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Taxonomy of interstate conflicts: is South America a peaceful region?*

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This article revisits theoretical efforts to classify interstate conflicts. It analyses South America and discuss the adequacy of influential interpretations about the intensity of interstate conflicts in the region as compared to global or other regions ones. The literature takes for granted that South America is a peaceful region. Such interpretation results from the indicators adopted. We argue that traditional indicators do not fully capture latent tensions and the actual level of conflicts in the region. The article suggests an alternative taxonomy that better fits the South America context and argues that a research agenda on the extent and nature of interstate conflicts is needed.

Keywords: Defense; security; military; war; South America.

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Understanding and classifying conflicts is not new. The international scenario is dynamic, adapting to new situations, therefore, periodically it becomes necessary to make an exercise of (re) thinking the realities of interstate conflicts.

This article revisits the literature on the taxonomy of interstate conflicts, contrasting it with historical data focused on South America, and thus questions traditional classifications and the argument that the region is peaceful. This study is rooted in the reflection of the main scholars in the field and the contribution of international research institutes dedicated to the subject. Based on such sources, the study seeks a better understanding of the conflicts in South America, identifying their classification in comparison with the dynamics of international conflicts that occurred in the same period. At least, it deals with the widespread interpretation that South America is a peaceful region.

Initially, it presents a methodology that attempts, albeit in a limited way, to contribute to a still little explored aspect of the research on Defence. The context is similar to what is seen in the framework of the studies on armed conflict, with the contribution of international relations and political science.

Next, the reference literature is reviewed. Two interpretations of interstate conflicts in South America are examined. The first, which is known as 'Long Peace', supports the idea that the region is experiencing a period of prolonged peace, without major tensions and confrontations among the states. This aspect was investigated from two perspectives: the construction of the 'taxonomy of interstate conflicts' and the construction of the theoretical argument of the 'Long Peace in South America'. First, a detailed analysis of different databases dedicated to systematizing and assessing conflicts between states is conducted, which then serves as a support for informing and better understanding the conceptual argument brought to light.

The second interpretation is known as 'The violent peace and the latent conflicts in South America' in that it admits the existence of a level of intensity not properly grasped by theorists and indicators of the first dimension. Such perspective advances the existence of frozen conflicts among the South American states. It shows evidence that the 'South American long peace' does not necessarily rest on solid a foundation, since frozen conflicts seem to be hidden under classification variables that disregard important historical and geopolitical issues on the South American continent.

The present study is based both on theoretical landmarks and empirical elements. The literature review was built from bibliographical research on the following: Battaglini (2012, 2008), Centeno (2002), Child (1985), Kacowicz, (1998), Lopes (2013), Mares (2012, 2001), Martín (2006, 2002), Medeiros Filho (2011, 2010), Pieri (2011), Rudzit (2013), Saint-Pierre (2013, 2011) and Saint-Pierre and Palacios Jr. (2014).

The empirical framework was built by mapping databases associated with regional conflicts, namely: 01. Correlates of War (COW), described by Sarkees and Wayman (2010); 02. Military Interstate Dataset (MID), described by Palmer et al. (2015); 03. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), described by Pettersson and Wallensteen (2015); and, 04. Conflict with Barometer, from the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (WANCKE, 2015). The dataset was analyzed with the support of the 'content analysis' technique (BARDIN, 1977), which made it possible to extract the typologies, taxonomies, variables and indicators associated with the study of contemporary armed conflicts.

Finally, brief conclusions as well as additional investigation options which can be further explored in future studies are proposed. The perspective of using matrices exogenous to the region, either by the use of external theories or by the use of empirical data not contextualized to the regional reality, hinders a better understanding of the specific dynamics of the subcontinent.

Taxonomy of interstate conflicts

The inaugural mark of the analysis was the definition of the term 'war' by the researchers of the 'Correlates of War (COW)', for whom it is necessary to define "war in terms of violence [being] the taking of human life the primary and dominant characteristic of war" (SARKEES and WAYMAN, 2010, p. 40). Based on this principle, used since the first analyses carried out by COW in the 1970s, the traditional classification has undergone modifications up to the current model (Table 01), which is intended to encompass most of the conflicts recorded on the planet.

