

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS AN OUTDATED PARADIGM IN THE PERSISTENCE
OF DEVELOPMENTALISM IN THE AMAZON**

***A DIVERSIDADE CULTURAL COMO PARADIGMA ULTRAPASSADO NA
PERSISTÊNCIA DO DESENVOLVIMENTISMO NA AMAZÔNIA***

***LA DIVERSIDAD CULTURAL COMO PARADIGMA OBSOLETO EN LA
PERSISTENCIA DEL DESARROLLISMO EN LA AMAZONIA***

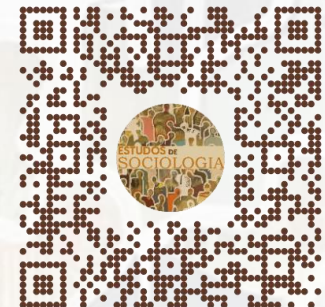


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ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to analyze the approach to the right to cultural diversity in one of the largest infrastructure programs planned for the Amazon since the redemocratization of the Brazilian political regime, the Barão do Rio Branco Program (PBRB), which resumes and extends objectives and methods of its predecessors, notably the Calha Norte Program, under the allegations of defense of national sovereignty and territorial integration of Brazil. Based on bibliographical and documental research in public archives, the article demonstrates the persistence of the restricted view of culture as an obstacle to development, as well as the updating of old theses and assimilationist practices in the public management of the Amazon. It also explains how cultural diversity has been equated with supposedly outdated paradigms, which some public authorities want to overcome through revision of the legislation instituted since the Federal Constitution of 1988.

KEYWORDS: Barão do Rio Branco Program. Amazon. State. Cultural diversity.

RESUMO: *O propósito deste artigo é analisar a abordagem do direito à diversidade cultural em um dos maiores programas de infraestrutura previstos para a Amazônia desde a redemocratização do regime político brasileiro, o Programa Barão do Rio Branco (PBRB), que retoma e estende objetivos e métodos de seus antecessores, destacadamente do Programa Calha Norte, sob as alegações de defesa da soberania nacional e de integração territorial do Brasil. A partir de pesquisa bibliográfica e documental em arquivos públicos, o artigo demonstra a persistência da visão restrita da cultura como entrave ao desenvolvimento, bem como a atualização de antigas teses e práticas assimilacionistas na gestão pública da Amazônia. Explícita, ainda, como a diversidade cultural tem sido equiparada a paradigmas supostamente ultrapassados, que certas autoridades públicas querem superar por meio da revisão da legislação instituída a partir da Constituição Federal de 1988.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Programa Barão do Rio Branco. Amazônia. Estado. Diversidade cultural.

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este artículo es analizar el enfoque del derecho a la diversidad cultural en uno de los mayores programas de infraestructuras previstos para la Amazonia desde la redemocratización del régimen político brasileño, el Programa Barão do Rio Branco (PBRB), que retoma y amplía los objetivos y métodos de sus predecesores, en particular el Programa Calha Norte, bajo los alegatos de defensa de la soberanía nacional y la integración territorial de Brasil. A partir de investigaciones bibliográficas y documentales en archivos públicos, el artículo demuestra la persistencia de la visión restringida de la cultura como obstáculo al desarrollo, así como la actualización de viejas tesis y prácticas asimilacionistas en la gestión pública de la Amazonia. También explica cómo la diversidad cultural ha sido equiparada a paradigmas supuestamente superados, que algunas autoridades públicas quieren superar mediante la revisión de la legislación instituida desde la Constitución Federal de 1988.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Programa Barão do Rio Branco. Amazonia. Estado. Diversidad cultural.

Introduction

In January 2019, indigenous people and quilombolas from the states of Pará and Amapá were surprised by the announcement of the Barão do Rio Branco Program (PBRB), which proposed the extension of the BR-163 Highway (Cuiabá-Santarém) to the border with Suriname, the construction of a bridge over the Amazon River in Óbidos-PA and the installation of a hydroelectric power plant (HPP) on the Trombetas River in Oriximiná-PA (BRASIL, 2019). In February, the scheduling of a visit by ministers of state to the military base located in the Tirió indigenous area, on the border between the two states, signaled the federal government's interest in speeding up the implementation of the program. In the regional press, it was praised as the biggest and most important initiative for the Calha Norte of the Amazon River since the 1960s.

