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A Retrospective Look at the Nature of National Borders in Latin America

Edgardo Manero

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BORDER STUDIES



Edited by

DORIS WASTL-WALTER

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A Retrospective Look at the Nature of National Borders in Latin America

Edgardo Manero

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to a better understanding of borders in Latin America, and how they are related to conflict over sovereignty. The chapter will present an account of the paradoxical process the borders in Latin America have undergone after being, during modernity, more or less subjective mode of delimitation of the political power that made possible the monopoly of legitimate violence and the constitution of semi closed spaces of social conflicts. These borders are now strongly called into question at the same time as they have become a strategic priority.

In the post-Cold War era we find ourselves facing a new vision of the territory-security relationship, a vision that radically changes the traditional strategic representations built on the basis of territorial neighbourhood, all of which affects the more general definition of a border as the boundary we wish to defend. Still, Latin American border areas, which have not been well-defined or integrated since colonial times, continue to be peculiar territories where conflicts proliferate. This is the case despite the relative stability that has been established due to the change in classic war hypotheses of armed conflict based on geopolitical thinking and historic animosities.

Sensitive as always, the issue of the control of borders and territories of necessity continues to reappear on the scene of a deep territorial, social and political reorganization. Such repeated re-emergence of sovereignty conflicts cannot be explained merely by the residual weight that the territory has in the collective imagination, by the fact that the states have not yet completely resolved the issue of colonial heritage, or by the interest in re-igniting the conflict for purposes of internal politics. In post-Cold War times, these conflicts must be analysed in relationship to the importance that the issue of control of flows and stocks, both legal (raw materials) or illegal (for example drugs, smuggling, immigrants) has acquired.

The end of the Cold War was accompanied not only by the prevalence of territorial disputes, but also by a recovery of the strategic importance of the strict, linear border defined by the Roman *limes* concept, a definition which has persisted despite numerous changes. These changes include global issues such as globalization's permeability with its increased mobility of capital, merchandise, and persons the paradigms based on the replacement of the nation-state concept; and the institution of new forms of membership. The strict, linear definition has also persisted despite questions of amore regional nature, such as the resolution of disputes over territories linked to the establishment of post-colonial states; making progress on the regional integration process, which has led to the establishment of supranational spaces; and the consolidation of democracy and the weakening of the military.

This chapter should enable us to analyse the trends observed in the current developments concerning borders. It also offers a prospective view of the possible outcomes of sovereignty conflicts in Latin America in relation to world-level changes. Two chronological stages will be reviewed using a comparative rather than a developmental approach, from the consolidation of the nation-state throughout the end of the Cold War and the post-Cold War.

Territorial Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood geography has strongly influenced decision-making in Latin America since the establishment of the post-colonial state. The geopolitical and strategic representations of Latin American nations are essentially terrestrial as a result of the adaptation of the European paradigm of strategic interaction to the neighbouring communities. However, Latin America has developed a heterodox conception of neighbourhood. The logic of territorial neighbourhood has been modified by the effect of the ideological dimension of the threat – the enemy within – and by the presence of extraterritorial powers, basically the United States of America, affecting the relationship among the region's states. Territorial conflicts were the most frequent and visible way to challenge a state's sovereignty in Latin America. Rivalry concerning power over the different territories developed independently from political ideologies, and reappeared in a diversity of situations. This illustrates a trend that goes beyond Latin America. In general, the ideological variable is not central to territorial conflicts. Sovereignty conflicts may emerge among ideological and military allies or among commercial partners, such as the controversy between the United States of America (USA) and Canada; they can be handled in a peaceful manner among ideological rivals, as shown by the negotiation of a maritime border agreement between the USA and Cuba. Moreover, politicians of opposing ideologies may instrumentalize conflicts in the domestic arena; for example, Venezuelan Presidents Luis Herrera-Campins and Hugo Chávez have both used the dispute between Venezuela and Guyana concerning the Esquibo region.