Table 01. Two typologies of war

Traditional Typology	Expanded Typology	
I. International wars	I. Interstate war	War type 01
a. Interstate wars	II. Extrastate wars	
b. Extra-systemic wars	a. Colonial - conflict with colony	War type 02
(1) Colonial	b. Imperial – state vs. non-state	War type 03
(2) Imperial	III. Intra-state wars	
II. Civil Wars	a. Civil wars	
	1. for central control	War type 04
	2. over local issues	War type 05
	b. Regional	War type 06
	c. Intercommunal	War type 07
	IV. Non-state wars	
	a. In non-state territory	War type 08
	b. Across state borders	War type 09

Source: Adapted from *Resort to War 1816 – 2007* (SARKEES and WAYMAN, 2010).

The typification in the COW database, as shown in Table 01, is composed of four typologies of wars (items i to iv), with nine types of wars (items 01 to 09) that allow for the classification of many conflicts, either between states and/or within states. This typification is centered on who the actors involved are and the spaces where conflicts develop. Considering that the object of research is the conflict between states, the research effort focused on the first type of war proposed by COW, the interstate wars. This choice was made in order to understand the dynamics of interstate conflicts in South America.

To better define the concept of war, Singer and Small (1972) proposed two primary criteria: first, a threshold of 1,000 battle-related deaths are necessary to be considered as a war; second, the wars must have participants on both sides, and have organizations able to conduct combat (armed forces). These considerations remain in today's studies of the series, particularly in respect to interstate warfare phenomena. That is, even if the world population has evolved, which changes the range of the indicator proportionally, it is understood that conflicts with an index of lethality of more than 1,000 deaths are different from those with fewer deaths. In specific terms, it should be noted that

[...] inter-state wars are those that involve armed forces of two or more members of the interstate system (states) in sustained combat. Each party must commit a minimum of 1,000 troops to the war (or suffer over 100 battle-deaths) to be considered a war participant. Hostilities must also

involve a minimum of 1,000 fatalities between or among the armed forces per year (or twelve-month period), beginning with the start date of the war (SARKEES and WAYMAN, 2010, p. 75).

As part of COW, the Military Interstate Dataset (MID) project was concerned with the study of interstate conflicts, expanding its range in relation to COW as it investigated the variables deaths and conflict duration using more detailed scales (Table 02). Furthermore, it conducted a classification of incidents that led to conflicts between states, from the use and the intensity of the use of force among the countries. Regarding this, the MID established the following classification: 01. non-militarized actions; 02. threat to use force; 03. display of force; 04. use of force; 05. war (GHOSN, PALMER and BREMER, 2004, p. 142).

Table 2. Conflicts by level of lethality, duration and object of dispute

Level of lethality	Duration	Object of dispute
1 -25	One week or less	Territory
26 – 100	8 - 31 days	Politics
101 – 250	32 - 61 days	
251 – 500	62 - 100 days	
More than 999	101 - 365 days	
	More than 365 days	

Source: Military Interstate Dataset (GHOSN, PALMER and BREMER, 2004, pp. 142–143)

It is important to observe the MID's considerations with reference to the handling of incidents and disputes among states, as this allows the perception of what was regarded as a conflict situation, namely: "A militarized incident is defined as a single military action involving an explicit threat, display, or use of force by one system member state towards another system member state [...] Militarized incidents provide the building blocks from which each MID is constructed" (GHOSN, PALMER and BREMER, 2004, p. 144-145).

It is therefore considered that each dispute consists of at least one, and often several, incident(s), and the MID database is a collection of such occurrences. The MID database considers an interstate conflict from a single action to a set of several incidents, which are analyzed from the variables that characterize the dispute.

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) provides another useful and consolidated database. For over a decade (GLEDITSCH et al., 2002), the program has

been dedicated to measuring the index of lethality of conflicts as a proxy to classifying conflicts. For the UCDP, an armed conflict is a result of divergence about government or land ownership leading to the use of force between the parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths per calendar year (PETTERSON and WALLENSTEEN, 2015, p. 05).

