

# Rethinking the Regional Security Complex Theory: A South American view between 2008-2016

Repensando la Teoría del Complejo Regional de Seguridad: una visión Sudamericana entre  
2008-2016

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**ABSTRACT:** With this article, we propose to reformulate the Regional Security Complex Theory, by Buzan and Waever, through a South American vision, with the time frame 2008-2016. To this end, we will analyse South America through Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia, and their forms of intra and extra-regional interaction, highlighting the Colombia-United States relations, and the South American Defence Council, of the Union of South American Nations. This article is divided into a first section marked by an understanding of the Regional Complex Theory, in which we present and discuss its theoretical elements and weaknesses, and propose theoretical changes that will guide our analysis. The second section contains information about the South American Complex in the academic view, focusing on the arguments of Buzan and Waever. In the third section, we present the South American Regional Security Complex restructured, as well as the analysis of its dynamics. The central argument of the article is the need to reformulate the Theory in question for a better understanding of the complexities and unique characteristics of South America.

**KEYWORDS:** Regional Security Complex, South America, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia.

**RESUMEN:** Con este artículo proponemos reformular la Teoría del Complejo Regional de Seguridad, de Buzan y Waever, a través de una visión sudamericana, con el marco temporal 2008-2016. Para ello analizaremos la América del Sur a través de Argentina, Brasil y Colombia, y sus formas de interacción intra y extrarregional, destacando las relaciones Colombia-Estados Unidos, y el Consejo de Defensa Sudamericano, de la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas. Este artículo se divide en una primera sección marcada por la comprensión de la Teoría del Complejo Regional, en la que presentamos y discutimos sus elementos teóricos y debilidades, y proponemos cambios teóricos que guiarán nuestro análisis. La segunda sección contiene información sobre el Complejo Sudamericano en la mirada académica, enfocándose en los argumentos de Buzan y Waever. En la tercera sección, presentamos el Complejo Regional de Seguridad Sudamericano reestructurado, así como el análisis de su dinámica. El argumento central del artículo es la necesidad de reformular la Teoría en cuestión para una mejor comprensión de las complejidades y características únicas de la América del Sur.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Complejo Regional de Seguridad, Sudamérica, Argentina, Brasil, Colombia.

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## INTRODUCTION

The South American region is inserted in a scenario marked by cooperative processes. However, it is an arena composed of unique complexities and specificities, in which extra-regional definitions and models may not be satisfactory to explain the existing dynamics. For a better understanding of such region, we consider that the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) is a relevant theoretical basis, because, while focusing on the regional level, where the interactions of the actors occur, it does not disregard the interactions and influences at the national and global levels. The thesis enables a link between internal conditions in the region, relations between the units of this location and other regions, as well as global dynamics and actors (Frasson-Quenoz & Piñeros, 2014: 22-3). Such theory allows an understanding constructed on a materialistic approach, close to the Neorealism of International Relations, emphasizing the territoriality and the distribution of power, as well as the Constructivist approach, turning to the field of securitisation and patterns of relationship based on social construction. (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 4).

Thus, this article aims to reformulate the Regional Security Complex Theory, through a South American vision, with the time frame 2008-2016.<sup>1</sup> To this end, we will analyse South America through Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia, and their forms of intra and extra-regional interaction, highlighting the Colombia-United States relations, and the South American Defence Council (SADC), of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Our methodology is based on historical analysis, through primary and secondary sources and execution of interviews<sup>2</sup>. The choice of the SADC is determined from the fact that the institution is the first initiative that encompasses twelve South American countries, in a cooperative political field. The Council is a unique proposal concerning regional defence and security. At the same time, the election of bilateral relations between Colombia and the United States was carried out as a way of demonstrating a counterpoint, or even a confrontation, with the proposal for South American regional cooperation. The focus on Argentina and Brazil occurs due to their central roles in the creation and development of the SADC; as well as their relevance in the South American region, representing the southern cone. In contrast, we insert Colombia, representative of the Andean subregion, characterized as a turning point, especially due to its political, economic and military orientation towards the United States of America, and its ideological confrontation with other countries in the region, such as Ecuador and Venezuela. Finally, the time frame was delimited by the year of creation of the UNASUR and SADC, in 2008, and the moment when governmental changes and crises started in the region, in 2016, with emphasis on the two countries we analysed: Argentina, with the election Mauricio Macri as president; and Brazil, with the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and the nomination of Michel Temer as interim president.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of the doctoral thesis of the author.

<sup>2</sup> Then Maintenance the anonymity of the interviewees is a prerequisite for the reproduction of their statements, except for Erika Rodríguez Pizón, from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and Sergio Caballero Santos, from Universidad de Deusto. The other statements used come from: Interviewee 1: First echelon of Ecuador's Ministry of Defence; Interviewee 2: Third echelon of Ecuador's Ministry of Defence; Interviewee 3: Third echelon of Chile's Ministry of Defence.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this research, we decided not to focus on Venezuela. This decision was based on the theoretical approach, the Regional Security Complex Theory, and the empirical material, as interviews, official documents, and previous researches. However, we do not disregard the relevant role of the Bolivarian country in the South American region and in the time frame. Therefore, we will recognize and highlight some of the country's points throughout the article.

It is important to emphasize the relevance of this article proposal, in which we seek to examine the South American region through critical analysis of the Regional Complex Theory. We aim to understand South America, through the security bias, with a specific look to the region, detaching ourselves from the pre-established theoretical formula based on general parameters. These meet specific understandings of northern dynamics, which, many times, are not applicable and sufficient to analyse cases from the global south. Therefore, the theoretical reformulation of RSCT will provide a concrete basis for the study of the South American region, and its respective conflicts and processes of securitisation and cooperation.

This article is divided into a first section based on the understanding of the Regional Security Complex Theory, in which we present a critique of the concepts used, and we propose changes for the construction of our analysis. A second section addresses the South American Complex in the academic view, focusing on the arguments of Buzan and Waever. The third section presents our reformulation of the South American Regional Security Complex, as well as an analysis of its dynamics. Finally, the fourth section has brief final considerations on the South American Complex and its current situation.

#### THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY

Buzan and Waever (2003) developed the Regional Security Complex Theory in a Post-Cold War context. To this end, they began their analysis with the differentiation of States, since, as their purpose was to understand historically the dynamics of regional security, there is a need to verify the types of States that comprise them. An initial consideration is between strong and weak States. The former has greater internal cohesion with, mostly, threats outside its borders; the latter is more focused on its sovereignty, presenting “less claim to stateness”, with internal weaknesses capable of making it more vulnerable, by both internal divisions and external threats. Complementarily, the authors consider that superpowers are those capable of exercising their military, economic and political capacities throughout the International System, where they are accepted as such, in addition to influencing the processes of securitisation and desecuritisation in the regions, and the construction of legitimate universal values. At the same time, great powers are actors included in the calculation of power distribution at the systemic level. Finally, regional powers are those with regional capacities and influences, excluded from the calculation of polarity in the International System. Finally, they conceptualize the island States, which are located in an area of indifference between Regional Security Complexes (RSC); and buffer States, defined by the function of “standing at the centre of a strong pattern of securitisation” (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 41), separating regional powers of a Complex.

The authors emphasize the role of the region as central to the RSCT since it is where the junction between the national and global levels takes place. In this sense, the region is where States or other units are close to the point where their security elements cannot be considered separate from each other. At the same time, the subregions refer to “a part of that region where not all States or part of them are included” (Pagliari, 2009: 47-48). The Regional Security Complex is based on the State and the political-military field, defined as “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 44), manifesting itself within regional conglomerates. RSCs are socially constructed, thus, depending on the security

practices of the actors. It is relevant to highlight that, for the theorists, “security is what actors make it” (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 48).

In this sense, RSCs are regions observed by the security bias, marked by the geographical perspective, and interdependence relations in security, affected by historical factors, such as long enmities or common culture. The constitution of a Complex is associated with an anarchic structure, with a balance of power and pressures from geographical proximity. Such pressures can generate greater security interactions between neighbours, as in the case of threats, with political, social, military and environmental impact. Hence, the characteristic structure of RSCs, in addition to being anarchic, is based on the power relations (balance of power), with the definition of its polarity, in which anarchy causes States to turn to their security and survival, as defended by Waltz in his Neorealist Theory (Frasson-Quenoz & Piñeros, 2014: 19). Finally, the relations between the actors are guided by patterns of friendship and enmity, marked by the Wendt’s social construction. Such conception is developed through a typology of society based on: a) socialization (articulation between conceptions about the other, marked by values and perceptions), being able to differentiate through the: Hobbesian view, with the assumption that the another is an enemy; Lockean perspective, in which the other is perceived as a rival; and Kantian one, with the perception of the other as a friend. b) instruments for the internalization of the norms, marked by societies based on: coercion, through institutional sanctions; interest (or calculation) following the utilitarian theory; and confidence of legitimacy, through “emotional bonds” (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 48-50).

The authors attempt to connect security relations through the understanding of Regional Complexes and the consideration of external factors, inserting them in the complete structure of the system (Pagliari, 2009: 44-5). With this, the distinction between the global and the regional is considered through the role of the powers and their “penetration” in the Complex. The term corresponds to the moment when external powers to the RSC carry out a security alignment with State members of such Complex. To distinguish these forms of relations, RSCs are classified between standard and centred. A standard Complex is made up of an anarchic structure, two or more powers, and a political-military agenda, with a polarity defined by the existence of regional powers, ranging from unipolar to multipolar. Despite the possibility of consolidating a Complex with a unipolar characteristic, its power does not have a global role. At the same time, their relations of friendship and enmity can vary from conflicting to the consolidation of security regimes and communities. The centred RSC is divided into three possible forms: 1) unipolar, with the presence of great power (or superpower), in which the global level of power will dominate the region and its regional powers will not have enough weight to define another regional pole; 2) transformation of the standard unipolar RSC into a central one, when a State gains global power status, as the United States of America example; 3) region integrated by an institution, as in the case of the European Union, with the role of security institution and global actor (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 46-62).

We seek, at this moment, to consolidate three points of contestation concerning the Regional Security Complex Theory, in which we will propose its reformulations. First, we look at the question of power. We consider Buzan and Waever’s definitions of superpowers and great powers complexes. In the sense of carrying out conceptualizations associating both Waltz’s Neorealist perspective, about the State capabilities, and the Constructivist social logic, in which a superpower must “perceive itself and be perceived” as such, being associated with the strategic calculation of the

other powers of the system, and their reactions, interfering under the distribution of international power (Barbé, 2010: 26-30). There is an appreciation of the “strength” of the States, linked to the Neorealist vision, concerning the ability to project “friendships and enmities”, disregarding weaker States (Kelly, 2007: 206). However, the regional powers definition is relatively superficial. We find an expressive difficulty in discerning such powers, especially in the case of South America. Considering the importance of recognizing the South American powers and their roles in the security dynamics of the region, there is a need to refine this concept. We believe that a simple definition will not be enough, therefore, to overcome this obstacle, we will use in this article the definitions of power by Barnett and Duvall (2005), which will guide our understanding of the South American Regional Complex and its actors involved, allowing a detailed analysis of their forms of power and, consequently, the forms of interaction between States at the regional level.

According to Barnett and Duvall (2005: 03), “power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their own circumstances and fate”. In this sense, for the authors, the understanding of power must encompass two analytical dimensions: a) the type of social relations, looking at the field of interaction and constitution; power refers to the particular attribute of the actors and their interactions (“power over”), or to a social process that builds identities, interests and capabilities (“power to”)<sup>4</sup>. b) the specificity of social relations, in which power can act directly and socially specific, or indirectly and socially diffuse. A consequence of these analytical dimensions is the development of four taxonomies of power: 1) compulsory power, based on the relationships that allow one actor to have direct control over another, surrounding not only material, but also normative and symbolic capacities. 2) institutional power, refers to the indirect control of one actor over another, focusing on formal and informal institutions that mediate the relationships between the actors. 3) structural power, which considers the social constitution, capacities, and interests of the actors, through direct relationships between them; shaping “fates and conditions of existence of actors”, from: a) structural positions that “allocate differential capacities, and typically differential advantages, to different positions”; b) social structure, made up of actors and their capacities, as well as “self-understanding and subjective interests”. This type of power can prevent actors from recognizing their own domination, causing them to reproduce (and not resist) differential capabilities and structural privileges. 4) productive power, which is “the socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification” (Barnett & Duvall, 2005: 3), based on knowledge systems, discursive practices, and social processes.

