



## THE PRESENCE OF FRANCE IN THE CULTURAL AND MILITARY FORMATION OF BRAZIL

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**Abstract:** The objective of this article is to trace a timeline of relations between Brazil and France from the late 17th century to 2024, highlighting the cultural and, above all, military development of our country. It also seeks to address the relevance of knowing the French language from that period to the present day. To this end, the text covers the last four centuries of Brazilian history, highlighting moments in which France, directly or indirectly, contributed to the formation of Brazil. Finally, it presents the place occupied by French in the Army Language Center (CIdEx).

**Keywords:** France, Brazil, History, Military History, CIdEx, Army Language Center.

**Résumé:** cet article a l'intention de présenter une frise chronologique des relations entre le Brésil et la France depuis la fin du XVIIe siècle jusqu'à l'an 2024, en soulignant la formation culturelle et outbreakout militaire de notre pays. Il vise également à aborder l'importance de la connaissance de la langue française depuis cette époque jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Pour ce faire, le texte couvre les four derniers siècles de l'histoire brésilienne, en soulignant les moments où la France a contribué, directement ou indirectement, à la formation du Brésil. Finally, the place occupied by France at the Center des langues de l'Armée de terre (CIdEx, acronym in Portuguese) is present.

**Motifs:** France, Brésil, Histoire, Histoire Militaire, CIdEx, Center de langues de l'Armée de terre brésilienne.

**Abstract:** this article aims to present a timeline of the relations between Brazil and France from the late 17th century to 2024, highlighting the cultural and, above all, military formation of our country. It also seeks to address the relevance of knowing the French language from that time to the present day. For this purpose, the text goes through the last four centuries of Brazilian history highlighting moments when France, directly or indirectly, contributed to the cultural and military formation of Brazil. Finally, the place occupied by the French language in the Brazilian Army Language Center (CIdEx – acronym used in Portuguese) is presented.

**Key words:** France, Brazil, History, Military History, CIdEx, Brazilian Army Language Center.

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### INTRODUCTION

*It was we [the French] who, at the end of the 18th century, provided the impetus that gave rise to the emancipation of all Latin America. It was our Revolution that launched the ideas, shook minds, and provoked the necessary indignation and decisive enthusiasm; it was Napoleon who broke the chains and determined the rupture of these heavy and repugnant ties of the past between the metropolises and their colonies.*

(Chailley, 1917, p. 263)<sup>3</sup>.

How can we not mention the influence, direct or not, of France in the formation of cultural life and military of Brazil in the last three hundred years? The need to know the language French in military schools before and after the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family in Rio de Janeiro; from the admiration that Dom Pedro II had for France to the Proclamation of the Republic; from the Mission French Military with the Army in the Year of Brazil in France; how not to mention the link that unites our country with that of great figures such as Joan of Arc, Louis XIV, Vauban, Napoleon Bonaparte and Charles de Gaulle?

Even after the undisputed rise of the United States on the world stage after World War II, War, relations between France and Brazil are far from being “irrelevant”, given the great number of Brazilians studying French, as well as the number of academic exchanges, cultural and military ties between the two countries, in addition to the fact that French companies are the largest foreign employers in our country.

This article aims to present, chronologically, Franco-Brazilian relations throughout the last four centuries and try to understand how France contributed, directly or indirectly, for the formation of the cultural and military life of Brazil, especially the Army.

To produce this article, we first turned to the history of the Great Navigations and to the division of the lands found between the Portuguese and the Spanish. Then we move on to the occupation Portuguese presence in the Americas and France's attempts to establish two colonies in the territory that today forms Brazil. We also resort, still in relation to Colonial Brazil, to the emphasis on the defense of territory through the construction of fortifications, with emphasis on Artillery classes and

<sup>3</sup> Free translation for “C'est nous [les Français] qui, à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, avons donné le branle d'où est sortie l'émancipation de toute l'Amérique latine. c'est Napoléon qui a secoué les chaînes et déterminé la rupture, entre les métropoles et leurs colonies, de ces liens pesants et hideux de jadis” (Chailley, 1917, p. 263).



Fortification in the training of the military; and the Minas Conspiracy, a movement marked by French Enlightenment. Later, we discuss Napoleon's ventures across Europe and the escape of the Portuguese Royal Family to Brazil, which opened space for the arrival of many intellectuals French to our country. The escape of the Portuguese Royal Family and its court in 1808 was the beginning of the our Independence process. And the period that followed, known as the Brazilian Empire, also had close cultural relations with France.

We finally arrived at the Brazilian Republic, with clear marks of French Positivism, passing through the French Military Instruction Mission to the Brazilian Army, through relations between Brazil and France throughout the 20th century and by the cooperation agreement between the Navy of France and Brazil to build submarines with that country's technology in the territory Brazilian. Still regarding the Armed Forces, we present the Language Center of the Army.

## I. Pindorama and Colonial Brazil: “discovery”, invasions and the Pombaline period

The French's first contact with Brazil may not have been the best. With the great voyages and great discoveries of the late 15th century, Portugal and Spain divided the New World among themselves. The Bull *Inter Cætera* (1493) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) granted the these two countries the right to explore the new lands. Portugal thus remained with the eastern portion of the lands that would be “found” in 1500, called by the original peoples of Pindorama, “land of palm trees”.

Nations like England, France and the Netherlands contested this division of land only among the Iberians. They rebelled, in the years that followed, against the orders of the Vatican and began to invade the new lands with the intention of also being able to explore the Americas. France, for example, invaded Brazil twice.

The first invasion (1555-1560), under the command of Admiral Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, was called Antarctic France<sup>4</sup>. The French occupied Guanabara Bay with the intention of exploring the territory, especially in search of brazilwood, and of giving the Protestants French people a place where they could practice their religion. It is worth noting that France was going through a bloody period of what today we would call a “civil war” between Catholics and Protestants.

