

The strategy of presence under the strategy concept and its roots in the Army's imaginary

La estrategia de la presencia a la luz del concepto de estrategia y sus raíces en el imaginario del Ejército

Abstract: The strategy of presence is often talked about, but it has been the subject of very few studies. This paper intends to contribute in this direction by establishing the historical background of presence, followed by the presentation of the various definitions of strategy and the analysis of the notion of presence as a strategy according to such concepts, in order to validate or not its elevation to the condition of strategy per se. A conjectural approach follows due to the fact that the subject is impregnated in the imaginary of Army officers and, therefore, is marked by a significant degree of subjectivity. The methodology applied was simple: a historical analysis, to raise and understand the past facts related to the subject and its importance, followed by a conceptual analysis, to find out the coherence of the presence strategy with the strategy concept. A conclusion incites those responsible for strategic thinking to give preference to logic over the illusory aspects of the imaginary.

Keywords: Army; presence; strategy; doctrine; amazon.

Resumen: Se suele hablar mucho de la estrategia de la presencia, pero es un tema que ha sido objeto de muy pocos estudios. Este artículo pretende contribuir en este sentido estableciendo los antecedentes históricos de la presencia, seguido de la presentación de las diversas definiciones de estrategia y el análisis de la noción de presencia como estrategia conforme dichos conceptos, con el fin de validar o no su elevación a la condición de estrategia en sí misma. A esto se sigue un abordaje conjetural, ya que el tema está impregnado en la imaginación de los oficiales del Ejército y, por tanto, plagado de un grado significativo de subjetivismo. La metodología seguida fue simple: un análisis histórico, para plantear y comprender los hechos pasados relacionados con el tema y su importancia, seguido de un análisis conceptual, para verificar la coherencia de la estrategia de la presencia con el concepto de estrategia. Una conclusión impulsa a los encargados de poner en marcha el pensamiento estratégico a privilegiar la lógica sobre los aspectos ilusorios del imaginario.

Palabras clave: Ejército; presencia; estrategia; doctrina; Amazonía.

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1 Introduction

Presence strategy is often talked about in Brazilian military circles, particularly in the Army, but, strangely, the attention given to the subject and the constancy with which it is referred to have not produced studies that correspond to the importance given to it; in fact, they are almost non-existent. And when they do exist, such as the Strategic Informative No. 1, 2015, of the Army Center for Strategic Studies (Centro de Estudos Estratégicos do Exército — CEEEx), they present it as a data, without any analysis to substantiate and justify it. The strategy of presence, therefore, hovers in a theoretical vacuum. Because of this, it can be said that, in a way, it exerts a kind of magic over the Army officers, because it makes them accept it spontaneously, without the need to understand its true meaning. This fanciful acceptance, without the need for proper substantiation by solid foundations, is not recommendable to those who have the task of thinking about the security and defense issues of a country, of debating them, and of transforming them into relevant and feasible military doctrine. This paper intends to contribute in this direction based on the following process: presentation of the historical background of presence in order to understand its historical importance and its influence on the way Army officers think, followed by an analysis of the logical coherence of its characterization as strategy with the concept of strategy, and finally a conjectural verification of the subjective factors surrounding it that led to this spontaneous rise to the condition of strategy.

It is not an easy task to specify at what exact moment, over the last decades, people started to talk not about presence, which is a much older subject, but about strategy of presence in the Brazilian Army. The fact is, however, that it was enshrined as such in the Army's manuals from the end of the last century and in those of the Ministry of Defense thereafter. What can be stated with undoubted certainty is that presence—both political and socioeconomic, as well as military—has been a constant concern of governments and the Armed Forces of Brazil throughout the ages.

2 Historical background of the presence

The remote antecedents of the concern with the presence of the State's living forces in the national territory go back at least to the 18th century, when Alexandre de Gusmão, based on the existence, though sparse and scant, of villages and settlements resulting from the exploratory action of the Brazilian explorers called "bandeirantes" across the central plateau and of military fortifications installed at strategic points along the Solimões/Amazonas rivers and some of its tributaries, eliminated once and for all the validity of the Tordesillas line and subsequent resolutions through the principle of *uti possidetis*, enshrined by the Treaty of Madrid in 1750, which guaranteed Brazil the general delineation of its borders, especially in the Amazon region and the Midwest, which remain in force with relatively minor changes until today.

