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## 8 Analyzing an anomaly: war, peace, and the state in South America<sup>1</sup>

Regions comprised primarily of weak states are zones of wars of the third kind. The etiology of these wars resides primarily within states that lack vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Many of these domestic wars cannot be contained within their frontiers, however. They become internationalized in various ways, sometimes leading to war between two or more states. Weak states are found predominantly in that vast area often inappropriately called the Third World, in the Balkans, and in some of the former Soviet republics. Does South America belong in any of these categories? Many people have so designated it. But the figures in table 2.1 show that South America has a unique profile of war. Like the other areas, it has seen a relatively high incidence of internal wars; but there have been no wars of secession. And, completely at odds with the other areas, there has been no war between South American states since 1941. South America is an intriguing anomaly. Is the war pattern of this region related to the weak state phenomenon? How can we explain the anomaly?

South America constitutes a distinct international system. It is linked

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the items cited in the references, some of the information and analysis is based on thirty-six interviews conducted in Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Santiago, La Paz, Lima, and Quito in May and June 1994. By role or profession, the interviews were with seventeen academic experts, eight former ministers of foreign affairs or other cabinet-level diplomats, nine military leaders with the rank of general (including two chiefs of staff of the army), one parliamentarian, and one former president. In some cases the respondent held more than one position. The interviews were conducted on the condition of anonymity; if there were serious disagreements of factual information between two or more respondents, the information was not included in the discussion that follows. I am very grateful to Paulo Wrobel, Monica Hirst, Maria Teresa Infante, Emilio Meneses, Gustavo Varas, Fernando Salazar Paredes, Eduardo Ferrero Costa, and Fernando Bustamante for their gracious assistance in organizing interviews or in other ways helping out.

to other systems, particularly to Central America and North America, but it contains its own unique properties and dynamics. G. Pope Atkins (1990: 1) defines it as an "international political subsystem." A prominent scholar of South American history (Burr 1965: 3, 28, 57) has chronicled its early years as a "continental system." Barry Buzan (1991: 207, 210) lists it among his "regional security complexes." Many other analysts concur with that categorization.

### **South America in the nineteenth century: a classical zone of war**

In *post-hoc* explanations of the international politics of South America during the nineteenth century, many neo-realist predictions about international politics would be borne out. In less than one hundred years, there were six formally declared wars of which the devastating conflict pitting Paraguay against Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil (1865–70), and the War of the Pacific between Chile and Bolivia and Peru (1879–84) were the most famous and have had consequences lasting into the late twentieth century. There were also five major armed invasions and interventions (cf. Goldstein 1992: ch. 17). In total, there were forty-two "militarized disputes" – defined as interactions "involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual use of military force" – between 1816 and 1900 (Hensel 1994).

All the accoutrements of European diplomacy were found in nineteenth-century South America: alliances, fear of Brazilian hegemony, balances of power, and arms-racing (Meneses 1991: 346). During this era, South American governments constantly laid claims to each others' territories. In the 1830s, Chile militarily dismantled the Peru–Bolivia confederation and occupied Lima for two years. Forty years later it grabbed Antofagasta from Bolivia, and Tacna, Arica, and most of the Atacama desert – all areas containing major mineral deposits – from Peru (the War of the Pacific, 1879–84). Peru had pretensions to Guayaquil and intervened militarily in an Ecuador revolution in 1860. Bolivia also lost territory to Peru and Argentina and, after armed incidents, ceded the Acre region in the Amazon to Brazil (1903).

Brazil was the potential hegemon. It claimed territories that had been demarcated during the Spanish colonial era as belonging to Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay. Through threats, subversion, armed occupation, and the skillful diplomacy of the Baron

do Rio Branco, it was able to expand its territories at the expense of its neighbors. It was also the only country in South America to proclaim itself an empire (1822–89) and was thus the object of considerable suspicion on ideological and strategic grounds. Finally, Bolivia and Peru, the down-sized losers of the War of the Pacific, had “Alsace-Lorraine complexes” that have continued to motivate their foreign policies to this day.

Looking at nineteenth-century South America, then, one sees patterns of peace and war, intervention, territorial predation, alliances, arms-racing, and power-balancing quite similar to those found in eighteenth-century Europe. This region would thus lend support to neo-realist, structural characterizations of international politics as a game of conflict, war, struggle, and survival.

There is also a correlation between the high incidence of war and intervention, and some of the typical characteristics of weak states. Nineteenth-century South America, in other words, lends support to the main thesis of this book. Brazil, for example, lacked national integration. There was little or no transportation between its major regions. As a coastal society, it looked to Europe rather than towards its own integration. Even though nominally an empire, it was in fact a loose federation of provinces, each with its own armed forces and its own political and economic agendas. Civil war flared during the 1830s and even as late as 1932 the province of São Paulo rebelled militarily against federal authorities in what was a virtual war of secession. Some of Brazil’s conflicts with its southern neighbors derived more from internal considerations, needs, and threats, than from external security problems.

During the latter nineteenth century, Argentina was hardly a nation, but more a decentralized system of warlords. It was immersed in a series of civil wars until the 1860s. Chile and Ecuador (after the latter seceded from Colombia) were in a condition of chronic revolution and civil war until mid-century. Ecuador’s weakness as a state prompted various claims and interventions by Peru. Bolivia in the nineteenth century was also a classic weak state. It contained geographically distinct regions, many of whose inhabitants identified with neighboring countries. Notable separatist movements developed in Tarija and Santa Cruz. The underdevelopment and weakness of the Bolivian state and its traditional dominance by Andean highlanders, contributed to decentralization and facilitated external interference from Argentina, Brazil, and Peru (Morales 1984: 175).

If states were weak, so were governments. In 168 years in Peru, there were 108 governments (Velit 1993: 214), most of which came to power through extra-legal means. Figures of similar magnitudes were found also in Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela.

A prime characteristic of weak states, as argued in chapter 5, is contested frontiers. A state lacks international legitimacy, and therefore security, if major portions of its territory are claimed by others. This aspect of statehood has been historically a major source of both international and domestic wars.

In nineteenth-century South America, the territorial limits of sovereignty were constantly challenged even though at the Congress of Lima in 1848 the governments agreed that the Spanish colonial boundaries as of 1810 should form the basis of future frontiers. This is the principle of *uti possidetis*, applied in a similar fashion in Africa since 1963.

The problem was that the formidable geographical barriers of the peripheral areas of South America made accurate frontier demarcations difficult. Even by 1848, almost all of the 1810 limits had been challenged or altered by armed force, and the Spanish-speaking countries, relying on the principle of the historic foundations (e.g., documents of title, treaties) of territorial extent, disagreed fundamentally with Brazil, which held that territorial limits are based on effective occupation. Until 1945 military conquest was still a valid basis for a territorial claim (Calvert 1983: 5). Calvert points out that "[i]t was therefore possible – and indeed desirable – to establish a military presence as rapidly as possible in disputed frontier regions, which could in subsequent negotiations be used as evidence of effective occupation." Vast regions of South America, in any case, had not been carefully mapped during the Spanish-Portuguese colonial periods. They included the Amazon and Orinoco river basins, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, and the Atacama desert – all areas of war and conflict in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries (Burr 1965: 5). Thus, the 1848 agreement – similar to the more recent principle enshrined in the Charter of the Organization of African Unity – that the new states should define their territorial limits on the basis of colonial frontiers – never really solved the territorial identity of the new states. In the rest of the nineteenth century virtually no frontier in existence in 1848 was to remain unchallenged (Calvert 1983: 5).

Many of the contested regions were sparsely populated and difficult to control, but once they were discovered to hold resources for world

trade (nitrates and guano in the Atacama desert, rubber in Acre, and oil in the Amazon basin) they became the scene of conflicts, crises, and wars.