The second invasion, led by Daniel de la Touche, became known as France Equinoctial (1612-1615) and took place in northern Brazil. During this period, the French built the fort

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<sup>4</sup> We recommend reading both “Rouge Brésil”, by Jean-Christophe Ruffin (Edition Gallimard, 2001) and the 2014 film of the same name, based on the book and directed by Sylvain Archambault.



of São Luís, which gave rise to the city of São Luís, capital of Maranhão. This second  
The project also intended to explore, mainly, brazilwood.

In both invasions and after much armed struggle, the French were expelled by the Portuguese. After the two defeats, they gave up on establishing colonies in Brazil. What they don't want say that they have given up the riches of the Brazilian territory, given the large number of pirates and corsairs who tried to raid Portuguese ships sailing the seas towards Lisbon.

During the period known as Colonial Brazil, the Brazilian territory, due not only to its great extension, but mainly to its riches, lived under constant threat of invasion, for example, those of the French. Thus, it was necessary to develop a defense plan to its borders. It was necessary to train soldiers who could, for example, build fortifications that would guarantee the defense of the colony and that could attack enemies.

Within this context, as most of everything that was published in the world was in French, it can be said that Brazil came into contact not only with the culture, but also with the French language as these publications did not have a translation into Portuguese. It was necessary to know French to read compendiums and compendiums from the most diverse areas of knowledge. This is how the teaching of French, which until then had only been recommended, became, in a way, a necessity for those who wanted to pursue a military career.

According to Nogueira (2014, p. 150), military education in Brazil originated at the end of the 17th century. According to this author, "military education in Colonial Brazil was precarious and classes were administered in a separate and decentralized manner". Therefore, through a Royal Charter of 15 January 1699, Dom Pedro II (of Portugal) authorizes the creation of the first training center for military education in Brazil: the Practical Fortification Course, which was established in the city of Rio de Janeiro. According to Luchetti (2006, p. 64), these fortification classes aimed to "prepare a small number of Portuguese, or their descendants, to direct the construction of fortifications on the coastal coast so that they would facilitate Portuguese defensive action against attacks of foreign attacks" (Luchetti, 2006, p. 64).

Although the Royal Charter was from 1699, until the end of 1700 it had not reached Portugal minimum infrastructure for the execution of this project, such as books or instruments necessary. Therefore, for some decades there was no possibility of establishing effectively created conditions for military education in the colony. It was on August 19, 1738, through a Royal Charter signed by Dom João V that formalized military education, lasting minimum of five years (Cordeiro *et al.*, 2008, p. 70).

Still regarding the training of military personnel at the beginning of the 18th century, Oliveira and Oliveira (2014) states that

(...) a first attempt was made to create a Fortifications Classroom in Brazil (...), but in 1710 it had not yet begun, as the main obstacle to its implementation was the lack of books written in Portuguese, most of which were written in foreign languages, especially French. On August 19, 1738, a Royal Order made military training mandatory for all Officers, who could no longer be appointed or promoted without being approved by the Artillery and Fortifications Classroom. There was, then, a need to teach the French language in military training in the Colony. (...) The French language, in this period, [had] an eminently instrumental purpose, since its study was [justified] as an instrument of access to knowledge then considered "scientific," and which was sometimes taught through foreign lenses and almost always through Compendiums written in French, in the Military Academies

(OLIVEIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2014).

In addition to the great appreciation for France, a need also arose – almost an obligation – to learn the language spoken in that country. This way, especially for artillery soldiers and Fortifications, knowing that language was a *sine qua non* condition to be able to have access to the modern scientific knowledge that was being produced at that time.

Now, if on the one hand, France was unable to establish colonies in the vast territory that today forms Brazil, on the other hand, through what today we would call, in military vocabulary, *soft power*<sup>5</sup>, was present in the formation of our country. In other words, the greatest legacy was born there French in the formation of Brazil: its cultural influence.

In the years that followed, the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement born in France that defended the use of reason to understand and solve society's problems set Europe on fire. Among 1750 and 1777, with Sebastião José de Carvalho, the Marquis of Pombal, Portugal and its domains lived the embodiment of Enlightenment thoughts.

## II. The Age of Enlightenment and the Minas Gerais Conspiracy

The children of the wealthiest families in Minas Gerais studied in Europe, especially in Portugal, and they had contact with Enlightenment thought and everything that was happening in Old World. Back in Brazil, after having had contact with the “abominable principles French”, they brought books (hidden, obviously!) and new ideas in their luggage. According to Fonseca (2009),

<sup>5</sup> In the context of international relations and the military, the term *soft power* is used to describe the ability of a political body to indirectly influence the behavior and interests of another political body(ies) through cultural or ideological means. In the case we analyzed, the political body that influenced the other would be the French state.



[These books] arrived primarily in the luggage of students that Brazil began sending to the University of Coimbra from the 1730s onward. They also arrived via Portuguese royal officials and members of the Portuguese administration. Upon arriving in Brazil, they became part of the select and exclusive colonial libraries, still studied and analyzed today. These works served as a foundation for groups seeking greater flexibility in colonial relations: greater freedom of thought, economic freedom, and, to a lesser extent, political freedom. This influence of the "abominable French principles," as representatives of monarchical absolutism called them, was long considered the main motivation for the *inconfidências* (confidences) of the late 18th century (Fonseca, 2009).

In the wake of these *inconfidências*, or rather, conspiracies, and in the face of dissatisfaction with the Portuguese Crown and everything they had seen or heard in Europe, especially about what was happening in France,

Members of the Minas Gerais oligarchies gathered to discuss a possible break with the Crown and the establishment of a free territory. The group consisted of large landowners involved in mining and agriculture, sugar mill owners, owners of clandestine looms, diamond smugglers, lawyers, priests, doctors, colonial administration bureaucrats, businessmen, and military officers, among others (Figueiredo, 2018, p. 143).

