters—had long experience in Brazilian politics and close personal ties to Brazilian military officers, ties dating back to the time when they fought together as allies in World War II. The United States was certainly aware of the broad outlines of impending coup movements. Indeed, some speculations had appeared in the Brazilian press about coup plans, and most knowledgeable Brazilians knew more than was to be found in the newspaper reports. In turn, the coup organizers were undoubtedly aware that the United States would be generally sympathetic to their plans. The president of the United States sent his congratulations to the coup victors even before President Goulart had fled the country. The U.S. ambassador to Brazil, Lincoln Gordon, became a forceful proponent of massive aid increases to the new military government

<sup>6</sup> The history of U.S.-Brazilian relations in this period needs to be the subject of a full-length book.

<sup>7</sup> Reproduced in *Unnecessary Dollar Costs Incurred in Financing Purchases of Commodities Produced in Brazil*, by the controller general of the United States, B-146820, March 19, 1965, Appendix II, p. 21. Cited in Carlos F. Díaz-Alejandro, “Some Aspects of the Brazilian Experience with Foreign Aid,” Center discussion paper no. 77 (New Haven: Yale University, Economic Growth Center, October 1969), p. 11.

following the coup, and was optimistic enough about the Brazilian revolution to call it "one of the critical points of inflection in mid-twentieth century world history."<sup>8</sup>

Under the military government, the USAID mission soared until it became the third largest U.S. program in the world.

What of the less obvious but equally important question of the U.S. government's attempt to export anti-Communist counterinsurgency ideology. The evidence is reasonably clear on this point. The United States government had, with the exception of Cuba and Mexico, a virtual monopoly of the foreign military missions in Latin America until the late 1960s. The U.S. Latin American military policy involved military arms assistance, technical assistance, and extensive educational programs. Latin American military officers and enlisted men were trained in schools run by the United States in Panama, Fort Leavenworth, and elsewhere, and were heavily exposed to U.S. doctrines at the Inter-American Defense College in Washington.

With the rise of Fidel Castro and the start of the Vietnam war, the Kennedy government shifted the rationale of the U.S. military AID policy to Latin America away from that of hemispheric security to that of internal security.<sup>9</sup> To combat "Communist-inspired" internal warfare, the United States campaigned throughout Latin America for the idea that the Latin American armies should divert their energies toward counterinsurgency and civic action.<sup>10</sup> Given the privileged U.S. access to an important Latin American elite—the military—it is important to examine the ideological content of U.S. military doctrines for the possible light they throw on changing attitudes within the Latin American military.

A review of U.S. military journals shows a very sharp increase in U.S. concern for internal warfare after 1961. The *Air University Library Index to Military Periodicals* does not contain categories for counterinsurgency or civic action in its 1959-1961 volume. In

<sup>8</sup> See Lincoln Gordon's letter to the editor in *Commonweal*, xcii (Aug. 7, 1970), p. 379.

<sup>9</sup> For a guide to the administration's arguments for this shift, see Michael J. Francis, "Military Aid to Latin America in the United States Congress," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, vi (July 1964), pp. 389-401.

<sup>10</sup> See Willard F. Barber and C. Neale Ronning, *Internal Security and Military Power: Counterinsurgency and Civic Action in Latin America* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1966) for a detailed listing and documentation of U.S. government aid and military schooling programs, as well as formal military treaties in Latin America.

the volume covering 1962-1964, there are 160 entries for counterinsurgency and 42 more entries for counterinsurgency study and training. There are 33 entries on civic action.<sup>11</sup> A listing of some of the titles in the main U.S. military journals—all widely distributed to the Latin American military—reveals the militant cold war tone and proselytizing nature of much of the military writing in the United States in this period:<sup>12</sup>

MATA (military assistance training advisor) Army Conditioning Course Puts Cold War Warriors on the Spot

