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Brazil: towards the new Defence White Paper

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This quarterly report will try to anticipate the strategic dilemmas that must be tackled by the new Brazilian Defence White Paper.

The next White Paper must resolve the typical problems of an emerging great power because, even if there is a real will to gain relevance with a non-conflictual approach, other countries affected by Brazilian strategic choices will adopt postures that are more confrontational than desired.

At a strategic level there are three critical issues:

- *the strong link between defence and development policies,*
- *the desire of becoming great without dominating,*
- *the maritime potential that starts influencing strategic perceptions in three oceans (Pacific and Atlantic, due to pre-existing strategic doctrines and Indian, due to multi-lateral South-South initiatives).*

The strong link between defence and development policy risks to become obsolete under the twin crisis of the idea of continuous growth and of the global financialized economy. The most probable response lies in the concept of sustainable development, but this must be further developed and qualified to be meaningful for Brazilian interests. Development means traditionally great engineering projects and this collides with the new importance assumed by indigenous populations. This can have tangible effects on major land and riverine strategic mobility projects. The same sustainability problem emerges with the use of military units in the control of slums: they are a first intervention means, but only redistributive economic policies can change the situation.

The declared will of avoiding regional domination is a desirable political choice, but it cannot completely forestall pre-existing resistances and rivalries in the continent.

Finally the Brazilian bi-oceanic strategic posture opens the way for substantial disagreements with: a) USA and Venezuela in the Atlantic Ocean; b) China in West Africa; c) USA in the Indian Ocean due to the naval co-operation in the IBSA (India Brazil South Africa) framework.

The foundations of the defence debate

On the 29th of February 2012, the official Brazilian wire services reported that the Defence minister, Celso Amorim, has announced the publication of the next Defence White Paper (LBDN, Livro



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Branco de Defesa Nacional) by November in Brasilia.

Even if the last document regarding defence policies was just published four years ago, it is neither an established practice yet nor a bureaucratic exercise.¹ In fact the whole of year 2011 was spent in organising six big seminars in different parts of the country, each dedicated to a specific subject:

1. The synergy between defence and society
2. 21st century scenarios
3. The modernisation of armed services
4. Rationalising and adapting the organisation and structure of the Defence ministry
5. The economic support to national defence
6. Peace and humanitarian operations with the support of the armed services.

One should also remember that, after the “National Defence Strategy”, the Defence ministry and the prestigious Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) jointly published a thick volume in 2009 (*Segurança internacional: perspectivas brasileiras*, edited by João Paulo Soares Alsina Júnior, Nelson A. Jobim, Sergio W. Etchegoyen) with the stated objective of deepening the debate among specialists so as to prepare further developments.² So one can understand that, since the issue of the first official defence-related document (1996, that is 11 years after the end of dictatorship), the practice of drafting a new defence policy with a wide public participation is a deeply felt democratic initiative. Thus it has been explained by the Defence minister during the same day: “... *it is a democratic exercise, a process requiring a wide co-operation between civilians and militaries, with consultations between political decision makers and ministries, in order to promote a wide awareness vis-à-vis the functions and the importance of armed services. The final product of this process will bestow more democratic legitimacy on national defence policy*”.³

The first national defence policy document was published in year 2005. Its main points are:

- The defence of the Brazilian Amazonian space (4 million sq/km);
- The defence of maritime areas under national sovereignty, including the EEZ (Economic Exclusive Zones). These areas are also called Blue Amazon (4,5 million sq/km) because they are more than 50% of the land surface and they are a vast frontier like the homonymous forest. The

¹ Cfr. *Estratégia Nacional de Defesa, Paz e segurança para o Brasil*, Ministério da Defesa, Brasília, 15/12/2008.

² The five chapters of a volume featuring more than 600 pages are: 1. The global security scenario; 2. Contemporary security challenges; 3. The regional security condition; 4. Brazilian security perspectives; 5. The regional security realities.

³ Seven ministries and three bodies of the Presidency of the Republic (among which the Human Rights Secretariat) will be involved in drafting the document, under the coordination of the Defence ministry. To have a clearer idea about the cleavages between civil society and militaries, a heritage of the past military dictatorships, see

(10/4/2012). The White Paper will be followed by the PAED (Plano de Articulação e Equipamento da Defesa – Defence Co-ordination and Procurement Plan), a document that will detail the great military procurement decisions; the first draft was handed to political decision makers the 8th of March 2012.

