

# Lessons in the Dragon's Lair

## The People's Liberation Army's Professional Military Education Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean

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### Abstract

The People's Liberation Army's (PLA) engagement in professional military education (PME) with Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries has experienced significant growth in terms of participants, course offerings, and subject matter. This expansion can be attributed to China's security cooperation policy, increased investment, and evolving political dynamics in the region. By analyzing government publications from China, the United States, and LAC countries, along with secondary sources on security cooperation, and theses of Latin American officers who studied at PLA academic institutions, this article aims to examine the development of China's PME efforts in the region, identify emerging trends, assess their effectiveness, and consider the implications. While existing research on Chinese security cooperation in LAC primarily focuses on areas such as military sales, equipment donations, exercises, and key leader engagements, this article sheds light on the often-overlooked field of PME, which has seen significant attention from China.

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Despite professional military education (PME) engagements constituting one method “where China has been most aggressive” in enhancing security cooperation, research on China's efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has predominantly focused on other aspects such as foreign military sales, equipment donations, exercises, and key leader engagements, rather than PME.<sup>1</sup> PME encompasses “a progressive education system that prepares leaders for increased responsibilities and successful performance at the next higher level by developing the key knowledge, skills, and attributes they require to operate successfully at that level in any environment.” This includes personnel exchanges and training at military academic institutions.<sup>2</sup> This article analyzes the progression of the People's Liberation Army PME efforts

<sup>1</sup> Jason H. Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests in Latin America and the Caribbean in the Context of Adversary Activities in the Region* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022), 45 and 116, <http://www.rand.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> Army Regulation 350-1: *Army Training and Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2017), 235, <https://usacac.army.mil/>.

in this LAC region, identifying trends, assessing effectiveness, and exploring potential implications.

While China has consistently donated military equipment throughout the region, these efforts have generally fallen short in advancing technical interoperability. The equipment provided often proved to be initially inoperable or quickly became so due to issues of poor quality, logistical challenges, and Chinese failures to provide necessary training and maintenance. Furthermore, there have been limited opportunities to employ this equipment in bilateral exercises. In contrast, PME holds the potential to enhance human and procedural interoperability through relationship-building and the sharing of doctrines. It also facilitates the establishment of enduring placements and access through personal associations. In terms of the Ladder of Military Cooperation, PME is an efficient means to advance partnerships, as it is a confidence-building measure (Stage 1) through academic engagement, justifies mechanisms of regular consultations (Stage 2) to establish and renew exchanges, and enables military-technical cooperation/personnel exchanges (Stage 3) (see fig. 1).<sup>3</sup>

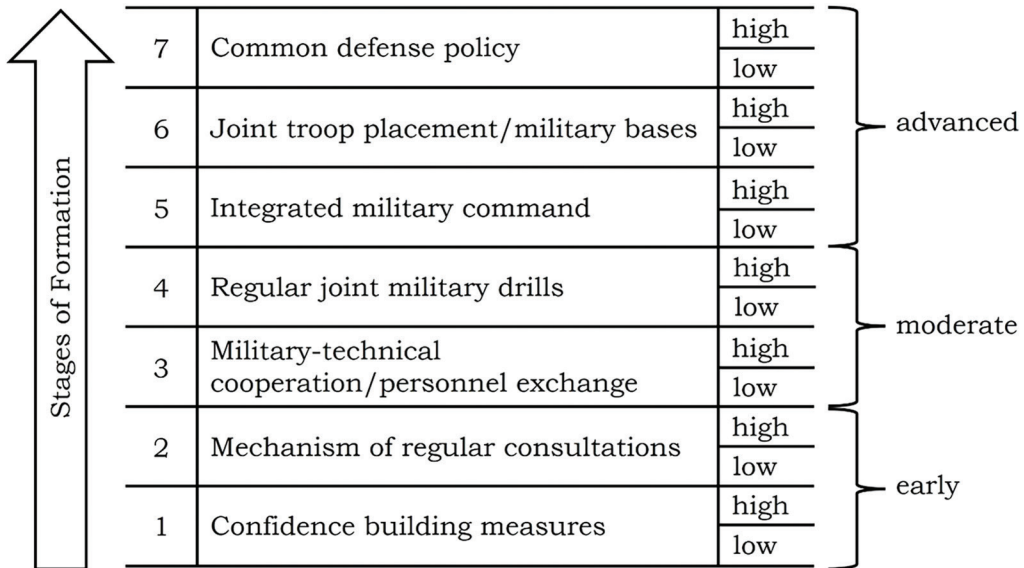
China's PME outreach in the region is much stronger than in years past. This is largely due to investments in PME programs and expansion of Spanish-language capabilities.<sup>4</sup> This topic is a noted intelligence gap as smaller embassies "are not staffed to closely track and evaluate Chinese and other adversary outreach through programs like PME exchanges, so they may not even be aware of the shift in relative participation and influence."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Korolev, "How closely aligned are China and Russia? Measuring strategic cooperation in IR," *International Politics* 57 [2020], 768, <https://doi.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 116.



**Figure 1. Ladder of military cooperation.** (Source: Alexander Korolev, “How closely aligned are China and Russia? Measuring strategic cooperation in IR,” *International Politics* 57 [2020], 768, [https://doi.org/.](https://doi.org/))

How has the PLA’s professional military education with Latin America and the Caribbean evolved since 2000? This study demonstrates the growth and broadening of the PLA’s PME relationship with LAC countries in terms of participants, courses, and subject matter. This expansion can be attributed to Chinese security cooperation policy and priorities, increased Chinese investment, and political changes in LAC. This article comprises several sections that delve into different aspects of the topic.

First, the article investigates Chinese defense policy on LAC and formal bilateral agreements, aiming to understand how PME factors into Chinese strategic approaches to achieve national priorities in the region. Next, the focus shifts to examining the participants involved in PME engagements, encompassing countries, overall numbers, ranks, and occupational specialties. Then, the article explores the content of PME, analyzing the courses offered and the academic institutions involved. This analysis seeks to uncover the focus areas, identify any omitted topics, and explore potential implications. Next, the discussion centers on funding sources for bilateral PME engagements and examines the returns on investment for China. Lastly, the conclusion presents potential implications of Chinese PME efforts in the region and outlines areas for further research.

