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Credentialization without Socialization: Professional Military Education and Civil–Military Relations in Brazil

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Abstract

Does integrating military officers into civilian universities strengthen civilian control? Conventional wisdom holds that exposure to civilian academic environments fosters normative socialization and narrows the gap between soldiers and society. This article challenges that assumption. Drawing on a qualitative case study of a partnership between the Brazilian Army and a federal university graduate program, it argues that such participation operates primarily as credentialization — enhancing professional status and career advancement — rather than normative transformation or institutional oversight. Distinguishing three analytical logics (credentialization, normative socialization, institutional control) and drawing on Janowitz, Feaver, Cohen, and Avant, the article assesses which prevails in practice. Based on survey data (N=37) and semi-structured interviews, the findings show that classroom interaction generates dialogue but does not produce normative convergence or alter authority structures. In polarized democracies with entrenched military autonomy, academic integration is more likely to coexist with than to transform prevailing civil–military relations.

Keywords: professional military education, civil–military relations, civilian control, military professionalization, credentialization, Brazil

When military officers enroll in civilian graduate programs, does the experience reshape their values and strengthen civilian control—or does it primarily enhance their professional credentials? This question sits at the heart of a longstanding debate in civil–military relations. For decades, the conventional answer has leaned toward

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4 socialization: exposure to civilian academic environments, the argument goes, fosters
5 democratic values, narrows the gap between soldiers and society, and supports the
6 political integration of the officer corps (Janowitz 1960). Yet this assumption has rarely
7 been subjected to systematic empirical scrutiny, particularly in contexts where military
8 autonomy remains entrenched and civilian oversight limited.
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14 The theoretical stakes of this question are significant. Janowitz's classic formulation
15 treats education as a mechanism of normative socialization through which sustained
16 exposure to civilian culture gradually reshapes military identities and political
17 dispositions. Huntington (1957), by contrast, emphasizes the tension between
18 professional autonomy and civilian control, suggesting that education may enhance
19 effectiveness without necessarily extending oversight. More recent institutionalist
20 approaches cast further doubt on socialization as the primary pathway to civilian
21 control. Cohen (2002) argues that control is not a stable condition achieved through
22 shared values but an ongoing process of political intervention. Feaver (2003)
23 conceptualizes civil–military relations as a principal–agent problem in which control
24 depends on monitoring, incentives, and compliance. Avant (1994, 2005) shifts attention
25 to organizational structure, showing how institutional arrangements—not cultural
26 convergence—shape military preferences and behavior. Taken together, these
27 perspectives suggest that the actual effects of military participation in civilian education
28 are an empirical question, not a theoretical presumption.
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44 Brazil provides a significant case for analyzing this issue. Following the democratic
45 transition in 1985, civil-military relations have combined formal civilian supremacy
46 with ongoing military autonomy in reserved domains, such as education, career
47 management, and doctrine (Pion-Berlin & Martínez 2017). In the past twenty years, the
48 Brazilian Army has engaged in a gradual and predominantly self-directed academization
49 process, aligning its educational institutions with civilian standards and pursuing
50 external accreditation, all while maintaining full control over curricula and promotions
51 (Oliveira 2019; Author 2025). The process unfolded alongside rising political
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polarization since 2013, resulting in unprecedented government militarization during the Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022). On January 8, 2023, polarization reached its zenith with the invasion and destruction of the Three Powers headquarters in Brasília by demonstrators seeking military intervention to reverse Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's electoral victory. The Federal Police and the Judiciary have conducted investigations that reveal the involvement or negligence of military personnel. This has prompted considerable discussion concerning hierarchy, discipline, and adherence to civilian authority as stipulated in the 1988 Constitution (Piazza & Landy 2025).

Within this context, this article examines a singular and analytically bounded case: the partnership established in 2015 between the Brazilian Army's Southern Military Command (*Comando Militar do Sul*—CMS) and the Graduate Program in International Strategic Studies (PPGEEI) at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Operating through a Special Call for Military Officers (*Editais Especial para Militares*—EEM), this arrangement allows a limited number of active-duty officers—predominantly at intermediate and senior career stages, holding ranks between captain and colonel—to pursue accredited graduate degrees within a civilian university, entirely outside the army's own educational system (Moura 2022). Participation is voluntary and elective: officers enroll in response to career incentives and personal motivation, not institutional mandates. The sample under study therefore consists of professionally experienced officers whose military identities are already well established—a feature that, as the analysis will show, has direct implications for understanding why credentialization tends to prevail over normative socialization in this setting.

This study asks whether participation in civilian graduate education strengthens civilian control—and, if so, through which mechanisms. It further asks whether such an arrangement functions primarily as a vehicle of normative socialization and enhanced oversight, as Janowitzian perspectives suggest, or whether it operates mainly as an instrument of credentialization, consistent with the institutional approaches proposed by Feaver, Cohen, and Avant.

The article presents the following hypothesis: in the Brazilian context, participation in civilian graduate education operates primarily as credentialization—a mechanism of professional advancement and institutional signaling—rather than as a vehicle of normative socialization or enhanced civilian oversight. Because participation is driven largely by career incentives and the army's own reform agenda, the interactions it produces tend to be pragmatic and compartmentalized, generating incremental rather than transformative effects on civil–military relations.