According to the Special Secretariat for Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic (SAE/PR), the PBRB works would attract public and private investment to boost the economic growth of the Calha Norte municipalities and promote their integration with the rest of the national territory, resulting in benefits for the population. In addition, the program would intensify the state's presence in the region, aiming to "guarantee respect for citizenship and the environment, the preservation of our wealth for future generations and the fight against illegality" (BRASIL, 2019, n.p., our translation). Paradoxically, the achievement of these objectives would depend on a set of works that are potentially damaging to the environment and to the way of life of a large part of the regional population, particularly indigenous peoples and traditional communities.

This paradox, however, was overlooked at the event to present the program to invited guests, which was held in Belém-PA in April 2019. On that occasion, the government team made it clear that they hoped, with the PBRB, to overcome "the paradigms of indigenism, quilombolism and environmentalism" (BRASIL, 2019, n.p., our translation). In their place, it welcomed the "new paradigms of liberalism (participation of private initiative) and conservatism (the new realist paradigms)", associated with a "new political, economic and ethical stance of the Nation", as revealed in the slides published by The Intercept Brasil website (PLANO, 2019).

The announcement of the PBRB prompted immediate reactions from civil society organizations and independent media outlets, which denounced its socio-environmental risks and the lack of dialogue between the government and the peoples of Calha Norte. The Articulation of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Amapá and Northern Pará (Apoiamp)

signed a technical note pointing out that, if implemented, the program would directly and indirectly affect 27 protected areas and various indigenous peoples, quilombola and riverside communities. Apoiãp also drew attention to the similarity between the PBRB and the Calha Norte Program (PCN), highlighting the longevity of the ideology that underpins state interventions in the Amazon, from the dictatorship inaugurated in 1964 to recent administrations, including those aligned with the left in the national political spectrum (BECKER, 2005; LOUREIRO, 2004; STEILMAN; MONTEIRO, 2020).

The persistence of the thesis supported by the military governments (1964-1985), according to which the region is anecumenous, vulnerable in its extensive border strip and hostile to the integration and development of the nation, is notorious (NERY, 2019). Although anachronistic and refuted in various scientific fields (BALÉE, 2013; CUNHA; ALMEIDA, 2000), this crude image of the Amazon illustrates the risk to Brazilian sovereignty supposedly offered by an "immense green desert", as wrote General Santa Rosa (2020, p. 1), who held the position of Special Secretary for Strategic Affairs of the Presidency when the PBRB was announced in 2019.

The "immense green desert" referred to by Santa Rosa (2020) actually corresponds to the largest portion of protected tropical forests on the planet. It is a vast area occupied by several indigenous peoples and hundreds of quilombola communities, and this, in the eyes of the government, is the dangerous environment in which to tackle the source of the region's supposed backwardness: the legal protection of the environment and of traditional peoples and communities, which, according to Santa Rosa (2020, p.4), has left the public management of the Amazon "with its hands tied". Between the lines of the PBRB's rationale, therefore, the so-called paradigms of environmentalism, indigenism and quilombolism are expressions of recent and unfinished processes of affirming cultural diversity as a human right, in Brazil and around the world.

At the international level, the issue emerged in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which dispelled the view of culture as civilization that prevailed in the 19th century and included it in the list of fundamental human rights, alongside the economic and social rights that are indispensable and constitutive of social security and human dignity (ONU, 1948). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), of 1966, recognized the right of all peoples to freely determine themselves, their political status and their economic, social and cultural development (ONU, 1966). In 1972, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage emphasized the urgency

of protecting cultural diversity in contexts of economic growth (UNESCO, 1972). In 2001, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity highlighted the importance of cultural pluralism in democratic states (UNESCO, 2001). In a similar vein, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage considered cultural diversity as a factor in sustainable development (UNESCO, 2003). Finally, in 2007, the Declaration of Cultural Rights reaffirmed cultural diversity as part of the indivisible and interdependent set of human rights (GRUPO DE FRIBURGO, 2007).