Thus, border problems, that is, problems generally inherited from the establishment of the post-colonial state, have traditionally been revived by economic questions. Conflicts between Nicaragua and Honduras are an example. In the 1980s, the flow of Nicaraguan refugees into Honduras and the presence of anti-Sandinist groups operating from there created great tension between the two Central American nations. Since the end of the 1990s, the border problem between Honduras and Nicaragua has been linked to two priority issues of the 'new international order': natural resources and economic migrations.

The post-Cold War era illustrates this special feature of territorial conflict. In Central America, border conflicts are mixed with ideology. Tension between Managua and Bogota coincides with tension between Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and his Colombian counterpart Alvaro Uribe, concerning mediation in the conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC) guerrilla. Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua, is Chávez's main political ally in Central America and close to the FARC.¹ On the other side of the spectrum, the conflict between Argentina and Uruguay about the installation of cellulose manufacturing plants on the banks of the Uruguay River illustrates the manner in which the geopolitical variable and the 'national interest' are elements affecting the relationship between political actors who view themselves as progressive and who share a political space with common characteristics as well as a community of political representations.²

The establishment of territorial boundaries is a key issue in the formation of the nation-state. In Latin America, the modern linear-type border marked by a line of posts or border markers was late to appear and it is particularly linked to the constitution of the nation-state. The North American notion of frontier, developed by Turner for the Far West, does not apply in a homogeneous and general way to Latin American history. Places used as borders are areas where people meet, where there may be confrontations but where also exchange and mingling take place. Relations of complementarity between the populations of the two sides are more important, at least at the local level, than differences, rivalry and conflicts among the countries. In Latin America, the border has been porous and friendly, but also hostile. It has encouraged exchanges, and at the same time it has helped obstruct them.

In peripheral countries, the representation of the border area is much more restricted and local. Frequently, the border representation refers only to the physical border area. As a consequence of the lack of integration of national areas,

1 Relations between Colombia and the Sandinista governments have always been problematic. During the 1980s Nicaragua claimed sovereignty over the San Andres and Providencia archipelago, and denounced the Esguerra-Bárceñas treaty (1928). The archipelago has been under Colombian control since the treaty's final ratification in 1930. Nicaragua considered the treaty invalid and argued that it was signed during the American occupation of Nicaragua.

2 Another example is the relationship between the PT administration in Brazil and president Morales of Bolivia.

it is often difficult for the border area to enclose the total area of the national state, and it even happens, in the case of certain populations, that it does not go beyond the local space, the region or even the village. However, an Ecuadorian Indian or a Bolivian peasant who can hardly conceive a national border area becomes aware of it when they enter into contact with the action of transnational firms or with foreign powers that affect their interests.³

By contrast in hegemonic countries⁴ – especially those with a ‘colonial tradition’ – the border area does not end where the national space of the metropolis ends. The nation’s border is not limited by the national physical border. The border can be extended to any point that a transnational company, a soldier, a foundation or an NGO can reach, which is to say that it is set wherever there may be interests, with which the nation in question identifies itself. This does not necessarily imply expansion of the physical border. The case of the United States of America is paradigmatic. Its idea of limits, in contrast to the idea shared by other new nation states such as the Latin American states, was not about finiteness. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, the ‘conquest of the frontier’ was followed, through expansion towards the outside, by the annexation of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Such expansion, which had its roots in the ‘Manifest Destiny’ ideology, sought support in the myths of the frontier of the pioneers and settlers. The border was also set as far away as the national interest would permit. For the United States in the post-Cold War era, the border was inseparable from the ‘enlargement’ of liberal democracy and the market economy.

A Latin American paradox: While border conflicts are relatively frequent and the military hypotheses of conflict are built upon the idea of a menacing neighbouring community, a central element of regional strategic cultures is that war among states is rare,⁵ and co-operation among the states as well as the sense of belonging to one single cultural entity are a constant. Conflicts due to the setting of territorial boundaries do not hinder good relations among the states.

