

# National Security Doctrine in South America: strategies of the two great powers

*Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional en América del Sur: estrategias de las dos superpotencias*

**Abstract:** Within the context of the Cold War, this article presents a qualitative analysis of South America in the realms of security and defense, considering both global and regional influences. Thus, it examines the interplay between the strategies of the two Cold War great powers and South America. The Cuban revolution awakened a revolutionary spirit in America, while, in contrast, the National Security Doctrine promoted by the US gained strength. Consequently, each South American country developed its own version of this doctrine, based on their unique realities and geopolitical positions, as well as characterized by a shared culture of militarism typical of the region.

**Keywords:** National Security Doctrine, Cold War, Civil-Military Relations, Cuban Revolution.

**Resumen:** A partir de la influencia global y regional, con un enfoque cualitativo, se analiza América del Sur en el ámbito de la seguridad y defensa, en el contexto de la Guerra Fría, observando cuáles fueron las estrategias de las dos superpotencias en este subcontinente y cómo se estructuraron. Para ello, se considera que la Revolución Cubana despertó el espíritu revolucionario en América y, en contrapartida, la Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional promovida por Estados Unidos indicaba una reacción a esta realidad. En consecuencia, cada país desarrolló versiones de esta doctrina, bajo sus propias realidades y posicionamientos geopolíticos, pero con una característica común: la cultura del militarismo, típica de los países sudamericanos.

**Palabras clave:** Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional, Guerra Fría, Relaciones Cívico-Militares, Revolución Cubana.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, the Cold War gradually reached South America. In the dispute between the capitalist and communist worlds, due to political alignments and geographic proximity, the countries of South America were more inclined to support the United States. However, since the 1930s, there had already been organizations, groups, and political parties aligned with the ideas of the Soviet Union. The National Security Doctrine promoted by the United States aimed at containing communism in Central and South America and, consequently, those groups. Thus, in the twentieth century, the countries of the region experienced some degree of U.S. interference, ranging from soft influence to military interventions.

This research considers the period from 1959, with the Cuban Revolution, to 1990, with the dissolution of the Soviet bloc. This period is situated within the Cold War, a dynamic that shaped defense and security issues at the national, regional, and global levels.

The Cuban Revolution (1959) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) brought South America and the region in general into the Cold War chessboard. The U.S. government could not risk another Marxist revolution in the Americas. Many leftist movements—armed or not—emerged across the continent. In this sense, the National Security Doctrine, promoted by the United States throughout Latin America, served the purpose of containing communism.

This article is divided into four sections: the first analyzes the beginning of the Cold War and its influence on South America, observing, from the perspective of different scholars, the relationship between the two superpowers and the subcontinent, and how these relationships were structured during this period. The second section analyzes Soviet versus U.S. strategy, from the U.S. perspective, through articles published in *Military Review*<sup>1</sup> from 1960 to 1990. The third section revisits the Cuban Revolution and insurgency in South America, analyzing the revolution's influence on the creation and development of insurgent groups active in the region. The fourth section examines the governance entities relevant to the U.S. National Security Doctrine, as well as the homologous institutions established in each South American country. Finally, the conclusions are presented.

## 2 THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOUTH AMERICA

In the second half of the 1940s, peaceful coexistence between the capitalist and communist worlds was short-lived. Countries aligned themselves with one of the two leaders of these power blocs—the United States or the Soviet Union—with the aim of asserting their role in the international context.

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<sup>1</sup> Military Review was chosen because it is a traditional, trilingual professional journal, widely read by Latin American military personnel and therefore a disseminator of concepts and information.

Its [the Cold War] two big defining features came into play almost simultaneously: nuclear weapons and a rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. This rivalry was made exceptionally intense not only because they were the big winners of the 1939–45 war, overawing all of the other erstwhile great powers, but also because they were the champions of mutually exclusive ideologies (democratic capitalism, totalitarian communism) each of which claimed to own the future of humankind (BUZAN; HANSEN, 2012, p. 118-119).

As Buzan and Hansen (2012) point out, following the Second World War, the notion of “superpower” emerged—attributed to the United States and the Soviet Union after their successful participation in the great war—as did the concept of bipolarity, since two ideologically opposed hegemonic axes had arisen, each seeking to extend its influence over the majority of nations. In response, a strategy of containment was developed, with the clear goal of avoiding ideological escalation by the Soviet Union, followed eventually by a strategy of deterrence, characterized by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the threat of mutual destruction—factors that endangered global security.

It is also important to consider the insights of Leal Buitrago (2003) and Lesbat (1994), who reference the Act of Chapultepec, the signing of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR), the Charter of the United Nations, and bilateral military agreements as the starting point for the unification of military policy in the Americas. As a result, no other nation could challenge the United States’ political and economic predominance in Latin America.

In 1945, the countries of the continent signed a set of agreements known as the Act of Chapultepec. Resolution VIII of the Act addressed the collective defense of the continent in the context of the still-unfinished world war. [...] This agreement was key to the unification of military policy in the Americas, as it involved the integration of Latin American military institutions into a war bloc whose strategic direction was under U.S. control (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 78, our translation).

In the realm of security, the instruments were crucial for exercising U.S. hegemony and for the strategic alignment of Latin American countries with the United States: the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) and the bilateral military assistance agreements (LESBAT, 1994, p. 53, our translation).

As the TIAR was implemented, the American Bloc was consolidated under the idea that if one of its member countries were attacked, the bloc would respond in its defense. In this sense, the implicit connotations of the treaty should be taken into consideration, especially regarding ideological and military threats from the Soviet Union.

In parallel, the National Security policies adopted by the United States gave rise to what came to be known in Central and South Americas as the National Security Doctrine.

This initiated a structural transformation in the functioning of states across the American continent. Indeed:

The 1946 “Truman Plan,” which proposed continental military unification, was consistent with this resolution. Both measures paved the way for the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR), signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1947. The National Security Act, enacted in the United States in 1947, was the main instrument for developing the concept of the national security state. This law empowered the federal government to mobilize and rationalize the national economy by involving the military, preparing them for the eventuality of war. Through this legislation, the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were created—organizations that set a new standard for the state and society in light of the hegemonic role the United States assumed in global politics (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 77, our translation).