Empirically, the article draws on a qualitative case study combining survey data (N=37) and semi-structured interviews with military officers, civilian students, faculty members, and institutional stakeholders involved in the CMS–PPGEEI partnership. Analytically, it contributes to the literature on PME and civilian control by demonstrating that the integration of military officers into civilian universities cannot be assumed to produce normative convergence or institutional transformation. Rather, the effects of such integration are mediated by preexisting patterns of military autonomy, the career stage and motivations of participating officers, and the political context in which civilian–military interactions unfold. The Brazilian case suggests a broader caution: in polarized democracies where the military held entrenched institutional autonomy, academic integration and civilian control may advance on parallel—rather than converging—tracks.

Competing Logics of Civilian Control in Professional Military Education

Theoretical debates surround the relationship between professional military education and civilian control, as education can potentially fulfill various and conflicting roles. This contestation is reflected in the literature itself: a recent systematic review of peer-reviewed scholarship on PME in the twenty-first century found no common understanding of what military education should accomplish, how it should be organized, or what effects it produces (Enstad & Hagen, 2025). It may operate as a mechanism of normative socialization, gradually reshaping military identities through

sustained exposure to civilian values and modes of reasoning. It may function primarily as an instrument of professionalization and credentialization, enhancing officers' qualifications and career prospects without altering their political dispositions. Or it may serve as a channel of institutional governance, through which civilian authorities extend oversight into military educational structures. Which of these logics prevails in any given case is not a matter of theoretical deduction but of empirical examination—and the answer is likely to depend on the career stage of participants, the organizational incentives governing their participation, and the political context in which interactions unfold.

Classical and contemporary approaches converge on the centrality of education to military professionalism but diverge sharply on its political and institutional effects. Janowitz's (1960) foundational argument holds that prolonged exposure to civilian academic culture fosters the internalization of democratic values and supports political integration of the officer corps—what he termed subjective civilian control. Subsequent scholarship in this tradition has extended the argument to the contemporary context of academized military careers, in which graduate-level credentials serve as both markers of institutional modernization and pathways to normative convergence (Snider et al. 2001; Frič & Pernica 2024). From a principal–agent or institutionalist perspective, however, such outcomes cannot be assumed. Feaver (2003) argues that civilian control depends primarily on monitoring, incentives, and compliance rather than shared values. Cohen (2002) treats control as an ongoing process of political intervention rather than a stable cultural achievement. Avant (1994, 2005) shifts attention to organizational structure, demonstrating how institutional arrangements—not cultural convergence—shape military preferences and behavior. Across these perspectives, the socializing power of education is at best conditional and at worst irrelevant to the actual mechanisms sustaining civilian oversight.

The heterogeneous nature of PME itself reinforces this analytical ambiguity—and points toward a key variable that is often underspecified in the literature: career stage.

Professional military education is not a uniform enterprise but a continuum spanning initial officer formation, mid-career professional schooling, and advanced graduate education (Enstad & Hagen, 2025). The socializing potential of education is likely to vary considerably across this continuum. At the initial formation stage, when officers are undergoing primary identity construction, normative exposure may have lasting effects. At intermediate and senior career stages, however, professional identities are already consolidated, institutional loyalties are deeply embedded, and participation in graduate programs is typically elective and career-instrumental. In such cases, the dominant logic is more likely to be credentialization—the acquisition of academically recognized credentials that signal expertise, enable post-retirement transitions, and enhance competitive positioning within the military hierarchy—than genuine normative transformation (Bell 1986; Enoch & Yogev 1989; Sarkesian 1975; Hedlund 2019). This distinction is analytically consequential: assuming that graduate education produces socialization effects regardless of career stage conflates contexts in which normative influence is plausible with those in which it is structurally unlikely.

From an analytical standpoint, three ideal-typical functions of advanced PME emerge from the literature. First, education serves as a mechanism of professionalization *and* credentialization, enhancing officers' technical competence, signaling expertise, and increasing competitiveness within both military and civilian labor markets (Sarkesian 1975; Brewer 1975; Hedlund 2019; Thompson et al., 2019). Second, education functions as a channel of *normative socialization*, facilitating subjective civilian control by promoting democratic values through sustained exposure to civilian academic culture (Janowitz 1960; Snider et al. 2001; Frič & Pernica 2024). Third, education plays a role in institutional governance and control, particularly when civilian authorities or academic institutions participate in curriculum design, accreditation, and quality assurance (Ackroyd 1991; Mukherjee 2018). From an institutionalist perspective, this third function may be more consequential for civilian control than socialization itself, especially where military organizations retain significant autonomy over careers and

educational governance. Although these functions are not mutually exclusive, concrete educational arrangements tend to privilege particular logics depending on career incentives, organizational interests, and political contexts.

