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The Defense Sector and Sustainable Development: a link to be strengthened

— *Júlia Jones*

THE SOVEREIGNTY AND CLIMATE CENTER

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Executive summary

This article aims at demonstrating the connection between Defense and Sustainable Development, and highlight the Defense Sector potential as an accelerating factor in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda.

The Defense Sector has a vital role in the context of Sustainable Development due to its characteristics and the nature of its activities. It is the State sector that represents one of the most significant purchasing activities, it is a great energy consumer and one of the main participants of public domains, in addition to generating employment and income. It can be stated that the operations and projects developed by the Defense Sector produce significant social, economic, and environmental impacts.

However, for the Defense to have the role of an accelerating factor for Sustainable Development, it is necessary to adopt measures that establish more precise guidelines, which allow the activities of the Defense sector to be aligned with the sustainable perspective. Furthermore, it is indispensable the creation of a governance structure, within the scope of the Ministry of Defense (MD), as well as within each Armed Force, focused on Sustainable Development, which may allow the monitoring and control of actions to promote Sustainable Development, and enable greater integration within the Defense Sector itself along with other stakeholders (industry, academia, and civil society). This governance is fundamental to foster the engagement of researchers, and various actors and correlated segments, as well as to allow the exchange of practices and face the challenges of the 2030 Agenda in a collaborative and cohesive way, keeping in mind that the Sustainable Development Goals are transversal concerning the different agendas of the country.

The reader is thus invited to go through the overview outlined here and the considerations regarding the subject of this paper, concluding the text with recommendations for future analyses and studies which are aimed at strengthening the link between Defense and Sustainable Development.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable Development. Defense Sector. Defense Policies.

The Defense Sector and Sustainable Development: a link to be strengthened

Júlia Jones¹

1. Sustainable Development and its transversality

The world is currently facing enormous social and environmental challenges. In order for these challenges to be confronted, it was created, in 2015, the UN 2030 Agenda — a global agreement settled among 193 countries, with the purpose of eradicating poverty, protect the environment and climate, as well as guarantee that every person may live in peace and prosperity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are part of this Agenda (United Nations 2015a), embodied in seventeen goals that define global priorities and aspirations to be achieved.

Firstly, it is essential to point out that the Sustainable Development perspective comprises three dimensions: social, environmental, and economic (United Nations 2015b). It is understood that these three dimensions are integrated and indivisible in a comprehensive view of Sustainable Development. In this sense, it is plausible to envision the SDGs as a network of objectives, considering that most of their goals encompass all three dimensions. (International Council for Science 2016)

According to what was stated, in order to achieve such goals, it is necessary to approach the plans and actions related to the SDGs from an integrated, multisectoral, and interdisciplinary perspective. Thus, these plans and actions must permeate different sectors of the State and will depend on the engagement of several stakeholders, such as the private sector, the academia, and civil society itself, so that an alliance is settled to share knowledge, experience, and technology.

At the State level, it is expected that governments internalize the SDGs through national actions and plans that result in policies and initiatives that comprehend the capacities, particularities and realities of each country. In this context, it is important to mention the position of the current US administration, headed by Biden and Harris, towards climate matters. As affirmed by Raul Jungmann and Marcelo Furtado, in an article published in the *Valor Econômico* newspaper (Jungmann and Furtado 2021), the executive order presented by president Joe Biden, on January 27th, 2021, innovates by placing the climate crisis at the center of the National Security and Foreign Politics of the United States, as well as highlighting the fight against the climate crisis as a priority in terms of Defense and National Security.

This decision of the US government makes this discussion transversal in every political agenda of the country, which includes the Defense Agenda, thus highlighting the confrontation of climate matters as an action of every person and not only of a single Ministry or specific Agency.

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“...it is essential to create or expand the relationship through different political agendas of the country, thus materializing the transversality of Sustainable Development.”

