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A LATIN AMERICAN ARMS RACE? A SUBSYSTEMIC APPROACH TO THE MILITARY REARMAMENT OVER THE LAST DECADE

UMA CORRIDA ARMAMENTISTA NA AMÉRICA LATINA? UMA ABORDAGEM SUBSISTÊMICA DO REARMAMENTO MILITAR NA ÚLTIMA DÉCADA

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Abstract

Military rearmament in Latin America over the last decade has raised questions about an alleged arms race in the region. While this hypothesis has been refuted, academics suggested that soft balancing and strategic considerations were at play. However, few questioned whether the rearmament was, in fact, Latin American or more restricted to smaller sub-regions. Furthermore, it is also relevant to discuss how the rearmament has affected the political setting in the region. In order to develop these arguments, this research uses SIPRI's (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) Arms Transfers Database to observe the volume of arms imported by states, as well as a regional subsystems approach to analyse the regional political environment. The conclusions point toward an expressive phenomenon – both on arms transfers and on the political situation – in South America, rather than in Latin America as a whole. Another indication is that the new military resources have been used as bargain power for a more assertive diplomatic action, in addition to allowing for greater readiness to face para-state or intra-state security issues.

Keywords: Latin America; regional geopolitics; military rearmament; regional security crises; regional organizations..

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Resumo

O rearmamento militar na América Latina na última década levantou uma série de hipóteses a respeito de uma possível corrida armamentista na região. A possibilidade foi prontamente descartada em favor de um quadro de balanceamentos leves e considerações estratégicas. No entanto, a produção no tema pouco explorou se o rearmamento era, de fato, latino-americano ou mais presente em subregiões menores e, ademais, ainda é preciso discutir os desdobramentos deste fenômeno na prática política da região. Para tanto, esta pesquisa se utiliza do banco de dados de transferência internacional de armas do SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, com objetivo de observar o volume de armas efetivamente importado por Estados, junto de uma abordagem de subsistemas regionais para realizar análises qualitativas a respeito da conjuntura política da região. As conclusões apontam para um fenômeno muito mais expressivo, tanto no volume de importações de armas quanto na conjuntura política, na América do Sul do que na América Latina como um todo. Outro resultado é a indicação de que os novos recursos militares dos Estados foram convertidos em poder de barganha para ações diplomáticas mais assertivas,além de permitir maior prontidão para tratar de questões de segurança para ou intraestatais.

Palavras-chave: Latina; geopolítica regional; rearmamento militar; crises de segurança regional; organizações regionais.

Introduction

This study aims to analyse the rearmament process in Latin America during the 2000s, scanning over the prior motivations and subsequent results of warfare modernization under a theoretical framework of regional subsystems. It is argued that the phenomenon is circumscribed to South America, and not to all Latin America, as it presents dynamic and subsystemic security interactions focused on Venezuela and Chile and low interaction with Central America and the Caribbean. On the one hand, this study aims to distance the rearmament process from a homogeneous Latin American phenomenon and, on the other, to understand what this process means for contemporary political practice in South America. Therefore, a portrait will be drawn of the volume of arms imports in Latin America over the last decade, followed by a survey of regional security crises and of the manner in which regional government bodies have managed these challenges.

Hence, the proposed reflection seeks to contribute to a geopolitical and strategic analysis of the region, stressing the need to take into account sub-regional nuances on security issues. In addition, we make a note of the strategic military development in Latin America in a post-Cold War environment, with issues and local disputes emerging with equally regional attempts at negotiation and confidence building. Indeed, this study attempts to underline a Latin American climate increasingly independent and estranged from the continental fora

led by the US, albeit with questionable effectiveness. Therefore, discussion of the topic is initiated with a survey of the academic literature to date.

First, mention must be made of the analyses focusing on the military budgets and extra-budgetary expenditures of South American States provided in the literature (HOLTOM; BROMLEY, 2008; MALAMUD; ENCINA, 2006; PERLO-FREEMAN *et al*, 2009; SAINT-PIERRE; PALACIOS JUNIOR, 2014; SENHORAS, 2010), which also deal with the technical specificities of military arms purchases over the last decade (SILVA; TEIXEIRA JÚNIOR, 2009; VILLA, 2008; VILLA; VIGGIANO, 2012). This approach is enlightening, as it underlines the principle of defence and the arms procurement mechanisms underlying the choices of States when opting for certain types of weapons.

It is also worth noting, especially with regard to international academic production, that the rearmament in the region is framed within an arms race phenomenon and, at times, a Latin American phenomenon. This has been suggested more emphatically as the then president of Costa Rica, Óscar Arias Sánchez, declared in September 2006 that the region "has begun a new arms race" (Cited in: STÅLENHEIM; PERDOMO; SKÖNS, 2008: 304). As stated by Bertonha (2006: 28), the issue found echo in the press and was notably amplified especially in Spanish and Argentine newspapers. The narrative would point to an arms race along three axes, with focus on Colombia, where it reaped the benefits of US aid, on Chile, through the acquisition of cutting-edge military equipment, and, more sharply, on Venezuela, where the rise in oil prices supported the acquisition of weapons in international markets. Part of academia has also shared media concerns. Malamud and Encina (2006), for example, have stated that "the famous arms race in Latin America, led by Venezuela, is no longer just talk." This has triggered a meaningful debate on the issue, with a number of authors rejecting this approach (ALSINA, 2006; HOLTOM, *et al*., 2008; SENHORAS, 2010; SILVA; TEIXEIRA JUNIOR, 2009; TAVARES, 2014; VILLA, 2008; VILLA; VIGGIANO, 2012). The general understanding is that there is no ongoing arms race in the classic sense, but a re-equipping of scrapped military equipment that generates soft balancing in line with the specific security strategies of each country.

