

Introduction: The Amazon as a Geopolitical Space

The Amazon constitutes a vast region of approximately 7,000,000 km² in South America, extending across the territories of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Brazil—the latter encompassing roughly 4,245,278 km² of Amazonian forest, equivalent to approximately 60% of the total biome.

It is the most biodiverse tropical ecosystem on the planet, hosting more than 40,000 plant species, 1,300 bird species, and 2,400 freshwater fish species, in addition to an extraordinary diversity of mammals, amphibians, and insects¹. Various estimates suggest that between 10% and 30% of all known species on Earth are found in this region².

Moreover, the Amazon basin accounts for approximately one-fifth of the world's surface freshwater and contributes nearly 20% of the total freshwater discharge flowing into the oceans through the Amazon River and its tributaries³. Owing to its vast vegetative cover, the biome absorbs more than 2 billion tons of CO₂ annually—equivalent to roughly 5% of global emissions per year—thereby playing a critical role in global climate regulation⁴.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Brazilian Amazon retained nearly its entire forest cover intact. By 2020, however, the area of tropical forest had declined to 3,381,073 km²⁵. In cumulative terms, this implies that nearly 20% of Brazil's natural forests have been lost over five decades. This transformation cannot be understood as a spontaneous or inevitable process, but rather as the outcome of political decisions, development strategies, and economic incentives that promoted agricultural expansion, resource extraction, and territorial integration.

Amazonian devastation thus constitutes an intrinsically geopolitical phenomenon. It has been shaped by national integration projects, by asymmetrical international relations, and by Brazil's insertion into global value chains oriented toward commodity exports. Its

¹ 2025, *Amazon: Main Issue*, The Global Environment Facility, Disponible en: <https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/amazon> , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

² DWYER Augusta, 2021, *Fun facts: the Amazon biome*, Global Landscapes Forum, Disponible en: <https://thinklandscape.globallandscapesforum.org/54244/fast-facts-the-amazon-biome/> , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

³ PASTERNAK RACHEL, 2025, *Guardians of Nature in the Amazon*, The Natural Conservancy, Disponible en: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/value-standing-forests-rewarding-nature-stewards-amazon/> , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

⁴ 2026, *Why Protect the Amazon*, Amazon Conservation, Disponible en: <https://www.amazonconservation.org/the-challenge/why-the-amazon/> , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

⁵ BUTLER, RHETT 2020, *Calculating Deforestation Figures for the Amazon*, World Rain Forests, Disponible en: https://worldrainforests.com/amazon/deforestation_calculations.html , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

effects extend beyond the environmental sphere: they include biodiversity erosion, the expansion of illicit economies, the weakening of effective state sovereignty across vast peripheral areas, and the systematic displacement of Indigenous peoples, thereby configuring a strategic challenge of both regional and global scope.

“Integrar para não entregar”: The Dictatorship, the United States, and the Emergence of Modern Extractivism

In the early 1960s, Brazil was governed by João Goulart of the *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* (PTB), whose program advanced the so-called “basic reforms.” These included proposals for agrarian reform, increased state intervention in strategic sectors, and tighter regulation of foreign capital. Within this framework, tensions emerged with U.S. corporate interests, including measures affecting International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT)⁶, in a context marked by the review of concessions and limits on profit repatriation.

In foreign policy, the so-called Independent Foreign Policy sought to diversify diplomatic ties, including engagement with socialist countries. Although there was no formal alignment with the Warsaw Pact nor military agreements with the Soviet Union, the expansion of contacts during the Cold War—including symbolic gestures such as the visit of Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin to Brazil⁷—was perceived by segments of the Brazilian Armed Forces and by the United States government as a potential shift away from the Western hemispheric orbit.

