

**Global Security Environment / Joint Operational Environment Seminar
US Army Training and Doctrine Command - TRADOC
24 - 27 May 2004 Williamsburg / Virginia
United States**

**BRAZIL'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE GLOBAL SECURITY
ENVIRONMENT AND THE UNITED STATES ROLE IN THAT
ENVIRONMENT**

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Brazilian Army MG (Ret) Alvaro S. Pinheiro

NOTA DO EDITOR DEFESANET

Este artigo foi apresentado pelo Gen Bda Res Álvaro de Souza Pinheiro no “Global Security Environment / Joint Operational Environment Seminar” (Seminário sobre Ambiente de Segurança Global / Ambiente Operacional Conjunto) conduzido pelo “US Army Training and Doctrine Command” (Comando de Adestramento e Doutrina do Ex EUA) em Williamsburg / Virginia, no período de 24 a 27 de maio de 2004. Além dos EUA e do Brasil, estiveram presentes representantes do Canadá, Colômbia, Israel. Índia, Reino Unido, Rússia, Paquistão, Coréia e Japão.

DEFESANET EDITORS NOTE

This article was presented by MG (Ret) Alvaro de Souza Pinheiro on “Global Security Environment / Joint Operational Environment Seminar” conducted by “US Army Training and Doctrine Command”, Williamsburg / Virginia, 24-27 May 2004. Also presented documents representatives from: Canada, Colombia, Israel, India, United Kingdom, Russia, Pakistan, South Korea and Japan.

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BRAZIL'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND THE UNITED STATES ROLE IN THAT ENVIRONMENT

Brazilian Army MG (Ret) Alvaro S. Pinheiro

The end of the last millennium went down as the era that witnessed the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the Soviet Empire, and the termination of the Cold War. A period characterized by the repudiation of totalitarianism, the resurgence of democracy and the geopolitics of the economic blocks. Lots of ruptures and changes have resulted from the clash of fragmentation and globalism.¹

The beginning of the 21st century, particularly since the tragedy of September 11th, 2001, is demonstrating that the current threats are completely different from the former ones in nature and dimension. The warfare resources classically used to fight the dangers in the recent past are not enough to face the conflicts of the new century.

Besides new technologies, it's absolutely necessary to rethink the new global security environment.²

The multi-polar nature of today's strategic environment is likely to continue least into the next two decades. Regional powers are emerging onto the global scene as today's driving forces move both developed and developing nation-states into global networks of economic interest. This fact creates a strategic framework for friction as cultures, religions, governments, economies, and people collide in a highly competitive global market. Today, there are over 190 nation-states worldwide, as many of 30 have the potential for failure as a consequence of their inability to meet the needs of their populations, or because of ethnic, cultural or religious conflict.³ Weak and failed states, not strong ones, have become the primary source of international instability, and they have become shelters and breeding grounds for such transnational threats as terrorism, drug-trafficking, refugee generation, environmental degradation, political and religious fundamentalism. There is no doubt that violence on a national, transnational and subnational level will continue. The fact that failed states are the primary source of instability means that irregular wars, in the context of asymmetric conflicts, within weak states, rather than conventional wars among powerful states, will prevail.⁴

The key powers in a regional and global context will most likely be the USA, the European Union, China, Japan, and Russia. On the other hand, key regional powers are most likely to be India, Pakistan, South Africa and **Brazil**.

Brazil Country Overview

Located in the east central portion of South America, Brazil's land mass is 8 511 996 square kilometers, making it the fourth largest continuous territorial extension in the world. Brazil represents nearly 45 percent of South America. It's indeed a huge expanse, from N to S, it's about the same distance from Dublin/Ireland to Alexandria/Egypt; from E to W, it's about the same distance from Lisbon/Portugal to Moscow/Russia. Its borders extend for about 10 000 miles (16 000 kilometers), bordering all South American countries except Chile and Ecuador. All the countries involved recognize these borders and there are no pending border disputes with any of its neighbors.

It's important to highlight that Geography is a strong component of Brazil's National Defense Policy. Its incalculable resources have been coveted by many countries starting as early as the seventeenth century. Brazil has resisted threats to its sovereignty over different regions as well as other attempts by international organizations to interfere in its internal affairs. There are now serious challenges to be overcome as Brazil pursues settlement and development of the Amazon region.

