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DOES THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES MATTER?

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Abstract

The phenomenon of regionalism is today present throughout the international system, and regional organisations are widely considered to play an important role in relation to international security. With the United Nations system increasingly overburdened since the 1990s, such organisations have emerged as one possible solution to problems associated with state fragility and violence perpetrated by non-state actors. Relative to other regional organisations, the OAS has received little attention in the literature and it is not generally considered to have much impact on international relations in the Americas. This paper, however, argues that the OAS does matter and that rules and norms do make a difference in international relations more generally. The OAS, despite its problems, has played an important role in terms of preventive diplomacy, generating channels for communication and building institutions that have helped avert violent conflict in a number of cases.

Introduction

Regional organisations have been part of the institutions produced for the management of international security at least since the nineteenth century, but only after World War II did they become a structural feature of the international institutional architecture. With the end of the Cold War, the debate on regionalism and regional organisations acquired new relevance in the context of the wider debate on international relations and security in particular. Regional organisations are seen by many authors and actors (e.g. Weiss 1998; Pugh and Sidhu, 2003; Boutros-Ghali 1992; Brahimi 2000) to fulfill an important role in guaranteeing stability, peace and security through conflict prevention and resolution, cooperation in non-offensive military fields and other areas related to the realm of security, such as human rights, humanitarian assistance, development and building institutions for conflict management.

The phenomenon of regionalism is today present throughout the global system and in different spheres of interaction with diverse levels of institutionalisation. Both spatially and functionally it is a major part of international relations. The management of international security in particular is increasingly supposed to be generated at the regional level. The negotiation of territorial disputes and intra-state conflicts and the creation of security regimes take place within regional organisations, and regional leaders play a major role in bearing the costs of these processes and shaping their outcomes. Since the United Nations system was overburdened after the 1990s, regional organisations have emerged as one among a number of solutions to problems encountered in generating a measure of global governance in a scenario of new wars, collapsing or fragile states and growing proliferation of violence among non-state actors.

In this context the multiplication of functions performed by regional organisations can be observed, and a debate on the subject has developed in the international relations literature. The literature on North Atlantic regional cooperation and African regional organisations is vast, but other regions are also part of the debate.

The Americas have received less attention partly because the number of international and intra-state conflicts in the region since the end of the Cold War has been small, and partly because Latin America has not been strategically central to the debate on international politics in the last twenty years. The literature relating to the Organisation of American States (OAS) that has emerged in this period focuses mostly, with few exceptions (e.g. Villagran 1992a; Shaw 2004) on its institutional structure and its role in fostering democratic institutions and human rights (Cooper and Legler 2006; Arrighi 2004; Thomas and Magloire 2000; Gossleign and Thérien 1999; Rosenberg 2001; Boniface 2002; Villagran 1992b: 365-381; Stoetzer 1993; Gaviria 1995; Farer 1996; Inter-American Dialogue Study Group on Western Hemisphere Governance 1997). The wider literature on hemispheric regionalism pays little attention to the OAS (Fawcett and Serrano 2005; Haggard 1997), mainly because economic integration on a sub-regional basis has been more relevant in terms of the public debate and the social and political consequences. The literature on hemispheric or Latin American security does not focus on the OAS, largely considered to have had little impact on international relations in this sphere (Hurrell 1998; Dominguez 1998a; Pellicer 1998).

This article examines the roles played by the OAS in managing international security in the Western Hemisphere with particular emphasis on the changes that have been taking place since the end of the Cold War. The objective of the analysis is to show that the OAS does matter. I depart from a constructivist perspective on multilateral institutions, which puts forward the view that actors in the international system have the potential to discuss and interact in a forum rather than invariably compete on a 'chess-board'. While in a forum, actors constantly recreate themselves and adapt and alter the rules of the game in contrast to the strict relative-gains rules of the realist game of chess. The view that rules and norms can make a difference, although at some point empirical research needs to confirm this reality, is the basis for this work (Ruggie 1993).

The OAS is the world's oldest regional organisation, and has been in continuous existence since 1948. All 35 sovereign states of the Americas are members of the OAS. It is a multifunctional institution but this analysis focuses on the role it has in one dimension – security. In this context I put forward the argument that the OAS has played a relevant role in two crucial areas: peaceful settlement of disputes; and conflict prevention – although the worst conflicts in the region have not been resolved by the organisation. Throughout its history the OAS has supported the peaceful settlement of disputes and after the attempts to revive the organisation after the end of the Cold War, it has increasingly played a role in the area of conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention is a term that acquired prominence in the 1990s (UN 2001; Osler and Malone 2002; Rubin 2002), particularly within the UN after the 1994 Rwanda genocide. It is a contested concept, involving measures that tackle the socio-economic causes of conflict, human rights and governance, but also more immediate actions to avoid existing disputes from escalating into violent conflict. Most specialists would agree with the distinction between structural prevention (i.e. dealing with the root causes of conflict) and operational prevention or measures applicable in the face of an immediate crisis. Operational prevention

involves cooperation expressed in negotiations and fact finding, but also coercion and inducement, which may entail the use of sanctions or the deployment of observers. The creation of demilitarised zones, preventive deployment, observer missions, special envoys, fact-finding missions, confidence-building and arms-control mechanisms are part of the conflict-prevention menu.

The term 'preventive diplomacy', coined by Secretary-General Dag Hmmarskjold in 1960, and broadened and publicised by a more recent Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is treated as the core concept in Michael Lund's work (Lund 2005). He departs from Boutros-Ghali's focus on preventing disputes from escalating into conflict, understood here as the use of physical violence, and deals both with domestic and international conflicts. In situations of 'unstable peace', when 'tension and suspicion among parties run high but violence is either absent or only sporadic', preventive diplomacy or conflict prevention should be applied. In situations of crisis when the 'probability of the outbreak of war is high' or confrontation has already taken place, crisis diplomacy or crisis management should be applied (Lund 2005: 39). The time frame is fundamental in Lund's analysis: preventive diplomacy makes sense in a medium to short term and crisis management in an immediate time frame. The tools used can also be used in other stages of conflict; they are diplomatic, military, economic and social, political-institutional, judicial-legal and normative ethical. According to Lund (2005: 43) there are three subtypes of preventive diplomacy: 'crisis prevention', aiming to reduce tensions or block violent acts; 'preemptive engagement', aiming to address disputes and generate negotiations; and 'preconflict peace building', aiming to create channels for dispute resolution, build political institutions, define norms, change attitudes and reduce sources of conflict.

Article 2 of the OAS Charter states that to 'guarantee the peace and security of the continent' is one of the mandates of the organisation (OAS 2008a). In terms of this widely defined aim one can state that the organisation is effective today in terms of the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention. In terms of the classical definition of collective security as a multilateral deterrent to aggression, the organisation is not effective, not having developed mechanisms for the collective use of force. Although some military approaches to preventive diplomacy are available, such as those aimed at restraining the use of force (arms-control mechanisms, confidence-building measures, nonaggression agreements), others are not available to the OAS because they involve the deployment of forces or decisions that move beyond the threshold established within the organisational culture regarding the concept of sovereignty.

The peaceful settlement of disputes and the mechanisms available are mentioned in Articles 24 to 27 of the Charter and prevention is referred to in Article 2. One of the purposes of the Organisation is 'to prevent possible causes of difficulties and to ensure the pacific settlement of disputes that may arise among the Member States'. Collective security is described as one the aims of the Organisation in Articles 28 and 29.

Although 'peace and security' can be understood widely, the reference to the peaceful settlement of international disputes in Article 24, and the articles reaffirming the principle of sovereignty, could suggest that only international conflicts are to be tackled within the Organisation. This is a disputed point and one that has generated great internal controversy. Nevertheless after the 1990s, following the establishment of the link between democracy and security, domestic as well as international conflicts were tackled. I shall discuss how the Organisation matters for both international and domestic conflict.

The analysis of the resources available, subjective environment and pattern of behaviour of the organisation will support this argument. I shall look both at the institutions created and at the results obtained by the action taken by the organisation.

The article will introduce the OAS in a brief overview of the history of the Organisation and its organisational structure, and then move on to concentrate on its role in the security sphere. The security environment in the Americas will be briefly analysed so we can consider the challenges the organisation faces. Finally, I will look at the role played by the OAS in preventing violent conflict and conflict resolution with emphasis on the post-1990 years.

History

The OAS was established in 1948 in Bogotá, Colombia upon the signing of the OAS Charter. 21 nations adopted the Charter of the OAS at that moment.[1] Since then the Charter of the OAS has been ratified by all the nations of the hemisphere to include Canada and the Caribbean states. Today the Organisation has 35 member states, although only 34 are active. The Charter does not include provisions for the expulsion of member states; nevertheless in 1962, Cuba was suspended.