In 2022, it is already acknowledged that it will not be possible to achieve all the goals of the Agenda by 2030. In addition to it, it is noteworthy that the pandemic brought new obstacles for the implementation of the SDGs, causing greater social and economic damage (United Nations 2022b). Accordingly, it is essential to discuss the relevance of the matter and the imperative necessity to adopt measures that effectively contribute to accelerate processes and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In order to accelerate this process, the holistic and multisectoral approach of the SDGs plays a crucial role, as these goals will only be achieved if the engagement of the stakeholders involved in the process is intensified. To do so, it is essential to create or expand the relationship through different political agendas of the country, thus materializing the transversality of Sustainable Development.

As it will later be stated here, due to its relevance and predominant role in the State, the Defense sector is a fundamental factor in accelerating the implementation process of Sustainable Development.

2. The Defense Sector and Sustainable Development in Brazil

“The nature of the activities of the Defense Sector, the size and location of its facilities, the importance of its staff and the volume of its purchases imply significant responsibility in terms of Sustainable Development.”

The nature of the activities of the Defense Sector, the size and location of its facilities, the importance of its staff and the volume of its purchases imply significant responsibility in terms of Sustainable Development.

The main Brazilian Defense documents² — the Defense White Paper, the National Defense Policy (NDP), the National Defense Strategy (NDS), and the Green Book — are extremely relevant, as it makes public Brazil’s position concerning Defense, both towards society as well as foreign partners.

The analysis of the last version of these documents (which is now under discussion procedures in the National Congress and was approved to be a Legislative ordinance on December 15th, 2021) allows us to realize the undeniable connection between the Defense sector and Sustainable Development.

In this sense, the following extracts from the NDP (Ministério da Defesa 2020a) are worth discussing.

2.1 Fundamentals

[...]

2.1.4. The defense of the country is inseparable from its development, since it depends on the installed capacities, in addition to contributing to the utilization and maintenance of the national potentialities and to the better use of all resources available in Brazil.

2.2 The national ambiance

[...]

2.2.5. Brazil must seek more investments and efficiency in Health, Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, in the qualification of its human resources and in infrastructure (transportation, energy, communication etc.), in order to overcome the existent

2. In regard to the Green Book, it is observed that there is no periodic revision established by law, and the version here analyzed dates from its releasing year, 2017.

problems, so that the development of the country is properly promoted and the National Defense is reinforced.

3. The political conception of defense

Peace and stability in international relations demand integrated and coordinated actions in the fields of **Development**, for the reduction of the structural disabilities of the nations; **Diplomacy**, for the conjugation of conflicting interests of the countries, and **Defense**, for the deterrence or the confrontation of hostile actions. These three pillars — Development, Diplomacy and Defense — must be explored with broader or more limited deepness according to the specific case, to guarantee National Security and Defense.

Still, in chapter 3, the NDP lists the assumptions in which Brazilian National Defense is anchored.

VII. defend the sustainable use of environmental resources, respecting the sovereignty of States;

In the Green Book, one can also find references to aspects of Sustainable Development (Ministério da Defesa 2017). This document deserves emphasis for its importance to the environmental field. It was published in 2017 by the Ministry of Defense (MD) to spread and share the good environmental management practices that are already adopted by the Armed Forces and by the Ministry of Defense, emphasizing that environmental protection and the secular preservation legacy are also part of the practices of the Armed Forces, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Traditionally, the contribution of the Armed Forces goes far beyond its primary mission, the defense of the territory and national sovereignty, and encompasses the territory occupation and integration, as well as the promotion of national development. The environmental protection and the secular preservation legacy, although less known, are also included in this noble set of activities.

[...]

It is, therefore, natural that the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces play a leading role in protecting the environment, by establishing norms and inspecting their appropriate execution, promoting good practices throughout the military facilities and offering adequate professional qualifications.

Brazil is marked by its diversified natural resources and it is up to the Defense not only to protect this heritage, but contribute to its preservation as a task inherent in the work of the Armed Forces.

In accordance with the principles of the documents previously referenced, The Plurianual Plan of the Ministry of Defense for 2020-2023, in item 6.2, specifically approaches the alignment of these Ministerial programs with the SDGs, according to the following terms:

6.2. The alignment of the Ministry of Defense programs to the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, are a universal call to action against poverty, planet protection and to guarantee that every person has peace and prosperity. These Goals include actions and projects related to global climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The following chart shows the connections between the Ministry of Defense programs and these goals. (Ministério da Defesa 2019)

In order for the SDGs to be achieved, however, it is essential for all the stakeholders to participate actively. In this context, the preliminary version of the Ministerial Declaration of the

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2022³ (United Nations 2022a) encourages the involvement and empowering of local authorities, community and organizations, for the SDGs to be achieved, determining that these stakeholders' help is essential to enable the adaptation of such objectives according to the local reality.