## Chinese Policy and Formal Agreements

Chinese policy documents and white papers prioritize the use of PME to strengthen defense ties with LAC countries. The expansion of the PLA's PME engagements has been facilitated by an increasing number of formal bilateral agreements. China's first policy paper on LAC published in 2008 emphasized that "the One China principle is the political basis for the establishment and development of relations" with LAC countries.<sup>6</sup> This principle not only affects political and economic relations but also extends to military relations, explaining the absence of Chinese PME exchanges with countries such as Paraguay that still recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation. Notably, China's "PME outreach and professional exchanges reach every LAC country that officially recognizes Beijing."<sup>7</sup>

The evolving political dynamics in the region and the increasing alignment of more countries with Beijing on the One China principle have resulted in the expansion of China's PME influence, facilitated by the emergence of new bilateral agreements. The 2008 policy paper expressed the intention to actively engage in military exchanges, defense dialogues, and cooperation with LAC countries, stipulating that China would "actively carry out military exchanges and defense dialogue and cooperation" and that "personnel exchanges will be enhanced" and "professional exchanges in military training, personnel training and peacekeeping will be deepened."<sup>8</sup>

China's second policy paper on LAC, published in 2016, reiterated and expanded upon the content of the first policy paper. It emphasized military exchanges and security cooperation activities as means to strengthen defense ties.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the document listed UN peacekeeping and cooperation in humanitarian relief as areas for exchanges, which subsequently witnessed increased PME engagements in the following years.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *China's Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean* (Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 20 April 2009), part IV, sec. 4, para. 1–3, <https://china.usc.edu/>.

<sup>7</sup> Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 5th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 298, as paraphrased in Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 45. Seven of the thirteen countries in the world that still recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation are in LAC: Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

<sup>8</sup> *China's Policy Paper*, part IV, sec. 4, para. 1–3.

<sup>9</sup> *China's Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean* (Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 24 November 2016), part IV, sec. 6, para. 1, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

<sup>10</sup> The policy paper was published on 24 November 2016, in the wake of the Battle of Juba in South Sudan (7–11 July 2016), for which Chinese peacekeepers were criticized for allegedly abandoning their posts. The LAC region has a variety of peacekeeping educational and certification centers operated by military units, which also emphasize joint operations—a priority for the People's Liberation Army since the 1990s. On this,

Three white papers published by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and one by the Ministry of National Defense of the PRC also mentioned the region and provided some additional insights into the intended role and application of PME. *China's National Defense in 2010* explained that "China conducts military exchanges with developing countries in . . . Latin America," and that "China continues to host workshops for senior officers from countries in Latin America [and] the Caribbean."<sup>11</sup> *China's Military Strategy* (2015) simply stated that China will "continue the traditional friendly military ties with . . . Latin American . . . counterparts."<sup>12</sup> *China's National Defense in the New Era* (2019) mentioned aspects of PME and highlights that "China is strengthening military exchanges with developing countries in . . . Latin America [and] the Caribbean . . . by carrying out personnel training, conducting exchanges between mid- and junior-level officers, and providing assistance in military development and defense capabilities."<sup>13</sup> *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* (2021) described PME in relation to the PLA's contributions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. It highlighted demining assistance in Latin American countries through training courses, the PRC's equivalent of mobile training teams, and the donation of demining equipment.<sup>14</sup> While the white papers did not establish policy for the region, they illustrated some ways in which China has operationalized policy guidance regarding PME.

Over the past two decades, China has gradually established formal agreements that incorporate PME with several LAC countries. One approach China has employed to advance PME in this region is through bilateral defense cooperation agreements (DCA). These are "formal agreements [that] establish broad defense-oriented legal frameworks between signatories, facilitating cooperation in . . . fundamental areas," including military education.<sup>15</sup>

China has signed a series of military agreements with Venezuela under the Maduro regime, historically focused on science, technology, and research and de-

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see Edmund J. Burke et al., *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts* (RAND Corporation: Santa Monica, CA, 2020), 5–6, <https://www.rand.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> *China's National Defense in 2010* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2011), <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/>.

<sup>12</sup> *China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2015), <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/>.

<sup>13</sup> *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Beijing: Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019), <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/>.

<sup>14</sup> *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2021), <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/>.

<sup>15</sup> Brandon J. Kinne, "Defense Cooperation Agreements and the Emergence of a Global Security Network," *International Organization* 72, no. 4 (Fall 2018), 799, <https://doi.org/>.

velopment. In 2015, military leaders of both countries convened in Caracas to review existing agreements and explore the potential of “expanding military cooperation beyond the technical field, to include education.”<sup>16</sup> As part of the defense talks, a visit to the Venezuelan Military University took place, emphasizing the significance of military education.<sup>17</sup>

Military education also took center stage in China’s DCA with Bolivia, signed in 2016. During the agreement signing, Bolivia’s minister of defense highlighted China’s military support to Bolivia’s armed forces, particularly grants to attend military institutes.<sup>18</sup> Uruguay, in late 2022, became the most recent LAC country to ratify a DCA with China. The agreement lists various methods of cooperation, including the exchange of instructors and students from military institutions.<sup>19</sup> DCAs and bilateral defense talks serve as foundations for long-term PME relationships and necessitate additional agreements to codify conditions for PME exchanges and training.

Among relevant formal agreements, there are arrangements between Chinese and LAC military academic institutions that specifically address PME, albeit with narrower scopes. For instance, the PLA National Defense University (NDU) has “contacts with over 140 foreign militaries [and] maintains regular interactions and cooperation with prominent military academic institutions in over ten countries. The PLA NDU has also signed formal interuniversity exchange and cooperation memos with foreign military academic institution[s], including the National Defense University of the United States.”<sup>20</sup> These arrangements generally specify numbers and ranks of military students, list courses in which they enroll, outline funding sources, and specify the duration of the agreement.