MID and UCDP adopt the same criterion, i.e., 'deaths per year'. However, UCDP proposes that the intensity of this variable be assessed in two categories: 'minor conflict', between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths per year; and 'war', with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year. UCDP also classifies conflicts into four types: 01. extra systemic, 02. interstate, 03. internal and 04. internationalized internal conflict. It is worth mentioning that, as the variable lethality starts at 25 deaths per conflict, UCDP has included a greater number of conflicts in South America.

Finally, the Conflict Barometer 2014 (CB) was analyzed. This index follows the indicator 'number of casualties' of previous indices (COW, MID and UCDP), using a model with four variables, having up to three different levels of intensity. Therefore, the CB uses the following taxonomy to measure and classify interstate conflicts (Table 03):

Table 03. HIIK variables for the classification of conflicts

Variables	Type	Indicator	Classification
Weapons	Light	Employment	Low
	Heavy		
Personnel	< 50	Numbers of personnel	Medium
	$51 < x < 400$		High
Casualties	> 401	Number of casualties	Low
	< 20		Medium
	$20 < x < 60$		High
Destruction	> 61	Destruction in 04 dimensions	Low
	0		Medium
Refugees & IDPs	between 01 and 02	Number of refugees	High
	between 03 and 04		Low
	< 1000		Medium
	$1001 < x < 20000$		High
	> 20001		

Source: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (WANCKE, 2015).

As observed, the Conflict Barometer considers different intensities for each variable, resulting in a classification of the conflict. In addition to the mortality variable, the CB sets forth other variables not observed in previous indexes, such as: the type of material employed; the amount of personnel involved; consequences of the conflict reflected in the destruction of basic infrastructure, cultural goods, homes and economy; and, finally, it considers the number of refugees and people displaced by the conflict. Therefore, to classify a conflict, CB refers to the sum of these variables, taking the intensity of each one of them into account (Figure 01).

Figure 01. Conflict classification according to HIIK

Intensity	Terminology	Level of violence	Intensity class
1	Dispute	Non-violent conflicts	Low intensity
2	Non-violent violent crisis		
3	Violent crisis	Violent conflicts	Medium intensity
4	Limited		High intensity
5	War		

Source: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (WANCKE, 2015).

After presenting the main international taxonomies on armed conflicts, all of which were considered in the study of conflict in South America, we proceed with the exposition and analysis of South American conflicts based on these classifications.

The long South American peace

An international consensus on the literature argues that South America is an area marked by a 'long peace' (BATTAGLINO, 2008, 2012; CENTENO, 2002; KACOWICZ, 1998; MARTÍN, 2006), in comparison with the magnitude of events that occurred in the twentieth century, such as the two world wars (1914-1918; 1939-

1945), or the intensity of the wars conducted against Iraq (1991; 2003). The specialized literature suggests that interstate conflicts in South America are irrelevant regarding both their duration and the equipment and technology used. The same conclusion is reached considering the death toll, with the exception of the Chaco War (1932-1935) (QUESADA and JOWETT, 2011) between Paraguay and Bolivia. Therefore, according to Centeno (2002, p. 37), it can be said that "the last two centuries have not seen the level of war that was common to other regions. No matter how it is approached, South America appears remarkably peaceful". For Kacowikz:

...the different explanations for the maintenance of the South American peace can be grouped into three clusters: (1) realist and geopolitical explanations (the pacifying roles of the United States and Brazil; a regional balance of power; external threats to the South American countries; and geographic isolation, irrelevance, and impotence to fight wars); (2) liberal explanations (the effects of democratization; the quest for prosperity and economic development; economic interdependence and integration; and, a common normative consensus about conflict management); and (3) satisfaction with the territorial status quo, derived from both domestic and international sources (KACOWICZ, 1998, p. 89).

