

# From regional security to political vacuum: a study of the ten years of the South American Defense Council

*De la seguridad regional al vacío político: un estudio de los diez años del Consejo de Defensa Suramericano*

**Abstract:** From the perspective of regional and geopolitical security, the construction of defense mechanisms is essential for the sovereignty of any country in the international system. The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the South American Defense Council (CDS) are innovative political practices that have sought to increase the autonomy and security of the South American countries in international relations. Therefore, the present article seeks to conduct a study on the advances and setbacks of the South American Defense Council in its initial ten years (2008-2018). Based on the concepts of Regional Security Complexes and Security Community, and using a bibliographic and documentary research, it has been tried to demonstrate that the first years of intense activities and projects were mitigated by the political-institutional vacuum, mainly due to the Brazilian crisis. Thus, it is concluded the importance of Brazil's leadership in defense issues in South America, whose negative scenario, in principle, makes it difficult to promote a South American identity and the construction of a Security Community.

**Keywords:** South American Defense Council. Regional Security. Regional Integration. Security Community. South America.

**Resumen:** Desde la perspectiva de la seguridad regional y geopolítica, la construcción de mecanismos de defensa es esencial para la soberanía de cualquier país en el sistema internacional. La Unión de las Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR) y el Consejo de Defensa Suramericano (CDS) consisten en prácticas políticas innovadoras que buscaron posibilitar una mayor autonomía y seguridad a los países suramericanos en las relaciones internacionales. Por tanto, el presente artículo busca realizar un estudio acerca de los avances y retrocesos del Consejo de Defensa suramericano en sus diez años iniciales (2008-2018). Con base en los conceptos de Complejos Regionales de Seguridad y Comunidad de Seguridad, y empleando una investigación bibliográfica y documental, se trata de demostrar que los primeros años de intensas actividades y proyectos fueron aplacados por el vacío político-institucional, sobre todo debido a la crisis brasileña. Así, se concluye la importancia del liderazgo de Brasil en los temas de defensa en América del Sur, cuyo escenario negativo, a principio, dificulta la promoción de una identidad suramericana y la construcción de una Comunidad de Seguridad.

**Palabras clave:** Consejo de Defensa Suramericano. Seguridad Regional. Integración Regional. Comunidad de Seguridad. América del Sur.

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## 1 Introduction

From the perspective of regional and geopolitical security, the construction of defense mechanisms is essential for the sovereignty of any country in the international system. The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the South American Defense Council (CDS) are innovative political practices that have sought to increase the autonomy and security of the South American countries in international relations. Specifically, the CDS was the first South American defense experience conducted by South Americans through cooperation, aimed at deterring and building a South American identity.

The purpose of the article is to visualize the advances and setbacks in the construction of the CDS over its ten-year existence (2008-2018). After identifying the evolution of the concept of regional security within the Council, the question is to what extent it could be described as a Security Community inside a South American Regional Security Complex.

To this end, the central hypothesis would be that the initial years of increasing activities and projects were mitigated from the inflection point of the political-institutional vacuum; the Brazilian crisis and, consequently, of UNASUR and the CDS, would prove the importance of Brazil's leadership, regarding defense issues, in its strategic surroundings. In order to corroborate this assertion, we researched articles published in specialized journals, as well as official sources from UNASUR and CDS.

The article is divided into three parts, plus final considerations. In the first section, we will discuss the theory of Regional Security Complexes and the concept of Security Community, which will serve as a theoretical and methodological basis for this work's objectives. In the second, there will be an empirical analysis about the CDS's ten-year activities, its characteristics, objectives and practical policies. In the third and last part, the relevance of Brazil with regard to South American regional defense will be analyzed.

## 2 Cds's security and defense concepts: regional security complexes and security community

With the end of post-Cold War bipolarity, some scholars have moved away from perspectives that ratify the structure of the international system based on the relative capabilities of states as a factor to explain international security. Among these authors, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003) stand out, stating that the region is the main factor to elucidate the phenomenon of security regionalization; their discussions are now analyzed based on what they call Regional Security Complexes. Thus, it was assumed that certain regions built identities that would favor a cooperative vision in terms of regional security and defense, which would not exist without a common discourse adopted by their members.

The Theory of Regional Security Complexes is the application of the concept of region to the security dynamics of the international system, reinterpreting the world in spaces whose securitization processes are more intense and conform to specific patterns that differentiate them from other Complexes. "As much as a small handful of states have

security concerns across the globe, the overwhelming majority think of their security from their own neighborhood” (HENDLER, 2016, p. 19-20, our translation).

In sum, the Regional Security Complex is formed by a set of states whose main processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interconnected that security problems cannot be separately analyzed or solved (BUZAN; WAEVER, 2003; BELLAMY, 2004; OKADO; QUEIROZ; BREDA, 2016).

Continuing his analysis, Barry Buzan states that in defining regional security, the main element that should be added to power relations is the pattern of friendly or enmity relations between states. Referring to the friendly ones, he understands that relationships range from genuine friendship to expectations of protection and support, while enmity goes from relationships defined from distrust to fear. [...] Based on this, regional security subsystems can be seen in terms of friendliness and enmity patterns that are substantially confined within a particular geographical area. (RUDZIT, 2005, p. 312-313, our translation)

Thus, from a regional perspective of post-Cold War International Security, whose “regional level tends to be the most relevant *locus* in the dynamics of cooperation and conflict between states and other political players” (HENDLER, 2016, p. 19, our translation), the Regional Security Complexes are regions viewed from a security perspective, whose focus leaves the global aspect, the main vector during the Cold War, to the regional aspect, where security aspects are most noticeable. Thus, the regional level is the space where most national-global interaction occurs, not only between states from a political-military perspective, but also involving a wide range of players and agendas that vary according to the region (BUZAN; WAEVER, 2003, pp. 43-44).