In other respects, however, the South American countries did not have many of the features of so many post-1945 weak states. There were deep class cleavages based on color, but most South American countries did not have the multiplicity of communities found, for example, in India, Nigeria, or Sudan today. Indigenous populations had been killed off in Argentina and to a lesser extent in Brazil and Chile, or remained marginalized from the main political systems. For a variety of complex reasons and unlike their counterparts in other areas of the world in the twentieth century, the marginalized did not organize resistance around the principle of self-determination or the policy of secession. Military or civilian oligarchies ruled, but under a paternalistic framework of constitutional rules of the game. The state was not an instrument of systematic predation of one group against others (again, the indigenous populations in Argentina, Brazil, Peru and other Andean countries are significant exceptions). Political opponents for the most part were silenced through means other than widespread human rights abuses, expulsion, or genocide, and even in eras of domestic turmoil, the state was able to provide minimal services.

### **Twentieth-century South America: a no-war zone**

The data on war incidence since 1945, introduced in chapter 2, indicate clearly that the international politics of South America have changed substantially since the late nineteenth century. Today, it stands as an anomaly among so many regions characterized by frequent wars, interventions, and collapsing states. If we exclude the Malvinas War (1982) because it was fought against an extra-regional power, there has been no interstate war in South America since 1941. This record is matched only by North America. Considering that there are four times as many independent countries in South America as in North America, on a probability basis the no-war record of the former is remarkable.

It is even more remarkable if we stretch the time horizon further back: there have been only two wars in South America since 1903. The Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay was a protracted, bloody conflict involving almost 100,000 casualties, while the war between Ecuador and Peru in 1941 lasted only two weeks. It is not listed in most

war data sets because it had fewer than 1,000 casualties. But because Ecuador lost more than 200,000 square kilometers (about 40 percent of its territory) including access to the Amazon River (and hence to the Atlantic) as well as potential oil resources, it must be considered an important war. Further border flare-ups took place in 1981 and 1995. The first was quickly managed with a cost of less than a dozen lives. The second was substantially more serious, with about 75 casualties, but far under the 1,000 casualty threshold; its significance will be noted below.

For South America, then, the twentieth century has been an era of relative peace. If we compare it to the record of war in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, or to the twentieth-century interwar period, the contrast is even more dramatic. Except for North America, South America has been the most peaceful area in the world in the twentieth century.

Many of the other characteristics of the neo-realist version of international politics have not been duplicated in twentieth-century South American international politics. Despite substantial ideological incompatibilities between various South American regimes, the incidence of subversion, armed intervention, or other forms of interference, has been relatively low. When Brazilian exiles were trained in Chile in the 1970s for resistance/subversive activities, the Brazilian government maintained proper relations with the Allende government in Santiago, even to the point of donating limited amounts of aid to it. Despite widespread concerns throughout South America about the Allende regime, there was no joint action against it and, indeed, the military government in Argentina took a major step to arbitrate the Beagle Channel controversy with it. The military, but radical-reformist, governments of Peru during the 1970s also faced no external interference except from the United States.

The major exceptions to the general rule of non-interference or intervention include Brazilian involvement in a Bolivian coup in August 1971 and frequent Argentine interference in Bolivian politics, including assistance to the leaders of an anti-leftist government coup in July, 1980. Given the record of ideological incompatibilities, civil disturbances, and unstable regimes throughout the continent in the twentieth century, however, these few exceptions tend to prove the rule of non-intervention.

South America in the twentieth century has also seen exceptionally high rates of peaceful conflict resolution or toleration of conflicts that

remain unresolved but are not likely to be settled by recourse to war (Treverton 1983). A recent study (Kacowicz 1994: 249–51) chronicles eight peaceful territorial changes (although some of them were settled only after a major, but not violent, crisis) in South America since 1900. Only two territorial conflicts were resolved by war.

Arbitral procedures for resolving conflicts have been used at extraordinarily high rates compared to other regions of the world. Since the 1820s until 1970, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela used arbitration procedures 151 times (data from Puig 1985: 9ff). Since 1970, the Beagle Channel dispute was arbitrated by the Queen of England (the award was subsequently rejected by Argentina) and by the Pope. Currently, two other territorial issues are being arbitrated between Argentina and Chile.

No other region of the world has as many bilateral and multilateral documents, treaties, and charters imposing obligations for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Among the more prominent are the Treaty on the Maintenance of Peace (Lima 1865), the General Treaty of Arbitration between Argentina and Chile (Pacto do Mayo) of 1902, the Bogotá Pact of 1948, and the Charter of the Organization of American States (Puig 1983: 11–13). While few of these contain compulsory procedures, their numbers and frequent use suggest a rich regime of peaceful conflict resolution norms.

Finally, one can gain an appreciation of the war or peace proneness of a region by superimposing maps over a period of years. While there were substantial frontier changes in nineteenth-century South America (but far fewer than the European counterpart), the twentieth century includes only a few minor changes, and only the two major territorial losses to Bolivia and Ecuador as a result of the two wars of the century (cf. Goertz and Diehl 1992: 112–13). It is also significant that those same maps show the disappearance of no states and the birth of no new states as a result of armed secession. Guyana and Suriname are the only new states; both emerged from peaceful de-colonization. Again, comparisons with other regions of the world are instructive. Most states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were born through international and civil-secessionist violence. Since the late nineteenth century, in contrast, South America has been a no-war zone characterized by peaceful change, non-violent conflict resolution, and only infrequent interventions.

One does not find, either, the remaining mainstays of neo-realist characterizations of international politics, namely alliances and bal-

ances of power. Both were prominent practices in the nineteenth century (Burr 1965), but disappeared as major foreign policy strategies in the twentieth century despite their importance in academic geopolitical analysis that was so popular in South America until the 1990s. Brazil has more territory and greater population and economic strength than all the remaining countries of the continent combined. It has not, however, sought hegemony in the classical models of a Louis XIV, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, or Adolf Hitler. It has frequently raised suspicions among its many neighbors,<sup>2</sup> but the absence of any counter-Brazil coalition or neighbors' "conflict hypotheses" which include Brazil as a possible threat, indicates a significant lack of hegemonial-type behavior on the part of Brazil (cf. Selcher 1990: 85). In territorial terms, Brazil has been a "satisfied" state throughout the twentieth century.

Alliances are also absent. By far the majority of relationships within South America are bilateral. Even attempts to build tactical and *ad hoc* coalitions in times of crisis (e.g., during the Beagle Channel crisis in December 1978; see below) have generally failed.

Overall, then, the international politics of twentieth-century South America fit poorly with neo-realist characterizations and predictions. Waltz's famous recurrent outcomes of an anarchic system (war, balancing, absence of relative gains) do not apply to this area. The theory, as suggested, comes from the European and Cold War diplomatic experience; it does not fit the patterns of twentieth-century South America.

### **From Hobbes to Kant: South America as a zone of peace?**

Is this a dramatic change from a zone of war, a "Hobbesian floor" of chronic warfare, to a "Kantian ceiling" of perpetual peace (Hoffmann 1981: 17)? Hardly. South America is not yet either a zone of peace or a pluralistic security community (Deutsch 1954; Deutsch *et al.*, 1957) as is found today in Western Europe or North America.

In the twentieth century, however, it has become at least a no-war zone ("negative peace," as termed by Arie Kacowicz, 1994) where mutually peaceful relations and non-violent modes of conflict resolution are the norm. As suggested in the previous chapter, no-war zones

<sup>2</sup> For example, in 1976, Guyana feared a Brazilian invasion in a dispute over territory.



fit somewhere between systems of chronic war, enmity, and insecurity, and zones of peace or pluralistic security communities in which the possibility of armed conflict has been reduced to almost zero.

