

Amazonia: climate issue, security and defense in the future

Amazônia: questão climática, segurança e defesa no futuro

Amazonia: cuestión climática, seguridad y defensa en el futuro

Amazonie : question climatique, sécurité et défense à l'avenir

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Abstract

This article analyzes the growing link between the climate issue and the security and defense domains, with emphasis on the Amazon region. It starts with the recognition that the natural environment, especially the Amazonia, has become a central element in contemporary geopolitical disputes. The objective is to investigate how the climate crisis can be securitized, becoming an instrument of international pressure and a risk to national sovereignty. The research adopts a qualitative approach, with literature review and documentary analysis of strategic and normative frameworks. The results indicate that, although Brazil has a robust environmental legal framework, the absence of a grand national strategy integrating security, development, and the climate issue may render the Brazilian state vulnerable to environmental instrumentalization by foreign powers. It is concluded, therefore, that it is necessary to strengthen sustainable public policies and defense strategies that incorporate the climate variable, all included in a grand national strategy that confers synergy to the process.

Keywords: securitization; environmental geopolitics; strategic sustainability; sovereignty; grand strategy.

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa a crescente vinculação entre a questão climática e os domínios da segurança e defesa, com ênfase na região amazônica. Parte-se do reconhecimento de que o meio ambiente natural, especialmente a Amazônia, tornou-se elemento central nas disputas geopolíticas contemporâneas. O objetivo é investigar como a crise climática pode ser securitizada, convertendo-se em instrumento de pressão internacional e risco à soberania nacional. A pesquisa adota uma abordagem qualitativa, com revisão bibliográfica e análise documental de marcos estratégicos e normativos. Assim, os resultados indicam que, embora o Brasil possua um arcabouço jurídico ambiental robusto, a ausência de uma grande estratégia nacional que integre segurança, desenvolvimento e a questão climática, pode tornar vulnerável o Estado brasileiro à instrumentalização ambiental por potências estrangeiras. Conclui-se, portanto, que é necessário reforçar políticas públicas sustentáveis e estratégias de defesa que incorporem a variável climática, inclusas todas em uma grande estratégia nacional que confira sinergia ao processo.

Palavras-chave: securitização; geopolítica ambiental; sustentabilidade estratégica; soberania; grande estratégia.


Resumen

Este artículo analiza la creciente vinculación entre la cuestión climática y los ámbitos de la seguridad y la defensa, con énfasis en la región amazónica. Parte del reconocimiento de que el medio ambiente natural, especialmente la Amazonia, se ha convertido en un elemento central en las disputas geopolíticas contemporáneas. El objetivo es investigar cómo la crisis climática puede ser securitizada, convirtiéndose en un instrumento de presión internacional y en un riesgo para la soberanía nacional. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, con revisión bibliográfica y análisis documental de marcos estratégicos y normativos. Los resultados indican que, aunque Brasil posee un sólido marco jurídico ambiental, la ausencia de una gran estrategia nacional que integre seguridad, desarrollo y la cuestión climática puede volver vulnerable al Estado brasileño frente a la instrumentalización ambiental por parte de potencias extranjeras. Se concluye, por lo tanto, que es necesario reforzar políticas públicas sostenibles y estrategias de defensa que incorporen la variable climática, todas incluidas en una gran estrategia nacional que otorgue sinergia al proceso.

Palabras clave: securitización; geopolítica ambiental; sostenibilidad estratégica; soberanía; gran estrategia.

Résumé

Cet article analyse le lien croissant entre la question climatique et les domaines de la sécurité et de la défense, avec un accent particulier sur la région amazonienne. Il part de la reconnaissance que l'environnement naturel, en particulier l'Amazonie, est devenu un élément central des disputes géopolitiques contemporaines. L'objectif est d'examiner comment la crise climatique peut être sécurisée, se transformant en instrument de pression internationale et en risque pour la souveraineté nationale. La recherche adopte une approche qualitative, avec une revue de la littérature et une analyse documentaire des cadres stratégiques et normatifs. Les résultats indiquent que, bien que le Brésil dispose d'un cadre juridique environnemental robuste, l'absence d'une grande stratégie nationale intégrant la sécurité, le développement et la



question climatique peut rendre l'État brésilien vulnérable à l'instrumentalisation environnementale par des puissances étrangères. Il en résulte qu'il est nécessaire de renforcer les politiques publiques durables et les stratégies de défense intégrant la variable climatique, toutes incluses dans une grande stratégie nationale qui confère une synergie au processus.

Mots-clés: sécuritisation; géopolitique environnementale; durabilité stratégique; souveraineté; grande stratégie.