The Organisation is the result of a long process of bridge building between the countries in the Western hemisphere (Stoetzer 1993; Arrighi 2004). During this time the norms of non-intervention, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes and renunciation of war were developed in the context of multilateral and bilateral relations.

From the 1820s, the Spanish-American movement, led by Simón Bolívar, sought to create a confederation of Hispanic-American states to protect the newly independent states from European intervention. In 1826, during the Congress of Panama, treaties referring to security and economic cooperation were signed. At that point the idea of regional solidarity in the realm of security was introduced. During the following decades other meetings occurred where treaties were negotiated and the idea of solidarity, peaceful resolution of conflict and non-intervention became embedded in the international culture of the southern part of the Americas.

In 1868, the first of two important legal doctrines of international law were devised. These doctrines set a legal framework for inter-American relations and sought to impose legal constraints on the US and European countries with strong interests in the region. Carlos Calvo, an Argentinean diplomat and legal scholar, argued in his book *International Law of Europe and America in Theory and Practice* (1868) that nations were not entitled to use armed force to collect debts owed to them by other nations or individuals. The Calvo Doctrine maintained the principles of sovereign immunity from external intervention and equality between the states. The Drago Doctrine of 1902 – named after the Argentine Foreign Minister, Louis Maria Drago – reaffirmed the Calvo Doctrine and further stated that public debt cannot occasion armed intervention or occupation of the territory of American nations. Minister Drago invoked this doctrine to call upon the United States to help prevent armed intervention by Britain, Germany and Italy against Venezuela, which owed them money.

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[1] Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, USA, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela

Towards the end of the century the involvement of the US in inter-American multilateralism changed the scope and nature of the inter-American system. The US became more interested in Latin America after the end of the Civil War, as it emerged as a great power in the international arena. At the first International Conference of American States held in Washington in 1889, the US was present for the first time in a multilateral inter-American meeting. In this context the focus shifted away from security issues to economic mechanisms of cooperation. A permanent secretariat was set up in Washington DC. At the second Conference, in 1901, it became the International Bureau of American Republics; then at the fourth Conference in 1910, it was once more renamed the Pan American Union. The US Secretary of State was the chairman of the Pan American Board and the US had tight control over the conference agendas. The Commercial Bureau for the International Union of American Republics was created and made available information pertinent to commercial and economic relations. The International Commission of Jurists created in 1906 had the function of drafting codes on international law and state rights.

Only after President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the 'good neighbour policy' in 1933 did the US government agree to widen the agenda of inter-American conferences to include security and political issues. This allowed for disputes between states to be treated as a collective problem and for the idea of peaceful settlement of disputes to be incorporated into the hemispheric institutions. At the inter-American conferences, states agreed that a meeting of foreign affairs ministers was to be mobilised when the security of the region was threatened.[2]

World War II united most of the region in a mutual security mechanism, and three consultation meetings were held between ministers of foreign affairs: in Panama in 1939, in Cuba in 1940 and in Brazil in 1942. During the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace, which took place in Mexico in 1945, three basic documents were drafted: a treaty of reciprocal assistance; a basic constitution for a regional organisation; and a treaty to coordinate and consolidate agreement on the pacific settlement of disputes. Two years later, at the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace and Security in the Continent, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, a different permanent arrangement was drafted – the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (IATRA), or the Rio Treaty. The treaty provides for mutual defence and defines an attack on one state as an attack on all. Thus the concept of collective security and collective defence was incorporated into the inter-American system (Claude 1984). Article 6 of the Treaty establishes that the Organ of Consultation, which comprises all states, should meet if an aggression against a sovereign state takes place. It should also be responsible for the pacific settlement of disputes. It has the authority to call upon contending states to suspend hostilities and restore matters to the *status quo ante bellum* (Article 7). A two-thirds majority makes decisions, there is no veto system and decisions regarding sanctions are binding.

At the ninth International Conference of American States in 1948, the OAS became the first regional organisation that would allow for the realisation of the principles contained in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, namely that regional organisations should play a part in the peaceful settlement of disputes and that their role in peace enforcement is subordinated to the UN Security Council. The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the

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[2] Inter-American conferences took place periodically, with three of them, in 1936, 1945 and 1947, dedicated to peace and security.

Pact of Bogota were also signed during that meeting.[3] In December 1948, a border conflict between Costa Rica and Nicaragua became the first instance in which the OAS and IATRA were invoked to deal with a security threat in the region; the OAS was able to facilitate the drafting of the Pact of Amity, signed by the parties in 1949.[4] A record of positive results in crisis management thus began with this first case.

The Structure of the OAS

The decision-making process of the OAS is based on a classical definition of sovereignty where states have equal rights. The actual distribution of power is not expressed in the formal procedures and the sovereignty of each state is treated as equal since there is no veto power or proportional distribution of voting power.

The supreme organ of the OAS is the General Assembly. It is 'composed of the delegations accredited by the governments of the member states' (OAS 2008b). It decides on the policies of the organisation, determines the functions and structure of different organs and approves the budget. The decision-making process is based on the one country/one vote system. The Inter-American Conference, convened every five years until the 1960s, was substituted by the General Assembly in 1967. It meets annually and exceptionally to consider specific issues. The resolutions issued by the Assembly are recommendations regarding the member states, and the Assembly meets at a different location every year, although the headquarters of the OAS are located in Washington DC.

The Permanent Council oversees the functioning of the different organs of the OAS. It is composed of one representative of each member state, with the rank of ambassador and based in Washington (OAS 2003). The Council may seek solutions for disputes between member states, create *ad hoc* commissions, investigate issues and formulate recommendations.

The Meeting of Foreign Ministers should convene in the case of an urgent problem and serves as the Organ of Consultation of both the Charter of the OAS and the Rio Treaty (Article 6 of the Rio Treaty and Article 60 of the OAS Charter establish the conditions for a meeting of the Organ). The Permanent Council can serve as the provisional Organ of Consultation prior to the Meeting of Foreign Ministers, but generally it only provides oversight for the activities of other organs. The Organ of Consultation, once established, is the supreme decision-making body for the urgent matter in question. The Council decides whether a Meeting of Consultation shall be convened when a member state so requests. If the Council or the Meeting of Foreign Ministers is functioning as the Organ of Consultation in application of IATRA, the provisions of this treaty shall govern its proceedings. When the OAS is meeting on the basis of this treaty, the twelve countries that are not party to it do not join the meeting of consultation.

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[3] The Pact establishes principles and procedures of the peaceful settement of disputes in the Americas including mediation, conciliation, good offices, investigation and the role of the International Court of Justice.

[4] On December 10, 1948, armed Calderonista rebels, one of the parties in the Costa Rican civil war at the time, exiled in Nicaragua, invaded Costa Rica but were repulsed . The long term dispute between the two countries refers to the San Juan River, which serves as a natural border between the two countries and dates back to the 1820s, but is not directly related to this incident. The OAS issued a resolution calling for the elimination of the conflict, a committee of military experts was sent to the border region to monitor the situation and a special committee of the Council (serving as the Organ of Cosultation) drafted a Pact of Amity, which was signed on February 21, 1949, by both parties to the dispute (Herzog 1992; Berrios 2004).

The Secretary General is elected by the General Assembly for a five-year term and heads a small permanent Secretariat. He has acquired new responsibilities since the 1985 reform of the Charter, reporting security or other crises to the Permanent Council. Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, who took office in May 2005, restructured the Secretariat and it is now organised in seven specialised secretariats: Office of the Secretary General, Office of the Assistant Secretary General, Secretariat for Political Affairs, Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, Secretariat for Integral Development, Secretariat for Administration and Finance, and Department of International Legal Affairs.

The Inter-American Council of Integral Development, which meets annually, promotes cooperation in the social, cultural and economic spheres. The Inter-American Juridical Committee, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, six specialised organisations and eleven agencies and entities also form part of the organisation, as seen in the chart below.

The Inter-American Defence Board (IADB), created in 1942, is an advisory organ to the OAS and is funded by the organisation but only became an agency of the organisation in March 2006. It is an international committee of nationally appointed defence officials, who develop collaborative approaches on common defence and security issues facing the Americas. It is today engaged in mine-clearing projects, cataloging confidence-building measures, disaster mitigation and prevention, and training activities specific to the Inter-American Defence College in the region. The IADB provides technical advice and services to the OAS. The Inter-American Peace Committee was active between 1948 and 1985.