An example of such an arrangement exists between the National Defense University of Argentina and the PLA NDU. This arrangement involves a “strategic cooperation program” with China, which includes a course on Argentina-China

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<sup>16</sup> Li Yan, “China, Venezuela to bolster military, technical cooperation,” *Chinanews.com*, 18 April 2015, <http://www.ecns.cn/>.

<sup>17</sup> Li, “China, Venezuela to bolster military, technical cooperation.”

<sup>18</sup> Carlos E. Hernández, “Bolivia y China firman un nuevo acuerdo de cooperación bilateral en materia militar [Bolivia and China sign a new bilateral defense cooperation agreement],” *infodefensa.com*, 13 January 2017, <https://www.infodefensa.com/>.

<sup>19</sup> “Acuerdo entre el Ministerio de Defensa Nacional de la República Oriental del Uruguay y el Ministerio de Defensa Nacional de la República Popular China sobre Cooperación en Materia de Defensa [Agreement between the Ministry of National Defense of Uruguay and the Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China in the Matter of Defense Cooperation],” written 2 September 2019, Montevideo, Uruguay, Article 3(d), <https://www.gub.uy/>.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Allen and Mingzhi Chen, *The People’s Liberation Army’s 37 Academic Institutions* (Maxwell AFB, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 2020), 40.



cooperation. The enrollment in this course doubled in 2020 compared to the previous year.<sup>21</sup> In addition, “China has received students from the program on visits to China and, reciprocally, has sent its own staff to attend courses at the institution in Argentina.”<sup>22</sup>

The details of these arrangements are rarely publicly accessible, which limits our understanding of the parameters, funding, and intent behind China’s PME efforts. However, occasional mentions of bilateral PME engagements by Chinese and LAC governments, along with insights from other government reports and documents, offer glimpses into the nature of some of these bilateral relationships and help us understand how they have evolved.<sup>23</sup>

### PME Participants

In terms of the sheer number of LAC participants in Chinese PME and vice versa, increasing values reflect greater Chinese investment and prioritization since the PRC’s 2008 policy paper. While China had conducted some PME exchanges with LAC countries before that period, there is limited information available in government-released articles highlighting specific engagements. The PLA National Defense University had the most active program in the 1990s, receiving field grade officers (major to colonel ranks) from over 40 countries, including some from LAC.<sup>24</sup> Chile began sending officers to the school in 1997 but does not currently conduct this exchange, while Uruguayan officers began attending in 2009, around the same time when a broader range of students from across LAC started participating.<sup>25</sup> It appears that DCAs have served as catalysts enabling the establishment and expansion of Chinese PME efforts in the region, with many agreements being signed after China’s 2008 policy paper.

Brazil’s National Defense White Papers from 2012 and 2016 provide useful insights into the number of Brazilian Army personnel participating in military education abroad and foreign army personnel attending military education in

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<sup>21</sup> Evan Ellis, “Nuevas direcciones en la profundización del compromiso chino-argentino [New directions in the deepening of the Chinese-Argentine commitment],” *Diálogo Américas*, 30 July 2021, <https://dialogo-americas.com/>.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, “La profundización del compromiso chino-argentino.”

<sup>23</sup> *Chinanews.com* regularly publishes articles on bilateral engagements with LAC countries. Details sometimes include numbers and ranks of personnel involved, training or discussion topics, locations, and future plans.

<sup>24</sup> Xu Zhonglin, “Un lugar de encanto excepcional [A place of exceptional charm],” *Chinatoday*, November 2002, <http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/>; and Antonio Graceffo, “La diplomacia de la defensa: La nueva arma de Beijing para ampliar su influencia en América Latina [Defense diplomacy: Beijing’s new weapon to expand its influence in Latin America],” *Epoch Times*, 16 December 2021, <https://es.theepochtimes.com/>.

<sup>25</sup> Graceffo, “La diplomacia de la defensa.”

Brazil. Such figures for most countries are often challenging to find in the public domain. Between 2001 and 2011, there were 70 US Army personnel in military education programs in Brazil, compared to six PLA personnel in Brazil, resulting in a ratio of 12:1.<sup>26</sup> During the same timeframe, Brazilian Army personnel in military education programs in the US totaled 171, while there were only seven in China, resulting in a ratio of 24:1.<sup>27</sup> In 2015, Brazilian Army military education programs hosted three US Army personnel, compared to five PLA personnel.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, 38 Brazilian Army personnel studied in US military education institutions that year, whereas only four studied in China.<sup>29</sup> The overwhelmingly strong bilateral relationship with the United States is closely tied to the longstanding practice of annual Army-to-Army Staff Talks, which began in 1984. These talks establish successive engagements and codify the number of slots open to each partner for various courses. Brazil's increased engagement with China, as indicated by the numbers from 2015, is also indicative of the PLA operationalizing policies and guidance to strengthen ties through bilateral activities in PME.

Throughout LAC, the disproportion in PME figures between the United States and China has grown. By 2015, "China for the first time trained more Latin American military officers than the United States, and the difference [grew] every year," at least through 2019 and possibly beyond.<sup>30</sup> During a congressional hearing in January 2020, Admiral Craig S. Faller, the Commander of US Southern Command, highlighted that the number of LAC students attending the Chinese war college exceeded five times the number attending the US war college.<sup>31</sup> This growing disparity was exemplified during the hearing by the case of El Salvador, where China offered 50 PME exchange opportunities compared to only one slot in the US International Military Education and Training (IMET) program.<sup>32</sup>

China's PME engagements encompass various seniority levels and ranks, with the highest engagement observed among field grade officers and the least among noncommissioned officers (NCO), as per available open-source information. At the

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<sup>26</sup> Brazilian Ministry of Defense, "Livro Branco de Defesa Nacional: Brasil—2012 [National Defense White Book: Brazil—2012]," 109, 133, and 153, <https://www.gov.br/>.