However, little effort is being made to understand, from a qualitative point of view, the results of the rearmament on the political practice in the area and whether the process is indeed happening throughout Latin America, as well as how to quantitatively compare the arms purchases made by each country. To address this wide-ranging set of issues, an analysis was formulated to identify regional subsystems in order to paint a clearer picture. Therefore, we have prepared a research guided by three core elements, described below. Those elements are: the volume of arms transferred to the region, political and security crises at the regional level, and the management of these challenges in international and regional fora. These three elements enable a quantitative perception of rearmament against a qualitative framework that outlines the motivations and consequences of warfare modernization. This research is also based on the SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) databases, which, in addition to keeping the records of defence

expenditure already widely in use by academia, also draws up a comparison of the volumes of arms transfers - Trend Indicator Values (TIVs)[1].

This article is structured as follows: initially, with a discussion centred on Regional Studies, to structure the theoretical framework for observation of the sub-systemic dimension of South American rearmament; second, by presenting a comparative analysis of the evolution of the volume of arms imported over the last decade throughout Latin America, seeking to frame the phenomenon as fundamentally South American; third, by putting forth a qualitative analysis of the motivations and consequences of the rearmament by looking at the political and security regional crises in South America over the last decade; fourth, by looking at international organizations and formal and informal confidence building measures that contribute to the management of regional security in these challenging areas, supporting the observation of the phenomenon's sub-regional dimension. We conclude by seeking an overall assessment of the meaning of rearmament for contemporary politics in South America.

Theories of Regional Subsystems: New interpretations and old issues

A brief introduction to the theories of regional subsystems is needed to better define concepts and terminology. According to David Lake, Regional Studies flourished in the 1960s and suffered a decline in the 1970s, and were only resumed in a significant manner with the end of the Cold War. This situation can be partly explained by the period having presented in such a way that "regional systems were commonly overwhelmed and subsumed within the global system" (LAKE 1997: 46). However, there is a second set of issues concerning the terminology and concepts of Regional Studies. A 1973 analysis by William R. Thompson underlines that, considering the twenty-two publications in the field at the time, it was possible to identify eight different terms for regional subsystems, used indiscriminately, with twenty-one attributes for identification (THOMPSON, 1973: 92). The author also points out that such a mixed framework of settings and variables causes obvious and redundant problems of lack of conceptual uniformity, with the likely result of "misunderstanding and noncomparability" (THOMPSON, 1973: 95). Under these circumstances, this area of scientific knowledge has faced issues such as the production of non-cumulative knowledge and the lack of a common analytical framework.

Despite this excessive diversity of variables and definitions, Thompson presents four sufficient conditions for the existence of regional subsystems, as follows:

1. The relationship or interaction patterns display a particular degree of regularity and intensity, to the extent that change at one point in the subsystem affects other points;

[1] Trend Indicator Values are units of volume of international transfers, formulated by SIPRI based on known production costs of a core set of weapons and are intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer. Weapons for which a production cost is not known are compared with core weapons based on: size and performance characteristics; type of electronics; loading or unloading arrangements, engine, tracks or wheels, armament and materials, and the year in which the weapon was produced. For more details, see: <http://www.sipri.org/databases/yy_armstransfers/background/explanations2_default>

2. The actors are usually in close proximity;
3. Internal and external observers recognize the subsystem as a distinct area or 'theatre of operations';
4. The subsystem logically consists of at least two, and probably more, actors (THOMPSON, 1973: 101).

One of the closest definitions to the one offered by Thompson was by Karl Kaiser in 1968, defining a regional subsystem in more parsimonious manner (KAISER 1968: 86): "a pattern of relationships between basic units in world politics which exhibit a particular degree of regularity and intensity of relations as well as awareness of interdependence among the participating units" (KAISER, 1968: 86). In addition to this definition, Kaiser states that these subsystems are partial international systems "whose members exist in geographical propinquity" (KAISER, 1968: 68). The two most recurring attributes in the definitions of regional subsystems are already present, according to Thompson (1973: 96): On the one hand, emphasis must be placed on the fact that this is a group of political units known for intense and close relations, even if the nature of these relations is not a defining characteristic. On the other hand, there is an immutable geographic component to the units of the international system, an element that is at times not sufficiently appreciated in larger scale systemic theories. Finally, Kaiser also alludes to the third item in Thompson's definition when he states the importance of awareness of interdependence among participating units. Whereas the fourth attribute is a mere logical formality, as stated by Thompson himself, the definitions of both authors are aligned.

However, it is only with the end of the Cold War that this study field presents again a significant scientific production. Lake and Morgan argue that the post-Cold War period experienced a framework with greater regional relevance in international politics, in which:

> [R]egional conflicts are more likely to stay regional, responding to their individual circumstances and developments. The ability of the great powers, and especially the United States, to intervene around the globe has not diminished. Their interest in supporting local clients and regulating regional conflicts has, however, significantly declined (LAKE; MORGAN, 1997: 6).

Thus, it is under this new geopolitical context that the authors define a regional security complex as "a set of states continually affected by one or more security externalities that emanate from a distinct geographic area" (LAKE; MORGAN, 1997: 12). In this sense, Lake and Morgan's definition has as its central concept local and cross-border externalities that create costs and benefits to a limited number of states (LAKE; MORGAN, 1997: 50), and it is precisely the "localized nature of many externalities that creates regional systems; and it is local security externalities that define regional security complexes." (LAKE; MORGAN, 1997: 52). Thus, the geographic factor is expressed only in the dynamics of externalities, as they delimit the positioning of actors in which regional systems will form (MORGAN, 1997: 30). It is noteworthy that, in addition to a concern in defining a contemporary agenda for regional subsystems, there

is also a strong focus on the security issues of these subsystems, therefore, the term Regional Security Complexes (RSC) has been agreed upon among the authors in the field.