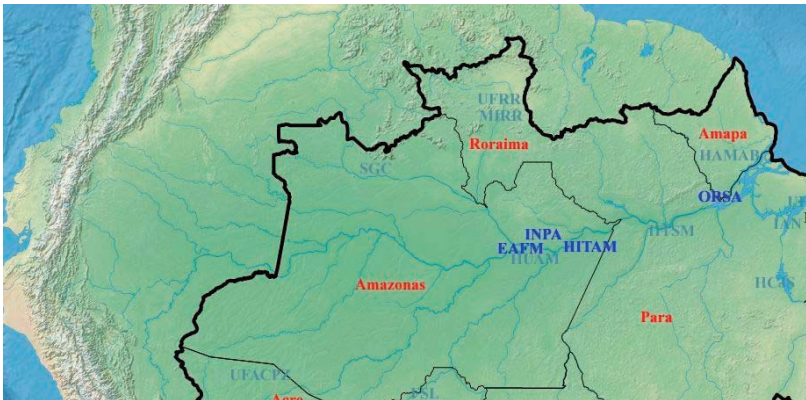


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defence is all the more important because 80% of the population is concentrated in less than 200 km of coast;⁴

- Definition of a “Brazilian security environment” from South America’s Pacific coast till Africa’s Atlantic coasts, including the whole South American subcontinent.⁵

Map of Brazilian Amazon



Source: http://brahms.inpa.gov.br/bol/content/Groups/Amazonia/images/AMAZONAS_IMAGE1.JPG (22/03/2012)

Map of the Blue Amazon

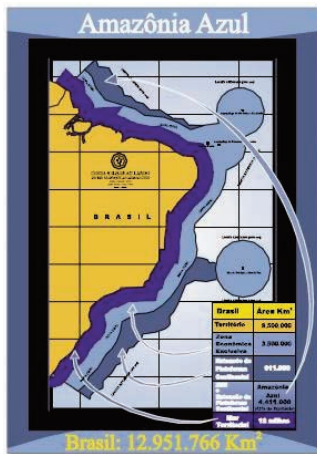


FIGURA 1.1 – MAPA DA AMAZÔNIA AZUL

Source: Ministry of Education in co-operation with the Navy, Defence Ministry

⁴ Brazil borders with 10 countries, seven of which are in the Amazon (Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Guiane Française and Suriname). The 10.000 km of land borders are vulnerable to conventional and non conventional threats, both by state and non state actors.

⁵ The definition is far from academic, because after the discovery of oil wells in the South American seas, the USA decided to re-establish the US 4th fleet (1/07/2008) whose AOR (Area of Responsibility) included precisely those oilfields. Brazil reacted with a war game where the “red” opposing forces belonged to the United States.

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*The Brazilian security environment*⁶



Source: Brazil, Defence Ministry

Map of the South Atlantic⁷



Source: Brazil, Defence Ministry

⁶The map shows not only the main bases and deployments of each armed services, but also the coverage of the SIVAM (Sistema de Vigilância da Amazônia – Amazon’s Surveillance System) and pictorial representations of the satellites networked in the system.

⁷The map shows the relationship between the Blue Amazon and the British territories in the South Atlantic.



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The last official document is the mentioned “National Defence Strategy”, dated 2008. The following main aspects highlight the elaboration of the vision:

- National defence and development strategies are intertwined in securing the country’s independence within the ambit of grand strategy;
- The strategy is organised around three overarching axes:
 - Armed services possible missions
 - Re-organisation of the defence industry⁸
 - Composition of military and the future of compulsory draft
- Definition of 23 strategic guidelines that allow the development of the capabilities required by the strategy.

The most important strategic guidelines are but a few and are also those that mirror more closely the specific geostrategic and geoeconomic characteristics of the country. The first strategic guideline is given by conventional deterrence whose task is to prevent the concentration of hostile forces along the land and maritime borders or within the national air space, thanks to **the monitoring/control, mobility, presence triad and to strategic mobility capabilities**.

It is a considerable challenge because it requires, beyond the deployment of strategic reserves in the centre of the country, the dominance of the strategic surveillance spectrum, a superior command capability and the ability to concentrate precisely the forces in vast, often impervious, spaces.

The second one is based on capability enhancements in three strategic sectors: space, cyberspace and nuclear. All are important in order to ensure that the services have the necessary flexibility and they cut across the borders of development and defence, civil and military ambits. While the importance of the first two sectors is self-explicative, regarding the third it is counterintuitive.