One of the hypotheses for the long South American peace is that, for Latin American countries, wars were mostly over territorial problems of little importance. This type of dispute, post-1945, has the tendency to be solved diplomatically without producing armed conflicts (HUTH, 2009, 1996; HUTH and ALLEE, 2003; SIMMONS, 2005). The issue is clear if we compare the territorial borders after the independence process with the current borders, and it is noticeable that they suffered minor changes:

Nowhere is the general peace of the continent more clearly seen than on a map. Examine a map of Latin America in 1840 and the general borders and country configurations look surprisingly like today's. While early units such as Gran Colombia, the Central American Republic, and the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation have vanished, no politically recognized state has disappeared through conquest (CENTENO, 2002, p. 10).

An important remark is that, even if the states have not disappeared, their boundaries have changed significantly. Centeno (2002) does not take into account facts such as: Ecuador had borders with Brazil; Bolivia had an outlet to the Pacific

Ocean; Paraguay, like some South American states, increased its territorial extension in the 18th and 19th centuries, which means that other countries lost territories. According to Beth Simmons, "international borders and the explicit demarcation of the exclusive territorial sovereignty that they imply are akin to the fundamental article of the 'international constitution' of the modern state system" (SIMMONS, 2005, p. 827). Even so, if the changes brought by globalization have promoted regional and international cooperation beyond the borders, control and regulation over the territory belongs to the state that holds it formally (SIMMONS, 2008). According to Hensel (2012), territorial disputes are still the main causes of violent disputes among countries.

A second idea is based on the notion that the wars fought in South America are characterized as being of short duration and with reduced personnel and equipment. The concept of limited war can be summarized as follows: "...(a) involve short overall duration of conflict with isolated moments of ferocity; (b) are restricted to few and small geographical areas; (c) are between states with shared ideological or cultural profiles and originate in economic or frontier clashes [...] They do not require dramatic fiscal or personal sacrifices or a strong state to impose these" (CENTENO, 2002, p. 21).

This reality is justified by the inability of the states to generate the necessary resources and permit them to maintain a prolonged war:

In explaining the Latin American peace, we need to question the assumption that all states are capable of war [...] War requires basic organizational competence and access to resources that only certain states have. From this point of view, **Latin America has been peaceful because the states in the region never developed the political capacity to have prolonged wars.** No states, no wars (CENTENO, 2002, pp. 91-92) (bold by the authors).

The third argument is associated with the regional political-military dynamic. That is, it suggests that the 'long peace' is due to the close working relationship between the military elites of the region, elements that contributed to regional stability, from two perspectives: regional armed forces show a certain 'transnational identity' while engaged in, mostly, the intrastate dynamics, as below.

Accordingly, the military's increasing stake in the national political process makes the armed forces inward-looking and more concerned with internal

threats to their socioeconomic and political interests. In a region such as South America where this phenomenon became generalized over a seventy-year period, the military of the region developed a sense of transnational identity or regional confraternity that enhanced the prospect for interstate peace [...]. The findings of this analysis indicate, nonetheless, that a sense of transnational military identity - one not fueled by the specter of national political competition and internal threats to the interests of the military institution, but rather encouraged by respect for individual liberties, human rights, and the proper role of the military institution in a strictly democratically governed society - may prove valuable for preventing war and achieving peace in the international system (MARTÍN, 2006, pp. 181-182).

The above argument transcends the twentieth century, also being perceived in the present. Initiatives to build regional stability in the military may be seen historically with the signing of bilateral cooperation agreements and treaties, combined exercises, academic cooperation and, more recently, with the creation of the South American Defence Council (CDS) in 2008. This Council aims to develop a common Defence policy for the subcontinent. (MEDEIROS FILHO, 2011; FUCCILLE and REZENDE, 2013; LEITE, 2015).

It is important to highlight, as Martin argues, "that South America military institutions have enjoyed political autonomy and a good amount of control over national process of government and decision-making (translated by authors)" (MARTÍN, 2002, p. 508). That is due mainly to their organizational structure and institutional representation. In this way, they influence decisions whether to go to war or not when there is an option of military cooperation.