Another contemporary contribution to RSC theory takes place with Buzan and Waever. Again focusing on the field of security, the authors divide the geopolitical world regions and sub-regions that make up exclusive RSCs, defined as "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another" (BUZAN; WAEVER, 2003: 44). In this sense, Buzan and Weaver's theoretical construction is greatly centred on their securitization studies within the Copenhagen School, and thus focuses on the first element of intense and close relationships as fundamentally linked to securitization processes. At the same time, the authors point to an outline of the different world regions in groups or geographic clusters that do not overlap, precisely to operationalize interregional interactions or interactions among global actors and regions, as a significant concern in their studies. It is noteworthy that his notion incorporates different RSCs to South America and North America, the latter comprising Central America and the Caribbean.

When comparing the new theories with the framework of the 1960s and the 1970s, it is evident that the terminological and conceptual issues took a big quantitative step. Both approaches use RCS terminology, presenting variables that include at the very least Thompson's fundamental items, with the implementation of a geographic variable being a source of dissent among authors. However, questions about conceptual heterogeneity are qualitative in nature. When comparing the two definitions, it is clear that externalities and securitization processes are not interchangeable variables. It is not, therefore, a matter of mere terminology but of adopting research agendas and different analytical frameworks. It becomes pertinent, therefore, to ponder the same Thompson issues in the post-Cold War context. Despite the explicit theoretical dialogue among authors, the compatibility of their individual academic production raises some doubts. Although the problem of non-cumulative knowledge production can be partially solved with the creation of a clear theoretical framework, noncomparability between theories is still currently a possibility.

As for the theoretical framework used in this study, it was decided that the weighings of the 1960's and the 1970's would be used and that a contemporary definition of regional subsystem would be adopted, formulated by Teixeira (2012: 18), who defines it as "a subset of the international system reflecting the outcome of actual patterns of interactions - including the whole spectrum between conflict and cooperation - among countries in condition of geographic proximity" This definition explicitly contemplates Thompson's items 1, 2 and 4 and, implicitly, considers that it is essential for regional subsystems to have some degree of interdependence among States (TEIXEIRA, 2012: 19). Both in cooperation and competition contexts, the interdependence of states is, thus, as stressed by Kaiser, a functional replacement for Thompson's item 3.

With regard to the analysis variables, interaction patterns can be observed through three variables, "wars and/or armed conflicts, trade, and regional organizations" (TEIXEIRA, 2012: 29). These include various processes that contribute to the subsystems identified.

The present study sought to adapt the variables along three directions. First, arms trade in the region is assessed through the volume of international arms transfers. More than the concerns about the intraregional trade variable, it is worth highlighting, in South American rearmament, the arms imported simultaneously or concomitantly between specific countries, displaying soft balancing patterns between neighbouring States. Second, it is assessed not only in wars and armed conflicts, but also in the regional security crises that erupted over the last decade, in such a way as to focus on the motivations for modernizing the Armed Forces of their respective States or resulting from the tensions generated by the phenomenon. The scope is widened in this way because, if there is a noticeable lack of inter-State wars in the historic moment of the post-Cold War2, it is also noted that smaller conflicts tend to be intrastatal3, although possibly presenting transnational reflections4. Finally, the work brings the international organizations variable together with the first two, to look at how rearmament projects and political crises are being managed by international organizations, seeking in particular to discover which regional focus was used as a privileged stage for negotiations. Furthermore, formal and informal confidence building measures are highlighted that are relevant to the management of South American rearmament, as they are mediated by multilateral fora and by traditional bilateral diplomacy.

From a theoretical point of view, it is argued that, if warfare modernization in South American countries has been found to cause soft balancing exclusively at the subregional level, and if these states interact intensely on sub-regional crises and seek subregional fora to address these challenges, it is clear that dealing with the topic of rearmament as Latin American is of little analytical use to academics, strategists and other interested parties, and, in that sense, it is more beneficial to look at South America's geopolitical specificities to better understand the phenomenon.

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[2] Tavares states that (2014: 1), times of war in South America are topical, noting the Chaco War (1932-1935) and the wars between Ecuador and Peru (1941 and 1981). The latest record was the brief Cenepa war between the two countries in 1995, promptly mediated by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the USA. Meanwhile, the spaced repetition of wars between the two actors is an important indicator that this low incidence does not translate into a lack of conflicts of interest among South American states. Within non-armed disputes, for example, Tavares (2012: 49-52, 260) has mapped eleven territorial disputes in South America since the post-Cold War.

[3] Tavares again points out that, according to the methodology of the Uppsala Conflict Database, there were at least nine cases of armed conflict in South America since the Cold War (TAVARES, 2014: 45-48), and only one, the Cenepa War between Ecuador and Peru in 1995, was classified as an interstate war. The remaining eight are classified as intrastate violence. This, in turn, is mostly "caused by violent coups or popular uprisings" (TAVARES, 2014: p 44). However, there is a deviant case, but one which is equally revealing about the security issues of intrastate order in South America: the military occupation operation of the *Alemão* and *Vila Cruzeiro* Complexes in 2010, both in Rio de Janeiro, aimed to retake state control of those areas, then controlled by drug trafficking. The balance of the operation involving more than 17,500 military and police was around 100 deaths and therefore fits the Uppsala Conflict Database as a minor armed conflict. Despite the apparent arbitrariness of the classification, it is stressed that these are threats perceived and answered by States in militarized form.