Source: OAS, available at http://www.oas.org/documents/eng/structure.asp
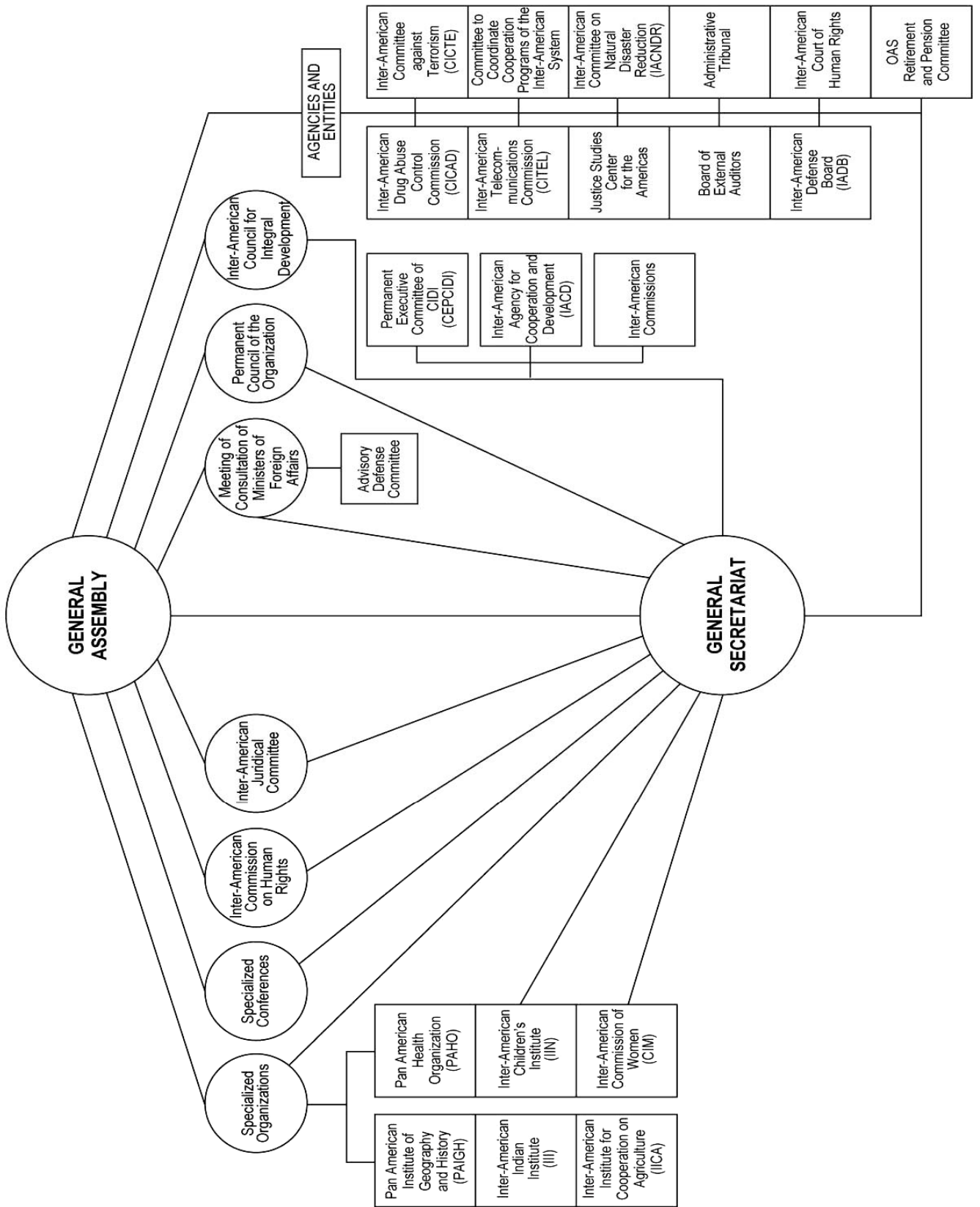
International Security in the Americas

In order to evaluate the role the OAS plays in managing security in the western hemisphere a brief look at the region's security landscape is required. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, since the end of the Cold War the Americas have been the second most peaceful region in the world (with Europe being the most peaceful) (UCDP 2008). The data indicating pacific relations in the Americas would be even more striking if the US, which has been involved in many of the conflicts, were excluded.

Regarding weapons of mass destruction, one the greatest security concerns at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century, Latin America is a remarkably stable area. The absence of weapons of mass destruction has been well established in the southern part of the hemisphere. The 1967 Tlatelolco Treaty, which aimed to create a nuclear-free weapon zone in the whole of Latin America, is fully enforced. The adherence to arms control treaties and organisations is widespread and adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is nearly universal in the hemisphere. In the 1990s, Argentina and Brazil, along with South Africa, became examples of nuclear proliferation 'rollback' (Dunn 1998: 22). In 1991, the Cartagena Declaration on Renunciation of Weapons of Mass Destruction was issued, supporting the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2002, the Presidents of South America met in Ecuador and declared South America a Zone of Peace and Cooperation.

There were few violent conflicts between states in the Americas after the end of the nineteenth century (Pellicer 1998; Mares 2004; Rosas 2003), although territorial disputes were abundant (Dominguez 2003). The four major inter- American wars took place between the middle of the nineteenth century and the 1930s: the Mexican-American War of 1846; the War of the Triple Alliance between 1864 and 1870 (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay); the War of the Pacific between 1870 and 1883 (Chile and Bolivia); and the Chaco War in 1932 (Paraguay and Bolivia). During the second half of the twentieth century and particularly after the mid-1980s the region has been characterised by very few instances of inter-state wars. In 1969, war broke out over territorial and migration issues between El Salvador and Honduras; in 1982 between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands; and in 1998 Peru and Ecuador finally settled their boundary dispute after a conflict that left nearly a thousand dead combatants in 1995 (Herz and Pontes 2002). Relations between Brazil and Argentina and between Argentina and Chile improved dramatically after the mid-1980s,[5] and in 1999 Chile and Peru settled their border dispute. The US was involved in several armed conflicts and military interventions,[6] particularly in Central America; but apart from the US intervention in Haiti in 1994, it has refrained from military intervention since 1990.

As seen in the data at the end of this article most countries in the region spend a low percentage of GDP on arms. The US, Colombia and Chile are exceptions that stand out. Colombia is at war and the powerful position of the military establishment in Chile explains its special situation. Regarding Latin America, Brazil is the only country that features among the fifteen major spenders in arms procurements according to SIPRI, accounting for 1 percent

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[5] Brazil and Argentina solved their disputes over water rights and nuclear competition. Chile and Argentina signed the 1984 Treaty of Peace and Friendship that put an end to the Beagle Channel feud.

[6] Between the mid-nineteenth century and 1989, US invaded Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, México, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama and Puerto Rico.

of world spending (SIPRI 2008). South and Central America stand out as the regions that spend less in absolute terms than any other world region apart from Africa, as shown in the data provided by SIPRI for 2006:

Military Expenditure in US B$ for 2006

Africa	15.5
Asia and Oceania	185
Europe	310
Middle East	72.5
North America	542
South and Central America	32.6

Nevertheless, one must remember that boundary disputes exist today and were sources of conflict in the past. The territorial disputes in the hemisphere at present are: Peru-Chile-Bolivia (Chile and Bolivia do not have diplomatic relations); Nicaragua and Costa Rica; Nicaragua and Colombia; Colombia and Ecuador; Colombia and Venezuela; and Venezuela and Guiana (ABIN 2007).

Moreover, guerrilla warfare was present from the late 1950s onward, and the war in Colombia is the most vivid example of this reality today. Intra-state wars (as defined by the Correlates of War Project) occurred in twelve countries since the 1950s.[7] Currently drug traffic and transnational criminal activities in general have become the most acute threat to states and individuals alike, and the social and economic problems that characterise the region could give rise to international conflicts over resources and migration. The domestic political and social situation in many Latin American countries could generate internal conflicts. The fragility of domestic mechanisms for conflict resolution and the state apparatus in general has generated political crises throughout the history of the southern part of the Americas. Ecuador, Haiti, Venezuela and Bolivia are countries where institutional or violent crisis is a possibility in the medium term.

The OAS and the Management of Security

From the brief overview presented above it is apparent that the institutions that are mandated to manage security in the region face a number of tasks: Among these institutions, the OAS is the most universal, including all countries in the hemisphere and geared towards the multidimensional problems in place.

The OAS, IATRA and the Pact of Bogota (Treaty on Pacific Settlement of Disputes) are supposed to be the pillars of the hemispheric security system. The Pact has never been applied, however. The OAS and IATRA have worked in conjunction, providing a security framework. As we have seen, either the Permanent Council or the Meeting of Foreign Ministers serves as the Organ of Consultation for both the OAS Charter and the Rio Treaty and makes decisions aimed at addressing security threats perceived by the member states.