The basic framework for what would later be called the National Security Doctrine in South America was established precisely through national security councils, intelligence organizations, and national study centers. In this context, as Child (1994) notes, there appeared to be a deliberate plan behind the adoption of the defense structure in South American countries.

The role of the United States in the establishment of this doctrine (and perhaps ideology) of national security is controversial. For some, its formation stemmed from a deliberate and carefully crafted process on the part of U.S. leaders, a control measure designed to maintain continental hegemony. For others, there is no significant relationship between U.S. policies and the security states of the Southern Cone (CHILD, 1994, p. 33, our translation).

According to Child’s (1994) research, this structure adopted by the United States was embraced by the other countries. However, the realities of Third World nations were quite different:

[...] what apparently happened is that certain American models (e.g., the National Security Council/National War College, the Central Intelligence Agency) were reproduced and adapted in Latin America, where they merged with latent geopolitical ideals, an organic concept of the state, and an authoritarian tendency of the Latin American military (CHILD, 1994, p. 33, our translation).

In South America, countries adopted these structures and adapted them to their specific realities in a gradual process that gained strength after the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

The Cold War had kept South America outside of direct U.S. influence, since: “[...] its geographical location was of relatively minor strategic importance. In fact, there was no direct U.S. military intervention in the region” (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 75, our translation).

Indeed, the major Cold War events took place in the Old World: the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Korean and Vietnam wars, the oil crisis in the Middle East, among others—events that were part of the strategies of the hegemonic blocs. Nevertheless, the Cuban Revolution and the Missile Crisis brought South America into the Cold War.

The episode of the Soviet missiles in 1962 provided the final dynamic in a process through which the Latin American region actively entered—albeit as a secondary actor—into the theater of the Cold War. The triumph of the Cuban Revolution catalyzed the South American formulation of the National Security Doctrine (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 79, our translation).

The National Security Doctrine is a phenomenon specific to the Americas, part of a vision of a centralized and militarized state, in which state planning and activity are directed toward ensuring both internal and external national defense. Mercado (1974, pp. 64–65, our translation) clearly summarizes the process encompassed by the National Security Doctrine:

Every state, once its national objectives and their corresponding political objectives are set and its general policy outlined, will encounter various forms of opposition in achieving the former. When these oppositions, due to their intensity and timing, acquire significant weight and thus jeopardize the national objectives and the execution of the outlined general policy, security problems may emerge, which must be addressed with an adequate policy known as security policy. Parallel to this policy, there is another that, through development, seeks to propel the nation in all fields of its activity, in order to allow it to achieve political objectives and, consequently, the national objectives.

From this perspective, the role of the Armed Forces in the administration and development of the state becomes clear. Hence, a proper security policy was required—one that, in turn, enabled the state's permanent objectives to be fulfilled.

### 3 SOVIET STRATEGY VERSUS U.S. STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Soviet Strategy

From 1959 to 1964, a period in which Vietnam came to monopolize American attention, the South American subcontinent featured prominently on the agendas of the State Department and the Pentagon (MARTINS FILHO, 1999). The hemisphere had opened a new front, as ideological boundaries had been breached, prompting many idealists in Latin America to embark on political activism—an engagement that became a defining reality across the subcontinent at the time.

Communism was perceived as the main cause of political instability, which, in turn, was considered the principal threat to hemispheric security. Beginning in the 1960s,

poverty was added as an additional factor contributing to that instability (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 79, our translation).

From the literature review based on *Military Review*, covering the period from 1960 to 1990, it was possible to identify the main actions carried out by different actors within the international context. From this perspective, the Soviet bloc saw an opportunity to redirect U.S. attention to another region, turning Cuba into a strategic outpost from which operations extended to neighboring countries (Table 1).

**Table 1 – The soviet strategy**

1	<p>Within the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary framework, Latin America is one of several cold war battlegrounds for which the following objectives have been established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To undermine Latin-American nations from within, and to promote guerrilla wars for the purpose of seizing power.</li> <li>• To broaden the “camp of Socialist nations” by incorporating into it the Latin-American nations.</li> <li>• To destroy the Organization of American States and its military arm, the Inter-American Defense Board, or to transform the member nations, with the exclusion of the United States, into anti-Western politico-military organizations.</li> <li>• To bring about the political and economic detachment of the United States from the rest of Latin America as a regional measure aimed at the latter’s worldwide isolation and suppression (MARTINEZ CODÓ, 1963, p. 3-4).</li> </ul>
2	<p>In the years since the Rio Pact was signed, the danger to the Americas has increased enormously. Inter-American defense planners <b>in the 1940's could not envision the internal security threat that communism would pose in succeeding decades. Today, the countries of this hemisphere are confronted with a growing problem of guerrilla and subversive warfare</b>, including urban terrorism (HARRIGAN, 1970, p. 4, emphasis added).</p>
3	<p><b>From a strategic perspective, the Soviets have manifested the propensity to cultivate or nurture instabilities In areas outside the European theater</b> The <i>modus operandi</i> of the 1970s and 1980s has been the orchestration of surrogate powers, local Insurgences, transnational terrorism and psychological operations efforts aimed at agitation and societal convulsion (THOMAS; KUSIER, 1987, p. 21, emphasis added).</p>
4	<p><b>Communist tactics vary from strikes and systematic work stoppages to guerrilla activity encompassing all types of terrorism, sabotage, assaults to obtain funds or arms, pillaging, mass demonstrations, infiltration into state organisms, and urban or rural insurrection.</b> Their activities in the coming years will be oriented toward an intensification of <b>ideological penetration</b> of the urban masses, particularly students, and workers and the rural population by exploiting the social, political, and economic problems by means of agitation and propaganda. They will continue, at the same time, to support guerrilla activities in isolated regions, particularly in Andean America (MERCADO, 1969, p. 11-12, emphasis added).</p>
5	<p><b>Cuba serves many Soviet purposes.</b> First, the island nation provides port access to Soviet naval and air assets and serves as a forward base through which the Soviets <b>can ship arms and other supplies to revolutionary movements in Latin America</b> (AYLSWORTH, 1988, p. 34, emphasis added).</p>
6	<p><b>Castro's political rhetoric is an intimidating influence on backed as it is by Soviet assistance.</b> Leaders of established governments know that he is capable of stirring up anti-Yankee sentiment in their capitals, should they align themselves too closely with US foreign policy. Another Soviet asset is Moscow's reputation for assisting the survival of revolutionary regimes (AYLSWORTH, 1988, p. 35, emphasis added).</p>

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

The analysis conducted at that time by Martínez Codo (1963) resulted in one of his articles, in which he discussed the Soviet strategy aimed at distancing Latin American countries from the United States, as well as promoting the focus on internal warfare in underdeveloped countries. This coincides with what Leal Buitrago (2003, p. 80, our translation) noted in his studies: “for the military, ‘revolutionary war’ materialized as a communist strategy, and the ‘internal enemy’ constituted the main threat”<sup>2</sup>. The Soviet strategy took shape through ideological indoctrination of subversive groups; military training with the support of its ally Cuba, in the case of Latin American countries; and economic assistance.