The nuclear sector is on one hand positively based on the rigorous compliance to the Non Proliferation Treaty, but on the other it reveals a strong political will of exploiting all peaceful uses of nuclear energy (energy matrix diversification, health, agriculture), including nuclear propulsion for nuclear hunter-killer attack submarines.

The third position is held by the Amazonian Region. Every attempt of intrusion will be firmly repelled with development and defence actions that will preserve Brazil’s sovereignty, the only country entitled to take care of the Amazon in the interest of country and humanity.

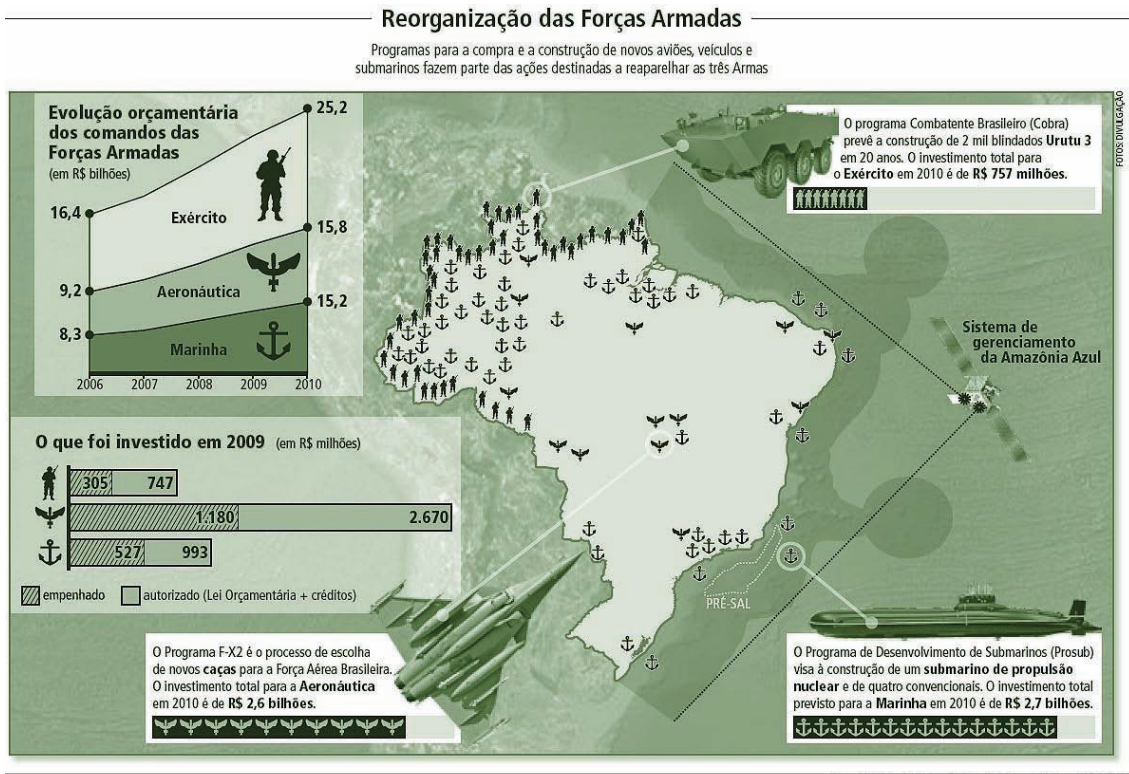
In the fourth place with equal importance are put the law and order missions, South American integration (through the tool of the Conselho de Defesa Sul-Americano – South American Defence Council – set up within the UNASUR framework) and the increasing participation in peacekeeping operations.⁹

A good view of the strategic starting point from which must evolve the Brazilian Defence is provided by the official map of military bases and deployments and by another showing the great infrastructures that provide also strategic mobility.

⁸The 29th of September 2011 President Dilma Rousseff signed a provisional decree exempting defence industries from different taxes in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the sector.

⁹UNASUR is a regional organization that in turn integrates also political and security aspects of two pre-existing custom unions: the CAN (Comunidad Andina – Andean Community) and the Mercosul itself.

Re-organization of the Brazilian armed services (2009)



Source: Brazil, Defence Ministry and SIGA¹⁰

¹⁰ SIGA is a public database that co-ordinates sectorial governmental databases.