[4] According to the Uppsala Conflict Database, a conflict can be defined as: "a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a State, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths within 1 calendar year. Armed conflict can be considered 'minor' - when there are at least 25 but less than 1,000 battle-related deaths within 1 calendar year, or "wars" - When there are at least 1,000 battle-related deaths within 1 calendar year" (cited in : TAVARES, Rodrigo 2014, p 43-44)...

As pointed out by Teixeira, concepts of region that retain the basic elements of interaction and geographical location possess the necessary and sufficient variables for the analysis of regional subsystems. In Latin America, the author criticizes the definition of a cultural character for the region, which is of little analytical utility: "the notion of a common culture or identity, or of supposed historical affinities, is a common misconception of regional subsystems – and this is especially relevant for the case of Latin America" (TEIXEIRA, 2012: 16-17). The study of the rearmament phenomenon specifically circumscribed to South America, which does not manifest in a similar way in Central America and the Caribbean, confirms this hypothesis.

Arms import volume in Latin America over the past decade

Analyses of defence budget data of South American countries have highlighted, on the one hand, countries with traditionally significant budgets in the region, such as Brazil, Colombia and Chile, and on the other hand, countries that have intensified their defence expenditure over the last decade. The first group features the larger budgets in South America which, according to SIPRI's *Military Expenditure Database*, in 2010, belong to Brazil (57%), to Colombia (16%) and to a lesser extent, to Chile (7%) and to Argentina (5%). The second group, according to the 2008 SIPRI report (STÅLENHEIM *et al.*, 2008: 200), features countries like Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile, which increased their defence spending by 78% 53% and 49%, respectively, in the period from 2003 to 2007. While budget expenditures are not the focus of this analysis, they nevertheless provide a relevant starting point to approach core countries for the rearmament process.

Table 1: Volume of arms transferred to specific countries in South America between 2001-2010, expressed in Trend Indicator Values (TIVs) *

Country	Average 1991- 2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average 2001- 2010
Argentina	109	6	16	12	168	3	9	24	23	16	14	29
Brasil	263	630	213	100	81	223	179	189	179	184	318	230
Chile	176	60	74	187	70	449	1096	662	397	335	475	380
Colômbia	77	275	167	148	18	16	56	234	110	248	257	153
Equador	35	13	1		15	48	17	2	102	77	90	36
Peru	114	5	16	22	47	368	193	172		43	46	114
Venezuela	69	105	50	15	9	20	380	785	743	358	208	267

*The figures are millions of Trend Indicator Values (TIVs) developed by SIPRI, covering transfers of major conventional weapons as defined by SIPRI. Rounding conventions apply. A blank entry indicates that there were no arms transfers during that calendar year. For the purposes of temporal comparison, the financial figures are recalculated to millions of US $ in constant 1990 prices.

Source: SIPRI *Arms Transfers Database*

Therefore, it is not surprising that the volume of arms purchased in the 2001-2010 period shows a prominence of Chile, Venezuela, Brazil and Colombia, in decreasing order. In these terms, significantly higher weapons imports are verified than the annual average standard of the previous decade (1991-2000) for Chile, with 380 TIVs imported compared to 176; for Venezuela, 267 TIVs compared to 69; and for Colombia, with 153 TIVs compared to 77. Brazil is a case of stability regarding pattern of imports, with an average of 230 TIVs, a number close to 263. Ecuador follows suit, with comparative figures of 36 TIVs and 35. It is noticeable, therefore, that while the first countries have intensified their rearmament process, the latter's behaviour over the previous decade has been more regular.

While South American rearmament presents a vast context with prominent actors such as Chile and Venezuela, and other highly relevant actors, including Brazil and Colombia, SIPRI's analyses regarding the rearmament of Central America and the Caribbean are more topical. According to the data of SIPRI's *Military Expenditure Database*, Mexico accounted for 80% of the defence budget of Central America and the Caribbean in 2010, with the Dominican Republic (4%), El Salvador (3%), Guatemala (2%) and Honduras (2%) following from a distance. According to the 2008 report, between 2003 and 2007, the largest increases in military budgets belong to Honduras (20%) and Mexico (16%) (STÅLENHEIM et al, 2008: 200).

Table 2: Volume of arms transferred to Mexico and regional total for Central America between 2001-2010, expressed in Trend Indicator Values (TIVs) *

Country	Average 1991-2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average 2001-2010
México	118	152	97	31	320	37	71	5	22	59	112	91
Regional Totals	157	158	100	39	356	49	81	48	34	87	188	114

*See Table 1.

Source: SIPRI *Arms Transfers Database*

Looking at the volume of arms imported by the Central American and Caribbean region over the last decade, it can be seen how Mexico is the only country close to the standards of South American imports, as shipments to this country represent a large part of the regional total. The average annual volume of arms imported between 1991 and 2000 was 118 TIVs, against 91 TIVs between 2001 and 2010. It is remarkable that Mexican imports did not intensify between 2003 and 2007, contrary to South American trends. Unlike South American countries, the large demand for military resources comes exclusively from Mexico's internal affairs, since the country is focused on a war on drugs against cartels, mobilizing the Army in law enforcement and internal order operations (STÅLENHEIM *et al*, 2008: 201-2). There are similarities with Colombian internal affairs, but the outward expressions are markedly different. With a lack of

rival competitors and a context of low subregional military spending, Mexican rearmament does not present the same tensions generated by Colombian rearmament, let alone respond with soft balancing to the modernization projects of neighbours, as in the case of Venezuela.