Although it was an unsuccessful project, the 1789 conspiracy in Minas Gerais brought itself much influenced by the French Revolution. Still according to Fonseca (2009),

Although they are not directly related to the process of Brazilian independence – as has been conventionally thought based on the reconstruction of Brazilian history promoted by the proclamation of the republic in 1889 – the principles of the Enlightenment created an irreparable rift in political relations, opposing liberal and conservative ideas that would be, in fact, the main drivers of the separation of Brazil and Portugal.

The years that followed and the events that occurred in both the Old and New Worlds are the proof of this distance and this split between the Metropolis and the Colony.

### III. 1808: the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family in Brazil

Fleeing from Napoleon Bonaparte and with the aim of protecting the Portuguese Crown, Dom João, Portuguese monarch, accompanied by his court, left Lisbon and transferred the seat of power to Rio de Janeiro. Thus, a Luso-Brazilian empire in the tropics was born.

While Napoleon fought against the Ancien Régime and definitively transformed the face of Europe, Brazil was undergoing changes that would forever mark its history. Among them are, according to Vainfas *et al.* (2010, vol. 2, p. 95), the opening of ports to Friendly Nations; the suspension of

prohibition of manufacturing; the founding of the Banco do Brasil; the creation of the Botanical Garden; the organization of the Royal Military Academy<sup>6</sup> of the School of Fine Arts and the Royal Library; the installation of the first higher education institution in the country: the Bahia School of Surgery, in Salvador; the liberation of typography, with the consequent creation and publishing of newspapers on land Brazilian.

Only in 1815, with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, did D. João reestablish relations diplomatic relations with France and with the countries previously occupied by Napoleonic armies. In addition, Furthermore, Brazil received, from a cultural point of view, the French Artistic Mission. In 1816, a group of French artists were invited to promote their culture in our country, which was considered, at that time, an ideal of civilization.

This mission, under the organization of Joachim Lebreton, was composed of visual artists, such as the painters Jean-Baptiste Debret and Nicolas Antoine Taunay, the sculptors Auguste Marie Taunay and Zéphirin Ferrez, and the architect Grandjean de Montigny, who designed the Praça do Comércio, the current France-Brazil House.



**Image 1:** Bust of Grandjean de Montigny at Casa França-Brasil, s/d.  
Source: photographs from personal collection.

All these changes gave rise to a new social, cultural, economic and, why not, to serve in our country. Brazil no longer saw itself as a colony, which led to its

<sup>6</sup> At the Royal Military Academy, established in 1810, there were no military science manuals in Portuguese. It was essential to be able to read the books published, most of which were in French, especially for future Artillery and Engineering Officers (Guimarães; Souza, 2019). For a long time, French was taught both at the Royal Military Academy – which, after the Independence of Brazil, became known as the Imperial Military Academy – as in the Military Colleges.



political emancipation on September 7, 1822, when the Prince Regent, D. Pedro, proclaimed the Independence on the banks of the Ipiranga stream.

#### IV. 1822 – 1889: from Independence to the Proclamation of the Republic

On the placid banks of the Ipiranga stream, D. Pedro would then have uttered the resounding cry of our Independence, and three months later, on December 1, 1822, he was crowned emperor from Brazil.

A Frenchman who made history at that time was Jean-Baptiste Debret, one of the artists who comprised the Artistic Mission of 1816. It was Debret who designed the flag of the Empire. The green and the yellow of that flag has crossed generations and makes us recognizable in any place in the world!

A few years later, our second and last emperor, Dom Pedro II, would establish a unparalleled relationship with France. Guy Gauthier (2019)<sup>7</sup>, a French historian, considers Dom Pedro II the father of Franco-Brazilian friendship. In fact, Pedro II cultivated a great admiration for that country, having become friends with great figures of the 19th century, such as Louis Pasteur and Victor Hugo.

Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that 19th-century French society had become a civilizing example for the wealthiest families in Brazilian society. In this sense, the language French occupied a prominent place in school curricula: having been, for many decades, the main foreign language studied in both public and private schools.

It wasn't just the French language and customs that left their mark on Brazil. Many French writers also became famous here, such as Stendhal, Jules Verne, Balzac and the previously mentioned Victor Hugo, author of "Les Misérables".

Still from a cultural point of view, another Frenchman who, in the second half of the 19th century, left his mark in Brazil was Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, better known under the pseudonym of Allan Kardec (1804-1869), creator of the Spiritist doctrine. In this sense, it can be said that,

As a result of the publication of works allegedly authored by Spirits and under the leadership of Allan Kardec, the Spiritist movement expanded and intensified in France, reaching other countries, especially Brazil. The first adherents of the new doctrine/religion in Brazil were members of the French colony in Rio de Janeiro, and it subsequently spread to the most diverse sectors of the country's elite. In Brazil, Spiritism currently has a considerable number of followers. According to the 2010 Census, (...) conducted by

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<sup>7</sup> Interview given to the documentary "Pedro II: dernier empereur du Brésil", fourth episode of the thirteenth season of the program "Secrets d'Histoire", which aired on August 8, 2019 on the France 3 channel.

Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE, [there are] about 3.8 million Spiritists [in the country]. That is, about 2% of the Brazilian population (Eugênio, 2017, p. 15-17).

Who also left his legacy in Brazil, but outside the national political center, the then capital of the Empire, Rio de Janeiro, was the Frenchman Claude-Henri Gorceix, founder of the School of Minas de Ouro Preto. According to Carvalho (2009), the creation of this school was an initiative of D. Pedro II, who,

Upon returning from his trip abroad in 1871/72, when he met Pasteur and was elected a member of the Institut de France, he invited his colleague from that institution and director of the École des Mines de Paris, Auguste Daubrée, to visit Brazil to establish mineralogical studies there. The director did not want to leave his newly occupied post and appointed the young Claude Henri Gorceix for the task (Carvalho, 2009).

