

Escuela de Relaciones
Internacionales
Universidad Nacional
Heredia, Costa Rica

ENVIRONMENTAL **SECURITY REGIMES AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA**

Alexander López

341.762 026
L864e

Nº 11



DOCUMENTOS DE ESTUDIO

**Nueva Epoca
2001**

Signatura

Nº inscripción

UNA
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**Devuelva este libro en
la última fecha indicada**

FECHA

HORA



1112-6 - P. UNA

341.762026

L864e

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Documentos de Estudio (Nueva Epoca) N° 11

Primera edición, Heredia, 2001

Tiraje de 300 ejemplares

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DOCUMENTOS DE ESTUDIO (Nueva Epoca) N° 11
ESCUELA DE RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES
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I The argument

This paper is a conceptual and empirical analysis of current approaches to security and regional integration in Latin America, focusing on the need for new security regimes, and more specifically for environmental security regimes in some Latin American regions. Such an exercise is important for the following reasons. First, environmental concerns rank high in the agenda of some Latin American countries; second environmental change is perceived as a new transnational threat (TNTs), requiring collective action; third regional integration processes represent an increasing phenomenon in Latin America; and finally the end of the Cold War has brought about fundamental changes in what is understood by security in the region. The building of environmental security regimes highlights the incongruity between state boundaries and ecosystems or ecoregions boundaries. Therefore, effective responses to environmental change as a transnational threat require new institutional arrangements for inter- or supranational environmental governance.

II Theoretical approach on regional integration and security

The first conceptual question to be answered is *what is a regional security order?* By this I mean a security system that

reflect the fundamental way in which ruling coalitions managed their regional security affairs. Having said that the inevitable second conceptual question is *what is a region?* Regional system theories, most generally, conceive regions as patterns of relations or interactions within a geographic area, that exhibit a particular degree of regularity and intensity to the extent that a change at one point in the system affects other points. In ecological terms a region normally includes several states-nation as defined by a common sea, watershed, forest, etc. Therefore, nowadays it is accepted that the governance of these regional resources require the participation of all states sharing such resources, which create what Buzan (1991) calls security complexes, and therefore open the discussion on the suitability for building regional environmental security regimes.

Regional integration agreements are example of second best. Despite an enormous theoretical, empirical and historical-descriptive literature, no consensus on the desirability of regional integration agreement has emerged. However, for some scholars such integration agreements normally have one kind of positive externality, this is the improvement of security for its member countries. Examples in this direction include the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC, 1957) to reduce the threat of war in Europe, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to reduce tensions between Indonesia and Malaysia, and MERCOSUR to reduce somehow tensions between Argentina and Brazil.

In the foreseeable future the regional level will become more important because most of the interactions between states will take place at that level. For instance, in Central American nations have pinpointed a series of efforts for its

gradual and progressive unification to conform a unity able to obtain economical and political spaces within the international global system, and in this way responding to the establishment of the new world order that would be featured by a large emphasis on commercial and technological expansion. In this way, the Central American Integration System (SICA) created by the Tegucigalpa Protocol, signed on December 13, 1991, renewed the legal frame and the institutional arrangement of the regional integration.

In South America the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a notable example of world-wide interest in regional trade agreements. Since the Treaty of Asuncion in 1991, the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay have experienced an important increase in regional trade which has contributed to consolidate the notion of region in this area with all the implication that such situation has.

These integration processes of course have faced some conflicts, as demonstrated by the Argentinean-Brazilian commercial disputes, however what is interesting is that most conflicts will mostly arise out of regional concerns and will be viewed by political actors through a regional, rather than a continental or global lens. Therefore, efforts to cope with conflicts, as well as to achieve order and security, will primary involve arrangements and actions devised and implemented at the regional level. (Lake and Morgan, 1997. p. 5).