The fourth argument explaining regional stability refers to public spending on defence structure. Systematic monitoring of spending on defence reports that the region corresponds to less than 5% of world spending in this sector (IISS, 2015, p. 21), regularly spending less than 2% of gross regional domestic product (IISS, 2015, p. 365). Such numbers are accompanied by Battaglini (2008, p. 28): "South America is a region with a low level of interstate conflict. The region spends half the world average on defence: 1.3% against 2.6% of GDP". In a study on rearmament and individualized arms race for Chile-Bolivia, Chile-Peru and Venezuela-Colombia, the author argued that:

The countries that form the three dyads have built a kind of peace² in which the conflict has neither disappeared, nor is imminent. This kind of peace does not characterize the acquisition of armaments as a rearming or as the beginning of an arms race. [...] Chile, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia consider and rationalize their purchases of weaponry - and those of their neighbours - as a **detering modernization**. This refers to a situation in which countries are careful to maintain the same amount of military equipment when the weapons acquired meet the simultaneous purpose of modernizing or replacing existing materials and maintaining a general level of deterrence, and when the new equipment does not confer a decisive military advantage. (BATTAGLINO, 2008, pp. 25-33) (Translated and bold by the authors).

Despite the international perception that military purchases in South America are related to processes of modernization and re-equipment, restoring historical military performance levels, it is important to note that the subject has been the object of recent regional academic attention. Although following the general line of the argument, in the sense that regional military purchases aim at modernizing weaponry that are obsolete without actually incurring an arms race, it turns out there is already a debate about its absolute validity (ROCHA, 2009; SAINT-PIERRE and PALACIOS JR., 2014; VILLA, 2008; VILLA and VIGGIANO, 2012). Nevertheless, the topic, contextualized to South America, is not new (VARAS, 1985), as the investigation of military spending has always been subject to methodological complexity and limitation of access and transparency³.

It is important to note that the declaratory policy of the countries reinforces the thesis of 'dissuasive modernization'. The argument can be observed in several of the Defence White Papers and Defence Agendas published in South America, as well as in the text of the Defence Policies, Defence Strategies, etc. The reading suggests that, at least on the formal level, the restoration of operability is the declared priority of public arms purchases in South America⁴.

Another argument that justifies the long peace – the fifth argument of this review – is the prevalence of diplomacy in relation to the use of force, which seems

² More recently, the author suggested the existence of a 'hybrid peace', where peace and conflict mix, better explaining the 'South American Peace'. For a better understanding of the concept, see Battaglino (2012).

³ For an introduction to the topic, see Heye (2005). For a comprehensive overview, the effort of Silva Filho and Moraes is recommended (2009).

⁴ For a thorough investigation, refer to the documents of Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia and Chile, which cover the period 2003-2012. A summary of the regional reality can be found in Aguilar (2008).

to be a regional feature. Therefore, it can be said that "South America has a rich, historical and cultural heritage in common, related to mediation and conflict resolution, and the peaceful settlement of disputes is a trait rooted in the history of the region" (BATTAGLINO, 2008, p. 25).

Finally, and of empirical nature, it has to be said that the COW counts 227 wars worldwide between 1816 and 2007, of which only eight were fought in South America (Table 04). That is, with or without the support of the previous arguments, the reality of the facts, at least based on the way they are perceived, suggests the existence of a 'South American long peace'. Besides, of all the South American conflicts classified as wars within the COW, only three occurred in the 20th century. Most of them occurred more remotely, in the 19th century.

Table 04. Wars in South America 1816–2007

Number	War	Year
01	Platine War	1851–1852
02	Ecuadorian-Colombian War	1863
03	Paraguayan War*	1864–1870
04	Chincha Islands War**	1865–1866
05	War of the Pacific	1879–1883
06	Chaco War	1932–1935
07	Falklands War	1982
08	Cenepa War	1995

Source: COW (SARKEES and WAYMAN, 2010).

Notes: *or War of the Triple Alliance; ** War of Peru, Bolivia and Chile against Spain.

However, throughout the 20th and the 21st centuries, diplomatic ties, tensions and skirmishes among South American countries allow some authors to question the construction of the continent as a peaceful place. The prospect of the existence of 'latent conflicts' in the region arises, as seen below.

