# The Inter-American Security System: Changes and Challenges

**Brigitte Weiffen**

Beginning in the mid to late 1980's, democracy took root in most countries in the Western hemisphere. This development in conjunction with the end of the Cold War led to a revival of the OAS and the initiation of new regional security institutions. The strategic framework of the Cold War had consisted in the perception of a threat outside the hemisphere and the monopoly of the U.S. government in defining and identifying the enemy. As these structures lost relevance, a new security agenda came to the fore, encompassing both traditional security threats like territorial disputes and non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism and drug-trafficking. Additionally, security was increasingly defined as the establishment of improved civil-military relations and the collective defense of democracy. However, the war against terrorism initiated by the U.S. after September 11, 2001 led to a revitalization of strategic framework of the Cold War. Hence, the paper analyzes how the regional security system in the Americas has changed since the early 1990s. It traces the major innovations with respect to its legal and institutional framework, the impact of the hegemonic position of the United States in the hemisphere and the challenges posed by the emergence of sub-regional organizations.

Key-words: OAS, regional security, western hemisphere, regional institutions

A partir de meados dos anos 80, a democracia se enraizou na maioria dos países latino-americanos. Esta característica, conjugado ao fim da Guerra Fria, propiciou o renascimento da Organização dos Estados Americanos (OEA) e a construção de novas instituições de segurança regional. O quadro estratégico da Guerra Fria consistia na percepção de uma ameaça externa ao hemisfério e monopólio dos Estados Unidos na definição e identificação do inimigo. Com a perda de relevância dessas estruturas, uma nova agenda de segurança veio à tona, incorporando tanto as ameaças de segurança tradicionais, como disputas territoriais, e ameaças de segurança não-tradicionais, como terrorismo e tráfico de drogas. Adicionalmente, segurança passou a ser crescente entendida como o estabelecimento de relações civis-militares estáveis e pela defesa coletiva da democracia. No entanto, a guerra contra o terrorismo iniciada pelos EUA após o 11 de setembro de 2001 levou à revitalização do quadro estratégico da Guerra Fria. Esse trabalho analisa como o sistema de segurança regional na América se modificou desde o início dos anos 90. Sua proposta é traçar quais as inovações no quadro jurídico e institucional da região, o impacto sobre a posição hegemônica dos Estados Unidos no hemisfério e os desafios colocados pelo surgimento de organizações sub-regionais.

Palavras-chave: OEA, segurança regional, América Latina, instituições regionais

In 1948, 21 nations of the Western hemisphere signed the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), affirming their commitment to common goals and their respect for each nation's sovereignty. Simultaneously, they also adopted the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the first international statement of its kind.

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The OAS Charter affirmed that one of the central purposes of the organization was "to strengthen the peace and security of the continent." According to Chapter VI of the Charter, the organization defines itself as a system of collective security, and from its very start, the creation of conflict resolution mechanisms was among the fundamental goals of the OAS.

Additionally, as a direct consequence of World War II, several treaties and conventions related to hemispheric security were issued for which the OAS is depositary. In 1945, at the Inter-American Conference on the Problems of War and Peace, held in Mexico City, representatives of

20 countries adopted the Act of Chapultepec, which called for the region to respond collectively to aggression against any American state. Two years later, this concept took form in the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (IATRA) signed in Rio de Janeiro. The IATRA, also known as Rio Treaty, was amended in 1975. However, this reform protocol never entered into force due to lack of ratifications, and several incidents, like the United States' active participation in the 1954 overthrow of the Guatemalan government and its 1962 Santo Domingo invasion, have undermined the credibility of this treaty as a security instrument (Fontana 2001, p. 42). As an additional instrument designed to regulate conflicts between American states, the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement was signed in Bogotá in 1948. It delineated formal mechanisms of conflict resolution which, however, have never been applied up to now (Kurtenbach, 2002b).

The OAS Charter also did not specify any measures or procedures to be adopted in case of an aggression, and during the Cold War, the organization was unable to respond to the ongoing conflicts in Central America and the frequent U.S. interventions in its "backyard". That is why it was regarded as politically irrelevant and entered into a long phase of agony during the 1970s and 1980s (Frohmann, 1995). Hence, the most important initiatives towards security cooperation did not occur before the 1990s, a fact that is attributable to the end of the Cold War as well as to (re-) democratization in most Latin American countries. Both factors set in motion a process of rethinking hemispheric security.

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In the following section, the paper will outline the changes and developments in the regional security system triggered by the end of the Cold War and by the democratization of the OAS member states. Section 3 will then evaluate the security challenges the region is facing after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Both sections begin with a description of the major innovations in legal and institutional framework and subsequently discuss their significance. Section 4 assesses the problems and prospects for the future of the inter-American security system in the light of booming sub-regional organizations.

## The End of the Cold War and the Inter-American Security System

Since its origins in 1948, the Organization of American States has expanded to include the nations of the English-speaking Caribbean and Canada, giving the OAS a broader perspective that encompasses the entire hemisphere. Nowadays, it has 35 member states, with English, Spanish, Portuguese and French as its official languages.

During the Cold War, the OAS was perceived as an instrument consolidating the hegemonic status of the U.S. As the Cold War intensified, U.S. security concerns and the desire to fight communism overshadowed all other foreign policy goals. In fact, in several instances, the U.S. government backed clearly anti-communist authoritarian regimes in the region and hindered or even abolished democracy (Shaw, 2004, 2007). Hence, the strategic framework of the Cold War consisted in the perception of a threat outside the hemisphere and the monopoly of the U.S. government in defining and identifying the enemy.

The post-Cold War world made a new content of the concept of regional security necessary (Hurrell, 1998, Sennes, Onuki & Oliveira, 2004). Anti-communism no longer served as a guiding principle. On the one hand, there still were traditional security threats that had to be addressed. While interstate war was a remarkably rare event in Latin America throughout the 20th century, there have nevertheless been a number of militarized interstate disputes or more subtle strategic or enduring rivalries resulting from undefined terrestrial and maritime border lines, from conflicts about resources or from competition for regional predominance (Child, 1985, Fuentes, 2008, Grabendorff, 1982, Mares, 2001). On the other hand, the concept of regional security increasingly includes problems like drug-trafficking, international crime, migration and environmental degradation. Additionally, in the course of democratization in the region, security was defined as the collective defense of democracy and the improvement of civil-military relations, both of which are supposed to guarantee stability (for a discussion on the renewal of civil-military relations after military rule in Latin America, see f.ex. Agüero & Fuentes, 2009, Fitch, 1998, Mares, 1998, Millett & Gold-Biss, 1996).