What is important to understand for the comparative analysis is that regions affect behavior and constitute a separate level of analysis from the global level. Within this

level, regions also differ in their characteristics, not in terms of the variables, but in the values attached to those variables. In addition, open systems such as regions with identical properties would not necessarily produce the same behaviors. "Outside" factors must be incorporated into theories of regional relations. For instance, according to Mares (1997), the hegemony of the United States within Latin America is a force for both stability and instability. The United States helps stabilize the region by excluding outside forces (even though for other this has been a source of insecurity). On the other hand, its predominance and ability to intervene everywhere also make it the primary security threat to states within the region.

Therefore, a regional security system is the product of one or more security externalities or spillovers. Normally these externalities originate in, but are not necessarily limited to, a specific geographic area. If the local externality poses an actual or potential threat to the physical safety to individuals or governments in other states, it produces a regional security system or complex. Externalities are costs (negative externalities) and benefits (positive externalities) that do not affect only to the actors that create them. Although not typically understood in these terms, the security dilemma is also an externality. The classic formulation of the security dilemma postulated by Jervis (1978) affirms that states, under anarchy, cannot be certain of the intentions of others. To ensure its own safety against the possibility of attack, the state procures weapons and other armaments, which in turn pose a threat to other states equally uncertain about the intentions of the first. In order to provide for their own safety, these states are then forced to arm at some cost to themselves. The net result is a spiral of costly arms racing, increasing hostility, and possibly war.

According to Lake (1997) security externalities vary along three dimensions that are likely to affect regional order. First, they differ in magnitude, defined in terms of the costs imposed on other states. The larger the externality, *ceteris paribus*, the more likely states will be able to alter their behavior, organizing either to capture the positive or eliminate the negative effect. Second, security externalities differ by how their effects are distributed across the relevant states, inevitably, they affect some countries more and other less. Finally, states face varying numbers of security externalities. Some regions could have many of them, which make necessary the creation of a security regime, of course multiple security externalities by themselves do not guarantee successful cooperation or the creation of a regional security regime, as the case of Middle East has demonstrated. In conclusion, the three dimensions are relevant when assessing the possibilities for security regimes in Latin America.

In Latin America as a whole the security concerns are linked to several issues with important externalities. For example concerns have to do with the transnational drug trade, smuggling, terrorism, refugee flows, environmental degradation and some disputes of territorial borders, all of them transnational threats (TNTs). This means that the management and resolution of one conflict situation has an impact on others, therefore it is a clear security externality.

III The new Latin American scenario

The question here is *what are the main elements that are precipitating the formation of new security regimes in Latin America?* I argue that seven factors should be considered.

First, the emergence of new transnational threats; second the end of the Cold War; third the different integration processes taking place in the region; fourth the changing security notion of the United States; fifth the transition of most of Latin American countries to democratic elected governments, Sixth the reduction in the military expenditure, and seventh the reduction of the security dilemma.

I would like to explain these arguments in more detail. First, currently Latin America faces new transnational threats (TNTs) such as drug trade, smuggling, refugee flows, and environmental degradation. These security threats faced by Latin American nations are predominantly transnational in nature, characterized by the ease with which they permeate state boundaries. These transnational threats to state security are more complex to deal with than the ones derived from the Cold War. Together, these TNTs represent an emerging shared threat perception that could lead to the creation of a new or several new regional security regimes in Latin America.

Second, the end of the Cold War has produced in Latin America that perception of an external enemy that has almost disappeared, and current threats focus more on factors such as drugs and environmental change. This element has a great impact on the security notion because it implies the end of the Cold War conflict thesis. Instead of the war orientation, the new missions of the armed forces are linked to new issues and certainly more related to peace. This new situation makes the security conception more embedded in the multilateral system and no related to the bipolar world. One of the results of this new situation is that in the last years the region has had a very low level of international conflicts.