Other institutions are also part of the group of regional mechanisms for the management of international security, although only the OAS congregates all hemispheric sovereign

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[7] Colombia, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Chile and Haiti (Correlates of War 2007)

countries: *ad hoc* regional arrangements, such as the Rio Group,[8] the Guarantors of the Peru-Ecuador Treaty;[9] the Summit Meetings;[10] and the Meeting of Defence Ministers[11]. Two specialised organisations deal with nuclear questions: the Brazilian-Argentine Nuclear Accounting Agency; and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Institutions such as the Caribbean Community and Common Market, the Andean Group, Mercosul and the Union of South American Countries, geared toward economic, cultural and social integration, also play a part in the creation of a common security agenda.

The relations between the OAS and the Summit Meeting are the most relevant for the purposes of this article since the Summit process has provided guidance beyond the Charter and the Rio Treaty for action in the sphere of security. Regarding the other forms of cooperation, the levels of coordination do not have any significant results. Initially the Summit process was to develop an autonomous agenda, but the OAS has increasingly taken the Summit's orientation as a guide for action. In the context of the Third Summit of the Americas held in Quebec City in 2001, the OAS was officially designated as the Secretariat of the Summit of the Americas Process. At the Miami Summit in 1994, the Heads of State and Government assigned mandates to the OAS in several areas such as drugs, corruption, terrorism, hemispheric security, sustainable development and the environment. The OAS incorporated these mandates into its agenda on a priority basis.

The OAS security structure was designed for collective security operations and for dispute settlement through diplomatic consultation. Chapter VI of the Charter endorses the principle of collective security – an attack on one is considered an attack on all. Regarding conflict between states in the hemisphere, the emphasis lies on peaceful means for the settlement of disputes. Chapter V outlines the procedures to promote this. The legalist tradition, profoundly rooted in Latin American international culture and also relevant in inter-American relations more generally, is firmly associated with the norm of peaceful conflict resolution and reinforces it.

When a security threat is detected, either the Charter of the OAS or the Rio Treaty may be invoked. There is no established norm regarding which treaty is invoked and in some cases both documents have been used.[12] The political process in each case will determine the selection. The difference in tone between Article 60 of the Charter and Article 6 of the Rio Treaty may determine the choice of one or the other. The Rio Treaty indicates that stricter sanctions could be applied. The Permanent Council of the OAS meets and determines whether the request is justified and whether to convene the Organ of Consultation. Frequently an investigating committee is formed and reports back to the Organ of Consultation. Finally,

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[8] The Rio Group was established in 1986 from the merger of the Contadora Group (Venezuela, Mexico, Panama, and Colombia) and its support group (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay), which negotiated the peace agreements that ended the Central American crises of the 1980s.

[9] Group of four countries (United States, Brasil, Argentina and Chile) established by a 1942 Protocol that mediated the negotiations between Peru and Ecuador.

[10] Heads of state met in 1994, 1998, 2001 and 2005 to define the economic, political and security agendas for cooperation in the hemisphere.

[11] The Miami Meeting of Heads of State in 1994 established the process. The agenda includes confidence-building measures, the role of the armed forces, the military and the protection of the environment, mine clearing, economic development and political stability, peace operations and narco traffic and the production of white papers on defence policy.

[12] This was the case after the terrorists attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. This was also the last time the Organ of Consultation convened.

resolutions may be voted for. Several options are available: sending an observation committee, sanctions or even the use of armed force. At any point the organisation may consider the crisis solved or may simply choose to withdraw from the case. The Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General are engaged in preventive diplomacy and mediation in the hemisphere's trouble spots and/or appointed to head OAS electoral observation missions.

The OAS has had some success in reducing regional tensions and preventing conflicts from escalating (Shaw 2004: 96). This was the case in the conflict between Costa Rica and Nicaragua between 1948 and 1979, and the Soccer War between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969. It has functioned as a forum for discussion of inter-state as well as intra-state conflict since its creation. Investigative commissions were created in a number of cases to offer assessments and sometimes indicate solutions to situations of conflict or controversy. It has also been a major forum for the process of generating regional norms on security, regarding the peaceful solution of disputes, the association between democracy, stability, security and arms control and the mechanisms to fight transnational criminality. The use of military capabilities is extremely rare. The only Inter-American Peace Force was created in 1965 and sent to the Dominican Republic after its civil war and US military intervention.

During the Cold War, the containment of the ideological threat of communism was the main pillar of the concept of security in the Western Hemisphere and at the OAS. The IATRA and the doctrines of national security developed in most Latin American countries reflected this logic. The definition of threat was framed in Cold War terms for the first time at the 10th Inter-American Conference in Caracas, in 1954. A resolution was issued defining a government under communist control as a threat to the hemisphere.[13] The treatment of the Dominican Republic political crisis of 1965 and the Cuban Revolution within the same framework followed. The Declaration of San José, issued during the Seventh Meeting of Foreign Ministers in August 1960, explicitly makes use of Cold War discourse, mentioning the threat of extra continental intervention by the Soviet Union and China and that the 'inter-American system is incompatible with any form of totalitarianism' (OAS 1960). The 1960s can be characterised as the period when the OAS was most clearly used as an instrument of US foreign policy partly because many countries in the region accepted the bipolar ideological view of international relations sponsored by the US.

During this period the OAS mediation of the dispute between El Salvador and Honduras, in 1969, was the clearest expression of the organisation's capacity to be effective beyond the Cold War confrontation. During a World Cup soccer tournament in July of that year, border incidents between El Salvador and Honduras occurred. The large migration of Salvadorians to Honduras (around 300,000) generated social pressure, and riots against the migrant population took place in Honduras. As a result, El Salvador invaded Honduras. The day after the fighting began, the OAS met in an urgent session and called for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of El Salvador's forces from Honduras. The OAS negotiated the dispute, put pressure on El Salvador to withdraw and a ceasefire was reached. The threat of OAS economic sanctions against El Salvador and the dispatch of OAS observers to Honduras to oversee the security of Salvadoranians remaining in that country were fundamental for the temporary resolution of the dispute. This was a clear case of preventive diplomacy, more specifically 'pre-emptive engagement', according to Lund's terminology. Violence had

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[13] President Jacabo Arbenz administration in Guatemala was considered to be communist infiltrated by the government of the United States. Arbenz's government was overthrown in 1954 by a coup d'etat backed by the United States and the OAS did not intervene.

begun, with 2,000 dead and thousands displaced, but was not widespread and the OAS acted successfully to create channels of communication, turning the norm of peaceful resolution of disputes into a reality while also using inducements and pressure. After only four days of fighting a ceasefire was reached. Thereafter, the OAS engaged in conflict resolution, allowing the disputes between the two countries to end peacefully.

In other cases the OAS was also able to avoid violence that faced the region during the period. The OAS functioned as a conflict prevention mechanism in the operational sense, supporting the return to stability or status quo in many instances, and as a forum for conflict resolution and social environment for the maintenance of the norm of peaceful conflict resolution. The following are the cases in which the Charter or the Rio Treaty was invoked to deal with a security threat in the region, in the period up to 1990 (those in which conflict prevention was successful in stabilising the situation are in italics):

Dispute	Year	Action taken by the OAS
Costa Rica and Nicaragua border dispute	*1948*	*Pact of Amity signed, troops withdrew. Preventive engagement was successful*
General Instability in the Caribbean area	*1949*	*The OAS issued resolutions and created a monitoring committee. Crisis prevention stabilised the situation temporarily*
Coup in Guatemala	1954	The OAS does not prevent the crisis
Dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua	*1955*	*Conciliation agreement is signed with the aid of committees created by the Council*
Territorial dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua	*1957*	*A ceasefire is signed and the case is transferred to the International Court of Justice. A case of crisis prevention.*
A small Cuban force invades Panama	*1959*	*The OAS guarantees the surrender of Cuban forces. A case of crisis prevention.*
Rebels fighting the Somoza dictatorship from Costa Rica and Honduras enter Nicaragua	1959	Council Meeting pledges the action to cease.
Dispute involving Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Cuba. The Dominican Republic charged Cuba and Venezuela of planning an invasion in the context of wider instability in the sub-region. The Dominican Republic is involved in an	*1959, 1960*	*First Meeting of Foreign Ministers takes place called as Organ of Consultation under the Charter. The attempt of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo to assassinate President Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela was investigated*