U.S. military officials were convinced that the Cuban Revolution was clear evidence of an international communist conspiracy and, from that point on, the national security doctrine became the cornerstone of military thinking (GILL, 2005, p. 104, our translation).

In addition to promoting the distancing from the United States, the Soviets worked to expand their ideology with minimal risk—that is, without deploying their own troops—by exploiting nationalist sentiments against the United States. By drawing U.S. attention back to the American continent, the Soviet Union gained greater freedom of action in the Eastern Hemisphere.

If, in South American countries, there was mention of seeking independence from hegemonic powers, those states would shift from U.S. influence to that of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s strategy, therefore, was to win over the sympathy of those countries that distanced themselves from the U.S. sphere, as was the case with Cuba, which began with a nationalist revolution and later chose to align itself with the Soviet bloc.

We note that U.S. military thinking attributed the proliferation of internal guerrilla warfare to a strategy developed and promoted in the Second World, with the clear objective of expanding its sphere of influence and creating new concerns for the United States. In the 1960s, the presence of insurgent groups is evident in most countries of the region, with military training carried out especially in Cuba and ideological indoctrination received in the Soviet Union (Table 2).

**Table 2 – Subversion as part of the strategy**

1	Although the Third World countries seek to reduce foreign domination, the USSR has attempted to support their independence from the West but not from itself. <b>Soviet strategy has been to exploit the Third World’s colonial history</b> and turn national sentiments against the United States and the former colonial rulers (LINVILLE, 1981, p. 10, emphasis added).
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Continues

<sup>2</sup> In the original: “Para los militares, la “guerra revolucionaria” se concretó como la estrategia del comunismo y el “enemigo interno” se constituyó en la amenaza principal”

Table 2 – Continuation

2	Thus even while reheating the Berlin crisis, Khrushchev has stressed this third approach of internal war over and over again. He sees the possibilities for internal wars in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as the best way of using force <b>to expand the Communist empire with the least risk</b> (HILSMAN, 1962, p. 12, emphasis added). The Soviets continue to sponsor Communist rebellions overtly wherever possible. They also do their best to infiltrate nationalist movements against colonialism (HILSMAN, 1962, p. 12-13, emphasis added).
3	The primary objective of the Soviet Union in Latin America is <b>to weaken Its chief global adversary, the United States</b> . The region Is significant to Soviet strategic calculations because tying down the United States in defense of Its “back yard,” It gains for <b>the Soviet Union greater freedom of action in the Eastern Hemisphere</b> (AYLSWORTH, 1988, p. 30, emphasis added).
4	This revolutionary war- <b>aimed at undermining the bloc of non-Communist nations from within, in which the Soviet Union does not risk the life of a single member of her main forces</b> , generally evolves in three phases: conquest of the population, establishment of its politico-administrative organization, and militarization (MARTINEZ CODO, 1963, p. 3, emphasis added).

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

In economic terms, the subversive strategy proved more advantageous than open warfare. Nevertheless, although less costly, it required resources capable of structuring and sustaining armed groups that were equipped and trained on a long-term basis.

On the other hand, there was a general recognition of Soviet expertise in this mode of operation. It was evident that the communist recruitment targeted groups composed of young people, workers, and peasants, taking advantage of the vulnerability of these individuals, which stemmed from the region's endemic social problems (Table 3)

Table 3 – The soviet expertise

1	The great advantage of internal war is that it is less risky and less conspicuous than the more violent wars. <b>It also involves techniques that the Communists feel they have mastered and we have not.</b> We must also remember that Khrushchev is using his recently increased capacity to wage the more violent kinds of war to expand his freedom of maneuver in guerrilla war and to threaten escalation if we try to stop him (HILSMAN, 1962, p. 13, emphasis added).
2	If a colonial or reactionary government is in power, <b>the Communists direct efforts along the entire spectrum of subversion. They foster discontent in the cities, leading to demonstrations and strikes, perhaps to riots and mob action.</b> Here their targets are <b>student groups, labor unions, and leftwing intellectuals</b> (HILSMAN, 1962, p. 13, emphasis added).
3	The political link between the two becomes clear when we see how the <b>very poor are used as recruits for guerrilla forces in the rural areas and for “people’s militia” in the urban regions.</b> Communists have long made use of the former in sustaining a rebellion; Castro and “Che” Guevara have become adept at using both groups to support the present Cuban regime (HILSMAN, 1962, p. 19, emphasis added).

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

In this context, the reflections of Leal Buitrago (2003, p. 79, our translation) coincide with the ideas presented in this study regarding the U.S. military conception

Thus blossomed what may be called the revolutionary era of Latin America. Its ferment was the ideology of middle-class youth and numerous social groups in a region considered destined to lead a political process of universal transcendence.

From a geopolitical perspective, Child (1994, p. 30, our translation) remarks that the State as an organism was affected. According to him, it would be necessary to take measures to remedy the harm that had been done.

The revolutionary geopolitical vision had its impact during the height of guerrilla warfare in Latin America, both in its rural and urban variants [...] this revolutionary vision was interpreted as a threat to the State as an organism. Among the military who felt directly affected by this danger, the inevitable reaction was the dramatic extirpation of this “malevolent cell”.