Comparative evidence underscores this variation. In the United States, the number of officers obtaining graduate degrees in civilian universities has long exceeded those trained exclusively in Department of Defense institutions (Brewer, 1975; Goldman et al., 2024), suggesting a strong and persistent emphasis on credentialization alongside professional development. A recent comprehensive review of the DoD PME system confirmed that civilian academic institutions can support aspects of officer education but—without structural adjustments—will not meet the full range of PME needs, reinforcing the view that military and civilian educational logics remain institutionally distinct even in the most academized context (Goldman et al., 2024). Military education in India focuses primarily on training and operations, with civilians exerting minimal influence (Mukherjee 2018). In Turkey, following the failed coup of 2016, military education became more centralized, deepening internal integration without improving civilian oversight (Ateş 2024). In the Czech Republic, by contrast, the integration of military and civilian educational spaces exposed the armed forces to broader political polarization, producing unintended and ambivalent effects (Frič & Pernica 2024). These cases illustrate that the same institutional form—military officers in civilian academic environments—can operate under very different logics and produce very different outcomes depending on the organizational and political conditions in which it is embedded.

In unconsolidated or transitional democracies, the relationship between education and civilian control is further complicated by persistent reserved domains and legacies of military autonomy (Valenzuela 1992; Serra 2010; Pion-Berlin & Martínez 2017). Even where armed forces formally accept civilian supremacy, they often retain control over doctrine, promotions, and education, limiting the penetration of civilian oversight and academic culture into military governance (Ackroyd 1991; Mukherjee 2018). Under

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4 such conditions, educational initiatives are likely to generate symbolic or incremental
5 effects without transforming the internal logic of military authority—a pattern
6 consistent with institutional and principal-agent approaches to civilian control.
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10 Political polarization adds a further constraint. When civilian academic spaces are
11 perceived as ideologically charged, military participants tend to manage interactions
12 cautiously and compartmentally, avoiding confrontational dynamics rather than
13 engaging in the kind of open normative exchange that socialization requires. Recent
14 evidence from Brazil and elsewhere suggests that polarization can turn university–
15 military cooperation into contested terrain, where educational exchange coexists with
16 institutional suspicion and strategic self-presentation (Frič & Pernica 2024; Piazza &
17 Landy 2025). In such contexts, education functions more as a resource for individual
18 professional trajectories than as a lever for collective institutional change. The
19 combination of advanced career stage, voluntary participation, entrenched military
20 autonomy, and political polarization therefore generates a strong prior expectation that
21 credentialization will prevail—and that normative socialization and institutional control
22 will remain limited. The Brazilian case, which is examined in the following sections, is
23 designed to test this expectation.
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41 **The Brazilian Context: Military Education, Autonomy, and Polarization**

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43 Brazil's civil–military relations are shaped by a paradox familiar to students of
44 transitional democracies: formal civilian supremacy coexisting with persistent military
45 autonomy in key institutional domains. This paradox has deep historical roots. Between
46 1964 and 1985, Brazil was governed by a military regime that not only exercised
47 executive power but also reorganized the state's institutional architecture in ways that
48 outlasted its own rule. The democratic constitution of 1988 formally established civilian
49 supremacy and subordinated the armed forces to elected authority. Yet it also preserved
50 significant military prerogatives, including institutional control over doctrine,
51 promotions, and education—domains in which civilian oversight has remained absent
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even decades after the transition (Valenzuela 1992; Pion-Berlin & Martínez 2017). In Brazil, as in several other post-authoritarian cases in Latin America, democratization led to the establishment of civilian governments but did not result in complete civilian control.

The institutional limits of that control are particularly visible in the area of military education. For most of Brazil's post-authoritarian period, the three military services operated without a unified civilian ministry; each branch reported directly to its own military minister, a general or admiral, rather than to a civilian political authority. The Ministry of Defense was established only in 1999—fourteen years after the democratic transition—and even then, the armed forces retained full autonomy over internal governance, professional development, and educational management. Civilian participation in curriculum design, faculty recruitment, or program evaluation within military institutions has remained limited, especially when compared to consolidated democracies where civilian academics and government officials play more direct roles in shaping military education (Mukherjee 2018; Hedlund 2019).

Within this framework, the Brazilian Army's education is organized around a structured career continuum that governs the professional development of officers from entry to senior command. Initial officer formation takes place at the Military Academy of Agulhas Negras (AMAN), roughly analogous to West Point in the United States. Mid-career professional schooling is provided through the School for the Enhancement of Officers (ESAO). Advanced preparation for senior command is concentrated at the Command and General Staff School (ECEME), comparable to the U.S. Army War College or the British Staff College, whose completion is directly linked to promotion thresholds. All three institutions are embedded within the army's organizational hierarchy, governed by its internal career logic, and subject to its accreditation and curricular authority (Oliveira 2019; Author 2025). In recent decades, the army has sought to align these programs with national civilian academic standards—a process known as academization—but this reform has been largely self-directed, reinforcing

professional credentials without transferring educational authority to civilian institutions.

The political environment of the 2010s and early 2020s intensified these tensions considerably. Brazil experienced a sharp rise in political polarization during the Bolsonaro administration (2019–2022), which was distinguished by an unusually high concentration of military officers in government: at its peak, over six thousand active and retired military personnel occupied positions across federal ministries and state-owned enterprises, and the four most senior cabinet roles—vice president, chief of staff, and two key ministries—were held by generals (Piazza & Landy 2025). This blurring of the civilian–military boundary was followed by a crisis of democratic legitimacy: after losing the 2022 presidential election, Bolsonaro and allied figures—including active and retired military officers—promoted claims of electoral fraud, and, on January 8, 2023, supporters stormed and vandalized the presidential palace, Congress, and the Supreme Court. The involvement of military personnel in these events placed the institutional relationship between the armed forces and democratic governance under unprecedented scrutiny. For the dynamics of university–military partnerships specifically, this political climate rendered interactions between officers and civilian academics more symbolically charged, politically sensitive, and cautious than might otherwise be the case.