The violent peace and the latent conflicts in South America

In a line of argument opposing that of the South American 'long peace', Robert Burr (1974), when talking about the foreign policy of Chile between 1830 and 1905, says that the political goals would be achieved by 'Razón o la Fuerza'. Similarly, David Mares (2001) talks about the 'Violent Peace' and the latent conflicts in South America. Mares (2001) says that that "The claim that 'Latin (or South) America is the most peaceful region in the world' is empirically incorrect",

considering that "War is statistically insignificant as an occurrence everywhere because, by the standard definition, it is so rare, considering the universe of interactions among states" (MARES, 2016, p. 255). He also mentions that South America was the setting of two wars involving three countries in the region (Ecuador-Peru, Argentina-United Kingdom).

In addition to considering the phenomenon in its internal, external and more and more transnational aspects, it is necessary to consider the temporal permanence of conflict, or the state of conflict. It is a perspective proposed in association with the classic understanding that "war is not just the battle or the act of fighting, but the period of time when there is the desire for war; thus, the notion of time should be considered as part of the nature of war [...] the nature of war is not in the actual fight, but in the willingness for it during the whole time in which there is no certainty of the contrary" (HOBBS, 2011, p. 46).

A temporal analysis of the dynamics of conflicts in South America brings the perception that there are different realities to be explored. The perception of conflicts in South America is not homogeneous, as each study develops its own methodology, with results deriving from the approach adopted. Comparing the empirical foundations consulted, it is possible to obtain evidence associated with 29 points of tension among South American countries (Table 05). This, in itself, is a much more comprehensive perspective than, for example, the perspective synthesized by COW, which acknowledges only 08 interstate conflicts in the region (Table 04).

Analysis of the content of the databases consulted permits us to theorize, converging with the literature cited in the theoretical references, that the conflicts in South America are 01. predominantly of short duration, which is a 02. possible consequence of the associated economic reflexes, and onus, including 03. frequent recourse to the mobilization of means. Such a context ends up configuring 04. a predisposition to a diplomatic solution through international organizations. However, despite the scenario describe above, it is apparent that the use and/or demonstration of force is recurrent, not having been discarded in the region.

Table 5. Classification of conflicts in South America (according to several authors)

	States-Parties	Reasons for the dispute	Period (start-end)	Named as	COW	Centeno	Child/Rudzit	Mares/MID	HIK/Lopes	De Pieri
1	Argentina-United Kingdom	Malvinas Islands Territory	1982	Falklands/Malvinas Islands War	War	War	Potential Conflict	Frozen	Non violent crisis	Formal declaration of War
2	Ecuador-Peru	Borders	1995	Cenepa War	War	Conflict	Potential Conflict	Frozen		Informal attacks and battles, with direct threats of war
3	Bolivia, Peru-Chile	Access to the Pacific Ocean	1879 - 1884	War of the Pacific	War	War			Dispute	Formal declaration of War
4	Colombia-Venezuela	Disagreement between Governments	2009 - 2010				Potential Conflict	2005, 2008, 2009, 2010 Dispute NH 3 Frozen	Dispute	Explanations from Diplomatic consultations
5	Bolivia-Paraguay	Borders	1932-1935	Chaco War	War	War	Potential Conflict			Formal declaration of War
6	Colombia-Nicaragua	San Andrés Islands and other Territory	1825				Potential Conflict	2007, 2008, Dispute NH 3 2010 Dispute NH 2 - Frozen	Non violent crisis	
7	Venezuela-Guiana	Esequibo region	1962				Potential Conflict	2007 Dispute Frozen		Dispute under international arbitration
8	Chile-Peru	Borders	1879-1884	War of the Pacific			Potential Conflict	Frozen	Dispute	
9	Argentina-Brasil	Borders Corpus Itaipu Crisis	1825-1991 1973-1979	1825-1828 War; 1851-1852	War		Potential Conflict			Explanations from Diplomatic consultations
10	Guyana-Suriname	Rio Novo Triangle-Borders	2000 - 2007				Potential Conflict			Explanations from Diplomatic consultations

Table 5 (Continuation I).