We also cannot fail to mention the repercussions of the creation of the Alliance Française. Founded in 1883, in Paris, by world-renowned personalities such as Louis Pasteur and Jules Verne, his goal was to promote the French language and culture around the world. What many are unaware of the fact that the second Alliance Française in the world, created in 1885, was the from Rio de Janeiro, such was the prestige of France in our country.

If, from an academic, cultural and customs point of view, Brazil during the Second Reign lived a true effervescence; from a military point of view, it can be said that Brazil experienced a relative period of peace until 1864, when the conflict with Paraguay broke out (Triple War Alliance, 1864-1870).

In this war, a soldier of French origin, Marshal Émile Louis, gained prominence. Mallet. Because of his achievements, especially at the Battle of Tuiuti, Mallet was recognized officially as the Patron of Brazilian Artillery.

After this war, the Empire faced an irreversible decline. Dissatisfaction with part of the São Paulo coffee growers, the growth of the abolitionist movement and the movement republican and disagreements with both the Catholic Church and the Army military brought it to an end with the Proclamation of the Republic on November 15, 1889.

Behind the republican movement, there was the presence of a French philosophical doctrine that argued that science and reason were the only possible ways of understanding reality and guide society: Positivism. Created by Auguste Comte, positivist ideas had many followers in Brazil at the end of the 19th century, mainly among the Army military. Among them, Benjamin Constant, a professor at the former Military School, stands out. Regarding to Positivism, Joseph Chailley (1917, p. 263), a French politician, states that,

During the 19th century, (...) Paris became, for Latin American youth, the center toward which all their hopes converged. The most literate Brazilians studied, from 1830 to 1870, in the schools of our thinkers and our scholars. Auguste Comte, more specifically, became the undisputed inspiration of Brazilian philosophy and social and political conceptions. Today, the country's motto is: "Order and Progress" (...).<sup>8</sup>

Two years after the Proclamation of the Republic, Dom Pedro II died, exiled in Paris. His prestige among the intellectuals and nobles of Europe was so great that his procession was followed by more than three hundred thousand people, including kings, queens, nobles, philosophers, scientists, politicians and writers from around the world. According to Gauthier (2019), his wake, at the Church of la Madeleine, was worthy of a French emperor.

## V. 1889 – 1945: from the Proclamation of the Republic to the Second World War

The year 1889 marked the centenary of the French Revolution in France. While there inaugurated the Eiffel Tower to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Revolution; in Brazil, the first step towards the republican regime.

And, like every new regime, the newly born Brazilian Republic sought symbols to represent itself. Legitimize itself before society, presenting, above all, its advantages in relation to the Monarchy. Of French inspiration, one of the attempts to introduce in Brazil was the image of women as republican symbol. According to Eugênio and Oliveira (2022, p. 170),

the French Republic is represented by a female figure, Marianne, a symbolic figure who occupies a prominent place in French town halls, schools and public establishments. His profile picture is printed on all official documents, postage stamps and even on euro coins minted in France.

In Brazil, there was an attempt to adopt/impose/naturalize this symbol of various forms, which could be seen, for example, in the real coins (old Brazilian currency) minted in early 20th century:

<sup>8</sup> Free translation for: "(...) durant tout le XIXe siècle, (...) Paris devint pour la jeunesse latine américaine le center vers lequel convergeaient tous les espoirs. Les meilleurs d'entre les Brésiliens se mirent, de 1830 à 1870, à l'école de nos faiseurs et de nos savants. Auguste Comte notamment devint l'inspirateur indiscuté de leur philosophie et de leurs conceptions sociales et politiques.



**Image 2** – Effigy of the Republic minted on one of the sides of Brazilian coins (1906).  
Numismatic section of the Conde dos Arcos Palace in the City of Goiás.  
Source: photograph from personal collection.

Another example is one of the main works of art in the current Museum of the Republic<sup>9</sup>, in the neighborhood of Catete, in Rio de Janeiro:



**Image 3** – Bust of the Republic, by Loiseau-Rousseau (undated).  
Source: photograph from personal collection.

<sup>9</sup> The Museum of the Republic building was the headquarters of the Federal Government from 1886 to 1960.

Sculpted by Paul-Louis Loiseau-Rousseau (1861-1927), this marble and copper bust is an allegory officially designated “Marianne, symbol of the Republic.” Just like Marianne French, ours also uses the Phrygian cap (*bonnet phrygien*, in French), but ours is decorated with coffee and tobacco branches – symbols that were also used by the Monarchy, but, literally, with a new face!

According to Richard (2014, p. 45), it was in front of this bust that, in 1917, Venceslau Brás Pereira Gomes, President of Brazil, declared war on the German Empire.

All this “French revolutionary imagery”, an expression coined by Pinto Júnior (2010), persisted in the first decades of the Brazilian Republic, a fact recognized even internationally, the which can be seen on the cover of a special issue of the *Journal de l'Université des Annales*<sup>10</sup>, published in Paris, whose theme was “The Americas and France”, on August 15, 1917, with emphasis for the aforementioned bust of the Republic sculpted by Loiseau-Rousseau.