<sup>27</sup> Brazilian Ministry of Defense, "Livro Branco—2012," 109, 133, and 153.

<sup>28</sup> Brazilian Ministry of Defense, "Livro Branco de Defesa Nacional: Brasil—2016 [National Defense White Book: Brazil—2016]," 84, 101-102, and 115, <https://legis.senado.leg.br/>.

<sup>29</sup> Brazilian Ministry of Defense, "Livro Branco—2016," 84, 101-102, and 115.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas Farah and Kathryn Babineau, "Extra-regional Actors in Latin America: The United States is not the Only Game in Town," *Prism* 8, no. 1 (2019), 105, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/>.

<sup>31</sup> US Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearing to Receive Testimony on United States Africa Command and United States Southern Command in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2021 and the Future Years Defense Program, Washington, DC, 30 January 2020.

<sup>32</sup> US Senate, United States Africa Command and United States Southern Command.



general/flag officer level, most PME engagements involve seminars or delegation visits to military academic institutions, which lay the groundwork for future exchanges. A notable example occurred in 2015 when PLA General Liu Yuejun, Commander of the Lanzhou Military Region, visited Venezuela to review several agreements and explore the potential expansion of PME engagements. During the visit, General Liu and his delegation also visited the Venezuelan Military University.<sup>33</sup>

LAC general/flag officers occasionally visit China to attend seminars and tour military institutions. For instance, in 2018, the Brazilian Army sent the Head of its Army Doctrine Center to Beijing, Baotou, and Nanjing, China for such a visit.<sup>34</sup> More recently, on June 5, 2023, a delegation of 18 PLA officers, led by General Zheng He (Commander of the PLA NDU) visited the Brazilian Army Headquarters in Brasilia and National War College (*Escola Superior de Guerra*) in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>35</sup>

These engagements often serve as precursors to the expansion of PME exchanges. Senior leaders visit military institutions, observe instruction, meet with institutional leadership, interact with their country's students attending those schools, and identify and prioritize opportunities. In some cases, they may even sign memorandums to establish the framework for future exchanges.

Based on open-source information, the majority of the PLA's PME engagements with LAC countries primarily involve field grade officers. Since the 1990s, the College of Military Instruction for Foreigners at the PLA NDU, widely regarded as China's premier military education center, welcomed students from over 40 countries worldwide. Among them were field grade officers from LAC countries, including Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.<sup>36</sup> Strong activity at that institution has continued to the present with an even broader range of countries sending students.

Personnel from LAC countries, including Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and others, have continued to attend courses on national security, strategic studies, and other relevant topics at the National Defense University. While

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<sup>33</sup> Li, "China, Venezuela to bolster military, technical cooperation."

<sup>34</sup> Portaria No. 1,677 (5 October 2018), <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>. Of note, this Brazilian Army officer had extensive foreign assignments and travel in his military assignments. He served as the Brazilian Army's Liaison Officer to the US Army Combined Arms Center and editor-advisor of the Brazilian edition of *Military Review* in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as explained in his author biography in *Military Review*, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/>, and later as the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Brazilian Army, as explained in his official service biography, <http://www.em.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>35</sup> "General of the China Armed Forces Comes to Brazil to Learn about the Army's Strategic Projects [Generais das Forças Armadas da China Vêm ao Brasil Conhecer os Projetos Estratégicos do Exército]," *Exército Brasileiro*, 5 June 2023, <https://www.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>36</sup> Xu, "Un lugar de encanto excepcional."

the PLA NDU has remained a prominent venue for PME engagements with LAC countries, increased investment and formal agreements have facilitated exchanges with other PLA institutions.<sup>37</sup>

The Army Command College of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, situated in Nanjing and one of 12 Army institutions in China, houses a Foreign Military Student Department that has hosted several field grade officers from various LAC countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Barbados, and Jamaica.<sup>38</sup> With few exceptions, the Brazilian Army has sent at least one field grade officer to the Command and General Staff Course each year since 2008.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the Peruvian Army assigned two field grade officers to attend the course in 2016–2017, followed by three more in 2020–2021.<sup>40</sup> Officers from Uruguay and Venezuela have frequently participated in the course, which offers the opportunity to earn a Master

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<sup>37</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Ecuador, "Intercambio militar entre China y Ecuador [Military Exchange between China and Ecuador]," 22 October 2008, <http://ec.china-embassy.gov.cn/>; R. Evan Ellis, "Peru's Multidimensional Challenge – Part 3: engagement with China," *Global Americans*, 20 November 2020, <https://theglobalamericans.org/>; R. Evan Ellis, "Uruguay strikes a path to navigate relations with US and China," *Diálogo*, 24 July 2021, <https://dialogo-americas.com/>; and Graceffo, "La diplomacia de la defensa."

<sup>38</sup> Following the 2017 restructuring throughout Chinese PME institutions, the following 12 institutions constituted Army institutions among the PLA's 37 academic institutions: Army Command College, Army Engineering University, Army Infantry College, Army Academy of Armored Forces, Army Academy of Artillery & Air Defense, Army Aviation Academy, Army Special Operations Academy, Army Academy of Border and Coastal Defence, Army Institute of NBC Defence, Army Medical University, Army Logistic University, and Army Military Transportation University. On this, see Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 51 and Table 48. On countries that have sent students, see Graceffo, "La diplomacia de la defensa"; and Leo Ivar Flores Jr., "La Estrategia de Defensa Nacional de Brasil y las Oportunidades de Cooperación con China [Brazil's National Defense Strategy and Opportunities for Cooperation with China]," no. 67 (thesis, Senior Command Course, Defense Studies Institute, National Defense University, China, 27 June 2018), 17, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>39</sup> On this, the following decrees in Brazilian Army Bulletins outline course participation guidance: for years 2008–2009, see "276-DGP/APG," 8 December 2014, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; for 2010–2011, see "341," 6 May 2010, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; for 2011–2012, see "1,907-MD," 11 July 2011, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; for 2012–2013, see "1,874-MD," 12 July 2012, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; for 2013–2014, see "1,478-MD," 7 May 2013, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; for 2015–2016, see "437," 18 May 2015, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; for 2016–2017, see "157," 29 February 2016, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>; and for 2018–2019, see "1,480," 28 October 2017, <http://bdex.eb.mil.br/>. COVID-19 likely impacted the Brazilian Army's participation in this course during periods of government restrictions.

