
Regional Mechanisms and International Security in Latin America

Edited by Olga Pellicer

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**United Nations
University Press**

TOKYO • NEW YORK • PARIS

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United Nations University Press
The United Nations University, 53-70, Jingumae 5-chome,
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan
Tel: (03) 3499-2811 Fax: (03) 3406-7345
Telex: J25442 Cable: UNATUNIV TOKYO

UNU Office in North America
2 United Nations Plaza, Room DC2-1462-70, New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 963-6387 Fax: (212) 371-9454 Telex: 422311 UN UI

United Nations University Press is the publishing division of the United Nations University.

Cover design by Takashi Suzuki

UNUP-967
ISBN 92-808-0967-9

Preface and Acknowledgements

In May 1994, a seminar on Regional Mechanisms and International Security in Latin America took place in Cuernavaca, Mexico. It was sponsored by the United Nations University (UNU) and the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM).

A year later, the Instituto Matías Romero de Estudios Diplomáticos (IMRED) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico decided to publish the papers presented at the seminar in Cuernavaca in a joint edition with the UNU. The publication of these essays in Spanish was a measure of the interest which both institutions believe that they will hold for the contemporary debate on notions of international security in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The seminar could not have taken place without the support of Rafael Fernández de Castro, head of the Department of International Studies at the ITAM; our thanks and acknowledgements go also to Valérie Cárdenas and Christiane Greathouse, who contributed so unstintingly and efficiently in its organization.

Both the seminar and the subsequent publication of the papers presented in it owe a great deal to the support of Jacques Fomerand, head of the North American office of the UNU, whose constant guidance and enthusiasm accompanied the project from the start.

The planning and coordination of the seminar, as well as the edition and compilation of the present volume, were carried out by Olga Pellicer. Miguel Angel Covián carried out all editing and revision duties with great professionalism, with the assistance of Rosalva Ruiz Paniagua. The support of Constanza García Colomé and Rosario Guin in the editing process, as well as that of Violeta Noriega in the word-processing of the original papers, also deserves the fullest acknowledgement.

For this English edition, a first draft of the translation was made by Julian Brody. The final editing, which includes a detailed revision of text and notes, was carried out by Mandy Macdonald.

Frequently Used Acronyms

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Name in English</i>	<i>Name in Spanish</i>
ARENA	National Republican Alliance	Alianza Republicana Nacional
CACM/MCCA	Central American Common Market	Mercado Común Centroamericano
CARICOM	Caribbean Common Market	
CD	Democratic Convergence	Convergencia Democrática
CIAB-OEA	International Commission for Support and Verification	Comisión Internacional de Apoyo y Verificación (OEA)
CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission	Comisión Interamericana para el Control del Abuso de Drogas
CIREFCA	International Conference on Refugees in Central America	Conferencia Internacional sobre Refugiados en Centroamérica
CIVS	International Verification and Monitoring Committee	Comisión Internacional de Verificación y Seguimiento
ECLAC/CEPAL	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe
EPS	Sandinista People's Army	Ejército Popular Sandinista
FDR	Revolutionary Democratic Front	Frente Democrático Revolucionario
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Name in English</i>	<i>Name in Spanish</i>
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade	
IADB/JID	Inter-American Defense Board	Junta Interamericana de Defensa
ITRA/TIAR	Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance	Tratado Interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca
LAES/SELA	Latin American Economic System	Sistema Latinoamericano Económico
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the Southern Cone	Mercado Común del Sur
MINUGUA	United Nations Mission in Guatemala	Misión de las Naciones Unidas en Guatemala
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement	Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario
MPSC	Popular Social Christian Movement	Movimiento Popular Social Cristiano
MTCR	missile technology control regime	
MTM	mutual trust measure	
NAFTA/TLCAN	North American Free Trade Agreement	Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte
NGO	non-governmental organization	
OAS/OEA	Organization of American States	Organización de los Estados Americanos
ONUCA	United Nations Observer Group in Central America	Grupo de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en Centroamérica
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador	Misión de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean	Organismo para la Proscripción de las Armas Nucleares en la América Latina y el Caribe
PKO	peace-keeping operation	
PNC	National Civilian Police	Policía Nacional Civil
PSD	Salvadorian Social Democratic Party	Partido Social Demócrata Salvadoreño
TSE	Electoral Supreme Court	Tribunal Supremo Electoral
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme	
UNDP/PNUD	United Nations Development Programme	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo
UNHCR/ACNUR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Name in English</i>	<i>Name in Spanish</i>
UNO	Nicaraguan Opposition Union	Unión Nicaragüense de la Oposición
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia	
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force (in former Yugoslavia)	
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia	
UNTAG	United Nations Transitional Assistance Group	
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca

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Introduction

Olga Pellicer

The present publication brings together a series of essays presented at the Seminar on Regional Mechanisms and International Security in Latin America, sponsored by the United Nations University (UNU) and the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM). The seminar, which took place in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in May 1994, was organized around four central topics:

1. Concepts of international security in Latin America;
2. Regional mechanisms and international security;
3. A case-study: the United Nations in Central America;
4. Recent trends in the Security Council: the Latin American perspective.

The gathering reflected the prevalent concern, frequently voiced within UN circles, regarding the greater responsibility which could be assigned to regional mechanisms in the pursuit of international security, viewed from the broad perspective put forward in the United Nations Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace," amongst other documents.

As can be seen by the papers presented in this volume, the seminar stimulated a lively and thought-provoking discussion which evinced the diversity of viewpoints to be found in the region regarding the elements which make up today's concepts of international security; the enlargement of functions for regional mechanisms; the experience gained from the actions of the United Nations; the prevailing tendencies within the Security Council; and the attention which must inevitably be paid to the role of the United States.

Diverse Perspectives on Matters of International Security

The first obstacle to a common vision of international security among the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean is their great diversity in terms of

economic development, military power, the role of the armed forces within the political system, and articulation with the other players on the regional stage, both continental¹ and extracontinental.

The contributions of Augusto Varas (chapter 1) and Andrés Serbin (chapter 3) lead us towards an understanding of how transformations on the global stage, accelerated by the end of the Cold War, have accentuated the differences between nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, leading to an increased divergence and heterogeneity of interests among them. In effect, the economic globalization in gestation throughout the 1980s has only added to the economic stratification of the countries in the region, as well as to increased differentiation in the subregional, or extraregional, nature of their economic alliances.

For those nations in the region enjoying a comparatively high level of economic development, insertion into the world economy is proceeding apace through structures external to Latin America, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In contrast, for the smaller nations in the Caribbean Basin or Central America, subregional integration, through the Association of Caribbean States or the Central American Common Market, seems the best route in order to avoid what constitutes perhaps the greatest threat to their security: exclusion from the processes of economic internationalization.

Latin America at the end of the millennium, Augusto Varas reminds us, is more “porous,” in the sense that new multilateral actors have appeared within it. Whilst it is the case that these actors are connected to Latin American nations through economic agreements, there can be no doubt that they will affect existing notions of both national and international security, thus bringing about a reinterpretation of the traditional ideas on this issue which were developed in the period following the Second World War. Reinterpretations of this kind are heavily influenced by the specific political interests operating in each nation, in particular those of the armed forces. This has led to clear differences in approach between nations with an influential military sector – such as those in South America – and those with an ingrained civil tradition, such as Mexico.

The second obstacle in the way of a common perspective on international security is the marked absence of a tradition of geopolitical and strategic thinking which characterizes most of the countries in the region. As Andrés Serbin points out, a salient aspect of political thought in the Caribbean Basin (the Caribbean states, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico) is the extent to which there is a gap both in geopolitical thinking and in perceptions of common threats within the traditional framework of security doctrines. This absence appears in the discourse of the political and governmental élites as a clear tendency to avoid problems of defence and security, exclusively privileging those aspects linked to economic security and emphasizing a domestic agenda limited to the consolidation of democracy and the buttressing of market economies. The absence of any fixed point of reference regarding regional security explains the wide diversity of approaches to the subject taken by participants at the seminar.

Thus, in the opinion of Donald Puchala and Morris Blachman (chapter 7), the concept of "human security" developed through the annual reports prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the most appropriate framework to provide guidelines for those actions which international organizations might implement in favour of security in the region. The term "human security," in their opinion, has the great advantage of overcoming the traditional split between the agenda for peace and the agenda for social and economic development. In this new concept of human security, peace is certainly an attribute of a secure environment, but it is only one of several attributes, which are related to peace in many ways. The establishment of peace, according to this approach, is a means for the implementation of the actions of an international organization; enhancing the quality of human security is the goal or objective towards which it is applied.