Regional Security Complexes have four levels of analysis, called “security constellation” (BUZAN; WAEVER, 2003, p. 51-52): domestic, regional, interregional, and systemic. The first one is domestically oriented, with the states of the region, particularly in their generated vulnerabilities; the second, state-to-state relations; the third, interaction of the region with neighboring regions; and the fourth, the role of world powers in the region.

Also, according to Buzan and Waever (2003, p. 530), four characteristics are common to all Regional Security Complexes: 1) geographical dimension (borders and frontiers that separate one CRS from another); 2) systemic dimension (anarchic structure, composed of two or more autonomous units); 3) power dimension (corresponding to the distribution of power between units); and 4) discursive dimension (social construction, which defines patterns of friendship or enmity between units).

The South American Regional Security Complex is considered the standard type, according to Buzan and Waever (2003), as well as a moderate integration complex, constituting a middle ground between conflicting and cooperative complexes. “This middle path is currently related to the development of newly created institutions and the recovery of a regional identity” (OKADO; QUEIROZ; BREDA, 2016, p. 43, our translation).

Historically, Buzan and Waver (2003) analyze the formation of this South American Complex in three historical periods. The first one, from decolonization and independence until the Cold War, left deep marks in the region in the delimitation of South American frontiers with geopolitical disputes to this day; the second one, during the Cold War, that has increased US interference degree through penetration (unilateral or consented), that is, alliance with a Complex State to preserve its interests and maintain the balance of power in this complex; and the third one, after the Cold War, in which the regional integration projects are formalized as an increment of cooperation for the development of institutions. Therefore, South America is configured as an institutionalized Regional Security Complex.

Another interesting concept for these article's purposes is Security Community. According to Karl Deutsch (1969), it is defined as political collectivities whose members decide to settle their controversies by means that do not employ violent use of force, but through interaction between agents; i.e. war is no longer a possibility in relations between this community's members. Understanding the conditions for the existence of a security community is of fundamental importance in a dimension in which the emerging institutions in South America are prone to building a regional defense identity.

The theoretical-methodological improvement of the Security Community concept, as well as how to operationalize it, was performed by Adler and Barnett (1998). In the case of the pluralistic security communities of South America proposed by the authors, UNASUR would represent the partially integrated, as it has minimal properties for its members' interaction and expectations of peaceful change. They surpass the war in the political imagination, since it has no system and norms close to a sovereign state, a supranational government, which is characteristic of a closely integrated pluralistic security community.

It is noteworthy that, according to Adler and Barnett (1998), the existence of such a community must meet five conditions in its development phase, namely: 1) multilateralism; 2) unfortified borders; 3) changes in military planning; 4) a common threat identification; and 5) a community speech and language. (OKADO; QUEIROZ; BREDA, 2016, p. 40, our translation)

Bellamy (2004, p. 12) realizes an enlightening Security Community conceptualization. For the author, Security Communities are groups of states that have developed mutual expectations based on common standards. When these communities are strong, states also share identities, governance structures, and common interests, which in their turn, shape the way the state views the world, the way it builds its interests, and the ethical and legal rules of the world to which is linked.

Thus, the development of Security Communities has a profound effect on identity construction and reproduction, reconfiguring the boundaries between "them" and "us". It is a generative framework that plays a vital role in building identity in the international society and, therefore, shapes state practice. However, building

identity is an ongoing political struggle rather than a fixed process, “Showing that the construction of group identities tends to be predicated on the creation of boundaries between ‘self and other’ but questioning the commonplace idea that this has to be so”(BELLAMY, 2004, p. 13).

According to Hendler, there is a “middle path,” proposed by the English School, between a realistic view of the conflict-forming, Hobbesian state of nature, with security dilemmas based on the military capabilities of states, and the Security Community, in which processes of desecuritization prevail. This is called “security schemes.”

From this perspective, the states remain as protagonists and live with security dilemmas, however the principles and standards of public international law appear to soften the Hobbesian state of security and to promote the construction of an international “society” based on values shared by its member states. (HENDLER, 2016, p. 20, our translation)

Concerning a Security Community in South America, Okado, Queiroz and Breda (2016, p. 31, our translation) affirm that the region is historically characterized by a paradox.

It is a geographical space marked by the absence of major inter-state clashes, proscription of nuclear weapons and low military spending, where endemic violence, alarming social inequality, and political-institutional instabilities also coexist. In this environment we notice a change in the behavior of South American countries towards their neighbors. [...] This movement basically consists in attenuating the image of the neighbor as an enemy and rising concern with its vulnerability, which is eventually reflected in regional security and defense dynamics. It is the fragility of the neighbor, not the strengthening, that becomes a source of threat, and the response to this situation tends to be collective, not individual.

One of the main points for the formation of a South American Security Community, in addition to the imminent elimination of conflict and the guarantee of peace (substitution of the “conflict hypothesis” by the “cooperation hypothesis” (SANTOS, 2018, p. 153), is the regional yearning for the formation of a South American identity of regional security. The main milestone of this identity, resulting from a long historical process, was the creation of the South American Defense Council (CDS), although primitive, as stated by Vitelli (2017, p. 3): “our argument is that South America is at an early stage of security community construction.”

Thus, at the next session we will study the first ten years focused on South American cooperation and integration *vis-à-vis* the South American Defense Council (CDS), which emerges as a catalyst in the search for the establishment of a regional identity in security and defense matters.