The same sort of incentive for multisectoral actions, interdisciplinary issues, and stakeholders' collaboration in the field of Sustainable Development can be seen in the objectives presented at the NDP, which recommends the citizens' participation in discussions related to National Defense subjects, with the aim at stimulating a collaborative and participative culture in the Brazilian society, as stated below:

VI. Amplify the engagement of Brazilian society in matters of National Defense. It is about increasing the perception of the entire Brazilian society on the importance of subjects related to the country's defense, thus adding up to the citizens' participation in discussions regarding the topic and resulting in the creation of a solid Defense culture.

[...]

XV. Stimulate the fundamental involvement of all sectors of Brazilian society on the subjects of defense, for the development of a collaborative and participative culture of all citizens.

In this sense, the Defense White Paper affirms that:

The Ministry of Defense is also a political actor responsible for fostering cooperation with other governmental sectors that are related to the defense of the country, aligning defense projects with programs developed by different government agencies that are specially linked to national development and diplomacy. (Ministério da Defesa, 2020b)

Considering the overview presented here, which emphasized the indisputable connection between the Defense Sector and Sustainable Development, we will move on to the discussion about the role of Defense as an accelerating factor for Sustainable Development.

“The Defense Sector is one of the largest buyers of the State, being a great energy consumer and one of the main occupants of public spaces, besides having a great number of employees. Therefore, the operations and projects developed by the Defense Sector cause great social, economic and environmental impacts...”

3. The Defense Sector as an accelerating factor for Sustainable Development

The year 2020 is known as the beginning of the so-called Decade of Action (United Nations 2019), which aims to accelerate, worldwide, the achievement of the SDGs worldwide. Thus, it is appropriate to evoke deeper reflections on the role of Brazil and, especially, of the Brazilian Defense Sector in this uninterrupted pursuit of Sustainable Development.

As previously discussed, the main Brazilian documents on Defense clearly establish the link between Defense and Sustainable Development. However, besides the normative structure formed by such documents, other extremely relevant factors allow us to see the Defense Sector as an accelerating factor for Sustainable Development.

The Defense Sector is one of the largest buyers of the State, being a great energy consumer and one of the main occupants of public spaces, besides having a great number of employees. Therefore, the operations and projects developed by the Defense Sector cause great social, economic and environmental impacts, with the potential to promote the strengthening of the national productive chain, the creation of jobs and income, and the transfer of

3. The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the main UN platform on Sustainable Development. It plays a key role in managing and revising the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs worldwide. The HLPF, in 2022, will take place between July 5th and 15th.

“...Defense policies may be a powerful tool to support the implementation of Sustainable Development.”

high-added-value technologies. These factors place the Defense Sector at the center of the race towards Sustainable Development.

Regarding technology transfer, it is considered a highly relevant subject, not only within the Defense Sector, but also in the 2030 Agenda (United Nations 2015a), which establishes investments in technologies as a preponderant factor in achieving the SDGs. Using technology to promote Sustainable Development is, as a matter of fact, a guideline aligned with what is stated in article 218, § 2° of the Brazilian Federal Constitution: “technological innovation must be predominantly aimed at solving Brazil’s problems”.

Therefore, it is important to mention the Technological, Industrial and Commercial Compensation Policy on Defense (*PcomTIC*, in its acronym in Portuguese) to demonstrate how Defense policies may be a powerful tool to support the implementation of Sustainable Development.

Known as “Offset”, compensatory commercial practices are regulated by the Normative Determination n. 61 of the Ministry of Defense, from October 22nd, 2018 (Ministério da Defesa 2018), being widely used in the agreements of the Defense Sector. Among the benefits they bring, the main one is the acquisition of technologies, to which the requesting country would not have access through conventional methods (Jones 2019). According to article 3, item VI of the referred Norm, compensation consists of “compensatory practice agreed between the parts, as a condition for the importation of goods and services, with the intention of creating benefits of a technological, industrial or commercial nature.”