This notion of human security focuses the actions of international organizations directly upon individuals and their circumstances; it constitutes, therefore, a subtle twist upon the issue of state sovereignty. Pressuring international organizations towards the service of "the security of individuals" is in fact a step towards the marginalization of states and the legitimization of supranational bodies.

A very different vision is that presented by Augusto Varas, who represents the thinking of many diplomats and academics in South America, Argentina and Chile in particular. In his opinion, the atmosphere of cooperation on the economic level between the nations of the continent has not coincided with the development of a similar level of cooperation in the field of security. The time is, however, ripe for generating a cooperative security system which could be defined as a web of inter-state interactions which, by coordinating government policies, could prevent and contain threats to national interests and prevent perceived threats from escalating into tension or outright confrontation.

Two explanations are relevant for the preceding definition. Firstly, it refers mostly to potentially contentious situations which could escalate into military confrontations; secondly, it assigns an important role to the armed forces in the governmental policies which it seeks to coordinate.

From Varas's point of view, the coordination of policies, including those of the United States, is the only possible guarantee for a stable and sustained peace in the hemisphere. For army professionalism not to translate into inter-state tensions and conflicts, he points out, the development of non-confrontational military mechanisms and interactions in the region is imperative. In this way, cooperative security would serve, among other things, as a control mechanism for bellicose developments which might threaten an existing balance. It would also allow for more stable and less costly technology transfer, in so far as there is participation, for example, in arms control systems.

Thomaz Guedes da Costa (chapter 2), who agrees more with Varas and Serbin than with Puchala and Blachman, points out that there are three factors which must be considered regarding the possibility of establishing an international security regime in the western hemisphere. The first is the notion of "international change." The author identifies a debate concerning the possible creation of a new international order in the post-Cold War period. On the one

hand, there are those who hold that the greatly increased levels of integration and economic interdependence which prevail today are setting the scene for such a new order to appear. On the other hand, there are those who consider that the changes taking place in the world are not profound enough to transform the "macro" structure of global power.

The second factor for Guedes da Costa is the nature of the United States' influence in the region. The author argues that there was no dispute, revolution, or coup during the Cold War period in which the United States did not interfere in order to reaffirm its own security interests. The important question which must be raised today concerns the extent to which this level of US involvement will be maintained, and the consequences that this might produce.

The third factor is the lack of credibility and value which characterizes the instruments for conflict resolution in Latin America, such as the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (ITRA, known also as the Rio Treaty) and the Inter-American Defense Board. These instruments failed to operate adequately in the most recent crises in the region, which have included the Central American conflict and the dispute over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). The existence of the Contadora Group in the 1980s, and of the Rio Group today, clearly evinces the Latin American leaning towards informal mechanisms for conflict resolution in the area.

Finally, Guedes da Costa presents four practical suggestions to be taken into consideration in the search for a new regime of international security in the western hemisphere:

1. The flow of information on foreign policies must increase if the new regime is to be constructed by democratic regimes;
2. Organizations coordinating security must invest in the training of personnel, to enable them to advise and support decision-making processes;
3. International organizations must increase their level of coordination with informal mechanisms on the regional and hemispheric levels;
4. Regional and global organizations acting in the field of security must renew themselves and show that they are able to keep abreast of current development.

Regional Mechanisms in the Americas

The participation of regional mechanisms, both formal and informal, in matters of peace and security in the hemisphere was one of the pivotal issues discussed at the Cuernavaca seminar. It is important here to reflect upon the many references made in international conferences, workshops, and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as in the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace," regarding the need for a more frequent use of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, which assigns greater levels of responsibility to regional mechanisms in security matters within their geographic arenas.

It might appear, at first sight, that the western hemisphere has an advanced

institutional framework for the coordination of international security policies. The Pan-American movement dates from the nineteenth century, and the institutions of the Inter-American system have been in place since the end of the Second World War. However, the undeniable fact is that, in the subregion of Latin America and the Caribbean, most viewpoints are either reserved about, or openly opposed to, the strengthening of mechanisms of collective security.