### 3 Analysis of the cds's ten-year activities

First, it is noteworthy that there are important contributions in the literature on CDS's ten years, such as the articles "UNASUR, Brazil and the South American Defense Cooperation: a decade later" (VAZ; FUCCILLE; REZENDE, 2017) and "*Cooperação na área de defesa na Unasul: um balanço do conselho de defesa sul-americano (CDS) e seus limites atuais*" (Cooperation in Defense Area at Unasul: A Review of the South American Defense Council (CDS) and its Current Borders) (BRAGATTI, GONÇALVES, 2018). However, the central hypothesis and objectives that permeate this article are different, as it will be seen throughout the following sections.

When performing the study of CDS's first ten-year activities (2008-2018), a small preamble is essential, since previous movements that led to its creation are important to understand that this process is a flow, with advances and setbacks, prior to the Council's institutional framework. According to Abdul-Hak (2013, p. 140), three presidential statements consolidated the conformation of South America as a peace zone, enabling the further conception of the CDS:

1) the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia, and Chile that resulted in the creation of a peace zone in July 1999; 2) the Declaration on the South American Peace Zone, resulting from the 2nd Meeting of Presidents of South America (July 2002) and ratified by a United Nations General Assembly Resolution in November of the same year; and 3) the San Francisco de Quito Declaration on the Establishment and Development of the Andean Peace Zone of July 2004, ratified by a UN General Assembly Resolution in December 2004. (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 140, our translation)

In addition to the political and institutional factors, some diplomatic-military crises have also intensified the need for the creation of a South American Defense Council that would not generate strategic imbalance and fears of intervention and foreign political interference. These crises include subregional conflicts, such as litigation involving Peru and Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile; autochthonous movements spreading a separatist feeling in Bolivia and Paraguay (FUCCILLE, 2018, p. 6-7); The most recent examples are the Angostura episode<sup>1</sup> and the Colombia-US military bases agreements (SOUZA, 2016, p. 129). Furthermore, its creation would be "a reaction to the tacit or explicit impositions of thoughts alien to regional identity – notably the USA influence – in the formulations and practices of defense policies in South America" (SANTOS, 2018, p. 24, our translation).

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<sup>1</sup> "The creation of the CDS, however, took place during a major diplomatic-military incident. Also during the negotiations on the UNASUR Treaty, there was an incident involving Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. It was an invasion and attack by Colombian troops in Ecuadorian territory against FARC camps in the Angostura region, which resulted in the deaths of twenty-two people, including the second in charge of the guerrilla, Raul Reyes. Venezuela responded by moving troops to the Colombian border" (SANTOS, 2018, p. 123-133).

According to Okado, Queiroz and Breda (2016), “two of the objectives of this council synthesize a set of previous regional initiatives and ratify it as such a landmark: consolidating South America as a peace zone and building a South American identity in matter of defense.” Therefore, a common regional identity regarding defense “would reinforce mutual trust and dispel misperceptions through greater engagement among the South American Armed Forces, thereby providing greater predictability and security to the region” (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 146, our translation). Concomitantly, it would signal a

rupture with pan-Americanism present in the views of hemispheric security advocated by the Organization of American States. The search for a South American identity in terms of security and defense results from the question raised by several countries about the effectiveness of OAS collective security instruments, such as the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance. (SANTOS, 2018, p. 127, our translation)

The Constitutive Treaty of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was signed on May 23, 2008, which then replaced the Community of South American Nations (CASA). UNASUR aims at regional integration in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. On December 16, 2008, in Costa do Sauipe, the South American Defense Council (CDS) was inaugurated, “the first defense integration experience in the region” (SANTOS, 2018, p. 132, our translation) which sought “to overcome distrust by incorporating the defense sector as a harmonious pillar to facilitate the process of regional integration” (ARREDONDO, 2017, p. 18, our translation).

The CDS is “as an instance of defense consultation, cooperation and coordination” (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 151, our translation), composed of the Ministers of Defense or equivalent of their 12 member countries – Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Decisions are made in it by consensus and respect for the diversity, aspirations, values and traditions of each member state; “they are only declaratory, without legally binding nature” (SANTOS, 2018, p. 140, our translation).

According to former Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim, “it would not be an operative alliance, like a South NATO, neither a joint army of the South, but an entity that would be within UNASUR’s framework to form and identify a South American defense policy” (SANTOS, 2018, p. 132, our translation). For Celso Amorim, another former Defense Minister, the CDS is guided by three concepts, “three C’s”: Cooperation, Confidence and Coordination (DINIZ, 2015), affirming that “among us, cooperation is the best deterrent” (SOUZA, 2016, p. 128, our translation).

According to this concept, the CDS would forge a South American identity of defense based on common values and principles (respect for sovereignty, self-determination, territorial integrity, non-intervention, subordination of the military to the democratically constituted power, prevalence of human rights and

fundamental freedoms, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the equality of states). This identity would also be based on the specific characteristics and situations of the various South American geographic strands: Platina, Andean, Amazonian, Atlantic, Caribbean and Pacific. (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 147, our translation)

Among its principles are respect for the sovereignty and territorial inviolability of states, self-determination and the principle of non-intervention, respect for human rights, the rule of democratic institutions and the strengthening of the rule of law, military subordination to civil authorities, peaceful settlement of disputes, promotion of trust and transparency and reduction of asymmetries (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 152).

The CDS's objectives are to: 1) consolidate South America as a peace zone, the basis for democratic stability and the integral development of its peoples, as a contribution to world peace; 2) build a South American defense identity that takes into account subregional and national characteristics and contributes to the strengthening of Latin American and Caribbean unity; 3) generate consensus to strengthen regional defense cooperation (ARÁNGUIZ, 2013, p. 64).