In the second half of the 19th century, the presence in the Amazon had an influx of workers attracted by the rubber exploitation cycle. Besides the general increase in human presence motivated by this economic activity, the expansion of the rubber plantations into the region of Acre, then a Bolivian territory, resulted in the outbreak of the Acre revolution in

1902, under the leadership of Plácido de Castro, which was supported by the government of Rodrigues Alves (the Brazilian president), who sent an army brigade to the region to support the Acre desire to incorporate into Brazil and, at the same time, to strengthen the negotiating power in the ongoing dispute. The definitive incorporation of Acre, an achievement of the Baron of Rio Branco, was agreed upon by the Treaty of Petrópolis in 1907. This function of presence as a factor in settling disputes and defining borders was extinguished after this action.

Despite these internal migrations, the Brazilian backlands, or *anecumenes*, according to the erudite language of geopoliticians, remained isolated, sparsely populated and completely disarticulated, both among themselves and from the political and economic centers of the country. In the early 1930s, Captain Mário Travassos published *Projeção Continental do Brasil*, a work that strongly influenced Brazilian geopolitical thought over the following decades (MATTOS, 2011). Noting the rarity of countries whose territorial unities were strictly restricted to aspects of their physical geography, Travassos affirmed that the role of political geography was to bind the territory into a truly national entity and, in this respect, affirmed that the Brazilian territory was very propitious, "despite all its caprices, all its contradictions" (TRAVASSOS, 1938, p. 85). He advocated eliminating the divergent character of Brazil's largest natural region, the Amazon, and the most integrated and developed, the Platina, by articulating them through the pivot represented by the central plateau and its connections with the Atlantic. To achieve this end, Brazil's longitudinal communication routes, essential from the point of view of national unity, should be based on the plurality of means of transportation (TRAVASSOS, 1938), which today is called multimodal transportation. From then on, the presence, as the final expression of the actions of the various branches of the State in the effort to integrate these backlands, including the military, became the main focus of Brazil's geopolitics.

The much older idea of transferring the federal capital to the central regions of Brazil was then put into effect, as established by the 1891, 1934, and 1946 Brazilian constitutions, an action of utmost importance for the innerization of national development. The consequent construction of the Belém-Brasília highway, materialized the first longitudinal land connection between the Amazon and the rest of the country.

Until that time, the needs for political, military and socio-economic integration and presence, as well as the resulting state actions, had been driven by internal factors. From the 1960s on, pressures, or at least uneasiness, of external origin were added to these motivating factors, a fact that particularly affected the military, always jealous of the defense of national sovereignty, and especially the Army.

The Great Amazon Lake project, elaborated in 1964 by the Hudson Institute of the United States, generated many suspicions and intense debates in the Brazilian government, political and military circles. The damming of the Amazon channel, associated with six other artificial lakes in rivers of the Amazon basin, would create a kind of Amazonian Mediterranean Sea (QUEIROZ, 2014) with an area of about 400,000 km², forming a huge lake system that would allow continuous navigability throughout the length of the South American waterway network and would serve to induce development by "connecting the main industrial centers to the subcontinent's raw material producers" (QUEIROZ, 2014, p. 271). Although viewed with sympathy by some of our Amazon neighbors, the proposal was soon met with suspicion in Brazil because of

the Hudson Institute's close ties to the US government and its defense department in particular, a strong indication that the proposal was most likely associated with US interests. Itamaraty (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) eventually pointed out in a report the inconvenience of the project stating that "of the whole scheme of the great lake of the Amazon, hovered the barely disguised idea of an internationalization of the Amazon" (QUEIROZ, 2014, p. 282). From then on, the idea that overcoming underdevelopment and integrating the inhospitable backlands to the dynamic regions of the country were essential to the national security and defense policy was firmly established in military thought, expressed by the famous slogan: "Integrate not to Deliver". According to the interior minister at the time, General Albuquerque Lima,

the Government is obliged to consider as a high priority the matter of the effective occupation of the empty spaces in the Amazon, that no occupation plan will be valid if it does not count on the decisive support of the Armed Forces, together, but that they should understand that it is an *operation of economic and social interest, according to the concepts of development* (1968 apud QUEIROZ, 2014, p. 276, our emphasis).

