

The need for Brazil to develop a Strategic Thought on National Security and Defense

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There are institutions that are remembered only when they fail. While they function, they remain almost invisible, silently and bravely sustaining the continuity of the state. Defense belongs to this kind of discreet presence. When there is no declared conflict, when the internal order appears to remain stable and the borders are under no apparent threat, its existence may seem distant from everyday life. Yet it is precisely this absence of rupture that reveals its deepest function. To speak of strategic thinking on defense and security in Brazil requires, before any theoretical formulation, recognizing the structural value of Defense as a permanent element of national sovereignty. It is not merely an instrument of war. It is an institution that materializes the state's capacity to protect its decision-making autonomy and its integrity in the face of an international system that, although interdependent, remains competitive.

Brazil has built its historical trajectory without facing large-scale interstate wars in recent times. This circumstance has shaped a relatively calm social perception of external threats. Regional stability has contributed to defense often being treated as a technical matter, restricted to budget planning or equipment modernization. However, historical tranquility does not eliminate the need for preparedness; on the contrary, it requires lucidity so as not to confuse the absence of conflict with the absence of risk.

Mature strategic thinking is not born out of reaction to crises. It takes shape when a society understands that security is a condition for any long-term national project. It is at this point that Defense reveals itself as a foundation. Its institutional presence ensures that the country has an organized capacity for deterrence, readiness, response, and international respect, even when the scenario appears favorable.

In the contemporary world, the nature of vulnerabilities has changed. A threat does not necessarily announce itself through visible military movements. It may emerge in the disruption of digital flows, the sabotage of critical systems, the manipulation of information chains, or the exploitation of logistical vulnerabilities that compromise the continuity of the

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state without any formal declaration of conflict. Strategic competition takes place on multiple planes, many of them silent. This does not diminish the role of Defense; on the contrary, it expands its relevance. Defense has long ceased to be only the guarding of physical borders. It has come to involve the protection of infrastructures that sustain the functioning of the state and the economy.

Energy networks, communication systems, offshore platforms, and submarine communication cables have become essential components of sovereignty. These elements do not replace territory; they complement it. To ignore them would be to reduce the understanding of security to a dimension already surpassed by technological reality.

Among the many critical infrastructures that operate far from everyday view, this text chooses to highlight submarine communication cables. The choice is not incidental. Although they are rarely recognized as vital in the collective imagination, they are what sustain the continuous flow of information, decisions, transactions, and defense operations without which social, economic, political, and institutional life simply can no longer be maintained.

Beneath the waters of the Atlantic, they connect Brazil to the planet's main information routes.

It is estimated that more than 95 percent of international information traffic passes through these submerged fiber-optic cables, and not through satellites, as is often imagined. There are more than four hundred active systems worldwide, extending over approximately 1.3 million kilometers.

Brazil is part of this network through dozens of routes that connect it to North America, Europe, Africa, and South America.

Trillions of dollars in financial transactions circulate through these cables every day. A single disruption on strategic routes can slow markets, affect stock exchanges, and compromise entire logistics chains. The impact, however, is not limited to the economic sphere. Air defense systems, data exchange among military commands, maritime border monitoring, and integration among space-based sensors depend on the stability of these connections. The command-and-control architecture that sustains the decision-making capacity of the modern state rests, to a large extent, on this submerged infrastructure.

There is also the cognitive dimension. Digital platforms and social networks that shape opinion and influence political decisions in real time also depend on this connectivity. In a crisis scenario, financial instability combined with communicational noise could generate

amplified effects on legitimacy and social cohesion. Contemporary defense therefore involves protecting the information environment.

This reality has direct effects on the Armed Forces. If the aerospace domain structures the superior surveillance of the territory, the Brazilian Army plays a decisive role in the land dimension of sovereignty. In a country with extensive and complex borders, crossing areas of dense forest and regions of difficult access, physical presence must be accompanied by technological intelligence. In this context, the Integrated Border Monitoring System, SISFRON, assumes strategic relevance. More than conventional surveillance, it integrates sensors, radars, secure communications, and real-time data processing, structuring an informational architecture applied to the territory. The contemporary border is not merely a geographic line; it is a space of flows.

Illicit movements and transnational dynamics require early detection and coordinated response. By incorporating monitoring technology and command-and-control systems, the Army transforms territorial surveillance into an integrated information system. The protection of land sovereignty comes to depend on the same logic that sustains submarine cables and digital networks: secure connectivity.

In the maritime environment, the Brazilian Navy faces a challenge proportional to the scale of the Blue Amazon. The extensive Exclusive Economic Zone concentrates trade routes, energy resources, offshore infrastructure, and strategic submarine cables. Protecting this space requires continuous presence and monitoring. The Blue Amazon Management System, SISGAZ, integrates coastal radars, maritime sensors, satellites, and command centers, consolidating expanded situational awareness over the maritime domain.

In a scenario in which disputes over resources and disruptions to trade routes can generate systemic impacts, the Navy acts as a guarantor of strategic stability in the South Atlantic. The protection of energy platforms, merchant vessels, and submerged infrastructure is part of a security architecture that combines physical presence and informational superiority.

The Air Force, in turn, projects this logic into the aerospace domain. Airspace surveillance, radar integration, satellite protection, and the coordination of strategic communications connect the physical plane to the informational one. The control of outer space has become a structuring axis of contemporary defense.

The Army, Navy, and Air Force now operate in an environment in which the cyber dimension and data management are inseparable from operational activity. Command-and-control systems, encrypted networks, and interoperability among the Services structure

national defense. Sovereignty is not only territorial occupation or maritime patrol; it is the capacity to understand and respond in real time to movements that unfold simultaneously in the physical and informational domains.

Strategic thinking, however, does not emerge from operations alone. It is built through reflection and education. It is at this point that the Brazilian Superior School of Defense and the Brazilian War College assume singular relevance.

By bringing civilians and military personnel together around the debate on national security, they help strengthen a shared understanding of the challenges facing the Brazilian state. Developing strategic thinking means consolidating a long-term vision, in which structuring programs are not interrupted by conjunctural fluctuations. Countries that develop a consistent strategic culture are able to align defense, technological innovation, and economic development.

Brazil has professional Armed Forces, committed to the Constitution and to sovereignty. The challenge is not to justify their existence, but to consolidate their centrality in the collective imagination. External security and internal development are complementary dimensions.

Brazil does not lack potential. It lacks alignment between material resources and strategic vision. By strengthening the Ministry of Defense, valuing the land, maritime, and aerospace domains, and investing in the intellectual education promoted by institutions such as the Brazilian Superior School of Defense and the Brazilian War College, the country does not prepare for conflict; it consolidates the conditions for sustained peace.