South America in the twentieth century – or more precisely, since 1941, the date of its last war – fits into the no-war or negative peace category because since the Ecuador–Peru conflict of that year it has been the scene of forty-three militarized disputes and crises (Hensel 1994; and the 1995 Peru–Ecuador crisis) and other forms of behavior that are inconsistent with the zone of peace or pluralistic security community concepts. Indeed, the record of near wars until the 1980s would place the region only at the “introductory” levels of a no-war zone. Consider some crises and military deployments since the last war of 1941.

In 1966, the Stroessner government manufactured a contested territory crisis with Brazil (cf., Barboza 1992: ch. 5). In 1975, Peru went to the brink of war against Chile. The traditional revisionist claim by Peru for Arica (lost in the War of the Pacific) was a minor dimension of the problem. Ideological incompatibilities between two military regimes – led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado and Augusto Pinochet respectively – were significant, as were fears in Lima that Pinochet’s geopolitical concepts, including the necessity for Chile to establish naval hegemony over the eastern South Pacific, would significantly increase Peru’s security problems. During a period of two weeks, the Peruvian army was put on “red alert” and the air force prepared for strikes against military targets in Chile. Unlike the Argentine military regime’s preparation of public opinion prior to the Malvinas campaign, the Peruvian government made no propaganda; it wanted to conduct a quick war without the complications or repercussions of public participation. The decision to launch the armed forces was rescinded only at the last moment after American sources provided Peru with satellite photographs of Chile’s defenses. They were of sufficient magnitude to reduce significantly Peru’s assumed military superiority in the conflict sector.

The Beagle Channel crisis of December 1978 had a similar outcome, this time resulting more from serendipity than from effective deterrence. The dispute over the islands in the Beagle Channel has a long history. The implications of the territorial distribution go far beyond the small amount of territory involved. Where exactly the border lies in the Beagle Channel determines whether, for example, Chile would be a naval power in both the Pacific and Atlantic and, with the 200-mile

economic zone being formulated at the time in Geneva, whether it would also have jurisdiction over large tracts of sea containing potential resources such as krill and oil. The dispute also related to Argentine and Chilean mutually exclusive claims in Antarctica. An extension of Chilean jurisdiction into waters considered by the Argentines to be their own also seriously threatened Argentine military leaders' geopolitical dreams of hegemony over the western South Atlantic. The issues were complicated and perceived as involving national honor, prestige, national identity, and many other symbolic and commercial stakes.

Queen Elizabeth made an arbitral award in June 1977 favorable to Chile. The Argentine junta formally rejected it in January 1978. A vigorous propaganda campaign prepared the way for an Argentine show of force in the disputed area (cf. Infante 1984: 337–58). Following intense debates among the leaders of the military services in Buenos Aires (with General Videla disclaiming to South American diplomats any intention of going to war), the decision was made to resolve the issue by threatened force (for details of decision-making and military infighting, see R. Russell 1990: esp. pp. 36–59). After the necessary alerts and general mobilizations of both countries' military forces along their lengthy border, the Argentine junta sent a battle group of one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, seven destroyers, and two submarines to confront a Chilean fleet composed of three cruisers, eight frigates and destroyers, and three submarines. After four days of a face-to-face showdown in the Drake Passage (Meneses 1991: 357), a violent Atlantic storm forced the squadrons to retreat (Garrett 1985: 96–7). On December 11, Pope John Paul II sent a personal message to both presidents urging restraint and offering to arbitrate the conflict.

Not only did the events of December 1978 come very close to battle, but the crisis might well have escalated beyond the two main protagonists. Argentina, fully familiar with Peru's revisionist claims to Arica, requested a Peruvian attack in Chile's north. The request was rejected, but Peru did order a partial mobilization. Landlocked Bolivia, always looking for opportunities to redeem its losses of the War of the Pacific and gain access to the sea, also considered but decided against an attack on Chile. Chile, of course, did not sit back waiting for an Argentine–Peru–Bolivia axis to form against it. It tried to get Ecuador to stop providing oil to Peru. The Peruvians claimed that the Chilean naval attaché in Lima was involved in espionage and three Peruvian military officials were executed for providing Chile with military

secrets. The classical characteristics of balance of power/threat diplomacy, espionage, and counter-balancing were all evident in December 1978.

The last major armed incident occurred between Ecuador and Peru in 1981. It was a border problem, with minimal loss of life, engineered and orchestrated by the militaries of both countries against the wishes of their civilian governments (cf. Varas 1983: 76). The 1995 flare-up, costing about seventy-five lives, indicates the extent to which crises and border incidents remain a part of the South American diplomatic and military landscapes.

Military capabilities in some regions of South America continue to be targeted toward neighbors. In addition to deployments, some South American governments continue to develop war plans, known as "conflict hypotheses," against their neighbors. Most are secret and not subject to parliamentary scrutiny or debate. Their contents are generally known, however, or can be deduced from deployments. In Chile, for example, in order of priority and probability, the four main threats – the bases of war doctrines – are (1) war against Argentina; (2) a confrontation with Peru and/or Bolivia; (3) a "maximum threat," meaning a simultaneous war against Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia; and (4) an external (great-power?) attack on Easter Island (Meneses, 1993: 398–403). Displaying the mentality of the Argentine military regime in the 1970s, as another example, there was "Plan Rosario" according to which Argentina would attack the Malvinas and then turn to settle the Beagle Channel problem by force. The sequence, according to the plan, could also be reversed.

We can cite, finally, the case of Bolivia, where the perception of threat is translated into everyday life. Until recently, Bolivia had not paved any of its roads to neighboring countries for fear that they would be used as avenues of invasion against it.

Countries in zones of peace and pluralistic security communities maintain rich and reliable communications channels between each other. It would be difficult to believe a news report that, for example, Sweden and Norway had broken diplomatic relations. In South America during the twentieth century, however, such ruptures of the most fundamental channel of communication are by no means rare. In 1953, Argentina severed diplomatic relations with Uruguay (*Keesings Contemporary Archives*, January 3–10, 1953: 12664); it broke them with Venezuela the same year because the latter refused to expel Juan Peron (*Keesings Contemporary Archives*, July 20–7, 1953: 15671). Bolivia broke

diplomatic relations with Chile in 1962, and again in 1978. To 1995 they had not been restored.

The installation of military regimes throughout the Southern Cone countries and Brazil during the 1960s and 1970s tended to exacerbate preexisting regional tensions. The area was characterized by a classical arms-race mentality that included Brazil–Argentine nuclear competition, the development of indigenous arms industries, and the diversification of new armaments sources to include Soviet, French, British, German, and Canadian weapons systems (Hirst and Rico 1993: 250–3). There was also a minor arms race between Colombia and Venezuela focused on territorial disputes.

With this record of militarized crises, targeted military forces, “conflict hypotheses,” diplomatic ruptures, and overall military competitiveness, South America clearly is not yet a zone of peace, much less a pluralistic security community. Nevertheless, it has been a no-war zone in which the probabilities of armed conflict are substantially lower than they were in the nineteenth century or are in many other regions of the world today. As such, it is an anomaly compared to most other regions of the world. Why did the region change from a typical Hobbesian zone of war in the nineteenth century to a predictably peaceful, if not demilitarized, no-war zone in the twentieth century?

### **From zone of war to no-war zone: the problem of explanation**

Presently available theories of international politics do not explain the South American case. Neo-realist predictions are not borne out by the record; dependency theory would emphasize the economic roots of many of South America’s conflicts, but there have also been conflicts where economic stakes were minimal; and liberal-institutionalist theories do not take us very far because until recently there have been only low levels of integration and successful multilateral institution-building in the region. Deutsch’s theories of integration do not hold either because rich communications flows, democratic governments, and a common external threat have not been important features of the regional system. How do we explain the anomaly, then?