	States-Parties	Reasons for the dispute	Period (start-end)	Named as	COW	Centeno	Child/Rudzit	Mares/MID	HIK/Lopes	De Pieri
11	Ecuador-Peru	Borders	1941	Wars of 41		Conflict				Formal declaration of War
12	Ecuador-Peru	Borders	1981	Conflict of the Condor		Conflict				Informal attacks and battles, with direct threats of war
13	Ecuador-Colombia	Angostura	2008-2010					2006 Dispute NH 3		Informal attacks and battles, with direct threats of war
14	Bolivia-Chile	Access to the Pacific Ocean	1978-2006	Bolivia Chile Crisis				2008 Dispute NH 4		Informal attacks and battles, with direct threats of war
15	Paraguay-Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay	Territory	1864 - 1870	War of the Triple Alliance	War	War		2011 Dispute NH 2 - Frozen		Break in diplomatic relations
16	Peru, Chile - Spain		1865-1866	Naval War	War	War				
17	Colombia-Ecuador		1863		War	War				
18	Colombia - Peru	Leticia's Trapeze	1932	War of Leticia's Trapeze						Formal declaration of War
19	Bolivia - Brazil		1899, 1902-1903	War of Acre						Formal declaration of War
20	Chile-Peru	Maritime borders	1986	Peru Chile Crisis						Dispute under international arbitration
21	Venezuela - United States	Ideology	2001						Non violent crisis	

Table 5 (Continuation II).

	States-Parties	Reasons for the dispute	Period (start-end)	Named as	COW	Centeno	Child/Rudzit	Mares/MID	HIK/Lopes	De Pieri
22	Brazil Uruguay	Arroio Invernada/ Ilhas Rio Quarai Islands-Borders	1988					Frozen		
23	Colombia – Costa Rica	Borders						Frozen		
24	Venezuela – Dominica	Aves Islands- Territory						Frozen		
25	Venezuela – Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Extension of the continental shelf						Frozen		
26	Argentina- Chile	Borders	1843-1984				Potential Conflict			
27	Argentina - Chile	Maritime borders and territorial islands	1978	Beagle Crisis						Troop mobilization
28	Colombia- Venezuela	Monges Islands	1871						Dispute	
29	Colombia- Venezuela	Gulf of Guajira- Borders	1987	Corbeta Caldas Crisis						Troop mobilization

Note: * LH: Level of Hostility.

In terms of geographical distribution, the conflicts involve all twelve South American countries. In terms of intensity, the levels of conflict vary from war, the highest point of the range, to 'non-violent crisis' and 'dispute', the lowest point on the scale. In some cases, when the skirmishes reach pre-conflict levels, the use of diplomacy prevails, such as in the disputes between Argentina and Uruguay, between 2005 and 2007, about industrial use and pollution of waters of the Uruguay River (the case of the 'Papeleras').

However, Rudzit (2013, p. 117) suggests that "one of the signs of the absence of peace is not only the use of force, but the threat of its use is also an indication of the tense regional relations and this mechanism, historically, is very common in the region". For Mares (2012), the use of the Armed Forces in South America is still part of the negotiation strategy between the states, 'in verbis': "Military action, including war, is not produced out of thin air; there is an interactive process in which, at a given moment, an actor decides that a certain level of military force would be advantageous in its relations with a rival"(MARES, 2012, p. 10).

Analysis of the regional conflicts (Table 05), based on the Defence budgets declared by the countries (IISS, 2015), is also evidence of correlation among the dynamics. The South American countries more prone to increased investment in weaponry are Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Brazil and Colombia. That is, countries with greater territorial dimension, greater border activity and, with the exception of Brazil, latent issues associated with the blurring or dissatisfaction with territorial limits.