attempt to assassinate the President of Venezuela		*by a committee which established the complicity of Trujillo. At the 1960 Meeting, the ministers approved diplomatic and economic sanctions against an American state for the first time. This action prevented the crisis from spreading and supported the transition to democracy in the Dominican Republic.*
Cuba	1960, 1962, 1964,1967,1975	The Cuban revolution in 1959 is treated as a Cold War threat in the hemisphere. In 1975 it is decided that economic sanctions will not be enforced. The preventive diplomacy framework does not apply.
Dominican Republic and Haiti accuse each other of illegal exile activities	1963	An agreement is reached. Violent conflict was not a real possibility. A case of conflict resolution.
Riots occur in Panama over flying the Panamanian flag in the Canal Zone.	*1964*	*The Inter-American Peace Committee investigated and the US and Panama negotiated a settlement. The OAS supported the prevention of further conflict. A case of preemptive engagement.*
The coup, counter-coup and US intervention in the Dominican Republic	*1965*	*A peacekeeping force is formed. The OAS mediated between the two factions in conflict. A provisional government is established and elections sponsored by the OAS are held in 1966. Conflict prevention was successful, but the OAS did not uphold the principle of non-intervention as it did not condemn the United States.*
War between El Salvador and Honduras	*1969*	*Preemptive engagement successfully put dispute settlements procedures in place.*
Ecuador-US fishing rights dispute	1971	Dispute did not escalate but the OAS did not have an

		impact on bilateral relations.
Nicaragua internal conflict	1978	The US proposed peacekeeping is rejected. The negotiations that led to end of the conflict took place with the support of ad hoc groups
Ecuador Peru territorial conflict	1981	The mediation of the conflict is transferred to an ad hoc group.
Argentina – UK war over the Malvinas/Falklands Island	1982	The OAS is not able to play a role but the Council supports Argentina and calls for a ceasefire.
United States invades Panama	1989	The OAS is not able to play any role.

(Source: Shaw 2004: 72-74)

During the 1970s and 1980s the OAS became less active in the security sphere. The disagreements between the US and most Latin American countries tended to widen. Latin American countries supported moves towards greater engagement of the OAS in social and economic issues. The Protocol of Buenos Aires, which took effect in 1970, addressed some of the concerns of Latin American countries by creating the Inter-American Economic and Social Council. There was no consensus on the use of the OAS as part of the Cold War foreign policy of the US. In fact in 1975, the majority of Latin American states reversed the embargo on Cuba as they did not consider Cuba to be a threat.[14] The OAS's inaction during the 1980s conflicts in Central America,[15] the marginal role it played in the Falklands/Malvinas War and the US unilateral decisions to intervene in Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989 led to greater emphasis on *ad hoc* regional arrangements, such as the Rio Group, the Summit Meetings, the Meeting of Defence Ministers or the Guarantors of the Peru-Ecuador Treaty.

The OAS After the Cold War

Since the end of the Cold War, an attempt to redefine the role played by the OAS has been made, prompted by a wide sense of failure, the new consensus on democracy in the region, the admission of Canada in 1990, different interests of regional actors and the wider debate on the redefinition of the concept of security. The OAS has become active in fostering confidence-building measures and land-mine clearing, and has continued its work on the dialogue on border disputes and attempts to prevent conflict. The range of activities in which the organisation has been involved has grown notably and new capabilities have been

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[14] The Freedom of Action resolution was passed at the Sixteenth Meeting of Foreign Ministers allowing member states to resume relations with Cuba.

[15] The Central America conflict involved Nicaragua , where a revolution had taken place in 1979, El Salvador Honduras and Guatemala. Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela collectively developed the effort to negotiate a peace process in Central America beginning in 1983 . This group was named the Contatora Group.They facilitated discussions between the United States and Nicaragua and between insurgents and government in El Salvador. In 1985, the Support Group was formed composed of Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay. The General Assemblies of both the OAS and the UN supported the process. The Esquipulas Agreement was signed in 1987, finally leading to an end of the Central American conflict as the Cold War was ending.

generated. Several institutional changes took place and new agencies were created such as the Committee on Hemispheric Security, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Committee and the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism. The Secretary General acquired new responsibilities. He or she is now authorised to bring to the attention of the General Assembly or the Permanent Council matters which might threaten the peace, security or development of member states. The Education for Peace Programme was also created.[16]

The effort to reshape the organisation also should be understood in the context of the generation of the idea that peace is a regional asset. The vision of a peaceful and stable region, in contrast to other parts of the world, is perceived by national elites of several countries as an advantage in the context of the current dispute over international investment flows. At the same time, policy makers and academics undertook a debate on the new role of the OAS as the literature quoted earlier testifies.

In this new context does the OAS matter? Two different paths are taken in the remaining part of this article to answer this question. First, I point out that the OAS has developed two new roles in norm generation: a leading role in supporting the confidence-building agenda in the hemisphere; and a central role in generating the hemispheric democratic paradigm that associates security and democracy, allowing the organisation to have an active role in preventing intra-state conflicts. In addition, the OAS remains an important pillar of the norm of peaceful solution of disputes, which is an historical legacy of previous periods. Insofar as the states participate in norm construction and behaviour is changed, one can see these norms functioning as preventive diplomacy mechanisms. Secondly, I will show that the OAS prevented a number of international and domestic disputes from turning into violent conflict and was essential in diffusing several crises.

In the sphere of security, in particular, a collective desire to redefine the role of the organisation can be observed. Several resolutions on cooperation in this sphere were passed, two important conventions were signed,[17] a debate on the redefinition of the concept of hemispheric security was launched and the Hemispheric Security Commission was created in 1991, becoming a permanent body in 1995. The Commission has a mandate to review the hemispheric security system. Among the several issues under scrutiny we should mention the juridical and institutional link between the OAS and the Inter-American Defence Junta, the drive towards greater transparency in managing military capabilities, the special needs of small states and the debate on the concept of security itself; notably absent from debate is the current situation in Colombia. The Committee's working groups completed their work during the last decade on the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance, on recommendations on natural disaster reduction to the OAS and its subsidiaries, on the modernisation needed to provide the OAS with technical, advisory, and educational expertise on defence and security issues, on a draft cyber-security strategy and on the juridical and

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[16] The Programme, created in 1999, comprises three areas: education for the promotion of peace between states; education for the peaceful settlement of conflicts; and education for the promotion of democratic values and practices. In August 2005, the Inter-American Programme on Education for Democratic Values and Practices was created. The Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) with the support of the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) of the OAS are responsible for the programme, which includes initiatives in three areas: research, professional development and educational resources, and information exchange.

[17] Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions

institutional links between the OAS and IADB (OAS 2007a). The agenda for 2008 includes the following topics, according to the mandate established by the Permanent Council: disarmament and non-proliferation education; anti-personnel mines in Ecuador and Peru; the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions; the Americas as an Antipersonnel-Land-Mine-Free Zone; confidence- and security-building; the work of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; follow-up to the Special Conference on Security; the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons; the Treaty of Tlatelolco; criminal gangs; the Inter-American Defence Board; natural disaster reduction; special security concerns of the small island states; the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540;[18] the plan of action against transnational organised crime; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials; the Annual Report of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD); and trafficking in persons.

The redefinition of the concept of security involved the incorporation of an expanded concept and the shift from collective security to co-operative security (Tickner 1995; Buzan 1991; Matthews 1991). The expanded concept of security allows for the perception of the interdependence between economic, social, political and environment issues and threats and use of violence. The perception that so-called new threats to security such as drug traffic, illegal traffic of arms, intra-state violence and institutional failure of states could be tackled by the organisation became acceptable. At the Special Conference on Security, held in 2003 in Mexico, member states defined security in multidimensional terms. Thus efforts to deal with drug traffic, democratic stability, terrorism and mine clearing acquired new legitimacy. A new normative framework was generated and institutional mechanisms were produced. Some of the norms and mechanisms in question are part of the preventive diplomacy practice discussed at the beginning of this article.

The emphasis on confidence- and security-building measures, which guarantee transparency of military procedures and the availability of information, replaced the stress on deterrence in the concept of collective security or collective defence (i.e. the idea that aggressors would have to face the combined force of a coalition) (Carter et al. 1992; OAS 1993; Dominguez 1993; Griffith 1998),

The idea of arms control is not explicitly present in the Charter, but slowly entered the inter-American security environment in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1974, eight Latin American governments issued the Ayacuchu Declaration,[19] affirming their support for the idea of arms control, and the Hemispheric Security Committee has taken on this subject.

The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Production and Traffic of Arms, Ammunition, Explosives and related Materials of 1997 expresses the link between the arms control agenda and the new prominence of the concept of cooperative security. On June 7, 1999, the OAS General Assembly in Guatemala adopted a landmark Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. By June 2003, the Convention was signed by twenty OAS member states – all major hemispheric conventional weapons importers and exporters.