Communist parties were established in Latin American countries during the 1920s. The Soviet Union created a breach in the ideological sphere, reinforcing doctrinal ties with leftist parties, which underwent a process of indoctrination and began to be consolidated in each country. In addition, networks of communication and relationships were established among these leftist groups, under Soviet sponsorship. The successful Cuban Revolution drew attention to the communist axis as a viable path to seize power via armed struggle.

Military training was closely coordinated between the Soviet bloc and Cuba, given that Cuba hosted thousands of representatives from South and Central America in its training camps. Likewise, Cuba provided military support to various countries, such as Angola and Ethiopia. It was precisely in this same context that Guevara died in Bolivia while promoting the foco-style revolution in that country.

Cuba became a center for ideological transfer, military training, and economic support, with a capacity that communist cells had not previously experienced to the necessary degree (Table 4).

**Table 4 – The Soviet indoctrination system**

1	<b>Soviet bloc countries (including Cuba) also have stationed more than 50,000 troops and military technicians in 19 Third World countries.</b> Over 75 percent of these are Cuban soldiers in Angola and Ethiopia. “More importantly, Cuba’s military presence in the Middle East and Africa increased from 21,850 troops in 1977 to 38,650 in 1978. The Cuban effort is underwritten almost entirely by the USSR which has provided Cuba with \$1.2 billion in military aid over the last 20 years (LINVILLE, 1981, p. 14, emphasis added).
2	<b>A US government study indicates that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies dramatically increased the amount of government sponsored scholarships available to Latin-American students, and Cuba provided thousands more through its Isle of Youth education complex (ARNOLD, 1987, p. 36, emphasis added).</b>

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

Another variable identified in this analysis attributes the failure of subversive groups to consolidate immediately to the absence of ties with the Church. However, with the emergence of several clergy members aligned with Liberation Theology, the main groups—Indigenous and peasant—began to be influenced. Although their ideological beginnings differed, the rupture of the Church served as a catalyst for these vulnerable groups to enter the revolutionary scene (Table 5).

**Table 5 – Liberation theology in revolution**

1	It is easy to appreciate that the object here is <b>to break the churches away from Rome, and to establish national popular churches</b> which, as has been the case in China, retain all outward signs and manifestations of their liturgy so as not to arouse suspicion from the faithful. The final objective is to transform the Catholic Church of Latin America to a status similar to that of the present Russian Orthodox Church—that is, into an other instrument for the subjection of the people (MARTINEZ CODÓ, 1963, p. 9, emphasis added).
2	To some, <b>liberation theology is theology; to others, it is revolution</b> . One cannot attempt to understand the social and political undercurrents of Latin America today without also understanding the growing influence of liberation theology upon events as they are unfolding (GOSNELL, 1991, p. 44, emphasis added).
3	Walter LaFeber, professor of history at Cornell University, explains that for centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had been one of the pillars of the status quo in Latin America. However, following the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII in 1961 and 1963, the Second Vatican Council in 1963 to 1965 and the Second Latin American Bishops' Conference in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, <b>the church became “an engine for (religious) revolution”</b> (GOSNELL, 1991, p. 45, emphasis added).
4	It is in this struggle against poverty that liberation theology has encountered its most vigorous opposition, <b>for the theology sees poverty as a result of the manner in which society is structured</b> . To alleviate “dehumanizing poverty” requires changes in society’s structure that require the poor to move into political action (GOSNELL, 1991, p. 45, emphasis added).

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

Another group that needed to be influenced was the Armed Forces. However, this process had little success in the region, with only sporadic cases such as the *Intentona comunista* (Communist uprising) in Brazil in 1935, and the *Força revolucionária secreta* (Secret revolutionary force) in Ecuador in 1960.

### 3.2 The U.S. strategy

This aspect is also evident in the *Military Review* publications concerning the Latin American situation, including South American countries. Corroborating the aim of this study regarding the U.S. response to the prevailing reality at the time, it can be inferred that it was necessary to counter Soviet influence through two fundamental axes: one military and the other social, given that the existing socioeconomic gaps rendered these countries targets for the development of insurgency. Thus:

The threat of “more Cubas” turned President Kennedy’s attention urgently to Latin America. His liberal idealism and anticommunism inspired the Alliance for Progress, which sought to promote social justice and economic growth and a simultaneous counterinsurgency war to combat Soviet-Cuban-inspired revolutionaries (LOVEMAN, 1999, p. 166, our translation).

In the military strategy, ideological indoctrination and anti-subversive military training were established through the creation of various institutions. Among them were the Inter-American Defense College and the School of the Americas, as indicated in the articles analyzed in Table 6.

Table 6 – The U.S. strategy

1	The Communists are already committed everywhere, <b>and unless we approach the problem in a systematic way, with considerable thought, we will simply be paving the way for Mr. Khrushchev</b> in his new and potent tactic internal war (HILSMAN, 1962, p. 22, emphasis added)
2	<b>The latent state of insurgency throughout Latin America calls for new appraisals of political and military strategy to combat Communist exploitation.</b> Political considerations must transcend the military because the programs must be primarily directed toward <b>political, economic, and social development to correct existing contradictions and weaknesses that provide the environment for insurgency.</b> At the same time, a closer relationship between military strategy and politics is needed to maintain a climate of stability without which these programs cannot be carried out (MERCADO, 1969, p. 20, emphasis added).
3	During the past decade, Latin-American <b>graduates have increased from an annual average of 1,000 in 1959 to some 1,600 today.</b> The 350 students who attend the school at any one time represent all Latin-American nations with the exception of Costa Rica, Cuba, Haiti, and Mexico (US ARMY SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS, 1970, p. 93, emphasis added).
4	Before <b>USARSA</b> <sup>3</sup> moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1984, approximately <b>29,000 students graduated from the school when it was located in the Canal Zone.</b> Records indicate that USARSA graduates include three presidents, two ambassadors, 23 ministers and national directors, and 18 chiefs and assistant chiefs of staff. More than 78 graduates eventually occupied significantly influential positions in their respective countries. Meanwhile, the IAAFA located at Albrook Air Force Base, Panama, has graduated more than 20,000 students since 1943. Information on some of its officer graduates indicates that, in addition to one country's president, influential graduates of IAAFA include: four armed forces chiefs of staff, eleven ambassadors and attachés, eight directors of civil aeronautics and civilian corps, nine directors of military schools, and thirty-three directors of national program staffs (ARNOLD, 1987, p. 39-40). Military schools are excellent examples of how we influence future leaders in both military and cultural realms. Latin-American officers associated with US technology and Ideology through IMET-sponsored schools tend toward moderation rather than extremism in their military and political roles (ARNOLD, 1987, p. 40).
5	This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. It is a form of warfare uniquely adapted to what has been strangely called wars of liberation (THOMAS; KUSIER, 1987, p. 25).
6	One objective of the United States in Latin America in the current context <b>is the exclusion or reduction of the Soviet presence or influence</b> , as an unfriendly extra continental power (AYLSWORTH, 1988, p. 28, emphasis added).