## Normative and institutional innovations in the 1990s

The 1991 meeting of the OAS General Assembly in Santiago, Chile is considered a turning point in regional relations (Fontana, 2001, p. 42, Vaky & Muñoz, 1993). At this meeting, the OAS member states committed to the renewal of the inter-American security system under the changed conceptual and political context after the end of the Cold War. During the 1990s, reforms of the existing legal instruments and institutions were enacted or at least envisioned, and several new legal instruments and institutions were created within and outside the framework of the OAS.

***Legal instruments***

The Latin American Nuclear Free Weapon Zone, established by the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco, dates back to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the sense of alarm created among states of the region that a superpower nuclear confrontation might occur on their soil. The Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Organismo para la Proscripción de las Armas Nucleares en América Latina – OPANAL) is an inter-governmental agency created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco to ensure that the obligations of the treaty are met. However, the extension of the nuclear-free zone to the entire Latin America was realized only in 1994, after Argentina and Brazil had finally refrained from their nuclear programs and ratified or dropped their reservations regarding the Tlatelolco Treaty (Davies, 2004, pp. 57-58).

Important legal instruments created in the framework of the OAS during the 1990s included the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Materials, adopted in 1997, and the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition. The latter convention was adopted in 1999, and its stated objective is to contribute to regional openness and transparency in the acquisition of conventional weapons by exchanging information regarding such acquisitions for the purpose of promoting confidence among the states in the Americas (Goldblat, 2003, p. 235).

Another frequently discussed topic was the future of the Inter-American Treaty on Reciprocal Assistance. The IATRA had already been signed before the foundation of the OAS, but had been incorporated into the OAS Charter as security instrument, applicable to the states that ratified it. According to observers from many member states, this collective defense and security arrangement has been largely inactive and is outdated and obsolete: Whenever an external threat occurred and the Treaty was invoked, the invocation merely consisted in declarations of solidarity, but never led to common action. From the perspective of some other states, however, among them the U.S., the IATRA is a useful tool and should stay in force (cf. Radseck, 2005, Shaw, 2004). Hence, as far as this Treaty is concerned, no reform attempts were made during the 1990s.

***Institutions***

While the OAS Charter and the Rio Treaty had been designed for collective security and collective defense in order to address threats among members as well as common external threats, institutional changes in the 1990s were characterized by a shift in focus towards cooperative security. Cooperative security arrangements deal with risks rather than with threats inside or outside the states that constitute it (Wallander & Keohane, 1999). In this type of arrangement, conflict management refers to confidence-building between rivals and measures to counter the risk of political instability.

The most important institutional innovation within the OAS on the way to a cooperative management of defense and security issues was the creation of the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CHS). Originally, it came into existence in 1992 as a special commission through the provisions of the 1991 OAS General Assembly. In 1995, it became a permanent organ. It is chaired by the Permanent Representative of one of the member states and holds meetings at least once a month. In general, the agenda of the CHS is determined by the mandates of the General Assembly. Its original task was to discuss and redefine the concept of security in the region. To this ends, it was commissioned to prepare a conference on security in the Americas, which finally took place in 2003. In addition, the Permanent Council instructs the CHS to consider and take action on those General Assembly resolutions that pertain to hemispheric security. The CHS might also take into consideration other resolutions that, according to its Chair, are directly related to its agenda.

Another important topic for which the OAS initially did not create a separate institution, but delivered a se-

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ries of conferences and declarations are confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). To begin with, the objective of confidence-building measures is to contribute to the reduction, or in some cases, the elimination of the causes of distrust, tensions, and hostilities. Hence, confidence-building measures are the main tool to move from the logic of confrontation to the logic of cooperation (Donadio & Tibiletti, 1998, p. 108, Rojas Aravena, 1998, p. 136). Furthermore, confidence-building is also related to democracy: Confidence-building measures are useful devices for the management of civil-military relations in countries that, after a period of military rule, are still in the process of consolidating democratic institutions (Diamint, 2000). Since 1992, the General Assembly passed resolutions encouraging member states to carry out diverse types of CSBMs and to share information on the implemented measures with the other member states. Due to their own experiences with those measures, Argentina, Chile and Brazil took the lead in promoting the topic. A first Meeting of Experts took place in Buenos Aires in 1994. Subsequently, the regional conferences in Santiago (1995) and San Salvador (1998) on CSBM issued declarations which, apart from some general considerations, formulated recommendations how to apply concrete steps towards confidence-building. The Declaration of Santiago of 1995 contains a set of eleven CSBMs whose application is highly recommended. The measures include the participation in international security and defense mechanisms, exchange of information concerning defense policies and military exercises, joint activities and cooperation of neighboring countries as well as peace education and courses for civilians and military personnel. In the Declaration of San Salvador of 1998, the list of recommended CSBMs was amended (Arévalo de León, 2002, Fontana, 2001, 2003).

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Additional steps toward hemispheric cooperation were taken outside the OAS. In 1994, U.S. President Bill Clinton invited all presidents and prime ministers of the Americas to the first Summit of the Americas which took place in Miami. The Summit was interpreted as a signal of departure from the former U.S. practice of unilateralism and support for authoritarian regimes and towards the promotion of democracy and cooperative politics in the region (Fontana, 2003, pp. 173-175). In spite of its importance for cooperation, security issues were not part of the agenda of the Miami Summit. This is why U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry decided to convoke the first Defense Ministerial of the Americas Meeting, which was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S., in 1995 and perpetuated biannually. Subsequent meetings took place in Bariloche, Argentina (1996), Cartagena de Indias, Colombia (1998), Manaus, Brazil (2000), Santiago, Chile (2002), Quito, Ecuador (2004), Managua, Nicaragua (2006), and the most recent one in Banff, Canada (2008). The Ninth Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas will be held in Bolivia in November 2010. The Defense Ministerial does not take binding decisions, but is regarded as a noteworthy discussion forum where current hemispheric security and defense topics can be addressed. At the Second Defense Ministerial of the Americas in 1996, for instance, the ministers identified the lack of civilian experts in the field of defense and security as major obstacle to the civilian control of the armed forces. They decided to create the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, a civilian counterpart to the Inter-American Defense College, in order to train civilians for positions in defense ministries and parliamentary defense commissions.