One way to proceed is to identify *types* of explanation that appear in the literature and that are offered by analysts and participants, and to

comb them for persuasive arguments. These include: (1) neo-realist/geostrategic; (2) learning and foreign policy change; (3) domestic politics; (4) cultural/sociological; and (5) liberal-institutional. To these approaches I add the argument of this book: strong states are a necessary if insufficient condition for the development of zones of peace and pluralistic security communities.

#### *Realist/geostrategic explanations*

In their normative stance, most neo-realist and geostrategic thinkers follow the logic of the ancient *para bellum* doctrine: if you want peace, prepare for war. The explanation for the change from a typical war system in the nineteenth century to a no-war or negative peace zone in the twentieth century lies primarily in effective military dispositions (deterrence) and an overall balance of power maintained between the particular states and by the regional hegemon, the United States.

The absence of war between states holding incompatible claims (Ecuador–Peru, Peru–Chile, Bolivia–Chile, Chile–Argentina, Colombia–Venezuela, Venezuela–Guyana), according to a neo-realist analysis, derives primarily from effective local deterrents which are promoted and sustained by the United States. For example, Chile deploys its highly equipped but relatively small military forces in a deterrent posture focused on the north and south against Bolivia/Peru and Argentina. The frontier with Peru in the north is mined. American military aid has for the most part sought to maintain such local military balances. When those balances tilted, as in the mid-1970s after Peru bought large quantities of Soviet arms (as a response to American efforts to de-stabilize the radical-reformist regime by denying it spare parts), the United States provided Peru with satellite pictures of Chile's defenses. This was, apparently, critical in the Peruvian decision not to go to war in 1975. Although Argentina and Chile have often purchased naval and other military equipment from European sources, the United States has refused to sell certain types of potentially de-stabilizing weapons systems. Local deterrents have for the most part been effective in maintaining at least an "armed peace."

Brazil's generally benign or cooperative policies toward the rest of South America can also be explained by neo-realist and geostrategic perspectives, to which are added economic arguments. The Brazilians are only too aware that genuinely hegemonic policies would bring together a significant counter-coalition. More important, however, is

the spatial distribution of Brazil's society. It has been historically a coastal state, outward-looking to Europe and the United States. Most of its frontier regions are distant from the main urban centers, sparsely populated, and logistically difficult to supply. Like nineteenth-century America, twentieth-century Brazil has focused on internal development rather than on territorial expansion at the expense of other states. There are plenty of land and resources within the continent-sized country that it need not press further claims. From its earliest years, the great task of Brazil was to hold itself together rather than to expand outwards. Moreover, Portuguese colonial authorities specifically organized defensive buffer zones beyond major riverlines, thus creating impenetrable frontiers against incursions from Spanish colonists. Borders were fortified, and the rivers were blocked. Brazil's physical limits, in brief, were designed on defensive geostrategic principles.

Geostrategic analysis also underlines the relative weakness of South American countries' military capabilities. The low incidence of war derives perhaps less from effective deterrence than from the insurmountable problems of projecting power in peripheral regions. Child (1985: 8-9) points out that distance, mountains, rivers, and climatic extremes separate the most prominent conflict zones from the actual centers of military power, which are mostly located within or near major coastal cities. South American militaries have not solved basic logistical problems and, for a variety of historical and cultural reasons, have not developed their naval and air power in comparison to their armies' capabilities.

The no-war zone, then, might also be explained by the irrelevance of the countries toward each other (cf. Kacowicz, 1994). That is, they do not touch upon each other sufficiently to generate the bases for conflict. It is not deterrence that matters, but the lack of mutual importance.

The remarkable record of peaceful change and conflict resolution in South America during the twentieth century can also be explained by extra-regional pressures exerted on conflict parties. Sometimes it was the United States (e.g., its role as a guarantor – but also as a source of pressure – in the 1942 Rio de Janeiro Treaty which in effect sanctified Peru's 1941 conquest of Ecuadorian-claimed territory), sometimes Great Britain (in the early stages of the Beagle Channel dispute), and sometimes a variety of states exercising their influence through the Organization of American States or the United Nations. As one example, Bolivia in 1963 withdrew from the OAS (termed an "incompetent organ" by the Bolivian foreign minister), because the organiza-

tion had placed pressures on it rather than back up its position in a dispute with Chile (*Keesings Contemporary Archives*, 1963: 19489, 19006). According to Puig, (1983: 23), "the small and medium-sized countries of the periphery were in no position to resist the pressure exerted on them by the great powers in order that, first, they should consent to a peaceful form of solution and later, that they should accept the judge's verdict."

Such neo-realist/geostrategic explanations of peace and conflict resolution, despite some contradictions (peace through effective deterrence or peace through irrelevance or weakness?), are persuasive to a point. But in a comparative perspective they are less compelling. Logistics problems have not prevented *other* countries from warring; nor have great power pressures always constrained small and medium states from attacking each other and prosecuting wars to the point of stalemate or victory. The archives of the OAS, the United Nations, and the American State Department are littered with unheeded resolutions and diplomatic *démarches* urging conflict partners to use peaceful conflict resolution procedures or to cease fire. In the case of the Chaco War, the United States was unable to prevent, manage, or stop the fighting. Whatever the external pressures during crises and conflicts, the South American governments have displayed a unique *predisposition* to search for peaceful solutions. The number of territorial disputes and crises that have not escalated to war remains unique compared to other areas of the world.

Another weakness of neo-realist/geostrategic forms of explanation is the relative absence of conflict between South American countries despite the strong tradition of geopolitical thinking among civilian and military analysts and governments in many of them. These analytical forms were very popular after World War II. They helped form important parts of the curriculum in War Colleges, and were sustained through numerous institutes, think-tanks, and government offices. Augusto Pinochet was a student of geopolitics, wrote an influential text on the subject, and established an institute to propagate his ideas. Jack Child's admirable analysis (1985) of the substance and content of the geopolitical tradition in South America chronicles how the main advocates of geopolitics used zero-sum assumptions, held deep suspicion of neighbors' motives and intentions, and characterized their own countries as "victims."

Child and others (cf. Russell 1990; Selcher 1985) emphasize that these analytical modes had significant influence in some governments, and

exacerbated long-standing territorial disputes. This was particularly the case during the 1970s when military regimes governed in the Southern Cone countries.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the influence of geopolitical doctrines, they attest more to the significance of ideas in foreign policy behavior than as useful analytical tools for theoretical analysis. Geopolitical explanations of South America's no-war zone do not carry us very far. Indeed, they even contradict the realities since the expected outcomes of analysis and policy prescriptions – power projection, struggle, alliances, power balancing, and war – are the opposite of the actual record. Geopolitical ideas and analytical methods have not changed substantially, but the South American states' behavior toward each other has. Nineteenth-century South America was an area of chronic war and armed intervention; in the succeeding century it has become a no-war zone. Geography, logistics problems, and the difficulties of power projection, which have arguably changed only marginally over the past 180 years, have not been duplicated by diplomatic behavior, which has changed dramatically. Any form of geographical or power determinism in explaining the development of a no-war zone in South America does not hold up to the empirical evidence.

#### *Learning/cognitive explanations*

In anarchic systems, security dilemmas, wars, alliances, balances of power, and zero-sum situations recur. This is the "dreary" list of system outcomes noted by Waltz (1979: 66). While he acknowledges that state attributes and other unit-level properties may influence patterns of relations between individual states, the main outcomes derive from system characteristics. Yet, it is precisely these outcomes – in this case the change from a chronic war/intervention system to a no-war system between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – that need explanation. Since the anarchic character of the system did not change,

<sup>3</sup> Many respondents, from the perspectives of the 1990s, denied that geopolitical ideas were influential as an intellectual basis for policy-making. Though various geopoliticians published profusely, today many see these efforts as relatively harmless "academic exercises." In my judgment, geopolitical ideas popular in South America during the 1970s helped create an atmosphere of mutual suspicion. The 1975 crisis between Peru and Chile was certainly exacerbated by Peruvian perceptions of Pinochet's ideas, and in the months prior to the December 1978 Argentine–Chile crisis, various influential analysts relied on geopolitical concepts to argue their case for a "final solution" to the territorial conflict (cf. Infante, 1984: 337–58).



nor was there any radical shift in the distribution of capabilities among the system members, then the change cannot be explained in system terms. We must look at the characteristics of the units that make up the system, or at the ideas of individual policy-makers.