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[18] UN Resolution on the non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, April 24, 2004.
[19] Argentina, Chile Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Peru and Venezuela.

The Contadora group mentioned earlier, the Ayacucho Declaration, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the treaties that ended the nuclear dispute between Argentina and Brazil introduced the CSBM agenda, launched at the 1975 Helsinki Conference, to Latin America (Rodrigues 1999; Rojas 1996). The 1995 war between Peru and Ecuador reminded Latin American leaders that the pending territorial disputes in the region, a legacy of the nineteenth century demarcation process, could be ignited into an actual exchange of fire. The US government, moving in the 1990s towards a more multilateral approach in the region, and the democratisation of Latin American countries permitted the introduction of the confidence-building agenda. In addition, the concern with the nature of civil-military relations in Latin America, given the region's history of military intervention in public administration, and the search for new roles and identities for the military led local elites to acquire greater interest in the subject.

In the 1990s the states in the hemisphere turned to the OAS as a catalyst for confidence building. The OAS has organised and sponsored conferences on confidence- and security-building measures, designed to strengthen military-to-military relations, deal with historic rivalries and tensions and create an environment that permits the governments of the region to modernise their defence forces without triggering suspicions from neighbours or leading to an arms race.

In 1994, a meeting of governmental specialists on confidence-building measures and other security-related issues was held in Buenos Aires. This led to two conferences on the theme, held in Chile in 1995, and El Salvador in 1998. The Santiago Declaration called on OAS members to accept accords regarding the pre-notification of military exercises, to take part in the UN Register of Conventional Arms, to exchange information regarding national defence policies and to permit foreign observers to be present when military exercises take place. The Declaration of San Salvador expanded this agenda, dealing with political contacts, border cooperation, the exchange of information on national armed forces, the creation of accounting procedures for military expenditure and the institutionalisation of discussions on cooperative security through annual experts meetings. One of the CSBMs proposed by the 1998 San Salvador Conference on CSBMs was the establishment of a common methodology to measure defence expenditures that would facilitate comparison of military spending throughout Latin America. The governments of Argentina and Chile submitted a formal request to the Economic Commission for Latin American and Caribbean (ECLAC). Following the publication of Argentina's Defence White Book in 1999, which contained the first-ever public accounting of its military expenditures, ECLAC began data gathering and analysis. ECLAC's common standardised methodology for the measurement of defence expenditures is now available to all nations of the Hemisphere as an important CSBM that contributes to disarmament and the lowering of military expenditures. A meeting of experts took place in Miami in 2003, issuing two final documents that are now a reference for the debate on the subject (US Department of State, 2003).

The countries of the region have also adhered to CSBMs on a global level, the OAS having approved the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition in 1999. This initiative provides a framework for the advance notification of acquisitions of weapon systems covered by the UN Register. The data available on the participation of American states in different aspects of the confidence and security agenda attest to the wide involvement of countries in the hemisphere. Among the OAS countries, 26 have presented reports on the themes required. Moreover bilateral arrangements complement this trend, such as the joint operations and training between Brazilian and Argentine forces in

particular. The experience of Latin American armies in Haiti can also be viewed as a confidence-building experience.

As part of the transformation process, the IADB has acquired new and different roles. Its current programmes include mine clearing in Central America, reporting on confidence- and security-building measures, and developing educational programmes on regional security. The analysis of the military security- and confidence-building measures was initiated at the headquarters of the Inter-American Defence Board in 1995. Resolution 650 (1031/95) of the OAS Permanent Council tasked the IADB with the preparation of an inventory of the military security- and confidence-building measures in the Hemisphere. The Board provides a senior-level academic programme in security studies for military, national police and civilian leaders at the Inter-American Defence College (IADC). On March 15, 2006, the 32nd Special Session of the General Assembly formalised the IADB status as an OAS agency. Thus it is clear that a long process involving hemispheric states, and more particularly the military establishments in the region, has generated a norm regarding knowledge sharing and the diffusion of rules regarding military activities and arms procurements. This is a change in social interaction that prevents conflict by generating confidence.

The second norm that the OAS had a central role in generating was the association between democracy and security, allowing for a role of the regional multilateral institutions in protecting democratic institutions where they were fragile or collapsing thus avoiding conflict. The new weight given by the OAS to the defence of democracy marked the international landscape in the region in the 1990s (Cooper and Legler 2001 & 2006; Massote 2007). In this case one should also notice the presence of other regional institutions playing an important role: the Rio Group, the Andean Group, the Caribbean Common Market and MERCOSUR.

The theme was always present in declaratory terms in the OAS's agenda, having been associated with the Cold War dispute. Some attempts to foster formal democratic institutions can be understood both as part of the US Cold War strategy and as the movement towards a regional regime for the protection of human rights and democracy. The Declaration of Santiago (OAS 1959: 4-6) issued by the Fifth Meeting of Foreign Ministers in 1959, explicitly mentions the importance of free elections, freedom of the press, respect for human rights and effective judicial procedures. During that meeting the American Commission for Human Rights was created.

Nevertheless only in 1979 did the OAS begin its road towards a legitimising and supporting role in the consolidation and improvement of democracy in the Americas. At that moment a resolution condemning the human rights record of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua was passed. The 1985 Cartagena Protocol states the commitment to the promotion and the strengthening of representative democracy. The 1991 Declaration on the Collective Defence of Democracy, often referred to as the Santiago Declaration, called for prompt reaction of the region's democracies in the event of a threat to democracy in a member state. Resolution 1080, passed by the General Assembly in June 1991 in Santiago, determines that the OAS Permanent Council should be summoned in case of the suspension of the democratic process in any member state, and thereafter a Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs could be summoned. Economic and diplomatic sanctions may be imposed. The 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas set the tone for a growing responsibility regarding the maintenance of democratic regimes in the Americas. In 1997, a reform of the OAS Charter took place through the ratification of the 1992 Protocol of Washington. The agreement strengthens representative

democracy by giving the OAS the right to suspend a member state whose democratically elected government is overthrown by force. A new collective identity was fostered, led by the US, and made possible by the transition of most Latin America countries to democracy in the 1980s. In fact, the OAS relaxed its commitment to the principle of non-intervention in the process of constructing a regime for the preservation of democracy. Finally, in 2001 the Inter-American Democratic Charter was adopted, further institutionalising the democratic paradigm (OAS 2001). This new Charter creates procedures for cases of formal disruption to democracy and for situations when democracy is at risk. It was first formally applied when a coup d'etat was attempted against President Hugo Chaves of Venezuela in 2002.

In this context, the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD), now the Department for the Promotion of Democracy, was established in 1991. It provided assistance for the development of democratic institutions and for conflict resolution. During the first years of its activities, the UPD concentrated on the area of electoral observations. Following the First Summit of the Americas in 1994, it got involved in programmes for the support of peace processes on the continent. The UPD took part in several electoral observation missions on national and municipal levels, supporting training, educational, research and information programmes (Thérien and Gosselin 1997). Since 1990 the OAS has set up 92 electoral observation missions in 20 different countries (OAS 2007b).

The Inter-American Forum on Political Parties fosters debate and research on issues pertaining to the political system of states, such as campaign financing and confidence in the political system. The OAS has also promoted national dialogue in countries where political institutions may be facing a crisis – such as Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Peru, Suriname and Bolivia – and generated training and educational programmes geared towards the generation of a democratic culture. These activities are part of the conflict-prevention toolbox and the extent, and importance of the activities allow us to assert that the OAS plays a major part in guaranteeing democratic stability in the region. These activities can be categorised in a different manner, but from the point of view of conflict prevention, in a region where intra-state and inter-state violence has often been generated by domestic political instability, this is a fundamental contribution for the prevention of violent escalation of disputes.