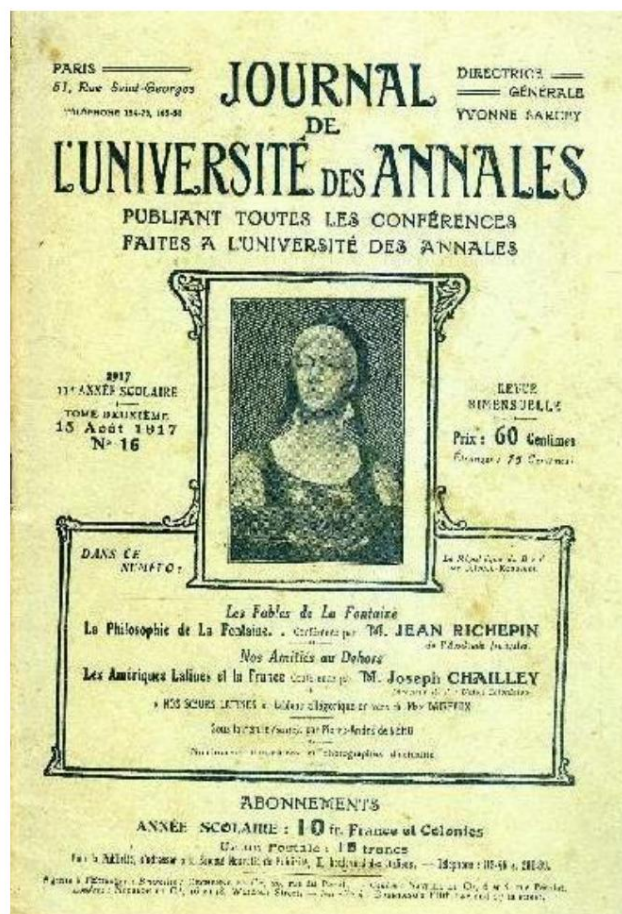


Image 4 – Cover of the *Journal de l'Université des Annales*, August 15, 1917.  
Source: personal collection.

<sup>10</sup> We would like to thank the University of Ghent (Universiteit Gent), Belgium, and its library network, the Boekentoren Library, for providing us with part of the copy of the *Journal de l'Université des Annales* of August 15, 1917, so that we could expand the scope of this article.

However, according to Carvalho (1990), the effort to create a Marianne of the tropics was a failed attempt, since it was an imported symbol, without historical references and which, therefore, was not recognized by the Brazilian population.

Another point of contact with France, but this time successfully, are two military missions of instruction with the aim of improving the knowledge of Brazilian military personnel. The first was the French Military Mission in the Public Force of the State of São Paulo, which lasted from 1906 to 1914 (Linhares, 2019). The success of this mission would have motivated the Federal Government to hire a second French mission with the aim of professionalizing the Brazilian Army. It was the French Military Instruction Mission to the Army<sup>11</sup>, signed by Delfim Moreira da Costa Ribeiro, interim president of Brazil, in accordance with Decree No. 3,741 of May 28, 1912.

After the approval of the President of the Republic, the contract for this mission would be signed on 8 September of that same year. The choice of France was made because, in addition to it being one of the victorious nations in the First World War,

France possessed prestige, experience, and cutting-edge military expertise. The Mission enhanced the Land Force Employment Doctrine, optimizing Command work and administrative organization, and implementing more effective measures for physical preparation, uniforms, training, and weapons use. Its activities were most prominent at the General Staff College (EEM), the Officer Development School (EsAO), the Military Aviation School, and the Quartermaster Officer, Health, Equestrian, Physical Education, and Veterinary courses.

According to Malan (2018 [1988], p. 124), this Military Training Mission, which lasted from 1919 to 1940, reorganized and modernized the entire structure of the Brazilian Army, as it was responsible for reorienting its doctrine, drafting new regulations and improving all teaching and military instruction.

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<sup>11</sup> Brazilian Army officers began leaving for France to train with French Army troops or even at the French War College. [Furthermore, in 1918], our Army purchased [from France] our first military aircraft. [A few years later], one of the clauses of the French Military Mission to the Army [would] state that the Brazilian government [would] give preference to French industry in the arms sector" (Eugênio; Oliveira, 2022, p. 176).

<sup>12</sup> Source: LexML Portal, of the Federal Senate. Available at: <https://www.lexml.gov.br/urn/urn:lex:br:federal:decreto:1919-05-28:3741>. Accessed on May 18, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Source: General Department of Personnel, Brazilian Army. Available at: <http://www.dgp.eb.mil.br/index.php/ultimas-noticias1/1880-8-de-setembro-contrato-da-missao-militar-francesa>. Published on September 6, 2023. Accessed on May 18, 2024.



**Image 5** – Arrival of the French Military Mission in Brazil: impetus for Army reform. On the left, foreground, General Maurice Gamelin. Beside him, General Durandin.

Source: Malan, 2018 [1988], p. 145.

Another French vestige that has also been successful in our country is in the academic field. It is important to highlight the role of renowned French intellectuals in the creation of University of São Paulo (USP). When USP was founded in 1934, the university model in the European model did not yet exist in Brazil. So, many French teachers came to teach classes at the newly-born university, among them were the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the sociologist Roger Bastide and the historian Fernand Braudel (EUGÊNIO; OLIVEIRA, 2022, p. 178).

According to the *QS World University Ranking*, an annual ranking published by Quacquarelli Symonds, from the United Kingdom, USP was ranked among the top hundred universities in the world in the year 2024.

Despite the notoriety and splendor of the past, the great prestige that France had in the Brazil until then began to decline when the Second World War ended, a period in which the The United States and its *American way of life* launched itself into the world.

## VI. From World War II to the present day

In the post-war period, France found itself very fragile: its economy was shaken; its finances, exhausted; and its population, impoverished. On the other hand, the United States was configured as the richest and most powerful country on the planet, to the point that even its language, English, is would become a global lingua franca. Thus, in the curriculum of Brazilian schools, as It was to be expected that French lost ground to English.

However, although the United States has a great influence on our culture and our economy, many French companies are still present in our country, which makes France the third largest foreign investor and the largest foreign employer in Brazil (Poulingue, 2023). Companies such as the Carrefour group, Leroy Merlin, Renault, Peugeot, Citroën, Michelin, Bic, Accor, L'Oréal, among others, employ almost 500 thousand people and generate a volume of business worth more than 66 billion euros, which shows how much France is still a country relevant to us. All this without mentioning the excellent reputation of cosmetics and gastronomy French people in our country.