As a second point, we critically analyse the classic securitisation view. Based on the definition of Buzan, Waever and Wilde (1998: 24-36), the speech act is the extreme expression of politicization. It is a key element for the consolidation of securitisation, as it is closely related to the need for urgent action in the face of an existential threat. Such act is centred on three units: 1) referent object, which constitutes “things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival” (Buzan, Waever & Wilde, 1998: 36); traditionally, the State is inserted in this field. 2) securitising actors, who will carry out the securitisation of the referent object, among which may be politicians, bureaucrats, pressure groups, etc. 3) functional actors, who affect dynamics, influencing decisions. In this way, securitisation is understood as an intersubjective and socially constructed process, which, when performed, the actor will start to operate

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<sup>4</sup> According to the authors, an analysis should not necessarily exclude one type of power from the other.

extraordinarily, reflecting in the way that other actors will see it. In the construction of this securitisation process, the actors involved need a relevant political power and capacity to present the threat as an emergency. The speech will be used to convince the audience regarding its urgency. Thus, we can see the normative implications of the Securitisation Theory, in which a question of the public sphere, based on ordinary democratic control, comes to be understood as a threat. As a result, the problem becomes a priority on the political agenda, and it is marked by the use of exceptional resources, which hurt the deliberations required in democratic political settings (Verdes-Montenegro, 2015: 138-139).

In this sense, traditionally, the speech act considers security as a “conventional procedure”, which will change the context, if its constitutive rules were applied successfully; establishing, in this way, universal principles of communication. However, we share here the perspective of the Paris School, specifically, the Balzacq’s sociological analysis. The author opposes the Buzan, Waever and Wild idea, understanding securitisation as a “strategic (pragmatic) practice that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction” (Balzacq, 2005: 172). The proposal raises securitisation beyond the normative level, inserting it in the social context. The concept of security as a pragmatic act, according to Balzacq (2005: 179), starts from three premises that aim to improve the structure of the speech act, in which “first, an effective securitization is highly context-dependent. Second, an effective securitization is audience-centered. Third, securitization dynamics are power-laden”. Besides, this concept can be divided into two levels. The first is agent, which includes a) positional power and personal identity of the securitising actor; b) social identity, restricting and/or allowing the behaviour of the securitising agent; and c) nature and capacity of the audience, as well as possible opponent voices. And the act, marked by: a) “action-type side”, appropriate language to be used in the act; b) contextual, heuristic elements that will be used by the securitising actor to mobilize the audience. With that, we have included in our improved RSC model the concept of the Paris School, which will be our basis for analysis in this article. Since it allows a thorough understanding of the securitisation construction, in which it is clear that, in addition to security statements, these need to be related to the external reality to win the audience. That is the securitising actor determines the appropriate moment (critical moment) to carry out the movement of securitisation and convince the public to accept the threat posed by the elite. It is worth mentioning that the securitisation construction process does not need to be directly related to the creation of a security problem, and it may turn to the attempt to raise awareness of a political agenda, as well as allowing the securitising agent to obtain greater control/power (Alves, 2019).

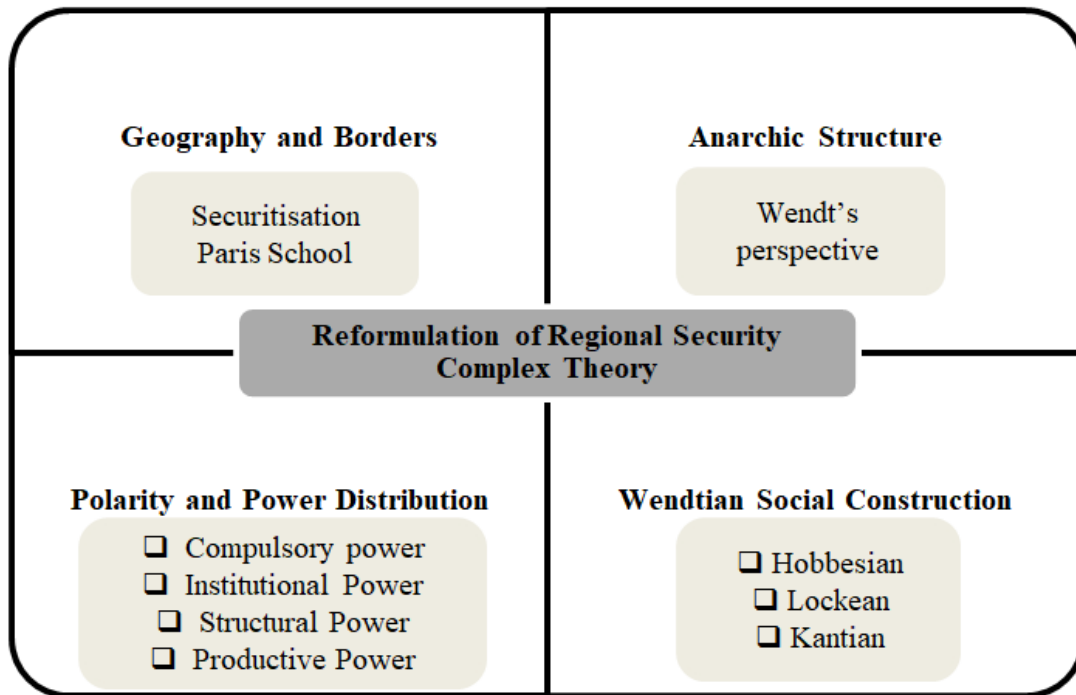
Our last point of questioning in the RSCT is the friendship/enmity dichotomy and, inevitably, the concept of anarchy. Using the approach of Buzan and Waever, we included in the analysis the Wendtian perspective, originally used in the theory, but emptied because it is presented with vague simplicity, in addition to being “merged” with the Waltzian approach of anarchy. First, for the Neorealists, anarchy is considered as a system of self-help that generates a balance of power, military competition, and war. The idea is closely related to the Realist security dilemma, which provides a competitive environment between States. This situation is intensified, even more, when it is observed that the Regional Complexes are characterized by geographical proximity, resulting in intense patterns and variants of friendship and enmity (Kelly, 2007: 207-208). In contrast, for Wendt (2003: 247), anarchy can have up to three types of structure

at the macro level, based on the “role type” of the relationship between the actors dominant in the system in question (political culture): enemy (Hobbesian), rival (Lockean), and friend (Kantian). Furthermore, for Wendt (2003: 248-259), the international structure has an effect on States, influencing their behaviours, identities and interests (socially constructed). In this sense, the structure starts to be noted from a social view, in which the actors consider each other when acting.