Therefore, mention must be made of the discourse and general motivations of South American countries for their respective upgrades. According to SIPRI's annual report of 2007 (STÅLENHEIM et al., 2007: 287), there is recurrent use of two political arguments. On the one hand, some countries have declared that these purchases are the "routine replacement of old equipment and the acquisition of capabilities for a more active role in international peace operations." Countries on the other group argue that "their acquisitions of equipment are in response to a perceived military threat." The report also shows occasions where both arguments apply, while other "tacit motives" – such as support of the local arms industry - are not explicitly articulated in the political discourses. As stated by Villa (2008: 38), it is noticeable that more Andean countries have tended to justify "arms modernization with the threat to the stability of the State and the stability of borders" than the Southern Cone countries, indicating subregional nuances distinctive of two different groups of countries within South America.

According to the mapping made by Villa (2008), the rearmament plans of the Southern Cone countries, namely Argentina, Brazil and Chile, are not motivated by identifiable threats to the integrity of the State, whether internal or external. Argentina has been fundamentally concerned with the task of "reviewing the actual operating conditions of their equipment" (VILLA, 2008: 30) under a domestic policy perspective to assess scrapping and the possible need for replacement of military equipment. The Brazilian case is similar, but is framed within a dual set of problems. If it is true that increasing the military budget partly serves the internal demands of the military sector and of the national defence industry, the purchase of "sophisticated weaponry" (VILLA, 2008: 26) by Chile and Venezuela are also indicators of Brazilian policy, both in the "political context of the announced competition between Brazil and Venezuela for South American leadership" (VILLA, 2008: 25), and in the internal dynamics of the use of the neighbouring rearmament as "bargaining chip" for interest groups. Additionally, the long-term plans for the "hemispheric and global projection of Brazil's role, that is, the appropriateness of Brazil to its condition of emerging global political player" (VILLA, 2008: 27) must be considered. Chile, in turn, has its own plans for international projection. On the one hand, the country seeks to engage internationally through UN peacekeeping missions, evolving from a participation record of three missions until 1990, to a current involvement in fifteen peacekeeping missions. On the other hand, the purchase of arms in western markets[5] shows that Chile "intends to achieve standard military status as a NATO country" (VILLA, 2008: 10), contributing to building a strategic partnership with the US.

The group of northern Andean countries significantly engaged in rearmament plans, particularly Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, have different concerns. Villa (2008: 34) states that Peru's rearmament plan is "related to concerns about the military investments of

[5] According to Villa (2008: 10), in the period between 2003 and 2007, Chile bought conventional weapons in markets in the EU (82% of spending), the US (15%) and Israel (3%).

the Chilean government." Ecuador, in turn, is motivated by the "trade-off between civilians and military", internally, while also answering for the "stability and security of its borders" externally (VILLA, 2008: 36-37). The Colombian plan aims to respond to the demands of the "counternarcotic and anti-insurgency struggle" while also seeking to serve the interests of the Colombian Armed Forces, who "are interested in improving their military capabilities and modernizing their equipment stocks, which are already quite outdated" (VILLA, 2008: 34). In turn, Venezuela is, on a domestic level, sensitive to "military support, which requires the modernization of the arms and outdated equipment of its Armed Forces", while externally reaffirming "strategic motives" relating to "improving Venezuela's regional political positioning" (VILLA, 2008: 32). SIPRI's 2008 report also highlights Chavez's speech on the "supposed US threat and their plans to overthrow his government" (Holtom, et al, 2008: 306-307). Both external motives are linked to the anti-hegemonic principles of the Chavez government and the construction of a Latin American alternative to US influence (TAVARES, 2014: 162-163).

Finally, it is noteworthy that the rearmament in Latin America, as a whole, presents significantly different behaviours between Central America and the Caribbean and South America. While in the first case, the only relevant importer is Mexico, in the second there is a much more complex patchwork of countries engaged in military modernization. The motives, though at times converging on internal order issues, are more present at the external level in South American countries. It therefore makes more sense to look at regional issues in South America in order to regionally circumscribe the phenomenon. Thus, the next section will cover political and South American security crises.

Political and security crises in South America

To further prove that warfare modernization, which is quantitatively more present in South America, is also qualitatively more expressed in the issues of the sub-region, it is important to analyse how political and sub-regional security crises could point to motives underlying the rearmament and provide the consequences of the tensions generated by the military restructuring of States. If, after all, there were no patterns of arms races and new impactful warlike conflicts, effectively how did the rearmament in South America unfold?

As noted above, the Cenepa War between Ecuador and Peru (1995) was the most recent record of wars in South America. This war took place prior to the rearmament of the last decade and thus, despite serving to establish a time-frame for territorial disputes in the region, was not a central element of the subsequent regional crises. Similarly, the smaller armed conflicts that have taken place since the end of the Cold War are of an intrastate nature, although they have had regional expression on occasion, as in the conflict in Colombia or in the implications of the transnational drug trafficking network that culminated in the military occupation of Rio de Janeiro communities. Thus, to identify policy issues that demonstrate the regional character of the South American rearmament, we will explore episodes of regional security crises or political crises that erupted in the last decade involving, on the

one hand, countries seen as a focus of the rearmament, including Venezuela and Chile, and on the other, interstate and inter-regional coordination efforts integral to those episodes. With regard to the first core country, it is worth highlighting the reaction of Caracas to the Colombian incursion into the Ecuadorian territory of Angostura in 2008, culminating in the death of Raul Reyes, a leader of the FARC. The following year, Venezuela's concerns focused in the declaration that Colombia would grant the use of military bases to the US Armed Forces. As for Chile, mention must be made of the political crisis revived by Peru in 2005, driven in part by a historical maritime dispute, but also due to concerns about the deterrent effect of the growing Chilean weaponry.