1 INTRODUCTION

The climate issue emerges as one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, given that its implications go beyond the limits of ecology and penetrate the fields of geopolitics, economics, international security, and national defense. Amazonia, due to its complex reality, plays a prominent role in this debate. Its territory, shared by nine countries, including Brazil, can be the object of symbolic and material disputes involving state and non-state actors, mobilizing environmental, economic, and strategic interests.

In this scenario, the prominence of environmental issues as a vector for reconfiguring power relations in the international system is growing. The Brazilian Amazonia is, at the same time, a national environmental asset and a sensitive geopolitical space, whose governance raises concerns about sovereignty, security, and sustainable development. The increasing visibility of the region generates external pressures that, under the guise of environmental preservation, can take on the contours of political, economic, and normative interference.

This article, therefore, focuses on the following problem: to what extent can the climate issue represent a threat to Brazilian sovereignty in the Amazonia, based on the logic of securitization proposed by the Copenhagen School?

As hypotheses, it is considered that (i) the international environmental agenda has been used as an instrument of symbolic and economic coercion by central powers; and (ii) Brazil's vulnerability increases in the absence of a Grand Strategy, conceived here as the integrated and long-term arrangement that guides national goals and articulates sectoral means and policies, which incorporates climate security in a cross-cutting manner.

The overall objective of this work is to analyze the implications of the climate issue for security and defense in the Amazon region, in the present and future, from the perspective of the Copenhagen School. As specific objectives, it intends to present the theoretical foundations of securitization; discuss the specificities of the Amazonia and the environmental and strategic challenges that surround it; and examine the contemporary mechanisms of cooperation and domination associated with the climate agenda.

In this way, the article proves relevant in its proposal to articulate the environmental debate with international security studies, in order to contribute to a critical understanding of the dynamics that pressure national sovereignty in the name of sustainability. In addition, it seeks to offer input for the formulation of public policies consistent with Brazilian strategic interests.


Methodologically, a qualitative approach is adopted with systematic bibliographic and documentary analysis. The empirical corpus is composed of national strategic documents (National Defense Policy - PND, National Defense Strategy - END, Brazilian Defense White Paper - LBDN), international treaties and agreements on environment and security, reports from the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), and resolutions from climate conferences (COPs). Selection criteria included: (i) centrality to security, climate, and the Amazon, (ii) source authority, and (iii) accessibility and completeness. The analysis technique employed was the securitization matrix triangulated with theoretical literature, and the procedure involved independent double reading, thematic coding, and analytical synthesis to integrate theory and evidence.

The article is structured in four sections, in addition to this introduction. The first section presents the theoretical foundations of the Copenhagen School, highlighting the concept of securitization. The second section addresses the Amazonia as a strategic space in the face of climate change. The third analyzes the relationship between international cooperation and domination, in light of the climate issue. The fourth discusses the impacts of the environmental agenda on national security and defense policies. Foresight principles are included throughout the sections. Finally, in the concluding remarks, the ideas discussed are summarized and future perspectives are outlined.

2 COPENHAGEN SCHOOL AND COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY

Following the end of the Cold War, changes occurred that catalyzed transformations in how international security came to be understood. That is, with the decline of the bipolar order, a theoretical framework was constructed to seek alternatives to the idea of what should be understood as security, shifting the view that external military threats are the only ones to be considered a danger to a State.

At this point, it is worth mentioning how environmentalism was incorporated into security studies. The pioneering work was done by Lester Brown (1977), with the publication of *Redefining National Security*. Following this, Richard Ullman published *Redefining Security*



in 1983. The catalytic role of the Brundtland Report, which advocated for broadening the scope of the concept of security to encompass the potential deleterious effects of environmental degradation, should also be considered (COMISSÃO MUNDIAL SOBRE MEIO AMBIENTE E DESENVOLVIMENTO – CMMAD, 1991, p. 21).

Within this context, the Copenhagen School emerged, formed by authors such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, which proposed a reconfiguration of the concept of security through the theory of securitization, articulating the idea of comprehensive security, incorporating threats of a political, economic, societal, and environmental nature. This theory is based on the principle that security is not merely an objective condition, but a political-discursive act by which a securitizing actor identifies an existential threat to a referential object, seeking to convince an audience of the need to adopt exceptional measures to neutralize it.

Dos Santos (2021, p. 13) points out that "the Copenhagen School, by proposing the progressive incorporation of new themes and actors in security studies, based on its own conceptual framework, broadened the fields of analysis, justifying the comprehensive name by which it became known."¹

According to Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde (1998, p. 23), security is “the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics.” Thus, the securitization process comprises three main stages: (i) Non-politicized, when the issue is not the subject of public debate or relevant government action; (ii) Politicized, it enters the public agenda and is addressed within the framework of ordinary policies and institutions, with resource allocation and the formulation of norms; and (iii) Securitized, it is constructed as an existential threat that demands extraordinary actions.