Hobbesian culture is characterized by the presence of the enemy and by the relationships based on the use of violence between the self and the other. This understanding is marked by the idea of the other as an actor who “(1) does not recognize the right of the Self to exist as an autonomous being, and therefore (2) will not willingly limit its violence toward the Self” (Wendt, 2003: 260). At the same time, the Lockean culture is centred on the structure of rivalry, also represented by the idea of self and other. However, unlike the conception of enemies, rivals will act from the recognition of their sovereignty (“rivalry is a right to sovereignty”) and, consequently, of the territories (property). Conflicts and territorial conquests will not be ruled out. The idea of rivals is based on the psychological relationship, but, at the macro level, the rival may be a pre-existing position, of shared knowledge, surpassing the individual ideas of the States, in which the rivalry is represented as a collective (Wendt, 2003: 279-286). Finally, Kantian culture is marked by friendship; this structure is guided by two rules: non-use of violence, and mutual assistance in case of a threat. Both statements are independent and equally necessary, inserted only in the case of the national security of States, and in the fact that friendship is temporally indeterminate. These two ideas provide, at the macro level, the tendency to build collective security and pluralistic security communities (Wendt, 2003: 298-302).

In this sense, we noticed, according to Wendt (2003: 247), that “there is no such thing as a ‘logic of anarchy’ per se”, its meaning is given through the actors and the structure of their relationships. For the author, the most important structure is based on ideas, which will determine the meaning and content of power, state strategies and their interests. Thus, what gives logic to anarchy are the social structures, that is, the sharing of ideas (or culture of an anarchic system) is the structure. In this context, we believe that understanding the Regional Security Complexes from the point of view of: anarchy through power relations (Waltzian perspective), relationship and discourse between the actors (through Wendt’s theory), and polarity (through the definition of Buzan and Waever’s powers) is a paradox and needs to be reformulated. Therefore, we established our theoretical-conceptual approach to Regional Security Complex Theory, shown in the figure below.

Figure 1. Theoretical Reformulation of Regional Security Complex



Source: Developed by the author

In the first quadrant, in the field of geography and borders, we used the Paris School securitisation approach, which, as previously said, complements the classical securitisation perspective of Buzan, Waever and Wild. In the second quadrant, anarchic structure, unlike the junction made by Buzan and Waever between Waltz's Neorealist approach and Wendt's Constructivism, we have chosen to follow only the Wendtian Theory, since, as discussed, this "mixture" is considered a paradox. In the third quadrant, we understand the conception of power and polarity through the concepts of Barnett and Duvall, which provide a more refined and complex analysis of power dynamics. Finally, the fourth quadrant follows the classical structure of RSCT, with relations of friendship and enmity based on the Wendtian social construction. We believe that these reformulations allow us to study the security dynamics of South America more satisfactorily, overcoming the obstacles of the RSC version of Buzan and Waever, and promoting recognition of the complexities of the region, which presents a history based on conflicts, cooperation, and extra-regional interference.

#### THE SOUTH AMERICAN REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

The South American RSC is formed from independence processes of States, which led to border instability and wars.<sup>5</sup> The region's interstate conflict scenario can be organized into three categories, according to the regional position of the States. There

<sup>5</sup> For example: the Cisplatine War (1825-1828); the Triple Alliance War (1865-1870); the War of the Pacific (1879-83); the Chaco War (1932-1935); the Colombia-Peru War (1932-1933); the Zarumilla War (1981 and 1995); and the Malvinas War (1982). In addition to internal conflicts: *La Violencia* in Colombia (1949-1962); the repression of dissidents in Chile (1973-1977); the Dirty War in Argentina (1976-1980); the fight against *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru (1982-2000); and the Colombian conflict between the State and the guerrillas (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 305).



are: a) Argentina-Brazil case, marked by the search for a balance of influences and regional leadership, situation evidenced during the 20th century; b) Significant States (Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela), which were involved in conflicts, especially during the 20th and 21st centuries; and c) a set of buffer States (Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay; Guyana and Suriname), characterized by considerable territorial losses and the capacity to prevent escalation of conflicts between countries in the region, given their location between centres of power (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 315-316).

At the same time, the role of the United States of America in this Complex must be considered, as it is the superpower with the power to penetrate South America. The 20th century was marked by American military intervention in Central America, and the Caribbean, and, indirectly, in South America, like Chile in 1972 (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 309-310). Currently, the US presence is achieved through: a) reactivation of the Southern Command, created in 1963, based on the already existing Unified Command, to carry out military operations and seek regional stability by: combating drug trafficking, promoting regional cooperation, humanitarian actions, and joint military exercises between the Armed Forces; b) the Fourth Fleet, aimed at strengthening relations between regional navies; c) the advanced military bases, in some countries in the region and by bilateral cooperation agreements (Silva, 2012: 12).

Therefore, this RSC is characterized by the existence of social tensions and internal political instability, regional rivalries, and extra-regional penetrations. However, despite issues still being resolved, their instabilities do not result in major conflicts or wars, in which States prefer diplomatic resolutions, mainly with the Brazilian incentive and its mediating role (Buzan & Waever, 2003: 310-313). Another relevant factor is the inconsistency of foreign policy, present in young democracies. "This inconsistency implies a predominance of government policies at the expense of State objectives, focused on the long term" (Silva, 2012: 17), portrayed in the questioning of established agreements<sup>6</sup> and changes in positioning, and regional and international vision. According to Cepik (2009: 69-70), the principle that governs this regional complex is anarchy, marked by a distribution of multipolar power and relations, mostly, of friendship between the actors. Thus, it is a standard RSC.

Buzan and Waever (2003: 322-334) differentiate the Complex into two subcomplexes: the Southern Cone and the Andean. The first one is marked by transformations in its patterns of friendship and enmity, in which it moves from a conflict area to a cooperative place, especially with the wide cooperation between Argentina and Brazil, established concretely through: bilateral agreements; the non-proliferation program; and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). In the second subcomplex, a conflictive zone prevails, marked by drug trafficking, national instabilities, and greater American involvement. In this context, Brazil inserts itself as a mediator and a bridge between these two subcomplexes, providing a possible decrease in the American presence, in addition to cooperative policies and programs against drug trafficking, and for the environmental protection of the Amazon.