<sup>40</sup> General Luis Humberto Ramos Hume, Ministerial Resolution no. 930-2016-DE/EP, 26 August 2016, <https://www.mindef.gob.pe/>; and Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, "Confidence- and Security-Building Measures: Peru," Organization of American States, 2023, <http://www.oas.org/>.

of Military Science.<sup>41</sup> Chinese field grade officers have also attended the CGSC course in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to courses at the PLA National Defense University and Army Command College, LAC field grade officers have participated in seminars, training sessions, and exchange events related to PME. As part of its Study Tour of Brazilian Senior Officers, the Brazilian Army has sent colonels to Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing.<sup>43</sup> Field grade officers from LAC countries have also taken part in the Latin American Training Course on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Mitigation, lecture events in Nanjing, the National Military Security and Command Course in Changping, and the High Symposium of Latin American and Caribbean Military Officers. These engagements have involved visits to Beijing, Xi'an, Wuhan, and Shanghai.<sup>44</sup> Regarding courses held in LAC, Chinese field grade officers have attended the Language Center of the Army in Rio de Janeiro for language instruction. They have also participated in the International Cyber Defense Course in Brasilia.<sup>45</sup>

To a lesser extent, China has engaged with army company grade officers (lieutenant to captain) and cadets in early PME courses. This includes technical training, such as short courses for junior officers at the Nanjing International Medical Center.<sup>46</sup> In addition to field grade officer students, the PLA's NDU also integrates cadets into courses and exchanges. According to a PLA news report from August 2018, the institution "has trained in recent years over 500 foreign military cadets from over 100 countries [worldwide]."<sup>47</sup> The Army Engineering University in Nanjing frequently hosts foreign junior officers and cadets, having welcomed approximately 100 foreign military delegations. This institution "has had regular exchanges with 14 foreign military elite schools," including the US Military Academy and the British Royal Military Academy.<sup>48</sup> The PLA Army Infantry College also receives foreign armies' "company and platoon-level military officers,

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<sup>41</sup> R. Evan Ellis, "Uruguay strikes a path to navigate relations with US and China," *Diálogo Américas*, 24 July 2021, <https://dialogo-americas.com/>; and Marcos Jose Salas Chirino (n.d.), Home [LinkedIn page], *LinkedIn*, <https://www.linkedin.com/>.

<sup>42</sup> Flores, "Las Oportunidades de Cooperación con China," 17.

<sup>43</sup> Portaria no. 704 (28 September 2009), <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>44</sup> National Defense Ministry of the Republic of Uruguay, "Resolution," 22 March 2012, <http://archivo.presidencia.gub.uy/>; and Exército Brasileiro, "Boletim do Exército," Portaria No. 2,967-MD, 22 October 2013, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>45</sup> Flores, "Las Oportunidades de Cooperación con China," 17.

<sup>46</sup> Portaria No. 197-A (30 April 2001), <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>47</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 40.

<sup>48</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 54.

along with their staff officers.”<sup>49</sup> A reciprocal exchange between the Brazilian Army’s Jungle Warfare School in Manaus and the jungle operations school in Guangzhou, China, featured specialty instruction. In 2016, China sent instructors to assist with training in Brazil, and Brazilian jungle instructors traveled to China to train 67 Chinese cadets.<sup>50</sup>

Competitions serve as a frequent form of engagement for PLA academic institutions. The Army Engineering University in Nanjing has participated in 10 consecutive Jingwu Cup competitions, which often feature competitors from LAC countries. Additionally, they have taken part in the US Military Academy’s Sandhurst Competition.<sup>51</sup> The Army Academy of Artillery and Air Defense of China also dispatched a cadet team to compete in the international Patrol Competition held in Chile in 2017.<sup>52</sup> Another notable forum for PME engagement is the recurring International Week of Chinese Army cadets, which has drawn the participation of LAC countries traveling to China.<sup>53</sup>

Chinese PME engagements with LAC countries are seemingly lacking in the NCO corps. Within the PLA’s own ranks, NCO access to PME “is a deficiency [it] has sought to address in recent years,” and this shortfall extends to international military education engagement at this rank level.<sup>54</sup> Since 2009, PLA NCOs have been required to earn technical certifications for rank advancement, which seems to be emphasized more than leadership training. According to available information, the PLA’s PME efforts involving LAC NCOs primarily focus on technical training rather than leadership instruction.<sup>55</sup> Publicly accessible information on the PLA’s PME efforts involving LAC NCOs is limited, but engagements seem to follow this trend of focusing on technical training rather than leadership instruction. Technical training has incorporated soldiers from LAC countries to an extent, such as a group of 20 Ecuadorian officers and soldiers that participated in courses on “military strategy and command, acupuncture, and special combat” at the Land

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<sup>49</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People’s Liberation Army’s 37 Academic Institutions*, 62.

<sup>50</sup> Flores, “Las Oportunidades de Cooperación con China,” 17; Swami de Holanda Fontes, “Potenciales estratégicos de Brasil y China: Oportunidades de integración entre los dos Países [Strategic possibilities for Brazil and China: Opportunities for integration between the two countries],” no. 64 (thesis, Senior Command Course, Defense Studies Institute, National Defense University, China, 18 May 2017), 15, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>51</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People’s Liberation Army’s 37 Academic Institutions*, 54; Exército Brasileiro, “Boletim do Exército,” Portaria No. 1,400, 17 November 2014, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>52</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People’s Liberation Army’s 37 Academic Institutions*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> Portaria No. 1,724 (11 October 2018), <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>54</sup> Matt Tetreau, “The PLA’s Weak Backbone: Is China Struggling to Professionalize its Noncommissioned Officer Corps?,” *Modern War Institute at West Point*, 23 January 2023, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu>.