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

<sup>3</sup> USARSA: US Army School of the Americas.

From the literature review presented, the existence of a U.S. strategy aimed at neutralizing the Soviet strategy is undeniable. Various perceptions from different authors support this information, while also analyzing it from multiple angles. Thus:

The anti-subversive struggle was the hidden side of the Alliance for Progress, the U.S. massive assistance program for Latin America, launched by President Kennedy, which combined highly publicized civic action programs with clandestine terrorism and massive violence (GILL, 2005, p. 105, our translation).

For Gill (2005), it is clear that the adopted strategy had a hidden side, which would bring severe social harm to Latin communities. The Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), through the Inter-American Defense College (IADC), promoted the National Security Doctrine, which enabled the alignment of American countries with U.S. interests. It was later a driving force behind the dictatorships in South America. Also contributing to these purposes was the School of the Americas, as Leal Buitrago (2003, p. 78, our translation) states that

The military training of Latin Americans in the United States and later in the Panama Canal Zone contributed to the transfer of the U.S. concept of national security to the armies of the region.

This analysis, based on *Military Review*, corroborates what Loveman (1999), who also presents new and important data to be considered, stated:

For the United States, however, the most important concern was battling against Soviet “wars of national liberation” and preventing the spread of the Cuban Revolution. From 1961 to 1963 the Kennedy administration built a new counterinsurgency security structure, the army’s Special Forces were substantially expanded, and a Special Action Force was installed in the Canal Zone at Fort Gulick, designated for special warfare missions in Latin America (LOVEMAN, 1999, p. 170).

[...]

Between 1961 and 1964, the School of the Americas in the Canal Zone (called the U.S. Army Caribbean School until 1963) trained over 16,000 Latin American personnel in counterinsurgency and civic action (LOVEMAN, 1999, p. 170-171).

The study presented by Loveman (1999) highlights the U.S. effort to prevent the ideological expansion of the Soviet Union into the Americas, which involved the establishment of major military infrastructures and the deployment of significant economic resources.

#### 4 SHIFT IN THE SOVIET STRATEGY

Another theme addressed is Guevara's foco theory and his desire to disseminate it throughout Latin America, along with his ideal of creating several Vietnams in the region in order to divert U.S. resources and attention. According to the analysis conducted, this doctrine had specific features when applied in Cuba, given that the circumstances in each country were different—something that went unacknowledged—ultimately proved to be a fatal mistake, costing Guevara his life (Table 7).

Table 7 – The failure of Guevara's foco theory

1	The elitist consequences of the Cuban experience were reinforced by what happened in Latin America after 1959. <b>According to Castro and Guevara, the whole continent was ripe for revolution.</b> But it did not occur (GOLDENBERG, 1970, p. 44, emphasis added).
2	The modern history of guerrilla movements in Latin America dates from Castro's Cuban victory in 1959 because that victory made guerrilla warfare appear successful. <b>On this basis, a number of campaigns were launched in Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil. They failed</b> mainly because counter guerrilla action in the field was successful and the guerrilla movements themselves were not united (JANKE, 1977, p. 62, emphasis added).
3	Che believed that by inserting a group of guerrillas into an already explosive political situation, the revolutionary conditions could be created. Che saw Bolivia as a logical location for the establishment of such an armed foco. Che was led to believe that the population <b>would be receptive to revolution because of the high illiteracy rate (70 percent), endemic poverty and the fighting spirit of the people as exemplified by the 1952 Bolivian Revolution</b> (WAGHELSTELN, 1979, p. 41, emphasis added).
4	As Ernesto Che Guevara discovered in Bolivia 20 years ago, <b>the peasant is frequently too concerned with survival to become involved in political-military activities</b> (VOUGHT; BABB, 1990, p. 19, emphasis added). <b>The idea that poverty or famine is the cause of insurgency is another misconception.</b> The people of Nicaragua did not revolt against Anastasio Somoza because they were hungry or poor. The revolt was a result of growing frustration with the corruption of the government (VOUGHT; BABB, 1990, p. 19-20, emphasis added).
5	Che told Fidel he wanted to leave Cuba and start the liberation of Latin America from central Bolivia. <b>He desired to aid the Vietnamese by creating two or three "Vietnams" within the Western hemisphere</b> and thus strain the resources of Cuba's primary adversary, the United States (WAGHELSTELN, 1979, p. 40-41, emphasis added).

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 also gave rise to tensions and resentments between the Soviet Union and Cuba. Three distinct strategic orientations began to take shape within the bloc: one aligned with Soviet ideological directives, another with the Chinese approach, and a third with the Cuban-Castrist perspective, rooted in Guevara's foco theory. By 1967, following Guevara's death, the Soviet Union's policy underwent a shift, driven by the perception that armed revolution had not produced the expected results and that a new strategy of rapprochement was needed.

After 1967, a new form of guerrilla warfare emerged—urban guerrilla warfare—introducing a different approach (Table 8).