We consider it important to emphasize that the differentiation between the two subcomplexes is still striking. It can be observed both in the Andean subcomplex, characterized by suspicions, conflicts and expressive ideological differences; as well as

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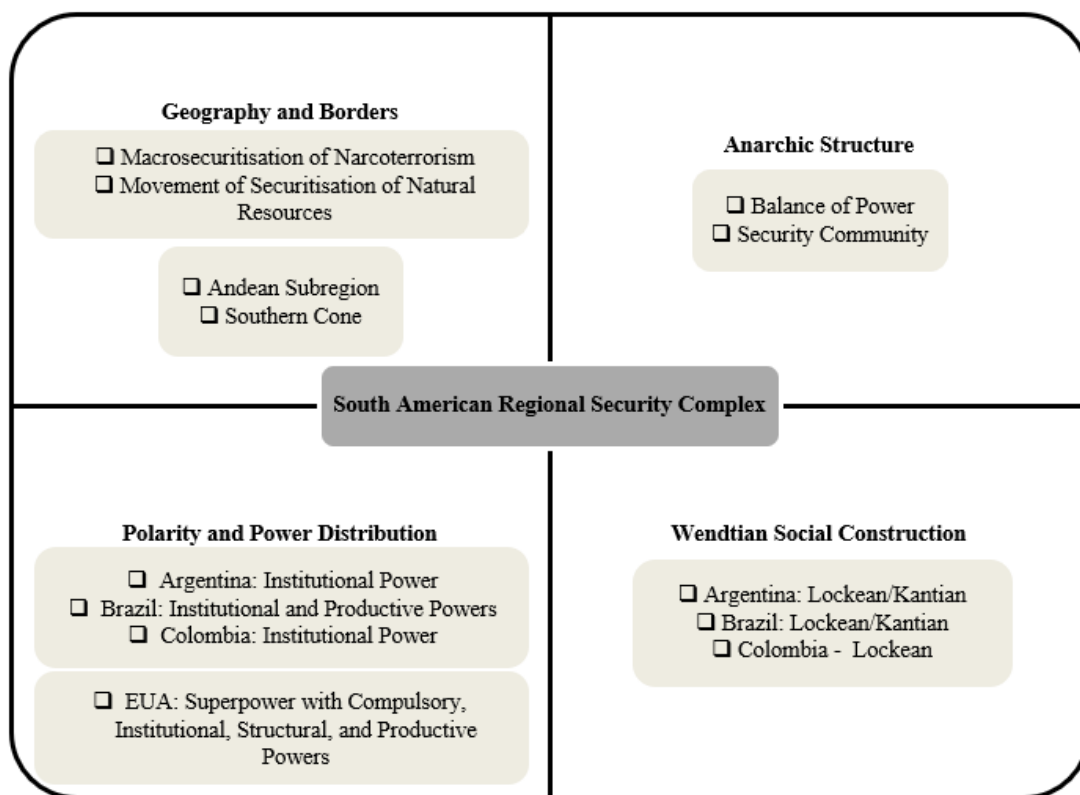
<sup>6</sup> As in the case of Bolivia, on the Pact of Truce (1884); Ecuador, regarding the Rio Protocol (1942); Venezuela, referring to the Geneva Agreement (1966); and Argentina, in relation to the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands (Silva, 2012: 17-21).

between the southern cone and the Andean region, with the presence of clashes of national and regional perspectives and objectives, especially regarding the Colombian position in the region, and securitisation processes. The presence of the United States of America is also a determining factor, with institutionalized participation in the South American region, and direct partnerships with some Andean countries, with an emphasis on the case of Colombia.

THE SOUTH AMERICAN REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX: A NEW VIEW

Using the theoretical-conceptual formulations proposed in this article, we present, in the figure below, our analytical scheme on the South American Regional Security Complex.

Figure 2. Reformulation of the South American Regional Security Complex



Source: Developed by the author

The first quadrant refers to the geographic scope of South America, which is involved in two securitisation processes, referring to: a) the US macrosecuritisation of narcoterrorism, which has a significant impact on the Andean subregion, highlighting the Colombian case; even though, it reflects on the entire South American region. b) the movement of securitisation of natural resources, via the South American Defence Council<sup>7</sup>. Despite being built, the securitisation was not actually consolidated.

<sup>7</sup> The SADC, created in 2008 within the Union of South American Nations, is a “body for consultation, cooperation and coordination” in defence matters that covers all South American countries, with the exception of French Guiana. Its general objectives are centred on the consolidation of South America as a zone of peace; to build a South American defence identity, respecting subregional and national

According to Buzan and Waever (2009: 257), macrosecuritisation corresponds to a securitisation at the systemic level, and may impose a hierarchy in the processes of securitisation at lower levels, or even incorporate them. In this sense, the authors note that the securitisation of terrorism played such role, including in its form the securitisation of drugs, crimes, and weapons of mass destruction. We note that the perspective of the fight against drugs has changed over time, especially with the construction of the perspective of narcoterrorism<sup>8</sup>, in which the threat started to be combated with measures against terrorists. The Andean subregion in South America is a prominent place in the securitisation of narcoterror. The world cocaine production is located in that subregion, particularly in Colombia. Between 2000 and 2013, there was a 45% decline in global cultivation. However, from 2013 to 2016, there was an increase of 76%; and in 2016, Bolivia, Colombia and Peru had a 36% increase in the area of cultivation. In the Colombian case, its planting area was reduced by 70% between 2000 and 2013. Still, from 2013 to 2016, it was tripled, reaching 146,000 hectares, corresponding to 68.5% of the global cultivation area. Peru has the equivalent of 21% of the global area, covering 43,900 hectares; while in Bolivia, its global percentage is 10%, reaching 23,100 hectares (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018: 28). It is observed that the period of decrease in Colombian coca crops is related to the intense actions of Plan Colombia, which pushed the plantations to Bolivia and Peru (Lyons, 2012). The United States of America, in the 1970s and 1980s, was the promoter of policies for the eradication of coca in Peru and Bolivia, as well as legislation to control illicit crops. In Colombia, these incentives occurred later, accentuated with Plan Colombia, at the end of the 1990s (Navarrete-Frías & Thoumi, 2005: 15-16).

Colombia's case reflects domestic and international insecurities in the region, given the fragility of this State and the constitution of organized groups that use violence as a means (Takushi, 2012: 18). The country's internal situation is characterized by its spillover, expanding beyond borders and impacting on the cooperation processes of economic, political and security; covering issues of refugees, drug trafficking, environmental problems, and violation of sovereignty (Fernández, 2008: 117-118). As of 2001, the Andean countries were involved by the Andean Regional Initiative, of American origin, as a way to stop the expansion of narcoterrorism to the rest of the region. From there, there is a tendency to militarise the solutions proposed, confusing the missions carried out by the Armed Forces with those of the police, and vice versa. According to Buitrago (2007: 115-118), the internal instabilities of the countries in such location, and the lack of sharing cooperative initiatives among States in the region to curb the advance of drug trafficking led to US intervention, and acceptance by governments, to cooperate with its policies.