Third, the different integration processes have transformed the perception of the actors. In the previous military logic there was a strong prevalence of military threats and no trust among the Latin American States, however, integration processes have precipitated the adoption of new measures of mutual trust. As it is perceived in MERCOSUR and SICA, the integration process is generating a need for regional arms-control and disarmament measures. The above has a significant impact on building a process of mutual trust among members. In the case of MERCOSUR the joint operations between Argentina and Brazil, and the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia, and Chile as a Zone of Peace is a case in point. In the case of Central America a good example is the promulgation within SICA in 1995 of the new Treaty for Democratic Security in Central America. In fact, article 26 states that Central American Democratic Security Model shall be governed by the principle that the democratic security of each of the countries signing this Treaty is closely connected with the security of the region. Accordingly, no country shall strengthen its own security at the expense of the security of other countries; moreover, it points out that one of the goals of the model is to establish a Central American Mechanism for Security Information and Communication, which as I have stated is a basic element to avoid the security dilemma.

It can be stated that one of the results of the integration process is the reduction of the military influence in the process as well as the perception that military threats are not the most relevant nowadays. For example, in MERCOSUR the *Mecanismo de Consulta y Concertación Política* created in July 1997 establishes as criteria to be member of MERCOSUR, this is the maintaining of democratic regimes and human rights. In the same line, in

July 1998 in a Memorandum on defense and security Brazil and Argentina stated that the arm race was absolutely unnecessary in the context of integration. (Diamint: 1999, p. 49). Now, it is evident that the integration process is not going to eliminate the conflicts in the area. Perhaps the territorial disputes could disappear, but conflicts over trade (as the one experienced between Brazil and Argentina), competition for markets, energy, natural resources, and migration are likely to continue.

The fourth element is the changing security perceptions of the United States in Latin America. Thus, taking into account that United States is the principal external element influencing security development and the integration process, it is important to mention what the priorities are that this State is pushing forward now that the communist threat has disappeared. The main issues in the agenda are: control of terrorism, assistance to the Latin American government to fight drug trafficking as the so-called plan Colombia, support to the democratic governments, promote joint and combined military activities in the region, control and fight of natural disasters, due to such natural disasters represent a potential heavy migration of people from Latin America to the U.S.A.

Fifth, the transition to democratic governments makes the military apparatus became subordinate to the civilian. With the exception of Cuba the Latin American countries have a democratic elected government. The trend toward democratic governance and free market economic model is a common characteristic of most Latin American states. Since the early 1980s, we have witnessed the transfer of power from military to civilian leaders in Argentina (1982), Brazil (1984), Peru (1985), Uruguay (1985), Guatemala

(1986), Chile (1990), and Paraguay (1993). Many Latin American militaries have been discredited in their ability to govern because of failed economic policies as well as human rights violations. In addition, this democratic transition makes almost the thesis of the internal war disappear. It is interesting to note how the democratic principle introduced by MERCOSUR as requirement for belonging was mentioned and to a certain extent used by MERCOSUR governments when Paraguay faced a turbulent period in 1999.

Sixth, the current military expenditures in Latin America are low and it is not expected any significant increase. According to estimations from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London between 1990 and 1996 the average of military expenditures in the world were between 2,1% and 2,3% of the gross national product, but in Latin America the expenses were between 1,1% and 1,2% for the same period (Sain: 1999, p.128).

The seventh aspect is related to the reduction of the security dilemma. In literature it can be found one reason which makes co-operation difficult is when states do not have reliable information about rival's capabilities and intentions. In such as case it is hard to determine whether an action reflects offensive or defensive motives. Thus, in many cases the effort by one State to increase its own military security may be perceived as a threat to one or more States, who may in turn respond in a way that further threatens the security of the former. This is what Jervis (1983) called the security dilemma. However, in South and Central America the gradual integration process has produced an important reduction of the military perception as a threat. In South America a central element in this process was the nuclear

co-operation established between Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s. Other interesting moment in the building of mutual trust is constituted by the Mendoza declaration through which the governments of Brazil, Argentina and Chile in a joint declaration accepted not to develop, produce, buy or transfer any chemical or biological weapons (Sain: 1999, 71). Moreover, in South America there is currently a tendency to solve border disputes for peaceful means, the most recent example is the resolution of the conflicts between Argentina and Chile for the border territory of Campo de Hielos.