The Great Lakes project did not contemplate any concern for the environment, quite the contrary. However, ecological interests and their indigenous developments would soon come to represent the main threat to the internationalization of the Amazon. In 1972, by order of the Club of Rome, the *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* (MIT) published the report *The Limits to Growth*, in which it concluded that "the continued growth of the global economy would, sometime in the 21st century, exceed planetary limits, most likely resulting in the collapse of the population and the economic system" (apud NUNES et al., 2012, p. 3). The developed countries, following the line of the MIT report, defended the idea of "zero growth" at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the first major meeting of heads of state to address the environmental issue, held in Stockholm, also in 1972. Considered highly unfair by developing countries, since zero growth would mean, in practice, reserving existing resources for already developed and industrialized nations, the idea was firmly rejected by Brazil and other countries, which prevailed by approving the clause that states have the sovereign right to exploit their resources according to their own policies, as long as they do not cause environmental damage to other countries.

Faced with all of these pressures on a region that was practically uninhabited and deprived of the resources and presence of the State, Brazil reacted by means of, among others, the following initiatives to apply the nation's living forces in this enormous territorial emptiness: the creation of the Superintendence for the Development of Amazonia (Superintendência do Desenvolvimento da Amazônia – SUDAM), replacing the inefficient organism that arose in the government of Getúlio Vargas; the implementation of the Manaus Free Trade Zone; the execution of the road plan for Amazonia, with emphasis on the construction of the Transamazon, Cuiabá-Santarém, Cuiabá-Porto Velho and Manaus-Boa Vista highways; the Rondon and RADAM¹ projects, and

¹ Rondon Project: Army initiative in which university students from all over the country were taken to do short internships with the Amazon's unassisted populations, in order to learn about the region's problems and recognize its importance. RADAM Project: broad action of surveying the mineral resources of the Amazon.

the strengthening of military resources in the region through the creation of the Amazon Military Command, the current Amazon Flotilla and the 7thCOMAR (Regional Air Command), as well as subordinate military organizations.

The legal solution to the issue in Stockholm did not completely reassure the Brazilian authorities, especially the Armed Forces, because several governments and internationally prominent personalities began to make public pronouncements indicating their intention to promote some degree of internationalization of the Amazon, which increased on the eve of the new UN conference on the environment in Rio de Janeiro, the so-called ECO-92. The conference, however, once again favored Brazil and developing countries by ratifying the sovereign right guaranteed by the Stockholm Conference and enshrining the concept of sustainable development (NUNES et al., 2012).

Non-governmental organizations, in turn, had been gradually assuming prominence in issues related to environmental protection, particularly with regard to illegal deforestation and the demarcation of indigenous lands. Although the demarcation of these lands is a constitutional obligation of the Brazilian State, the pressure to grant extensive indigenous areas along the borders, covering regions rich in natural resources, has once again reinforced the suspicion in military circles, especially in the Army, of a disguised attempt at internationalization of the Amazon, through the blocking of these resources and a possible recognition of the existence of "indigenous nations" by the international community. In yet another strategic action to counter this possible threat and to increase protection and settlement in the northern arc of the Brazilian Amazon basin, the Army conceived and managed to get national approval for the Northern Border Project (Projeto Calha Norte) in 1985, which later became a program under the Ministry of Defense.

As a result of all these actions taken, the current presence of the Armed Forces in the Amazon is practically configured, in terms of the military sphere. Besides this, the concern with the effective occupation of the territory, that is, the presence of the State in its various aspects, and the Army's intense involvement in the debates related to it and in the resulting actions, was a constant in all the actions mentioned, permeating them in a chain of the same predominant idea, which ended up taking root in the Army officers' minds.

On the other hand, the installation and maintenance of military garrisons in the main political and socioeconomic centers and of fortifications at strategic points in Colonial Brazil was necessary to impose Portuguese sovereignty and law and to ensure the loyalty, or at least the passivity, of the population towards the overseas Kingdom. This presence, inherited from Portugal and later expanded, initially played a similar role in the Empire and in the Republic, due to the political instability of the first decades of both regimes, although, sometimes, as a result of politics meddling in the military, it itself served as a base for rebellious acts or acts contrary to the democratic principles of the nation, one of the most notorious examples being the uprising of the Natal and Recife garrisons and of some units based in the federal capital during the 1935 Communist Uprising.