The Brazilian people are comprised of three main ethnic groups: native Brazilians (our Indians), Africans and Europeans, predominantly the Portuguese who discovered and colonized Brazil. Brazilians are very proud of their Portuguese ancestors. Because of their culture, customs and religion, they paved the way for the integration of these groups without racial tensions. In fact, the Brazilian population of 176 million people is an example of racial brotherhood. Since the last century, Brazil has embraced an enormous number of immigrants (Japanese, German, Italian, Arab, Jewish, Chinese and Korean). The predominant religion is catholic. There is a rate of 21 inhabitants per square kilometer, and the greatest population centers are São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Brasilia.

Brazil is a Federative Republic constituted of 26 States and a Federal District, Brasilia, the Capital. Currently, Brazil is a great example of a very stable representative democracy and, notwithstanding some severe social problems, there are no threats against the political order established.

Economy is the most likely key factor in the new world equation. Brazil's transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy began in the 1940s, and was consolidated between 1965 and 1980, when a diversified and solid economic structure was implemented. Since then, Brazil is one of the top 10 economies of the world by size, representing roughly half the gross domestic product (GDP) of the whole South America. Despite the globalization problems, in this year of 2004, the expectation is a growth rate of 3.5 to 4.0. Currently, Brazil is leading MERCOSUL (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay). MERCOSUL is expanding its relations to several other countries in Latin America. Nowadays, Brazil is extremely successful in its commercial relations with the European Union, Pacific Basin countries and the NAFTA countries. A very positive balance is observed in the commercial relations between Brazil and all those countries. The commercial relations with India and

China are also being significantly implemented. This is very important because by January 2005, ALCA (Free Trade Area of Americas) should be completed. The negotiations to reach that objective are up to now extremely hard. Very important Brazilian interests are facing some significant barriers derived from the traditional protectionism policy of the USA Government.

However, when talking about economy, it's important to highlight that Brazil still has a big problem. It's the chronic poor distribution of income, which creates many social problems. There are about 30 million people still living in absolute poverty in Brazil. This is a great challenge the Brazilian Government and society have to face in the beginning of this century – to eradicate poverty.

Looking at scientific technological aspects, it's important to underscore that, currently, there is a strong trend towards the establishment of control mechanisms which seek to create obstacles for developing and emerging countries access to high technology, be it related to military applications or to economic development.

Despite some budget restrictions, Brazil is developing very successfully its scientific technological area. Good examples are: the largest hydroelectrical plant of the world, made in Brazil; the aircraft production; one of the most increased telecommunications networks in the world; the capability for oil prospection in deep waters; the uranium enrichment with a genuine Brazilian technology, concerning the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; the technology needed for satellite manufacturing, and so forth. The Government, Armed Forces, universities, private enterprises and the society in general are perfectly aware that science and technology are a very significant factor to increase the national security and the people's quality of life.

The Brazilian Constitution underscores the fact that Brazil is a Union of 26 States, Municipalities and a Federal District and has as its basis: sovereignty, citizenship, human dignity, the social value of work and free enterprise, and political pluralism.⁵

Concerning its international relationships, Brazil's policy is based on the following principles: national independence, prevalence of human rights, people's self determination, non interference, equality among nation-states, peaceful resolution of conflicts, repudiation of terrorism and racism, cooperation among peoples for the progress of mankind, and the assurance of political asylum.⁶

Brazil strives for the economic, political, social and cultural integration among Latin American people. It has no grudges against its neighbors or any other country in the world. All boundary disputes have ended with a negotiated solution within our diplomatic tradition. Although being regarded by its neighbors as the regional power, Brazil does not seek to be a hegemonic regional power.

Nowadays, the Government understands that the UN Chart must be rectified, and Brazil is an ostensible candidate to get a permanent seat at the UN Security Council. Looking forward to reach this objective, Brazil has already gotten the support of some Governments like France, United Kingdom, Russia, Germany and others.

Latin American countries find themselves in peculiar geostrategic regions that accentuate marked differences among them. It is a great strategic mistake to believe that all Latin American countries are the same. They have different problems, different solutions, and most important of all, different potential. In the past, sometimes, the US Government or even the USA Southern Command didn't recognize that it has to deal with each of the 35 countries of Latin America as a separate entity, understanding its culture, language, historical contexts, and its unique requirements. That mistake frequently created significant problems.