At the national level, the right to cultural diversity was introduced by the 1988 Federal Constitution, which gave the state the duty to protect it and promote the appreciation of the contributions of indigenous peoples, Africans and other groups that form Brazilian society (BRASIL, 1988). The Constitution also guaranteed specific territorial rights for indigenous peoples and the communities remaining from quilombos, assuming that the continuity of their cultures necessarily requires the defense of their territories and natural resources (SANTILLI, 2005; SHIRAISHI NETO, 2007; SOUZA FILHO, 1997).

Despite the fact that there is currently robust legislation based on the principle of the inseparability of the rights to cultural diversity, territory and the environment, which is intended to make the Federal Constitution effective, development processes in Brazil still tend to provoke and encourage human rights violations. As is the case in other countries focused primarily on economic growth, development projects in Brazil and the Amazon, in particular, nurture impoverishing visions of cultural diversity and culture itself as an element of human development, deepening social inequalities (ARIZPE, 2015; LAMARCHE, 2019).

By minimizing the importance of cultural diversity, implicitly reducing the rights associated with it to supposedly outdated paradigms, the PBRB follows the path of development projects which, in addition to some polarized economic growth, have left the Amazon with invaluable environmental problems, social problems, interethnic clashes and agrarian conflicts (LOUREIRO, 2004). Without pretending to explore the long history of unsuccessful development planning in the region, this article follows the suggestive comparison with the PCN, made by Apoiãp (2019), with the aim of understanding the approach to cultural diversity in the new plans for Calha Norte do Pará.

Based on bibliographical and documentary research in public archives and an examination of materials relating to the PBRB, the article demonstrates the persistence of a narrow view of culture as an obstacle to development, as well as the updating of old assimilationist theses and practices in public management in the Amazon. More than that, it

explains how cultural diversity has been equated with supposedly outdated paradigms, which public authorities of different political persuasions want to overcome by revising the legislation established since the 1988 Constitution.

Overview of Calha Norte in Pará

The Calha Norte do Pará delimits Brazil's international borders with Guyana and Suriname, and the borders with the states of Amazonas and Amapá. It encompasses nine municipalities in the Lower Amazon mesoregion, covering an area of approximately 270,000 km², where approximately 346,000 inhabitants live. Around 82% of this territory is part of the Mosaic of Protected Areas of Calha Norte do Pará, which includes several Conservation Units (CU), Indigenous Lands (TI) at different stages of recognition and Quilombola Territories (TQ). With more than 20 million hectares, it is a portion of the Amazon with high potential for the development of a forest-based and sustainable economy, but it has historically been targeted for logging and mining, as well as agriculture (IMAZON, 2020).

From the 1960s onwards, Calha Norte became the focus of major infrastructure projects and development and land-use plans implemented by the military governments (1964-1985). Of particular note during this period was the National Integration Program (NIP), established by Decree-Law n. 1106/1970 with the aim of implementing economic and social infrastructure projects in the North and Northeast regions (BRASIL, 1970). With the motto "integrate so as not to hand over" the Amazon to foreigners, the NIP conceived of national integration mainly as the creation of physical networks, which translated into the so-called highway system, from which the emblematic Transamazônica (BR-230) and the BR-163 highway derive.

The induced colonization of lands deemed unproductive, mineral prospecting and forestry, agronomic and energy surveys were other achievements of the NIP in Calha Norte, whose supposed territorial and demographic void was to be filled by the excess of poor people from the Northeast. However, the spaces considered empty were occupied by various indigenous peoples and presented significant fragility and ecological complexity.

In 1985, during the re-democratization phase of the Brazilian political regime, the region in question was covered by the Calha Norte Project (PCN), which was created with the aim of combining regional development with the militaristic doctrine of national sovereignty, providing a greater state presence in this part of the Amazon (BRASIL, 1985; DINIZ, 1994). In practice, however, army platoons set up in the middle of the forest became the main

expression of the PCN and regional development was reduced to infrastructure and land-use planning projects, following on from what the NIP had started.

The legacy of the Calha Norte Project

Conceived under the military administration, but effectively formulated under the presidency of José Sarney in 1985, the PCN was based on a study carried out by an Interministerial Working Group entitled Development and Security in the Region North of the Solimões and Amazonas Rivers. Its stated aim was to protect the northern border strip, connect Calha Norte to the national territory by means of roads, expand infrastructure and promote regional development with a view to improving the living conditions of the population (BRASIL, 1985).