IV Environmental change as transnational threat: The likelihood for building environmental security regimes in Latin America

Having as background all the above mentioned elements I will be more specific focusing on one of the mentioned transnational threats, thus the following question is *what is an environmental security regime?* Based on Acharya (1994) definition of security regime I argue that an environmental security regime is a formal or informal arrangement whose main objective is to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, the likelihood of environmental conflict by securing adherence to a set of norms and rules that constrain the conflictual behavior of the regional actors in relation to one another. An analysis of an environmental security regime in Latin America could cover a variety of formal and informal arrangements including environmental conflicts avoidance. In relation to security the term "region" means that a distinct and significant subsystem of security relations exists among a set of states whose fate is that they have been locked into geographical proximity to each other (Buzan, 1991: p.188). These distinct and significant security

relations are determined by the fact that several natural resources in Latin America are shared by two or more countries, which introduce the question of collective actions.

Why do we need environmental security regimes in some Latin America regions? As stated by some scholars (Jervis, 1983; Gross Stein, 1985; Haggard & Simmons, 1987) security regimes are thus relevant to a regional context in which the interests of the national actors are neither completely conflictual nor completely harmonious, and where it might be possible to secure compliance with principles, rules and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behavior in the belief that others will reciprocate. Following this line of argumentation, the first reason is that regional environmental security regime in some Latin American region can be useful because it directs attention to the possibility of security co-operation where actors share a set of regional environmental problems and/or threats without a clear security framework for dealing with such regional environmental problems and conflict resolution. Thus, as the case of MERCOSUR shows in some Latin American regions states presently do not perceive each other as the main source of danger.

A second central reason is that the management of transboundary natural resources poses important questions regarding collective actions. It should be remembered that the complex processes by which some Latin American states were shaped and the long history of armed and political conflicts that produced their present political boundaries took no account of conservation and environmental management considerations. Paradoxically, natural resources have frequently been used by states to draw the

lines that separate them. This has typically been the case with river basin, which have historically been used for demarcating frontiers. At the same time, conflict over scarce environmental resources often strain relationship between government or societies, therefore making effective cooperation more difficult to establish or sustain. Thus, it will be interesting to see whether the development of a regional security regime having the environment as an object of reference will imply that the classical notion of sovereignty will be redefined within a new context of ecological interdependence. Similarly, whether the idea of national interest can be re-conceptualized as one of common interest, meaning joint management of these ecosystems by all the countries included in the basin.

Why do I relate environment to security? In the last two decades several scholars have been working on the idea of redefining the concept of security. Among the most important works are: Brown (1977), Ullman (1983), Renner (1989, 1995), Buzan (1991), Lodgaard (1992), Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998)¹. The main argument of the proponents of a redefinition of security has been that non-military threats are an important element of insecurity in today's world. Most of the work pays great attention to the environmental sector. Hence, for some of them the negative side effects (externalities) of environmental change constitute a new type of threats. For those supporting this idea, the deterioration of a country's natural resource base, which at

1. Since 1983 Buzan and Ullman started to consider the problems associated to the narrow perspective. Thus, Buzan stated that the concept of security binds together individuals, the state, and the international system so closely that it demands to be treated in a holistic way (Buzan, 1983: p. 245). The same year Ullman (1983) pointed out the drastic deterioration of environmental quality, caused by sources from both within and outside the state, as a threat to national security.

the same time undermines productivity capacity, is an example of non-military dangers which jeopardise human well-being (Ulrich, 1989: p. 2).