Amid this climate of ideological polarization, military sectors began articulating a discourse centered on the “threat of communization”⁸, linking social mobilization, labor unrest, and perceived military indiscipline to a broader subversive menace. The coup d’état of March 31, 1964, received political and logistical support from the United States, materialized in the planning of Operation Brother Sam⁹, which contemplated naval assistance and resource provision. Although this support was not fully deployed, it underscored the strategic convergence between Washington and the coup leaders,

⁶ 1962, *The expropriation of the IT&T Properties in Rio Grande do Sul*, Department of State USA, Disponible en: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d221> , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

⁷ 1961, Gagarin is hailed on visit to Brazil; Soviet Hero Guest of State for Four-Day Stay, Disponible en: <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/07/30/archives/gagarin-is-hailed-on-visit-to-brazil-soviet-hero-guest-of-state-for.html> , [Consultado: 26 de febrero 2026]

⁸ Chaves Eduardo (2011), Expulsando comunistas e fazendo a “Revolução”: as lembranças do exército sobre o governo de João Goulart, *Revista Agora*, 14, p. 6 -11

⁹ PEREIRA Anthony (2016), The US Role in the 1964, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 37, p.5-17

paving the way for a regime that would profoundly reconfigure Brazil's development model and resource exploitation framework.

The government installed after the 1964 coup—ushering in an authoritarian military regime that endured until 1985—adopted as one of its central slogans the maxim *integrar para não entregar* (“integrate in order not to surrender”). The Amazon was conceived as a “demographic void” over which the state exercised fragile sovereignty. Consequently, the expansion of state presence was pursued through the construction of strategic infrastructure and the intensive exploitation of natural resources, within a program that intertwined territorial security, economic development, and anti-communist doctrine.

The Amazon's low population density was interpreted as a vulnerability to potential Marxist-inspired insurgent movements, such as the Araguaia Guerrilla, which operated in the region for nearly a decade¹⁰. Under the logic of the National Security Doctrine, the physical occupation of the territory became a strategic imperative.

Within this framework, the regime undertook ambitious infrastructure projects. The Trans-Amazonian Highway (BR-230), extending nearly 5,000 kilometers, traversed the states of Paraíba, Ceará, Piauí, Maranhão, Tocantins, Pará, and Amazonas from east to west¹¹. From north to south, the BR-163—spanning 3,629.3 kilometers—connected Pará with Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul¹². These projects facilitated economic penetration and access to new productive frontiers.

¹⁰ MENDONÇA Elizabeth (2015), As ruínas de uma viagem, ficção e depoimento sobre a Guerrilha do Araguaia, *Patrimônio e Memória*, 11, p. 69 – 87 , [Consultado: 27 de febrero 2026]

¹¹ 2015, Trasmazônica: saiba o que mudou em 45 anos de construção, *EBC Revista Brasil*, Disponible en: <https://radios.etc.com.br/revista-brasil/edicao/2015-10/transamazonica-ja-se-passaram-45-anos-desde-o-inicio-da-construcao> , [Consultado: 27 de febrero 2026]

¹² 2016, Principal via de escoamento de MT, BR-163 completa 40 anos, *G1 Globo Mato Grosso*, Disponible en: <https://g1.globo.com/mato-grosso/noticia/2016/10/principal-de-escoamento-de-mt-br-163-completa-40-anos.html> , [Consultado: 27 de febrero 2026]



Image (1): Rodovia Transamazônica (BR-230)

In 1966, the *Superintendência do Desenvolvimento da Amazônia* (SUDAM)¹³ was established as the agency responsible for administering fiscal incentives that allowed corporations and large landowners to allocate a portion of their income tax liabilities to projects approved within the region. Extensive cattle ranching emerged as the primary beneficiary sector—an activity intrinsically linked to large-scale forest clearing. By 1990, approximately 10% of Amazonian forest cover had disappeared.

In 1970, the *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* (INCRA)¹⁴ was created, formally tasked with managing federal public lands, regularizing rural property titles, and implementing colonization programs. These initiatives involved granting plots to migrants from Brazil's Northeast and South under the slogan “*terra sem homens para homens sem terra*” (“land without men for men without land”), promoting productive occupation as a mechanism of territorial consolidation.

At the international level, the United States consolidated its position as one of Brazil's principal trade partners during the military government, particularly in trade, technology, and financing. From 1975 onward, Brazil participated in regional repressive coordination

¹³ 2020, A Sudam, *Governo do Brasil*, Disponible en: <https://www.gov.br/sudam/pt-br/composicao-1/ministro> ,

¹⁴ 2020, O Incra, *Governo do Brasil*, Disponible en: <https://www.gov.br/incra/pt-br/aceso-a-informacao/institucional/o-incra> , [Consultado: 27 de febrero 2026]

mechanisms associated with Operation Condor, reflecting broader strategic convergence under an anti-communist security paradigm.