Although it was designated as such, it was not really a project or plan with a systematic structure, but rather "a coherent set of guidelines and goals with which all government initiatives aimed at that region should be made compatible" (OLIVEIRA, 1991, p. 325, our translation). Without a unit directly responsible for its execution, the PCN encompassed a series of "special projects" focused on different issues: bilateral relations with border countries, indigenous policy, expansion of road infrastructure and recovery of border markers, among others (LOURENÇÃO, 2014). There was also acute concern about the activities of illegal miners, drug traffickers and guerrillas on the borders, who were seen as potential influencers of communist uprisings (PIVATTO-JUNIOR; CAVEDON-NUNES, 2020).

In order to increase the state's presence in the region, the PCN was structured along two lines: military and civilian. The first was aimed at neutralizing supposed political threats and defending the integrity of national territory, especially on the border with Venezuela, where there were supposedly plans to create a Yanomami state (BRASIL, 1985). The second focused on the installation of infrastructure and basic services. In these areas, the PCN proposed integrating the efforts and resources of the civil and military ministries to act in three environments - the border strip, the interior core and the riverside areas - in the states of Roraima, Amapá, Amazonas and Pará, corresponding to 14% of the national territory. In addition to the "special projects", measures such as:

[...] implementation and expansion of basic social activities - health, education, water supply, rural electrification, food supply and consumer goods, popular housing, community development and leisure - as well as the internalization of economic development hubs, particularly through a process

of colonization with targeted settlement of families (BRASIL, 1985, p.16-17, our translation).

In practice, the PCN focused on the installation of Special Border Platoons (PEF) in places considered strategic for national defense, largely inhabited by indigenous peoples, and on land-use planning actions (LOURENÇÃO, 2014; MONTEIRO, 2017). The project also sought to redefine indigenous policy in order to combat supposed threats to the integrity of Brazilian territory, subjecting various indigenous communities to geopolitical control under the justification of integrating them into national society and providing them with better living conditions (ALBERT, 1992; BUCHILLET, 1991; OLIVEIRA, 1991).

The study that underpinned the PCN assumed that the "indigenous problem" required maximum attention, as it had been exploited "to the detriment of the country's good image" (BRASIL, 1985, p.4, our translation). It therefore proposed: i) strengthening indigenous posts in border areas; ii) channeling resources to carry out studies aimed at "delimiting indigenous areas, according to the priorities defined by the Federal Government" (BRASIL, 1985, p. 24, our translation); and iii) supporting "Community Development Projects and Incentives for Handicrafts, as a way of directly benefiting indigenous populations in the fields of agriculture, extractivism, fishing and the recovery of cultures (handicrafts)" (BRASIL, 1985, p. 24, our translation).

Despite establishing as a premise the recognition and appreciation of the "characteristics and peculiarities of Amazonian society and culture, as elements arising from ecological, anthropological and historical conditions" (BRASIL, 1985, p. 32), the PCN not only failed to meet the needs of the highly diverse regional population, but also reinforced inequalities that already affected indigenous peoples, riverine communities, rural black communities, extractivists, settlers, squatters and other politically minority groups. It also intensified pre-existing conflicts between indigenous people, prospectors and mining companies that were operating illegally in indigenous territories.

In the Upper Rio Negro (northwestern Amazon), the reinforced presence of the Armed Forces was perceived as an invasion by indigenous families. In the District of Pari-Cachoeira-AM - Indigenous Land of the Upper Rio Negro, a large part of the ancestral territory was expropriated in exchange for the provision of government assistance for socio-economic, education and health projects, carried out in the first two years of the PCN and discontinued afterwards. In the Yanomami area, military power did not keep illegal miners away; on the contrary, it intensified conflicts between them and indigenous people (BUCHILLET, 1991).

There were so many problems that the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) accused the project of risking the extermination of native peoples (CEDI, 1987). For Buchillet (1991), in fact, the PCN's objective in relation to these peoples, concealed in the promise of providing social services and respect for their cultural specificities, was to forcibly integrate them into national society by means of an unprecedented territorial expropriation.