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Great civil engineering structures built and planned



Source : http://temi.repubblica.it/UserFiles/limes/Image/Carte/7QS1_C6_GrandiOpere_800.jpg
(23/03/2012)

Before looking at the difficult balances that the new white paper must strike, it is worthwhile underlining some useful contributions from the mentioned Defence-SGV volume:¹

- The then Defence minister, Nelson Jobim, considers the USA as the chief axis of the international system, a heavily armed actor, trying to deepen the asymmetries it is enjoying in a uni-polar world that could last until 2035. On the other hand, even if none of them is ready to compete globally, EU, Russia, China, Japan and India are relevant actors. Since the nature of war is shifting towards irrational violence of sub-groups, national armies must abandon industrial warfare and focus on counter-insurgency and nation building; armed forces must be transformed into gendarmeries or peace forces for development;
- Prof. Francisco Carlos Teixeira (UFRJ) believes that Brazil's security concerns are both conventional and asymmetric. In the first case a credible deterrence must be set up to protect the countries from "*Western democracies coming from the sea*", but the most probable conflict is the second one and could be carried out by sub-national groups in Brazil, third parties located in Brazil and outside interests represented within Brazil.

¹ An overview of international security: Brazilian perspective, The book before the white paper, in Insights from the field, May 2011



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Future issues

If the overall direction of the next white paper is still difficult to ascertain even by the authors, it is possible to identify the critical points that must be tackled at strategic and grand strategic level. The most problematic point of Brazilian grand strategic thinking is **the strong link between defence and development policies**, which obviously stems from the interaction between a sophisticated military techno-structure, potentially well equipped to modernize the country top-down, and the leadership of an emerging country. This development paradigm, that was evident and effective throughout the Twentieth century, albeit with some serious difficulties, now faces a serious crisis during the first five years of this century.

We are not just talking about a liaison between economic development and financialized economy that turns out being objectively incapable of achieving both creation of value and durable development; it is the very concept of traditional development that is under discussion. If a GDP increase alone cannot be considered a relevant and absolute indicator, so the assumption of a tendentially endless development, implied by the 2008 national defence strategy, makes the defence-development couple an unrealistic and unsustainable proposition.

This becomes even more true as the issue of indigenous populations, emerging as actors who are recovering their full status and rights, becomes an serious handicap in the development of important infrastructures, especially in the habitat of tropical forests.

A similar social and security issue arises with law enforcement missions, like those carried out to regain control over the favelas (slums) around the great cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Until today the deployment of military and military police units has had the function to give a first blow at criminal organizations but it is evident that only public programmes of urban renewal, public education and job creation are able to modify deeply the causes of the problem.

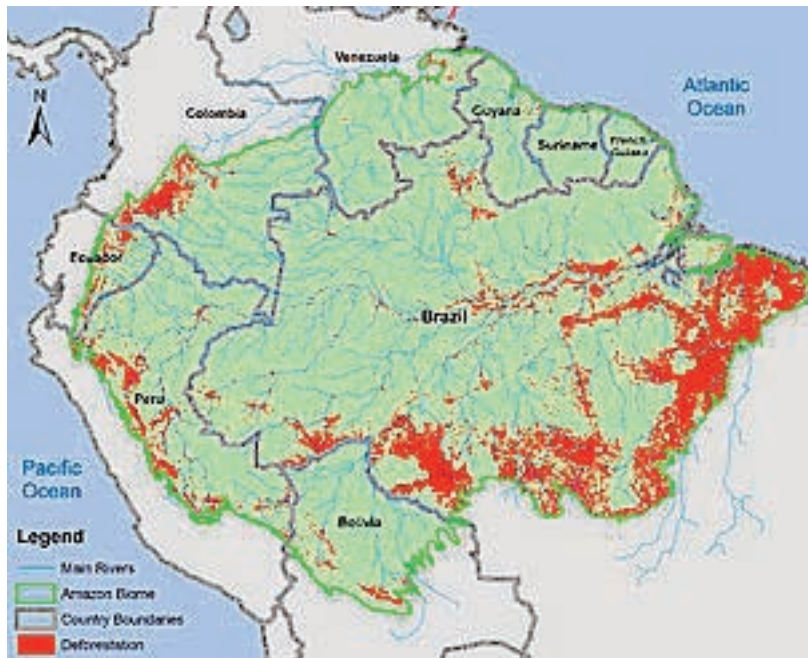
The standard answer consists in the sustainable development mantra, but in reality it is a phrase that needs to be qualified to be credible and to be translated into an affordable military instrument.¹¹ If one then puts together the monitoring/control, mobility, presence triad with strategic mobility and the need to open road links in the Amazons, one understands also that the deforestation and indigenous population problems are two faces of the same dilemma.