It is realized, according to the previously-transcribed definition, that the compensatory policy was established in order to seek technological, industrial or commercial benefits. It is not, however, mentioned any social and environmental subject. It is noticed, still, that in countries like Peru and Colombia, the compensation policy embraces the social and environmental aspect in its guidelines (Colombia 2008a; Ministerio de Defensa, 2011).

Another way of including the pursuit of Sustainable Development in the offset policy would be by establishing a greater multiplier coefficient for compensations that, besides transferring technology and know-how, are also ecologically responsible.

“...one of the essential steps to achieve the SDGs is the transposition and translation of their goals into national policies.”

The focus of this paper is not to analyze other specific policies of the Defense Sector under the Sustainable Development perspective, such as the law n° 12.598/2012, which determines special norms for purchasing, hiring and developing products and systems of defense. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the relevance of this type of study, considering that one of the essential steps to achieve the SDGs is the transposition and translation of their goals into national policies.

3.1 Good international practices

The lack of robustness and clarity of norms and the absence or deficiency of measuring mechanisms (control and evaluation), constitute great obstacles for achieving goals established in public policies of the State. In regard to the promotion and implementation of Sustainable Development, it is not different. A brief analysis of other countries’ scenarios allows us to identify the existence of unified and more consistent provisions, which clearly establish guidelines at operational and strategic levels, so that the Defense Sector plays, as best as possible, its role in the pursuit for Sustainable Development.

Both in the United States and the European Union, as well as NATO, there are provisions on Sustainable Development in the Defense Sector. Even though it is not here intended to analyze these international structures, it is worth, by way of example, making comments on the way in which Sustainable Development is present within the structure of the French Ministry of Defense (Ministère des Armées).

The French Ministry of Defense established its first environmental engagement plan in 2007, which was updated in 2009. In this sense, in 2010 it elaborated the first National Strategy for Sustainable Development on Defense (*La stratégie de développement durable*

“...all these policies address the issue of governance as a relevant factor in achieving the efficient promotion, coordination and implementation of actions related to Sustainable Development.”

de la défense de 2010) which identifies nine challenges in terms of Sustainable Development, including social, economic and environmental aspects. Each of these challenges is aligned to strategic decisions and proposes measures to be implemented to confront their respective challenges. In 2012, the Ministerial Energy Performance Strategy (*La stratégie ministérielle de performance énergétique de 2012*) was launched, which identifies efforts to be undertaken to guarantee the Armed Forces access to energy, ensure quality, and control the expenses and consumption, from an environmental perspective. Moreover, in 2016, the Sustainable Defense Strategy (*La stratégie défense durable de 2016*) was created, which identifies four main challenges: (i) territorial preservation (ii) ecological design of infrastructure and equipment (iii) reinforcement of a socially responsible approach (iv) implementation of a structured governance, to ensure the correct implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy (Assemblée Nationale 2021).

In 2020, the Ministerial Energy Performance Strategy was updated (*La stratégie ministérielle de performance énergétique de 2020*), which is based on two main commitments: the reduction of energy consumption, and the development of renewable energy. Also in 2020, the 2020 Sustainable Development Strategy (*La stratégie de développement durable de l'état-major des armées de 2020*) was launched, which mainly seeks to reinforce actions concerning the six SDGs related to the environment, as well as highlight actions and results achieved in the social and economic dimensions. In 2022, the Defense and Climate Strategy (*Stratégie Climat & Défense*) was established, focusing on preparing the Defense sector to face climate matters.

It is important to mention that all these policies address the issue of governance as a relevant factor in achieving the efficient promotion, coordination and implementation of actions related to Sustainable Development.