Brazil is the one country that cannot be stereotyped nor sub-regionalized because of its geographical, demographic, political, economic and military specific characteristics.

The Brazilian society is perfectly aware that the benefits of stability, economic growth and democracy depend on effective national sovereignty and security.

The Brazilian National Defense Policy

The Brazilian National Defense Policy is primarily directed by the Brazilian Constitution. The Armed Forces: Navy, Army and Air Force are permanent and regular national institutions, based on discipline and hierarchy, under the Ministry of Defense, and the supreme command of the President of the Republic.⁷

The Brazilian National Defense Policy is built around two central pillars: active diplomacy (peaceful resolution of conflicts) and conventional deterrence. It's clear that military force will only be used in self defense.

The objectives of this policy are: to guarantee sovereignty and the safety of national wealth; to guarantee rules of law and democratic institutions; to maintain national unity; to protect citizen rights and Brazilian interests abroad; to provide a more significant role in international affairs; and to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.⁸

The Brazilian Armed Forces, besides being the largest and most powerful of Latin America, and the second (after USA) of the Western Hemisphere, are apolitical, and enjoy the highest confidence rating of any public institution in the Country, as evidenced year after year in public polls. Notwithstanding to be the 15th defense budget of the world, Brazil is among those countries with one of the smallest defense budgets as a percentage of its GDP. Its mission is clearly stated in the Constitution. The duties assigned to the Armed Forces have remained essentially the same since Brazilian political independence was established by the Imperial Constitution in 1824. The tasks to perform as stated in the Constitution are:

- To defend the homeland;
- To guarantee constitutional powers;
- To guarantee law and order;
- To contribute to national development and civil defense; and
- To participate in international operations.⁹

Defense of the homeland means integrating and protecting national territory and democratic institutions of the Government, Federation, and Republic from aggression, be it internal or external, overt or covert.

The guarantee of Constitutional Powers specifies providing security to the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary, so they can conduct their legal responsibilities, independently and harmoniously, free of any type of pressure.

The guarantee of law and order is summarized as enforcing respect for established legal norms or those derived of them. It's important to highlight that Armed Forces intervention will always be a last resort, when federal and state law enforcement agencies can't maintain law and order, and chaos becomes an imminent threat.

The contribution to national development and civil defense is a complementary mission. Historically, the Armed Forces have been present even in the most remote corners of Brazil, cooperating with the federal government in performing socio-economic activities in support of the people in regions that remain inaccessible to any other instruments of public administration. The same happens on emergency civil defense, disaster relief or humanitarian assistance. The Brazilian Armed Forces will continue to play that role for a long time to come.

The participation in international operations is the military's involvement in multinational peace operations. Honoring its international commitments, Brazil has participated of 24 UN peacekeeping missions with more than 12 000 soldiers. Currently, Brazil has troops in Africa, Central America, East Timor and Europe. On June the 1st, 2004, Brazil will be leading the UN Stabilization Force for Haiti (MINUSTAH) with a contingent of 1200 soldiers.

It's important to underscore that Brazil – US military ties are traditionally very strong and go back many decades, with its zenith being the Brazilian participation in World War II. The US military are understanding that the Brazilian Armed Forces are modern and professional and does not fit the same mold as other countries of the region who are highly dependent on outside assistance.

A Brazilian Perspective on the International Scene

- Escalation of ethnic-nationalist violence

The escalation of ethnic-nationalist violence, compounded by religious fundamentalism and transnational terrorism, has no respect for borders, and is currently a great challenge to the civilized world.

- Narcoterrorism as a social threat

Narcoterrorism has emerged as a new social threat, reflected in the impact of the organized crime on urban centers afflicted by migration.

- Proliferation of low intensity and regional conflicts

A range of uncertainties virtually unknown to previous generations worsens today's insecurities. Numerous current internal conflicts are a legacy of colonialism. Half of the nations now in the UN have borders arbitrarily imposed by colonial

powers. Thus, it should come as no surprise when separatist and rebel movements surface.

- Unequal development of nation-states

In the face of geopolitical quirks of globalization, countries are forced to compete, without much hope, for a place among megablocks with transnational economic power.

- USA as the remaining hegemonic power

There is a clear assumption that no solutions exist without the US support, at least at the short term.