As Margarita Diéguez recalls in her article (chapter 5), experiences of the implementation of collective security measures on the American continent during the Cold War years, under the aegis of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, left behind memories of manipulation on the part of the United States, and diminished the credibility of the regional organization. In this context, it is not surprising that solutions to conflicts which arose in the 1980s should have been sought outside the Organization of American States (OAS). One need only recall the cases of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Central America, or Panama, which were brought to the attention of the United Nations or grappled with through ad-hoc procedures such as the Con-tadora Group.

In the early 1980s, under the impulse of the growing dynamism of the United Nations, a new era of UN-OAS cooperation in matters relating to the maintenance of peace began. However, as Diéguez points out, this cooperation has been incipient and limited. Nicaragua and, more recently, Haiti stand out as examples of a somewhat more extensive and innovative cooperation.

Alongside these experiences, a new approach to security matters has arisen within the OAS. On the one hand, this approach is related to democracy. This is indicated by certain aspects in the Declaration of Santiago and, later, a reform to the Charter of the OAS, which allow regional organizations to take action should a constitutional breakdown occur within a member state.

On the other part, in its resolution AG 1123(XXI-0/91), the OAS moved to create a working group to study and formulate appropriate recommendations regarding cooperation in all aspects of hemispheric security. This working group, which would later become the Special Committee on Hemispheric Security, has run into an obstacle: an extremely wide notion of security. Some member states believe that the concept of security should include such issues as the deterioration of the environment, the war against the international drug trade, migration, terrorism, or even poverty and the violation of human rights.

As can be deduced from Margarita Diéguez's essay, translating this broad notion of regional security into specific agreements regarding actions to be implemented has proved difficult, if not impossible. Progress within the Special Committee on Hemispheric Security has been made only in certain fields, limited by the scope of traditional security concerns, such as confidence-building measures or armaments control.

As Diéguez suggests, instead of arriving at greater consensus, more questions have opened up. Perhaps the most pressing of these questions is to what extent it is possible, or desirable, to enter into a security agenda shared, not only with the United States, but also among the Latin American nations themselves, and between these and the Caribbean nations.

A third manifestation of the new interest in security (and the divisions which it engenders) is the debate surrounding the link between the Inter-American Defense Board and the OAS. As Diéguez indicates, attempts have been made to alter the status of the Board by providing it with a formal link to the OAS and assigning it executive functions. In the opinion of a number of nations, this would mean endowing the regional organization with an armed contingent, which would devalue the original purposes and principles of the OAS. It is worth recalling that, since its inception, many member states have sought to keep the OAS from being granted any kind of military competence.

If the OAS advances only slowly on security matters, the same can be said for informal mechanisms such as the Rio Group. This issue is discussed in Francisco Rojas Aravena's essay (chapter 6) on political coordination and regional security. The debate during the seminar confirmed the impression that governmental élites tend to resist a more institutional involvement with the issues of hemispheric security.

Although the Rio Group (initially named the Group of Eight) was originally motivated by a genuine concern for the problems of security in Central America, the analysis of a number of head-of-state summit meetings, from Acapulco in 1987 to the present day, reveals a great disparity between the predominant rhetoric and any real commitment to the construction of a regional security system which could include, amongst other ideas, Augusto Varas's notion of cooperative security.

According to Francisco Rojas, Latin America has not taken the qualitative leap made feasible by the transformation of circumstances resulting from the end of the Cold War. It has proved incapable of creating joint perspectives from which to address problems of security, either at the continental level (Haiti and Cuba) or at the universal level (the reform of the Security Council). Rojas affirms that there are no regional or continental proposals for a coordinated view of international security, beyond the mutual satisfaction gleaned from advances in dealing with weapons of mass destruction.

The reasons for this are several. They range from a political culture which shies away from potentially conflictive issues in order to avoid explicit differences or points of friction, to the tendency to prioritize bilateral relations over regional coordination. Latin American nations, Rojas believes, seek to gain weight and protection on the basis of the enhancement of their bilateral policies with the United States, rather than through the strengthening of an effective regional coordination.

United Nations Actions in Central America

As a result of the situation outlined above, the OAS has not played a significant part in the settlement of disputes within Latin America. The United Nations, therefore, has assumed a greater role in recent years, particularly through its participation in the pacification of Central America.