Thus, the first point is the generation of transparency, eradication of distrust and elimination of suspicions and fears; the next step is to make sure that commitments are met by forming a predictable relationship that remains over time. The third step is to deepen trust by establishing links and associative processes to further recognize interdependence and thereby institutionalize policy coordination to the point of creating supranational institutions. (PAGLIARI, 2015, p. 29, our translation)

The highest CDS's instance is the Council of Defense Ministers or its equivalent, which meets once a year for deliberations and approval of the Action Plan for the following year. The Council also has an Executive Body, composed of the Deputy Ministers or their equivalents, and which meets every six months to monitor the work's progress. In addition, the CDS presidency is rotating and held, in principle, by the same country that corresponds to the *pro tempore* presidency of UNASUR. Its responsibility is to coordinate the Council activities (ARREDONDO, 2017, p. 19).

The main activities of the CDS are set out in an annual Action Plan (there are eight CDS Action Plans from 2009 to 2017), divided into four thematic axes: 1) defense policies; 2) military cooperation, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance; 3) defense industry and technology; 4) training and qualification.

In addition to the Action Plans, other documents about the CDS's functioning and activities are considered important. Among them:

- the document "Implementing Procedures for Confidence- and Security-Building Measures" (2010), divided into four confidence-building categories: 1) information exchange and transparency; 2) intra and extra-



regional activities; 3) security measures; and 4) guarantees (PAGLIARI, 2015, p. 34);

- the “Advance Report on Security and Defense Concepts and Institutions, Threats, Risk Factors and Challenges of the South American Defense Council” (2012), which initiated the attempt to reach consensus on the concepts of Security and Regional Defense;
- the Cartagena Declaration (2014), in which seven fundamental axes were established: 1) cyber defense; 2) defense of natural resources; 3) integration of the aeronautical industry; 4) construction of a regional communications center; 5) publication of regional spending on defense matters; 6) holding a Human Rights Operational Training Seminar; and 7) opening of the South American Defense School – ESUDE. (JAIMES; MIÑO, 2015, p. 158-159);
- the document “*Institucionalidad de la Defensa en Suramérica*” (2015), launched by the Center for Strategic Defense Studies (CEED), is a confidence- and transparency-building measure as it provides a systematic description and analyzes normative, organic and functional aspects of the defense architectures of the twelve countries in the region.

One of the CDS’s central points, which was strongly supported by Brazil in the early years of the Council, is the possibility of the recovery of the defense industry. This time it would be with complementarity of the production chain and scale of scope, also aiming at “industrial cooperation as a way to overcome fears about an alleged arms race” (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 222-238, our translation). A possibility of recovery is alleged, since, according to Fuccille (2018, p. 11), 1980s Brazil was considered one of the largest exporters of war material in the world, but<sup>2</sup> this scenario changed in the 1990s. Thus, in seeking to rearticulate a South American-based Industrial Defense Base (BID), “the CDS presents the possibility of working on building a South American defense industry, with a large market driven by state orders and with participation of companies from their countries” (PADULA, 2015, p. 247, our translation).

To name a few: the agreement to set up the South American Space Agency and the formation of a second air vehicle development working group in 2011; the agreement for the development of a regional unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) under the CDS; Brazil and Bolivia have made arrangements to realize (as yet undefined) the first flights of a UAV from the former country to guard the joint border; project IA73 UNASUL-I, officially presented in December 2012, aimed at cooperation for the construction of a manned military pilot training aircraft, as a significant portion of military technology comes from

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2 “More precisely, throughout the 1980s the Brazilian defense industry came to rank among the 10 largest exporters in the world and the first among developing countries (Andrade et alli 2016; Mawakdiye 2006; Pim 2007). Just to illustrate, in 1988 the Brazilian ENGESA (Engenheiros Especializados S/A) produced approximately half of the Western armored wheeled vehicles (Dellagnezze, 2008, 29)” (FUCCILLE, 2018, p. 11).

central powers at a high cost. In October 2014, Brazil and Argentina signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation in the aeronautical area. Brazil and Argentina are already developing several defense cooperation initiatives, such as the exchange of experiences in the cyber defense sector and the participation of the Argentine Aircraft Factory (FAdeA) in the production (of parts) of Embraer's KC-390. (PADULA, 2015, p. 247, our translation)

Regarding the fourth thematic axis of the main CDSs activities (training and capacity building), the most important and unprecedented event was the creation of the Center for Strategic Defense Studies (CEED) on March 10, 2009, having its status approved on May 6 and 7, 2010, in the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador. The Center seeks to generate strategic thinking at the regional level, contributing to the coordination and harmonization of defense policies in South America. Thus, it is a CDS instance that acts on the basis of intergovernmental dialogue, as it seeks to work in a shared way with the National Strategic Studies Centers on issues of regional interest.

The CEED's purpose is to contribute to the consolidation of principles and objectives established by the CDS's Statute in the generation of knowledge and dissemination of South American strategic thinking regarding regional defense and security, always at the initiative of the CDS's Executive Body. In other words, it seeks to strengthen confidence and transparency, based on reports on military spending and inventories (VITELLI, 2017, p. 11), as well as the monthly document "South American Defense Observatory," a record of key events, data and news prepared by the Center, notified by the respective CDS's Ministries of Defense.

The CEED's Statute text resulted from a Brazilian-Argentine proposal that sought to meet the following objectives: a) to avoid characterizing the Center as an institution focused on monitoring activities; b) to make it clear that the Center should focus on defense and regional peace issues, excluding strictly public security issues from its scope; and c) to clarify that the production of the Center should be directed to the governments of CDS's member countries. (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 153, our translation)

According to Pagliari (2015, p. 33, our translation), "the creation of CEED enabled to shape permanent body characteristics for regional integration issues in defense". As one of the empirical examples of CEED's work since the Buenos Aires-based Center's Opening Conference in May 2011, it already had an active stance on the geopolitical importance of natural resources as "strategic assets of common interest". (SOUZA, 2016, p. 140-141, our translation). Thus, this theme is one of the main axes of studies, which helps in the generation of analyses and information on the main components of South American natural wealth, guiding and systematizing future scenario configurations for the region. Therefore, the "Suramerican Prospective Studio 2025" emerged in November 2015, a thorough analysis that sought to consolidate aspects of regional defense, along

with other national and regional policies, in order to maximize the potential of South American strategic natural resources.