- Interdependence of countries

Countries are ever more interdependent. Regional blocks and international organizations assume an increasingly important role in conflict mediation. The trend may contribute to the decline of the nation-states classic concept of sovereignty and self-determination. Paradoxically, there is an increase of countries in search of a national identity as they witness the inability and lack of resources on the part of international organizations to resolve their disputes.

- Threats to stability in Latin America

Latin America is one of the most peaceful regions in the world today. Threats of external aggressions are extremely remote possibilities. Nonetheless, there exist situations in some nations that could create crisis affecting the region's stability. Guerrilla movements and their association with narcotrafficking, weapons smuggling, and a flow of migrants difficult to control are conditions existing in some countries that may cause serious international problems.

One of the consequences of this international outlook is the need to seek greater military interaction among nations, mainly with neighboring countries. Another even more predictable result is that the Brazilian military is increasingly called on to participate in non-traditional missions and multinational peace operations.

The Brazilian Top Priority Strategic Area

The five Brazilian strategic areas are: The Amazon, the Midwest, The Prata River Basin, Central Brazil, and the Northeast.¹⁰ The Prata River Basin, although clearly relevant from a geopolitical approach, is currently a socially and economically well-developed area with consolidated borders, established populations, no points of friction and enhanced relationships with the neighboring countries, as shown in the success of MERCOSUL.

The Amazon is the Brazilian top priority strategic area. It's considered of utmost importance for several reasons, including its vast size, its small population, its long borders, its abundant natural resources, its problems associated with Indians and gold prospectors, presence of narcoguerrilla groups in neighboring countries, and pressure imposed by international interests. Some of the specific characteristics of the Amazon are:

- 5.2 million square kilometers (3.6 % of the world's lands);

- population density of about 5 inhabitants per square kilometer (17 million, about 13% of Brazil's population);
- 1/3 of the planet's tropical forests;
- the largest biological diversity reserve of the planet (about 20% of living species);
- the largest fresh water basin of the world;
- one of the world's richest subsoil in mineral wealth.

The Amazon international issue is a typical case of disinformation, media manipulation and ignorance. The disinformation campaign is so big that it generated a change of the name of the forest. Suddenly, the Amazon Jungle, a tropical forest, was transformed by some environmental groups into "The Rain Forest", an excellent name to sell their product. Who wants to save jungles? Probably only Tarzan and Jane...But, "Rain Forest", Oh! That is really a good cause to fight for...

Actually all of this seems to be intentional distortion. Brazil's interests are not correctly assessed, the data published by the press have been exaggerated or wrong, and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have used the Amazon "rain forest" issue to raise money by creating alarm about a non-existent menace – the destruction of the jungle. It is also clear that the entire matter has an economic and political motivation. Forest, Indians and ecology are a kind of mask to avoid the development of a region everybody knows is rich in minerals and other biodiverse resources. Certainly, there is something more than mere concern for better conditions of life on Earth behind the interests expressed in the Amazon by so many "ecologists".

The environment is a serious issue in Brazil. The Brazilian Constitution legislates about the environment in seven articles. There is no tolerance or connivance with damage to the environment. Brazil is not a "pollution country", and the preservation of the environment is tied to the development.

In order to develop the region and to defend vital national interests in the area, the Brazilian Government is implementing the following strategies:

- increasing military presence in the region;
- developing the Amazon Surveillance System (SIVAM)¹¹;
- developing sustained economic activities;
- improving access to new environmentally-friendly technologies that preserve the ecosystem and the environment; and
- applying resources from the reactivated "Calha Norte Project"¹² and other sources.

The occupation of the Amazon is an inherent obligation of Brazil in order to achieve its national objectives, strengthen national integration, and continue progress and peace. Even if the basic goal of the "Amazonian Environmental Debate" is valid, to prevent the Amazon against ecological aggression, Brazil can't renounce its obligation and right to develop those natural resources. Foreign "tutelage" or political impositions are absolutely unacceptable.

The Brazilian Armed Forces never forget its permanent mission “to sew the seam of national unit”, directly participating in the Country’s development efforts and, through the soldier’s presence in all regions, maintaining national cohesion, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The US Role on the Global Security Environment

No one disagrees that the US power is extraordinary. The USA is not just a superpower pursuing its interest; it is a Nation-State able to produce a new world order.

In order to overthrow the Taliban regime and to destroy the al Qaeda terrorist network, which had been built with the Taliban cooperation, the Campaign in Afghanistan was set off. It was a decisive step in the context of the so called “Global War on Terrorism”.