During the 1980s, the Grande Carajás Program was launched as a megaproject centered on iron ore extraction in the Serra dos Carajás. This initiative included the construction of the Carajás Railway and the Ponta da Madeira port complex to facilitate exports. Although mining did not generate levels of deforestation comparable to those associated with cattle expansion, it produced significant environmental and social impacts, including water and soil contamination, disruption of local ecosystems, and the displacement of Indigenous communities¹⁵.

Brazil's military dictatorship concluded in 1985, having laid the institutional, infrastructural, and financial foundations for large-scale extractivism in the Amazon. The development model implemented during this period established a territorial occupation and resource exploitation pattern that would underpin the sustained acceleration of deforestation in subsequent decades.

The Century of China and Commodities

Beginning in the twenty-first century, Brazilian foreign policy underwent a significant reorientation, particularly following the inauguration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first presidential term in 2003. The new administration pursued diversification of strategic partnerships and advocated greater autonomy in Brazil's international positioning. In this context, Lula signaled a measured distancing from the United States, indirectly criticizing its actions in Iraq¹⁶. This stance formed part of a broader strategy aimed at strengthening ties with emerging economies and the so-called Global South.

Concurrently, China's economic growth—propelled by the reforms initiated under Deng Xiaoping—remained above 9% throughout the 2000s¹⁷, enabling it to surpass Japan in 2010¹⁸. This dynamism transformed China into a central actor in global trade and a rapidly

¹⁵ ANDRADE Gilciandro (2015), A Amazônia e o Projeto Grande Carajás, Mundo Amazónico, Vol. 6 Nº. 2

¹⁶ GENTILE Carmen (2003), Commentary: Lula in Cuba – a bold move?, *United Press International*, Disponible en: https://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2003/09/26/Commentary-Lula-in-Cuba-a-bold-move/UPI-34101064612235/, [Consultado: 25 de marzo 2026]

¹⁷ World Bank, GDP Growth Anual % China, [en línea], disponible en: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN>, [Consultado: 25 de marzo 2026]

¹⁸ EUROPA Press (2011), China se consolida como segunda economía mundial por delante de Japón, *El Mundo*, Disponible en: <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/02/14/economia/1297675149.html>, [Consultado: 25 de marzo 2026]

expanding consumer of raw materials.

Within this framework, Brazil and China progressively deepened their bilateral engagement. A significant milestone was Lula's 2004 visit to Beijing, during which a strategic partnership was established, grounded in trade in soybeans and iron ore¹⁹. The structural inflection point, however, occurred in 2009²⁰, when China officially became Brazil's principal trading partner and both countries consolidated their roles as founding members of the BRICS grouping.

Historically, the Brazilian export commodities most directly associated with Amazonian deforestation have been soybeans and beef. In 2024, China accounted for 72.8% of Brazilian soybean exports and 59.3% of beef exports²¹. In the case of soybeans, the primary end use is the production of protein meal, predominantly destined for animal feed to sustain the expansion of China's pork and poultry industries.

Extensive cattle ranching has accounted for between 65% and 80% of Amazonian deforestation since the 1970s, as it requires large tracts of land for pasture, necessitating forest clearing and conversion into grazing areas. This pattern of horizontal expansion has historically constituted the principal structural driver of forest cover loss.

Soy cultivation, by contrast, operates as an indirect driver of deforestation. Although it does not always directly replace primary forest and frequently expands over previously degraded or pasture lands, its growth displaces the cattle frontier toward new forested zones. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as the "displacement effect," generates a dynamic in which agricultural expansion compels cattle producers to migrate deeper into the Amazon in search of lower-cost land, thereby contributing to the expansion of the so-called arc of deforestation.

The intensification of Amazonian deforestation within the framework of Brazil–China trade cannot be attributed exclusively to decisions taken within the BRICS forum; nevertheless, various analyses contend that the bloc's environmental commitments have proven

¹⁹ 2004, Hu pledges strategic partnership with Lula, *China Daily*, [en línea] disponible en: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-11/13/content_391244.htm [Consultado: 25 de marzo 2026]

²⁰ 2009, The meeting of BRIC leaders is held in Yekaterinburg and President Hu Jintao Attends the Meeting and Delivers an Important Speech, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China* [en línea] disponible en: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyjh/202405/t20240530_11340081.html [Consultado: 25 de marzo 2026]

²¹ 2024, Brazil's Export Destinations, *Observatory Economy of Complexity*, [en línea], disponible en: <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/bra?selector343id=Export>, [Consultado: 26 de marzo 2026]

insufficient to counterbalance the extractive dynamics embedded in its member economies²².