The PCN went through several phases and institutional shelters until it was absorbed by the Ministry of Defense and reconfigured at the end of the 1990s. Passing through governments of various political affiliations, it entered the 21st century without ever becoming an effective national priority but found new impetus in the 2000s with the expansion of its territorial and financial base. In 2003, under Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the program covered 25.60% of the national territory, including six states. Its volume of resources also increased considerably, as did the number of agreements signed with municipal entities within its scope (MONTEIRO, 2017).

In 2020, the PCN completed 35 years of operation, involving 442 municipalities spread across ten states. According to the Ministry of Defense (BRASIL, 2022), it covers 5,986,784 km², an area equivalent to 70.30% of the national territory and 99% of the extension of indigenous lands in Brazil, where 7.53% of the total population and 85% of the country's indigenous population live. However, just as when it was created, it remains little known by Brazilian society, including in its region of coverage.

Although it has acquired a well-defined institutional place in the federal administration in recent decades, the program has undergone so many restructurings throughout its history, oscillating between political-military and developmentalist purposes, that it is confused with other government programs, for example, with the Amazon Surveillance System (Sivam), which began in 2002 as part of the Amazon Protection System (Sipam)². In a brief retrospective, Lourenção (2014) reports that:

[...] seeking to remove the stigma of a military project, the PCN, in a process of conceptual renewal, began to focus on the fight against drug trafficking, with the establishment of Federal Police posts, and on increasing assistance and protection for indigenous communities, contributing to the demarcation of their lands. When, in June 1994, the Secretariat for Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic (SAE/PR) finally took over all the tasks related to the Project, there was an emphasis on issues concerning ecology and cultural

² Sivam has integrated infrastructure and technology for obtaining and processing sensitive data in strategic sectors such as telecommunications and environmental and meteorological monitoring, for example, applicable to a set of defense and development policies for the Amazon.

values, which were secondary in the original formulation of Calha Norte (LOURENÇÃO, 2014, p. 21, our translation).

When consulting the PCN in 2023 on the Ministry of Defense's website, it was updated in October 2022 and presented as a social program of the Ministry of Defense, whose mission would be to maintain national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to promote orderly and sustainable development. The program's strategic objectives included: "increasing the presence of Public Power; improving infrastructure in the areas of defense, education, sports, public safety, health, social assistance, transport and economic development" (BRASIL, 2022, n.p., our translation). However, despite the profusion of social objectives, the military-developmental paradigm remains the backbone of the PCN (MINUSSI, 2008).

The Barão do Rio Branco Program

The Barão do Rio Branco Program (PBRB) was presented in 2019 as a vector of change for Calha Norte do Pará, comprising a set of projects aimed at expanding the infrastructure needed to explore and transport the region's natural resources. According to General Santa Rosa (2020), its stated objective is to promote economic development and defend national borders from threats supposedly posed by guerrillas and revolutionary movements from South American neighbors, as well as by the greed of wealthier countries in the North and Asia:

The strategic context is worrying. Environmentalist and indigenist pressures of all kinds are invalidating government policies. There is a permanent psychological campaign against Brazil, synchronizing external and internal media operations. In the surrounding area, political instability and transnational crime are proliferating. In Bolivia, the drug market is expanding. Venezuela is in the process of fragmenting its internal order. Peru, Suriname and Guyana are facing the problem of Chinese expansion³ (SANTA ROSA, 2020, p.2-3, our translation).

This type of argument justifying the need for a state intervention of the size of the PBRB in an area of sensitive ecological balance like Calha Norte is based on three pillars of the geopolitical doctrine that has prevailed in the Amazon since the 1960s. The first pillar, relating to the occupation and control of the territory through the expansion of infrastructure, is connected to the second, which is based on the highway system as a strategy for integrating the Amazon with the rest of the country. Both, in turn, are closely linked to the third, which

³ China is one of Suriname's most important trading partners, accounting for 10% of its imports, and the Chinese are the third largest immigrant group in the country (CARNEIRO; SOARES; LICHTENTHALER, 2020).

advocates national sovereignty in the exploitation of the region's resources. In short, although presented as a strategy for change, the PBRB is based on premises that have been widely explored in recent Brazilian history.