Among the many criticisms leveled at Rousseauian/neo-realist, structural theories of international politics is the claim that if system characteristics "push" and "shove" the states to act in certain ways, then one cannot expect major changes in the character of relations between states until the system itself changes from one based on the principle of anarchy to some other principle, such as hierarchy. Systems theory, then, is basically static; it is a theory of recurrence rather than a theory of change. But there was significant change in South American international politics between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; it took place in the absence of fundamental systemic changes, including distributions of capabilities.

One way around the shortcomings of structural theories is to assume more agency in international systems, mainly in the ability of policy-makers to *learn* and to act in new ways upon the information that has been gained through historical experiences (cf. Levy 1994). One major stimulus to learning and change is the diplomatic/military disaster, those magnificent failures of policy that lost wars, states, and empires. The Vietnam War was a great learning experience for American policy-makers, one that still has strong repercussions in America's contemporary unwillingness to use military force except under highly limited conditions. Munich was a "lesson of history" that has often been used – sometimes incorrectly – to instruct policy-makers in supposedly analogous situations. World War I was similarly a great disaster, dubbed after the fact as a "war to end all wars," because of its folly and high costs. British diplomacy in the 1930s was primarily an effort to avoid duplicating the disasters of the Great War, that is, to demonstrate that important lessons from that war had been learned (Holsti 1991: ch. 11).

In South America, the experience of war has been consistently disastrous for both military and civilian regimes that directed them. If most policy-makers have historical memories (but avoiding the question whether it is a correct memory), then the unmistakable "lesson" to be learned from South American wars is to avoid them at all costs. While in some nineteenth-century wars winners clearly emerged, they also revealed degrees of military ineptitude seldom equaled elsewhere. The military forces of Chile during the War of the Pacific were

paralyzed by lack of logistics. The Chaco War turned into a carnage leading to major territorial losses by those who initiated the fighting. Ecuador lost almost one-half of its territory and access to the Amazon River after the rout of its troops by Peru in 1941. Except for the air force, Argentine military units were routed during the Malvinas War. The major winners of wars – Brazil, Chile, and Peru – made substantial gains of actual or potential resources, but in so doing earned the enmity of their neighbors for the next century.

Battlefields were not the only arenas of loss-loss situations deriving from South American wars. Unlike European wars, where populations joined together in outbursts of nationalist enthusiasm for the cause and strengthened loyalties to their governments, South American regimes that initiated wars never survived the victories, stalemates, or defeats. They were thrown out of office either during or immediately after the war. The fate of the military regime in Argentina following the Malvinas debacle was just the last in a long string of governments that paid a high price for launching the armed forces. It is perhaps because of this historical fact that many military governments in South America have “fought” to prevent wars as much as they have fought to win wars.

But there are sufficient exceptions to the generalizations to cast doubt on the learning theory as a complete explanation of the change from a war to a no-war system. Earlier, we noted two incidents in the 1970s where military regimes almost went to war but were thwarted at the last moment by serendipity or effective deterrence. It is by no means certain that knowledge of historical trends or statistical regularities pacify the bellicose when there are sufficient opportunities for major gains or when there are high states of tension during a crisis. Nor is there any substantial evidence that South American policy-makers are familiar with the history of war on the continent. Nineteenth-century experience is probably remote and only sketchily recalled, and there are too few wars in the twentieth century to constitute any repertoire of commanding “lessons.” The lessons available to the Argentine generals and admirals who attacked the Malvinas, for example, were more than a century old.

#### *Domestic politics explanations*

It has become a cardinal tenet of the academic study of international politics that there is no clear line distinguishing the external from the

internal. International politics is not a game with its own rules, actors, and stratagems. Ultimately, most foreign policy initiatives are taken to meet domestic requirements or needs. To understand foreign policy, then, we have to look not only at the external environment but at the domestic politics of the major actors.

With little knowledge of those politics, one might be persuaded to predict a high incidence of war in South America because the military have governed in so many countries so much of the time. By definition, the military are supposed to represent the warrior virtues, of which "national honor," victory, and loyalty are among the main ones.

It is difficult to generalize about the military in South America; their characteristics, historical origins, and sociological makeup vary significantly from country to country. Acknowledging exceptions to most generalizations, we can argue nevertheless that historically the military in South America have been institutions of politics and governance rather than armed forces trained primarily for fighting Clausewitzian-type wars against external enemies. The military have traditionally taken a paternalistic view of their relationship to society and the state. They typically see themselves as protectors of the constitution, guarantors of social order, and engines of national moral (patriotic), economic and technological development. In brief, their roles are primarily internal, not external.

Military regimes in South America have run the ideological spectrum from radical-liberal to reactionary-repressive. What unites them is their preoccupation with domestic problems. Their professionalization in the late twentieth century has strengthened their domestic roles and increased their sense of competence and incorruptibility. Compared to civilian regimes, they have often stood out as the only institution committed to the integrity of the state above private gain. During the 1970s, anti-communism gave them another plank on which to justify their predominant role in politics. José Nun (1986: 105) nicely summarizes the bases of military roles during this period:

Professionalization of the military has . . . led to feelings of superiority, that only the military is competent, that only it has the capability to solve a wide range of social problems . . . As the military officers saw it, they had resolved "their" problem [competence] while the civil sectors and the government continued in a state of total crisis. This feeling of organizational accomplishment led to the belief . . . that the military possessed a superior capacity to confront the social problems which the civil authorities evidently could not solve.

Those problems included economic development and education. Under doctrines of "national security," borrowed from the United States and France, South American militaries expanded their organizational tasks to include all aspects of "development" as a means of undercutting the appeal of leftist doctrines and practices. "National security" came to mean almost any aspect of domestic political and economic life (cf. Barros and Coelho 1986: 441).

The problem was that these claims for extensive political participation (and rule in most of the Southern Cone countries during the 1970s) were not founded on a persuasive and acceptable doctrine of legitimacy. Military regimes, whatever their economic track record, came to rely extensively on human rights abuses – called "dirty wars" – to deal with dissidents and resistance. These further eroded support in the civil society. Faced with declining domestic support, they had several options: (1) pave the way for restoration of civilian rule and return to the barracks (Peru, Brazil, and Chile), (2) increase suppression of dissidence (Argentina); and/or (3) create a foreign policy crisis. Paraguay in 1966 and Argentina in 1978 and again in 1982 followed the latter path. Two – three if we include the 1995 incident – of the five major post-1945 militarized crises in South America were driven in part by the classical Machiavellian ploy of creating a foreign policy crisis in order to enhance popularity or legitimacy at home.

How do we interpret this brief analysis of domestic politics in South America? The problem is that it fails to explain the no-war zone of South America; the consequences of the institutional strength of the military are, in other words, indeterminate. All we can say is that contrary to popular assumptions, military rule does not necessarily lead to war. And civilian rule, particularly during the nineteenth century (and in 1995) did not lead to peace. There has been a South American no-war zone in the twentieth century whether civilian or military regimes governed. Domestic politics are no doubt important in explaining individual events, but variations between types of regimes do not correlate either with the overall incidence of crises and wars, or with a propensity to resolve conflicts peacefully (Trevorton 1983; Morales 1984: 181).