¹¹ In the 2008 document the locution “desenvolvimento sustentável” appears only three times and only in connection with the Amazonian forest; one is left with the doubt that it has more to do with greenwashing than with economic policy.



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Deforestation map of the Amazonian Region



Source: WWF, 2009 data for Brazil; 2007-2008 data for other countries

Another difficulty lies in the intention “Quer que o Brasil se engrandeça sem imperar” (**Want that Brazil become great without dominating**). Leaving aside classical political thought for which this idea is a contradiction in terms, there is still the problem of how to promote a necessary regional integration, but under an inevitable Brazilian impulse and leadership, which in turn arouses already strong resistances among the Mercosul and the UNASUR partners.

The elegant solution is to present oneself as a stabilising but not hegemonic power, something easier said than done at political level, especially if there is a gap between deeds and words. The Itamaraty (MFA) and hence the Defence ministry have to square a traditional bilateral diplomacy (and now multi-bilateral, as shown by the effort in signing and ratifying 10 different border security agreements with the adjoining countries) with a new effective multi-lateral regional approach.¹²

If one observes Brazilian diplomatic practices, one sees that Brasilia consistently avoids excessive institutionalisation of the different regional frameworks, in order to retain freedom of action: it is a more subtle variant of the typical exceptionalism of major powers. That said, Brazil is a stalwart

¹² Cfr. . <http://www.defesanet.com.br/defesa/noticia/5296/Celso-Amorim-propoe-ampliar-cooperacao-em-defesa-na-America-do-Sul> regarding the concept of regional deterrence, used by the actual Defence minister to convince the other regional partners that Brazil has a co-operative and not hegemonic approach in defence and security matters. Regarding Brazilian political contradictions and difficult balances, see also Mariana Fonseca Lima, *Defense and Diplomacy in the Brazilian Strategy for Maintenance of Order in South America*, (10/04/2012).



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defender of the multilateral agreements it has signed: when the US proposed the concept of an Atlantic Basin outside the UNCLOS III multilateral framework, the reception was rather frosty.¹³ Finally Brazil is one of the three great American countries that has **a strategic vision on both the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans**. This is a potential point of friction with both USA and Venezuela, taking into account that there is already some competition with these powers. And it becomes even more concrete if one remembers that only Brasilia's most important CPLP partners (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa – Portuguese Language Community of Countries) are in the Atlantic: namely Portugal and Angola, notwithstanding the strategic position of the São Tomé and Príncipe islands. Moreover in the CPLP only Brazil and Portugal have significant navies.¹⁴ Ultimately the future grand strategic vision may even diplomatically paper over some thorny issues, but decision makers cannot elude the prospect of a double opposition of interests with the USA and China. On one hand there is the already mentioned undeclared continental and maritime politico-strategic rivalry with Washington, while on the other hand there are the strong commercial and currency disagreements with Beijing, which will be worsened by the commercial and strategic competition in Africa, particularly in West Africa.

Moreover the IBSA (India Brazil South Africa) regional framework, despite being weak, has the potential to alter the overall balance within the Indian Ocean, modifying the strategic parameters for the US 5th Fleet operating in the waters adjacent the Hormuz and Bab el Mandeb straits.

In conclusion the next White Paper must resolve the typical problems of an emerging great power because, even if there is a real will to gain relevance with a non-conflictual approach, other countries affected by Brazilian strategic choices will arguably adopt more confrontational postures than desired.

¹³ Brazil for instance has refrained from supplying to UNASUR the detail of its military expenditures and from supporting initiatives that would give UNASUR an arms reporting and monitoring function for the region. Cfr. on the Atlantic Basin issue (20/04/2012).

¹⁴ Cfr. Luís Bernardino José Santos Leal, *A Arquitetura de Segurança e Defesa da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (1996-2011)*, IDN, Lisboa, Dezembro de 2011. The CPLP is a multi-lateral organization that fosters friendship and co-operation among Portuguese-speaking countries. In the Americas only USA, Brazil and Canada have significant navies.