It is within this institutional and political context that the CMS–PPGEEI partnership must be understood. Established in 2015, the arrangement links the Brazilian Army's Southern Military Command (*Comando Militar do Sul*—CMS), headquartered in Porto Alegre and responsible for military operations across Brazil's three southernmost states, with the Graduate Program in International Strategic Studies (PPGEEI) at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)—one of Brazil's leading public research universities. Through a Special Call for Military Officers (*Editais Especial para Militares*—EEM), a limited number of active-duty officers at intermediate and senior career stages—predominantly captains and lieutenant colonels—gain access to

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4 accredited master's and doctoral programs in a fully civilian academic environment,
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6 outside the army's educational system. Admission is competitive and governed by the
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8 university's own academic criteria; once enrolled, participants remain on active duty and
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10 embedded in the army's career structure while pursuing degrees under civilian faculty
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12 supervision and subject to national higher education regulations.
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14 This arrangement is structurally distinct from other forms of civilian–military
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16 educational cooperation. It does not embed civilian professors within military
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18 institutions, nor does it bring military programs under civilian curricular authority.
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20 Rather, it opens a channel through which officers voluntarily enter a civilian academic
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22 space—on the university's terms, not the army's. Participation is elective and career-
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24 supplementary: the EEM does not replace any mandatory element of the formal career
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26 ladder, and officers enroll primarily in pursuit of externally accredited credentials that
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28 the army's own institutions do not offer. The program has graduated more than ten
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30 officers since its establishment, remaining small in scale and bounded in institutional
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32 scope.
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34 Taken together, these features configure a setting that is analytically well-suited to
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36 testing the competing logics developed in the previous section. The persistence of
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38 military autonomy over careers and educational governance, the voluntary and
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40 credential-driven character of participation, and a polarized political climate that
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42 discourages open normative exchange all generate a structural expectation that
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44 credentialization will prevail. At the same time, the case offers conditions that should,
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46 under a Janowitzian perspective, be conducive to socialization: officers spend extended
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48 periods in an autonomous civilian academic environment, engage with civilian peers
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50 and faculty, and are formally subject to civilian academic standards. That
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52 credentialization nonetheless predominates—as the empirical analysis demonstrates—
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54 and highlights the limits of education as an instrument of civilian control when
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56 institutional autonomy and career incentives point in a different direction.
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Research Design and Methods

This article adopts a qualitative case study design to examine how the insertion of military officers into a civilian graduate program affects civil–military relations at the institutional level. The objective is analytical inference rather than statistical generalization: to assess which of the competing theoretical logics—credentialization, normative socialization, or institutional control—best accounts for the observed patterns in the Brazilian case. A single-case design is appropriate here because the CMS–PPGEEI partnership constitutes a bounded and clearly identifiable institutional configuration that allows the three logics to be distinguished and evaluated against a controlled empirical setting.

Data and Sample

The empirical material combines two sources: an exploratory survey and semi-structured interviews. Together, they enable cross-validation between structured perceptual data and in-depth qualitative accounts and allow systematic comparison across the five institutional groups involved in the partnership.

The survey yielded 37 valid responses distributed across three groups: 27 civilian students, 4 military students, and 4 faculty members. This distribution reflects both the demographic composition of the program and the limited number of officers admitted through the Special Call (*Edital Especial para Militares*—EEM) in each cohort. The four military respondents were active-duty officers at intermediate and senior career stages, holding ranks between captain and lieutenant colonel—a profile consistent with the program's typical participant. This career stage is analytically significant: at this point in a military career, professional identities are already consolidated and institutional loyalties firmly embedded, making voluntary participation in graduate education more plausibly career-instrumental than socialization-driven. Due to the limited number of military respondents, we report the findings from this group in absolute numbers instead of percentages to prevent overstating trends.

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with two distinct groups. The first comprised two academic stakeholders, anonymized to preserve institutional candor, including one former academic supervisor of the program. The second comprised three retired senior officers with direct institutional links to the CMS: Colonel Mario Andreuzza (ret.), Colonel Antonio Moura (ret.), and General Hamilton Mourão (ret.), former Commander of the CMS, former Vice President of Brazil (2019–2022), and currently a senator. As the officer who held command authority over the CMS at the time the partnership was established, General Mourão is the single most institutionally relevant source for understanding the organizational motivations behind the initiative. His subsequent political trajectory—from military command through the vice presidency under the Bolsonaro administration—also illustrates, in concentrated form, the broader interface between military credentialization and political positioning that the article theorizes. The retired officers were interviewed in their identifiable institutional capacity, given their public roles and formal involvement in the program, while civilian stakeholders demanded anonymity. This asymmetry in disclosure is itself analytically relevant: while university actors expressed concerns about exposure and opted for confidentiality, and students preferred anonymity due to the politically sensitive nature of the topic, CMS officers—accustomed to hierarchical visibility and institutional representation—saw no need for anonymization. The varying perspectives on public identification reflect enduring imbalances of authority, visibility, and institutional confidence between academic and military domains, which are central to the broader dynamics of civil–military relations in Brazil.