The challenging of the traditional security paradigm by using the environmental sector has as one of its main outcomes the emergence of the environmental security concept. Buzan states that environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend (Buzan, 1991: pp. 19-20). In sum, most of these attempts to challenge the concept of security and introduce the environment into the analysis are shaped by the following ideas:

1. An attempt to go beyond the traditional paradigm of national security, the analyses being formulated at several levels (subnational, national and international).
2. An effort to stress the participation of new actors with potentially great influence on the national and international agenda, such as intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, social groups, and public opinion.
3. The assumption of the existence of new referent objects, beside the nation-state.
4. The recognition of new types of threats, not just the military.
5. The idea that the classical notion of political boundaries could be replaced by the idea of ecological unity.
6. Finally, the classical notions of sovereignty and national interest are reformulated and it is argued that they must be supplemented by one of ecological

interdependence (reciprocity) and common interest (joint management).

In sum, as the Latin American scenario shows threats are not only coming from an external enemy; internal environmental problems threaten the economic stability of a country as well². Threats to security today could come from within nations, not necessarily from invading armies. In addition, the state seems no longer to be the only referent object of security. Thus, it is not only states that can experience an existential threat, but social groups, firms, and even the biosphere could be a new referent object. Furthermore, power is increasingly measured not only in terms of the aggregation of resources, but also in terms of the ability to mitigate the factors and forces which cause insecurity. For instance, in the environmental sector the state itself is limited in its capacity to generate the outcomes necessary to solve the problems, because environmental problems normally go beyond the state border.

The final question is *what are the main problems to overcome in the construction of regional environmental security regimes?* The first problem to be solved is the type of institution required to cope with environmental change as a transnational threat. The starting point is that current military structures in Latin America do not correspond to the new reality. In fact, even though all the mentioned declarations the main unsolved problem is the institutional dimension, this means either to create new institutions to deal with new transnational threats such as environmental

2. There are some environmental problems that can be called national in terms of its formal manifestation in one specific region. However, I am aware of the strong global links of most of the environmental problems. So, I support the thesis that the borders are becoming increasingly porous in terms of environmental threats.

change or to redefine the objectives and structure of the military apparatus, so the military institution could be prepared not just for one type of threat (no only the military), but also to face the negative externalities of the process of environmental change.

The institutional problem is reinforced by the situation that nowadays the Latin American public opinion is very skeptical of the traditional role of the military forces. Therefore, it is unclear that the Latin American public opinion will support the military apparatus in taking care of these transnational threats.

A second set of problems is related to the fact that the handling of transnational threats push the reconceptualization of the classical notions of national security, sovereignty and territoriality. In fact, it is assumed that transboundary environmental problems necessarily undermine state sovereignty, thus, while states may claim sovereignty over natural resources, they have come under mounting pressure to manage their resources according to international norms. The problem in Latin American is that armies still feel a strong link with the notion of traditional sovereignty, territoriality and national interests. However, the sovereignty concept is losing its national territorial component as the most important one. Therefore, a transnational threat such as environmental change makes difficult for Latin American countries to define the security interest in just national territorial terms.

V The payoff of environmental security regimes

The existence of new transnational threats such as environmental change and the emergence of a concept of

security closer to people's concerns could be promoting the need for schemes of regional environmental security regimes that could respond to this new dynamic.

One of the most cited arguments explaining regime formation is that if participants perceive that they have common interests and that the benefits - the payoff - of joint actions are greater than those of unilateral action, they are likely to co-operate, and then possibly to form a regime. Following this argument the question will be: *what types of benefits are going to produce such regional security regimes for the participants?* There are two types of expected benefits: they are the utility and security function. For instance, the MERCOSUR and SICA States as a regional block could be more effective than the nation-state in solving collective action problems such as the ones present in South and Central America (this is maximize utility), as well as defending a collective entity against foreign powers (this is security function). In the context of global competition the regional level provides more bargaining power than the State level. This is particular relevant for States and regions facing international pressure such as the South and Central America and, in which there are not truly hegemonic states.