This movement is initiated by a securitizing actor and validated by an audience, characterizing itself as an intersubjective process. Thus, a topic can move from a "non-politicized" to a "politicized" state and, finally, be securitized, that is, treated as an existential threat that justifies actions outside the ordinary political norm. The ideal result, according to the authors, is desecuritization, when a topic returns to treatment within the ordinary political sphere (Buzan; Wæver; de Wilde, 1998, p. 29).

It is noted that the structure proposed by the Copenhagen School allows for an understanding of the instrumentalization of themes such as security, with particular emphasis on the climate issue. Climate change, due to its cross-cutting impact – affecting water resources,

¹ Free translation by the translator from the original: “a Escola de Copenhague ao propor a incorporação progressiva de novos temas e atores nos estudos de segurança, com base numa estrutura conceitual própria ampliou os campos de análise, justificando a denominação abrangente como ficou conhecida”.

biodiversity, public health, agriculture, infrastructure, and social stability – is becoming increasingly susceptible to securitization by state and non-state actors.

Dos Santos (2021, p. 14) explains that:

The securitization theory proposed by the Copenhagen School embodies an intersubjective process in which the problem is presented as a threat to the existence of a given referential object, requiring exceptional and emergency measures to solve it. These measures or actions are sometimes outside the conventional limits of customary political praxis.²

In this scenario, the risk emerges that environmental discourse will be manipulated as an instrument of international coercion, transforming the climate issue into a vector of geopolitical power. As Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde (1998) observe that two problems stand out in this sector: firstly, environmental threats are mostly unintentional; and secondly, there is still great uncertainty about what kind of political structures environmental issues will produce.

At this point, it is worth highlighting that high levels of uncertainty and risk are factors that point to the need for the use of prospective scenarios, within the set of strategic planning tools, for the construction of robust and resilient public policies that allow decision-makers to mitigate risks and reduce the degree of future uncertainties.

As a consolidated instrument within the scope of management, strategic planning has, among its tools, the construction of prospective scenarios, which consists of projecting different future possibilities based on critical variables (Marcial; Grumbach, 2008, p. 12).

Therefore, the effects of environmental securitization are visible in practices such as the imposition of environmental tariff barriers and trade restrictions based on ecological standards. The use of legal and media mechanisms by central powers and coalitions of international actors can represent a subtle way of subjecting the sovereignty of developing countries, such as Brazil, to the normative logic of foreign interests disguised as environmental defense.

It is important to emphasize that, for Buzan; Wæver; Wilde (1998, p. 31), the concept of threat is not an objective reality in itself, but an intersubjective construction: it is the shared acceptance between actor and audience that legitimizes the classification of something as an existential threat. In the climate field, this means that external pressures only translate into effective securitization when there is discourse accepted as such.

It is understood that the concept requires the intentionality of an actor and acceptance by the audience, which means that the climate threat only becomes a securitized threat if there is a successful discourse in this regard. The growing international attention on the Pan-Amazon,

² Free translation by the translator.



for example, can be read as part of an attempt to construct a discursive global threat, with implications that go beyond the environmental field and touch on sovereignty.

Consequently, it is possible to observe that, among the existing scenarios within securitization, lies the challenge of responding to climate change without allowing it to be used as a pretext for the erosion of national sovereignty. The absence of a robust Grand National Strategy that integrates climate security increases Brazil's vulnerability to external securitization, resulting in a possible difficulty in building its own environmental agenda, balancing environmental protection and economic development.

For conceptual purposes, the Grand National Strategy transcends the strictly geopolitical sphere and also assumes a constitutional dimension. In the context of the Democratic Rule of Law, the Constitution establishes the parameters that guide the strategic actions of the Brazilian State, while the Grand Strategy acts as an instrument for realizing the fundamental objectives enshrined in Article 3, paragraphs I to IV, of the Federal Constitution (Góes, 2024, pp. 35-36).

In summary, the Copenhagen School approach provides an analytical foundation for understanding how political processes involve the emergence of climate crisis and can result in global tension. As explained, this approach broadens the view of security beyond the military dimension, allowing us to understand how discourses shape international practices and directly affect the capacity for self-determination of states in environmentally sensitive regions such as the Amazonia.

Therefore, the complexity involved in climate issues is evident, highlighting that, to address such a relevant topic, experts point to the viability of using strategic planning techniques and tools that allow decision-makers to guide their activities with flexibility.

According to Porter (1989), scenarios can be perceived as a set of plausible hypotheses about the uncertainties that may influence the prospecting object, with a consistent view of future reality. Using Porter's own words (1989, p. 15), we have the concept that “scenarios are an internally consistent view of future reality, based on a set of plausible assumptions about the uncertainties that may influence the prospecting object.”³

Thus, the use of prospective scenarios is suggested in order to visualize new possibilities and routes. This confirms the need to use tools for analyzing future reality, lending quality to the planning of public policies.