In general, Latin Americans do not feel threatened by their neighbours. It is difficult, in Latin America, other than for territorial affairs and the quest for regional hegemony, to channel hostility vis-à-vis the neighbouring state because of cultural similarities among most countries. On the other hand, the presence of extraterritorial powers – which are culturally different – in territories over which the countries of the region claim rights has not unleashed any wars. With the

3 Pollution of the land by oil companies in Ecuador or demands for eradication of coca crops in Bolivia by the United States of America are two examples.

4 This is the case of a member country of the ‘Group of Eight’ but also of several other countries emerging and re-emerging as ‘powers’, such as China and India.

5 According to Domínguez, J.I. (2003b), the structure of the international system in the American continent and its relations with the somewhat distant global system and the inter-American procedures and institutions explain the rareness and short duration of wars.

exception of Argentina and Britain in 1982, no country has militarily placed the status quo in doubt.

The states in Latin America have many militarized disputes on their records; nevertheless, they have good relations among themselves and cooperate closely with each other. Although the use of force to determine certain aspects of bilateral relations is a constant, transforming words into action is less so.⁶

Although during the second half of the twentieth century the main armed conflicts among states were linked with territory – whether by force of war (El Salvador-Honduras 1969, Argentina-Great Britain 1982, Peru-Ecuador 1995) or by force of a military confrontation (Colombia-Venezuela 1987, Nicaragua-Honduras 2000), or by the possibility of war (Argentina-Chile 1978), the level of violence reached in territorial neighbourhood-related conflicts cannot be compared in importance to that of other regions.

The history of borders in Latin America and the Caribbean has been relatively peaceful, except at rather localized geographical points, and most of the disputes have finally been solved by negotiation or arbitration. A large number of conflicts have been dormant for a long time. These conflicts result from de-colonization itself. Latin American countries have made efforts to define their territorial sovereignty according to the *Uti possidetis juris* doctrine, a principle establishing that a state liberated from colonization inherits the colonial administrative boundaries that it had when it acquired its independence. The independent republics would be the inheritors of the territories that were under colonial administration. The application of this doctrine consisted in keeping the old administrative borders and creating international borders. It should be noted that there is a long-standing discussion as to whether this principle is applicable to regions where there was no effective occupation during colonial times, such as Patagonia. Territorial conflicts – and irredentism – reappeared with the independence of Guyana (1966) and Belize (1981) as the consequence of a new de-colonization process.

The presence of extra-regional powers such as Great Britain or the USA is a major fact in the territorial picture in Latin America. The latter have participated in separatism, as in the cases of Uruguay in 1828 or Panama in 1903; they have occupied and continue to occupy territories claimed by Latin American states, such as Guantánamo or the Malvinas Islands; and have used dissuasion as a consequence of military asymmetry vis-à-vis the demands of a Latin American state, as in the case of Belize. Closely related to the preceding issue, territorial disputes among the Latin American nation-states can be covers for a 'conflict by delegation' among multinational companies – oil companies, in the Paraguay-Bolivia case⁷ and banana companies between Guatemala and Honduras.⁸

6 For Domínguez, J.I. (2003b, 16), this is a Latin American dilemma.

7 In the Chaco War (1932 to 1935), the two countries wanted to gain control over the Chaco Boreal section where oil was believed to be, which turned out to be false. Bolivia was supported by U.S. oil companies, and Paraguay by British oil companies.

8 In 1928, these two countries entered into a confrontation with military mobilization in support of the opposing demands of the United Fruit Company and the Cuyamel

The United States has participated in various ways in sovereignty conflicts⁹. At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States became involved in the conflict between Venezuela and Great Britain and repeated its involvement in the 1930s during the conflict between Guatemala and Honduras, in the 1980s between Argentina and Great Britain, and in the 1990s, between Peru and Ecuador.

