

Defense in the National Agenda

The Strategic Defense Plan

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We are witnessing a reconfiguration of the political and economic paradigms that defined political relations during much of the twentieth century. In this sense, Brazil has consolidated its position in the world – a position fortified by the nation's recently-acquired political and economic stability. Current circumstances, together with policies adopted to capitalize on them, have allowed Brazil greater international influence.

This process implies new challenges, together with the new responsibilities that we must gradually take on. It implies, furthermore, the need for strategic planning and flexibility for the process to be adapted to scenarios that are in constant flux.

Brazil's new position on the world stage will also alter its defense posture. New standards of international defense standing will depend, however, on a new posture adopted by the nation's society. It is necessary, then, that questions of defense are once again placed on the national agenda, signifying a reversal of the situation that has prevailed since the end of the military regime.

Over the last decades such questions have been relegated exclusively to the military sector. Civilian power, which succeeded the military regime, identified defense themes in its imagination with political repression. These themes were, for this reason, marginalized during the 1987-1988 Constituent Assembly. The emerging leaderships avoided anything that might associate them with the previous regime – that might identify them with the “refuse of authoritarianism.”

The retreat of civilian power was accompanied by an expected reaction in military circles: the officers made it their task to formulate a defense policy. Defense themes necessarily were erased from the national agenda, and the executive and legislative branches came to view these exclusively as the province of the military's agenda.

Losses in investment capacity as a result of the fiscal crisis that plagued the country in the 1980's further aggravated the situation. Funds for defense were lacking, and difficulties in the way of providing for the military led to losses in the services' operational capacity. Lacking the necessary resources to feed the troops, the situation was such that their service time in the barracks had to be reduced.

A similar process developed in academic circles, where a detachment had developed. Very few scholars dedicate themselves to the subject of defense. Some researchers of military topics were questioned by their own colleagues as to their motivations. In other countries, such topics are subjects of profound intellectual interest,

and defense-area studies enjoy an abundant output in civilian academic institutions. Furthermore, civilian-military exchanges allow the state more favorable decision-making capacity and greater control mechanisms for the society as a whole.

In an effort to correct these distortions, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva established, through a September 6, 2007 decree, a commission to formulate a national defense strategic plan under the minister of defense and coordinated by the special minister for strategic affairs.

Included in the commission are the minister of planning, budget and administration, the minister of finance, the minister of science and technology and the commanders of the navy, army and air force, who will be advised by their respective chiefs-of-staff. A report, which will include general guidelines, will be handed over to the president on September 7, 2008.

Preparation of the Plan

The plan is an ambitious one that focuses on medium and long-term measures. The objective is to restore the national defense structure and, in what amounts to another relevant objective, to reintroduce questions of defense into the national agenda.

This endeavor would divide the study into three major themes:

- 1) reorganization of the armed forces, including appropriate materiel;
- 2) reorganization of the national defense industry, emphasizing national training, technological self-sufficiency and sustainability; and,
- 3) the future of mandatory military service and the system of national mobilization.

The plan's preparation, then, rests on two basic assumptions.

The first of these assumptions is the division of civilian and military defense authority:

- the civilian authority would define the possible scenarios wherein military power would be employed;
- the armed forces would define strategies for these possible scenarios (the preparation for the use of the military services and management of this force).

The second consists in Brazil's maintaining the option of a deterrent capability as an integral component of its defense strategy.

The history of the twentieth century brings home the lesson that the whole of society endures the costs, sacrifices and suffering of war. It is incumbent upon all societies – by means of the deliberative bodies of their democratic systems and also direct participation in debates – to define what is expected of their armed forces and to provide

them with the means to carry out their role. Important among these means is the best possible technology available. From here the studies proceeded on the basis of a central question:

What does Brazil want from its armed forces?

The presidential commission seeks an answer to this question.

The services have contributed to a better understanding of this central question. They provided insights into their historical experience and singularly specific knowledge, and will play an important role through debates with the people's elected representatives and in open discussions with civil society, in academic seminars and conventions.

The end of this first phase will bring forth what is needed for a decision by the president and the national congress. Only then can a genuine reorganization of the services take place, along with their subsequent upgrading of materiel, without ignoring intercurrent decisions.

The dialogue with the services is based upon a set of questions applicable to one of the scenarios for use of force presented by the commission.