³Free translation by the translator.

Understanding that there may be an increase in pressure from international groups and central powers, whether through attempts to impose international norms on Brazilian territory or through the difficulty in managing interests in sensitive regions, it is also necessary to align issues related to the Amazon, which is done below.

3 AMAZONIA AND THE CLIMATE ISSUE

The Pan-Amazon region is recognized as the largest tropical biome in the world, encompassing nine South American countries. In Brazil, the area corresponding to the Legal Amazon extends over approximately 6.9 million km², representing 58.93% of the national territory (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA – IBGE, 2023, p. 65; ORGANIZAÇÃO DO TRATADO DE COOPERAÇÃO AMAZÔNICA – OTCA, 2017, p. 2).

When the approach is from a regional perspective, it becomes known as Pan-Amazon and extends across the territory of Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, and Suriname, as well as the overseas territory of French Guiana. This transnational dimension reinforces the need for coordinated policies that, within the logic of securitization, function as endogenous responses favorable to the defense of the Amazon, and that refute the existential threat contained in international discourse.



Source: Costa (2020).

This expanse is equivalent to the largest continuous tropical forest on the planet and includes not only the dense equatorial forest, but also transition areas to other South American



biomes, forming a complex ecological and hydrological network (OTCA, 2017, p. 23). In this sense, international discourses that link global climate balance to Amazonian preservation can function as securitization acts, shifting the debate from the political plane to one of existential urgency.

From Sachs's (2008) perspective, the future of humanity will depend on the fate of the Amazon rainforest. Far from being the "Garden of Eden" or the "green hell" portrayed by extreme views, the Amazon demands recognition beyond its ecological and strategic importance, in order to incorporate environmental preservation into development policies that reconcile the sustainable exploitation of its resources with the maintenance of the sovereignty of the countries that share it.

Although common, describing the Amazon as the "lungs of the world" is a scientific misconception. The popular metaphor misinforms by suggesting the Amazon as the planet's main supplier of oxygen (Oliveira, 1991), illustrating how environmental narratives, even if flawed, can be mobilized to influence perceptions and justify interventions, highlighting the discursive dimension of securitization. In reality, its net contribution to global oxygen production is practically nil, as the oxygen released is consumed by respiration and biomass decomposition, requiring a critical review of this environmental rhetoric.

Although the importance of the Amazon is recognized, there is a notable lack of international consensus on appropriate measures for its preservation. The approaches proposed at the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on climate change, such as COP 21 in Paris (2015), COP 3 in Kyoto (1997), COP 26 in Glasgow (2021), and COP 28 in Dubai (2023), reveal the disparity between the expectations of developed countries and the interests of Amazonian countries. This scenario reveals the politicized stage of the Amazonian issue: the topic is on the public and institutional agenda, mobilizing resources and decisions, but without any legitimized exceptional actions that would characterize full securitization.

Therefore, it is understood that, when compared to other regions of the country, the Amazon may present peculiarities, such as geographic isolation and the need for specific public policies for development that is responsive to the environment. Dos Santos (2021, p. 42) makes an important point that the debates surrounding the Amazon are intrinsically connected to other terms:

Discussions about the Amazon are interwoven with other related terms such as borders, environment, indigenous peoples, traditional populations, economic exploitation, sovereignty, scarcity of natural resources, forest, water, biodiversity, preservation, sustainable development, and others. From this perspective, and beyond regional geographic determinism, the conceptual dimensions of these terms point to the need for complex and comprehensive

solutions, which must be agreed upon multilaterally by all Amazonian stakeholders.⁴

This tension manifests itself in proposals that, although cloaked in environmental rhetoric, can serve as instruments of diplomatic and economic coercion. A prime example is the Triple A Corridor project (Andes-Amazon-Atlantic), proposed by the Colombian government and supported by other international actors. The initiative aimed to create a continuous ecological corridor between the Andes and the Atlantic, crossing strategic territories.

However, it was harshly criticized by Brazilian authorities, especially in the defense sector, who pointed to the absence of bilateral dialogue and the risk of international interference under the pretext of environmental preservation (Dos Santos, 2021). The Brazilian reaction highlights how the Amazon can become a field of geopolitical disputes disguised as ecological concerns.


Furthermore, the complexity of the Amazonian biome goes beyond its ecological dimension. It is a region marked by socioeconomic inequalities, a chronic lack of infrastructure, a shortage of public services, and logistical difficulties. These characteristics hinder the implementation of effective and sustainable environmental policies. As Bezerra (2013, p. 170) points out, the development of the Amazon demonstrates a possibility of economic development in harmony with local particularities, that is, an approach that articulates sovereignty, regional cooperation, and a minimum infrastructure of connectivity.