<sup>55</sup> Tetreau, “The PLA’s Weak Backbone.”

Forces Infantry Institute in Shi Jia Zhuang in 2008.<sup>56</sup> Bilateral engagements with LAC countries also extend to specialty courses like jungle training.

### PME Content

The curriculum of courses and training in China's PME engagements with LAC countries has evolved over time, driven by technological advancements, significant reorganizations within PLA institutions, and increased Chinese investments in PME outreach. The duration of academic and training courses in China can vary from weeks to more than a year. Some courses offered by China "focus on the operation and maintenance of Chinese military equipment sold to LAC countries," while others "introduce foreign students to PLA military thought regarding operations and leadership or Chinese military doctrine."<sup>57</sup>

In the early 2000s, the College of Military Instruction for Foreigners at the PLA National Defense University consisted of three sections. These sections included a one-year course aimed at training officers from Western Asia, North Africa, and coastal areas of the Pacific Ocean, which was generally taught in English. There was also a five-month course designed for field grade officers, which was taught in English, French, Spanish, and Russian. Additionally, there was a month-long research course on international problems taught in English and Chinese.<sup>58</sup> The curriculum of these courses focused on five key areas. These areas encompassed the history and culture of China, military thought from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* to modern theory and tactics, research on strategic problems and the national defense system, technical skills in mission command, and China's military capabilities and national defense construction.<sup>59</sup>

In June 2017, the PLA implemented a "massive reorganization" of its academic institutions, resulting in the reduction of "the number of officer academic institutions from 63 down to 34 and NCO institutions from four to three."<sup>60</sup> Technological advancements drove curriculum changes in technical schools, while reorganization efforts and outreach initiatives influenced the curriculum and structure of leadership courses and higher-level educational institutions.

At the PLA National Defense University's International College of Defense Studies, which hosts foreign military officers, advanced studies (five months), defense research (one year), and an international affairs seminar (one month) are

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<sup>56</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Ecuador, "Intercambio militar."

<sup>57</sup> Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 45.

<sup>58</sup> Xu, "Un lugar de Encanto excepcional."

<sup>59</sup> Xu, "Un lugar de Encanto excepcional."

<sup>60</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 3.



now offered.<sup>61</sup> The university also confers masters and doctoral degrees and issues graduate-level certificates. As of April 2018, the university had trained 5,844 graduate students, including 236 foreign graduate students.<sup>62</sup> The curriculum typically covers Chinese Military Thought, including Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and other works, strategy and geopolitical studies, and international security studies.<sup>63</sup>

While some courses aim to expose LAC military students to Chinese doctrine, it has been observed that “the war college course on offer in China [is] in actuality a copy of US doctrine translated into Spanish.”<sup>64</sup> This may be attributed, at least in part, to gaps in Chinese doctrine and joint-level operations. Another area with gaps and weaknesses is peacekeeping. Both of China's 2008 and 2016 policy papers on LAC highlighted peacekeeping as a focus topic for strengthening security cooperation ties. However, this is an area where China has historically lacked experience and credibility, primarily due to a lack of combat experience since the 1979 conflict with Vietnam.<sup>65</sup>

To address this gap, dozens of the PLA National Defense University's “teaching and research officers have participated in international peacekeeping and served as military observers.”<sup>66</sup> While Chinese troop contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions have increased, the 2016 Battle of Juba in South Sudan remains a significant event that undermines the credibility of Chinese peacekeeping efforts. Chinese peacekeepers faced sharp international criticism for their actions in this incident, as The Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) published a report in early October 2016 stating that “Chinese peacekeepers with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) had withdrawn from a civilian protection zone in July after coming under attack.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 38.

<sup>63</sup> Renato Laguna Aschiero (n.d.), Home [LinkedIn page], *LinkedIn*, <https://www.linkedin.com/>.

<sup>64</sup> US Senate, United States Africa Command and United States Southern Command, as paraphrased in Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 46. “Chinese military theory from the 1990s forward posits that joint operations are the ‘basic form’ of war,” and “Chinese professional military education materials make clear that China has absorbed lessons learned from U.S. performance in contemporary conflicts and harnessed those insights to shape its development of a joint reconnaissance-strike capability,” as set forth in Burke et al., *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts*, 5, which paraphrases Michael S. Chase, Cristina L. Garafola, and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, “Chinese Perceptions of and Responses to US Conventional Military Power,” *Asian Security* 14, no. 2 (2017), 5.

<sup>65</sup> Michael S. Chase et al., *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 52, <https://www.rand.org/>.

<sup>66</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 40.

<sup>67</sup> “China denies allegations its peacekeepers abandoned South Sudan posts,” *Reuters*, 10 October 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/>.



Despite these challenges, China has sought to incorporate peacekeeping into PME engagements. For instance, the National Defense University's International College of Defense Studies organized the second International Defense Forum in Beijing in June 2019, with the theme "New Changes in the Form of War, New Challenges of Peaceful Development." One of the forum's three major topics was "The Ways to Resolve Conflicts and Maintain World Peace, the Plans: China's Plan, and the World's Plan."<sup>68</sup>

Values appear to be an area that is not adequately addressed in Chinese PME instruction. The curriculum and organization of PLA academic institutions often diverge from certain traditional Western values. Professional military education plays a crucial role in instilling institutional values in troops, including foreign students who benefit from exposure to societal values during their time abroad. However, it seems that the PLA curriculum for foreign students in PME lacks coursework on topics such as ethics, democracy, and human rights, despite the Chinese government publishing white papers on these subjects.<sup>69</sup>

In contrast, partner nation attendees of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Moore, Georgia, are required to attend courses on these three topics. Among codes for level-1 and level-2 specialties, uniform for all Chinese academic institutions—those affiliated and not affiliated with the military—there is a code for "Ethics" (伦理学).<sup>70</sup> The Army Medical University, an academic education and professional education institution located in Chongqing, has 20 identified teaching and research labs, one of which is on "Ethics and Law" (伦理学与法学教研室).<sup>71</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that democracy, human rights, or ethics beyond the scope of medical care are addressed in the curricula, research specialty areas, or other materials available on these institutions' websites and publications.