In this context, the seminar turned its attention towards the actions of the

United Nations in Central America. As can be seen in Cristina Eguizábal's essay (chapter 4), the United Nations' participation in the solution of the Central American conflict took two clearly differentiated directions: first, there were actions taken to assist the demobilization of the Nicaraguan "contras" and their reincorporation into Nicaragua's economic and social life; second, there was the mediation which led to the Peace Accords in El Salvador, as well as their subsequent implementation.

The United Nations' actions in Central America bequeathed a valuable legacy of experience, which reveals a great deal both about its limitations and the conditions in which it can succeed. In the case of Nicaragua, Eguizábal's essay underlines the great multiplicity of factors which made the demilitarization and relinquishing of weapons sponsored by the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) an incomplete exercise. This was to lead to the emergence throughout the country of armed gangs, which are still an obstacle today to the normalization of Nicaragua's political life. It should be added that since the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas the international community has shown little commitment to the "consolidation" of peace in Nicaragua. In fact, programmes for the nation's reconstruction have been meagre at best, and the possibility of a programme for sustainable development still seems remote.

The case of El Salvador is very different. Here, a number of conditions allowed the United Nations to consider its activities in this country as a "success story." The first of these conditions was the military stalemate which the contenders, the government and the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) had reached. This situation, defined by Eguizábal as the "ripeness" of the conflict, meant that both parties were well disposed towards negotiation. The second condition was the wide-ranging nature of the Peace Accords. These not only considered military aspects, such as the cease-fire or the relinquishing of weapons; they also contemplated a diverse spectrum of issues ranging from the reform of the Salvadorian Constitution and the restructuring of the army and the national police to the creation of a Truth Commission to investigate serious violations of human rights, as well as the transfer of land to ex-combatants of the FMLN. Finally, unlike Nicaragua, El Salvador enjoyed a phase of peace consolidation, aided by the work of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), which ensured the implementation of the Peace Accords. Eguizábal's essay describes, for example, the role played by ONUSAL in restarting the stalled negotiations for the transfer of lands provided for in the Accords.

The secondary, indeed almost imperceptible, role played by the OAS in the settlement of the Central American crisis leads us to a conclusion regarding the seminar's central concern. Regional organizations have had a limited involvement in the settlement of the Central American crisis; a remnant of the informal mechanism that was Contadora, the so-called Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, took part in the negotiations in El Salvador. However, the greatest responsibility for Central America has fallen squarely upon the shoulders of the United Nations.

A Latin American View of the New Tendencies in the Security Council

The central role played by the United Nations in matters of peace and security in Latin America calls for the elaboration of a Latin American view of the new tendencies expressed by the actions of the Security Council in the post-Cold War period. This is the aim of the essay presented by Olga Pellicer and Joel Hernández (chapter 8).

Pivotal to their argument is the existence of a credibility crisis in the Security Council. During the period immediately following the Cold War, these authors point out, great expectations of a new era for the United Nations were born. It appeared that conditions were finally in place for the United Nations to fulfil the responsibilities with which it was entrusted in the Charter of San Francisco. Doubts and scepticism, however, were soon to set in.

Two factors contributed to such scepticism. First, there was the widespread notion that the Security Council, lacking any consensual basis, was acting incoherently and excluding the views of many UN Member States, including non-permanent members, from its processes of coordination and decision-making. Second, much uncertainty was generated by the vague terminology in some resolutions regarding the deployment of peace-keeping operations (PKOs). The confusion which characterized the mandates that these forces were issued, as well as the disappointing results obtained from their involvement, exemplified by the Somalian case, have only served to exacerbate this uncertainty.

The unexpected development of PKOs, according to Pellicer and Hernández, in terms both of number and of mandate, is the result of a political climate which has allowed the Security Council to act more dynamically. Although this dynamism has enjoyed the support of a number of Member States, there is also a large group which is alarmed and sceptical regarding the Security Council's tendency to authorize actions which place the United Nations above the sovereignty of nations.

Any attempt to endow the world organization with supranational faculties to be implemented through collective action, including the deployment of PKOs, must be directed by a system of rules grounded on a consensual basis. In the view of these authors, the future functioning of peace-keeping operations, and of international security in general, requires guidelines which can be reconciled with a common notion of national sovereignty. If this does not occur, there is a danger that certain states may decide to distance themselves progressively from the Security Council.

An Unavoidable Actor: The United States

Although it was not formally on the agenda, an issue which was much discussed in the Cuernavaca seminar was the influence of the United States upon security problems in Latin America and the Caribbean.