The region's internal weaknesses make it even more vulnerable to external pressures. The lack of unity of thought at the international level regarding preservation criteria and unilateral initiatives reinforce the need for a well-defined Brazilian strategic position. This can be seen in the increasing use of environmental tariff barriers by developed countries, such as the requirement for green certifications for agricultural imports, which exemplifies how the climate agenda can be used as an instrument of economic domination (Ribas; Riet, 2025, p. 130).

At this stage, the focus is on future possibilities and risks arising from the conduct of the Brazilian State and the actions of other actors that may not align with Brazilian interests for the future of the region

Ribas, Dos Santos, and Konno (2025, p. 303) explain that "projecting the future differs from prospecting the future." The former seeks historical series and short-term data;

⁴ Free translation by the translator.



prospecting, on the other hand, is directed towards the medium and long term, in order to identify megatrends and possible disruptions. Therefore, scenarios must be constructed in strategic planning to minimize uncertainties within a pre-established time horizon.

Thus, it becomes clear how imperative the use of prospective scenarios is in supporting the strategic planning of the Amazon region in order to promote the robustness, flexibility, and resilience of future public policies for that region.

In short, the Amazon should be understood not only as an environmental asset, but as a strategic territory whose preservation requires sovereign environmental governance, based on cooperation among stakeholders. It therefore demands coordinated endogenous actions that reconcile conservation, development, and sovereignty, neutralizing attempts at exogenous securitization and reinforcing the leading role of the Amazonian states.

4 CLIMATE ISSUE, COOPERATION AND DOMINATION

International concern for the environment gained momentum starting in the 1960s, driven by climatic events such as the emergence of acid rain, the destruction of the ozone layer, and the recognition of the greenhouse effect as a global phenomenon caused primarily by human activities.

In the United States of America, the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* (1962) stands out as a symbolic milestone in the environmental awakening. It denounced the impacts of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), an insecticide widely used at the time, on ecosystems, becoming a reference point for the modern environmental movement.

Since then, environmental issues have become increasingly important topics in international forums, especially after the Stockholm Conference (1972) and the publication of *The Limits to Growth* by the Club of Rome, which projected catastrophic scenarios if the model of unchecked economic growth persisted (Lago, 2013, p. 24). These initiatives anticipated the contemporary debate on the planet's limits and the costs of development. However, they also revealed a central tension: who will bear the costs of ecological transitions? Which countries will be able to impose their paradigms of environmental preservation?

The Copenhagen School's theory of securitization offers a lens through which to understand how this debate can be instrumentalized. According to Buzan and Hansen (2009, p. 214), security "does something" (securitizes) by framing an issue as an existential threat. In the environmental sector, this framing allows for the legitimization of exceptional measures, including sanctions and trade restrictions, as a way to pressure states to adopt specific policies.

Therefore, the discourse of security not only describes a threat, but produces that threat by naming it as such, legitimizing exceptional actions that deviate from the normal course of politics. Securitizing actors, such as political leaders or international institutions, can present environmental destruction as an existential threat, justifying extraordinary measures such as sanctions, trade barriers, or diplomatic interference.

In the case of the Amazon, this logic manifests itself when international actors present the forest as a global reference point and question Brazil's ability to preserve it, shifting the issue to a level where sovereign decisions can be relativized in the name of "planetary survival."


Brazil, however, has a robust environmental legal framework. The 1988 Federal Constitution enshrined environmental protection as a fundamental right (Article 225), establishing robust policies such as the Forest Code (Law No. 12,651, of May 25, 2012), the National Environmental Policy (Law No. 6,938, of August 31, 1981), and control mechanisms such as the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) and the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC).

However, the existence of these norms does not prevent the country from being the target of securitization narratives, since securitization is less about objective capabilities and more about discursive constructions accepted by an international audience. At the international level, the effects of climate change are felt unevenly. Most greenhouse gas emissions are generated by a limited number of industrialized countries, while the environmental impacts fall disproportionately on developing nations (Giddens, 2010, p. 268).

Climate conferences, such as Kyoto (1997), Paris (2015) and Glasgow (2021), show that developed countries tend to defend stricter regulatory standards, while developing countries emphasize the right to growth and climate justice. This divergence fuels a politicized scenario, in which the environmental agenda is negotiated politically, but it still does not justify, in the Brazilian case, exceptional actions that would characterize full securitization.

The case of the Arctic exemplifies this logic: with the melting of polar ice, powers such as the United States, Russia, China, and Canada began to compete for maritime routes and the natural resources available there, prioritizing strategic and economic interests even in the face of ecological warnings. The prevalence of geopolitics over ecopolitics reveals how the environmental agenda can be relativized in the face of national interests, reinforcing the thesis that the discourse of preservation can serve as a pretext for practices of domination (Viola; Franchini, 2012).