Because admission to the EEM is selective and institutionally endorsed, the sample reflects individuals already filtered by professional qualification and organizational approval. This introduces a degree of self-selection bias: participants are likely to be more favorably disposed toward civilian academic engagement than the broader officer population. This does not invalidate the findings—if credentialization prevails even among self-selected, positively oriented participants, the theoretical argument is

strengthened rather than weakened—but it reinforces the exploratory character of the study and cautions against strong generalization.

Analytical Strategy

Data collection and analysis were organized around three dimensions derived from the theoretical framework: expectations and motivations for participation; patterns of classroom interaction and perceived tensions within the academic environment; and perceived institutional effects on civil–military relations. These dimensions correspond directly to the three analytical logics under examination—credentialization, normative socialization, and institutional control—and provide a structured basis for comparing perceptions systematically across groups.

Survey responses were coded according to these dimensions and disaggregated by institutional group. Interview transcripts were coded using the same analytical categories, enabling cross-validation between structured and qualitative data. Rather than presenting isolated quotations, the analysis first identifies patterns within and across groups before using selected excerpts to illustrate or nuance those patterns. This approach reduces anecdotal bias and supports systematic assessment of which logic predominates across different participant perspectives.

The main empirical trends across all five groups are summarized in Table 1, which presents a comparative overview of motivations, interaction patterns, and perceived institutional effects. The table serves as a synthetic analytical map linking empirical observations to the three theoretical logics developed in Section 2 and is discussed in detail in the findings section that follows.

Table 1

Perceptions of the CMS–PPGEEI Partnership by Institutional Group: Motivations, Interactions, and Institutional Effects

Group	Primary Motivation	Classroom Interaction	Perceived Effect on CMR	Dominant Logic
Military	Career	Pragmatic,	Personal enrichment; no	Credentialization

Group	Primary Motivation	Classroom Interaction	Perceived Effect on CMR	Dominant Logic
Students (N=4)	advancement; credential acquisition	cautious; politically managed	institutional change	
Civilian Students (N=27)	Academic diversity; curiosity about military presence	Cooperative but politically sensitive	Symbolic dialogue; no structural change	Symbolic integration (credentialization context)
Faculty Members (N=4)	Institutional cooperation; academic pluralism	Professional; occasional tension	Marginal effect; no governance shift	Limited institutional control
Academic Stakeholders (N=2)	Institutional partnership; academic outreach	Structured and regulated by academic norms	No alteration in authority structures or culture	Credentialization
Senior Officers (N=3)	Professional development; strategic exposure	Respectful but compartmentalized	Enhanced professional profile; autonomy intact	Credentialization

Note. Dominant logic categories are derived from the analytical framework developed in Section 2 (credentialization, normative socialization, and institutional control). “Symbolic integration” denotes a pattern in which interaction generates cooperative dialogue without producing normative convergence or structural transformation. CMR = civil–military relations.

Scope and Limitations

The study's scope involves three explicit constraints that bear on the interpretation and transferability of findings. First, the small sample—37 survey respondents, of whom only four are military officers—limits statistical inference and reinforces the exploratory character of the analysis. The low number of military respondents reflects the limited scale of the program itself, which has graduated approximately ten officers since 2015, but it nonetheless restricts the analytical weight that can be placed on any single perceptual pattern within that group.

Second, the study examines officers at intermediate and senior career stages whose participation is voluntary and career-instrumental. The findings therefore do not speak to the socialization effects of PME at earlier stages—such as initial officer formation at

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4 AMAN or mandatory mid-career schooling at ESAO—where normative influence may
5 operate differently and where structural conditions for value change are more plausible.
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7 Readers should be cautious about extending these findings to the full PME continuum.
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10 Third, the case is confined to a single army program within a single regional command.
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12 While the Southern Military Command is one of the largest within the Brazilian Army
13 and UFRGS is a nationally recognized research university, the dynamics of this
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15 partnership may not replicate across other military commands, service branches, or
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17 civilian institutions with different political or academic cultures.
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20 Within these constraints, the case supports analytical generalization: the argument that
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22 credentialization tends to prevail over normative socialization and institutional control
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24 in settings characterized by entrenched military autonomy, voluntary participation, and
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26 career-driven incentives can be extended theoretically to comparable contexts.
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28 Statistical generalization requires additional evidence beyond the scope of this study,
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30 whether it applies to the Brazilian military as a whole or to other national cases.
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35 **Findings: Credentialization without Normative Socialization**

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37 The empirical findings are organized around three analytical dimensions derived from
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39 the theoretical framework: expectations and motivations for participation, patterns of
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41 classroom interaction and perceived tensions, and perceived institutional effects on
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43 civil–military relations. Table 1 above summarizes the dominant patterns across all five
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45 institutional groups. Across all three dimensions, the evidence points consistently in the
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47 same direction: while interaction and dialogue occur, the logic that prevails is
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49 credentialization rather than normative socialization or institutional control. The
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51 subsections that follow detail the evidence underlying each dimension.
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55 ***Expectations and Motivations***

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Across groups, expectations regarding participation varied in emphasis but converged around professional and institutional benefits rather than normative transformation. The clearest expression of this pattern came from military participants.