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characteristics; and in the search for consensus to strengthen regional cooperation in defence (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, 2008). During the planning and articulation of the SADC, three particular views can be highlighted. The first one is the Brazilian government's point, which wanted a Council capable of creating and articulating measures of mutual trust, military exchanges and industrial integration in defence. As for Venezuela, the South American region should be united in the face of threats, to form a military alliance in the South Atlantic. The third one was the Colombian government's vision, aimed to build military cooperation with the USA, maintaining the Organization of American States and the fight against narcoterror (Abdul-Hak, 2013: 20). It is noteworthy that the Brazilian initiative cannot be separated from the attempt to contain the Venezuelan proposal. Brazil designed a Council capable of articulating the South American countries, without the USA presence, but maintaining good relations with the superpower. The plan would allow the construction of Brazilian aspirations as an international actor and regional leader (Nery, 2016: 70-3).

<sup>8</sup> Term usually used to embrace activities of cultivation, manufacture, transport, and distribution by groups that use drug trafficking to finance terrorism.

The year 2008 represented a moment of escalation of the instabilities of the Andean subregion, with the attack by the Colombian Armed Forces on the camp of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), established in Ecuadorian territory, close to the border, resulting in the death of Reyes, second commander of the organization, and twenty others. According to interviewee 2, the operation was pre-planned and supported by the United States of America, who was present on a Colombian military base. Interviewee 1 informed us that the Ecuadorian President and his Armed Forces felt “betrayed” by Álvaro Uribe, Colombian president at the time, since they had not been previously notified. This situation, according to the same interviewee, was due to a lack of information from the Colombian president, who believed that Ecuador could be associated with Reyes. Consequently, Ecuador made a statement, supported by the Venezuelan government, that Colombia had violated its sovereignty, breaking relations with Bogotá. Concomitantly, ten Venezuelan battalions were displaced to the border with Colombia, and their diplomatic relations were interrupted. Caracas feared an intrusion in its national zone, associated with the USA (Abdul-Hak, 2013). However, we must consider that the Colombian incursion in Ecuador did not occur just at that moment; presenting episodes in 2005, in the Esmeraldas region, and in the period from 2006 to 2008, in the Sucumbíos area (Santos, 2013: 05-06). Besides, in the case of Venezuela, Colombian operation under the leadership of paramilitaries took place in the neighbouring country in 2004, and resulted in the capture of Rodrigo Gandra, leader of the FARC. In these scenarios, the consolidation of Colombian policies to combat terrorism, promoted by the USA, can be seen with the execution of preventive attacks justified by the “legitimate defence in neutralizing a threat to their national security” (Abdul-Hak, 2013: 143).

Another place in South America addressed by the American policy to combat terrorism is the Triple Border between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. According to the superpower, the zone is marked by the presence and alliance between Islamic terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, criminal organizations, and corruption by officials and the police. Since 1992, with the attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, and with the post-11 September 2001, this hypothesis has been strengthened, linked to the fact that the place has some peculiarities, such as its economic and demographic relevance, due to the construction of the Itaipu Hydroelectric Plant, and a large number of Arab immigrants, from the region where Hezbollah operates (Bekaa Valley), which sends large remittances of money to its place of origin (Cepik & Arturi, 2011: 658-659). Thus, since 1995, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay began cooperation in border control and combating terrorism, combining relations with the superpower, such as the use of legislation criminalizing money laundering, and terrorist acts, in addition to extradition agreements, and joint operations police officers (Hirst, 2013).

The year 2009 can also be considered a milestone in instability at the South American level, caused by the US macrosecuritisation, and its intrusion in the region, via Colombia. The negotiation of the US presence on Colombian military bases was decisive for the mistrust between Andean countries. As an attempt to dialogue, Brazil proposed an Extraordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Union of South American Nations<sup>9</sup>. Hugo Chávez, the Venezuelan president at the time, argued that the military agreement would provide US regional strategic control and its

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<sup>9</sup> In 2008, UNASUR was founded with the objective of promoting an international legal personality in the region, and providing an alternative route to the proposals of the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, for the resolution of regional conflicts. The Union has a regional cooperative character, based on political, economic, infrastructure, social, and defence biases.

dominance over South American natural resources, especially oil reserves. Uribe, on the other hand, argued that, despite the solidarity on the part of the South American countries, regarding the internal crisis in its country, only the United States of America contributed effectively with human and military resources. He agreed, however, with the submission of the agreement within the scope of the South American Defence Council, since all other countries also did so with their similar military agreements. Despite the exacerbation of the differences between Colombia and Venezuela, the meeting enabled the opening of a dialogue in the region, as well as the establishment of measures of mutual confidence in the fight against terrorism, and organized crime. In the end, the agreement on the bases was not consolidated. Even so, Colombia and the USA signed the “Supplemental Agreement for Cooperation and Technical Assistance”, dealing with the use of Colombian bases and measures to improve the existing cooperation between the two countries, making only a notification to other countries in the region (Abdul-Hak, 2013: 169-179).

The second element of regional securitisation was the movement of securitisation<sup>10</sup> of South America’s strategic natural resources, via the South American Defence Council. The choice of such a referent object is associated with the possibility of intervention by external powers in the region, fearing the existing asymmetry of military capabilities and the violation of countries’ sovereignty. In this sense, we see a direct link between this proposal and the crises of 2008 and 2009 in the region. The possibility of the United States’ presence through Colombia is considered a source of instability and insecurity. However, Colombia does not share this view, despite wanting to preserve resources, considering the USA as allies for maintaining its policies and interests. The securitising actor focuses on the Argentine and Brazilian States, in the figure of their representatives sent to the Centre of Defence Strategic Studies (CEED), as well as the Ministers of Defence and Presidents within the scope of the SADC. We must emphasize that they used the SADC as a platform to promote the movement. The figure of the functional actors covers the other member countries of the SADC, as well as their President, Ministers of Defence, and representatives in the CEED. In this process, the audience is linked to the twelve member states, crossing not only their populations, but also their governmental authorities who are not part of the securitising and functional actors. The complexity and diversity of the audience show us the difficulties of consolidating securitisation, which has already been resisted by some functional actors, in the figures of Colombian representatives, who did not consider the referent object as an emergency threat.

In South America, natural resources are centred, especially, in the Amazon region, which has the largest reserves of forests, biodiversity, and freshwater, relating to the Triple Amazonian Border, formed by Brazil, Colombia and Peru. State fragility in this region contributes to the intensification of the situation (García, 2014: 15-6), added to the presence of extra-regional powers in the Pacific Ocean, and Central America, contributing to greater insecurity concerning the resources of these places. Also, the region has oil and natural gas reserves, notably in Colombia and Venezuela; and the recent discovery of gas reserves in Bolivia, and oil and gas in Brazil.