However, U.S. hegemony is not adequate to explain the perspectives of interstate war and peace in Latin America. Within a North American hegemony scenario, the second half of the twentieth century has seen territory-related, open armed conflicts erupt among close allies of the hegemonic power: Honduras-El Salvador (1969), Argentina-Chile (1978), Guatemala-Belize (1981), Argentina-United Kingdom (1982), and Peru-Ecuador (1995).

Neither hemispherization of the armed forces nor U.S. influence through the National Security Doctrine have been able to eradicate neighbourhood rivalries; neither readiness to set up military alliances among the region's authoritarian regimes to fight against international communism, nor strategic and political representations close to the international system have impeded traditional rivalry (see Manero 2007b).

Every strategic analysis of the second half of the twentieth century must consider the regionalization of security dynamics in the Southern Cone, in progress since World War II under the influence of the United States, as the persistence of a regional power-balance system resulting from regional rivalries and organized around the logics of a menacing territorial neighbouring community.

The Inside-Outside Dimension in Border Conflicts

Two basic types of reason account for the permanence of border problems in Latin America. Primarily, there are space reasons: Reference is made to the geography of the continent, with its jungles and mountains, making border demarcation difficult; to a weak, inaccurate cartography; and to the existence of enormous empty expanses. These reasons then become political: the weak presence of the state in the territory; the fact that the national states of the American sub-continent were formed by the disintegration rather than by integration of the internal market; the lack of continuity in the territorial delimitation processes associated with political instability; the importance of the armed forces in decision-making; and the fact that territorial conflicts may be used to serve domestic political objectives.

Border conflicts appear as a form of socialization and intensification of group cohesion, an element that reinforces collective cohesion. From the time this mechanism for cohesion was used routinely as a resource by the Somozas in Nicaragua in the conflict with Costa Rica to the Malvinas war, it has been a constant.

Fruit Company.

9 According to Mares, D. (2001), the United States has played a limited role as an intermediary.

Behind the concept of a neighbouring community menacing a state's territory, we can see a system of representation of the antagonisms in which the border dispute is most useful for channelling the conflict out of the nation-state framework. The creation of an external neighbourhood attempts to eradicate the existence of an internal neighbourhood. The principle according to which external 'threat' is the basis of internal political 'friendship' causes external conflict to become the axis of a greater social cohesion. Traditionally, this principle has been used to justify the imposition of limitations on dissidents.¹⁰

The use of the 'displacement' mechanism in Latin America is clearly an operation within a cost-benefit relationship. This mechanism works very well in a region where the probability of arriving at an open conflict is rather low, given the characteristics of the Inter-American System.¹¹ This low probability lies upon one characteristic of the region: the mediating role of both the states and the regional institutions for maintaining the peace in any such occurrence.¹² The intervention tradition has made possible the progressive institutionalization of an inter-American conflict-resolution system. One example is the role played by the Rio Group and, to a lesser extent, by the Organization of American States in the Colombia-Ecuador dispute in March 2008.

The available arsenal of inter-American procedures and institutions explains not only the absence or the short duration of inter-state wars, but also plays a role in the instrumental utilization of the territorial neighbourhood and certain defiant behaviours in the pursuit of domestic political objectives.

The 'displacement paradigm' is always tempting as an analysis and explanation of the phenomenon of nationalism. To a certain extent, it is even appropriate for interpreting a great number of border conflicts. However, this analytical perspective cannot be mechanically applied to the populist movements, which are the most important manifestation of Latin American nationalism. For them, the threat does not come from a neighbouring state but from 'Imperialism'. From Perón to Chávez, integration thus appears as an element of *Realpolitik*. For this type of nationalism, the defence of national interests necessarily falls into the framework of regional integration.

10 While extreme conflict may be an important integration factor, it is not the only one. Shared beliefs and values and the expectation of mutual benefits from living together as a community are also important integration factors. Agreement on values reinforces a community.

11 According to Domínguez (2003b, 30), states can behave carelessly in order to serve national political objectives, under the assurance that the international institutions will intervene to settle the dispute.