Other hemispheric security institutions include the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) and the Inter-American Defense College. The IADB was founded in 1942 with the purpose of coordinating the defense of the Americas during the Second World War. It is based in Washington D.C. and according to its statutes, conducted by a military representative of the United States. In contrast to TIAR, it had not been formally incorporated in the OAS structure. For a long time, the IADB did not have much significance since the member states did not want to equip it with operational capacity. Some OAS member states are not even members of the IADB, either because they do not have a military (as Costa Rica and some Caribbean states) or because the IADB was not considered sufficiently useful. During the 1990s, it was questioned whether these institutions were still needed. Many member states felt that the IADB constituted an exercise in military diplomacy relatively isolated from other dimensions of diplomacy and acted according to an outdated Cold War rationale. Others, like Argentina and Canada, proposed to integrate it into the OAS structure so as to make it a useful tool for peace and security (Escudé & Fontana, 1998, p. 59-60).

Besides the security mechanisms properly spoken, instruments designed for the promotion and defense of democracy can also be interpreted as means for conflict prevention and therefore as parts of the security system (Kreimer, 2003, Milet, 2004, Ramírez, 2004, p. 112, Shaw,

2004, Soto, 2004). Especially after the termination of civil wars, it is hardly possible to separate conflict mediation and peacekeeping from measures destined to establish and stabilize representative democracy (Muñoz, 1998, p. 14). The Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System, adopted at the OAS General Assembly in Santiago in June 1991, emphasized the member states' "inescapable commitment" to the defense of democracy in the region, and the accompanying Resolution 1080 set up procedures of collective action in the case of a "sudden or irregular interruption of the democratic political institutional process or of the legitimate exercise of power by the democratically elected government" in a member state. The Protocol of Washington, which was adopted at the Sixteenth Special Session of the General Assembly in 1992 and entered into force in 1999, added a new article to the OAS Charter, granting the organization the authority to suspend a member state whose democratically constituted government has been overthrown by force (Boniface, 2007, Gosselin & Thérien, 1999, pp. 179-180, Kreimer, 2003, p. 258). Later on, the defense of democracy instruments were merged into the Inter-American Democratic Charter, signed on September 11, 2001 (Cooper, 2004, Graham, 2002, Legler, 2007). With it, the OAS broadened its conception of what constitutes a democratic crisis to include not only irregular interruptions of the democratic political institutional process, but also any "unconstitutional alteration of the democratic order", a phrase applying specifically to undemocratic actions of democratically elected leaders.

Already in 1990, Canada as a new member of OAS had provided the leadership in the creation of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD). Its main purpose is to provide advisory services and technical assistance to help OAS members develop democratic institutions and procedures. Additional mechanisms designed for conflict prevention and resolution and concomitant democracy building in the region are the "good offices" capacities of the Permanent Council and the Secretary General of the OAS as well as the inter-American system of human rights (Kreimer, 2003).

### Discussion and evaluation

For the OAS, the end of the Cold War was an important turning point. In Latin America, the organization had always been perceived as an instrument employed by the United States to enforce their hegemonic interests. According to the international perception, until 1989 the OAS had hardly any influence and was widely regarded as useless. The end of the Cold War brought about the abolishment of the strategic framework whose main rationale was the fight against communism. Democratic transitions in most Latin American countries as well as the worldwide movement towards regional integration were additional factors that pushed forward the revival of the inter-American system.

The legal mechanisms and institutions that were established in the 1990s were important steps toward security cooperation in the hemisphere; the advances with regard to arms control regimes and the initiation of confidence-building measures on the political as well as on the military level reduced insecurity in the region and contributed to the settlement of various bilateral rivalries (Hurrell, 1998b, Nolte, 2000). In spite of the advances in security policy, the OAS's most significant achievements with regard to the adoption of new norms and norm enforcement mechanisms were made in the area of democracy promotion, which also receives the bulk of attention in the international literature (Acevedo & Grossman, 1996, Arceneaux & Pion-Berlin, 2007, Boniface, 2002, 2009, Cooper & Legler, 2001, 2006, Hawkins, 2008, Hawkins & Shaw, 2008, Legler, Lean & Boniface, 2007, Levitt, 2006, Muñoz, 1998, Parish & Peceny, 2002, Schliemann, 2009, Weiffen, 2009). The fact that member states placed a strong emphasis on the principle of representative democracy signals a shift in priority away from the traditional principles of non-intervention and state sovereignty (Shaw, 2004, chapter 7).

In comparison to the degree of "democratic commitment" that was reached in the Western hemisphere, advances in the area of inter-American security cooperation appear limited (Fontana, 2003). Many institutional tasks necessary to reform the inter-American security system were not accomplished in the 1990s, and as progenies of the Cold War, its components appeared increasingly outdated. Although the plan to reformulate the concept of security was repeatedly stated, no conclusion on that matter could be reached. Hence, in spite of the noteworthy innovations described above, a lot of unfulfilled tasks remained. As the examples of the Inter-American Defense Board and the new initiative of the Defense Ministerial of the Americas demonstrate, consultations on defense and security issues tends to take place outside the OAS framework. This is an expression of Latin American persistent mistrust towards the U.S.: After their negative experiences with U.S. interventionism during the Cold War, Latin American governments still felt uneasy about cooperating with the U.S. in the field of security and defense, so that an initiative to create a forum comparable to the Defense Ministerial inside the OAS framework would most probably have met with their resistance (Bitencourt, 2003).

Hence, in the 1990s, the future of OAS as a regional security organization was still undefined. Despite the highly symbolic nature of the large number of summits and the declarations and instruments adopted, there was no shared vision with regard to fundamental characteris-

tics of post-Cold War security cooperation in the Western hemisphere. The U.S. Latin American policy during the 1990s put an emphasis on economic issues: The main goals were opening up Latin American markets and promoting hemispheric economic integration under the aegis of neoliberal economic policies (Carranza, 2009). Moreover, fostering and stabilizing democracy was a central aim. The main security issue on the U.S. agenda for the Americas, dating back to the 1980s, continued to be the fight against illegal drug trade. Three interconnected features related to the U.S. role in the hemisphere determined the limited progress in regional security (cf. Hirst, 2003, p. 57): Just like during the Cold War era, the power asymmetry between the United States and the rest of the region remained an outstanding characteristic. It meets with a lack of coordination of Latin American states vis-à-vis the dominant neighbor in the North. Additionally, the relative irrelevance of Latin America in U.S. global security considerations became increasingly obvious.