The list, not an exhaustive one, considers the roles of the military and covers circumstances of both peace and war:

- 1) monitoring of coastal and territorial borders, including air space, during peacetime;
- 2) penetration of the borders or accessing the coast:
 - a. by a paramilitary force with undercover assistance or the compliance of a border state;
 - b. with the open engagement of a border state;
- 3) war in the Amazon against far superior forces;
- 4) war in another region of the world, one that exceeds the limits of a controlled regional conflict, with real or possible use of nuclear weapons;
- 5) Brazilian participation in United Nations peace operations ;
- 6) participation in internal operations to ensure law and order.

In the case of each scenario, the services responded with a general proposal as to the manner by which they would carry out their roles. They furthermore answered the specific questions of:

- 1) Which organizational changes may be necessary to increase efficiency and efficacy?
- 2) What doctrinal changes (operational practices) may be necessary?
- 3) What equipment will be needed? What new equipment will have to be developed or acquired? What is the order of priority of this needed equipment?
- 4) In what manner can each service cooperate with the other two?

The debate within the commission will proceed on the basis of the services' responses to these and other questions.

Consider the first scenario for employment of force. Monitoring the national territory requires different resources for each of the services (waters, borders and air space).

Patrolling the territorial waters is itself a Herculean task, responsible for the defense of 3.5 million km² of ocean¹, in an area of concentrated national petroleum reserves and the sea routes of great portion of Brazil's trade with the world.

Each service is engaged in discussions about its specific needs in contributing to the monitoring of the national territory. These needs are furthermore coordinated among the services, thereby allowing for a combined implementation.

We can surmise, on the basis of responses to the first specific question and subsequent debates, the most appropriate organization of the Brazilian armed forces.

Reorganization and Re-equipping of the Services

The question concerning the need for changes in the makeup and organization of each service should be understood in the broadest sense possible: that of force allocation throughout the national territory according to standards of troop preparedness.

With troop allocation to the north and central-west regions, areas of possible threat unrelated to border countries, the question arises as to their billeting, presently concentrated along the seacoast.

The positioning of monitoring forces along the northern and western borders raises doubts about the location of army troops, now mostly concentrated in the east.

These questions prompt an evaluation of a number of alternatives:

- 1) maintain the current structure,
- 2) shift contingents to other regions, or
- 3) invest in mobility.

The final alternative (3) replaces the paradigm of "being present" with that of "able to be present." Instead of having troops at each location, the country would invest in highly mobile units and firepower that could be rapidly displaced to any part of the territory.

All of the alternatives are on the table, including that of adopting none of them but, rather, a combination of three.

¹ TN: Illegible.

It should furthermore be stressed that new models for each of the services are being considered. If, on one hand, it may be necessary to reevaluate the distribution of army units, one might, on the other, debate the appropriateness of concentrations of military forces in urban areas.

One might examine, furthermore, revising current standards of instruction. In the course of recent conflicts, there have been cases of superior forces facing difficulty when pitted against militarily weaker armies. The same holds true of combat against non-state organizations at times involved in organized crime. The question arises as to whether the Brazilian soldier is being prepared to engage in this type of conflict, both integrating the services with better resources as well preparing him for combat against resistance forces.

The organization of each service cannot take into consideration only the possibility of conventional conflict.

A doctrinal question then arises: along with reorganization, is it necessary to reconsider operational practices along with further interoperability among the services?

Once these questions are resolved, the problem of matériel emerges.

As such, the national defense strategy does not limit itself to once again taking up the discussion of rearmament of the armed forces.

The very term "re-equipping" proves it inadequate. What is sought is not a simple replenishment of lost capacity, or to return the past to the present. Evaluating needs and building new capabilities are linked to the challenges that we can envision for future scenarios. This course of action would alter the logic that currently drives discussions about matériel acquisition.

The new evaluation of needs renders matériel no longer an end in itself but a means to an objective. The work to be carried out is defined along with the means necessary for its completion. This enables the adoption of similar systems for the three services.

It is possible to measure the impact of such changes in the case of the acquisition of new fighters for the Brazilian Air Force. The discussion ongoing for the past few years presents basically one option: that of acquiring, on the basis of Brazilian Air Force criteria, the most up-to-date model possible that would be operable for a relatively long time.

So-called fourth generation models were evaluated, and international bidding had reached its final stage. The bidding process was then suspended. If the option to purchase fourth-generation jets remains open, then it must allow national industries the means to acquire the technology of the platform.

Suspension of the bidding process confirmed the suspicion that no decision had been made: all proposals remain open to consideration.

The reevaluation of scenarios for the use of force opens the way for new possibilities not considered under the previous program.

With monitoring of the territory defined as the services' chief role, the priority of new fighters verses other necessary equipment and systems should be questioned. An option that now presents itself is to delay the purchase and direct all resources towards the other four initiatives, all strictly in keeping with the monitoring of Brazil's territory.