12 Thus, during the 1930s, the Chaco war between Paraguay and Bolivia generated a general concern. Argentina played a leading role in this conflict and foreign affairs minister Saavedra-Lamas was in fact awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his intervention towards a solution of it. Another example is the decisive role played by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States of America in the various conflicts between Ecuador and Peru (1940, 1980 and 1990).

Nevertheless, the logic of displacement quickly shows its limitations. The attitude of the Guatemalan military vis-à-vis the decision of President Jorge Serrano to change a secular, century-old political position by recognizing the existence of Belize in 1991 illustrates this. The army, which supported the president, was satisfied with such a decision, which allowed the military to acquire greater control on internal security tasks, while reducing the risk of war against the British guarantors of Belize's sovereignty (Mares 2003, 81).

Conflicts Associated with the Management Limitations of State Power

International political and economic processes and the current hemispheric dynamics are eroding the pre-existing *status quo* in Latin America, despite the persistence of 'archaic' border-type conflicts. This does not imply denial of the inertia that preserves regional rivalry or the importance of territory that may remain in the collective imagination, as can be observed in the relationship among Chile, Bolivia and Peru.¹³

However, beyond the change experienced with respect to the menacing neighbouring community, Latin America continues to be a setting for local and regional crises; one example is the escalation, in March 2008, of the conflict among Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia as a consequence of the Colombian military entering into Ecuadorean territory to destroy a provisional camp of the FARC and killing one of their leaders, Raul Reyes.

Crises and factors of political instability are among the sources of conflict, the type of open conflict whose final settlement is a prerequisite for achieving cooperation. While the disagreements between Alvaro Uribe and Hugo Chavez did not stop bilateral trade, they paralysed the resolution of the border dispute, the energy integration project, and the consolidation of the Andean Community of Nations.

In the 1990s, the array of inter-American procedures and institutions as well as the hegemonic political and strategic representations attempted to defuse border conflicts. A shared vision concerning integration into the international system, the role of markets and the value of liberal democracy accompanied the decision to deactivate conflicts so as to give priority to common economic interests. This was based on a 'utilitarian' logic that the costs of disagreements are greater than the price to be paid for solving the conflicts. Solving a conflict would thus become part of a macro strategy.

Thus, while the Argentine-Chilean case is a good example, the Peruvian-Chilean case shows the unpredictable nature of the initiative. Although in 1999 Chile and

13 This case concerns a legacy of the War of the Pacific (1879-83), during which Peru lost the province of Tarapacá and Bolivia the province of Antofagasta.

Peru made progress on the imposition of the 1883 and 1929 treaties, which marked the end of the 'War of the Pacific,' the conflict re-emerged in 2007 with respect to maritime borders. Nevertheless, the Peruvian demands did not affect bilateral relations.

A final solution to the main border problems generated by the colonial heritage in South America was found at the end of the twentieth century (Argentina and Chile, Ecuador and Peru). Only four classic, non-maritime conflicts are still being dealt with. Three among them are related to de-colonization as a consequence of British colonial advances after the independence of Latin America. They are sources of conflict between Venezuela and Guyana, Guatemala and Belize, and Argentina and the United Kingdom. The first two conflicts reappeared at the end of the 1990s, the third in 2007. The fourth one is a question of irredentism mixed with new problems: renewed efforts by Bolivia seeking an outlet to the Pacific Ocean.

However, at the same time Latin America has witnessed the emergence of 'new' disputes and the reactivation of the old ones, which to a large extent are related to new disputes: Guyana-Surinam, Nicaragua-Colombia, Honduras-Cuba, Nicaragua-El Salvador, Nicaragua-Honduras, Nicaragua-Costa Rica, Argentina-Uruguay, Peru-Chile, Colombia-Ecuador, Colombia-Venezuela, Honduras-Guatemala, Venezuela-Trinidad and Tobago, Honduras-El Salvador, and Panama-Colombia. With the exception of some islands of the Caribbean (Bahamas, Dominica, Jamaica, San Cristobal, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia), all other member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS) are involved in at least one international border conflict. In addition, if disagreements over the rules that regulate actions in territorial waters and national air space are included in the disputes over sovereignty, the United States has conflicts with almost the entire American continent. However, the asymmetry of power makes it difficult for this type of dispute to become a serious conflict.