Since 2009, this center has carried out works aimed at distinguishing and informing issues of common interest, such as: defense spending of the bloc's member countries, inventories of military material from the countries, the defense sector's institutionality (Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces), gender policy in the field of defense, as well as information on military exercises conducted in the region. This center gathers data provided by the 12 South American countries regarding their defense spending, periodically issuing a global report on these indicators in our continent and how it has evolved over time. (ARREDONDO, 2017, p. 22-23, our translation)

Another institution created was the South American Defense School (ESUDE), on February 20, 2014, through the 1st Paramaribo Declaration at the 5th Regular CDS Meeting. It is a CDS Center for Advanced Studies "with the objective of monitoring and articulating the national initiatives of member states for the training and capacity building of civil and military personnel in defense and security issues at the strategic political level" (ARREDONDO, 2017, p. 23, our translation), through teaching and research on themes common to the region, which contribute to the gradual advancement of a shared vision on regional defense and security.

After ratifying its establishment and status in December 2014, the School had no fixed physical location, but a permanent Secretariat that operates at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of UNASUR, in Quito, Ecuador, without generating obligatory financial contributions from member states. ESUDE courses are taught in different South American countries, and also through a virtual platform.

Accordingly, as its executive secretary has recently put it, the role of ESUDE consists in promoting "the exchange of instructors, didactic material and research and teaching methodologies between defense schools in the region", by assisting national teaching institutions to share their assets with the rest, "using the ESUDE as a sort of repository for common assets and manager of combined activities". (VITELLI, 2017, p. 12)

In an effort to aggregate all UNASUR countries, the Advanced South American Defense Course (CAD-SUL), based at the Superior School of War (ESG) in Rio de Janeiro, had its first class in 2012. The course is aimed at civilians and military personnel, usually two students (one civilian and one military) from the twelve countries of UNASUR working in the defense field, fully funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Defense (ARREDONDO, 2017, p. 23-24). It aims to provide knowledge that enables the development of South American defense thinking, based on regional cooperation and integration. Its curriculum structure is developed over 10 weeks, with a total workload of around 330 (three hundred and thirty) hours, in which students perform theoretical studies and practical applications.

In addition to these training initiatives, Souza (2016, p. 136) lists other significant initiatives by member states, such as the Polar Technical Training Course, organized by Argentina; the South American Defense Civilian Training Course, already in its third edition; the Advanced South American Defense Course for senior Defense Ministry officials, also in its third edition; the first South American Course on Defense and Strategic Thinking, under the responsibility of Ecuador; and the first South American Course on International Law and Human Rights of the Armed Forces, coordinated by Peru.

In order to strengthen South America as peace and cooperation zone, the Council established Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (MFCS), such as: information exchange and transparency, intra/extra-regional military activities, unique methodology for preparation of defense spending spreadsheet in the region and standardized military inventory form.

In 2017, the Register of South American Defense Expenditures was presented, published by CEED, which presented the regional defense spending<sup>3</sup> executed by the South American countries from 2006 to 2015. It is noteworthy that this Registry is an official report of UNASUR member disbursements in defense terms, based on a common definition of spending, a standardized technical methodology for measurement and an annual consultation mechanism for transparency.

Cumulatively, total regional defense spending for the decade was U\$ 337,102 million, with an average annual regional expenditure of U\$ 33,710 million. South America's defense spending as a percentage of regional GDP is stable over the decade, averaging 0.98%. This percentage shows that South America is globally below other regions in terms of regional defense spending regarding the GDP. Furthermore, with regard to regional defense spending in relation to regional fiscal expenditures, the average for the decade is 3.78% (CONSEJO DE DEFENSA SURAMERICANO, 2017).

Complementarily, Arredondo affirms that one of the CDS's challenges

would be the ability to establish a genuine geopolitical model that considers the region's strengths, mainly characterized by the abundance of natural resources and by the political, social, religious and economic inter-complementarity. (ARREDONDO, 2017, p. 25, our translation)

In Abdul-Hak's (2013, p. 240) view, regional defense cooperation as proposed by the CDS offers collective gains to its member states, such as

mitigation of inadequate means of defense in most UNASUR countries; the recovery and strengthening of the regional defense industry; reducing risks of regional isolation; the promotion of regular contacts between military commandos; the creation of trust; the rising costs of breaking multilateral

<sup>3</sup> "Defense spending is understood as: 'all resources allocated by the state for the funding of activities that include the country's national security'." (CONSEJO DE DEFENSA SURAMERICANO, 2017).

commitments through the imposition of censorship and sanctions; the definition of functions for the Armed Forces outside the domestic political sphere; and the emergence of new players and networks of interest (around themes such as the defense industry) that may gradually contribute to overcoming old rivalries. (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 240, our translation)

However, despite the advances, there are some extraregional obstacles to building an operative alliance in South America: a persistent USA regional primacy, a competitive system of alignments and growing extraregional influences. Moreover, from a constructivist perspective, Fuentes and Santana (2009, p. 571) provide an interesting picture of the future difficulties (and opportunities) of the CDS, both due to the low level of institutionalization the agreements have acquired and to the difficulty of measuring the redefinition of international interests and practices.