The imposition of sustainable standards disconnected from local socioeconomic realities exemplifies this trend, simultaneously delegitimizing sovereign environmental



management policies compatible with the development interests of peripheral countries. Thus, under the guise of environmental preservation, a new form of discursive colonialism is constructed, in which ecology serves as a vector of power and international influence.

In the case of the Amazon, the ecosystem is frequently constructed as a global reference point, opening the way for the relativization of the sovereignty of Amazonian countries. Such discourse, even if disguised as environmental concern, can mask geopolitical disputes over strategic resources, such as water, minerals, and biodiversity, and connects to Viola and Franchini's (2012) critique of the political use of ecopolitics as a pretext for practices of domination.

Environmental security also reflects epistemic and material disputes between the Global North and South. As Buzan and Hansen (2009, p. 129) point out, the first studies on environmental degradation emerged “within overlapping scientific and policy agendas,” that is, from technical-normative agendas that tended to preserve the perspective of the central countries.

However, critical approaches – such as Postcolonial Studies, Peace Research, and Human Security – highlight that the impacts of environmental degradation fall disproportionately on peripheral countries, even though these have historically contributed less intensely to emissions. This asymmetry is visible in climate conferences, where developed countries push for regulatory commitments that often limit the possibilities for economic growth in developing countries, creating new forms of environmental subordination.

It can be seen that the imposition of environmental restrictions can, therefore, become a tool of economic and diplomatic domination, through mechanisms such as environmental tariff barriers, conditionalities for international financing, and asymmetrical trade agreements. The Amazon is part of this global landscape of dispute.

With its vast biodiversity and sources of strategic resources, the biome becomes the target of external pressures, including in the form of securitization narratives. According to Antiquera (2006, p. 19), the growing global attention to the Amazon due to its ecological relevance raises the alarm among Amazonian countries about possible attempts to relativize their sovereignties. As Santos (2018, p. 105) warns, the scarcity of natural resources and environmental vulnerability increase the risk of external securitization over the Amazonian territory.

The climate issue emerges, therefore, as an arena of necessary cooperation, but also as a potential field of domination. The challenge lies in building a balance between the objectives of environmental preservation and the rights to sovereign development. This reconciliation

requires a leading role for the state, active environmental diplomacy, and public policies that integrate sustainability and strategic autonomy.

5 SECURITY, DEFENSE AND ENVIRONMENT


The growing visibility of the climate issue on the international stage has increased the importance of its articulation with the security and defense sectors. In an increasingly interdependent world, environmental guidelines have come to be used as mechanisms for international insertion and credibility. For Brazil, a country with a vast territory and immense biodiversity, especially in the Amazon region, this implies aligning its public policies with international norms without relinquishing sovereignty and national strategic interests.

They must also consider the so-called "deep forces" (Duroselle, 2000, p. 186), which are geographical, demographic, economic, cultural, and sentimental structural conditions that shape the perception and response of States. These factors influence the context in which securitizing speech acts about the Amazon gain traction, increasing receptiveness to narratives that seek to shift the issue to the securitized stage or maintain its management within the politicized sphere.

Environmental security, in this context, goes beyond the simple preservation of ecosystems: it becomes a fundamental variable for political, energy, food, and water stability. Prospective scenarios, such as *Brazil 2035* by Ipea and Assecor (Marcial *et al.*, 2017, p. 191), indicate that the Amazon will continue to be a focus of tension, both due to the strategic value of its resources and the international pressures seeking to influence its environmental governance.

Climate threats, therefore, do not act in isolation. They tend to catalyze or exacerbate existing threats, such as migration crises, border tensions, and disputes over energy resources. As Krausmann *et al.* (2009, p. 14) argue, the increase in global demand and per capita consumption imposes significant pressures on the extraction and use of resources, intensifying the risks of instability.

In this scenario, the centrality of the State as an agent of security is reaffirmed. Despite contemporary criticisms of the State's capacity, it is the State that holds the legitimate monopoly on the use of force and the responsibility for guaranteeing territorial integrity and the well-being of its population (Ferrajoli, 2002, p. 48). Sovereignty, in this sense, constitutes a non-negotiable pillar for the definition of environmental and defense policies.



Environmental security, in this context, must be incorporated as a strategic variable in the formulation of a Grand Strategy. In the Brazilian case, the National Defense Policy (PND), the National Defense Strategy (END), and the Brazilian Defense White Paper (LBDN) form the instrumental core. In light of securitization theory, this arrangement delineates when environmental risks remain in the politicized stage (ordinary management) and when they demand exceptional measures of defense, sustainable development, or resilience in the face of external pressures.