These expected benefits are pushing the States to a new situation unknown up to now. This is what can be called in Buzan's words a security complex. This situation implies necessarily to avoid zero-sum games for a more cooperative one, in which the positive externalities (in this case security) are distributed among the participants. To Buzan (1991, 1998), security complex is "*a set of units whose major process of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another*" (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: p. 201).

The recognition of this security complex can be seen in the development of a common agenda. Thus, very much of the development of a common agenda of security has been influenced by putting into effect joint security operations. For instance, Chile and Argentina in 1998 decided to carry out in the Drake and Beagle Channel joint operations. That was the first joint operation in history between Argentina and Chile.

It is important to mention that until 1995 there were few initiatives supporting a common security agenda in South America, however after 1995 there has been a notably evolution in this direction mainly in the MERCOSUR context. Thus, the integration process taking place in the region seems to support the need for a new security framework. Indeed, if one follows the systemic hypothesis that argues that if the density of transactions between the states concerned is high, the demand for the establishment of an international regime tends to increase, then one could argue for the need of a security regime. In fact, the trade dynamism in the context of MERCOSUR and SICA requires a new security framework, no just thinking in military terms but in other types of threats derived of the integration and the fact of sharing natural resources. Indeed, the consolidation of MERCOSUR and SICA requires a stable regional situation where conflicts and threats can be minimized or reduced.

In sum, one of the most important pay off of regional environmental security regimes is that they can increase the governance of transboundary regional natural resources, these regional natural resources without effective governance can generate a "prisoner dilemma paradox", in which individually actors rational strategies lead to regional irrational outcomes.

VI What does the establishment of regional security regimes in Latin America require?

They require, first, that the members share a set of values. This can be a commitment to democracy, and the strengthening of a community of democratic values among the countries, which are joined together by ties of history, geography, and cooperation;

Second, the members must be vulnerable to the collective measures. This aspect is more visible in MERCOSUR than in SICA. The crisis which took place in Paraguay in 1999 demonstrated the vulnerability of this state to the collective measures emanated from MERCOSUR.

Third, the system actions must be incorporated or at least be harmonic with the hegemonic world order, meaning basically United States interests. This means, that it should be complementary and not in opposition to the security initiatives emanating from the United States. Thus, the most viable alternative conflict-management system for Latin American must also recognize that the United States will continue to define its security needs unilaterally. The system must not be built on the assumption that the United States will behave as Latin America wants or that its behavior is irrelevant (Roeder, 1997: p. 216). The regional security management system might convince the United States both that its legitimate needs were being addressed and that an early decision on its part to use force would meet opprobrium not only at the regional level but at the global level as well.

Fourth, it requires the adoption of new security frameworks, which includes the conceptualization of new threats, not just the military ones and new referent objects of security,

not just the State. This element has been taken place to a certain extent within SICA and MERCOSUR. For instance the Central American Democratic Security Treaty argues that it is based on the supremacy and strengthening of civil power, the reasonable balance of forces, the security of persons and of their property, the elimination of poverty, the promotion of sustainable development, the protection of the environment, the elimination of violence, terrorism, and drug trafficking. As can be seen there is wide reference to new threats as well as different objects of references such as the state, the people and even the environment.

VII Concluding remarks

To conclude I argue that nevertheless common characteristics for the Latin American states, the building of an effective collective security regime for the whole continent is difficult. The historical reality is that neither the United States nor some of the major Latin American states have accepted subordinating their freedom of action to the Inter-American community. Thus, efforts to cope with conflicts and promote security are likely to be more successful at the regional level, rather than a continental or global level, this is especially valid in the environmental sectors. Here, the interdependency arising from the fact of shared natural resources is forming security complexes. Indeed, as Latin America shows we are witnessing today a wide variety of new regional security regimes such as the Caribbean's Regional Security System, the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, and the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia, and Chile as a Zone of Peace. These security regimes could be used as a framework for building more concrete regional environmental security regimes to manage transnational

threats such as the process of environmental change as well as potential international environmental conflict arising from the management of transboundary natural resources.

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