Since the creation of the CDS, there has been a negative turning point in its activities since 2015, with an emptying process of UNASUR and the CDS that converges with the power vacuum caused mainly by the Brazilian political-institutional crisis. “Brazil, sponsor of this new institutional structure, also presents itself ambivalently throughout this process, notably characterized by a discrepancy between discourse and practice” (FUCCILLE, 2018, p. 3, our translation).

Although a substantial portion of the bloc’s depletion of power has as an independent variable: the Brazilian Government’s stance on the project of regional integration and cooperation, such movement was not restricted to Brazil, with other South American countries pleading and ratifying their absences and departures of the Union.

President Mauricio Macri – since his inauguration in December 2015 – and President Michel Temer – since May 2016 – have been talking about relaunching their foreign policies on a new basis. When the two largest countries in the subcontinent present this behavior it directly affects possibilities and expectations regarding security and defense cooperation. Even during Rousseff’s administration (2011-2016), several senior officers and general-officers saw with great reserve ventures such as the CDS, often classifying it as an extravagance, fruit of daydreams of a leftist government that could not find its correspondence in reality. In short: a government policy and not a state policy that would not survive the alternation of power. (FUCCILLE, 2018, p. 14, our translation)

As it turned out, changes in the South American scenario, such as presidents with different worldviews, help to aggravate this scenario, since the personalist figure was an essential element for consolidation of the Council project. Also, according to Souza (2016, p. 134, our translation), these changes help in the collapse of UNASUR and, consequently, of the CDS, the “progressive crisis in Venezuela, with the death of Hugo

Chávez, as well as the election of Mauricio Macri in Argentina, breaking Kirchnerist policies and their expressive enthusiasm for CDS cooperation.”

In 2018, some facts corroborate the prerogative of decelerating the cooperative process within the CDS and UNASUR. In April, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Chile and Peru suspended their participation in UNASUR indefinitely, alleging a deadlock over the choice of the organization’s Secretary-General;<sup>4</sup> in July, Cabinet Chief Yuri Chillán – who had been acting as De Facto Chief due to the vacancy of the Secretary-General since January 2017 – resigned; Also in July, Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno announced the request to return the UNASUR headquarters building in Quito; In August, the Colombian government of Iván Duque announced the definitive departure of UNASUR – which may encourage other countries to do the same – shortly after the announcement of their entry as a “global partner” in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), being the only Latin American country in the group.

In other words, the pattern of alignment between South American countries – which is set back in the second half of 2010 in the apotegma “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, which Philip Kelly (1997) calls *checkerboards* –<sup>5</sup> has been impeding the development of more intense and lasting regional cooperation and integration. As an intensifying element of the process, the Brazilian omission is of paramount importance in the theme of (dis)integration and, specifically, of the non-continuity of a South American regional defense project and of the deepening of an embryonic Security Community.

#### 4 The importance of brazil in the south american regional defense theme

Brazil’s geopolitical vocation is in keeping with its 16,000 km of land borders with almost all South American countries (except Chile and Ecuador) and 7,500 km of maritime border – being the largest South Atlantic country. Belonging to the group of the five largest countries in terms of territory and population, among the world’s ten largest economies in terms of GDP, approximately 95% of offshore oil reserves, and over 90% of its foreign trade by sea, Brazil is configured as a simultaneously maritime and continental country, a geopolitical duality in its strategic surroundings.

The term “strategic surroundings” comes from the National Defense Plan (NDP) of 2005 and the National Defense Strategy (NDS) of 2008, which originated the White Book of National Defense (2012). This concept had been a priority of the Brazilian Foreign Policy (PEB) in the 2000s, used in the speeches of former Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, his former Executive Secretary, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, and former President Lula. From these documents, the concept is defined as “the region

4 “Another point that has been bothering – and very much – President Macri is the resistance placed on the name of José Octavio Bordón to UNASUR’s secretary-general (which has been vacant for over a year and a half), especially the open opposition from Bolivia (who assumed the Pro-Tempore Presidency of the multipurpose bloc in April 2018) and Venezuela” (FUCCILLE, 2018, p. 15, our translation).

5 “Checkerboards appear as multipolar balance-of-power structures that reveal a fragmentation relative to the dictum, ‘My neighbor is my enemy, but my neighbor’s neighbor is my friend’. These phenomena have appeared throughout the foreign affairs of republican South America” (KELLY, 1997, p. vii).

where Brazil wants to radiate – preferably – its influence and its diplomatic, economic and military leadership, including South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Antarctica and the South Atlantic Basin” (FIORI, 2013, our translation); i.e. the strategic surroundings can be classified as security perimeter, immediate area of influence and/or area of strategic interest.

Each country has strategic surroundings based on its geopolitical configuration in international relations, which is characterized as an anarchic, competitive, hierarchical and asymmetrical environment. However, intersections of multiple strategic surroundings reveal clashes of interest and conflicts in the international system, in which any presence or interference of external – or even internal – power in any country’s strategic surroundings is viewed as a threat to its national security.

This fact is commonly mitigated from the correlation of mutual and reciprocal interests. The convergence is fruitful and lasting to the extent that regional integration projects are intensified. The ultimate objectives are outlined as a geopolitical goal in any integration project. Whether in terms of security, development, international power or identity, regional integration seeks to conflate the particular and collective interests of member countries and understand how such a project relates to hegemonic powers, leading to a change in the *status quo* of countries in the international system.

Regarding the area of Security and Defense, related to both regional integration and the Brazilian strategic surroundings, the creation of the CDS, as a Brazilian initiative for a common agenda among South American countries, aimed at building a deterrent force to defend strategic areas, such as the Amazon, the La Plata Basin and the Pre-salt, with an emphasis on sovereignty over natural resources and defense against interstate threats. As stated by Abdul-Hak (2013, p. 193, our translation), “Brazil is a country that has a lot to defend, but with limited effective defense capacity.”