In practice, apart from the potential negative impacts on the environment and the native peoples who are currently recognized as subjects of rights in the Brazilian legal system, there is little new in this government program which bears the title of the diplomat José Maria da Silva Paranhos Júnior (1845-1912), the Baron of Rio Branco, renowned for his work in consolidating national borders through bilateral negotiations between the 19th and 20th centuries (NUNES, 2018; VIDIGAL; BERNAL-MEZA, 2020). In fact, the PBRB is structured around three major infrastructure projects, two of which are well known to the population of Calha Norte, namely:

- (1) The extension of the BR-163 highway, allowing it to be integrated with the Perimetral Norte (BR-210), in order to connect the states of Pará, Amapá and Roraima by land, up to the border with Suriname, the area covered by the Special Border Platoon (PEF) in Tiriós.
- (2) The installation of the Cachoeira Porteira hydroelectric plant, on the upper course of the Trombetas river, in order to achieve energy security in the region, reduce costs with the supply of thermoelectric plants and make aluminum industrialization viable in Oriximiná-PA.

Both projects were conceived in the 1970s under the NIP. The opening of the BR-163 highway began in 1971 and was halted five years later, at the height of the quilombola community of Cachoeira Porteira, named after the first waterfall found upstream of the Trombetas River. In Oriximiná-PA, the highway became known as the BEC Road because it was opened by the 8th Engineering and Construction Battalion (BEC). Contractor Andrade Gutierrez, which set up shop in the town in 1973, even carried out landfill and earthworks on the road, but all that remained of it was a 3km stretch of road that runs from the riverbank to the access branch to an old airstrip. With materials left over from the company's facilities, houses and buildings for collective use were erected and/or refurbished, and are currently distributed along the road, delimiting a kind of community village.

After work on the road was suspended, Andrade Gutierrez turned its attention to the Cachoeira Porteira HPP construction site. Although interrupted at the end of the 1980s, the HPP project had negative impacts on the indigenous and quilombola communities of Alto Trombetas (Oriximiná-PA): deforestation, deep excavation of the soil, socio-spatial segregation and

discrimination by the whites, who had a supermarket, school, hospital, good wooden houses, police station and other facilities, unlike the "people of the beiradão" (as the blacks were pejoratively called).

Since then, plans to build the plant have been cyclically revived by the Brazilian government: in the 1990s and, more recently, in 2014, as part of a hydroelectric inventory of the Trombetas river basin, also covering the lower reaches of its Mapuera and Cachorro tributaries. The inventory was carried out by the Energy Research Company (EPE), linked to the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and frightened the indigenous peoples who live above Cachoeira Porteira, as well as dozens of quilombola communities situated below it.

Although unfinished, the two projects are historically and strategically linked to each other and to the 1976 installation of the Rio do Norte Mining Company (MRN) on the Trombetas River. Bauxite mining has caused large-scale deforestation, the disappearance of wildlife, water pollution and a shortage of natural resources, as well as a series of social problems that threaten the livelihoods of local communities (MONTEIRO, 2008). In the last decade, MRN has dedicated itself to projects to expand the area mined, which should allow it to continue operating in Trombetas for at least the next forty years. In this scenario, increasing energy capacity in the region is fundamental to maximizing mineral exploration.

It is well known that the complex of projects planned for Calha Norte, partially installed to date, has caused cumulative socio-environmental impacts and intensified agrarian conflicts since the last decades of the 20th century (COELHO; CUNHA; WANDERLEY, 2010; MADEIRA FILHO et. al., 2019; WATRIN; VENTURIERI; VALENTE, 1998). In light of this, the indigenous and quilombola communities of Calha Norte reject the PBRB, while the Federal Government (2019-2022) has repeated the postulates adopted in the NIP and PCN and the nationalist discourse of exalting homeland values and the liberal economic perspective. This combination is at the root of the previously announced paradigms of conservatism and liberalism (understood as openness to the participation of private initiative).

Behind the patriotic tone of the Amazon defense discourse, the PBRB is strictly focused on opening mining and agro-industry fronts in Calha Norte, encouraging the entry of foreign private and mixed capital companies into the region (VERDUM, 2019). It also focuses on the interests of multinational mining companies that already operate in Oriximiná-PA, Faro-PA, Terra Santa-PA and surrounding areas, and intend to intensify their presence there.