To achieve its objectives in this campaign, the US had a full support of the international community materialized in international organizations like the UN and NATO.

When the US and some of its allies went to war against Saddam Hussein in March 2003, the situation was completely different. Invading Iraq in the context of the Bush’s unilateralist approach, without the UN Security Council’s approval, created a real America’s crisis of legitimacy. The problem of legitimacy is currently extremely complex because the emergence of a unipolar era coincided with two other historical developments: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the rise of international terrorism, both of which seem more threatening to the US than to any other country in the world.¹³ Bush’s administration response to these threats has caused the greatest uproar. Many Europeans and many other countries around the world, including Brazil, have called the US willingness to take preventive action a prime example of the hegemonic superpowers’ disregard for international law and the international order. The point is that despite its role in helping to create the UN and draft the UN Charter, the US has never fully accepted the organization’s legitimacy or the charter’s doctrine of sovereign equality. Although fiercely protective of its own autonomy, the US has been less concerned about the inviolability of the sovereignty of others. It has reserved for itself the right to intervene anywhere and everywhere. And although it is as capable of self-serving hypocrisy as other nations, the US has generally justified its interventions in the name of defending the cause of freedom.

Anti-Americanism has increased in recent years, and the US ability to attract others by the legitimacy of its policies, and the values that underlie them, is in decline as a result.¹⁴

Even acknowledging that the Security Council is not the ultimate depository of international legitimacy in today’s challenges, most European countries and many others, including Brazil, understand that if the US seeks to gain international legitimacy for any use of force, it must avoid acting alone and must embrace a foreign policy of multilateralism.

The US can't confront terrorism without the cooperation of other countries. That includes a very decisive participation of the UN.

Above all, Americans will have to become more aware of cultural differences; an effective approach requires less parochialism and more sensitivity to perceptions abroad. The first step is changing attitudes at home. Americans need a much better understanding of how the US policies appear to others. And to keep in their minds that to communicate effectively, they must first learn to listen.

NOTES

¹ Brazilian Army Col Luiz Paulo Macedo Carvalho, *The Armed Forces Role in the 21st Century*, Military Review/Brazilian Edition, 3rd Quarter 1995.

² Robert Hall and Carl Fox, *Rethinking Security*, NATO News, Winter 2001/2002.

³ DCSI, US Army TRADOC, *Future Operational and Threat Environment: A View of the World in 2015*, February 2001.

⁴ Jeffrey Record, *Collapsed Countries, Casualty Dread, and the New American Way of War*, PARAMETERS, US Army War College Quarterly, Summer 2002.

⁵ Brazilian Constitution, 1st Article.

⁶ Brazilian Constitution, 4th Article.

⁷ Brazilian Constitution, 142nd and 143rd Article.

⁸ Brazilian National Defense Policy.

⁹ Brazilian Constitution, 142nd and 143rd Article, and National Command Authorities' Directives.

¹⁰ Brazilian Army General Staff (EME), *Concepção Estratégica de Emprego da Força Terrestre*.

¹¹ SIVAM will be fully operational by the end of 2004. It amalgamates data from a number of different sources; airborne radars, land-based fixed radar stations, mobile radar sites and satellite information all feed into the system. U.S. defense contractor Raytheon designed the system. It has cost Brazil US\$ 1.5 billion. Besides to provide significant military capabilities, SIVAM looks to protect people and resources of the region and help establish land management and use regimens. The system is concerned with deforestation, contacts with indigenous peoples, communications and providing government services over a wide swath of Brazil. The data bank will contain information on the flora fauna of the Amazon River basin - the largest in the world.

¹² The Calha Norte (North Path) Project is currently the Brazilian government's most important strategy in securing the Amazon region. Its main goal is to promote the region's socio-economic development and integrate the region with the rest of the country. The Calha Norte Project is located to the north of the Solimões and Amazon rivers and covers 4,100 miles of border that separates Brazil from the Guyanas, Suriname, Venezuela and Colombia. The Project involves a 100 mile-wide strip along those borders, or an area of 700,000 square miles; this is equivalent to a quarter of Brazilian Amazon and about 15 percent of Brazil's territory.

¹³ Robert Kagan, *America's Crisis of Legitimacy*, Foreign Affairs, March / April 2004.

¹⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Decline of America's Soft Power: Why Washington Should Worry*, Foreign Affairs, May / June 2004.

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