Table 8 – Changes in the Soviet Strategy

1	<p><b>The policy adopted by the Soviet Union during the Cuban crisis of 1962 provoked much resentment among the Castroites</b>, and its policy in the following years seemed even worse (GOLDENBERG, 1970, p. 44-45, emphasis added).</p> <p>To the Cubans, it seemed that the Soviet leaders had concluded that the objective situation in most Latin-American countries was not revolutionary and that the best strategy to undermine the United States would consist in having closer diplomatic and economic relations with the existing Latin-American Governments which Castro regarded as counterrevolutionary lackeys of imperialism. Not only did the Soviet Union wish to come to terms with these regimes, it even declared its preparedness to extend credits and economic and technological aid to them which provoked extreme anger in Cuba.</p> <p>It is quite possible that still another consideration determined Soviet policy: <b>Cuba costs them a lot of money, and they are reluctant to spend still more in order to sustain any new “Socialist” country appearing in the hemisphere</b> (GOLDENBERG, 1970, p. 45, emphasis added).</p>
2	<p><b>The Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) conference held in Havana in 1967 confirmed the primacy of revolution through armed struggle</b> and Cuba's role of leadership in the movement (AYLS-WORTH, 1988, p. 34, emphasis added).</p>
3	<p>Recent Latin-American experience shows the development <b>of a new threat the urban guerrilla</b>, whose direct object is control of the population through terrorism (MARTINEZ CODO, 1970, p. 73, emphasis added).</p>
4	<p>For a time, the success of the Cuban peasant guerrilla overshadowed all other revolutionary methods in Latin America. <b>The recent failure of rural guerrillas in other part of Latin America has placed urban warfare back in its former position of primary interest</b> for Communist subversion (MARTINEZ CODO, 1971, p. 3, emphasis added).</p>

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

Although the Soviet Union ceased to provide the necessary economic support, the revolutionary project persisted. In 1980, subversive processes also became evident, requiring both regional and extra-regional support. In this context, Vietnam entered the scene by supporting the insurgency in El Salvador (Table 9).

Table 9 – Evidences from other sources supporting the revolution

1	<p>It is no secret during the decade of the 1980s, the <b>Vietnamese Communists have actively supported the insurgency in El Salvador</b>. This external support, particularly specialized commando training, has helped the Salvadoran insurgents to score stunning tactical successes such as the spectacular attacks of fortified brigade compounds and a military training center (ROSELLLO, 1990, p. 71 emphasis added)</p>
2	<p><b>The FMLN's hemispheric brethren, Cuba's Fidel Castro and Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega, keep this supply network operational.</b> After repeated denials, Ortega finally admitted, in 1987, that Nicaragua secretly supplied the FMLN insurgents with weapons (ROSELLLO, 1990, p 72, emphasis added).</p>
3	<p>In 1985, the <b>diary of captured FMLN “Comandante” Nidia Diaz, “listed 33 Salvadoran guerrillas... sent to training courses in Vietnam, Bulgaria, East Germany, and the Soviet Union in 1984 and 1985”</b> Diaz, herself, was scheduled to attend training in Vietnam (ROSELLLO, 1990, p. 72-73, emphasis added).</p>

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information from the *Military Review* archive.

In the 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. perception of subversion shifted, lost momentum, and redirected its efforts toward other areas.

The “security” issues that will likely involve the US Armed Forces in Latin America in the 1990s and beyond are not strategic questions, border conflicts or even combating insurgent movements. Rather, the US Armed Forces will become increasingly involved in fighting threats to US interests that derive from the narcotics traffic, criminal networks and the sociopolitical deterioration and disintegration in some countries (LOWENTHAL, 1991, p. 62).

Collective security began to demand a multidimensional approach, giving way to human security and cooperative security, focusing, as Lowenthal (1991) comments, on the control of organized crime and drug trafficking—problems understood as new threats to the United States.

## 5 THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND INSURGENCIES IN SOUTH AMERICA

The success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 marked a new phase for South America within the context of the Cold War. According to Jiménez and Franchi (2016, p. 56, our translation), two facts are relevant: “(i) Cuba began a process of ideological exportation in Latin America,”, which led to “the military doctrine of counter-guerrilla warfare and internal subversion beginning to dominate U.S. policy in Latin America” (GILL, 2005, p. 105, our translation); and “(ii) From that moment on, left-wing groups began to take shape in the rest of the American countries” (JIMÉNEZ; FRANCHI, 2016, p. 56).

As part of the consolidation process of the Cuban Revolution, hundreds of members of the regular Cuban army were executed, which, in some way, heightened the spirits of the members of the Armed Forces in the region, as stated by Loveman (1999, p. 172, our translation).

Latin American military leaders, shaken by the Cuban revolutionaries’ execution of over six hundred officers and destruction of the old armed forces, sensed the immediate danger for themselves and their institutions posed by weak civilian governments.

Up to that point, the Armed Forces had primarily focused their doctrine on external warfare. This new strategy including internal warfare, guerrilla warfare, the *foco* theory, and urban guerrilla tactics, was unfamiliar to South American armies. Conversely, the experiences in Algeria and Vietnam allowed the United States to develop a doctrine in this area. Thus:

After Fidel Castro’s triumph, Latin American armies found themselves compelled to accept the Pentagon’s directive regarding the “internal enemy,” viewing their own co-nationals as potential adversaries according to the new concept of ideological frontiers (VILLANUEVA, 1972, p. 125, our translation).

Following the consolidation of the Cuban Revolution, and after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, Cuba's subsequent decision, driven by the fear of a U.S. invasion, was to host Soviet troops on the island. In turn, the Soviet intention to equalize forces due to the presence of bases in Türkiye resulted in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis:

As part of the agreement ending the U.S.-Soviet missile crisis, the United States promised not to invade Cuba. This promise allowed a revolutionary socialist government to survive in the Americas as both a platform for Latin American insurgency and a military and political asset for the Soviets until the late 1980s (LOVEMAN, 1999, p. 166-167).

These events, according to Loveman (1999), transformed Cuba into an advanced Soviet outpost in the Americas, promoting revolution across the continent. This support was evident in the early years through military training and economic aid, with "Cuba reportedly training between 2,000 and 3,000 Latin American guerrillas between 1962 and 1967, and continuing to do so at least until 1970" (ROLLEMBERG, 2001, p. 18).

Jiménez and Franchi (2016) discuss two periods within the revolutionary process: a first characterized by rural guerrilla warfare based on the doctrine developed by Guevara during his Cuban experience; and a second based on urban guerrilla warfare. Thus:

The unsuccessful revolt led by Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Bolivia, which ended with his capture and execution by Bolivian officers in 1967, epitomizes the failure of rural guerrilla warfare in Latin America" (HALPERING, 1976 *apud* FELDMANN, 2005, p. 11).