Since the first decade of the 21st century, Brazil began to develop a strategy of international affirmation and expansion of its presence in some geopolitical scenarios, in which the very conception of the CDS would be more than a collective defense body in its geopolitical perimeter: “CDS is for Brasilia a major step in its career towards recognition as a great power” (MIJARES, 2011, p. 7, our translation), and would serve as a collective legitimation for “Brazil’s aspiration to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council” (JAIMES; MIÑO, 2015, p. 147, our translation).

Regarding the redesign of international geometry, economic change in South America is a new fact of enormous importance. According to Fiori (2013, p. 14), “Latin America will be increasingly hierarchical and the future of South America, in particular, will be increasingly dependent on the choices and decisions made by Brazil”. Therefore, the country is in a strategic position “To appraise leverage or pivotal impact in international relationships. Certain countries are found in central or middle positions and, thus, may enjoy certain advantages in trade, resources access, and leadership” (KELLY, 1997, p. 15).

The sum of all its potentials makes Brazil a prime space for promoting development and regional defense of its South American strategic surroundings, with greater gains for the less developed countries. Whether due to its large consumer market, its industrial park,

its agricultural potential, or its military capacity, the steady growth of the most developed economy, when complemented by a quest for greater regional integration, will lead to increased imports from these partners, also increasing the demand for production of these countries and, consequently, their interest in collaborating with a geopolitical strategy that prioritizes integration, facing the external challenges imposed by the world economy (COSTA, 2013, p. 675-676).

Therefore, given its specific weight, it is of fundamental importance that Brazil assume the role of major regional and international player, of engine of economic expansion (COSTA, 2013, p. 675), of “whale country”<sup>6</sup> (SOSA, 2013, p. 137), of “integration leader” (KELLY, 1997, p. 179), and whose path to the international insertion of Brazil must be understood from the South American integration and cooperation point of view.

Returning to the historical series of regional defense spending, the annual variations recorded during the decade were increasing, albeit to varying degrees; only in the last fiscal year of the series (2015) there was a sharp reduction in regional defense spending, by 14.54% over the previous year (CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS ESTRATÉGICOS DE DEFENSA DEL CONSEJO DE DEFENSA SURAMERICANO, 2017). One of the possible hypotheses for this fact converges with the problematization of this article; due to the Brazilian political crisis and relative departure from UNASUR and CDS issues, there is a significant reduction in participation in economic terms, given that Brazil’s regional defense spending accounts for a significant portion of the total.

Following the same logic of Brazilian political vacuum, another interesting data is the composition of defense spending at the regional level, which allows us to state that most is allocated to the Personnel category, with a 59.57% average for the decade, followed by Operations and Maintenance (22.60%), Investments (17.18%) and Research and Development (0.47%). In other words, a disinvestment process in the regional defense sector can be perceived from 2014 (17.72%) to 2015 (10.19%), the latter being lower in percentage terms for all series years (CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS ESTRATÉGICOS DE DEFENSA DEL CONSEJO DE DEFENSA SURAMERICANO, 2017).

There is a mutually beneficial relationship of reciprocity between South America and Brazil, since there is a strategic importance of the region for the Brazilian state, as the latter was the main promoter of the South American Defense Council in its early years, either by economic or political bias. In this regard, we can see a decrease in presidential diplomacy from Da Silva’s Government to Roussef’s Government, including South America (MILANI et al., 2014, p. 62-63). Moreover, after the impeachment process in 2016, this Brazilian declivity in its strategic surroundings becomes even more symptomatic, either by internal redirection aiming at political stability, or by changing the ideological bias in the external agenda.

With regard to foreign policy, it can be seen that from 2008 until 2018, there was a decrease in the importance that Brazil directed to its South American strategic surroundings. In Da Silva’s administration, based on the haughty and active foreign policy, South-South

<sup>6</sup> According to Itamaraty’s terminology, this type of country is characterized by its large geographical, demographic and economic dimension and by the fact that when mobilized, they agitate the world system.



cooperation and political, economic and diplomatic stimulus to South America, the strengthening and emergence of new themes in the international agenda was visualized, enabling the creation of the CDS in 2008. In Rousseff's administration, there is a process of relative continuity with its predecessor, but the prevalence of partnership diversification in the face of the transformation of the international scenario, invoking a lower profile of external action and a Brazilian contribution lower than expected in the CDS. With Temer, Brazil's leadership in South America is emptied, due to the political crisis, the unpopularity and lack of credibility of the president and, mainly, from the negative impact of foreign policy measures taken by his management (CASTILHO; BOAS, 2018).

Therefore, we sought to demonstrate the untapped geopolitical potentialities of Brazil in achieving a CDS-based integration process that reinvigorated the regional defense. Economic, geopolitical and diplomatic particularities show that Brazil's inaction or numbness has led to the CDS's failure. Thus, Brazilian actions within the CDS's framework explain its initial successes, and the omission in the most recent period explains its paralysis to some extent.

Regional integration is an integral and indivisible part of the pillar of Brazil's international insertion, security and defense strategy. Thus, the country presents itself as a polarizing and energizing center of South American integration because it: 1) is an indispensable player for the construction of an international political dialogue that contributes to the formation of another global governance structure; 2) is a leader in South America for its political and geostrategic influence, as well as possess material, organizational and doctrinal capacities to formulate a project with its strategic surroundings; 3) is already playing a central role in the integration process and its deepening; 4) has centers of industrial growth and innovation that can generate results of regional and international importance; and 5) is contributing to the shaping of a South American identity, essential for the creation of a South American Security Community.