Counterinsurgent Allied Soldiers—By the Hundreds

Damn the *Insurrectos*

Counterinsurgency Courses Conducted Army-wide

Counterinsurgency: Global Termite Control

The Search for and Development of Soldier-Statesmen

Civic-action—A Counter and Cure for Insurgency

A central aspect of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine was the belief that to be effective necessitated military concern with and study of all areas of society. A faculty member of the U.S. Army War College, writing in the confident period of 1964, stated: "Counterinsurgency is by definition geared to military, political, economic and civic action. . . . The major problem before us is to learn to orchestrate the magnificent counterinsurgency resources we have into a single symphony and to persuade the governments we help to apply their energies and resources against threats that confront them."<sup>13</sup>

United States policy urging the Latin American military to become more deeply involved in all stages of society in order to wage an effective campaign against internal war implicitly encouraged a deeper involvement of the military in politics, and to this extent

<sup>11</sup> The *Air University Library Index to Military Periodicals* indexes 72 military publications by topic and is the starting point for any study of contemporary U.S. military thought. The 1962-1964 volume is xv, no. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Starting from the top these articles appeared in *Army Information Digest* (October 1963), *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September 1962), *Military Review* (January 1964), *Army Information Digest* (July 1962), *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1962), *Army* (April 1963), and *Military Review* (August 1962).

<sup>13</sup> Lt. Col. Jonathan F. Ladd, "Some Reflections on Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (October 1964), pp. 76 and 78. Emphasis added.

can be considered a contributing factor in the creation of military regimes. In a policy paper by Einaudi, Maullin, and Stepan, we argued that "the United States' attention to threats from the Left has meant that the U.S. had ignored, and inadvertently even contributed to, problems on the Right. . . . United States' perceptions about the seriousness of the Communist threat and about the subsequent need for counterinsurgency and civic action for the Latin American military are producing undesired results."<sup>14</sup>

While profound internal changes that were only marginally related to U.S. influence were occurring in Brazil in the years leading up to assumption of power by the military, it is also important to note that many special conditions were present in Brazil that were not present in other Latin American countries, and that these made for unusually close personal relationships and policy perspectives between important groups in Brazil and the U.S. military establishment.

One of the most important facts bringing about a close similarity in aims and outlook between elements of the Brazilian military and the U.S. military mission was the participation of Brazil in World War II. Brazil was the only country in Latin America to send ground combat troops to fight in the war, and a Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) of divisional strength fought in Italy as part of the U.S.-commanded Fourth Corps. The result of this participation was an integration of Brazilian material, organization, procedures, and tactics with those of the United States that has no parallel in the rest of Latin America. Just as important, from this experience arose a whole set of close personal friendships that persist even to this day. An especially close tie existed between the operations officer for the Brazilian force, Castello Branco, later the first president of the military government in Brazil, and the liaison officer between the U.S. Fourth Corps and Brazilian force, Vernon Walters, who was to become the U.S. military attaché to Brazil between 1962 and 1967.<sup>15</sup>

Another legacy of the Brazilian participation in World War II was a special relationship between the allies incorporated in the

<sup>14</sup> Luigi Einaudi, Richard Maullin, Alfred Stepan, *Latin American Security Issues* (Santa Monica, Calif.: The RAND Corporation, P-4109, April 1969), p. v.

<sup>15</sup> The significance of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force is discussed at length in Chapters 8 and 11.

agreement setting up the Joint Brazil-United States Defense Commission and still in active existence. The agreement institutionalized a program of high-level exchange on security issues that is not found in other bilateral treaties in Latin America.<sup>16</sup>

The great size and future world-power potential of Brazil also had special implications for U.S.-Brazilian relations. Because Brazil viewed itself as an apprentice world power, the Brazilian military has participated in overseas military operations to a degree unmatched by any other Latin American military. In addition to participation in World War II, Brazil for many years manned the U.N. peacekeeping force in Suez. A Brazilian general was also the first commander of the U.N. air force in the Congo.<sup>17</sup> The great-power aspirations also helped to account for Brazil's especially close attention to the cold-war ideology of the great powers, containing such doctrines as those of total and limited nuclear warfare and later that of internal warfare.<sup>18</sup>

For the United States, the great size of Brazil contributed to an intense "attraction-fear" relationship. The fear, especially pronounced and frequently voiced between 1961 and 1964, was that since Brazil has borders with every country in South America except Chile and Ecuador, a "pro-Communist" Brazil could serve as a sanctuary and training ground for guerrilla operations throughout South America. The same strategic position of Brazil was later a point in favor of massive assistance to the military government in Brazil, because Brazil could in essence perform an anti-Communist hegemonic role for the United States in South America.