Despite having lost ground to English and the *American way of life*, French is still a language sought after by Brazilians. According to data from the Alliance Française Foundation, Brazil is the sixth country with the highest number of students enrolled in its establishments, with around 25 thousand students<sup>14</sup>. In addition to the Alliance Française, French can also be learned in many schools languages and extension centers of the Faculty of Letters spread throughout the country. In addition, there are schools and French high schools in cities such as Brasília, Curitiba, Natal, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Furthermore, some higher education institutions enjoy great prestige among our students, such as the Sorbonne, the École des Ponts, the École Nationale d'Administration, and the École Polytechnique. And, still regarding higher education, in Brazil, the following stands out:

SKEMA Business School, an international business school originating in France and which has a campus in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais.

From a military point of view, there is a large number of aircraft of French origin, mainly of helicopters, in our three Forces: the Navy, the Army and the Air Force. In addition to aircraft, still stands out the Action Plan of the bilateral Strategic Partnership, signed in 2008, together with Navy, with the objective of creating, in Brazil, four conventional submarines and one nuclear one within the next twenty years, a subject that will be addressed later.

In 2005, in an initiative of the governments of Brazil and France and with the aim of deepen cultural, academic and economic relations between the two countries, the Year was celebrated of Brazil in France. On July 14, 2005, during the celebration of the French National Day, cadets from the Agulhas Negras Military Academy, the Marine Corps band and the Marine Squadron Smoke participated in the military parade on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in front of the presidents of France and Brazil.

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<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://www.fondation-alliancefr.org/wp-content/medias/DATA2018/HautPage-Affiche-2018.pdf>. Accessed on July 18, 2023.



**Image 6** – Marine band and cadets from the Agulhas Negras Military Academy at the July 14 military parade in France, 2005.

Source: VSD (magazine)15.

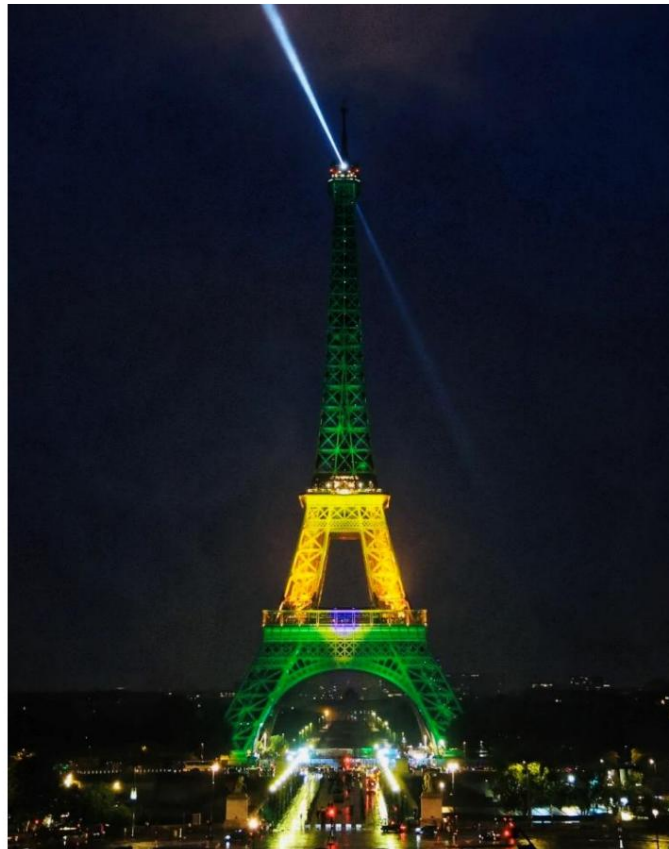
In 2009, it was Brazil's turn to return the tributes. From April 21 to November 15 that year, the Brazilian public was able to follow several French artistic manifestations and learn a little more about France.

Within this context, it is worth highlighting the creation of the Varilux French Film Festival created by Unifrance – a non-profit organization whose objective is to promote French films abroad – with the support of the French Embassy in Brazil and the Delegation of the Alliances French. Since its founding, the festival has been held annually in several movie theaters across Brazil.

In June 2025, President Lula was in Paris for a state visit, on which occasion who was received by his counterpart, Emmanuel Macron. The Brazilian president also met businessmen who promised to invest around 16 billion euros (100 billion reais) in Brazil in the coming years. During this visit, the Eiffel Tower was illuminated with the colors of the flag Brazilian.

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<sup>15</sup> VSD is a French current affairs magazine. Available at: <https://vsd.fr/2449-le-14-juillet-fete-inter-nationale/>.  
Published on July 10, 2015. Accessed on May 15, 2024.



**Image 7** – Eiffel Tower illuminated in green, yellow and blue.  
Source: Gov Agency – EBC.

Regarding the military partnership signed between Brazil and France, in 2008, the Submarine Development Program. On March 27, 2024, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron and his Brazilian counterpart, President Lula da Silva, were at the naval base from Itaguaí, in Rio de Janeiro, for the launch of the submarine Tonelero into the sea.



**Image 8** – Tonelero submarine before being launched into the sea.  
Source: Marine News Agency.

According to the Brazilian Navy, the Tonelero is “the third conventional submarine with diesel-electric propulsion built entirely in Brazil”<sup>16</sup>.

As regards the French language, in recent years the need has been highlighted for know the language to work in Peace Missions in French-speaking countries, such as the Côte d’Azur Ivory (MINUCI, between 2003 and 2004), Haiti (MINUSTAH, from 2004 to 2017) and the Republic Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO, from 2010 to the present day).

This connection between our Armed Forces and the French language is so great that the Ministry Defense developed specific centers so that this language could be taught to our military, among which the Army Language Center (CIdEx) stands out.

Currently, in addition to CIdEx, French language activities are also being developed at the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Center (CCOPAB), created in 2010<sup>17</sup>.

## VII. Teaching French to Army personnel

If, in Colonial Brazil, during Fortification and Artillery classes, it was enough to know how to read in French, the 21st century demands much more than that. The way foreign languages are taught today go far beyond simply equipping a soldier to read works in another language.