One characteristic of these conflicts is the fact that they can be unilateral. Thus, while Bolivia and Peru maintain that they are in conflict with Chile, the latter does not acknowledge that there is such a conflict. The situation is similar in the case of Colombia. In response to criticism from Nicaragua's president Daniel Ortega, the Colombian minister of foreign affairs, Fernando Araujo, has stressed on several occasions that his country is not in any situation of conflict with any state.

Such comeback of territorial conflicts within a political context characterized by the hegemony of the democratic system, the market economy, the regional integration process, and by the hegemony of the United States of America seems to question the traditionally-established relationship between the regime-type variable and territorial rivalry in Latin America, a distant by-product of the notion that democracies do not fight each other.

Without a doubt, the existence of a democratic framework and procedures plays a role in the solving of border and territorial conflicts. The Argentine-Chilean case is a good example. These countries cooperate with each other in every field, including defence and security. For them, their relations constitute a strategic alliance. However, the intensification of the sovereignty conflicts in Central

America since the 1990s among democratic states illustrates the autonomy of this type of dispute in relationship to the political system.

The resurgence of borders as strategic priorities must be viewed in relationship with new problems. Poorly determined border lines and unfinished agreements are combined with the political use of the conflict and interests such as access to natural resources, management of border areas, problems like migration, the development of various transnational criminal organizations, and the effect of strategic representations and doctrines which relativize traditional national sovereignty.

Thus, at the start of the twenty-first century, the most important border conflict, Colombia, is not related to disputes over the border line, but to the action of various actors (guerrillas, paramilitary forces, the armed and security forces of Colombia and of the neighbouring countries, criminal organizations, displaced populations, and the United States of America), and diverse interests ranging from illegal and legal traffic – evidenced by the size of the underground economy in Colombia – through the activities of transnational companies that exploit oil or that provide security to the national interests of the regional and extra-regional nation-states.

In the Post-Cold War era, sovereignty problems in Latin America are related to the significance of the control of flows and stocks, whether legal (raw materials) or illegal (for instance, drugs, smuggling, and immigrants). Diverse, heterogeneous actors are involved in such control. They could be criminal or political-military organizations, but also nation-states or transnational corporations seeking to acquire control over natural resources.

The consolidation of new forms of border problems, which are related to the limits of managing state power and of the state's capacity to prevent crime and guarantee a legal framework, has been accompanied by the development of legal and illegal organizations – to a large extent transnational – that are perceived as a threat. These trends are already taking shape. The real or assumed absence of 'effective sovereignty' allows for criminal organizations and transnational corporations to be active and the USA to intervene. During the post-Cold War era, territory-related conflicts in Latin America are not due to the power of the neighbouring states, but to the weakness, whether real or assumed, of the state in question vis-à-vis actors as diverse as multinational corporations, criminal organizations or the hegemonic power.

The Latin American state was drastically put to the test during the neoliberal cycle by the intensity with which the new forms of mobility and circulation that characterize the contemporary experience manifested themselves. From this point of view, probably the most important phenomenon marking this experience is that which affect borders, where the architecture of defense and security has traditionally been anchored.