Besides the specific focus on the lack or deficiency of state action in the Northern region of the country, which, it seems, was the main motivator of the whole process that came to result in the idea of the strategy of presence, this long-established linking of presence with the preservation of sovereignty and the maintenance of order also undoubtedly contributed in the same direction.

It is worth pointing out two fundamental aspects before closing this item: first, in order to introduce the following line of argumentation, the above-mentioned strategic actions were not justified by themselves; they were adopted by the government and the Brazilian Armed Forces with the unequivocal objective of supplanting existing adverse factors or of preventing real, potential or suspected antagonisms. Second, it is worth emphasizing that, due to their importance, continuity, and scope, they exerted an impactful effect on the imaginary of Army officers, marking it and strongly sedimenting themselves in their way of thinking.

3 The strategy of presence in the face of strategy definitions

There is no question that presence, as a strategy, must necessarily fit into the corresponding concept. This concept, however, has expanded over the past two centuries. In his portentous *Traité de Stratégie*, Hervé Coutau-Bégarie states that "the whole history of strategy from the second half of the nineteenth century onward has consisted of its advance into the sphere of politics" (2001, p. 67). The concept of strategy, consequently, has not one, but several definitions, which have marked this evolutionary process².

Derived from the ancient Greek *strategos*, the word originally denoted the art of leading an army or, in more general terms, the art of command. Jomini defined strategy as the "art of conducting war on the chart, of encompassing the entire theater of operations" and Clausewitz considered it as "the theory concerning the employment of combats³ in the service of war" (COUTAU-BÉGARIE, 2001, p. 65). Other definitions emerged up to World War I, all, however, revolving around the conduct of war, with some expanding the validity of strategy to peacetime as well. In the 1920s, the concept of strategy broadened once again beyond the purely military domain. Signaling this trend, Liddell Hart proposed the notion of grand strategy, whose function would be "to assess and develop the nation's economic and demographic resources in order to sustain its armed forces" (COUTAU-BÉGARIE, 2001, p. 69), with its horizons extending "beyond war toward subsequent peace" (COUTAU-BÉGARIE, 2001, p. 69). In the early 1960s, General André Beaufre stressed in strategy its character of action and reaction in the face of an adversary intelligence by identifying it as a "dialectic of wills employing force to resolve their conflict" (1998, p. 27). Following previous trends, pointed out by Coutau-Bégarie (2001), Beaufre stated that strategy, although unique in its objective and method, is subdivided when applied in specialized strategies, uniquely linked to a special domain of conflict. As the highest dimension, he placed total strategy, in charge of the political level, in charge of conceiving the total war⁴ by establishing the appropriate mission and the appropriate combination of the various general strategies — political, economic, diplomatic and military — components of the intermediate

2 The new Manual of fundamentals: strategy (Manual de fundamentos: estratégia) EB20-MF-03.106, approved in 2020, provides a comprehensive list of definitions.

3 Coutau-Bégarie explains that he followed Raymond Aron in opting for "combats" as the more precise connotation of the German *Gefecht*, instead of "battle", a term contained in the definitions presented by Peter Paret, *Clausewitz*, in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, t. 1, Bibliex, 2001, p. 263, and by General Meira Mattos, *Estratégias Militares Dominantes*, p. 239.

4 In Beaufre's view, total war does not mean the culminating employment of the power of nations, as in the two world wars (although they do fit the concept), but simply the commitment of all expressions of national power, in various combinations, to resolve the conflict.

level. At the base of the pyramid, he placed the operational strategy, linked directly to the conduct of operations (1998).

According to Coutau-Bégarie (2001, p. 76), strategy is

an exchange relationship, of a certainly particular kind, but one that can only take place in pairs. It is, to be sure, the child of politics, since it presupposes from the start the designation of an adversary and is fundamentally an action/reaction phenomenon.

Alluding to the current vulgarization of the concept, the same author further states:

Everything has become strategic, and strategy is nowhere to be found anymore; the corruption of the concept has taken place. The only way out of this impasse is to return to the notion of the enemy and the dialectic of intelligences that it gives rise to. When there is no such dialectic, there is no strategy (COUTAU-BÉGARIE, 2001, p. 78).