Among military students (N=4), career advancement and credential acquisition were the dominant motivations. Respondents emphasized the value of a civilian graduate degree for competitive differentiation within the army's promotion system and access to higher education teaching: "Deepen knowledge of international relations and strategic studies"; "become qualified for higher education teaching" (Military student, survey, 2024). One respondent described the degree as "an asset that sets you apart in the selection process." Some articulated broader aspirations: one described hoping "to understand the viewpoints of the civilian academic community on international security issues [...] and how to build a shared vision between military and civilian sectors" (Military student, survey, 2024). Yet even these formulations remained framed in terms of professional enhancement rather than normative transformation. No military respondent framed participation as an opportunity to engage with civilian values or democratic norms.

Senior officers (N=3 interviews) reinforced this interpretation at the institutional level. They described the initiative primarily as an instrument of professional upgrading and strategic exposure. Andreuzza summarized the institutional expectation simply: "The expectation was to open minds" (Andreuzza, interview, 2024). Mourão framed the objective in terms of capacity-building: the program aimed to "build a critical mass of civilians who think about defense and security" (Mourão, interview, 2024). Civilian engagement was presented as institutionally useful — "The university is a key place for progress in civil–military relations" (Mourão, interview, 2024) — but not as a mechanism for strengthening civilian oversight or transferring educational authority. The persistence of military autonomy over career management and educational governance was treated as a given, not a variable that the program was expected to alter. This reading was corroborated from the civilian side: one academic stakeholder characterized the graduate title, from the military perspective, as "an ornament for R1

[first class reserve officers]" — a credential enhancing post-retirement status rather than a vehicle for institutional change (Interviewee 2, interview, 2024).

Among civilian students (N=27), motivations were markedly different but equally distant from questions of civilian control. The majority expressed intellectual curiosity about military participation and welcomed the diversity of perspectives it brought to classroom discussions. Fewer than a third, however, articulated any expectation that the program would reshape civil–military relations or democratize military culture. One respondent expressed their opinion directly: "I do not believe that the special call fulfills significant functions of democratic oversight over the armed forces, since the basis of military training, as far as I know, is totally insulated from civilian influence. To think of meaningful impact on military education, in particular, would sound somewhat naïve to me. At most, I believe it may broaden, for military officers, the complexity of their views of civilians regarding the international context, which is indeed positive" (Civilian student, survey, 2024). For most civilian participants, the presence of military officers was an enriching academic feature rather than an instrument of institutional transformation.

Faculty members (N=4) and academic stakeholders (N=2 interviews) similarly framed the partnership in terms of institutional cooperation and academic pluralism. Faculty respondents described the initiative as an opportunity for "the construction and consolidation of debates that involve the civic building of democracy" and expressed hope that "the PPGEI contributes to the intellectual development of military personnel so that they may become more socially conscious agents" (Faculty member, survey, 2024). Interviewee 1 articulated the broader institutional rationale: the EEM sought to capitalize on the "expertise of academia" and create "a two-way channel of communication between the armed forces and society" (Interviewee 1, interview, 2024). Interviewee 2, however, offered a more skeptical reading, arguing that military actors viewed the university primarily as a resource for legitimacy rather than as an epistemic partner: "The military thought it was great to have an institutional partnership, but when

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4 it came to research — with funding from their side — that was out of the question"
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6 (Interviewee 2, interview, 2024).
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8 Taken together, motivations across all groups align more closely with the logic of
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10 credentialization than with normative socialization or institutional control. Participation
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12 was interpreted as professionally and symbolically beneficial, but not as a mechanism
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14 for restructuring civil–military relations.
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18 ***Classroom Interaction, Polarization, and Tensions***
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20 The second dimension concerns patterns of interaction within the academic
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22 environment, particularly in a context shaped by national political polarization. A
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24 consistent pattern emerges across groups: interaction occurred and was generally
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26 described as professional and productive, but it remained bounded and
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28 compartmentalized—especially on topics touching the military's institutional role in
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30 politics.
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33 Military students described classroom dynamics as respectful and intellectually
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35 stimulating in most contexts. However, they consistently noted a degree of caution
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37 when discussions moved toward contemporary politics or the armed forces' relationship
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39 with democratic governance. One officer described this dynamic with notable self-
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41 awareness: "The political polarization in Brazil affected relationships, but I believe it
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43 did so indirectly. There was a concern not to express opinions that could generate
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45 controversy, especially because we, as military officers, are trained with a focus on
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47 discipline and respect for hierarchy. At no point was there direct conflict, but a certain
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49 caution in conversations could be perceived" (Military student, survey, 2024). This self-
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51 description captures precisely the logic of institutional self-preservation operating
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53 beneath the surface of professional engagement: exposure to civilian perspectives was
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55 welcomed; public expression of political positions was not. Rather than dissolving the
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57 boundaries of institutional identity, officers navigated the civilian academic space while
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59 actively preserving them.
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Civilian students reported largely cooperative relations with military peers but acknowledged considerable discomfort when debates touched upon politically sensitive issues. Several attributed this directly to the broader political conjuncture: "The proximity of the military to the Bolsonaro government made every comment made by a military student in the classroom be viewed with suspicion" (Civilian student, survey, 2024). Others described a more diffuse atmosphere of constraint: "The frequent association between military institutions and certain ideological political positions contributed to an atmosphere of tension and apprehension regarding freedom of expression [...] This did not prevent respectful coexistence, but it made some exchanges less spontaneous and more cautious" (Civilian student, survey, 2024). Despite this, there was no evidence of overt conflict or breakdown in academic exchange. The academic environment absorbed the political tensions of the broader context without being destabilized by them — but also without transforming them into genuine normative dialogue.