Transnational Flows

In South America, not all flows and stocks have the same strategic importance. The circulation of illegal products such as cocaine stands in contrast to the increase in importance of the illegal circulation flows of legal goods, which is taken into consideration but does not constitute a major strategic concern or a cause of conflict. The 'triple border' is a case in point. Brazil's unilateral project to build a wall along the border with Paraguay between the towns of Foz do Iguaçu and Ciudad del Este has not created a conflictual situation. The illegal circulation of legal merchandise crosses a series of countries around the 'triple border,' from Paraguay to Foz do Iguaçu and Puerto Iguazú to then go on to the rest of the territory. However, the 'triple border' region, considered by the USA as a no-law zone where various criminal organizations, especially 'narcos' and 'terrorists' are established, has a high strategic priority.

Inside Latin America, population flows have a considerable impact on the reshaping of security spaces, even though national societies are not internally affected by intensive migration flows that would result in a flow over territorial borders producing a mingling of socio-cultural identities. The scale and dynamics of human displacements in Latin America cannot be examined on the basis of the classic research terms developed in and for European and North American societies. In the region, migration as a strategic problem implies matters as diverse as refugee issues resulting from the spill-over of inter-state conflicts (Colombia is an example); the containment of flows towards developed countries, particularly the United States of America; and holding foreign elements responsible for the increase in crime or unemployment¹⁴ or for settlements in border areas. However, in the twenty-first century this has been oriented towards prohibiting the purchase of land in border areas or of land considered strategic by foreign corporations rather than to citizens settling in the neighbouring country, as had been the case during the geopoliticism of confrontation in the twentieth century.

Migration as a cause of conflict in Latin American inter-state relations was an issue at a very early stage. Repeated tension cycles upset official relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic with occasional tragic outcomes; such was the case, in 1937, of the massacre of thousands of Haitians in the Dominican Republic under the Trujillo regime. In 1969 the flow of Salvadorians who crossed the border into Honduras was one of the main causes for the war.

In the Post-Cold War era, the issue of refugees and displaced populations is of paramount importance in the Colombian conflict, but this is also true in Central America. Guatemalan populations that occupy virgin lands in Belize and the migration of Nicaraguans into Honduras are two examples. In 2006-2007, the possibility of a conflict in Bolivia has been a matter of concern in the neighbouring

14 In the Argentina of the 1990s, it is possible to find a common denominator with the European experiences in the manner in which Latin American immigrants were reclassified in a security sense by the receiving populations, the political establishment and the press. See Manero (2007a).

states given the possible increase in the number of seasonal immigrants and refugees. In Latin America, an increase in the displacement of populations must be visualized in the context of the expansion of monocultures, especially of soybeans and palm oil. As part of the global trends towards the production of bio fuel and supplying an international food market under pressure on demand, monocultures destroy peasant cultures and forces migration. Such 'internal' migrations could become 'transnational', flowing not only to the United States of America but to Europe as well. The case of Ecuadoreans, Colombians and Peruvians in Spain illustrates this point since they constitute human flows of significant importance from Latin America to Europe on the basis of already established networks.

From a strategic point of view, the borders between Latin America and the United States of America are a basic element in this analysis. The U.S.-Mexican border is the point where the immigrants from all of Latin America converge. The reinforcement of restrictions to the circulation of migrant populations dates back to the 1980s. The installation of metal barriers in the Tijuana-San Diego region was encouraged by the free trade agreements among the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada. It is less likely for the flows of capital and goods to be accompanied by displacement of the work force. The other side of the agreements for the circulation of goods and capital is the setting up of barriers to the circulation of the labour force. This is not particularly characteristic of the United States of America. The images of African immigrants trying to make it through the different defensive systems – metal barriers, electrified link fences, security forces – at the Spanish exclave Melilla resemble those of Latin American immigrants at the U.S.-Mexican border. Since 9/11, the aspect of security regarding migrations is no longer an explicit taboo. It is on the basis of a terrorist threat that the new forms of the control of mobility and the displacement of certain individuals and populations are developed.