The first episode, involving the death of Raúl Reyes, was critical as it substantially damaged the fragile diplomatic relations between Colombia and Venezuela. According to Tavares (2014: 153), "the attack unleashed one of the worst diplomatic disputes in recent years in South America", and the legitimacy of the raid invading Ecuadorian sovereign territory was argued. As a backdrop to criticism from Caracas, there were also arguments against an excessive influence by extra-regional powers in Colombia and, by extension, in South America. Moreover, according to SIPRI's 2009 report, the episode marked the moment when "the region came closest to a military confrontation since the 1990's" (PERLO-FREEMAN *et al*. 2009: 202), eliciting responses not only from Ecuador and Venezuela, but also from Nicaragua, all countries breaking off diplomatic relations with Colombia. Caracas and Managua went further, as the then President Hugo Chavez "ordered extra troops to be sent to the border with Colombia" while Nicaragua "revived maritime disputes" with Bogota (idem). The effects of the crisis initiated in 2008 were still felt in 2010, when Uribe spoke at the OAS and accused the Venezuelan government of harbouring FARC rebels. In response, Caracas again cut relations with Colombia. According to Tavares (2014: 168), the strategy of granting tacit shelter to the FARC, although understandable in light of the shared left-wing ideologies between the Venezuelan government and the guerrillas, can also be seen as "primarily designed to constrain its main regional adversary - thus distracting Bogota from to carrying out any military effort that could threaten the territorial integrity of Venezuela". Moreover, one more issue was added to this set of issues, the "close defence relationship shared by Bogota with another key adversary of Caracas, the USA" (TAVARES, 2014: 153), which became more evident in the crisis that followed 2008. In short, the author also states that "the bilateral crisis was partially ignited by the Colombian (and Venezuelan) domestic agenda, as the dispute was a clear opportunity to instigate nationalist sentiments and increase the President's popularity" (TAVARES 2014: 153).

The diplomatic crisis created in October 2009 made clear the concerns of South American countries, particularly Venezuela, about the enduring influence of extra-regional powers in the geopolitical location. Bogota announced an agreement with the United States to grant use of seven Colombian military bases, over a period of ten years, to conduct anti-trafficking and anti-terrorism operations, which was treated by Uribe as an extension of the American aid given to the security of the Colombian state (TAVARES, 2014: 150). From the North

American perspective, the agreement came at an opportune moment, at the end of the Manta base agreements in Ecuador, which until then was the only US base for South American operations. The agreement received a negative reception in the region, as it "was heavily criticized by virtually all South American leaders" (TAVARES, 2014: 150). Peru was the only dissenting country, taking a conciliatory position as it was also involved in cooperation with the US. Venezuela responded by announcing the measure that had been planned since 2005, the creation of the Bolivarian National Militia and, according to SIPRI's 2010 report "it is not coincidental that the announcement came shortly after Colombia and the USA approved an agreement on military bases in October 2009" (PERLO-FREEMAN et al 2010: 185). Despite intense unsuccessful negotiations in international fora, the short-term solution came from the Colombian legislature, which suspended the proposed agreement on the grounds that it would require new obligations by the State, as well as extensions of previous obligations, framing the document as an international treaty requiring congressional approval.

More than separate episodes, the repeated crises between Bogota and Caracas from 2008 onwards demonstrate the tensions generated at the end of the decade between rivals who possess, respectively, the second largest military budget and the highest relative increase in budget in the region between 2003 and 2007. Marked by ideological differences, and vigilant regarding territorial disputes[6] among themselves, these countries have demonstrated, at least at foreign and interstate levels, a deterrent use of their renewed military capabilities. Therefore, it is also worth noting, according to SIPRI's 2009 report, that the rearmament "is unlikely to result in an interstate war, but it does allow countries to act in a more assertive manner" (PERLO-FREEMAN et al. 2009: 202). The incursion into Ecuadorian territory was one of the worst regional security crises over the past decade and still did not culminate in a confrontation. It is clear, however, that the origins of a non-militarized solution to the crisis are varied and are answered in part by mediation in international regional fora and by formal and informal confidence building measures.

In turn, the rekindling of the territorial dispute between Chile and Peru shows greater assertiveness on part of the Peruvian state, but is primarily based on the growing military capacity of the neighbouring country. According to Tavares (2014: 136), the crisis began in 2005, when the Peruvian Congress passed a law unilaterally expanding the maritime limits with Chile. The measure attempted to draw on a 1947 decree limiting Peru's sovereign maritime belt. The Congress decided that the maritime borders of the time were related to two fishing agreements and did not establish sovereignty in the belt under dispute. In 2008, the case was submitted by Peru to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, although the case was not tried until 2014. The solution, albeit a gradually implemented one, was in favour of granting the disputed territory to Bolivia, which historically advocated a sovereign outlet to the sea. According to Tavares (2014: 137), the dispute dates from

[6] The most latent territorial dispute between Colombia and Venezuela is over control of the entry to the Gulf of Venezuela and the Los Monjes Islands, which ensures a significant belt of territorial sea for the Caribbean (TAVARES, 2014: 50).

the Pacific War of 1879-1883, involving Chile and a Peru-Bolivia coalition, in which Chile was victorious, acquiring approximately a third of its contemporary territory. Today, still according to the author, arms purchases by Chile heightened the "inherent geopolitical rivalry" in the period before the trial. Although the rhetoric from Santiago is to say that "their arms purchases were purely for defence and deterrence purposes", the argument was not enough to discourage concerns by Peru, considering the "inherent divergence of interests and security awareness" generated by the Chilean purchases of military equipment in what is a classic image of a security dilemma. Hence, while the diplomatic crisis would hardly inflame an armed conflict, the political use, both deterrent and diplomatic, of the newly acquired warfare capacity of States has also prevailed in this episode.