In the Army, foreign languages are taught in intensive preparatory stages, which are capable of developing, in a short space of time, the most different skills linguistic: listening comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension and written expression, and that aim to prepare our military personnel to perform in a wide range of missions abroad.

This way of teaching dates back to 1956, in the context of the Suez crisis, when military personnel Brazilians were sent with the aim of mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict (Souza Júnior, 2015). In this context, the figure of a World War II veteran emerges, then Lieutenant Afrânio de Viçoso Jardim, seriously wounded in combat on January 4, 1945, victim of a Nazi artillery grenade<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Navy News Agency. Available at: <https://www.marinha.mil.br/agenciadenoticias/marinha-lanca-submarine-at-sea-next-week-in-itaguai-rj>. Published on March 20, 2024. Accessed on April 27, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> In 2018, the Brazilian Navy created the Virtual Language and Education Center, under the Navy’s Education Directorate, offering intensive internships in Spanish, French, and English. The Brazilian Air Force, through its Office of the Vice-Rector for Specialized Education and Languages, offers distance learning courses in Spanish and English.

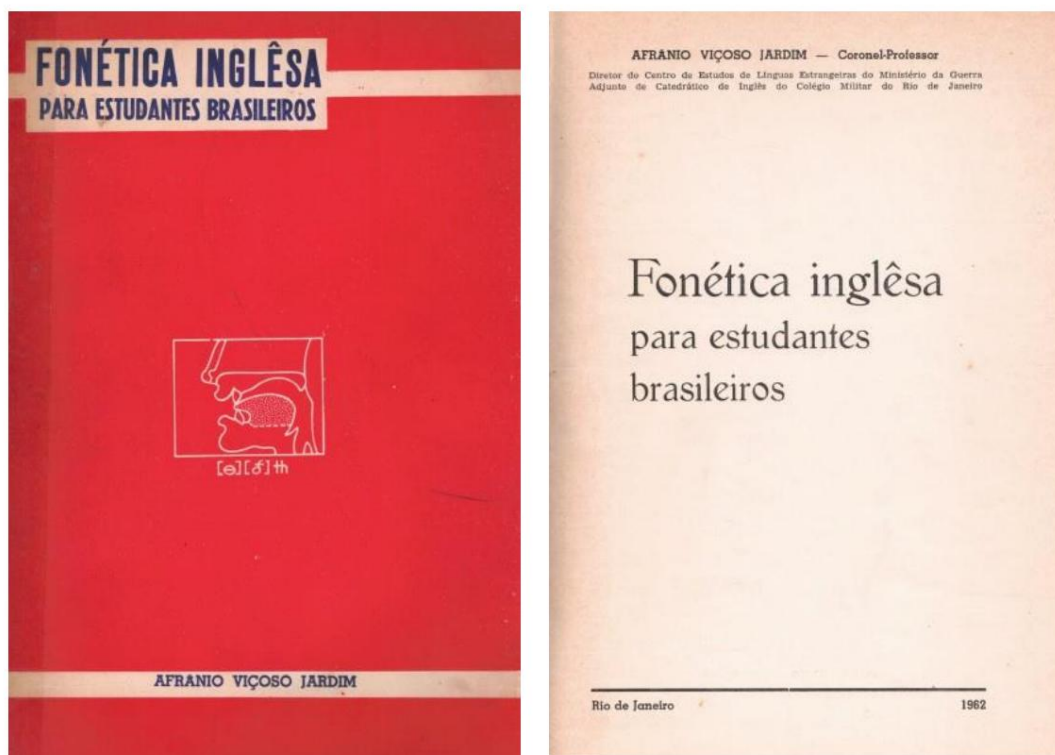
<sup>18</sup> As a result of his injuries, Afrânio de Viçoso Jardim was considered unfit for service in the Army’s combat line, but fit for teaching and bureaucratic functions.

The one who would later become Major General Afrânio de Viçoso Jardim became, in 1954, an English teacher at the Military College of Rio de Janeiro (CMRJ), after a long period of treatment in the United States.

In 1956, faced with the Army's need to prepare its soldiers for missions in abroad, then Major Jardim was appointed director of the Orientation and Language Course (COL). In 1958, already promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he was appointed as an English teacher for the Suez Battalion of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).

Back in Brazil, and already promoted to the rank of Colonel, he was appointed, in 1961, director of the newly created Center for Foreign Language Teaching (CELE). Language internships foreigners took place, from 1956 to 1966, at the Ministry of War (currently the Duque de Caxias Palace), in the center of Rio de Janeiro.

Proof of General Jardim's work and contribution to the education system in Army was the publication, in 1962, of a manual on “English Phonetics for Brazilian Students”, work developed from his own observations as a professor both at CMRJ as in the CELE language laboratory.



**Image 9** – English phonetics manual written by General Jardim  
Source: Collection of the General Jardim Cultural Space – CIdEx

In 1966, language internships were transferred to the Personnel Studies Center (CEP), in Forte do Leme, also in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Military Organization that housed the language teaching from 1966 to 2015.



**Image 10** – Example of an internship completion certificate issued in 1962.  
Source: Collection of the General Jardim Cultural Center – CIdEx.

In September 2015, recognizing the importance of foreign languages for their military, the Army Command decided to create a military organization exclusively for this purpose end. Thus, the Army Language Center was born<sup>19</sup>.

### VIII. The Army Language Center<sup>20</sup> (CIdEx)

Operating since 2016, CIdEx is tasked with teaching foreign languages in intensive internships and administering language proficiency exams with the aim of increasing the universe of military personnel competing for the most varied missions abroad.

Six foreign languages (German, Spanish, French, English, Italian and Russian) and Portuguese as a foreign language give life to this Military Organization. Its teaching staff is composed of military teachers, both from the Complementary Officers' Framework and Technical Officers-Temporary workers, graduates in Literature and specializing in the aforementioned languages.

