

The Subregions: Institutions and Agreements

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The existence of elements that indicate the progress in the regional security situation does not hide a gradual and apparently irreversible process to the divergence of interests (and consequently of agendas) between the different sub-regional spaces or spheres.

Currently, the American system and in particular and the inter-American security system are undergoing a bifurcation between regional actors and the powers. A clear epitome of this desire for disengagement is the creation of UNASUR as a source of dialogue between South American countries. It is seen how the Inter-American system is pierced by a continuous path of change and continuity. Since its inception, the mutation of the OAS has been in response to the expansion of democracy, development and growth of the members. By doing this, the organization leaves aside questions of political nature that are taken in advance by different groups to mark its sphere of influence within the region.

Within this range of regional actors, the hemisphere is organizing in relation to common interests and agendas. It can be seen then as sub-spaces and defense cooperation were emerging in well distinctive and defined geographical areas. In this respect, it can be found that South America (with Brazil's prominence role) holds a defense agenda based on conventional threats, and promotes dialogue and negotiated positions in multilateral agencies, the Andean subregion in which political instability prevails, that can be added to the list of major threats to drug traffickers and guerrillas. Central America, meanwhile, reveals the geographical proximity to the United States, the threats of drug trafficking, public security tied to the economic infeasibility together with social and environmental disasters. The latter meet with the concerns of Caribbean insular states, for which a hurricane can mean their practical disappearance. As a result of this differentiation of regional interest, the homogenization of the agendas in the context of scarce economic and political resources, it seems unfeasible for the region.

During the last 20 years, the American system has experienced a transformation at the regional level. In defense, many actors have emerged in response to the attempt of unifying themes of mutual interest. In this regard, the following have been established:

- The **Union de Nations of South America (UNASUR)** created in 2008 by the Treaty of UNASUR. Within this union and after a strong Brazilian initiative, in December of 2008, the South American Defense Council (SDC) was created. The SDC seeks to enforce and consolidate the members' interests in defense matters.
- The **MERCOSUR and the meeting of Ministers of Internal Affairs** held its first meeting in the city of Asuncion on May 30th, 1997. This level of cooperation was established as a sub-working group by decision 7/96 of December 17th, 1996 of the Common Market Council. Countries have been holding periodic meetings where they analyze the possible joint operations against drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism, etc., especially in the Triple Frontera zone (tri - border where

Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay confluence). Thus, in 1998 a Plan for Cooperation and Reciprocal Assistance in Regional Security was created within the Mercosur framework. This Plan mainly intends to coordinate actions and information referred to drug trafficking, terrorism and other crime-related activities in border zones.

- The **Andean Community** has several programs on security and peace: Democracy and Human Rights, Judicial and Police Cooperation, Drug Enforcement and Security and Andean Zone of Peace.
- The **Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC)** was created in 1997. This Conference represents a major forum for security issues in Central America, and has been very active since its very inception. Its creation can be framed inside the process of the Peace Accords in the region and the development of the concept of democratic security.
- The **Central American Integration System (SICA)** was born on December 13, 1991, in the framework of the XI Summit of Central American Presidents. The constitutive Protocol provides that: "Central is a new model of regional security, for protection, protection and promotion of Human Rights to ensure legal certainty and to assure peaceful relations among States in the region."
- The **Regional Security System** was created in 1982. The RSS is a collective alliance, a defense system seeking for coordination and cooperation. The System is usually referred as a "hybrid" organization because security forces comprise both military and police personnel, what is a characteristic of the Caribbean security structure as not every country in the region has armed forces.
- The **Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)** is an institution of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). It started its functions since September 2006, by the Inter-governmental Agreement on the Twenty Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM.
- The **Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police**. This organization is composed of Commissioners of Police from 24 countries. The Association was created in 1972 and intends to be the clearinghouse for the promotion of common policies regarding public security problems.
- The **Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)**. This new alliance is formed in 2005 as a concrete commitment of the three Trustees with a regional focus for North America.

As it can be denoted, the multiplicity of currently existing organizations responds to regional cooperation logic that emerged mainly after the cold war era, replacing the pre-existing dynamics that the United States had once established with the *Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional* in the Region. This looks to consolidate institutionally issues and common challenges and non-conventional threats among neighbors.