After the end of the Cold War we can also verify that the OAS played an important role in conflict prevention dealing with situations that could have escalated into violent conflict. In the following instances the Charter, Resolution 1080 or the Inter American Democratic Charter were invoked:

Dispute	Date	Action Taken By the OAS
A coup d'etat takes place in Haiti	1991	The Council condemns the coup based on Resolution 1080 and sends a mission to Haiti beginning the process that would lead to President Aristides' reinstatement in 1994, after an American led intervention authorised by the Security Council.
In April 1992 President Alberto Fujimori of Peru shut down the courts, suspended the constitution and assumed special emergency powers.	1992	For the second time Resolution 1080 was invoked. A Meeting of Foreign Ministers was called and a mission was sent to Lima. The OAS exerted pressure, which added to positions of many other actors, and elections were held for a Constitutional Congress. The Fujimori regime

		was strengthened and stability was maintained. The OAS has been criticised frequently for allowing a regime without proper democratic credentials to be stabilised.
Institutional crisis in Guatemala when President Jorge Serrano suspended basic rights, shut down Congress and the courts and detained members of the opposition. This happened in the context of the civil war that only ended in 1996.	1993	The Secretary General João Baena Soares headed a fact-finding mission. The president resigned and the Guatemalan Congress elected a new president that served until the January 1996 elections.
Paraguay- Attempt to overthrow the government	1996	The OAS condemns the Coup and democratic stability is restored.
Venezuela- Coup d'etat against President Hugo Chavez, who returns to power after 48 hours	2002	The Permanent Council condemns the coup based on the Inter- American Democratic Charter. Fact finding mission of the Secretary General to Venezuela. The OAS's Secretary General aids the mediation between the government and the opposition.
Institutional instability in Belize	2005	Permanent Council support for the country's constitutional government
Bolivia President Carlos Mesa in the context of political and social upheaval	2005	The Permanent Council declares its support for the democratic process in Bolivia, sends a mission and provides support for the strengthening of democratic institutions. Ambassador Horacio Serpa of Colombia was designated special representative of the Secretary General and facilitated political dialogue and then headed the OAS mission that observed the electoral process. On December 18, 2005, President Evo Morales was elected, through a process considered free and fair.
Institutional instability in Ecuador	2005	PermanentCouncil Resolution in support of democratic institutions. A Mission is sent to the country. The OAS supported the establishment of the Supreme Court of Justice. Insulza appointed two jurists as his special representatives to observe the selection process. Members of Ecuador's new Supreme Court were sworn in November 2005
Political instability that marks the end of the Fujimori period in Peru	2000	Elections in Peru are not considered free and fair by the OAS mission. Resolution 1753 created the OAS High Level Mission to Peru, which mediated negotiations to strengthen Peruvian democratic institutions between the government, civil society and the opposition within the context of the 'Dialogue Roundtable'. Fujimori leaves Peru and new elections take place.

The OAS has also been involved in conflict resolution and national reconciliation since the 1990s. It took part in post-conflict reconstruction in Nicaragua, Haiti and Guatemala.

The International Commission for Support and Verification (CIAV, *Comisíon Internacional de Apoio y Verificación*) was the context in which the OAS, in conjunction with the United Nations, dealt with the pacification of Nicaragua. Peace building in Nicaragua was a coordinated enterprise undertaken by the OAS and the UN (Seresere 1996). The OAS would receive returning combatants and their families inside Nicaragua. The Commission aided in the reintegration of approximately 120,000 combatants and their families into post-war Nicaraguan society, was able to include non-combatants in the programme and mediated local conflicts. The OAS also monitored the 1996 elections, which saw a successful transition from one elected president to the next. CIAV ended operations in July 1997.

The OAS was assisted the mine-clearing operations in Nicaragua, the General Secretary of the organisation having requested the IADB to plan the operations. Subsequently a wider project to remove mines from Central America was implemented. The mine-clearing programme was created in 1991 and was conducted under the general coordination of the UPD with the technical support of the IADB.

The OAS also aided the process of pacification in Suriname, where its crucial role as mediator led to the signing and fulfilment of the 1992 peace accord. The OAS mission helped collect and destroy weapons from armed groups that had operated throughout Suriname's rural areas. In 1993 and 1994, the OAS monitored compliance with the peace accords and assisted in the removal of land mines.

When a coup d'etat took place in Haiti in September 1991, the OAS was the first international organisation to react, issuing a Permanent Council resolution condemning the coup, and demanding respect for the democratically elected government (Berenson 1996). An *ad hoc* Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was called, pursuant to the mechanism established under Resolution 1080. The meeting called for full restoration of the rule of law and the reinstatement of President Aristide; and suspension of economic, financial and commercial ties with Haiti was recommended. In October, the creation of a Civilian Mission to re-establish and strengthen constitutional democracy was authorised by the meeting of Consultation. Secretary General Baena Soares sent OAS human rights observers to Port-au-Prince. After this initial OAS experience, the UN General Assembly approved a plan for a joint OAS/UN mission. Only after the action of the multinational force, led by the US in September 1994, was it possible to effectively put in place the peacekeeping mission authorised by the Security Council and the OAS/UN civilian mission could start its work. The International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH) was the most advanced experience in cooperation between the OAS and the UN. In the context of the mission, collaboration took place in the areas of electoral observation, humanitarian aid, human rights monitoring, political negotiations, refugees, fuel supply and the economic recovery programme. After the signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala in 1996, the OAS provided support for legislative and electoral reforms, aided the reintegration of ex-combatants and promoted the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The OAS continues to fulfill a role in conflict resolution between states. In September 2005, Belize and Guatemala signed an agreement at the OAS establishing a framework for negotiations and confidence-building measures, to help maintain good bilateral relations

while they seek a permanent solution to their longstanding territorial dispute. The OAS is supporting that effort through its Fund for Peace. In April 2006, El Salvador and Honduras reach an agreement regarding their common border, the OAS having played an important role in support of negotiations.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that the OAS has followed the orientation of its mandate, particularly after the 1990s, in a limited but important area: preventive diplomacy. The organisation matters because it plays a role in preventing the escalation of both intra-state and inter-state disputes into violent conflicts. I have pointed out that in 18 different instances the OAS played a relevant role in preventing the escalation of disputes into violent, or more violent, conflict. The capacity of the OAS to generate communication channels through mediation and institution building is its greatest contribution.

Three norms developed partly within the organisation are part of the preventive diplomacy mechanisms in place: the drive towards the peaceful resolution of conflict; the norm of information sharing built into the confidence-building agenda; and the norm that stresses democratic institutional stability, associating democracy and security and allowing a more active multilateral interference in domestic political affairs. The pattern of behaviour observed in the pages above permits us to point out that institutions have been built, are functioning and have changed matters on the ground in several countries, preventing violence.

I would also like to stress the technical assistance given by the organisation in several spheres to countries where the state apparatus or the institutions for conflict resolution are still fragile. The examples mentioned in this article pertain to information gathering, electoral assistance and other matters regarding political and judicial institutions. This assistances favours acquiescence to international norms and accords.

On the other hand, if we look at the data produced by the Correlates of War Project it is clear that between 1948 and 1997 the OAS had an insignificant impact in cases when war broke out.

Armed Conflicts in Latin America (1948- 1997)

Parties Involved	Country	Period	Kind of Conflict	War	Deaths
Costa Rica/ National Union Party	Costa Rica	3/12/1948 – 4/17/1948	Intrastate	X	2000 (state)
Colombia/Conservatives	Colombia	4/9/1948 – 4/12/1949	Intrastate	X	1400 (state)
Colombia /Liberals of 1949	Colombia	9/15/1949 – 12/31/1962	Intrastate	X	300000 (state)
Bolivia/ Leftists	Bolivia	4/9/1952 – 4/11/1952	Intrastate	X	1500 (state)
Guatemala / Conservatives	*Guatemala*	*6/8/1954 – 6/30/1954*	*Intrastate*	*X*	*1000 (state)*
Argentina / Army	Argentina	6/15/1955 – 9/19/1955	Intrastate	X	3000 (state)

Cuba /Castroites	Cuba	6/15/1958 – 1/2/1959	Intrastate	X	5000 (state)
Dominican Republic/ Leftists	*Dominican Republic*	*4/25/1965 – 9/1/1965*	*Intrastate*	*X*	*2526 (state)*
Guatemala /Indians	Guatemala	10/?/1966 – 7/12/1972	Intrastate	X	138000 (total)
Guatemala / Leftists of 1970	Guatemala	11/15/1970 – 9/15/1971	Intrastate	X	1000 (state)
Chile / Pinochet Led Rebels	Chile	9/11/1973 – 9/15/1973	Intrastate	X	8000 (total)
Guatemala/ Leftists of 1978	Guatemala	3/12/1978 – 4/13/1984	Intrastate	X	73000 (state)
Nicaragua /Sandinistas	Nicaragua	10/1/1978 – 7/18/1979	Intrastate	X	35000 (state)
El Salvador / Salvadorean Democratic Front	El Salvador	7/1/1979 – 2/1/1992	Intrastate	X	69000 (total)
Argentina/ United Kingdom	Malvinas Islands/ Falkland Islands	03/25/1982 - 06/20/1982	Interstate (conflict between states)	X	29.158
Peru vs. Shining Path	Peru	3/4/1982 – 12/31/1995	Intrastate	X	30000 (state)
Nicaragua vs. Contras	*Nicaragua*	*3/18/1982 – 4/19/1990*	*Intrastate*	*X*	*43000 (state)*
Colombia / M-19 & Drug Lords	Colombia	3/15/1984 – Today	Intrastate	X	31000 (state)

Source: COW – Correlates of War. Available at http://www.correlatesofwar.org/
(The cases in which the OAS had some impact are in italics)

The most striking case for the present discussion is the war in Colombia. Colombia is the main security crisis in the region. The OAS has been mostly silent about this conflict, although the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA) could become relevant in future peace negotiations. The US and Colombia have chosen a bilateral approach regarding the conflict and its linkage with drug and arms trade.