The first initiative involves maximum modernization of existing aircraft and their weapons systems to the point that their structures permit.

The second initiative would be to increase investments in Brazilian projects to develop unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for both surveillance and combat. The use of UAVs can lead to important innovations in the operational practices of the other services as well.

The third possible initiative would be the search for an international partner who is proficient in the technology required to develop a fifth-generation fighter. This would have the disadvantage of delaying latest-generation aircraft for the Brazilian Air Force, but it would accelerate the process of acquiring advanced technology in this sector.

The fourth initiative would be to invest massively in graduating specialists in advanced technologies, especially those that would be called upon in the event of a cyberspace conflict.

The discussion, then, does not revolve around the least costly solution but what will work efficiently towards the implementation of goals.

The same principle applies to the other services. The navy, for example, engages in debates about the role of submarines and ships in the national defense. Opting to favor the use of one or another type of vessel, the navy will need to invest in communications and surveillance systems, and will even have to rely upon communications and surveillance satellites.

The dilemma faced by the navy is apparent.

The navy has three primary roles:

1. monitoring the waters;
2. denying access to the sea; and,
3. projecting its power.

How must these roles be developed? Must we develop them in an equal or in an unequal, but combined way? Should we opt for an equal development, we run the risk of mediocrity on all fronts. Should we opt for an unequal but combined development, then

where will our priority lie between monitoring, denying of use of the sea or the projection of power? The question is a relevant one, and the options are on the table.

Reorganization of the Defense Industry

The second big thematic area in the design of the plan is the reorganization of the defense industry. The important point here is the type of defense industry the country wants and needs.

Brazil can no longer accept a situation in which, in the best of cases, it produces under license products developed in other countries.

Mastery of technology is an objective consistent with the maintenance of a deterrent capability. A national technological capability is a requirement for the acquisition of matériel.

The intention is not, however, to cease forever from purchasing foreign equipment and technology. Investment of resources and time towards the development of technologies available on the international market cannot be considered at this time.

On the other hand, the country must keep pace with these technologies and secure its ability – on the basis of these technologies, in an autonomous fashion or even through international cooperation – to attend to its demands in these areas.

Although the state is indispensable to the survival of the defense industry, the private sector plays an important role. The possibility of transferring military technology to civilian sectors renders private sector participation important. Many technologies now employed in commercial and business aviation, for example, were first developed for military aircraft.

A relationship currently exists between government and private, military and civilian institutions. Military institutions developed, either on their own or through partnerships with public research organizations and private enterprise, diverse armaments and matériel projects (including radar-deflecting material, radar, missiles, UAV systems, etc.).

These initiatives, however, do not always achieve their desired results, whether for lack of the necessary institutional framework for cooperation, budgetary uncertainty or because of the rift separating the parties involved.

As regards actions taken by military institutions, each service must weigh alternative initiatives towards the development of necessary technologies. There is a concern, furthermore, as to the integration of effort on the part of the three services towards this end.

Problems related to the allocation of public funds for defense compromise the use of government purchases as a means of stimulating domestic industrial capacity. Many of the companies that were able to secure niches in the market did so thanks to exports, as domestic orders failed to guarantee any continuity in production.

Through the National Strategic Defense Plan, the Brazilian government should play an active role in the process of consolidating the nation's defense industry. Special procedures governing public purchases can be elaborated that would favor domestic suppliers who are committed to technological modernization programs.

Methods of direct government participation, such as special Golden Share-type activities, in managing the sector's strategic industries could be implemented.

Military Service

Having discussed the structure of the services and the defense industry, it remains for us to consider the question of obligatory military service.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, the armed services functioned as the republic's equalizer. The services provided a space of equal opportunity for all and presented a microcosm of Brazilian society, both socially and geographically.

This situation has changed in recent times. Today, approximately 95% of recruits are de facto volunteers. Obligatory service occurs only under special circumstances, in which there is not among the young volunteers sufficient numbers fitting a given profile that suites the services' technical requirements.

Indeed, military service is becoming voluntary and thereby losing its quality a mirror of society. There are two possible ways of confronting this situation. One is to recognize the natural course of things and to render military service voluntary. The other option would be to maintain mandatory conscription which would, however, open the way to various alternatives.

Should the choice be mandatory conscription, utilization of the current structure should be considered, along with the "citizen soldier" (recruit career-training) experience to improve educational standards – chiefly scientific and technical - of troops recruited each year.

Another option to be considered is that of effective mandatory conscription. Of the approximately 1.5 million young recruits who present themselves annually, 600,000 go through the selection process and only 70,000 to 80,000 are ultimately selected. Only 5% of those enlisted are incorporated into the armed services, and the minister of defense enjoys referendum power only in cases of self-selection.