The ally relationship between the U.S. and Brazil, and both countries' perceptions concerning Brazil's potential big-power status, contributed to other special features in U.S.-Brazilian relations. A U.S. advisory mission helped in the establishment of the Brazilian Superior War College and the mission remained at the school until 1960. The United States is still (1970) the only foreign country with a liaison officer with faculty status at the Brazilian Superior War College. Students from the college also make tours

<sup>16</sup> For a copy of the public version of the agreement, see Barber and Ronning, *Internal Security and Military Power*, 285-287.

<sup>17</sup> See R. Reynolds, "Brazil's Overseas Military Operations," *Military Review*, XLVI (November, 1966), 85-91.

<sup>18</sup> It is symptomatic that Brazil stations two full-time officers at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth for the task of translating into Portuguese that school's publication, *Military Review*.

of U.S. military establishments and often pay a special visit to the U.S. president.<sup>19</sup>

The evidence clearly indicates, therefore, that there has been an unusually close relationship between the U.S. and the Brazilian military. However, it does not support the frequently heard argument that the Brazilian military's concern with internal warfare and counterinsurgency was solely the result of U.S. doctrine or training. A close study of the published work of the most important strategic thinker at the Brazilian Superior War College (ESG), General Golbery do Couto e Silva, reveals that in the mid-1950s, well before the basic U.S. concern with counterinsurgency, Golbery's own interest in revolutionary warfare was already being clearly articulated.<sup>20</sup>

Golbery argued in an interview that in the 1950s United States military thinkers were essentially preoccupied with nuclear warfare, and that the Brazilian Superior War College "was concerned with local warfare and revolutionary warfare before the United States, because nuclear warfare for us was technically impossible and politically less probable. Our actual problems in Brazil made fear of revolutionary warfare much more relevant than it was for the United States."<sup>21</sup>

Another assumption that must be qualified is that, owing to the special relationship existing between the Brazilian and the U.S. military, Brazil, more than any other Latin American country, must have chosen to send its officers and troops to U.S. schools, and that this also largely accounts for Brazil's adoption of the counterinsurgency ideology. However, if one examines the lists of foreign graduates of two of the most important U.S. schools devoted to disseminating doctrines and tactics of counterinsurgency, the United States Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the United States Army School of the Americas in the Canal Zone in Panama, one finds that Brazil was the most underrepresented of the Latin American nations. By 1963, of the 112 Latin American officers graduated from Fort Bragg, only two were Brazilians; of the

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 8 for a detailed discussion of the Brazilian Superior War College and its role in the breakdown of the democratic regime in 1964.

<sup>20</sup> See his two major works which are based upon his lectures at the Escola Superior de Guerra in the 1950s: *Planejamento Estratégico* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1955), and *Geopolítica do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José Olympio, 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Interview, August 29, 1968, Rio de Janeiro.

16,343 Latin Americans graduated from the Army School in Panama, only 165 were Brazilians.<sup>22</sup> These somewhat surprising figures are probably due to the fact that, since many of the courses are taught in Spanish, language has proved a barrier for the Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. Secondly, Brazilians, for reasons indicated in the discussion of the interview with Golbery, felt they had developed adequate counterinsurgency doctrines of their own and that their schools were as good as those of the United States.

This latter point should not be overstressed, for many Brazilian officers do attend U.S. military schools; my data show that about one-third of the Brazilian army line generals on active duty in January of 1964 had received some U.S. schooling.<sup>23</sup>

This brief survey of U.S. attempts to influence the course of Brazil's development in the 1960s shows that on economic, political, and military grounds the United States was supportive of the events that led to the overthrow of Goulart and the establishment of military government in Brazil. Despite this, however, it would not do intellectual justice to the complexities of the situation in Brazil and the internal dynamics of Brazilian politics, nor to the entire question of the breakdown of democratic regimes, to put all the explanatory weight on external factors such as the role of the United States. Even though, for example, there existed an influential group of Brazilian military officers with close links to the United States, the fact remains that in 1950-1952, 1955, and 1961 the Brazilian officer corps was profoundly divided over such issues as nationalism, the Korean war, and anti-Communism. The groups within the military who later emerged as most clearly associated with the United States cold-war policies in 1964 *lost* in the internal military struggles of 1955 and 1961. The assumption of power by the pro-U.S., militant anti-Communist generals in 1964 was thus far from foreordained.