International organizations and confidence building measures

If the tensions arising from the rearmament notably broke out with greater intensity in South America, it is also interesting to note how the role of INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organizations) in these cases shows actual interactions between States, sometimes cooperatively and sometimes in a combative manner, to find negotiated exits. Considering the substantial differences between a Latin American and a South American framework of rearmament in the region, would the INGOs follow similar patterns of preference for sub-regional stages?

In the crises mentioned above, INGOs had heterogeneous performances and functions. In addition to regional institutions, the use of traditional bilateral channels in a complementary manner is noteworthy. However, it is evident that although the OAS presented the most important initiatives of confidence building measures in the region, such as the Inter-American Convention on Transparency on Conventional Weapons Acquisitions in 1999 and the Lima Declaration of 2010 (BROMLEY; SOLMIRANO, 2012: 17; TAVARES, 2014: 201; WEIFFEN, 2010: 23), South American countries have been opting for sub-regional fora to implement confidence building mechanisms and also using them to manage regional security crises. In the first case, Weiffen underlines (2010: 33) that "in terms of practicality of the adopted cooperation measures, subregional and bilateral cooperation mechanisms seem to be more efficient than hemispheric initiatives." Regarding the second, Saint-Pierre and Palacios Junior state that:

> The regional security crises made clear, to the governments of South America, the tardiness and impotence of hemispheric forums in addressing their security concerns. This lead to a search for new ways to address these issues, ways that did not depend on extra-regional actors (SAINT-PIERRE; PALACIOS JUNIOR, 2014: 22).

Therefore, one of the crises in which this dynamic most stands out is the incursion by the Colombian Armed Forces in Ecuadorian territory. On the other hand, the crisis among Peru-Chile-Bolivia follows the regional pattern of non-intervention by INGOs in territorial disputes

(TAVARES, 2014: 264). We will proceed, then, by looking at the regional fora held during the above crises.

In the case of the Colombian incursion that culminated in the death of Raúl Reyes, the OAS "adopted several decisions to mediate between the two countries [Colombia and Ecuador] and to prevent the escalation of the conflict" (TAVARES, 2014: 210). The organization's response was initiated during an extraordinary session on March 5, acknowledging the events of the crisis and beginning the process of mediation. However, it was only with the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on March 17, that a was decision made to send delegations to both parties involved, comprising representatives from Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Panama, as well as a declaration that "the attack violated international law" (Idem). Of all these meetings, the one where the crisis was most emphatically defused was the CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) forum. The Rio Group issued a statement "declaring its rejection of the Colombian incursion", which was categorized as a "violation of the territorial integrity of Ecuador" (TAVARES, 2014: 250-251). Additionally, Uribe pledged not to repeat any similar actions, which was enough for Correa to give up on demanding sanctions against Bogota. According to Tavares, what gave momentum to the forum was the fact that the Twentieth Group Meeting would be scheduled for March 7, six days after the outbreak of crisis and "therefore it would be implausible to leave the issue off the agenda" (Idem). Moreover, according to Medeiros Filho (2014: 38), the creation of the South American Defence Council, a project that was initiated in 2006 and was revisited still in 2007 by Nelson Jobim, the Brazilian Minister of Defence, gained prominence in the agenda of the region because of "[a] conflict involving Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela; and the reactivation of the Fourth US Fleet". Thus, while CELAC was an ad hoc forum for crisis management, the creation of the SADC was a reaction to the tardiness of the hemispheric forum provided by the OAS, which nevertheless contributed to defuse tensions between the parties in the meetings of March 5 and 17.

The episode triggered by the agreements on the use of Colombian bases by the US was widely reflected on the USAN forum. During the Third USAN Conference, in August 2009, the topic was on the main agenda, and the US military presence in the region was under discussion. Differences between Colombian policies and those of other South American countries, with the exception of Peru, were such that it was not possible to reach a consensus on the issue, which was not included in the final declaration. It was decided, therefore, to schedule a new Special Conference in Argentina to discuss the issue. A key element to produce more conciliatory negotiations was Uribe's presidential diplomacy. As Tavares states (2014: 227-228), "[b]efore the [Special] Conference, Uribe travelled to seven different South American capitals to announce and discuss the cooperation between Colombia and the US. Therefore, despite the crisis having been contained *in* the USAN Conference, one cannot infer that it was *by* the USAN." In addition to that, the issue persisted for three subsequent conferences on the crisis created by Venezuela, also without any consensus having been reached.

As for the maritime dispute between Peru and Chile, it is noteworthy that the dispute was referred to the International Court of Justice in The Hague by Peru, bypassing sub-regional and hemispheric forums. According to Tavares (2014: 229), Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa "proposed that the discussion of the conflict be part of the agenda of the USAN Special Conference in Bariloche or a central topic of another Special Conference", a proposal that was promptly rejected by both parties. It is also relevant that, through the efforts of Peruvian President Alan García (2006-2011) and of Chilean President Michelle Bachelet (2006-2011), "both countries tried to revive a mechanism called '2+2 meeting', an instrument of consultation, policy coordination and information exchange between the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs "(VILLA; WEIFFEN, 2014: 152).