Although philosophy is commonly listed as an educational focus area, which may include discussions on values, the curricula lack specific details. It is evident that any values discussions would greatly contrast with traditional American values. Specialty codes related to philosophy include "Philosophy of Marxism," "Chinese Philosophy," and "Foreign Philosophies," indicating a potentially antagonistic ap-

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<sup>68</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 41. This source explained that senior-level military officers from 88 countries participated in the International Defense Forum.

<sup>69</sup> The State Council Information Office of the PRC has published or shared a variety of white papers or reports on related topics, including *China: Democracy That Works* (4 December 2021) and *New China Research's Pursuing Common Values of Humanity – China's Approach to Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights* (7 December 2021). On this, see <https://english.www.gov.cn/>.

<sup>70</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 237.

<sup>71</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 93 and 96.

proach despite the possible presence of a foreign audience in military academic institutions. Additionally, at China's National Defense University, specialty areas under the subject of jurisprudence include "Marxist Theory" and "Basic Principles of Marxism."<sup>72</sup>

Military students from LAC attending courses in China would likely be aware of the threats to democracy posed by the PLA's influence in academic institutions and their collaboration on military and security-related science and technology research. Several Chinese academic institutions, including the PLA National Defense University and Army Medical University, are categorized as "very high" risk in the China Defence Universities Tracker by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's International Cyber Policy Centre.<sup>73</sup> This tracker serves as a tool to aid in the due diligence of entities considering engagements with Chinese entities and "aims to build understanding of the implications of China's expanding military-civil fusion in the global education sector." The tracker incorporates research on human rights abuses and espionage.<sup>74</sup>

These concerns are also associated with intellectual property theft, which China exploits to drive innovation and reduce costs in research and development. China's activities in emerging domains like cyber create a sense of distrust in collaboration and exchanges with the PLA.

## **Returns on Investment**

China acknowledges the success of the US IMET program and seeks to emulate its achievements in military education and international engagement.<sup>75</sup> The IMET program, funded by the Department of State, exemplifies the whole-of-government approach in strategic competition, even in the realm of PME. It has demonstrated enduring presence in partner nations, enhanced interoperability, and fostered relationships between US service members and foreign counterparts, yielding unparalleled influence. Participants in the IMET program not only gain doctrinal knowledge and cultural understanding through coalition operations but also cultivate lasting friendships with their US and foreign counterparts, which can have significant strategic impact.

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<sup>72</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 39.

<sup>73</sup> The Army Medical University is designated very high risk "for work on biological sciences for the military," as explained in Australian Strategic Policy Institute, "Army Medical University," 18 November 2019, <https://unitracker.aspi.org.au/>.

<sup>74</sup> Australian Strategic Policy Institute, "About," China Defence Universities Tracker, <https://unitracker.aspi.org.au/about/> (accessed July 2, 2023).

<sup>75</sup> Posture Statement of Admiral Craig S. Faller, Commander, United States Southern Command, before the 116th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 30 January 2020, 4.

An illustrative example is the case of Haiti in 1991, where the democratic election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was followed by a coup. In 1994, a diplomatic delegation led by President Jimmy Carter, including former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, convinced the military junta led by General Joseph Raoul Cédras to peacefully step down and restore power to Aristide. General Powell's personal relationship with Cédras, which originated when Cédras was a student at the United States' School of the Americas, "served to convince the junta to give up power peacefully."<sup>76</sup> As one officer put it, "the cost of such long-term benefits from these types of programs . . . is 'peanuts' in comparison to other DoD managed programs and justifies increased IMET opportunities."<sup>77</sup>

China has increased its investment in PME outreach and incentivized LAC countries to engage in PLA PME by covering expenses, aiming to emulate and compete with the proven returns on investment of the US model. As the PLA offers to cover expenses, "LAC governments are often open to accepting any 'free' training, and officials that receive perks, such as traveling with their families, have proven to be enthusiastic students."<sup>78</sup> stronger impression on foreign military students, "Beijing also pays for [them] to travel in business class, stay in five-star hotels, and have other expenses paid for them while in China—none of which are generally offered through US programs."<sup>79</sup> China regularly covers the costs for LAC students to attend courses at the PLA's NDU, Army Command College, and other sites for leadership and technical courses, exchanges, or conferences.<sup>80</sup> China also hopes that positive feedback from LAC students, along with other factors such as political conditions, will foster stronger defense ties with LAC countries. Regarding this, the Argentinian Ambassador to Beijing, Sabino Vaca Narvaja, addressed managers of 21 military academic institutions in LAC in June 2023 on the topic of security cooperation with China, emphasizing the importance of the PRC's unconditional cooperation in the defense industry of LAC countries.<sup>81</sup>

China views such investment as one method to cultivate *guanxi*—a Mandarin term meaning *connections* or *relations*, and in reference to military engagements, an

<sup>76</sup> Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, "Case Study No. 6: A review of Operation Unified Response, the U.S. military's effort in support of Haiti following the January 2010 Earthquake," 3, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/>.

<sup>77</sup> Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 46.

<sup>78</sup> Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 46.

<sup>79</sup> Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> "Resolución Ministerial no. 1093-2019 DE/EP," Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Peru, 23 August 2019, <https://cdn.www.gob.pe/>.

<sup>81</sup> "Vaca Narvaja fue distinguido como profesor honorario de la Universidad de la Defensa china [Vaca Narvaja was distinguished as an honorary professor of the Chinese Defense University]," *télam digital*, <https://www.telam.com.ar/>.

art that “places an emphasis on the binding power and emotional and ethical qualities of the personal relationships.”<sup>82</sup> This concept, which permeates Chinese culture, involves cultivating strong personal connections that lead to obligations and exchanging favors, and its influence extends to PME.