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### The 2001 Terrorist Attacks: New Challenges to Hemispheric Security?

While in the 1990s the countries in the Western hemisphere focused on democratization and economic transformations, security considerations and changes in security policy have once again become a frequently debated topic from 2001 onwards. From the perspective of the United States, multilateral cooperation in the Americas was not among its major concerns any longer, while at the same time the fight against terrorism became the top priority. Already in the 1990s U.S.-Latin American security cooperation had suffered from mutual distrust and a lack of shared visions. However, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the establishment of a new U.S. security doctrine, entailing the United States' inclination to use military force and to ignore the opinion of other actors in the international system, the gap between U.S. goals in security policy and the concerns of the rest of the region has widened (Fontana, 2003, p. 171). After September 11, there seems to be a move backwards to the U.S. hegemonic position of the Cold War: Instead of the fight against communism, the war on terrorism is now the most important policy goal, and other states are urged to partake in this mission.

Hence, September 11 had somewhat contradictory effects with regard to hemispheric security: On the one hand, U.S. attention shifted to other world regions and Latin America continued to lose importance. At the same time, certain features of the traditional hegemonic position of the U.S. in the hemisphere were revitalized: Once again, the United States define the enemy, and the Latin American states have to act according to these definitions if they do not want to evoke tensions.

### Normative and institutional innovations after 2001

#### *Legal instruments*

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, the OAS passed a resolution to strengthen the cooperation in the prevention and the fight against terrorism. In June 2002, the member states signed the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism, which offers a legal framework for cooperation efforts and exchange of information on this challenge. In April 2001 the Third Summit of the Americas had once again called for a thorough review of security issues in light of the up to date realities. The Declaration of Bridgetown, approved by the 2002 General Assembly, already featured a multidimensional approach to security, which was taken up by the Special Conference on Security, held in October 2003 in Mexico City. The Special Conference on Security issued a Declaration on Security in the Americas (2003) which affirms the countries' political will to help preserve peace through close cooperation and elaborates on the new concept of security:

Our new concept of security in the Hemisphere is multidimensional in scope, includes traditional and new threats, concerns, and other challenges to the security of the states of the Hemisphere, incorporates the priorities of each state, contributes to the consolidation of peace, integral development, and social justice, and is based on democratic values, respect for and promotion and defense of human rights, solidarity, cooperation, and respect for national sovereignty. (Declaration on Security in the Americas, paragraph 2.)

Paragraph 4 of the Declaration defines the "new threats, concerns, and other challenges of a diverse nature:

- terrorism, transnational organized crime, the global drug problem, corruption, asset laundering, illicit trafficking in weapons, and the connections among them;

- extreme poverty and social exclusion of broad sectors of the population, which also affect stability and democracy. Extreme poverty erodes social cohesion and undermines the security of states;

- natural and man-made disasters, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, other health risks, and environmental degradation;

- trafficking in persons;

- attacks to cyber security;

- the potential for damage to arise in the event of an accident or incident during the maritime transport of potentially hazardous materials, including petroleum and radioactive materials and toxic waste; and

- the possibility of access, possession, and use of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by terrorists."

The particularity of the Declaration on Security is that the "multidimensional" approach is much broader than the concept of security commonly referred to in international relations (Radseck, 2005, pp. 59-61). Apart from traditional security threats, like territorial and boundary disputes, this concept encompasses non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms trade and contraband, migration and natural disasters. Moreover, it also includes aspects of internal security. According to the definition, genuinely socioeconomic problems like poverty and diseases are perceived as security concerns. Hence, the Declaration on Security introduces a concept of comprehensive security, including challenges conventionally regarded as non-military. Some of those non-military risks, especially migration, drug-trafficking and environmental degradation, had already been on the agenda of the inter-American security system for many years (Hirst, 2003). However, the novel aspect about them is that governments increasingly realize their transnational scope and impact. More precisely, these challenges are "intermestic", meaning that they simultaneously affect international and domestic security. They are complex insofar as each challenge is linked to other security-relevant phenomena and the countries are affected to a different degree, which complicates the search for a concerted response. Traditional "hard power" responses prove to be less effective anyway. Another new aspect is the involvement of non-state actors (cf. Tulchin, 2005, pp. 101-104). The main rationale behind this broad security concept is to represent the wide range of security risks and concerns relevant for the different sub-regions and thus to exert an integrative function. In this manner, the Declaration tries to depict an alternative to the traditional U.S. unilateralism. At the same time, the principle of collective security guarantees that states help and support each other in dealing with their specific challenges, even if they are not affected themselves (Bitencourt, 2001). The combination of a multifaceted security concept and a collective encounter with the threats and risks is what distinguishes the "multidimensional, flexible and cooperative" security architecture.

Whether the multidimensional security concept is an integrative and useful innovation or a dangerous inflation of the security term is highly contested. Kincaid and Gamarra (1996) offer a model of security that encompasses three distinct categories: National security includes preparation for and response to threats to the state's territory, institutions and sovereignty and is traditionally handled by the military. Citizen security requires the response to an array of threats to individual citizens and lies within the responsibility of law enforcement agencies. Public security denominates a gray area between national and citizen security. It involves threats to the public at large that can quickly overwhelm law enforcement agencies and thus require military resources and expertise. Most of the non-traditional security threats mentioned in the Declaration on Security in the Americas (except for social problems like extreme poverty and social exclusion, or diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other health risks) fall into the category of public security: organized crime (drugs, arms, trafficking in persons etc.), terrorism/weapons of mass destruction, guerrillas/insurgencies, illegal migration, natural and manmade disasters, extreme political instability, and border violations (Collier, 2006, p. 15). Additionally, these threats might exceed the capacities of internal law enforcement agencies due to their transnational character.

However, due to the creation of this new category, the separation between internal security and external security or rather defense is increasingly obliterated. The security term becomes diffuse and limitless, which means that social problems or political polarization can easily be defined as security threat and hence become militarized. The "securitization" of internal problems and conflicts also wipes out the boundary between the spheres of competence of armed forces and internal law enforcement agencies. An amalgamation of military and police responsibilities and in particular an expanded scope of functions for the military is very delicate and dangerous, taking into account the long Latin American history of military interventions in politics (Chillier & Freeman, 2005, Nolte, 2004, pp. 79-80, Tulchin, Benítez Manaut & Diamint, 2005, p. 19, Villagra Delgado, 2003, pp. 8-9).