Observers have identified a persistent gap between declared climate commitments and effective conservation outcomes, suggesting the endurance of a structural deficit in environmental governance. In this regard, the expansion of trade in agricultural and livestock commodities has unfolded within an international system in which economic growth objectives have prevailed over binding environmental mechanisms.

Far from constituting an isolated phenomenon, Amazonian devastation linked to agro-export expansion reveals the inherent tensions among economic development, international insertion, and environmental sustainability in the twenty-first century.

Actors on the Ground: Garimpeiros, Criminality, and the Displacement of the Yanomami

The ecological catastrophe outlined above represents only one dimension of a broader phenomenon associated with Amazonian deforestation. One of the most significant social consequences of this process has been the consolidation of the *garimpeiros*—a social group engaged in illegal gold mining across vast areas of the tropical forest.

The *garimpo* economy has historical antecedents dating back to the 1940s, when gold extraction in enclaves such as “Pista do Cabeça,” in northern Mato Grosso, offered marginalized populations an alternative means of subsistence. Over time, these groups reorganized themselves amid tensions with large landholders, generating what some analysts have interpreted as a land-based struggle shaped by competing claims to territory and resource access²³.

The contemporary expansion of *garimpo* activities is closely linked to the territorial transformations initiated in the 1970s. The construction of highways under the military dictatorship’s *integrar para não entregar* (“integrate in order not to surrender”) doctrine facilitated access to previously isolated areas, catalyzing migratory flows of economically vulnerable populations seeking income-generating opportunities²⁴.

²² Vaishali Jain (2024), BRICS and Climate Change Security Concerns, *World Affairs*, Vol. 28, p. 141 -142

²³ Christ Flaviane (2020), *Garimpeiros da Amazônia*, [Tesis de doctorado], Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná

²⁴ Cardoso Thais (2025), *Prática de crimes ambientais na região amazônica tem raízes históricas*, Instituto de Estudos Avançados da Universidades de São Paulo, [en línea], Disponible en: <https://www.iea.usp.br/noticias/pratica-de-crimes-ambientais-na-regiao-amazonica-tem-raizes-historicas> , [Consultado: 26 de marzo del 2026]

By 1975, *garimpeiros* operating along the banks of the Tapajós River—between the states of Pará and Mato Grosso—had deforested approximately 1,540 hectares using rudimentary extraction techniques. The subsequent construction of the BR-163 (Cuiabá–Santarém) highway enabled the transportation of heavy machinery, significantly intensifying the scale and efficiency of mining operations. By 1993, more than 16,500 hectares²⁵ in the state of Pará had been devastated by *garimpo* activity.

The state's role in this expansion was not incidental. During the military dictatorship, the government indirectly incentivized artisanal mining as a mechanism for absorbing social tensions and channeling marginalized populations into frontier regions. Testimonies such as those of *garimpo* leader José Altino Machado indicate that the Brazilian Army facilitated incursions into Indigenous Lands during the 1970s, including the construction of clandestine airstrips and the establishment of logistical checkpoints²⁶.

In an effort to regulate the gold rush, the regime established designated *garimpeira* reserves, including the Tapajós reserve in the early 1980s, for which the *Transgarimpeira* road was constructed. This process partially institutionalized the activity and attracted hundreds of thousands of individuals, increasing the *garimpeiro* population from approximately 140,000 to 240,000²⁷.

The most lethal damage associated with *garimpo* extends beyond deforestation to encompass mercury contamination of freshwater systems. Mercury is used to amalgamate gold and once released into the environment, transforms into compounds that bioaccumulate and biomagnify in fish²⁸—constituting a direct threat to the food security and health of Indigenous populations whose subsistence is deeply reliant on riverine ecosystems.