South America has the capacity to establish itself as a Security Community through the CDS and to intensify autonomous integration projects through UNASUR. In addition, it has a common "diplomatic culture," recognizing the former colonial borders (*uti possidetis*), peaceful international coexistence (the principle of coexistence), the principle of non-intervention and mutual respect for national sovereignty, conflict resolution by diplomatic means, peaceful settlement of international disputes, including the use of arbitration, mediation and other similar legal and diplomatic techniques.

In the context of South American security, the fragility of countries is the biggest challenge, requiring a coordinated and joint response, with institutionalized power, but with Brazil as a regional power: "the institutional cohesion and the future of a possible security community have more to do with UNASUR's future than MERCOSUR's and the role played by Brazil" (FUCCILLE, REZENDE, 2013, p. 85, our translation).

Among the challenges for Brazil in the short-term intensification of CDS is the regular financing of activities; in the medium term is to find appropriate responses to regional security problems and defense industry exports; in the long run is the thickening

of UNASUR's general integration process (ABDUL-HAK, 2013, p. 241-242). Moreover, one of Brazil's main challenges to achieving regional security based on a Security Community is the need to establish itself as a state, not a government policy, "designed to be durable despite the political changes" (UGARTE, 2009, p. 15, our translation). There is also the attraction of certain endemic political and economic fractions, still contrary to integration projects with long-term gains.

The security agenda in South America is in dispute. Its balance allows for both optimistic and pessimistic interpretations, or a mixture of these. The main challenge for establishing a regional agenda based on a South American identity within the CDS's framework is that it must result from the interaction of political agendas of member countries, of what they perceive as threats. [...] If Brazil is unable to promote an integration, security and development agenda for countries in the region, the trend towards fragmentation of integration projects will persist, making room for the penetration of external powers and their agendas seeking access to natural resources. (PADULA, 2015, p. 257-258, our translation)

In addition to Article 4 of the Federal Constitution of Brazil, which advocates Latin American economic, political, social and cultural integration, the integration of continental defense is fundamental for Brazil both in strategic and deterrent terms, seeking to prevent external interventions in the region, and for the economic integration of a defense industrial base, increasing its production scale in order to compete in foreign markets. Moreover, both NDT and CDS were linked to the country's foreign policy, since

both the document and the regional defense body were linked to Brazil's pursuit of broadening South American articulation and to the region's incorporation into internal discussion around Brazil's national development plans. (FUCCILLE, 2018, p. 14, our translation)

As Santos (2018, p. 145, our translation) points out, in stating that regional security articulates national defense, "a scenario of stability and balance in interstate relations can be translated as regional or international security, which would require states to a willingness to cooperate in their strategic surroundings." Also, according to Abdul-Hak (2013, p. 240, our translation), the CDS, as a permanent space for regional consultation and reflection on strategic themes, "articulates Brazil's two traditional diplomatic objectives: the strengthening of inter-state cooperation as a means of minimizing the risks of using force in its geographical surroundings, and the consolidation of national and regional autonomy." In other words, from the Brazilian political point of view, it is convenient to form power blocs that result in a state policy facing external threats in the interstate system, whose geopolitical articulation among the South American countries is fundamental, even in their development strategies.

## 5 Final considerations

This article aimed to study the ten years of the South American Council and Defense (CDS), its advances and setbacks, outlining the main objectives of the bloc and the main practical actions in the period.

Nowadays, some factors show, after ten years, the crisis that both UNASUR and the CDS are going through: the smallness in the progression of a South American identity, the remaining existence of a competitive system of intra and extraregional alliances, the lack of a state policy, the successive political-economic crises of some member countries, the scarcity of foreign exchange for budget composition, the dispersion in the pursuit of common interests, the lack of practical political will from some member countries.

The CDS begins as an incipient collective security mechanism, with relevance at the regional level as a space for interaction between the national and the global; however, it was not configured as a Security Community, as mutual perspectives based on institutionalized common norms and interests and independent governance structures were not developed. Brazil's specific case, with its importance in regional and geopolitical defense, only ratified UNASUR's dependence on the largest country in the region, whose internal crisis directly affects the inoperability of the CDS in the final years of its decade of existence.

Although Brazil has a central role in the performance and functionality of the CDS, either because it is the main producer of military science and technology, the largest defense industrial hub and/or because it is a geopolitical link between the Southern Cone and the Amazon, its contribution has been decreasing over time. Therefore, although there are other alternative explanations about the current CDS paralysis, such as countries with ideological divergences, the end of the commodity boom, the organism's low institutionalization, it is based on the fact that the Brazilian omission is one of the most important variables, whose political vacuum and lack of leadership leaves doubt as to whether the country can establish itself as the basis of a future South American Security Community.

Therefore, it is concluded that there is no such Community, but only a trigger from the framework of the CDS's construction. The likelihood of constituting this community in the current context is very low, given that defense is a sensitive and parsimonious area and it is unrealistic to expect substantive advances in the short term. In addition, the political vacuum of certain sectors in key states contributes to this scenario in order to strengthen the project for the integration and shaping of a South American defense identity.

However, important elements for the effective building of a South American Security Community were created during the ten years of the South American Defense Council, such as the Center for Strategic Defense Studies (CEED), the South American Defense School (ESUDE), the Advanced Course of South American Defense (CAD-SUL), among other initiatives mentioned throughout the article. Such projects could move forward – or backward – according to policy makers at the regional level.

Therefore, the negative political scenario in the region – intensified by the Brazilian political and institutional instability – could seriously compromise the existence

of this incipient Community. As the experiences of the 2000s demonstrate, given Brazil's vital geopolitical and geoeconomic importance in the region, both Brazil's strategic surroundings and South American regional integration are indivisible parts of the same political project, whose security and defense play a fundamental role.

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