In this context, some good governance practices implemented in the French Defense Sector stand out: (i) the establishment, within the structure of both the Ministry of Defense and each Armed Force, of a position responsible for monitoring Sustainable Development issues (*haut fonctionnaire au développement durable*⁴). This professional is responsible for contributing to the coordination and evaluation of Sustainable Development policies implementation in each Ministry. The creation of this position thus contributes to the transversality and coordination of the subject in different agendas; (ii) the establishment of responsible procurement guidelines and policies (*achats responsables*⁵) so that purchasing in the Defense Sector takes into consideration Sustainable Development aspects; (iii) actions towards the continuing training and education of the armed forces' personnel and their awareness of the Sustainable Development challenges.

This brief exposition aims at stimulating debates and reflections regarding what could be improved in terms of the governance structure of the Ministry of Defense, with the purpose of implementing the Sustainable Development conception into the activities of the Brazilian Defense sector.

4. Final considerations and recommendations

As shown throughout this paper, the nature of the Defense Sector activities, the size and location of its military facilities, as well as the purchasing volume, both nationally and internationally, aligned to guidelines, actions or objectives, present in the main Brazilian Defense documents, concerning aspects of the protection, preservation or sustainable use of environ-

4. More information about the *haut fonctionnaire au développement durable* at: <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/hauts-fonctionnaires-au-developpement-durable>.

5. More information about the *achats responsables: Le développement durable au sein du ministère des Armées* p.62. Available at: https://www.asafrance.fr/images/123_dossier_armees_developpement_durable.pdf.

“...an invitation to permanent debates on the role that the Brazilian Defense Sector plays in the context of promoting Sustainable Development and the necessary measures for the Brazilian Defense to be an increasingly active actor regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.”

mental resources, are factors that attribute to the sector undebatable potential to become a driving force for Sustainable Development in Brazil, also in line with the acceleration process that has been implemented in this decade worldwide. Here, therefore, is an invitation to permanent debates on the role that the Brazilian Defense Sector plays in the context of promoting Sustainable Development and the necessary measures for the Brazilian Defense to be an increasingly active actor regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

As a contribution to these reflections and future studies, the following recommendations can be drawn:

a) Elaborate studies dedicated to analyzing the Defense Sector Policies and their alignment to the conception of Sustainable Development.

The result of this study should propose inclusions, modifications and further development in such rules, or even the creation of new policies, to establish clearer guidelines for the implementation of the sustainable perspective in the daily activities of the Defense Sector. The eventual modification of such policies may result in guidelines for:

a.1) Intensification of the inclusion of the Sustainable Development perspective in the design, construction, maintenance and use of military infrastructures and equipment:

- The military facilities to be constructed, and also those that already exist, must increasingly be the object of ecological viability studies, considering evaluations on the possibility of using renewable energy, correct waste management, among other aspects that constitute sustainability tools.
- It is also fundamental that the Sustainable Development perspective be intensified in the management of the life cycle of materials and equipment; which means that the environmental preservation must sustain actions that involve the use, maintenance, demobilization/decommissioning and materials disposal.

a.2) Incentive for technological innovation and scientific research focused on Sustainable Development.

The Brazilian Defense sector must invest in the development of cleaner technologies and processes. Reducing energy consumption and pollution when using equipment or infrastructure should be one of the guiding principles.

b) Reflect on the governance structure of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces in regard to Sustainable Development.

It should be considered the establishment of a governance structure that chooses someone to be responsible for Sustainable Development matters in each Armed Force, as well as in the Ministry of Defense. The structure of the Ministry of Defense would promote the consolidation of information, data and analysis of Sustainable Development actions in each Armed Force, thus, allowing a general and concentrated view on how this subject advances, which practices should be strengthened and which have to be changed. This consolidation and centralization of information will enable sharing good practices and difficulties faced, and it will also facilitate the creation of proposals for future policies or necessary adjustments to existing policies.

c) Hold seminars, workshops and conferences involving the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense, as well as representatives of the Defense industry and academia, with a view to raising awareness on the importance of Sustainable Development, exchanging good practices and evaluating the challenges ahead.

d) Implementation of programs that foster scientific research in the field of Sustainable Development and Defense.

Although there are initiatives in the Ministry of Defense for research programs in the area of Defense, no research was identified with an emphasis on Sustainable Development. Therefore, there is a lack of projects aimed at consolidating the link between Sustainable Development and Defense. ■

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