In general, there is a rather ambiguous tone to the performance of INGOs in the security environment of South America. According to Tavares' mapping (2014: 263-264), of the forty one armed and unarmed disputes since the end of the Cold War, INGOs mediated twenty two cases through forty three actions. Of these, twenty nine were carried out through the OAS, six through USAN, six through CELAC, one through CAN (Andean Community) and one through the Ibero-American Conference. Of all these actions, twenty four (56%) are statements or resolutions in favour or against specific episodes. There were only seven mediations, seven observation missions, two peacebuilding missions, two suspensions of admission and one peacekeeping operation. As the author concludes, "most are still low capacity interventions" (Idem). In this sense, the crises described above contribute to this scenario. While in the case of Colombia-Ecuador there were further mediation efforts within CELAC and the OAS throughout March of 2008, the crisis of the Colombian bases has constraints within the UNASUR, which were complemented by presidential diplomacy and, finally, the development of the Peru-Chile-Bolivia dispute rejected the regional forums in favour of the Hague IJC. Despite a questionable performance, we note that, in support of the claim by Saint-Pierre and Palacios Junior, there is an effective demand for fora other than the OAS to solve regional crises.

Formal and informal confidence building measures present different records in regional security crises, even though a subregional trend is also present. While sub-areas may be more effective for the implementation and management of confidence measures in a more direct manner, these can also be achieved in such a way as to complement the hemispheric level. Bromley and Solmirano state:

> At the regional and international level, states in Latin America and the Caribbean have created ambitious confidence and security building measures via the OAS and have been strong supporters of relevant UN instruments. In addition, states in South America are currently creating a new set of mechanisms for sharing information on a range of security issues —i ncluding military spending and arms acquisitions — via the Union of South American Nations (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, UNASUR). However, levels of participation in existing instruments remain varied and inconsistent, with several states failing to provide the information that they have agreed to share. (BROMLEY; SOLMIRANO, 2012: 2).

It is noteworthy that South America presents a higher participation in formal confidence building measures than Central America and the Caribbean, by publishing transparency reports at the OAS, reporting arms acquisitions to UNROCA (United Nations Register of Conventional Arms), and producing more defence white papers (BROMLEY; SOLMIRANO, 2012). This demonstrates greater concern and care among South American countries in offsetting the negative impact of rearmament. However, there are nuances even within South America, with the levels of adoption and application of confidence building measures remaining uneven between the Southern Cone, with stronger participation, and a less committed Andean region. (VILLA; WEIFFEN, 2014: 155).

Does the notion of a Latin American rearmament make sense? A final assessment

In light of the analyses conducted, a number of elements should be stressed about the understanding of rearmament as a recent South American phenomenon.

First, the evolution of the volume of arms transferred to Latin America in the last decade was mapped. There is a marked increase in weapons imports by Chile and Venezuela, although most other countries in the South America sub-region proceed with significant regular imports. It is also highlighted that, compared to the volume of arms imported from Central America and the Caribbean, the rearmament phenomenon is most intense in South America. In fact, only Mexico presents a similar volume of imported weapons. It therefore makes more sense to look at rearmament as a South American phenomenon, as opposed to the whole of Latin America. This framework is complemented by a variety of motivations in South America, which either touch upon intra or parastatal issues like bargaining with interest groups, internal conflicts, militarized responses to drug trafficking, or touch upon interstate issues of international prominence, regional rivalries and territorial disputes. In the latter case, there are elements of cooperation and rivalry underlying those motivations. By contrast, the Mexican case shows concerns only with internal issues.

A double dynamic was made clear in the regional security crises and political crises analysed: if, on the one hand, the new military power is used both as deterrent and diplomacy for the inter-state dimension, there is an effective use of military resources for intra or parastatal threats. An example of this was the Colombian raid in Angostura, which presented both dimensions simultaneously. Despite provoking the most serious regional security crisis of the decade, interstate military use did not take place. Moreover, most of the actors involved, both directly and in the role of mediators, were circumscribed to South America. The participation of actors perceived as sub-region members of the Caribbean and Central America is best understood by looking at the border position of Colombia and Venezuela between both subregions.

The non-outbreak of wars was due, in part, to the coexistence of cooperation and dialogue mechanisms with the traditional power game. However, these have shown mixed results. There is a coexistence of the hemispheric forum with new subregional alternatives, both mediated by bilateral presidential diplomacy. Still in the case of Angostura, there was

a need for successive meetings at different fora to defuse the situation. On the other hand, the subsequent crisis of agreements on Colombian bases demonstrates the need to align multilateral fora with presidential diplomacy. Still, there is a clear tendency to seek solutions in more localized and subregional levels, as opposed to the robust and complex hemispheric stage of the OAS.

Moreover, the choice for fora specific to South America, aside from reflecting a regional scale of security dynamics, expresses a South American fear of lasting interference by extra-regional powers in local geopolitics. However, it is notable that the Colombian bases crisis had a far greater impact than the military cooperation between Caracas-Moscow and its subsequent military exercises (ROMERO, 2008). In addition to the ideological arguments of left-wing governments in South America, it is important to note that the latter case lacks the lasting power projection of the first, as it granted the station of US troops in the region, even if in small numbers.

Finally, we note that the consequences of the South American rearmament so far have been to reinforce the status quo of the subsystem. An example that in theory would deviate from this is the Venezuelan regional leadership project. However, while it is true that, Venezuelan politics are anti-hegemonic in what concerns the US, it should be taken into account that the Venezuelan project has been adapting to a Brazilian leadership, either through participation in USAN and in the actual Mercosur, or through diplomatic neutralization by Brazil. Moreover, the possibility of major change occurs in para- and intrastate threats, which are now addressed more assertively by States with greater military resources. Thus, the South American subsystem has been re-adjusting to the reality of the post-Cold War with greater assertiveness and autonomy in this field, despite the different sets of issues resulting from the process.

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