As can be well noted, all these definitions and arguments are oriented toward armed conflicts, even when they go beyond military means. In Brazil, however, a peculiar vision emerged, motivated by the observation that underdevelopment was, at the time, the greatest threat to the country's security. The War College (Escola Superior de Guerra – ESG), established in 1949, became prominent as a center of strategic thinking between the 1950s and 1970s. Adopting the American notion of "national strategy", it defined it as "the art of preparing and applying national power", in all its expressions, "considering existing or potential obstacles", adverse factors and antagonisms, "to achieve or maintain the objectives set by national policy" (ARRUDA, 1983, p. 68). The ESG continues to adopt basically the same definition, with minor changes: "The art of preparing and applying power to conquer and preserve objectives, overcoming obstacles of all kinds" (ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE GUERRA, 2019, p. 46). According to this line of reasoning, strategy became as comprehensive as Beaufre's total strategy, by virtue of encompassing all expressions of power, but it replaced the intelligent adversary and the dialectic of wills with the much vaguer notion of obstacle, thus obscuring the link with war and attributing clear primacy to the adverse factors of underdevelopment, which undoubtedly diverted the focus of the concept, undermining its precision. A more recent definition, which goes back to *Clausewitz*, has been proposed by Colin Gray: the use of force or the threat to use it for political purposes (2016, p. 40).

As a result of all these definitions, it is unequivocally apparent that strategy is applied against an identified enemy or adversary or, depending on the specificity of the ESG notion, to overcome an unwanted condition, whether physiographic, social, economic, military, or of any other nature. In short, strategy fulfills its purpose by preparing power for a conflictive situation, by confronting and defeating an enemy, or by overcoming obstacles. Its action concludes when these objectives are achieved, and the meaning of the strategy also vanishes with the achievement of these objectives. And, at the time, the ESG made this aspect clear by linking the strategy to current national objectives, and not to permanent ones, thus indicating its evident temporariness (ARRUDA, 1983).

No prospect of armed conflict worries Brazil today, and the old obstacles of the state and military vacuum were filled by strategic actions that integrated the Brazilian backlands through the presence of political and socio-economic forces and that resulted in the current territorial organization of the Army. It is a very satisfactory organization, by the way, because it covers the whole country, including its most remote borders. Political and social instability, the cause of internal convulsions and attempts at secession in the past, has in turn been supplanted by communion around a sense of Brazilianness and the consolidation of Brazil's political institutions.

Now, if there are no obvious adversaries or the anticipation of armed conflicts, there is no reason to have a strategy according to the classic definitions presented⁵ and, once the obstacles that motivated it have been eliminated, the strategy according to the ESG concept also dissolves. Moreover, art, a recurring term in these definitions, explicitly reveals itself through actions. Art consists of action and therefore is consummated in action, and there is no action in the presence itself. Strategy is also considered by many authors and by the Brazilian Army as a science⁶ but as such, according to Coutau-Bégarie (2001, p. 143-153), it is linked to applied thought and strategic theory. As a science, therefore, it consists of the theoretical basis for the elaboration and execution of a strategy, but this is materialized through action, which has primacy. And just as there is no art in presence, there is no science behind it. One must, therefore, conclude that the elevation of the presence of military organizations in the national territory to the condition of strategy is unfounded, as it does not fit into any of the various forms of the concept of this art/science.

Presence, as it manifests itself today, consists of a mere conjunctural condition, a contingency. The purpose of preserving or maintaining objectives, contained in the ESG definition and in the Army's definition of military strategy (presented later), derives from the eventual persistence or later manifestation of some related obstacle. This purpose, indicative of an action to be taken, could serve as a counter-argument to justify presence as a strategy; it should be noted, however, that such an obstacle will require, if necessary, other strategic actions to be overcome, and presence in effect will not solve it at all. It should also be noted that General Meira Mattos, one of the greatest Brazilian military strategic thinkers, if not the greatest, makes no reference to it in his book *Estratégias Militares Dominantes: sugestões para uma Estratégia Militar Brasileira* (1986), an obvious sign of not recognizing it as a strategy. This, however, does not mean to deny the strategic value of the presence, because the appropriate location of its military organizations throughout the national territory favors the Army's strategic employment. Strategic value, however, is not the same as strategy, otherwise the Paraná River and the Northeastern salient, which were very important in the Paraguayan War and the Second World War respectively, would also have been strategies in their own right.