Nowadays, the countries of South America have many more characteristics of the European reality of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, i.e. governments with strong control over their societies and restrictive attitudes related to the opening to the outside. They have policies aimed to increase self-reliance as a tool to maintain their independence through mercantilist economic development policies, with the view that their borders are sacrosanct, in order to preserve their sovereignty (RUDZIT, 2013). This may be one of the causes of the recurrence of most regional conflicts, which are a consequence of border divergences, such as the conflicts between Peru and Ecuador since 1829, with a last confrontation in the Cenepa Valley in 1995. That is, they characterize more than 150 years of latency, with occasional upsurges.

A similar perspective is presented by Medeiros Filho (2011, p. 184), for whom the national primacy is still the main model of the defence mentality in the region. That is, historically, the existence of peace treaties and perspectives related to the peaceful settlement of disputes is still not the major political option, considering the prevalence of the concept of sovereignty and state absolutism which make frequent the use of coercive means of settling disputes.

The need for better 'security crisis' management in the region has prompted recent political initiatives. One such initiative was the creation, in 2008, of the South American Defence Council (CDS) which encompasses all South American countries. The CDS "would work as a high-level regional forum that would enable South American rulers to resolve their security crisis situations autonomously" (SAINT-PIERRE and PALACIOS Jr., 2014). It is assumed that the promotion of integration and dialogue, not only among governments but also among the armed forces, can be a way to solve conflicts between member countries. Either way, strictly in the interest of the present study, it is believed that the latent and/or present conflicts in South America are sufficient to suggest technical and political coordination for regional crisis management.

David Mares (2012) suggests that the rising violence in recent years is a possible source of threat to relations among the States. The author highlights the relevance of organized crime, drug trafficking and smuggling, especially of arms, to the increase in regional violence. The transnational aspect of such crimes can serve both as a direct threat to regional stability and as a pretext for conflicts in settings where the presence of ideological and/or boundaries disputes pre-exist between countries.

Conclusions and suggestions for future research

The Long South American Peace, under various perspectives, does not mean the absence of conflict, but represents how it is perceived by the international community. It turns out that the prevalence of short and moderate conflicts is not well captured by the literature and international research institutes. Hence, methodological issues need to be better investigated and formalized, possibly with the development of regional indicators able to better express the reality of the conflicts in South America, both in terms of intensity and duration. Under both criteria, there is a scenario of 'latent conflicts' whose monitoring

may favor early solutions of warning and management, reducing the systemic risk in the region.

The South American countries are states with common roots that have experienced the same influences through time, suffered similar problems (political, social and economic), which may have influenced them to adopt a different view on how to perceive and respond to conflict. Thus, as they do not have the resources needed for a total war, this entailed the development of FFAA according to their needs. That is, they have dissuasive capacity that allows them to face, at any given moment, a limited conflict and in a relatively short time, to later resolve it through diplomatic channels offered by international organizations in a better position at the negotiating table. Two considerations emerge, based on this conclusion: first, the reality of the conflicts in South America is unique and distinct from the average, and from the extremes associated with the intensity of international conflicts; second, a temporal persistence is associated with the low intensity of South American conflicts, in the context where the cyclic dichotomy between latency and conflict is present.

Although several conflicts have been solved through dialogue and international mediation, the strategy of militarization of disputes is recurring throughout the region, and it is possible that this is part of the national strategies of inclusion and negotiation in South America. In this sense, the threat of the use of force has been an historic indicator about the dynamics and trends of interstate relations in South America.

Territorial border problems are at the heart of the South American conflicts. However, it is necessary to take into account, and investigate in greater depth, the so-called new threats such as organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, etc. These threats have a strong transnational bias, which can lead to interstate disputes in border regions. It never hurts to remember that border limits are linked to the models of national states and, consequently, to the constitutional role of the armed forces of territorial defence. Therefore, it is necessary to better investigate how the states, as sovereign actors, behave before their neighbors to understand what level of importance they give to ownership, inviolability and sovereignty of their border spaces.

The study of the dynamics of interstate conflicts in South America can provide a new research agenda under the defence studies, to the extent that the classification,

measurement and monitoring criteria are still strongly associated with the literature and exogenous realities, not reflecting the regional reality with adequate precision. There is potential for methodological advances, such as the insertion of monitoring variables, measurement scale dimensions, georeferencing of occurrences, etc.

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