Faculty members and academic stakeholders offered a more institutional perspective. Professors characterized classroom dynamics as rigorous and within the normal parameters of academic debate. Polarization in the external political environment was acknowledged, but it was not reported to have produced systematic ideological clashes within the program. Academic stakeholders emphasized that interactions were structured by established curricular and evaluative procedures—and that these procedures governed military participants no differently from civilian ones.

The overall picture that emerges is one of professionally managed co-presence rather than transformative encounters. Interaction occurred but was shaped more by institutional self-protection and political caution than by genuine normative openness. As the theoretical framework predicts, exposure to diverse perspectives—absent the structural conditions for deeper engagement—does not produce sustained normative convergence.

Perceived Institutional Effects on Civil–Military Relations

The third dimension addresses whether participation in the UFRGS-CMS partnership produced perceived changes at the institutional level of civil–military relations. Across all groups, the answer was consistently negative: effects were described as personal, symbolic, and bounded rather than structural or transformative.

Military students characterized the program's impact in strictly individual terms. Participation enhanced personal competence and credentials but left the army's internal governance, promotion system, and doctrinal authority entirely unchanged. No respondent suggested that enrollment had reduced military autonomy, altered the locus of educational authority, or transferred meaningful oversight to the civilian institution. The program adhered to the university's academic standards, while the military's institutional logic remained undisturbed beyond that boundary.

Senior officers confirmed this assessment at the organizational level. While acknowledging the symbolic importance of engagement with a leading civilian research university, none mentioned that educational governance, career management, and strategic decision-making would change within the military structure. The partnership was described as an expression of institutional openness—not as a concession of authority. Mourão characterized the initiative as an instrument of connection rather than institutional concession: “The intertwining of the university and the armed forces is meant to foster thinking” (Mourão, interview, 2024). In his framing, the program builds bridges—but transfers nothing. Authority over careers, doctrine, and educational governance remained entirely within military channels.

Civilian students and faculty members reported similarly limited perceptions of structural change. The partnership was described, across multiple responses, as symbolically positive — a demonstration of institutional dialogue and mutual openness — but without measurable consequences for the distribution of authority between civilian and military institutions. There was no indication that the university had gained

any oversight role over military educational structures beyond the confines of its own academic program.

Academic stakeholders confirmed that the initiative had not altered the institutional balance. While UFRGS's academic standards governed the graduate program itself, the broader architecture of military education and professional advancement—promotions, curricula, and career trajectories—remained entirely within military control.

At this point, the convergence across groups is analytically significant. Even participants most favorably disposed toward the arrangement did not perceive structural change. One military student captured the distinction between individual and institutional affect with particular clarity: "Living with professors and civilian colleagues made me better understand the role of the public university and academic research. Before, I viewed the academic environment as something distant and overly theoretical, but today I recognize its importance for the country and for the formulation of defense policies" (Military student, survey, 2024). This is precisely the kind of individual cognitive enrichment that socialization theory predicts—yet it coexisted, in the same respondent, with the perception that the army's institutional authority, governance structures, and career logic remained entirely unchanged. It is this gap between individual enrichment and institutional continuity that the credentialization thesis explains. The initiative facilitated dialogue and personal professional advancement, but it did not modify the authority structures that define the terms of civil–military relations.

Summary of Findings

Assessed across all three dimensions, the empirical evidence consistently supports the hypothesis advanced in this article. The PPGEEI–CMS partnership operates primarily as a mechanism of credentialization: it enhances individual professional profiles, signals institutional openness, and generates dialogue—but it does not produce normative

convergence, alter authority structures, or extend civilian oversight into military educational governance.

Normative socialization exists to some extent. Interaction occurs, and some participants acknowledged that exposure to different perspectives was intellectually valuable. But socialization remained bounded, compartmentalized, and individual in its effects—far removed from the sustained normative transformation that Janowitzian perspectives predict. The partnership conferred no authority over the careers or educational governance of officers from the Southern Military Command, preserving the continued absence of institutional control.

These findings point to a broader pattern that the Brazilian case illustrates with particular clarity: in contexts marked by entrenched military autonomy, career-driven participation, and political polarization, academic integration and civilian control are likely to advance on parallel rather than converging tracks. Education may modernize and professionalize the officer corps—and this is not trivial or straightforward—but modernization is not the same as democratization of institutional authority.

Discussion: Credentialization, Socialization, and the Limits of Civilian Control

The empirical findings allow a more precise assessment of how the three competing theoretical logics—credentialization, normative socialization, and institutional control—operate in the Brazilian case and what that operation implies for the broader literature on professional military education and civilian control.