This is how, in the PBRB, the objectives of "building the hydroelectric complex on the Trombetas River, in order to provide energy for the mid-Amazon, enable the exploitation of

aluminum and expand the strategic hub of Oriximiná" and of "transforming the sites of federal hydroelectric projects in the region into hubs of economic and social development" (SANTA ROSA, 2020, p. 4, our translation) come together perfectly. To justify its proposals, the PBRB assumes that in Calha Norte "the territory has remained deserted [...], a great demographic void, increasing the geopolitical risk of the region" (SANTA ROSA, 2020, p. 3, our translation).

The supposed risk comes from poor neighbors in South America, subject to political uprisings, guerrillas and drug trafficking, and from rich countries and multilateral organizations interested in the internationalization of the Amazon. It also comes from Amazonian societies themselves under the influence of the so-called paradigms of indigenism, quilombolism and environmentalism - ironic expressions of the rights to self-determination of peoples, territory and the environment, provided for in the Brazilian legal system.

Against these paradigms, the PBRB has set out to act through political and legislative moves at national and international level. These attacks include the supposed pacification of interests in the domestic sphere, under penalty of the forced erasure of differences and the destruction of the Amazon's socio-biodiversity, as well as the realignment of Brazilian foreign policy by abandoning consolidated progressive stances in favor of conservatism on issues relating to human rights, migration and the environment, among others (RODRIGUES; MACIEL, 2019). To this end, the government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022) claimed that it was necessary to

[...] vitalize the diplomatic and intelligence presence close to the decision-making centers of the international indigenist-environmentalist movement, anticipating measures and neutralizing its media campaigns. At the same time, to "break the national arm" of this same movement, through strict control over the international NGOs operating in Brazil and their national subsidiaries. This strategy involves stopping the transfer of public funds to indigenous and environmental NGOs (SANTA ROSA, 2020, p. 4, our translation).

Bolsonaro's government plan did not hesitate to call for legal changes. While Santa Rosa (2020, p. 4, our translation) lamented that "the public management of our Amazon works with its hands tied by restrictive legislation, produced without a strategic filter since 1988", political authorities were quick to promote the deregulation of environmental protection and the revision of rights acquired by indigenous people and quilombolas from the Federal Constitution promulgated that year, but still incomplete (BARRETTO FILHO, 2020; CUNHA; BARBOSA, 2018; FEARNside, 2019; SANTOS, 2019; VERDUM, 2019).

As Rodrigues (2002) shows, Brazil's return to democratic rule, which began in the 1980s, has not been able to curb the assimilationist theses and practices applied to indigenous

and other ethnic groups, which in practice deprive them of the right to decide on their own development models. The emphasis of the development projects implemented in the Amazon has been the supposed inclusion of its peoples in national society through the dilution of ethnic-cultural differences in economic, social and cultural integration projects.

In line with two of Jair Bolsonaro's main campaign promises for the presidency of the Republic in 2018, the government's actions relentlessly attacked legislation protecting indigenous people, quilombolas and other traditional communities in the face of measures and projects that affected them. As Verdum (2019, p. 20, our translation) pointed out, the government encouraged them to ask why "they should remain 'on the margins' of the transformations of contemporary capitalism". In addition, the legislative proposals of their supporters sought to include them as partners or entrepreneurs in hydroelectric, mining and agricultural projects (CARNEIRO; SOARES; LICHTENTHALER, 2020), while at the same time preventing the demarcation of TI and TQ.

Furthermore, as far as environmental protection is concerned, changes to legislation on environmental licensing processes, the relaxation of inspections and the review of protected areas have been accelerated. With the support of the majority of parliamentarians and changes in regulations adopted by federal institutions, a new legal and administrative order has been effectively implemented in Brazil since 2019.

Called neoconservative by Tomei (2021, p. 107, our translation), because it was based on an "alliance of conservative morals and neoliberal economics", this new order reinforced an old military-developmental doctrine that had been in force in the country for a long time (SOARES, 2018). The premise of recognizing and valuing the "characteristics and peculiarities of Amazonian society and culture, as elements arising from ecological, anthropological and historical conditions" (BRASIL, 1985, p. 32, our translation), which was at least stated in the PCN, was abandoned.

The aforementioned premise was ironically linked to the supposedly outdated paradigms of indigenism, quilombolism and environmentalism. The view of traditional peoples and communities as a mere "mass of manoeuvres for international organizations" (BRASIL, 1996, p. 11, our translation), which the then former President of the Republic used to praise the PCN, gained strength to such an extent that the government's defence of the revision of the rights that had been granted to them in Brazil's recent re-democratization process became explicit.