It is very important therefore to study some of the internal factors that played a part in shifting the ideological center of gravity within the Brazilian military and many civilian groups. Why did a minority opinion become a majority opinion? Why did ideas of internal warfare come to seem so relevant to numerous Brazilians,

<sup>22</sup> For tables breaking down all graduates from Latin America by country, see Barber and Ronning, *Internal Security and Military Power*, pp. 145 and 149.

<sup>23</sup> See Table 11.1, p. 240.

both military men and civilians, by early 1964. These questions can only be answered within the wider context of a whole series of changes that were occurring in Brazil in the late 1950s and early 1960s, changes that tended to strengthen opposition to the traditional parliamentary system of politics and even to the democratic framework of politics. This growing opposition was found among both military officers and civilian groups. The slowing of the Brazilian economy and soaring inflation led to middle-class fears of erosion of status and an actual decline in lower-class wages. The growing awareness of the magnitude of economic and social problems facing the government, and the seeming inability of successive civilian governments to implement solutions to these problems, produced a suspended belief in the efficacy of democratic formulas both on the right and the left. Widespread fears among military officers of mutinies by enlisted men created a temporary coalition between military officers who were deeply divided on other issues.

This analysis does not ignore, nor does it attempt to condone, the role of the United States, but it does try to place this role in the wider perspective of changes occurring within the Brazilian polity, for it would be simplistic to ignore the fact that massive changes and fears within Brazil itself, fears felt by both civilians and military officers, contributed to an atmosphere in which a military coup was actively sought by a large number of civilians. Here the experience of the Dominican Republic was qualitatively different from that of Brazil, because in the Dominican Republic United States armed forces invaded the country to reverse the existing trend of politics. In Brazil, some existing trends found reinforcement in United States policy. These and many other factors form a central part of the analysis in Part III of the events leading up to the coup against President Goulart and the coming to power of the military.

Two intellectual orientations guide the inquiry into the events leading to the boundary change in Brazilian politics in 1964. The first is that, in general, regimes fall more from internal weaknesses than because of the strength of the opposition.<sup>24</sup> Thus, while not ignoring the civil-military coalition that attempted to overthrow

<sup>24</sup> Juan Linz develops this point theoretically and empirically in "The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes" (paper prepared for the Seventh World Congress of Sociology, Varna, Bulgaria, September 14-19, 1970). This work and Linz's lectures on the breakdown of democratic regimes in Germany, Spain, and Italy provide an analytic framework for much of Part III.

Goulart as early as 1962, I also study the "loads" on the political system and attempt to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the governmental strategy in coping with these loads.<sup>25</sup>

The second working hypothesis is that while powerful economic and political structural strains normally contribute to the breakdown of a regime, these macro-sociological factors do not in themselves lead inevitably to its fall. The diffuse, generalized factors that are placing strains on the system have to be brought to a crisis by the interaction of key actors and issues at the micro-political level. Thus, in addition to studying the wider, structural factors that contributed to the breakdown in 1964, it is necessary to reconstruct the actual resolution of specific crises occurring in the period of the revolution itself. This allows us to get closer to such crucial variables as the quality of individual political leadership, problem-solving behavior, and the decisive impact of specific highly symbolic incidents. The essence of much politics is precisely what goes on at this level—and what is often overlooked in an exclusively macro-analysis.

<sup>25</sup> Since in Brazil the three military ministers were defeated handily in their 1961 attempt to block President Goulart from assuming the presidency, the hypothesis that it was not the inherent strength of the anti-government forces that accounted for the fall of Goulart seems reasonably strong. I discuss leadership factors in somewhat greater detail in my "Political Leadership and Regime Breakdown: Brazil, 1964" (paper prepared for the Seventh World Congress of Sociology, Varna, Bulgaria, September 14-19, 1970).