Due to the natural career progression and timeline of officers, it is premature to fully understand and assess the PLA's increased focus on PME with LAC countries in recent years and how it has fostered connections with senior military leaders in the region. On occasion, LAC students who study in China have also attended US PME courses, providing a level of equivalence in foreign experience and military thought (depending on the course). This is exemplified by Ecuadorian Army Brigadier General Delgado Salvador Henry Santiago, the Director of the Ecuadorian Army's military academy (*Escuela Superior Militar “Eloy Alfaro”*), who attended the Signal Captains Career Course in the United States and CGSC in Nanjing.<sup>83</sup>

Foreign language presents a limitation to the returns on investment in Chinese PME engagement with LAC countries compared to the United States. While PME courses attended by LAC students in the US are predominantly conducted in English, with some offered in Spanish, most courses in China are also conducted in English or Spanish, without any requirement for Chinese proficiency. For example, China's National University of Defense Technology requires English proficiency for all 41 specialties, and the Army Engineering University requires English proficiency for all 32 specialties.<sup>84</sup> While this practice encourages more LAC students to attend courses in China, it does not address the foreign language challenges that would arise in training and exercises, limiting the potential for greater interoperability at higher levels of military cooperation.

Furthermore, there is limited potential for increased procedural interoperability in strategic studies when the war college curriculum in China is a replica of that in the United States. In contrast, in mid-career US PME courses such as the Command and General Staff Officers Course, foreign students often write monographs or theses on topics specific to their own countries and armed forces, applying doctrine and coursework to explore new approaches and solutions. In PLA academic institutions, monographs and theses written by military students from LAC predominantly focus on areas of mutual interest and seek to identify opportunities to deepen ties at the national and strategic levels of engagement. For instance, a senior

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<sup>82</sup> Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 51, as cited in Campbell et al., *U.S. Resourcing to National Security Interests*, 36.

<sup>83</sup> “Directivos,” Escuela Superior Militar “Eloy Alfaro,” 2022, <https://www.esmil.mil.ec/>.

<sup>84</sup> Allen and Chen, *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*, 47 and 58.

field grade officer from the Brazilian Army studying at the PLA National Defense University wrote his thesis on security cooperation opportunities between Brazil and China. He identified opportunities based on mutually beneficial strategic goals, including subject matter expert exchanges and discussions on various fields such as fires warfighting, special operations, psychological operations, cyber defense, electronic warfare, peacekeeping operations, and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives.<sup>85</sup>

A high-ranking Brazilian Army officer at the PLA National Defense University wrote his thesis on the development of Brazil's defense industry and opportunities for China. He emphasized the lack of bilateral defense agreements despite common interests in this strategically important area. According to him, strategic defense projects are crucial for the development of the Brazilian defense industry, and he highlighted the potential for Chinese companies to share technology and supply materials, parts, and equipment for Brazilian companies involved in modernization projects.<sup>86</sup> In addition, another Brazilian Army officer discussed recent bilateral DCA, highlighted PME exchanges, and expressed Brazilian interest in learning about nuclear security and cyber defense from China.<sup>87</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The PLA's PME engagement with LAC countries has expanded in scope and numbers since 2000, driven by China's increased investment and focus on PME. Chinese policy documents prioritize PME in the LAC region, leading to the signing of DCAs to facilitate exchanges and training. The number of LAC military students in China has grown steadily and, in some cases, surpassed those in the United States. However, Chinese PME courses lack instruction and discussions on values that are fundamental to US PME.

One implication of political trends in LAC is that Chinese PME will likely be one of the first types of security cooperation engagement China seeks as countries align with the One China policy and sever ties with Taiwan. For instance, China may soon engage in PME with Honduras, which established diplomatic relations with Beijing in March 2023. Greater Chinese investment in LAC PME necessitates that the United States fills course billets offered by partner nations, as China

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<sup>85</sup> Flores, "Las Oportunidades de Cooperación con China," 18–19.

<sup>86</sup> Marcelo Luiz Almeida de Jesus, "El desarrollo de la industria de defensa nacional de Brasil y las oportunidades para China [The development of Brazil's national defense industry and opportunities for China]" (thesis, International Defense Studies College of the National Defense University, Beijing, China, 16 June 2017), 4 and 20, <http://bdex.eb.mil.br/>.

<sup>87</sup> de Holanda Fontes, "Potenciales estratégicos de Brasil y China," 15.

aims to seize any vacancies. The United States should prioritize IMET to enable LAC countries to send officers and soldiers for PME in the United States.

Furthermore, increased Chinese PME exchanges in emerging domains like space and cyber heighten the likelihood of Chinese foreign direct investment and infrastructure projects in LAC, which could lead to PLA presence and cooperation in these areas. This raises concerns about the erosion of values related to authoritarianism, privacy, and democracy as the state gains more control. Another implication of China-LAC PME is the progression up the ladder of defense cooperation. Depending on favorable circumstances, including political administrations in certain LAC countries and Chinese participation in exercises, bilateral cooperation could increase.

One potential avenue for further research is conducting a comprehensive study on the monographs and theses written by LAC field grade officers. Due to limited access to digital libraries and restricted public library access in many LAC countries, it may be challenging to gather data. However, examining thesis topics, findings, and recommendations could provide valuable insights into relevant research areas and potential opportunities for security cooperation.

In addition, a study on LAC participants in Chinese PME programs could offer valuable insights. This research could shed light on the career progression and roles of these individuals, as well as how they apply their education from China in their assignments. Analyzing their contributions in areas such as doctrine development, research and development, strategic projects, or international relations would provide insights into how LAC countries value and leverage the education of those who studied in China.

Furthermore, there is limited information available regarding Chinese PME efforts involving NCOs. Exploring this area would be worthwhile to understand how China engages LAC NCOs in military education, the nature of their involvement, and the objectives of the exchanges or programs. 🌟

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