Despite what Army strategy manuals have established, the constancy of presence is circumstantial, it does not constitute a strategy, for the real strategy is found in the previous actions that resulted in the presence and those taken on the basis of it, not the presence itself. Even if a specific need requires the employment of military forces, presence is not characterized as strategy;

5 Employment assumptions, guiding military planning at its highest level, must be based on objective, not fanciful, indicators of the potential existence of these two aspects.

6 "Art and science of preparing the power to, overcoming obstacles of all kinds, achieve the objectives set by the policy" (BRASIL, 2020, p. 2-5).

it consists only of a trump card of probable strategic value, and its effect is more one-off than generalized. The obvious notion of being present if needed, inserted in its most recent definition (BRASIL, 2020, p. 4-5), is a ploy to cover up the flaw in the concept. Moreover, being present is a dynamic function, which implies a systemic approach, since it demands efficient command and control, effective means, and adequate logistics. Presence, on the other hand, is essentially inert, it does not induce, by itself, care for all kinds of means, nor concern for efficacy, since it embeds, as a supposed strategy, the illusory idea of acting by itself. Presence and being present are very distinct and, in a sense, antagonistic functions. Being present, on the other hand, does not constitute a strategy either, since it determines nothing about the actions to be performed on the stage of operations, but only consists of a preliminary phase of the strategy: the displacement and concentration.

To finish this conceptual approach, it is necessary to analyze the very definition of presence strategy. The 2004 manual C 124-1, Strategy, defined it as "the military presence throughout the national territory, with the purpose of guaranteeing the constituted powers, law and order, ensuring national sovereignty and integration, and contributing effectively to national development" (apud RODRIGUES, 2020, p. 58). The Military Doctrine of Defense, from 2007, characterized it with more restraint as the "military presence in the national territory and its extensions, with the purpose of fulfilling the constitutional purpose and subsidiary attributions" (apud RODRIGUES, 2020, p. 58). The new Strategy manual, of course, reproduces the definition of the Military Defense Doctrine. These definitions, however, are unsatisfactory and illusory. Unsatisfactory because tautological; they are explained by the very term they intend to define, presence; and illusory because unspecific; attributing to presence the constitutional mission of the Armed Forces, the core of the definitions, does not distinguish it in any way from any other high-level activity of the Army and the other services. It allows one to speak, for example, of "teaching strategy", "logistics strategy", "administration strategy", etc.,⁷ because these pseudo-strategies can also be attributed to the Army's constitutional mission as its ultimate purpose. If one could speak of a presence strategy for this purpose, it would be much more logical to speak of an "Army strategy", not as a sectorial strategy promoted by the Land Force, but rather inherent to its mere existence, unrelated to any action.

4 The presence in the Army's imaginary

Presence has undoubtedly taken root in the Army's imagination, otherwise it would not going against the need of a consistent rationale to be accepted as a strategy. It is necessary, then, to investigate why it is considered as such, why it has assumed in the thinking of Army officers and, consequently, in military doctrine, this immanent condition of strategy in itself. Little can be stated categorically in this regard, since, after all, the imaginary is characterized by its subjectivism rather than by the logical foundation of objective arguments. It is possible, however, to conjecture on the

⁷ Not to be confused with teaching, logistical or administrative strategies, feasible, according to the concept, as a way to conduct these actions at the highest level.

basis of some certainties, because, as long as it is anchored in rational aspects, conjecture is useful for its capacity to unveil what is hidden and shed light on the object that one wishes to know.

The old strategy manual inserted presence and deterrence into the category of "security strategies," however, it did not explain what these would be. In the absence of a specific definition, it must be admitted that they fit the general definition of strategy, which confirms the previous argument. The fact that they are tied to security, a permanent concern, could indicate an intention to grant them equal permanence. Although it is possible to attribute a dissuasive condition to the Brazilian military means, imagining that the slender body of conventional weapons can exert the same effect as the massive force of nuclear weapons,⁸ which would guarantee them a certain inherent dissuasive value, the same did not and does not apply to presence, because dissuasion requires a specific threat to be dissuaded, an enemy, therefore, even if potential, which necessarily inserts it in the dialectic of wills, while presence does not have this character of reciprocal action.