The organisation has not developed a military capacity in spite of the experience in peace operations in Central America; and the decision-making process based on consensus building in a context in which there is wide division in the region on security matters does not permit further activism.

This article has aimed to show how the OAS matters in the sphere of security; but some words on the limits of its engagement should close this discussion.

The non-interventionist tradition, which dates back to the Calvo and Drago Doctrines mentioned earlier, is based on principles deeply rooted in Latin American political culture, is enshrined in several legal documents and embedded in a wider support for a legalist international order that would protect the region from great power interventionism. It has hindered the development of a more robust security system.

Most Latin American governments firmly adhere to the principle of non-intervention, fearing a wider control by the US of different aspects of domestic and international politics in the region. The OAS is often perceived as a tool of US interests (Shaw 2004). Legal instruments are regarded as a protection against the overwhelming power disparity in the region. On the other hand, the systematic affirmation by successive US governments that the US reserves the right to unilateral action also hinders the move towards stronger multilateral institutions. There is widespread fear that interventionism could also spread into other spheres such as human rights and the environment, in a context of the ongoing redefinition of threats to peace and security.

Nevertheless, the OAS has assumed new responsibilities particularly preventing domestic disputes from escalating into violence, and the principle of non-intervention has been challenged. Although the tension will remain between non-interventionism and greater activism on the part of the OAS, the front lines have definitely been redrawn.

It is quite obvious that in terms of the distribution of power in the region, the imbalance between the US and other member states of the OAS is the most striking feature. As a consequence, the capacity of the organisation to be effective and create resources that tackle the problems of the day is directly affected by relations between Latin American countries and the US.

In the 1990s, for instance, this resulted in the new activism of the OAS. During that period one could observe a high level of investment on the part of the US in multilateral institutions in the Americas. In that context the Bush and Clinton administrations supported a Free Trade Area of the Americas. But even then anti-narcotics operations revealed the limits of the North American engagement in hemispheric multilateral institutions. The current stress on bilateral relations and military presence undermines the institutions created in the previous period.

The OAS remains an organisation divided between at least two groups of countries inserted in very different ways within the international system. The US and Canada – which are part of NATO and are at the centre of the decision-making process in the most important international forums – and Latin America – which has become 'marginalised' in the post-Cold War era (Dominguez 1998b). The security priorities of the US in the region are cooperation in intelligence operations, antiterrorist activities and the treatment of 'new threats' in general (Hirst 2003). The priorities of Latin American states vary, but are usually associated with social and economic problems facing the countries of the region. In this context their perspectives on the OAS differ. The US has viewed the organisation as an instrument for gaining support and legitimacy for its policies, and creating mechanisms that complement the state apparatus, particularly when they are fragile. Fundamentally, it has concentrated efforts in areas where the regional organisation is seen as complementary to global policies on drugs, terrorism, domestic institutional building or non-proliferation. Latin American countries, on the other hand, have traditionally seen the OAS, as well as other treaties and institutions, as a way to 'forestall unilateral intervention by the United States in regional matters' (Inter-American Dialogue Study Group 1997) and foster cooperation that will lead to greater development and stability. These aims are not necessarily contradictory, but the difference in emphasis generates tension and often paralyses the OAS.

The manner in which the US and Colombia have framed their security policies in terms of the 'war on terrorism' is also an obstacle for consensus building in the region. The US has defined the tri-border frontier (Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay), the Tabatinga-Leticia

corridor (in Brazil and Colombia), the Agrio Lake (border between Colombia and Ecuador), the Darién region (Panama and Colombia) and Suriname as priorities. In most Latin American countries the war on terrorism has not become an organising concept for security policies (Jácome 2006: 6).

Furthermore, the most important actors in the region are reluctant to play a leadership role in the OAS today either because they see the organisation as a tool of US policies or because they are concentrating their efforts elsewhere. In particular, the lack of leadership by the US, in a context in which the relations with the US is the focus of the foreign policy of most countries, has profound effects over the destiny of the OAS. On the other hand, the competition for a hegemonic position between major actors – Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela – does not allow two important social processes to take place: a proper distribution of cost and the universalisation of a common agenda that has effective impact.

The financial situation of the organisation should also be mentioned. The relative scarcity of resources limits the scope and effectiveness of the projects underway. Total contributions for 2008 are expected to be only $93,483.1 (OAS 2007c).. Thus it depends on specific contributions from outside donors to fund many of its basic tasks, such as electoral observations, the protection of human rights, and efforts to combat terrorism, corruption and illegal drugs.

The OAS is an important forum for the diffusion of regional tensions, having generated a social space for negotiations and the production of legitimate norms. Although the Americas are more peaceful than other parts of the world, a war has been taking place in Colombia for the last 40 years, social tensions are high and many states are fragile, transnational crime is not only intense and widespread but penetrates most state apparatuses, tension on several borders can be observed due to migration and the presence of refugees and territorial contentions still exist. Thus although the OAS, as with other regional organisations, cannot tackle all the problems today treated as security issues, and in fact in my view should not, it remains an important institution for the management of security and cooperation.

It needs much improvement, but as in all intergovernmental organisations this will depend on decisions made by national governments, social pressure and the learning process that takes place within the organisation itself. The debate on critical conceptual issues has yet to reach a point where the consensus agenda permits effective impact on the most pressing security problems of the region.

Data on Member States

Country	Population	Surface area Sq. Km	GDP US$	Military expenditure(%GDP)
Antigua and Barbuda	83,612.2	440.0	961.9	Not available
Argentina	39,1 million	2.8 million	201.4 billion	1,0 (2005)
Bahamas	327.1 thousand	13,880.0	5.0 billion (2002)	0.7 (2005)
Barbados	270.0 thousand	430	3.1 billion (2005)	0.9 (2000)
Belize	297.2	22,970	1.2 billion	Not available
Bolivia	9,3 million	1.1 million	11.2 billion	1.9 (2005)
Brazil	188.7 million	8.5 million	1.1 trillion	1.4 (2005)
Canada	32.6 million	10.0million	1.3 trillion	1.1
Chile	16.5 million	756.6 thousand	145.8 billion	3.7
Colombia	45.6 million	1.1 million	135.8 billion	3.7 (2005)
Costa Rica	4.4 million	51,100.0 thousand	22.1 billion	Not applicable
Cuba	11.3 million	110.9 thousand	Not available	Not available
Dominica	72,395.6	750	299,8 million	Not available
Dominican Republic	9.6 million	48.730 thousand	30.6 billion	0.6 (2005)
Ecuador	13.4 million	283.6 thousand	40.8 billion	2.4 (2005)
El Salvador	7.0 million	21,040	18,3 billion	0.6 (2005)
Granada	108,1 thousand	340.0 thousand	519,3 million	Not available
Guatemala	12,9 million	108.9 thousand	35,3 billion	0.4 (2005)
Guyana	751.2 thousand	215.0 thousand	896.2 million	Not available
Haiti	8.6 million	27,750.0 thousand	5.0 billion	Not available
Honduras	7.4 million	112.1 thousand	9.2 billion	0.6 (2005)
Jamaica	2.7 million	10,990.0	10.5 billion	0.7 (2005)
Mexico	104.2 million	2.0 million	839.2 billion	0.4 (2005)

Nicaragua	5.2 million	130.0 thousand	5.4 billion	0.7 (2005)
Panama	3.3 million	75,520.0	17.1 billion	Not available
Paraguay	6.0 million	406.8	9.1 billion	0.8 (2005)
Peru	28.4 million	1.3 million	93.3 billion	1.2 (2005)
Saint.Kitts and Neves	48,393.5	360.0	486.7 million	Not available
Saint Lucia	166.0	620.0	906.0 million	Not available
Saint Vicent and Granadines	119.6 thousand	390.0	465.9 million	Not available
Suriname	451.6 thousand	163.3 thousand	1.6 billion	Not available
Trinidad Tobago	1.3 million	5,130.0	19.9 billion	Not available
United States	299.0 million	9.6 million	13.2 trillion	4.1 (2005)
Uruguay	3.3 million	176.2 thousand	19.3 billion	1.4 (2005)
Venezuela	27.0 million	912.1 thousand	181.9 billion	1.1 (2005)

Source: World Development Indicators Database April 2007 World Bank. Data for 2006, exceptions are indicated.

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