#### *Cultural/social explanations*

More than other regions of the world, South America's diplomatic system is imbued with legal norms and a "culture" of legalism. We

have already noted the profuse collection of multilateral and bilateral treaties and charters that impose obligations for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Despite escape clauses in many of these (in cases, for example, where "vital" national interests or honor are involved), South American governments have frequently – and uniquely – chosen legal means for defusing actual or potential crises. There has also been a history of policy-makers analyzing issues from a legal rather than geostrategic perspective. Claims are based on legal interpretation instead of commercial or strategic arguments. While the latter are not ignored, concepts of justice underlie much of the discourse between governments in conflict. The Beagle Channel conflict was characterized by many in both Chile and Argentina in terms of obligations arising from nineteenth-century treaties and standard legal practices in locating sea and other territorial boundaries (cf. Infante 1984: 337–58). The Malvinas problem was similarly couched in legal discourse.

Constructing a conflict as essentially a legal dispute has its risks because arbitral procedures often result in win–lose outcomes rather than compromise. On the other hand, it also presupposes an outcome reached through argument and debate rather than through force. Once in the hands of arbitrators or mediators, there is a strong presumption against recourse to violence. There is a real cost in terms of prestige and "honor" in refusing to use peaceful conflict resolution procedures if the other party has accepted them.

But why should South America in the twentieth century be almost unique in its legalistic "diplomatic culture"? The question has not received systematic analysis, but some observers argue that in the region there is a tradition and sense of gaining honor by meeting legal obligations. The tradition is not divorced from questions of national interest. Rather, it *is* in the national interest to follow the law because it enhances reputation. Legalism is the intellectual milieu in which policy is often made. Lacking other commanding doctrines such as "manifest destiny," a civilizing mission, world revolution, or anti-communism, legalism helps establish the worth, reputation, and prestige of small countries on the margins of the central international system.

The foundations for legalism reside in the ancient Spanish and Portuguese tradition of appealing to Seville, Lisbon, or to the Pope to settle problems between the colonies, and in canon law, which is a judicial archetype. Those aspiring to be part of the South American elite have traditionally earned doctorates in civil or canon law, and

until recently most foreign ministers and career diplomats held law degrees.

As with other explanations, cultural/social perspectives help us understand the unique importance of legal considerations and procedures in South American countries' policy-making and approaches to conflict. But they do not explain adequately the change between the nineteenth century, a time of chronic war and intervention, and the twentieth century, when a no-war zone developed. The plethora of bilateral and multilateral arbitration and peaceful conflict resolution treaties in the nineteenth century did not prevent numerous territorial claims, armed interventions, and wars.

#### *Liberal-institutional explanations*

At this point, liberal institutionalists would argue that the record of relative peace in South America during the twentieth century correlates significantly with the development of international institutions, democracy, and the growth of interdependence. The League of Nations was instrumental in resolving the Leticia dispute between Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador in the early 1930s. The Organization of American States and the United Nations have contemplated a number of disputes in the region since the end of World War II.

However, regional and universal international organizations have played only a peripheral role in conflict resolution in South America. Bolivia and Ecuador, the two main "revisionist" states of the continent, have appealed on numerous occasions to these bodies to help them in their claims. Results have been meager, taking the form usually of innocuous resolutions urging the parties to engage in negotiations to resolve the problem. In fact, not a single territorial/resource conflict in South America since 1945 has been resolved through the intervention of an international organization. South American governments have strongly favored *ad hoc* arbitral and mediation procedures outside of the context of international organizations. Indeed, appeals to the OAS or United Nations are made more for the purpose of embarrassing adversaries than as serious bids for resolving issues. A convincing argument that international institutions have been a primary source of peace and peaceful conflict resolution in South America does not hold up well against the evidence.

The growth of democracy fails to explain the change from a classical anarchical system of international politics to a no-war system. Most

*The state, war, and the state of war*

governments in South America during the period up to the 1980s were not democracies. And, as we have seen, the incidence of crises and wars does not correlate with type of regime.

Economic interdependence explanations are equally unpersuasive. Trade within South America has traditionally been a minuscule proportion of the countries' total foreign trade. Communications linking national capitals are lacking or underdeveloped, with only airline routes carrying significant passenger traffic. Significant changes in trade and communications towards patterns of high density are only beginning to take place. Compared to North America or Europe, South America has remained throughout most of the twentieth century an area of low communication, social transactions, and commerce.

*Strong states as an explanation*

The argument of this study is that communities of strong states are sites of peace, while regions of weak states are sites of domestic and international war. In the South American case, we must keep in mind the distinction between the strength of states and the popularity of governments (see chapter 5). Domestic politics in South America are unstable, featuring a high turnover of governments and government personnel. Voters may be alienated from particular governments. However, they generally accept and defend the overall constitutional order, including its territorial dimensions and integrity.

Nineteenth-century South American states were strong at the rhetorical level of acceptance. There was both implicit and explicit acknowledgement that the new states would be the legitimate successors to the individual Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Simon Bolivar's dream of a United States of Latin America did not survive his death, and by 1846 all the former colonies (Ecuador had torn itself away from "Gran Colombia") had recognized each other's sovereignty. But states had little legitimacy in terms of mutually respecting the limits of territorial jurisdiction. Nineteenth-century South American states were inherently weak because most frontiers were not adequately defined and a number of states successfully plundered their neighbors. Governments could come and go, sometimes through elections, more often through *coups d'état*, but all faced the prospects of being downsized by a neighbor. All faced the classical security dilemma: the means to protect oneself were seen by others as a threat to their own territorial integrity. Arms-racing, regional balances of power, and war were the results.

Weak states also face problems of domestic vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Many South American countries in the nineteenth century lacked local acceptance, strong civil societies, and political integration. Civil wars were common and military or civilian officials ruled more through threats, coercion, and oppression than through consent. These aspects of state weakness were frequently the source of international complications and external intervention. Horizontal legitimacy was less of a problem, at least among the elites. The successors to colonial society were characterized by hierarchy and cleavages according to color. Those at the bottom, the mestizos and full-blooded Indians and blacks, were mostly excluded from politics. Their consent was neither sought nor necessary and most of them adopted passive and quietistic attitudes toward politics. They were simply not part of the political game until well into the twentieth century.

Have things changed in the twentieth century? The record of government turnovers, coups, and domestic instability would suggest not. However, on the external dimension, the territorial identity of the states has become more firmly established. Remaining territorial disputes are not likely to be resolved by armed force and most of them involve relatively small parcels of land or await only the precise demarcation of frontier lines in remote or nearly inaccessible areas. The two major exceptions are Bolivia and Ecuador, both of which hold major grievances deriving from lost wars in 1884 and 1941. Other territorial revisions of the nineteenth century have been more or less accepted by the losers.

On the domestic dimensions of state strength, vertical and horizontal legitimacy, some of the fundamental weaknesses of the nineteenth century have been ameliorated but not resolved. Recall from the figures in chapter 2 that the incidence of domestic war in South America since 1945 has not been significantly lower than the patterns found in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Balkans, and among some former Soviet republics. Terrorist and guerrilla campaigns continue. Social cleavages have been expressed primarily through Marxist-inspired rebellions and armed resistance to military dictatorships and, more recently, by political action to prevent ecological depredations by national and international companies and population movements. Indigenous and other disaffected groups, however, have not sought secession as a solution to their problems. We must also acknowledge that, unlike many of the countries born after 1945, South American countries have a strong tradition of republicanism in the Kantian sense:



a polity under the rule of law, with the rules of the political game carefully defined by constitutional provisions. The habits and hopes of republicanism, despite numerous deviations in practice, remain highly embedded in citizens' political consciousness.