The current manual classifies presence, in addition to deterrence and others,⁹ as a model of military strategy, which also does not evade the conceptual argument made. The fact that the new concept of presence strategy has excluded the idea of contributing to national integration and development, as seen above, does not automatically eliminate from the minds of the military, in particular the Army, its presumed strategic function, since it will be necessary for them to overcome the natural effect of inertia in the face of change, the stronger the more ingrained the idea, whose entrenchment the previous concept unequivocally indicated.

In this sense, it is symptomatic that the Army's strategy manual welcomes the developmental approach of the ESG strategy (BRASIL, 2020, p. 2-5). Besides not having the precise incisiveness of the conceptions of a warlike character, linked to the actions of force against an intelligent adversary, its view of strategy, derived from that approach, points to the Army's tendency to see itself as an agent of development and guardian of national institutions, historically represented by its presence in the national territory. As for military strategy, General Meira Mattos, in his work already mentioned and in line with those conceptions, states unequivocally that it is "the art of conducting war" (1986, p. 8). The definition in the old manual ignored this indisputable truth, and the current one presents it in a diluted form¹⁰ General Albuquerque Lima's warning still reverberates, more than half a century later, in the Army's way of thinking, despite the fact that the national conjuncture has changed radically during this period of time and that the obstacles that caused it have been largely overcome. Not enough attention has been paid to this evolution of the Brazilian picture, and, in general, there is still an attachment to the idea that the Army is still *the pillar of the nation*, and not an *instrument* of it (SERRANO, 2004), an idea to which we are used to, and to its past condition of inductor of the country's development and sustainer of nationality, of which we are justifiably proud.

8 Before the advent of the atomic bomb, the incessant sequence of wars between great powers throughout history leaves no doubt as to the lack of effective deterrent power of conventional weapons. In these, such power is at best derisory, unable to dissuade the pursuit by war of political objectives considered important.

9 The other models listed fit well with the concept of strategy at its various levels, although one of them, that of resistance, also lacks a solid foundation, as well as being an unnecessary development of irregular warfare. Two others (independent action and alliance) are not purely military, as they have direct links to political action.

10 "Art and science of foreseeing the employment, preparing, guiding and applying military power during conflicts, considering the existing or potential obstacles, aiming at achieving or maintaining the objectives set by the political level" (BRASIL, 2020, p. 4-1).

Using a strong image, it seems satisfactory to rest on the laurels of the past, believing that it is still pertinent and necessary, on the part of military organizations, an integrating, developmental and moderating effort similar to the one of the past. And presence, artificially elevated to the status of a perennial strategy, would serve to feed illusions in this regard, giving the impression that it was inherent to the military purpose of the strategic actions carried out at that time.

The presence strategy, on the other hand, is also linked to the strong "territorialist" mentality that prevails in the Army. According to this mentality, which is the result of historical contingencies that have led the Land Force to act and intervene more frequently in internal security than in external security, the Army's operational military organizations feel imprisoned by portions of the national territory, something that bears some resemblance, one could well say, to a serfdom of the land. Presence would then serve as a *strategic corollary* justifying this *territorialism* (SERRANO, 2012). Besides the conceptual inconsistency, there is the inconvenience that, under this aspect, it constitutes a strong factor of resistance to any necessary structural transformation of the Army.

5 Conclusion

One can consider sufficiently demonstrated the incoherence of the notion of presence as a strategy, as well as *infer* to what degree its prevalence over being present in the thinking of the officers can indirectly weaken the concern with the Army's war means and, consequently, harm the operational efficiency of the Land Force and the doctrine that guides it. It is not a matter of criticizing the territorial organization of the Army, but of not attributing to it the unusual condition of strategy, which gives it the false idea of action (inherent to strategies), when in reality there is none, thus possibly obscuring the need for other actions and blurring the sense of priorities.

In the minds of those reflecting on strategic matters and drafting military doctrine, this inconsistency and the potential harmfulness of the central character assumed by the strategy of presence will undoubtedly clash with the resilient power of the imaginary. However, in this soul expression of ideals and stimulant of ways of thinking and acting, there is no room for unreasonable imaginations and attachments. For this reason, between the logical conclusions and the daydreams of the imaginary, one must always opt for the logical in order to avoid going down the path of illusion. Nothing justifies agreeing with the line that closes a famous Hollywood western movie: "When facts contradict the legend, publish the legend"¹¹.

11 *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, starring James Stewart and John Wayne.

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