After Guevara's death, the first revolutionary period in South America ended. However, a second period began, characterized by urban guerrilla warfare, in which Abraham Guillén and Carlos Marighella gained prominence:

A second revolutionary period took shape in the analyses of Abraham Guillén, materialized in his work "Strategy of Urban Guerrilla Warfare." This work and the "Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla," written by Carlos Marighella, marked a new operational scenario with the idea of operating in cities (JIMÉNEZ; FRANCHI, 2016, p. 57, our translation).

This period, like the first, was also repressed. The Armed Forces had developed military doctrine focused on internal security, and, additionally, most South American countries were under military regimes. It should also be emphasized that U.S. support against subversive groups, based on the National Security Doctrine, continued.

Another consequence, a product of the Cuban Revolution, was the militarization of governments. In 1963, Ecuador would initiate the first coup d'état, followed by Brazil in 1964, which would later be replicated throughout South America, with the exception of Venezuela and Colombia.

As Loveman (1999) states, the fragility of institutions was a characteristic of these states, and this was perceived by the Armed Forces, “Military officers had long ago identified weak political institutions and poor government performance as impediments to development and inducements to revolution” (LOVEMAN, 1999, p. 169).

It is important to highlight that the Armed Forces have always been solid institutions, characteristic of their hierarchical and disciplined structure. Thus, facing a subversive threat and the expansion of communist ideology, they decided to take control of the states. This pattern of behavior is not new in Latin America. From the study conducted by Loveman, it can be observed that the Armed Forces’ pattern of behavior regarding intervention in political life was constant:

Understanding the reasons for military coups in the early 1960s requires not only reference to the Cuban Revolution, U.S. policies, and the Cold War but also to historical regional patterns and to immediate national circumstances. A study of military coups from the 1820s to the 1960s found that their incidence, despite periodicity and evident peaks (1820s, 1840s, 1850s, 1870s, 1910–1915, early 1930s, late 1940s, 1962–1964) had been relatively constant (LOVEMAN, 1999, p. 173).

In 1978, Ecuador initiated the process of handing power back to civilians, and “in the 1980s, the so-called redemocratization process began in Latin America. U.S. governments no longer believed that military regimes were necessary, or even tolerable in the region” (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 76, our translation). The **perception of human rights violations** eroded the military regimes, which gradually returned to their barracks.

Subversion and guerrilla warfare were processes that continued in many countries. However, these groups became characterized by having short periods of duration. Nevertheless, some groups have persisted to the present day<sup>4</sup>.

## 6 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY DOCTRINE

The United States National Security Act of 1947 gave rise to institutions such as the NSC, the CIA, and educational centers like the War College. These institutions were replicated in South America, with adaptations to the realities of each country.

Over the years, these institutions underwent changes in both their organizational structures and modes of operation. Among the most significant was the shift in the leadership of intelligence agencies, which were formerly headed by military personnel and are now mostly administered by civilians.

These organizations have persisted over time and continue to exist within state structures today, as shown in Table 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ver Jiménez e Franchi (2016), “Terrorismo na América do Sul: o caso de ‘Alfaro Vive Carajo’”.

**Table 10 – Institutions of the National Security Doctrine**

Country	Security Advisory Body	Intelligence office
Brazil	Conselho Nacional de Defesa	Agência Brasileira de Inteligência
Argentina	Consejo de Defensa Nacional	Agencia Federal de Inteligencia
Peru	Consejo de Seguridad Nacional	Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia
Ecuador	Consejo de Seguridad Pública y del Estado	Secretaría Nacional de Inteligencia
Uruguay	Consejo de Defensa Nacional	Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia de Estado
Bolivia	Consejo Supremo de Defensa Nacional	Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia
Chile	Consejo de Seguridad Nacional	Agencia Nacional de Inteligencia
Colombia	Consejo de Seguridad Nacional	Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia
Paraguay	Consejo de Defensa Nacional	Secretaria Nacional de Inteligencia
Venezuela	Consejo de Defensa de la Nación	Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional

**Source:** Donadio (2016), official websites of each country and institution.

The NSC became the highest-level advisory body, composed of authorities who, at the time, represented the four base powers of the National Security Doctrine: Political, Economic, Psychosocial, and Military. As Child (1994, p. 32, our translation) states, “Power is a constant concern of the national security state and geopoliticians. Power is visualized in four ‘fields’: economic, political, psychosocial, and military”.

Similarly, intelligence systems played an important role. They were responsible for acquiring and processing information with the intention of preventing the proliferation of subversive groups. It is important to highlight the difficulty in carrying out this task, as the internal enemy was hidden among their own co-nationals:

Thus, in this anti-subversive war, priority was given to the psychological component through intelligence work. For this purpose, the U.S. National Security State institutions designed for this purpose were copied, particularly those of “intelligence” (LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003, p. 84, our translation).

The institutes, schools, and centers dedicated to the study of state security and defense played a decisive role in civil-military relations in South America, as they became the nexus between state entities and the armed forces. Child (1994, p. 33-34, our translation) presents, in his analysis, the phenomenon observed in the case of Ibero-American countries.

The role of the higher war colleges provides us with an illustrative example. In the United States, these colleges [...] were military institutions with a primarily military curriculum and a predominantly military student body. Civilians were government officials, and their representation among students did not exceed 10%. Such institutions did not devote much attention to the analysis of major national civilian or economic problems, nor did they have direct ties to political decision-making institutions. The opposite

occurred in many parallel institutions in Latin America, especially in the Southern Cone, such as the Superior War College of Brazil, the National Defense School of Argentina, the Center for High Military Studies of Peru, and many others.

From the foregoing, it is observed that the connotation of these defense study centers in the United States differs from the reality experienced by South American countries. The role of the armed forces within the state context also varied, evidencing a greater level of influence of the armed forces over the state.

In these cases, the curriculum analyzed national issues in the economic, political, military, diplomatic, and psychosocial fields, seeking to propose solutions to these problems. There was greater participation of civilians among the students (up to 50% in some cases), who were government officials, businesspeople, doctors, university professors, religious figures, professionals, etc. In turn, these institutes had close ties with their respective National Security Councils, functioning as analysis groups (think tanks) that provided solutions for major national problems (CHILD, 1994, p. 34, our translation).