Representatives of the U.S. military as well as some think tanks, on the contrary, strongly argue in favor of tightly intertwining police and military tasks in Latin America. Some actually advocate the abolishment of the legal separation between those spheres of influence. Sure enough, some of the transnational security threats, in particular organized crime and terrorism, indeed exceed the capacities of the police forces, and it is doubtful whether the strict separation between their internal competences

and the external tasks the military is in charge of can be upheld in the future. Still, it has to be carefully delineated in which fields it makes sense to draw on the military and in which issue areas the armed forces should rather not be granted additional influence (Rojas Aravena, 2005, Villagra Delgado, 2003, pp. 8-9).

***Institutions***

In the new millennium, the OAS continued its trajectory toward cooperative security initiated in the 1990s, but at the same time reinforced its efforts in the areas of collective security and defense. The Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is an OAS organ in security policy already included in the OAS Charter. However, it does not meet on a regular basis, but can be convoked upon request of any member state to deal with problems of an urgent nature (Shaw, 2004, Stoetzer, 1993, p. 167). Throughout the past decade there have only been a few meetings: Two of them took place in 2001, addressing the terrorist acts perpetrated within the territory of the United States on September 11, and the most recent one occurred in reaction to the incursion by Colombian military forces and police personnel into the territory of Ecuador in March 2008. Triggered by 9/11, even the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, which had not been used for a long time, was reactivated. Primarily, it implied a declaration of solidarity with the United States.

The Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) had already existed before the OAS was founded in its current form, but after the process of democratization in the Americas, the IADB was more and more regarded as part of the OAS family. The IADB's personnel consist mostly of military officers, typically in the rank of Colonel. Due to its character as military organization and its location in Washington D.C., it has always been dominated by the U.S. The IADB mainly served as forum for exchange between the militaries of the hemisphere, but apart from this "social" function, it had a very low performance. During the 1990s, the need to clarify the juridical and institutional relationship between the IADB and the OAS was repeatedly voiced. The Special Conference on Security requested the CHS to maintain regular contact with the authorities of the IADB in order to determine the norms that govern the mandate of the IADB and its relationship to the OAS. Thence, the CHS formed the Working Group to Conclude the Analysis of the Juridical and Institutional Link between the OAS and the Inter-American Defense Board. As the IADB was primarily a military body, the problem of civil-military relations had to be discussed in order to convert it into an entity of the OAS and to define its level of subordination. The new statutes of the IADB, finally approved in March 2006, establish a juridical and organizational link to the OAS, in particular a close collaboration between the IADB and the CHS, and develop new ideas on how to use the IADB. The functions of the IADB will be confined to technical advisory services in the field of military and defense, whereas it is not permitted to perform functions of an operational nature. Further activities include demining in Central America and the development of educational programs on regional security. It has also been instructed to administrate an inventory of confidence- and security-building measures in the hemisphere and to report on the application of these measures upon request. The fact that the reports are to be sent to the IADB brings up the problem that not all OAS member states are members of the IADB as well. However, as the new statutes establish that states may also send civilian representatives to the IADB, those states that do not have a military or refused to participate in a purely military environment are now enabled to join. Since the link between the IADB and the OAS is a very recent achievement, it will be interesting to see how it will evolve in the future.

**The particularity of the Declaration on Security adopted at the Special Conference on Security held in 2003 in Mexico City is the concept of "multidimensional security", which is much broader than the concept of security usually referred to in international relations.**

During the past decade, the OAS has also created new measures of conflict resolution: The Fund for Peace was established by the OAS General Assembly meeting in Windsor, Canada in June 2000, in order to address boundary disputes which still pose a risk to hemispheric security (cf. Fuentes, 2008, Mares, 2008). This mechanism provides financial resources to member states in order to support the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes. From 1999 to 2003, the Fund for Peace brokered agreements to resolve disputes between Belize and Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, and El Salvador and Honduras. In 2004, the OAS also initiated a Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution as part of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. After a substantial restructuring of the OAS General Secretariat, those conflict resolution instruments are now administered by the Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions, which is part of the Secretariat for Political Affairs. Since 2005, the Department has coordinated special missions to Bolivia where it accompanied the electoral process, Ecuador where it assisted

with the re-establishment of the Supreme Court of Justice, Haiti where it provided technical assistance for the 2006 elections and Nicaragua where it facilitated the dialogue after intra-governmental conflict. In 2004, it set up the first genuine OAS peacekeeping mission, consisting of a staff of more than 100 civilian experts, to support the peace process in Colombia.

With respect to confidence- and security-building measures, in 2002 an OAS General Assembly resolution convened another Meeting of Experts as follow-up to the first Meeting of Experts in Buenos Aires (1994) and the regional conferences of Santiago (1995) and San Salvador (1998) on confidence- and security-building measures in order "to evaluate implementation and consider next steps to further mutual confidence" and "to transmit the conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting of Experts to the preparatory body of the Special Conference on Security as a contribution to the preparation of that Conference."

**The "securitization" of internal problems and conflicts also wipes out the boundary between the spheres of competence of armed forces and internal law enforcement agencies.**

At this Meeting of Experts, which took place in February 2003 in Miami, the participants formulated new recommendations building upon the recommendations in the Declarations of Santiago and San Salvador. The Consensus of Miami, which was submitted to the Special Conference on Security, contains two extensive lists of "military" as well as "general" CSBMs. Furthermore, an "Illustrative List of CSBMs" was compiled which identifies measures for future consideration and which for the first time attempts a systematic classification of CSBMs into diplomatic and political measures, educational and cultural measures, and military measures. The document also addresses the need to develop cooperative measures confronting the new security threats and challenges. Moreover, the experts recommended to use the CHS for further investigation on CSBMs. Accordingly, the Declaration on Security mandated the CHS to constitute itself as Forum on Confidence- and Security-Building once a year, in order to review and evaluate existing CSBMs and to consider and propose new ones. The first meeting of this kind took place in April 2005; the second one was held in November 2006, the third meeting of the Forum was in March 2008, and the fourth one is scheduled for November 2010. Additionally, the Consensus of Miami suggests asking the countries for reports on the CSBMs they have carried out. It is desirable to monitor the implementation of agreed CSBM through the exchange of information, for which the CHS as well as the OAS Information System (OASIS) could provide an appropriate tool. The General Assembly has urged all member states to provide to the Permanent Council, through the CHS, information on their ongoing CSBMs, so as to facilitate the preparation of the systematic inventory of these measures. It has also invited the Inter-American Defense Board to provide advisory and consultative services on CSBMs of a military nature and to keep an updated inventory.

