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## Abstract

### **Conservation frontier: The creation of protected areas in the Brazilian Amazonia.**

This paper investigates the establishment of national parks in the Brazilian Amazon in the 1970s and 1980s, a period when Brazil set aside 27,220 square miles of rainforest for protection—an area almost the size of the US state of Maine. Parks were established at the same time the Brazilian military dictatorship opened the rainforest to mining, agriculture, cattle ranching, and hydroelectric dams. The military aimed to bring settlers to the Amazon and develop the region into a source of raw materials for the country's industrialized southeast. What led the Brazilian state to invest in the parallel—and seemingly conflictive—implementation of nature preserves and development projects in Amazonia? I argue that in 1970s Brazil, proponents of environmental protection were successful in framing parks and other nature preserves as necessary initiatives in a package of modernization policies for the Amazon. This paper shows how, at a time when Brazil focused on opening Amazonia for development, a small group of Brazilian and foreign conservationists managed to convince the Brazilian military to include nature reserves in their frontier development plans. The protection of vast expanses of forest represented a shift in policymaking towards the region, which, after decades of being imagined as Brazil's development frontier, gained a concurrent significance as the world's conservation frontier. This paper retraces the evolution of federal plans for the occupation of the region and shows how the 1970s represented a watershed, with new development plans that brought not only technical and logistical resources but also a new spatial representation of the Amazon. These new resources allowed park proponents, within and outside the government, to identify areas to conserve in the space between proposed development zones. They inaugurated a trend that continued in the post-dictatorship era until before the Bolsonaro administration, with the aggregate area of federal, state, and municipal reserves in the region growing from about 45,000 square miles in 1980 to 558,000 square miles in 2017.