South American governments of whatever ideological stripe therefore legitimate themselves primarily by adopting the stance of protectors of the state and constitution. Military regimes, such as those in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, made themselves appear to rule constitutionally. There was an emphasis on the facades of democracy: tolerating within limits a few opposition parties, retaining a legislature, and rewriting constitutions to correct the weaknesses of the predecessors. Most military regimes also emphasized the *temporary* nature of their rule. According to Rouquié (1986: 448), "[t]hey must invoke [democratic transition] for their own legitimation and in their own policy objectives, while at the same time proposing to improve, reinforce, amend, and even protect it, but never to annihilate or destroy it as has been the case elsewhere." Thus, while publics in South America hold politicians of whatever stripe in low esteem, they are deeply committed to republican principles (cf. Fitch 1986: 32) and to the idea of constitutionalism. Military regimes have had to take these sentiments into account.

South American governments in the twentieth century, in contrast to their cousins in Central America, by and large have not used the state as an instrument of predation against subgroups of the citizenry. While treatment of indigenous populations is an important exception and leaves much to be desired even today, the brutal policies of extermination and systematic exploitation of the nineteenth century have for the most part abated. The secession phenomenon, a major indicator of state weakness in many post-1945 states, has been largely absent in twentieth-century South America. Indeed, all of South America is anomalous compared to other regions of the world because communal minority activism has taken the form of non-violent protest, and even that has declined significantly since the mid-1980s (Gurr 1991: 7-8). Respect for human rights among the indigenous has grown. There are numerous "minorities," but they are defined as citizens of the state and whatever the divergences in practice, they are slowly gaining equal rights with others (cf. Aylwin 1992). Internal wars in South America have been of the ideological rather than resistance/secessionist type.

Like Western Europe, South American states have systematically strengthened their role vis-à-vis civil society, and since the 1930s have

become the "decisive motor and actor in the development process" (Nohlen and Fernandez 1990: 77). They have developed a reasonable balance between extraction and the provision of services. Many of the characteristics of weak states outlined in chapter 6 exist in South America, but at levels much lower than found elsewhere in the Third World or among some of the former Soviet republics.

Finally, levels of national identification are strengthening. Andes Indian and other indigenous peoples tend to identify with their language and cultural kin no matter where located, but politically active classes – significantly broadened since the 1930s – have pronounced sentiments of nationality. Others in South America are "cousins," but are nevertheless identified as foreigners. Unlike Western Europe, the sentiment of continental political integration is weak. Economic logic and continental identifications have not replaced the nationalist/statist logic and sentiment.

### **Toward a zone of peace? System transformation at the end of the millennium**

In the past two decades there have been important turning points and trends in South America which suggest that the region may be moving from a no-war zone to something akin to a zone of peace.

Transformations from a no-war to a peace zone may occur suddenly after a traumatic event or learning experience, as was the case in Europe after World War II. In South America, the transformation is taking longer, but some key events and trends have propelled the process to the point where it may have become irreversible.

Brazil–Argentine relations had been for more than a century a pivot of conflict and tension on the continent. Exacerbated by geopolitical thinking in both countries, rapid Brazilian growth rates, Brazilian presence in Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay, and an incipient nuclear technology race, the 1950s and 1960s were an era of substantial distrust, occasional crises, but no war.

Brazilian leadership in the late 1970s recast its relationship to Argentina primarily by "de-politicizing" it and playing down its military dimensions. President Figueiredo assumed a key role in changing the style and content of Brazil's stance toward Argentina. After forty years without a Brazil–Argentina summit meeting, he met with his Argentine counterpart five times between 1980 and 1985 (Selcher 1985). According to Selcher (1985: 31):

What has occurred has been termed a "conceptual leap," a new way of approaching the relationship . . . Supposition of an overarching, permanent rivalry has given way to a more reasonable, problem-solving attitude . . . With the decline of prestige considerations as motivators, the sphere of influence race in the three "buffer" states has subsided.

Issues were redefined in terms of economic progress rather than as territorial and hegemonic problems.

A second stimulus to new patterns of relationships was the Argentine defeat in the 1982 Malvinas War and the subsequent installation of the democratically elected Alfonsín government in December 1983. While South American governments (except Chile) publicly supported Argentina in its conflict with Great Britain, in private many governments were pleased with the outcome of the war. Argentina's bellicosity against Chile over the Beagle Channel problem had raised fears of escalation to include Peru and Bolivia. The Malvinas debacle spelled the end of the military regime in Argentina, a government that in addition to fighting its "dirty war" at home, also dabbled in foreign intervention (Bolivia and Nicaragua), and propounded a set of geopolitical doctrines that were seen in other countries as threatening to them. After the defeat, the geopoliticians in Buenos Aires lost influence. They were replaced by advisors with a distinct enthusiasm for economic cooperation and integration.

These trends and events multiplied into a blizzard of Brazil-Argentine agreements, the foremost of which was the 1979 Itaipú treaty to regulate exploitation of the Parana River's hydroelectric potential. Subsequently Argentina signed the Treaty of Tlatelolco and for lack of funds, an external enemy, and American pressures, abandoned its Condor II IRBM missile program (Hirst and Rico 1993, 253-4). Brazil and Argentina then agreed to forgo the development of nuclear weapons. They are now constructing a major highway linking São Paulo to Buenos Aires; trade between the two countries has increased from \$2 billion in 1990 to \$6 billion in 1993 (*New York Times*, April 8, 1994).

A second major turning point was the 1984 settlement of the Beagle Channel dispute between Argentina and Chile. This agreement was followed up by economic cooperation and other agreements that include oil and gas pipelines between the two countries - formerly an Argentine strategic taboo (Hirst and Rico 1993: 256 fn. 3) - a railroad tunnel, and the settlement of numerous frontier location problems in the Andes (*New York Times*, April 8, 1994; Selcher 1990: 88).

Table 8.1 *Changing roles and tasks of the military in South America* (from Varas 1987)

Dimensions	Conceptions of security	
	Traditional	Modern
Internal	Military repression	Political action
Interstatal	Equipment and men	Mutual confidence-building measures
Regional	Military equilibrium	Military cooperation
Global	Defense of the West	Social interests

South American military institutions are undergoing important doctrinal and capability changes. Augusto Varas (1987: 7) has urged reform of military tasks along the lines of table 8.1.

Though Varas may not have made his analysis in the expectation that South American military establishments would actually follow academic advice, some have recast their tasks in similar terms. In Brazil, the tasks have been defined increasingly in terms of dealing with subversion (a holdover from the 1960s and 1970s) and socio-political threats, as well as controlling narco-traffic and illegal migration from neighboring countries. Another relatively new task is to promote scientific-technological progress throughout the country. More traditional tasks seek to unify the country through developing transportation systems and inculcating national values through education. Conceptions of helping to "defend the West" against communism or promoting naval power projection into the vastness of the South Atlantic have been discarded (cf. Bustamante 1993: 129-53).

Elsewhere in South America military institutions are trying to define new concepts of security, roles, and tasks (for detailed discussion, see Hirst and Rico 1993: 257-68). The concept of providing services is slowly lowering the classical priority of protecting territory. Even retired generals are writing significant and sophisticated proposals for altering traditional concepts and organizations for security (cf. Jarrin 1989, esp. p. 64 and chs. 7, 9, and 11). In Ecuador, environmental protection, education of marginal populations, preventing "spillover" of guerrilla activities from neighboring countries (Colombia), and controlling narco-trafficking are current priorities. It is particularly significant that environmental protection has become one of several

"permanent national objectives" that must be achieved by the Ecuadorian military (Chamorro 1994).

What is significant about these new tasks, services, and roles is that most can be fulfilled only through cooperation with the military authorities of neighboring states. While remaining a largely autonomous and non-transparent<sup>4</sup> institution within society, the notion of social service, albeit in a paternalistic mode, is developing rapidly.