As it had fulfilled its original task, namely the preparation of the conference on Security in the Americas and the redefinition of the concept of security, the mission of the CHS changed after 2003: It is now responsible for the follow-up on and the implementation of the Declaration on Security in the Americas. Although other institutions, such as the Defense Ministerial of the Americas and the meetings of the armed forces' General Staff, are deemed more important for the concrete planning of future confidence-building measures between the militaries of the region, the Committee's important task is to increase transparency through the collection and distribution of information on all types of CSBMs. When constituting itself as Forum on Confidence- and Security-Building, the CHS has to consider new CSBMs, which in the future might also take place between internal security forces in order to cope with new security threats. Additionally, the CHS publishes the OAS Roster of Experts in Confidence and Security Building Measures, which, as of July 2009, lists experts from 16 member states. Moreover, the Committee is in charge of collecting information on the member states' defense spending and weapons acquisition. The annual General Assembly resolutions ask them to provide this information in compliance with the two regional and global arms control measures, namely the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and United Nations Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures.

During the 2005-2006 sessions, the majority of the Committee's meetings dealt with the establishment of the link between OAS and the IADB. Another important issue in 2005 and 2006 were natural disasters, a topic usually brought forward by the Caribbean countries, and reinforced by the impact of hurricane Katrina. The 2006-2007 as well as the 2007-2008 agendas addressed many issues that had been postponed due to the intense negotiations over the IADB. In the field of traditional security, the CHS regularly holds sessions on nuclear nonproliferation, discussing the consolidation of the regime established in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, as well as disarmament and nonproliferation in general, such as the meetings of the states parties of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency

in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. In the field of new security threats, besides follow-up meetings evaluating the implementation of the Declaration on Security, there are regular meetings and working groups that address public security, transnational organized crime, the problem of criminal gangs, and natural disaster reduction and risk management. Additionally, the CHS also follows up on other security-related OAS activities, such as the work of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).

Combating terrorism had already been part of the agenda of the hemispheric security system ever since the first Summit of the Americas. The initial reasons to deal with the topic were the bomb attacks on the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994, respectively. At the 1994 Summit of the Americas, the heads of state decided to hold a special conference on terrorism which took place in 1996 and adopted an action plan. At a follow-up meeting in 1998, it was decided to create the CICTE, which was formally set up by the June 2001 OAS General Assembly. CICAD had already been formed in 1986, which illustrates that drug-trafficking is one of the oldest and most persistent non-traditional security threat the Americas are facing. In the 1990s, new provisions regarding money laundering were created.

**Due to its character as a military organization and its location in Washington, D.C., the Inter-American Defense Board has always been dominated by the U.S. It has served mainly as a forum for exchange between military officers, but apart from the "social" function, it had a very low performance.**

During the past years, the OAS General Secretariat was substantially restructured, giving way for the creation of a Secretariat for Multidimensional Security which addresses traditional as well as non-traditional threats. The Secretariat comprises three departments: the Department of Public Security, which deals with topics like organized crime, public safety, the removal of landmines, the Executive Secretariat of CICAD, concerned with drug-trafficking and related criminal activities, and the CICTE Secretariat, which is concerned with the fight against terrorism and increasingly provides training and coordination of anti-terrorism activities.

## Discussion and evaluation

The new millennium brought further steps toward a new security architecture in the Americas (Franko, 2003). The OAS and the other elements of the inter-American security system remain an important forum for security cooperation. By means of its Declaration on Security, the OAS has significantly contributed to a region-wide discussion and definition of new security challenges. At the same time, it has continuously addressed traditional security threats in the framework of its CHS and by the numerous initiatives regarding CSBM, and has even accomplished the incorporation of a forum for military exchange and cooperation, the IADB, into the OAS institutional structure.

Having said that, the heterogeneity of the region as reflected in the broad security concept and the exceptional power position of the United States pose into question the possibility of close security cooperation. One can identify two stages in US post Cold War policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 being the turning point between them (Vilas, 2005, p. 391). Whereas during the 1990s U.S. Latin American policy focused on political and economic liberalization, in the aftermath of September 11, fighting terrorism became the central objective of the U.S. government. Many authors argue that the war against terrorism initiated by the George W. Bush administration in 2001 generates the impression that the strategic framework of the Cold War was revitalized (Carranza, 2009, Kurtenbach, 2002a, Lowenthal, 2009, Tulchin 2005, p. 98). One symptom of this is the tendency of "securitization", which becomes manifest in the utilization of the military for purposes of internal security. Another symptom is the fact that once more the U.S. defines who is the enemy and thence assumes the role of a hegemonic power in the hemisphere. It imposes its policy priorities and focuses exclusively on the topic of its own major concern, terrorism, losing out of sight other urgent problems of the region (cf. Hirst, 2003, pp. 62-63, Tulchin, 2005, p. 110, Weeks, 2006). The ability of the U.S. to impose its views on the region is facilitated by its power to determine with which governments it collaborates and with which ones it does not, according to compliance with U.S. political goals, one possible selection criterion being the willingness to use the military for the fight against terrorism.

It has been argued that the multidimensional security concept advocated in the Declaration on Security not only generates the dangerous tendency to redefine economic, social or political problems as security risks, but also bears a striking resemblance to the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) adopted after the 2001 terrorist attacks (Vilas, 2005, pp. 395-396). The NSS identified "new threats" that are di-

rectly headed towards United States' domestic security. In this context, the inclusion of social and ecological as well as institutional issues together with terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime is worth noting. "New threats" no longer flow from actions implemented, encouraged or tolerated by "rogue states", but also from private actors. However, as far as Latin America is concerned, the NSS also contained some elements of continuity (Vilas, 2005, pp. 396-397): Its main objective was Latin American and Caribbean alignment with US global interests in political and economic matters. Additionally, the war on drugs was mentioned as a major issue in the hemisphere.