Although the PBRB was removed from the federal government's public agenda during the administration of President Jair Bolsonaro, the ideology behind it remains vigorous, even after his defeat in the 2022 presidential elections. He was not re-elected, but the processes set in motion during his administration did not end with him; on the contrary, they remain strong on the political scene, showing undeniable strength in legislative spaces and insinuating themselves into the executive and judicial branches. There is therefore a real possibility that this program will be reintroduced and perhaps implemented in the near future.

Final considerations

The association between the expansion of infrastructure, economic growth and the intensification of state presence - notably through the Armed Forces - has been frequent in the recent history of the Brazilian Amazon, with negative impacts on the environment and the region's societies - especially the indigenous and quilombola communities. This association is based on an image that is as anachronistic as it is vigorous, of an immense and hostile green desert that needs to be protected, tamed, controlled and exploited for the supposed benefit of the nation. To this end, the colonization of areas previously inhabited by indigenous peoples and traditional communities has been encouraged at different times in history, particularly since the military governments that ran Brazil between 1964 and 1985.

In the Calha Norte region of Pará, which comprises nine municipalities and the largest block of legally protected areas in the world, on the border with Suriname and Guyana, a series of government programs have focused on the binomial of development and militarization from different angles.

Following on from the objectives of the National Integration Program (NIP), launched in the 1970s and characterized by the opening of roads and expansion fronts, the Calha Norte Project (PCN) became the longest-lasting in the region: created in 1985, it became a program in the late 1990s and was expanded in the 21st century.

Initially marked by the deployment of Special Border Platoons (PEF) in areas of strategic interest, mostly inhabited by indigenous peoples, the PCN has gained different institutional contours since its creation, giving different emphases to the actions that integrate its two aspects: military and civilian. Along the way, the mission of defending national borders has been overshadowed by other government initiatives such as Sivam. On the other hand, the volume of resources and the scope of the program in the civilian area grew significantly in the

2000s with the establishment of agreements with municipalities and states, when issues such as the environment gained ground in the PCN, which came to be presented as a social program of the Ministry of Defense.

Revisiting the PCN was fundamental to understanding the premises of its potential successor, the Barão do Rio Branco Program (PBRB), announced by the federal government in 2019.

Based on the old military-developmental paradigm that guided the NIP and the PCN, the PBRB advocates a new "political, economic and ethical stance of the Nation" (BRASIL, 2019, n.p.), which breaks with indigenism, quilombolism and environmentalism, identified as outdated paradigms. Considering that by these terms the government means practices related to defending the environmental guarantees and human rights recognized for indigenous peoples and quilombolas in the 1988 Federal Constitution and in a series of international instruments that have not been fully implemented in Brazil, the PBRB represents vectors for substantial change in a region of unique biodiversity and complex ecological balance, inhabited by peoples and communities that have not only been historically denied fundamental human rights, but have already been dealing in recent decades with conflicts over increasingly less available natural resources, which tend to be intensified.

The first reactions of civil society organizations to the announcement of the program showed that its implementation had a high potential for generating and exacerbating social problems linked to territorial and environmental pressures that threaten the ways of life of the traditional peoples and communities of Calha Norte. On the other hand, the disregard of these risks by government authorities who insist on the need to overcome the supposed backwardness associated with the region's cultural and biological diversity, indicates that the focus of political innovation for the Amazon in the PBRB is the repeal of legal provisions that are intended to protect this diversity.

In short, in addition to sharing the ideas and strategies that underpinned the state's military-developmental inclination, which had already been experienced in various government plans in the Amazon since the 1960s, the PBRB is characterized by its explicit defense of assimilationist theses and practices.

By reducing the human right to cultural diversity to supposedly anachronistic paradigms, even though these are very recent and unconsolidated achievements, the PBRB and the policy that supports it - a policy that goes beyond the limits of action of the declared supporters of now ex-President Jair Bolsonaro - threaten indigenous peoples, quilombola

communities and countless non-hegemonic groups in Brazilian society, which remain vulnerable even after changes in the federal administration in 2023.

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