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<sup>10</sup> It is noted that there is a relevant difference between the movement of securitisation, act of presenting the threat as something to be securitised; and the real securitisation, which needs an acceptance by the audience, legitimizing the existential threat and the actions relating to it (Buzan, Waever & Wilde, 1998).

Since 2011, we have seen a movement within the SADC to include guidelines related to natural resources and regional defence. During the inauguration of CEED, the Argentine president at that time, Fernández de Kirchner (apud Forti, 2014), stated that:

this moment of constitution of the Centre for Strategic Studies of the UNASUR's Defence Council should be the starting point to create a defence system that has strategic objectives the characterization of what will be required, during the XXI century. And it is very clear [...] that the issue of natural resources is going to become a strategic issue - it already is - in our entire region.

Venezuela, while in the office at the UNASUR secretary, launched the prospect of regional integration with a common bias based on natural resources (Vitelli, 2016). In 2011, during the meeting for the development of the 2011-2012 action plan, Colombia proposed to include in the first axis of the plan the “defence of biodiversity and natural resources”, suggesting the execution of meetings and a seminars on the topic, in addition to the formation of a working group (Consejo de Defensa Suramericano 2012a). Under Colombian leadership and with the consensus of all member countries, except for Paraguay that did not sign the document, there was a resolution that natural resources, such as oil, minerals, gas, biodiversity and water, must be conserved by States, constituting a South American fortress and possible “risk factors” (Consejo de Defensa Suramericano, 2012b). To this end, it was suggested that countries include their protection within the scope of national legislation (noting that this incorporation was already taking place) (Consejo de Defensa Suramericano, 2012c); as well as developing cooperative agendas for the “defence of resources, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of South American States” (Consejo de Defensa Suramericano, 2012b).

In 2014, a workshop was held on “availability and potential of the region’s strategic natural resources”. It listed common denominators among the Ministries of Defence from the member countries, noting that strategic resources for countries touch: combustible minerals, such as oil and gas, and not fuels, such as lithium, copper, bauxite and gold; water resources; biodiversity and resources present on continental platforms, highlighting the Amazon and Antarctica; and agriculture and livestock. For the protection and preservation of such, the members indicated the role of the norms in national defence, and the employment of the Armed Forces (Consejo de Defensa Suramericano, 2014). In the same year, the countries met at the “Defence and Natural Resources” Conference, proposing a second additional protocol that is part of the constitutive treaty of UNASUR, referring to the “exercise of the permanent rights and sovereign of States and people over their natural resources” (Centro de Estudios Estratégicos de Defensa, 2014). According to the former executive director of CEED, Alfredo Forti (2014: 14), the construction of “regional interest” through the Defence Council is noted, in which member countries seek to consolidate South America as a zone of peace, in addition to defending the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democracy. With the approach of natural resources as strategic, there is the construction of a geopolitical vision, foreseeing scarcity and conflicts, which reflects the Brazilian military thought, accompanied by the Argentine (Sanahuja & Verdes-Montenegro, 2014: 9-11).

Despite the incitement of the movement of securitisation, we can say that it has not been consolidated as a real securitisation. There is no evidence that natural resources were accepted as existential threat, as well as the execution of exceptional resources, since the actions were only contained in meetings, workshops, working groups, and publications of the Study Centre. According to interviewee 3, there was an “artificial”

search for the protection of such resources, to unite the SADC member countries in the face of a regional threat that would allow the strengthening of defence cooperation.

The second block of figure 2 concerns the anarchic structure of the region, which we based on Wendt's constructivist perspective. States are responsible for its dynamics, configuring two concomitant situations: a) the balance of power between the countries of the Andean subregion, visible in the 2008 and 2009 crises; and b) the security community, in its first phase, shown by the cooperative security, via SADC, which impacted both the Andean subregion and the southern cone, enabling crisis mitigations, and the reformulation of social construction relations of the countries involved, to highlight Colombia.

The third quadrant of the figure covers the perspective of polarity and distribution of power, in which we turn to observe the power of the three chosen countries and their reflexes in the region. Argentina built an institutional power, promulgated in its national defence policies, with defensive and cooperative behaviour, further strengthened by its role in cooperative initiatives, such as the SADC and MERCOSUR. Since the 1990s, Argentina initiated the proposal to create initiatives in the field of defence cooperation in the southern cone, under the scope of MERCOSUR. The idea was based on the promotion of security cooperative, as measures of mutual trust, and transparency. Argentine, with the consolidation of the SADC, was expressively active and a leadership in some themes, inserting itself as one of the protagonists in the Council (Vitelli, 2015: 09). Its institutional power also became clear at this time, when, through the SADC, Argentina managed to achieve desired cooperative goals, intensifying ties with the South American region, notably with the establishment of the CEED in Buenos Aires.

Brazil presents an institutional power, which could culminate in a productive power, verifiable in its national documents, presidential speeches, and in the construction, under its leadership, of regional defence cooperation with UNASUR and SADC. The attempt to build a productive power, in which the Brazilian leadership starts to be characterized as soft power, was marked by moderate actions, pragmatism, and the search for international recognition as an emerging power, projecting itself in the global level. Through UNASUR and its Council, the country acted as a mediator in situations of regional instability, promoting regional cooperation in the politics and defence fields, and strengthening its institutional power. However, at the same time, it started to modernize its Armed Forces, increasing military spending on aircraft and arms purchases, like the KC-390 Project, the FX-2 Fighter Modernization Program, and the acquisition of Gripen aircraft and technology transfer with Sweden; expanding the Amazon Protection System; and maintaining the Submarine Development Program (Vaz, Fuccille & Rezende, 2017: 12-13). Brazilian military institutions are still ruled by the balance of power idea, while the bureaucracy, the policymaker, turns to discourses and practices for building cooperation and a security community (Villa, 2017: 13). According to the interviewee Sérgio Caballero, Brazil itself has gone through a process of renouncing its regional leadership, abstaining from becoming the paymaster of cooperative processes, and demonstrating that its interest is more centred on its positioning as a global player that, really, as a regional leader. There is a variant behaviour in Brazil, with moments when it proclaims the use of its institutional power and the search for consolidating a productive power in the region, meanwhile declaring a behaviour based on a fictitious compulsory power, announced by its material, normative and symbolic capabilities.