²⁵ Killen Timothy (2024), *Amazônia: a geografia do garimpo*, Mongabay, [en línea], disponible en: <https://brasil.mongabay.com/2024/07/amazonia-a-geografia-do-garimpo/?print&=1>, [Consultado: 26 de marzo del 2026]

²⁶ Brasil Kátia (2021), *Projeto do mineração de Bolsonaro vai virar uma confusão, diz memória-viva do garimpo no Brasil*, *Observatorio dos direitos e políticas indigenistas*, [en línea], disponible en: <https://obind.eco.br/amazonia-real-projeto-de-mineracao-de-bolsonaro-vai-virar-uma-confusao-diz-memoria-viva-do-garimpo-no-brasil/>, [Consultado: 26 de marzo del 2026]

²⁷ Betim Felipe (2022), *Garimpo na Amazônia: uma história de esperanças e conflitos*, *Dialogue Earth*, [en línea], Disponible en: <https://dialogue.earth/pt-br/uncategorized/58783-garimpo-guarda-historia-de-esperancas-e-conflitos-na-amazonia/>, [Consultado: 26 de marzo 2026]

²⁸ Gatehouse Tom (2023), *Book extract: They're killing us*, *Dialogue Earth*, [en línea], Disponible en: <https://dialogue.earth/en/pollution/364000-book-extract-the-heart-of-our-earth-illegal-mining-brazil/>, [Consultado: 26 de marzo 2026]

Among the Indigenous peoples directly affected are the Munduruku, Aracaça, Kayapó, and—most severely—the Yanomami. Several media outlets and advocacy organizations have described the precarious humanitarian conditions facing the latter as an unfolding genocide²⁹. The Yanomami population numbers approximately 20,000 individuals, distributed between the Venezuelan state of Amazonas and the Brazilian states of Amazonas and Roraima.



Figure (2) Yanomami territories

The Yanomami are a people of longstanding historical continuity, whose social organization is based on hunting, gathering, and a complex ritual cosmology that includes funerary practices such as ritual endogamous cannibalism³⁰, a central element in their cultural conception of death.

Since the advance of *garimpo* activities, the Yanomami have faced direct violence and severe public health impacts. According to a study by the Yale Global Health Review, 84% of the individuals analyzed presented contamination levels of 2 µg/g or higher, and 10% exceeded 6 µg/g—concentrations associated with severe health risks³¹.

²⁹ Brum Eliane (2023), El genocidio Yanomami tiene las huellas de Bolsonaro, El País, [en línea], disponible en: <https://elpais.com/opinion/2023-02-01/el-genocidio-yanomami-tiene-las-huellas-de-bolsonaro.html> , [Consultado: 26 de marzo 2026]

³⁰ Aparicio Jesús y Tilley Charles (2015), El Endocanibalismo en los rituales funerarios del Pueblo Yanomami, *Revista TRIM*, Vol 8, p. 73 - 92

³¹ Mojekwu Debbie (2025), The true cost of Mining in a Changing Climate: The Global Health Crisis in South America's

Likewise, the craters and ponds generated by mining activity facilitate the proliferation of malaria-vector mosquitoes. During the administration of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022), who was investigated for alleged genocide against the Yanomami due to his policies in the Amazon³², malaria cases in affected regions increased by approximately 300%. Although the Yanomami represent only 0.013% of Brazil's population, they accounted for 9.3% of national malaria cases.

Physical violence has also been persistent. On July 23, 1993, garimpeiros led by Pedro Emiliano García murdered at least 16 Yanomami in the Haximu massacre³³, a crime that resulted in the first and only genocide conviction in Brazilian judicial history.

Although this case was the most emblematic, attacks continued throughout the twenty-first century. In 2020, two Yanomami were killed in Roraima³⁴, and in the Xaruna community, located along the Parima River, two others were killed and two minors aged 15 and 16 were kidnapped³⁵. These events demonstrate that *garimpo* does not constitute merely an illegal extractive activity, but rather a complex phenomenon combining environmental devastation, chronic contamination, and structural violence against Indigenous peoples.

The 2023 Shift: Protection Policies and Initial Outcomes

On January 20, 2023, just two weeks after assuming the presidency, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva visited the state of Roraima and declared a public health emergency in the Yanomami Indigenous Territory through Decree No. 11.384/2023³⁶, officially recognizing the humanitarian crisis threatening the lives of Indigenous populations in the Brazilian Amazon.