It is essential that the criteria for recruit selection be reevaluated. We must recognize our ability to take into account, besides those qualities that are adequate to the

needs of the armed forces and the physical and intellectual capacity of the young recruits, criteria for rendering the services a reflection of the heterogeneity of the society at large.

We must, furthermore, once again engage in discussions concerning the implementation of mandatory social service programs, to which young people would contribute their talents to national mobilization efforts and comprise a civilian reserve corps to be employed in national emergencies.

South American Defense Council

Given Brazil's position on the international scene – a position that implies, by necessity, defense-related actions –, the idea of a South-American defense council comprising all of the continent's nations has been taking shape. Such a Brazilian proposal was brought forward at the Special Meeting of Heads of State and the Unasul Government on May 23.

The Brazilian government suggests that the countries of the region have a forum dedicated to the analysis and discussion of defense topics. Such a forum would allow the continent to unite into a conflict-free zone of peace and cooperation once the region attains a position of world prominence.

Affirming South-American identity is one of Unasul's objectives, and Brazil emphasizes the appropriateness of this affirmation in the area of defense as well.

The specific powers of the council are being discussed and will be defined by a consensus of the parties.

The chief powers of the council include that of implementing confidence-building and transparency measures and coordinating positions in multilateral defense forums. Such measures may include, for example, discussions surrounding the defense policy of each country, issuing white papers and integration of industrial bases for defense.

The defense industry requires significant investments that can only be justified by adequate demand. In view of this reality, the structuring of defense material production chains in the region should be evaluated. The potential of each country could be harnessed, thereby generating economies of scale that would justify greater investment.

The region would furthermore benefit from gaining advanced technological knowledge that would have a favorable influence on the entire industrial structure of each country.

The possibility of integrating defense industries is a real one, even in capital- and technology-intensive areas. Some of the fuselage components of Embraer aircraft, for example, are produced by Chile's Enaer.

The expansion of such activity would increase the region's autonomy in providing for its own defense or dual-use equipment.

² Inter-American Defense Board (IID), OAS Hemispheric Security Commission, Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, etc.

Whatever the authority enjoyed by the council, the Brazilian proposal is that it constitute a forum for discussion, and not that the parties be bound to its decisions.

In multilateral defense forums², the council could exercise prior coordination over the region's positions and render them more forceful.

The Brazilian proposal, aware of the lack of a common enemy, does not argue for common armies or permanently joined forces. We are not dealing here with a military alliance in the classic sense.

In the view of Brazil, joint UN peacekeeping operations do not suggest the creation of permanent military structures with this end in mind. The council could become an example of a union of existing efforts to better coordinate activities up to now under the aegis of bilateral contacts between the countries involved and between themselves and the UN.

The council could institute some measures presently employed in the interactions of the region's armed forces. Cooperative programs for training and graduating military personnel, for example, are a tradition in the region. Every year, dozens of officers from neighboring countries attend Brazilian military academies. Upon returning to their countries, these officers help uphold good regional relations.

This exchange, however, is promoted exclusively by South American armed forces when such should be the policy of the states. Raising initiatives to this level might figure among the council's functions.

The council would be founded upon principles and values – including non-intervention in the affairs of other nations, respect for sovereignty, self determination and the territorial integrity of states - shared by the nations of the region.

Moreover, it is critical that the council regard the region's geopolitical realities, such as those that are geographically determined. For example, the La Plata, Amazon and Andean basins should be kept in mind, as well as the sub-regions that border the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean Sea.

Defense and the National Agenda

The creation of a national strategic plan for defense would strive to avoid repeating the error of leading us, on the basis of urgent calls for a solution to problems, to opt for ready-made solutions which, in the long run, prove inadequate.

² Inter-American Defense Board (JID), OAS Hemispheric Security Commission, Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, etc.

The most important aspect of this process, therefore, is to once again be able to place defense issues on the national agenda. This is not simply a case of mobilizing the government, but of reintroducing the theme in everyday social life.

The research underway demonstrates that this is possible. The dialogue between civilian and military sectors concerning defense has been a frank and open one, founded upon absolute transparency and the conviction that all topics are open to discussion. Congressmen, businessmen, academics, military personnel, government and opposition politicians – all of these groups have participated and will continue participating in debates that will define what Brazil expects of its armed forces.

The success achieved up to now allows us a glimpse of the real possibility of ensuring that Brazil has adequate means of providing for its national defense, in a way that draws upon the participation and benefits the entire society. We have to think big.