As Child highlights, by bringing together military personnel and civilians from different state structures, these centers transformed into entities where national realities were discussed. They also became true centers of national thought, where alternative strategic solutions to the countries' problems were proposed.

**Table 11 – National study centers in South America**

Country	Institution	Creation	Director	Dependência
Brazil	Escola Superior de Guerra	1949	Military	MDN
Argentina	Escuela de Defensa Nacional	1950	Civil	
Peru	Centro de Altos Estudios Militares	1950	Military (SP)*	MDN
Ecuador	Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales	1972	Civil	
Uruguay	Centro de Altos Estudios Nacionales	1993	Military (SP)*	MDN
Bolivia	Escola de Altos Estudios Nacionales	1959	Military	FFAA
Chile	Academia Nacional de Estudios Políticos y Estratégicos	1947	Military	MDN
Colombia	Escuela Superior de Guerra	1909	Military	FFAA
Paraguay	Instituto de Altos Estudios Estratégicos	1968	Military	CODENA
Venezuela	Instituto de Altos Estudios de Seguridad de la Nación	1970	Military	MDN

\*SP: Retired

**Source:** the author based the information provided on the websites of each national study center.

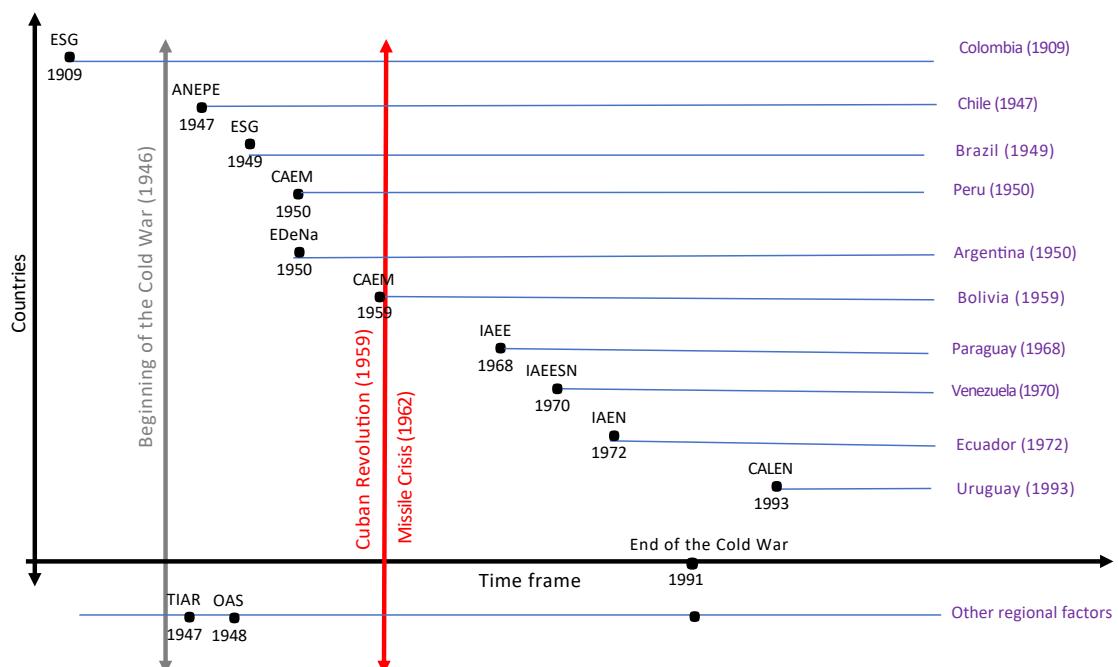
In Table 11, it is observed that institutions dedicated to national studies related to Defense are over 45 years old, with Uruguay's being the most recent (created in 1993). In the Uruguayan case, its mission is to prepare civilians and military personnel for leadership and advisory roles in the field of National Defense.

In the ten countries analyzed, with the exception of Argentina and Ecuador, the national Defense study institutions are directed by active or reserve military personnel, and their dependence is directly linked to security entities, which may include the Ministry of Defense, NSC, or the Armed Forces.

In these two countries, the institutes focused on Defense studies have become institutions directly linked to civilian educational bodies. This evidences a clear departure from the original conception under which they were created. Thus, the area of security and defense has become just another faculty within universities.

It is interesting to note that these centers interact with each other, receiving foreign students and faculty, establishing a continuous improvement in the educational process among them, sharing their best practices, resulting in permanent strengthening (Graph 1).

**Graph 1 – Establishment of national study centers**



**Source:** The author.

It can be observed that the majority of South American countries that sought to structure schools and institutions specifically dedicated to national studies, relating them to security issues, are organized into two main groups. The first group has a temporal demarcation set by the beginning of the Cold War, in 1946, and comprises Chile (1947), Brazil (1949), Peru (1950), Argentina (1950), and Bolivia (1959). The second group was formed after the Cuban Revolution and the missile crisis. This group includes Paraguay (1968), Venezuela (1970), and Ecuador (1972). Two countries appear outside these groups: Colombia (1909) and Uruguay (1993).

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

Broadly speaking, the Soviet strategy was aimed at promoting the political and economic distancing of Latin American countries from the United States. By doing so, in addition to gaining adherents to its cause, it achieved greater freedom of action in other regions.

The strategy sought to weaken the United States by undermining Latin America from within, promoting guerrilla warfare; expanding, whenever possible, the number of nations with socialist-oriented governments; or transforming influenced countries into anti-Western political-military organizations through political-ideological indoctrination, military training, and economic support. Religious influence was a parallel event that, in one way or another, became linked to this process.

The National Security Doctrine in South America was a response from the United States, through a political, military, and economic approach, from which it maintained a strategy that emerged from an idea of a holistic solution (Alliance for Progress) to finally arrive at a military solution.

The creation of the National Security Doctrine is based on the framework that originated in the U.S. National Security Act of 1947, considered the basic instrument in the conception of the national security state. Under this law, the NSC and the CIA were created, institutions that were replicated in South America and complemented by the national defense colleges.

Each country developed versions of this doctrine, based on their own realities and geopolitical positions, but with a common characteristic: the culture of militarism, typical of South American countries, as an alternative. Its validity extended over time, with representative variations in some countries and consensus in others.

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