The Janowitzian prediction fares poorly here, but not because socialization is absent. Interaction occurs, civilian perspectives are engaged, and participants across groups describe the academic environment as intellectually enriching. What is missing is the sustained normative transformation that the theory requires: a reshaping of political dispositions, a reduction of institutional distance, or a reorientation of military identity toward democratic civilian values. Instead, military participants engage with civilian academia in a professionally managed and institutionally bounded way — appreciating

the intellectual content while carefully preserving the organizational identity that defines their careers. The parallel tracks of academic engagement and institutional self-preservation do not merge; they run alongside each other.

This pattern is precisely what institutional and principal–agent approaches would predict. The key insight from Feaver (2003), Cohen (2002), and Avant (1994, 2005) is that civilian control depends on authority structures, incentives, and oversight mechanisms, rather than the cultural convergence that education might produce. In the Brazilian case, none of these structural conditions changed as a result of the partnership. The army retained full authority over promotions, doctrine, and educational governance. The university exercised authority only within its own academic program. The Ministry of Defense, the constitutional locus of civilian oversight, played no role in the arrangement. Civilian academic standards applied inside the classroom; military institutional logic governed everything outside it.

The findings also clarify an important distinction that the literature sometimes elides: academization and civilianization are not the same process. The Brazilian Army has pursued a substantial program of academization—aligning its educational credentials with civilian academic standards, seeking external accreditation, and integrating officers into civilian graduate programs. But academization, as this case demonstrates, can proceed without civilianization—without any transfer of authority, any expansion of civilian oversight, or any meaningful penetration of civilian governance into military institutional domains. Officers emerge from the program with enhanced credentials and broader intellectual horizons; the institutional architecture of civil–military relations remains unchanged. This is not a failure of the program—it was designed without altering that architecture—but it is a consequential finding for how such initiatives are understood and evaluated.

The conditional character of socialization effects deserves particular emphasis. Rather than rejecting socialization theory, the findings suggest that its effects are structurally dependent. Normative convergence may be more plausible where civilian institutions

exercise shared governance over military education, where participation spans multiple career stages and begins at the point of primary identity formation, or where the political environment supports rather than penalizes open normative exchange. In the Brazilian case, none of these conditions are present: governance remains military, participation is senior-stage and elective, and the political environment of the study period was marked by acute polarization. Under these conditions, credentialization is not merely the observed outcome—it is the structurally expected one.

This conditional reading has implications for policy as well as theory. Civilian graduate education for military officers is often justified—implicitly or explicitly—on the grounds that it strengthens democratic values and supports civilian control. The Brazilian case suggests that this justification requires more careful qualification. Such programs can modernize military education, enhance professional competence, and generate symbolic forms of institutional cooperation. These are not negligible achievements. But they are different from strengthening civilian control, and conflating them risks both overstating the democratic effects of academic integration and understating the persistence of military autonomy in contexts where it remains structurally entrenched.

Conclusion

This article sets out to examine a deceptively simple question: when military officers enroll in civilian graduate programs, does the experience strengthen civilian control? The answer, drawing on a specific case study in Brazil, is nuanced but clear. Academic integration can coexist with—and leave undisturbed—the institutional autonomy that defines the boundaries of civil–military relations. Education professionalizes; it does not necessarily democratize authority.

The three analytical logics developed in this article—credentialization, normative socialization, and institutional control—provide a framework for understanding why. In the PPGEI–CMS case, credentialization predominates because the structural

conditions that would make the other two logics prevail are absent. Military authority over careers and educational governance is intact. Participation is voluntary and career-driven. The political environment encourages compartmentalization rather than normative openness. Under these conditions, officers engage with civilian academia instrumentally—acquiring credentials, building networks, and broadening strategic perspectives—without the encounter reshaping either their institutional identities or the authority relations that govern civil–military relations.

These findings carry implications beyond Brazil. In many democracies—consolidated and transitional alike—civilian graduate education for military officers is expanding, often accompanied by assumptions about its democratizing effects. This article suggests that those assumptions are warranted only under specific structural conditions: shared governance over educational content, participation at formative career stages, and a political environment that supports genuine normative exchange. Where these conditions are absent, academic integration is more likely to reinforce professionalization than to extend civilian control.

Several avenues for future research follow from these findings. Longitudinal studies tracking how participation in civilian graduate programs affects career trajectories, promotion outcomes, and institutional behavior over time would help assess whether the absence of short-term normative effects masks longer-term change. A comparative analysis of similar arrangements across different military branches, national contexts, and political environments would clarify the conditions under which credentialization gives way to deeper forms of institutional transformation. Particular attention to career stage—comparing the effects of civilian academic exposure at initial formation versus senior career levels—would directly test the theoretical claim about the structural dependence of socialization effects that this article advances.

In contemporary democracies navigating political polarization and renewed civil–military tensions, the question of what education can and cannot accomplish is not merely academic. Understanding when and how educational integration reshapes civil–

military relations requires attention not only to interaction and exposure but also to the institutional structures that govern power—and to the career incentives that determine why officers enter civilian classrooms in the first place.

Data Availability Statement

The data that supports the findings of this study—survey responses and interview transcripts—is not publicly available due to ethical and confidentiality constraints governing the conditions under which participants consented to participate. Anonymized aggregate findings are reported in the text. Requests for further information may be directed to the corresponding author.

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