Yanomami Territory, *The Yale Global Health Review*, [en línea], disponible en: <https://yaleglobalhealthreview.com/2025/05/18/the-true-cost-of-mining-in-a-changing-climate-the-global-health-crisis-in-south-americas-yanomami-territory/>, [Consultado: 26 de marzo 2026]

³² 2023, ¿Por qué investigan al gobierno de Bolsonaro por un posible genocidio contra los yanomamis, *BBC News*, [en línea], disponible en <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-64477930>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

³³ Bond Letycia (2023), Chacina e resistencia: relembre fatos históricos da realidade yanomami, Agência Brasil, [en línea], disponible en <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/es/node/1507207>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

³⁴ 2020, Garimpeiros matam dois Yanomami em Roraima, denuncia grupo de DH, *Diário do Nordeste*, [en línea], disponible en: <https://diariodonordeste.verdesmares.com.br/ultima-hora/pais/garimpeiros-matam-dois-yanomami-em-roraima-denuncia-grupo-de-dh-1.2960117>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

³⁵ Guifrida Guilherme (2022), Xaimú, Atlas do Chão, [en línea], Disponible en: <https://www.atlasdochao.org/ponto/haximu-en-em-aterramento/>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

³⁶ 2026, Proteção e construção de um novo futuro marcam os três anos da Emergência Yanomami, [en línea], disponible en: <https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202601/protecao-construcao-novo-futuro-tres-anos-emergencia-yanomami>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

One year later, in February 2024, the federal government established the Yanomami Government House in Boa Vista, integrating more than 20 federal agencies linked to public security, environmental enforcement, and social assistance. This initiative represented a qualitative shift in crisis management by centralizing institutional coordination. In the president's own words: "We will treat the Yanomami issue as a matter of State."³⁷

These measures were accompanied by *desintrusão* policies, consisting of the systematic removal of illegal miners occupying the territory. Between March 2024 and January 2026, numerous security operations were carried out, generating estimated losses of R\$ 644 million³⁸ for criminal networks associated with *garimpo*.

The restoration of access to health services in Yanomami territory has shown significant progress. Malaria case detection increased by 24.5%, reflecting improved diagnostic capacity, while hospitalizations declined by 19% and malaria-related deaths decreased between the 2021–2022 and 2023–2024 periods³⁹. In parallel, the government resumed the policy of demarcating Indigenous nations, ratifying six Indigenous territories across different Brazilian states⁴⁰.

The political shift initiated in 2023 was not limited to the Indigenous dimension but entailed a broader restructuring of Brazilian environmental policy. Initial results were significant: deforestation in the Amazon declined by 50%, 19%, and 8.7% in 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively⁴¹.

³⁷ Bechara Victoria (2024), Ministros inauguram Casa de Governo para coordenar ações na terra Yanomami, [en línea], disponible en: <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/maquiavel/ministros-inauguram-casa-de-governo-para-coordenar-acoes-na-terra-yanomami/>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

³⁸ 2026, Proteção e construção de um novo futuro marcam os três anos da Emergência Yanomami, *Agencia Brasil*, [en línea], disponible en: <https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202601/protacao-construcao-novo-futuro-tres-anos-emergencia-yanomami>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

³⁹ Menezes Máira, 2026, Estudo aponta impacto de ações contra malária na Terra Yanomami, Instituto Oswaldo Cruz, [en línea] Disponible en: <https://www.ioc.fiocruz.br/noticias/estudo-aponta-impacto-de-acoes-contra-malaria-na-terra-yanomami>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

⁴⁰ 2026, Lula assina demarcação de seis terras indígenas e liberação de R\$12 mi à Funai, *Band Jornalismo*, [en línea] Disponible en: <https://www.band.com.br/noticias/lula-demarcacao-terras-indigenas-funai-16598713>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

⁴¹ 2026, La deforestación en la Amazonía cae un 8,7% en 2025 y llega a su menor nivel en ocho años, *Swissinfo*, [en línea] Disponible en: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/la-deforestaci%C3%B3n-en-la-amazon%C3%ADa-cae-un-8%2C7-%25-en-2025-y-llega-a-su-menor-nivel-en-ocho-a%C3%B1os/90750151>, [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

This performance resulted from a strategy that coordinated 19 ministries within the reactivated Interministerial Commission for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation⁴², strengthening enforcement and oversight of economic activities in the region.