However, from a securitization perspective, these documents remain predominantly in the politicization stage: they acknowledge strategic relevance, but do not establish mechanisms that integrate the climate goals of the National Plan on Climate Change (PNMC) with defense actions, nor measures that characterize a fully securitized response, which reinforces institutional fragmentation and the difficulty of translating rhetoric into practice.

The PND, nevertheless, establishes a formal link between the environment and security, which allows us to infer that the Brazilian State admits the possibility of securitizing the environmental sector. This provision aligns with the logic of environmental securitization by recognizing that climate and environmental threats can be framed as risks to national security. In section 2 of the PND, entitled "The context of the National Defense Policy," item 2.3.5 states the following:

(...) the global expansion of human activities, resulting from economic and population growth, has led to an increased demand for natural resources. Therefore, the intensification of disputes over maritime areas, spatial dominance, and sources of fresh water, food, mineral resources, biodiversity, and energy cannot be ignored. Such issues may lead to interference in internal affairs or controversies over interests in spaces subject to state sovereignty, creating potential conflict scenarios⁵ (Brasil, 2020, p. 17).

Beyond the Brazilian case, international experiences indicate the growing incorporation of the environmental agenda into defense structures. The European Union, for example, announced in 2021 the creation of an environmental protection force within its security and defense policy, aimed at actions in areas vulnerable to climate disasters and ecological conflicts. Such initiatives exemplify the politicized or even securitized phase of the environmental agenda in certain contexts, according to the Copenhagen School.

Amazonian geopolitics, therefore, needs to be understood as a space of symbolic and material dispute. Meira Mattos (2005) already warned of the need for integration of the national

⁵ Free translation by the translator.

territory through the strategic occupation of borders, aiming at protection against the internationalization of the Amazon and the preservation of its natural resources.

In the same vein, Bertha Becker (2005) warns of the transformation of contemporary geopolitics, which acts diffusely on the decisions of States, using unconventional instruments to influence the use and control of territories.


Geopolitics has always been characterized by the presence of pressures of all kinds, interventions in the international arena ranging from the mildest to wars and territorial conquests. Initially, these actions had the State as their fundamental subject, as it was understood as the sole source of power, the only representation of politics, and disputes were analyzed only between States. Today, geopolitics acts, above all, through the power to influence the decision-making of States regarding the use of territory, since the conquest of territories and colonies have become very expensive. Thus, the vast geographical areas delimited by multinational borders, as well as a very rich patrimony to be explored together with its Amazonian partners, evoke international threats and covetousness over the region.⁶

The integration of the Amazon as an object of international security must be analyzed in light of Critical Security Studies, especially the theory of securitization. For Buzan and Hansen (2009, p. 214), securitization means shifting a topic from the field of ordinary politics to that of urgency, legitimizing exceptional actions.

In this context, the Amazon is not merely a tropical forest, but a referential object whose protection has been invoked in international discourses that, while calling for environmental preservation, may relativize the sovereignty of the Pan-Amazonian States. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), created with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and protecting the territorial integrity of the Amazonian countries, represents a multilateral institutional response to these securitizing narratives (Dos Santos; Ribas, 2024, p. 17).

The actions of the ACTO reveal that multilateralism among Amazonian countries can function as endogenous securitization strategies, in which the Amazonian states themselves recognize risks and formulate joint responses, reinforcing autonomy in the face of external pressures. This post-hegemonic model is relevant to the Global South, as it integrates environmental cooperation and the defense of sovereignty. According to Santos and Ribas (2024, p. 20), the creation of the organization aimed to react to subliminal discourses that relativized Brazilian sovereignty and sought to build a cohesive diplomatic front against the internationalization of the biome.

⁶ Free translation by the translator.



This arrangement demonstrates that the Pan-Amazonian countries recognize the importance of environmental cooperation but reject any attempt at geopolitical subordination in the name of ecology. The ACTO, therefore, embodies a model of endogenous securitization – not as an imposition from the outside in, but as a collective action in defense of sovereignty, environmental preservation, and regional sustainability. The articulation between sovereignty and environmental security, in this sense, takes on distinct contours in the Global South. While in central countries environmental security tends to be understood as a technical-normative imperative with a universalizing vocation, in the geopolitical peripheries it is intertwined with the affirmation of autonomy and resistance to dependence.

Buzan and Hansen (2009, p. 129) draw attention to the tendency of traditional approaches to environmental security to maintain the State as a referential object, but to ignore structural inequalities in the international system. The ATCO, on the other hand, emerges as an example of a post-hegemonic environmental security initiative: anchored in regional experiences, geared towards emancipation, and founded on cooperation among equals.

Given this, it becomes essential to build defense policies that articulate sovereignty, development, protection, and environmental defense. The complexity of contemporary challenges demands strategic planning based on prospective scenarios, broad inter-institutional dialogue, and the valorization of the Amazon as a national asset, whose defense is an inseparable part of the country's project.