Colombia, in particular the government of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018), started to build an institutional power in the region, inserting itself in South America and its cooperative dynamics. Santos employed a pragmatic and diplomatic style, promoting leadership in situations of crisis, and cooperation in the face of changes in the national and international scene; developing the image of a new Colombia, capable of attracting foreign investment, active in hemispheric and extra-regional initiatives, and able to promote a peace process with international assistance (Ardila & Batalla, 2019: 53). In this regard, Colombia used regional, hemispheric, and international institutions for national strengthening and development, as well as for the recognition in the global level.

Finally, we must highlight the American superpower for its compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive powers in South America, which fluctuates over time. The country is a superpower with recognized military, economic, political, and ideological capabilities that influence securitisation processes in the Americas. In the field of compulsory power, the US presence is made directly and can be recognized especially in cases related to Central American countries, historically controlled by the superpower. In terms of institutional power, it is centred both on hemispheric initiatives and on bi and multilateral relations, such as Plan Colombia and the Andean Initiatives. Structural power directly influences the States of the Latin American region, allocating different levels and types of relations with countries, in addition to playing a role under their national interests and policies, even in situations of relative remoteness. One can notice a structural dependency promoted by the superpower, which causes a reformulation of relations, institutions, and ideologies. In this sense, the political and economic structures, as well as the economic, religious, political, military, and educational institutions of the countries are now influenced and/or determined by that USA (Ayerbe, 2002: 263). Finally, productive power becomes increasingly clear between the United States and the Andean subregion, especially with Colombia. American hegemony influences the formation of regional identity, being accepted mostly by its allied countries, serving as places of power transmission, and the ideology of the superpower (Castiblanco & Bullón, 2017: 70-71).

The last quadrant refers to the perspective of Wendtian social construction, in which we see in the Argentine case a Lockean and Kantian behaviour in the region, based on friendly relations, especially with the countries of the southern cone; but with situations of resistance to projects of Brazilian authorship, demonstrating brief maintenance of the idea of rivalry. In the Brazilian context, its behaviour varies between Lockean, showing defence policies based on rivalries, with the maintenance of the national interest; and Kantian, given its cooperative and regional friendship discourse, with cooperative processes guided by its leadership. Colombia, until the government of Álvaro Uribe, configured a Hobbesian behaviour with the Andean countries, and a Lockean with Brazil. However, afterwards, with the advent of UNASUR, the SADC, and the Santos government, there was a consolidation of Lockean behaviour for the region, based on rational analysis, encompassing both the possibility of conflict and cooperation. While Colombian behaviour with the United States of America is characterised by a Kantian one, with the internalization of the norms arising from such cooperation, visible at the national level.



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When we analyse the South American Regional Security Complex, based on the new vision proposed, we must also highlight some points, which may be part of future research agendas. The first one is the role of Brazil as a regional leader, in which, with the figure of Lula da Silva and Nelson Jobim, a movement was noted, in 2008, for the articulation of South American governments for the formulation of UNASUR and SADC, and the insertion of the region and Brasília at the global level (Castiblanco & Bullón, 2017: 55-56). However, the perception of Brazil as an accepted leader in South America does not match the reality of resistance of its South American neighbours, who fear its power and, thus, limit its leadership capacity. Brazilian behaviour also does not help to deconstruct mistrust, with a realistic bias in maintaining its interests, autonomy, and sovereignty (Sanahuja, 2012: 23-25); in addition to imposing its agendas on the countries of the region. Brazil has a pendular behaviour between balance of power, and its mitigation through regional mutual confidence measures, with exercises, courses, transparency and institutionalization (Villa, 2017: 5-9).

According to Battaglino (2008), the relationship between Argentina and Brazil can be described as a situation in which the conflict has not completely disappeared, but it is also not imminent. Argentina proved its resistance to the Brazilian proposal to create the SADC; the absence of international alignment between such countries, as in the case of the UN Security Council; and their differences in the use of the armed forces in public security matters. However, even so, the countries have historic cooperative agreements, and common positions during the advent of progressive governments in the region, especially since the 2000s.

In the Andean subregion, the Brazilian challenge is in Colombia. Bogotá is marked by a strategic alliance with the United States of America and an international position, especially with the advent of the Santos government, seeking diversification of partnerships and cooperative insertion in the field of combating drug trafficking and terrorism. According to the interviewee Erika Pinzón, the country “does not aim at its Latin American neighbours because of its lack of interest, abandoning the proposal of regionalism, despite being present in CELAC and UNASUR”. There is a balance of power on the part of the country that, on the one hand, tries to compensate for its limitations vis-à-vis Brazil, using its relations with the USA and hemispheric bodies; and, on the other hand, seeks not to isolate itself in the region, participating in cooperation initiatives (Buelvas, 2016: 189-190).

Focusing on cooperative dynamics, highlighting the case of the SADC, there is a regional process of building a South American security community, which was in its initial phase. To that end, the political will of the progressive South American governments was central, in addition to being associated with an auspicious economic context. There was a consolidation of a regular interaction dynamics: between Ministries and Ministers of Defence, members of the armed forces, and official representatives (Vitelli, 2017: 5-6); the institutionalization of permanent bodies; and the construction of mutual confidence measures. Despite the advances, on 20 April 2018, a week after the eighth edition of the Summit of the Americas, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru requested a temporary suspension of participation in UNASUR activities. Their justification was based on the absence of consensus for the election of a general secretary, a position that had been vacant for a year and a half. In addition, the countries requested concrete results, which would be able to keep the activities running, and a review of the principle of unanimity for decision-making in the Union (Vitelli & Souza, 2018). In August 2018, the new Colombian president, Iván

Duque, declared that the country would withdraw from UNASUR; materializing in 2019, and being accompanied by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru.

Nevertheless, it is observed that the incipient development of such security community reflected on the dynamics of relations between the member countries, especially within the Andean subregion, with the dissipation of the prospect of enmity and armed conflict. Colombia, despite not being interested in and/or identifying itself with the South American cooperative defence processes, did not fail to participate in the actions and activities within the scope of the SADC, while it was active. As identified by Lula da Silva, former Brazilian president, for the first time Colombia and Venezuela began to develop relatively harmonious relations, with the ability to meet and discuss the future of the South American region, even if they might disagree. Thus, despite the institutional dismantling of UNASUR and, consequently, its Defence Council, we cannot disregard the role played by such bodies, which allowed the first attempt at defence cooperation that encompassed the twelve countries of the region and it was perpetuated for ten years.

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