Nevertheless, structural challenges persist. In 2024, forest fires affected 17.9 million hectares—equivalent to 58% of the national total—releasing 791 million tonnes of CO₂ solely from fire-related events⁴³.

Although the El Niño phenomenon contributed to extreme drought conditions, ignition sources were predominantly associated with human activities: agricultural expansion, pasture-renewal burning, the presence of *garimpeiros*, and cumulative degradation following decades of disordered territorial occupation. These elements demonstrate that, despite recent progress, the structural vulnerability of the Amazon remains a systemic challenge.

Three Layers, One Forest: The Geopolitical Architecture of Extractivism

The devastation of the Brazilian Amazon cannot be understood as a spontaneous or exclusively economic process. It is, above all, a geopolitical phenomenon shaped by the overlap of three historical logics which, although emerging at different moments, have generated cumulative effects that mutually reinforce one another to the present day.

The first layer corresponds to the national security doctrine implemented during the military dictatorship (1964–1985). Under the slogan “*integrar para não entregar*,” the regime conceived the Amazon as a demographically empty and strategically vulnerable space, susceptible both to internal insurgency and foreign interference. The construction of infrastructure such as the Trans-Amazonian Highway and BR-163, the creation of SUDAM, and fiscal incentives directed toward extensive cattle ranching were not neutral development policies but instruments of territorial occupation and sovereignty projection through economic exploitation. This model laid the structural foundations of contemporary extractivism and consolidated a pattern of deforestation that eliminated approximately 10% of the forest within a few decades.

⁴² Cristaldo Heloisa, 2023, El gobierno crea comisión por la meta de deforestación cero hasta 2030, Agencia Brasil, [en línea], Disponible en: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/es/politica/noticia/2023-02/el-gobierno-crea-comision-por-la-meta-de-deforestacion-cero-hasta-2030> , [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

⁴³ Sinimbú Fabiola (2025), Brasil registra aumento del 79% en áreas quemadas durante 2024, Agencia Brasil, [en línea] Diponible en: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/es/meio-ambiente/noticia/2025-01/brasil-registra-aumento-del-79-en-areas-quemadas-durante-2024> , [Consultado 26 de marzo del 2026]

The second layer gained centrality in the twenty-first century with the consolidation of China as Brazil's principal trading partner beginning in 2009. Unlike the previous phase, this dynamic did not operate through direct territorial occupation, but through sustained demand for commodities, particularly soybeans and beef—of which 72.8% and 59.3%, respectively, are destined for the Chinese market. This trade flow functioned as an external driver incentivizing the horizontal expansion of the agricultural frontier. Soy displaced cattle ranching into new areas; cattle ranching entailed deforestation; and the process reproduced itself under the logic of a global market in which multilateral environmental commitments, including those within BRICS, have demonstrated limitations in their effective implementation.

Superimposed upon these two structural layers was a third dynamic: the expansion of illegal *garimpo*. Clandestine gold mining does not constitute an isolated phenomenon, but rather the convergence of infrastructure inherited from the military period, a model of global economic insertion based on primary commodities, and persistent state weakness across vast Amazonian territories. *Garimpo* entails not only deforestation, but also mercury contamination, territorial violence, and the forced displacement of Indigenous peoples, as has occurred in the Yanomami Indigenous Territory, the site of a humanitarian crisis that some observers and advocacy organizations have characterized as genocide.

The structural dilemma lies in the fact that Brazil aspires to consolidate its position as an agro-environmental power without having resolved the fundamental tension between growth based on primary exports and forest conservation. The political shift initiated in 2023 demonstrated that state action can alter prevailing trends: deforestation declined by 50%, 19%, and 8.7% over three consecutive years, and *desintrusão* operations in Yanomami territory produced tangible results. However, the 2024 fires affected 17.9 million hectares, and the cumulative impacts of mercury contamination will persist for generations.

Ultimately, the Amazon is not being transformed by a single actor nor by a single rationality. It is the result of the superposition of a territorial security logic, a global economic insertion logic, and a criminal logic that occupies spaces where governance is insufficient. Brazil's challenge does not lie merely in reducing annual deforestation, but in structurally redefining its development model, its international insertion, and the state's capacity to exercise effective environmental sovereignty over its Amazonian territory.

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