The growing global interdependence and transnational environmental challenges have brought to light a structural tension between the paradigms of sovereignty and environmental security. While the former are based on the principle of self-determination of peoples and non-intervention (Dallari, 1981, p. 109), the latter demands international coordination, binding commitments, and often partial renunciation of the exclusive decision-making authority of States. For Amazonian countries, this dilemma is particularly acute: how to cooperate internationally without relinquishing control over their territories, turning to national development?

The ACTO offers a unique model for overcoming this dichotomy. By articulating sovereignty and multilateralism among countries that share the same ecosystem, it allows environmental governance to be exercised with legitimacy and territorial knowledge. As Dos Santos, Ribas, and Konno (2023, p. 13) emphasize, globalization has caused selective erosions of sovereignty, mainly affecting peripheral countries; in this context, the ACTO functions as a counter-hegemonic instrument, allowing regional solutions to global problems. This

arrangement reinforces the idea that sovereignty should not be seen as an obstacle to cooperation, but as a condition for fair and equitable environmental governance.

This perspective contrasts with that of sectors in the Global North, which frequently advocate forms of "global environmental governance" that, in practice, operate as mechanisms of surveillance and conditioning. Thus, an emancipated environmental security – as proposed by critical studies – needs to be rooted in regional arrangements such as the ACTO, which reconcile environmental protection with sovereignty and distributive justice among peoples.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The rise of the climate issue on the agenda of the international system has transformed the way states, multilateral organizations, and other actors approach defense and security issues. Far from being restricted to the environmental sphere, the climate crisis has become a cross-cutting vector of geopolitical disputes, especially in regions with high ecological and strategic relevance, such as the Amazonia.

In this scenario, Brazil occupies an ambivalent position: it is a normative protagonist in global environmental forums, but also the target of securitizing narratives that call into question its sovereignty over the Amazon. The analysis developed demonstrated that, according to the Copenhagen School, this framing is neither neutral nor strictly technical, but the result of political and discursive processes that intersubjectively construct the Amazon as a referential object of international security, justifying potential normative, diplomatic, and economic interventions.

The ACTO study demonstrated that the pan-Amazonian countries have resisted this verticalized logic through a cooperative, horizontal, and multilateral approach. This initiative can be interpreted, sometimes as cooperative coordination at the politicized stage and, in certain aspects, as a desecuritization strategy, by bringing the issue into ordinary governance among the Amazonian states, without triggering exceptional measures.

At the same time, international environmental governance instruments, such as climate treaties and "green" trade mechanisms, can operate as tools of normative domination when they do not incorporate climate justice and respect for the autonomy of states. This risk requires Brazil to act as a rule-maker and not just as a recipient, challenging frameworks that threaten its sovereignty.

The country has one of the most robust environmental legal frameworks in the world, which gives it the normative capacity to lead the sustainable development agenda. However,



this normative strength needs to be integrated into a Grand Strategy that incorporates the climate variable across defense, security, infrastructure, diplomacy, development, and innovation policies. Without this integration, Amazonia will remain vulnerable to external pressures that instrumentalize the environmental agenda as a mechanism of coercion.

The defense of Amazonia is not limited to containing external threats but also requires the construction of internal conditions for its sustainable, integrated, and secure development, with a strengthened state presence, investments in science and technology, sustainable infrastructure, and participatory governance mechanisms. The tension between environmental security and sovereignty is structural, manifesting itself, for example, in the COPs, where developed countries defend strict regulatory commitments, while developing countries demand climate justice and compensation for historical inequalities.

This asymmetry reveals how the climate agenda can operate as an instrument of normative coercion and diplomatic domination, especially when linked to tariff barriers, trade restrictions, or financial conditionalities. In this context, the strengthening of regional arrangements such as the ACTO emerges as a counter-hegemonic alternative, capable of articulating a South American vision of environmental security and restoring decisional autonomy on issues central to national and regional security.

Amazonia is simultaneously a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge due to its geopolitical and socio-environmental vulnerability; an opportunity due to its centrality in the construction of a civilizational paradigm based on cooperation, diversity, and regional integration. The future of Brazilian environmental security will depend, to a large extent, on the ability to combine sovereignty, multilateralism, and sustainable development within the same strategic horizon.

Recognizing the Amazonia as a geopolitical asset, and not just as an environmental liability, is a sure step to ensure that Brazil remains an active subject in the formulation of its own climate, development, security, and defense agenda. Therefore, the reflection proposed here points to the repositioning of the climate issue as a strategic security theme for the Brazilian State. This does not imply automatic militarization, but rather its recognition as a vector for public policies, defense strategies, international agreements, and development programs harmonized under the logic of sovereign sustainability.

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