There is also increasing transparency in capabilities and deployments. In August 1988, Chile and Argentina held joint naval exercises in the Beagle Channel (*Keesings Contemporary Archives*, December 1988, 36346). Following practices developed in the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe, there are now numerous South American bilateral arrangements for observing maneuvers, exchanging military information, and exchanging officers in the various countries' military academies. Commanders-in-chief of the armies, navies and air forces hold annual conferences in different capitals.

Finally, economic stringencies have compelled the military establishments to scale down arms acquisitions. Military spending declined steeply for all South American countries in the 1980s, as much a function of recession and severe debt and budget deficit problems as a recasting of military tasks. South American countries are, in effect, disarming due to financial constraints. Peru's capabilities, for example, are only 30 percent effective at the time of writing.

The signs of expanding commercial and political networks are evident everywhere in South America. Complementing the more than quarter-century-old Andean Pact (Grupo Andino), the Mercosur free trade area has dramatically helped increase commerce among the Southern Cone countries; in 1994 Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico drafted their version of NAFTA; the resurrected 1978 Amazon Treaty fosters military cooperation among eight signatories, primarily in civic roles; and the annual Ibero-American summits bring together the heads of state of the entire region, along with those of Central America, Spain, and Portugal.

The democratization of the continent has underlain all this growing network of activity, economic liberalization, and re-definition of

<sup>4</sup> In many countries of South America, there is no parliamentary control of military budgets. Funding remains secret. In many other ways, the military are kept separate from the rest of society.

military tasks.<sup>5</sup> Democratic institutions are fragile in some countries, but there are few available options. Most of the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s were thoroughly discredited. On the other side, many guerrilla groups look increasingly like bandit organizations rather than ideologically inspired political formations. A small armed group in Ecuador threw in the towel in June 1994, and the fortunes of the Sendero Luminoso have withered though not disappeared since the capture of its leadership.

There is growing mutual support for civilian political authority. In meetings in Macchu Pichu and the Galapagos in 1989, South American governments agreed not to recognize governments that came to power through means other than elections. There have even been preliminary discussions to create a multilateral force to sustain or restore democratic regimes under assault. The idea has not been approved by several governments and remains primarily a matter of academic discussion rather than military planning, but similar ideas have appeared in discussions of a South American "peace force," perhaps as the next logical step for Mercosur.

Finally, some governments are approaching traditional tension areas with bold new proposals that alter win/lose situations into possibilities for mutual gains through cooperation. In the first-ever visit by a Peruvian president to neighboring Ecuador in 1992, Alberto Fujimori proposed a variety of areas where the two countries could cooperate for mutual advantage. While not conceding Peru's claim that the territory it gained in 1941 is an integral part of the country, the proposals seek to promote joint Peru-Ecuador exploitation of resources, development of agriculture, transport and communications, energy, tourism, and fishing, and to undertake educational and health programs among the vast territory's sparse population. These ambitious programs would be overseen by a bi-national executive committee (Ecuador 1992). However, the fragile and tenuous nature of such initiatives is indicated by yet another armed incident between Peru and Ecuador in January 1995. If there is significant movement toward a zone of peace, particularly in the southern cone, it is not yet achieved in some areas. Bolivia and Ecuador remain territorially dissatisfied states.

The overall trends of the last two decades of the millennium – with

<sup>5</sup> For a theoretical discussion and case studies linking democratization to integration and other foreign policy problems, see Nohlen and Fernandez (1991).

Colombia as a probable exception – is in the direction of stronger states, increasing vertical and horizontal legitimacy for governments, broadening civil societies, economic liberalization, dramatic increases in personal contacts between the countries' political and military leaders, and a slow but evident re-definition of military tasks from protection of territory and national honor to providing social services. As these developments continue, the prospects for armed crises recede. South America appears to be moving from a no-war zone toward a zone of peace.

### **The theoretical significance of the South American states system**

The recent flurry of studies of the theory of the "democratic peace" follows upon Kant's argument that a necessary condition for peace between states is constitutional republics. Recent research (cf. Doyle 1986) has established what Jack Levy (1989: 270) calls one of the few empirically established generalizations in the study of international relations: democracies do not make war against each other.

There are some empirical problems with the generalization. They arise primarily from the Clausewitzian definition of war that is used in the analysis. The "democratic peace" is identified by the lack of armed combat between the organized military forces of two or more states. This type of analysis overlooks the use of coercive techniques short of formal war. Democracies have with some regularity subverted popularly elected regimes through clandestine actions, subversion, and economic coercion. The joint American-British destabilization of the Mossadeq regime in Iran in 1951; American subversion of a freely elected government in Guatemala in 1954; French armed intervention to sustain beleaguered military regimes in Africa *against* popular movements; and the American destabilization of the elected Allende government in Chile during 1972-3 are just some of the documented cases. Western democracies may not war against each other, but Western democracies also seem to hold a veto over the politics and policies of democracies elsewhere.

But the peace-through-democracy theory has gone beyond celebrating an empirically valid generalization in a field of study. Theorists and researchers have taken the next normative step, following Kant's argument: democracy is a *necessary* condition for peace. This proposi-

tion is implicit in the work of Deutsch where, almost by definition, expanding communication flows, development of mutual empathies and responsiveness, and growth of common values cannot develop between closed societies.

The analysis in this chapter raises the question whether in fact democracy is a necessary condition for peace. In South America since 1941 there has been a no-war zone despite the fact that in that period many governments were not democratic in the original sense of the word (e.g., periodic elections; civil liberties; free press; legal opposition). Empirical research (Treverton 1983) in the South American case shows that in fact the nature of a regime tends to be irrelevant to the incidence of crises, wars, and successful conflict resolution (cf. Morales 1984: 181). The 1981 and 1995 border incidents between Peru and Ecuador occurred when elected governments were in office. The 1981 story reveals more about the autonomy of the military (which launched the incident) in the countries than it does about relations between democracies (Varas 1983: 77), while the 1995 episode shows that even constitutional and elected leaders may use a crisis for enhancing their personal popularity during an electoral campaign. Both suggest that democracy may not be the key explanation for absence of armed combat; it is, rather, the strong state in combination with several other forms of explanation reviewed above.

The strong state explanation of the no-war zone is not in itself sufficient, however. But it is necessary. There is a significant correlation between growing state strength in South America between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and decline in the incidence of internal wars, armed crises, interstate wars, and interventions. Other explanations for the South American anomaly are nevertheless necessary as well. Local deterrents have worked; revisionist powers, in particular, might have been tempted to right historical wrongs (in their view) in the absence of countervailing military power. The South American system cannot be understood adequately, either, without recognition of the strong legal tradition that has underlain regional diplomacy. The pattern of conflict resolution in the twentieth century is unique when compared to other regions of the world. That uniqueness can best be understood as deriving from historical traditions, culture, and the importance small states place on laws and norms as protective devices. This chapter has sought to provide further evidence for the strong state-peace connection. But it acknowledges that other forms of explanation, including elements of neo-realism, also increase our



understanding of this theoretically important anomaly in the history of international politics.

The transformation of international politics in South America, as well as in Europe, during the late twentieth century suggests that Rousseauian, neo-realist characteristics of international relations can change and even become obsolete. States can overcome the security dilemma and learn to live in reasonable harmony with each other. But there is scant evidence that the trajectories of these two continents are being emulated elsewhere. Weak states persist and some will collapse bringing in the wake of their downfall millions of civilian casualties, more millions of refugees, and unpredictable international responses. A sense of optimism deriving from an examination of the South American move from a classical zone of war and all its accoutrements toward a zone of peace must be tempered by the critical difficulties weak states continue to pose. The final question is: what can the international community do about the state-strength dilemma and its legacies of death and despair?