In spite of the strong influence of U.S. security concerns, the characteristic feature of the Declaration on Security is that it expresses the heterogeneity of threat perceptions in the region. Terrorism, for example, is not considered a security risk everywhere in the hemisphere to the same degree. For the majority of Latin American countries, international terrorism does not pose an imminent threat. Anyhow, in compliance with the collective defense paradigm, most states chose to collaborate with the United States on this score. A case in point is the "triple border" between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, where these adjacent countries primarily worry about transnational crime such as contraband and money laundering, but also agreed to combat terrorism jointly with the U.S. who targeted the area as a retreat for Islamic terrorists. For the Central American and Caribbean states which are increasingly affected by climate change and recurrent hurricanes, natural disasters pose a severe security concern, whereas other countries see no need to address them as challenges to security. The Andean countries, in turn, are affected by illegal drug trade and related crime as well as by the internal instability resulting from this sordid business. As mentioned before, the U.S. do not hesitate to advocate and actively support the deployment of the armed forces as a means to fight internal and intermestic threats. Especially the Latin American countries that are or in the near past have been affected by guerrilla warfare and drug-trafficking follow suit. In contrast, the Southern Cone countries advocate a strict separation between internal security and defense. After the end of their military dictatorships, they have struggled hard to constrain the armed forces' sphere of activity and to prevent their interference in domestic politics and they worry that these achievements might be put into question by the broad hemispheric security concept (Pion-Berlin, 2005).

Barack Obama's opening statement at the fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009 heralded a change toward a greater emphasis on multilateral diplomacy and genuine consultation with partners in the hemisphere. However, there was no radical shift with respect to hemispheric security policies. Given other foreign policy priorities inherited from its predecessor and the budgetary pressures it faces after the global financial crisis, the Obama administration is unlikely to give more aid money or even attention to Latin America. Moreover, there have not been any major personnel or organizational changes in the US Southern Command, the military unit responsible for security cooperation with Central and South America, which means that there is continuity in many aspects of its mission, such as the "counter drug/counter narcoterrorism" programs for Colombia, Mexico and Central America. For reasons of pragmatism as well as principle, Obama would be wise to elevate the importance of the OAS. A broad range of hemispheric concerns – including security and defense cooperation, the promotion of democracy and human rights, trade, immigration, drugs, and the environment – can be usefully addressed in the organization. Indeed, the OAS is precisely the right forum to air important policy differences on such contentious issues involving the US, Canada, and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It also has developed methodological expertise in each of these issue areas.

### The Effectiveness of the Inter-American Security System: Current Problems and Prospects for the Future

Some observers criticize the OAS security arrangements in general and argue that the effectiveness of inter-American treaties and declarations is limited (Diamint, 2004): An increasing number of agreements, meetings and summits are managed by a limited number of officers with precarious resources. Some of the policies accorded at presidential meetings are mere personal commitments, which means that they remain government instead of state policy and are abolished as soon as a new political party takes office. In various cases, the executive branches, for example the ministries of defense, do not have the power to enforce new hemispheric directives geared towards the military. Additionally, the OAS is weak when it comes to concrete measures of conflict resolution. It can provide political support for a democratic government under assault and condemn transgressions of the constitutional order, but it does not have the means to carry out strong economic sanctions, let alone military interventions.

**Whereas during the 1990s U.S. policy to Latin American focused on political and economic liberalization, in the aftermath of September 11 fighting terrorism became the central objective of the U.S. government.**

The low effectiveness of its instruments as well as the problems generated by the subjective and multifaceted nature of the term "security" in the Western hemisphere lead to frequent calls for reforms of the inter-American security system (Bitencourt, 2003, Radseck, 2005). However, in spite of its limitations, the OAS is the only regional security organization recognized and accepted by all countries of the hemisphere. With the Rio Treaty and the IADB, it disposes of the sole multilateral security architecture, and with CICAD and CICTE it also hosts specialized organizations covering the new, intermestic security threats. It is also obvious that the United States foster collective action through the OAS bodies, as there is no competitive institutional framework. It is even arguable whether the OAS would still exist had the U.S. not been a member state. In spite of all mistrust and suspicion against the regional hegemonic power, Latin American politicians have always been interested in the OAS as a forum where they can exchange opinions with U.S. government representatives and directly communicate their views and concerns to their northern neighbor.

Much of the critique raised against the OAS actually derives from a comparison with other, more advanced regional security organizations such as NATO. Compared with the NATO, of course, the OAS appears highly ineffective. However, not all regional security organizations necessarily have to model themselves on the NATO, and in the case of the OAS, there are even good reasons why it should not develop in that direction: According to Mares (1997, p. 218), no regional organization in the Americas that has the United States as a member should have a military capacity. U.S. resources would just overwhelm everyone, and the group would fall under its control. Hence, Mares (1997) states that collective inter-American security schemes in terms of defense integration are inappropriate.

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This leads to the question how to classify the inter-American security architecture. In his analysis of regional security problems, Barry Buzan (1991, pp. 186-229) describes the regional level of analysis as an intermediary level between the state and the international system as a whole. In the international system, a regional system mediates between global and local security dynamics. A region should not be considered as an arbitrarily-defined set of countries, but as a distinct system of states closely united by geographical vicinity, and whose security relations are so significant as to establish the location of boundaries with other regional formations. In order to find an analytical device for identifying and delineating regional formations, Buzan introduces the term "security complex", defined as "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another" (Buzan, 1991, p. 190). Members of a security complex are often linked by what Lake (1997, p. 31) refers to as a "security externality". He describes a regional security complex as a set of states affected by at least one trans-border, but local, externality that emanates from a particular geographic area. If the local externality poses an actual or potential threat to the physical safety of individuals or governments in other states, it produces a regional security system or complex. While the Western hemisphere is united by geographical proximity and clear distance from other regional formations, the other criteria for a regional security complex are not fulfilled: Security concerns à la Buzan and local, trans-border externalities in line with Lake's terminology link together subsets of countries within the region, but not the region as a whole.

In the OAS Charter, the organization is referred to as a system of collective security. Rooted in the principle of "all for one and one for all", collective security is a coalition-building strategy whereby a group of nations agree not to attack one another. Furthermore, the concept of collective defense, which is articulated by the Rio Treaty, implies the defense of each nation against aggressions by external enemies. While collective security and collective defense will remain unrealizable goals and probably should remain so due to the heterogeneity of threat perceptions and the power asymmetry between member states, the changed global and regional context allows the nations of the Western hemisphere to pursue cooperative security. Unlike collective defense and security, cooperative security is not based on a common threat perception. The concept also accepts the reality of diverging security concepts and of an unequal degree of intensity of collaboration and alliances within the region. A cooperative security system is restricted to defining security, discussing risks, and the promotion of peaceful change based on agreed-upon norms, rules and procedures.