<sup>19</sup> The Army Language Center was created at the end of 2015, according to Ordinance No. 1,349, of September 23, 2015, of the Army Command (Army Bulletin No. 39, Brasília, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Since June 2021, CIdEx has been known as the "General Jardim Center," in honor of the man who dedicated himself so much to language teaching in the Army. Consequently, in December 2021, the Center's founding date was revised to March 22, 1961, the day CELE was established. The Language Center was then renamed the Army Language Center (Foreign Language Studies Center / 1961), or "General Jardim Center."



**Image 11** – Building where the Army Language Center operates.  
Source: photograph from personal collection.

To illustrate the importance of creating this unique language center in Brazil, it is necessary to take taking into account the different demands of the Army both in the theater of operations and in the most various activities in which it is employed.

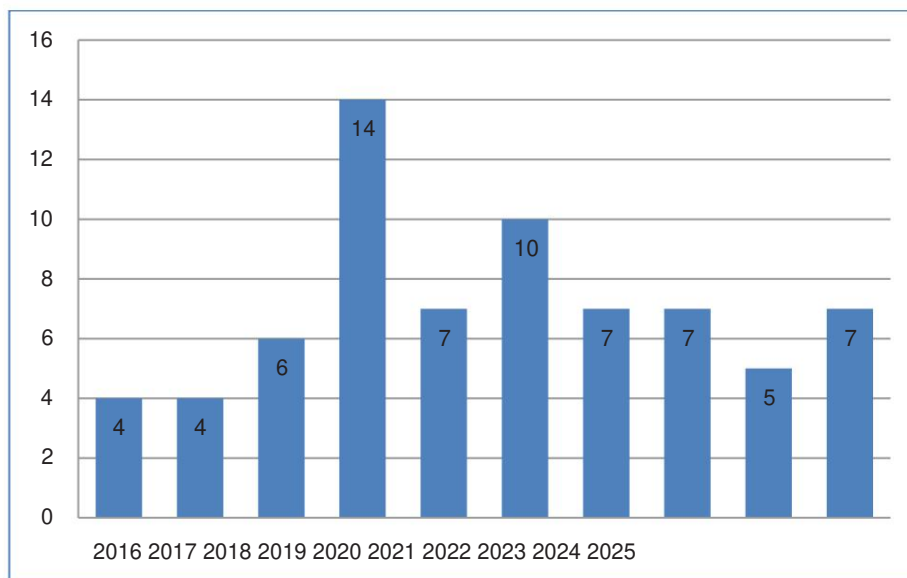
For example, if a troop needs to prepare for a peacekeeping mission of the Organization of United Nations (UN), your military needs to be able to establish effective communication both with local inhabitants and with military personnel from that or other nations. In this type of mission, general knowledge of a foreign language alone would not be sufficient. It is also necessary to use military vocabulary. It is necessary to know, for example, terms related to weapons, combat vehicles or even International Law.

Furthermore, it is very important to know the country's culture: what is the predominant religion, what the relationship between men and women is like, how to approach people, how to interact with them, etc.

In other words, more than knowing how to express yourself in different situations in life everyday life, such as going to the supermarket, reading a newspaper or watching a television program, the military assigned to an overseas mission also needs to know how to use military vocabulary in foreign language(s) (Eugênio; Oliveira; Silva, 2022). In other words, it is up to the CIdEx to present Army personnel with a wide range of military terms and expressions, but also prepare them culturally for different everyday situations.

Within this context of linguistic and cultural preparation, until April 30, 2024, the universe of Army soldiers qualified in French to compete for some mission in the abroad was 1,854. As for French teaching, since the creation of CIdEx, 68 military personnel, among

General Officers, Officers and Soldiers went through the Intensive Internship, as represented in the graph below:



**Image 12** – graph showing the number of interns between 2016 and 2025.

In 2016, the Army Command assigned four soldiers to study French at CIdEx. In 2017, also four. In 2018, six. In 2019, fourteen – the largest number of military personnel in the Intensive French Internships since the Center's founding. In 2024, the first female military personnel participated in the Intensive French Internship<sup>21</sup>. These military personnel performed, perform or will perform different functions, such as military attaché, instructor, observer or liaison officer, in the countries to which they have been or will be sent.

Finally, in recognition of the work that has been done with the French language, both at the Army Language Center and at the Brazilian Joint Peace Operations Center, on the day December 8, 2022, in a solemn ceremony at the Consulate General of France in Rio de Janeiro, military teachers of this language were decorated by the French Ministry of Defense. Consul General of France in Rio de Janeiro, Gérard Maréchal, and the French Military Attaché in Brazil, the Captain of the Sea and War François Escarras, decorated us with the *Médaille de la Défense Nationale* (National Defense Medal, in Portuguese) for the promotion of language and culture French with the Brazilian Army soldiers.

<sup>21</sup> Other Brazilian military personnel have already served on missions in French-speaking countries. However, they already had a good command of French. Only those military personnel who still need to achieve a good level of proficiency in a language participate in CIdEx Internships.



**Image 13** – National Defense Medal with the *Armée de terre* clasp.

Source: personal collection.

## IX. Final considerations

Throughout this article, we seek to show a little of France's presence in the formation of Brazil and how relevant France and the French language still are in our country not only from the point of view academic, cultural, commercial and diplomatic, but also military, points of view.

We thus address several periods of Brazilian history that had a direct or indirect influence of France, as well as we deal with the relationship of the Brazilian Armed Forces with the French language, especially with the creation, in 2015, of the Army Language Center.

And what to expect in the coming years, decades, centuries?

We hope that Franco-Brazilian relations remain friendly and that the two countries can continue to establish exchanges in all areas. And, with regard to the others French-speaking countries, that Brazil's relations with them foster many partnerships, not only at the cultural, but also military.



**Image 14** – Brazilian and French flags in the entrance hall of the Army Command and General Staff College (ECEME) during the visit of Colonel Nicolas Guisse (France) on May 3, 2024.  
Source: personal archive.

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