This description aptly characterizes the OAS and its activities in the security realm. The OAS's main achievement is the extension of its essential principles, in particular de-

mocracy, human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution, to the entire hemisphere and the vitalization of the mere declaratory norms by the adoption of a number of new monitoring and norm enforcement instruments and specialized organizations. When assessing only its most visible and thoroughly symbolic activities, it still appears to be a predominantly intergovernmental organization. However, the vast array of new institutions, even if their effect on security and defense policies adopted by the nation states is minimal, have made consultations of functionaries on the lower levels of state bureaucracy a more frequent occurrence in between Summits and General Assembly meetings (Dembinski, Freistein & Weiffen, 2006, Franko, 2003). In political day-to-day business, the OAS functions as a discussion forum creating awareness of other countries' and sub-regions' security concerns. The establishment of trans-bureaucratic networks which resulted from the establishment of new legal instruments and institutions in the inter-American security system and lead to frequent contacts between functionaries in security and defense policy can be regarded as a value in itself.

**In spite of the mistrust and suspicion against the hegemonic power, Latin American politicians have always been interested in the OAS as a forum where they can exchange opinions with American representatives and directly communicate their views and concerns to the U.S. government.**

The heterogeneity of the region, however, impedes steps toward more substantial defense cooperation, let alone defense integration. The diversity of interests of the member states and the close cooperation between certain sub-regional groups is often regarded as a problem of the OAS, entailing its low capacity to act. In fact, there are many questions where a region-wide consensus is difficult, if not impossible to achieve. This results in compromises like the Declaration on Security, where all states and sub-regions were able to peg down their particular definition of security. In consequence, joint hemispheric declarations usually have a high symbolic value, but a low applicability and assertiveness. In terms of practicability of the adopted collaboration measures, sub-regional and bilateral cooperation mechanisms seem to be more efficient than hemispheric initiatives. Some of them are an expression of the Latin American states' disappointment with the OAS and other hemisphere-wide institutions such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) project, and hence explicitly pursue alternative models of regional integration excluding the U.S. Some sub-regional integration schemes and agreements, such as the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), the Andean Community, the Central American Integration System, the Rio Group and the new Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) have seen significant advances since the 1990s. They usually had a more direct impact on national policies and were sometimes more successful in the resolution of conflicts and crises: During its summit in 2008, the Rio Group settled the dispute caused by the border skirmish between Ecuador and Colombia, while UNASUR played a key role as a mediator in the 2008 secession crisis in Bolivia and the diplomatic crisis between Colombia and Venezuela in mid-2010. In direct competition with the OAS, UNASUR has established the South American Defense Council as a mechanism for regional security and defense. The intention is not to form a NATO-like alliance, but a cooperative security arrangement, enhancing multilateral military cooperation, promoting confidence- and security-building measures and fostering defense industry exchange.

The overlap of security institutions in the Americas can be termed a multilevel security architecture. According to Tulchin, Benítez Manaut and Diamint (2005, pp. 22-23), there are five levels or contexts in which security policies in the Americas can be analyzed: the international, hemispheric, sub-regional, bilateral and national level. On the international level, geographical unity suggests that the Western hemisphere is a regional system characterized by interdependence in economic and security realms. In fact, the Americas are often viewed as an entity when examining their relation to other world regions like Asia or Europe or when diagnosing its general affiliation with "the West". However, on the hemispheric level, the problem of power asymmetry within the region is obvious. The hemisphere consists of a superpower lumped together with one of the most unimportant world regions in a strategic sense. This imbalance yields the disproportionate influence of the United States as regional hegemon and also creates difficulties regarding the implementation and continuation of hemispheric conventions and agreements.

On the sub-regional level, we find the hemisphere divided into several sub-regions – North America, Central America and the Caribbean, the Andean countries and the Southern Cone –, which are rather homogeneous and share the same problems. Therefore, several sub-regional organizations have developed, and although many of them were originally designed as economic integration schemes, they have increasingly addressed security as well. The members of the Central American Integration System signed the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America in 1995. In the Andean Community, steps toward security cooperation, such as confidence building mea-

sures and the exchange of information between the armed forces, had been envisioned already in 1989. In 1998, the Southern Cone countries signed the Political Declaration of Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace.

On the bilateral level, some countries, in particular Argentina, Chile and Brazil, have achieved the settlement of rivalries dating from colonial times and have built up bilateral cooperation mechanisms in defense and security matters, which, in some cases, are very effective. On the national level, certain commonalities between the states, usually not across the hemisphere, but within the sub-regions, are striking. Whereas some countries share a comparable legacy of military dictatorship and the need to reorganize civil-military relations, others are or were faced with similar internal conflicts and guerrilla warfare. These analogies between agendas were a main catalyst of bilateral and sub-regional cooperation.

Because of the multilevel structure, the asymmetry between the U.S. and Latin America on the hemispheric level could also constitute a chance. Compared to the Cold War era, the autonomy of Latin American countries and sub-regions has improved, thanks to their relations with other world regions and the new sub-regional integration schemes which decrease the OAS's leverage as Washington's "political tool in order to discipline Latin American governments" (Vilas, 2005, p. 390). While the shifting focus of US foreign policy can be interpreted as a downgrading of Latin America from a previously higher rank on the US foreign policy agenda, that lack of attention can also be understood as enlarging the room for maneuver for Latin American governments to advance alternative development strategies more in tune with the demands of their populations as well as building or strengthening intra-Latin American agreements at both governmental and civil-society levels (Franko, 2003, Vilas, 2005).

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It is the responsibility of Latin American politicians and diplomats to take the lead and promote their interests in inter-American relations. As a hemispheric institution, the OAS and the inter-American security architecture can only be fully functional if member states' governments want it to be so. Despite all reservations, dialogue and exchange of information on defense and security in the hemisphere have unfolded noteworthy dynamics since the 1990s. Due to the heterogeneity of security concerns in the region, not all the problems have to be solved on the hemispheric level and are often better addressed by sub-regional and bilateral institutions. At the same time, the inter-American security system which includes the U.S. and Canada performs valuable and complementary functions to the other, entirely Latin American forums and organizations. Both the U.S. and Latin American government take stock in the maintenance of close contacts and cooperation in defense and security matters through the inter-American institutions.

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