Because of NAFTA,¹⁵ the Mexico-USA border is both open to the free passage of goods that are difficult to control and simultaneously strongly fortified; its role is to slow the movement of immigrants and keep them, through its offshore manufacturing operations, on the other side of the border to take advantage of the comparative advantages provided by this labour force, resulting from the development of competitive prices for a displaced U.S. industry. These offshore manufacturing operations are a key element within a more sophisticated logic of containing human flows through the economy. In general, peripheral border regions have an important effect on national economies. Border zone industrial facilities are a source of development that exerts a permanent attraction for populations that seek better living conditions. This is the case of Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez in Mexico, or Tangiers and Tetuan in Morocco. The various governmental bodies tend to be overtaken by the multiple consequences of demographic growth.

15 The North American Free Trade Agreement defines a free-exchange zone formed by the United States of America, Canada and Mexico. Signed by presidents George Bush, Brian Mulroney and Carlos Salinas de Gortari on 10 July 1992, the agreement entered into force on 1 January 1994.

Management of Stocks

In the global disorder, some sovereignty conflicts have to do with controversies about the acquisition, control, management of, or access to real or imagined natural resources. The importance that disputes relative to the definition of maritime borders have in comparison to land borders is a case in point. These conflicts are directly related to the exploitation of hydrocarbons and fishing. This is nothing new. The controversy between Colombia and Venezuela over borders in the Gulf of Venezuela is closely related to the discovery, in the 1960s, of oil in this area.

It is also worth noting the disputes between Argentina¹⁶ and Great Britain in the South Atlantic and Antarctica, between Peru and Chile in the Pacific, and in the Caribbean region. In this region, there are various maritime conflicts: Honduras-Cuba, Nicaragua-Honduras, Venezuela-Colombia (Gulf of Venezuela). They may be tripartite as in the case of El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua concerning the Gulf of Fonseca, or also inactive, as is the conflict between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago concerning fishing; they may even be riddled with ideological issues, which is the case in the dispute between Bogota and Managua concerning their borders in the Caribbean. This is the most interesting conflict, given the number of actors and variables and the level of militarization involved. The government of Nicaragua stresses attempts by Colombia and Honduras¹⁷ to take from it territories in the Caribbean Sea. Nicaragua is also in conflict with Costa Rica over the San Juan River. The common denominators in such border disputes, which are mainly in Central America and in the Caribbean region, are non-observance of treaties and agreements, their long duration, and a low intensity of violence.

Several factors are closely related to the development of this type of conflict. Among them are the increasing importance of the sea to the world economy, the development of new technologies to exploit maritime resources, and changes extending maritime jurisdiction in international maritime law as a consequence of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982).

The oceans are governed by this convention, which sets the extent of the exclusive economic zone of a coastal state at 200 nautical miles. If a state claims seabed beyond that point it must prove with geological profiles that these seabed are an extension of its own continental shelf. Otherwise, the principle of freedom on the high seas is applied. This convention has not been ratified by the United States of America, which causes permanent conflicts in Latin America.

The matter of oceans as open borders where tensions between two coastal states manifest themselves is of a global nature. Thus, the hypothesis according to which the Arctic Ocean releases its summer ice under the effect of climate warming, thus making raw materials in the abyss more accessible will kindle the desire for them. At the end of July 2007, two expeditions, one from Russia and one from Canada,

16 Since 2006, Argentina has sought to toughen sanctions against illegal fishing in an exclusive economic zone.

17 The government of Honduras has approved prospecting by oil companies in the region disputed with Nicaragua.

made almost simultaneous claims of sovereignty. Disputes over sovereignty abound in the Arctic zone.

Concerning natural resource management, we can also look back at the conflict between Argentina and Uruguay over the use of the Uruguay River. This conflict put back on the table, in a radically new form, the conflicts relative to the control of rivers and river basins with their tributaries and effluents. With the agreements between Brazil and Argentina in 1979 the matter of the use of water resources was the last expression of the controversy concerning the way in which neighbouring states use the resources in border areas.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, strong tensions characterized relations between Argentina and Uruguay, although the two countries were governed by presidents who were ideologically close. The origin of the conflict was the installation of two large cellulose manufacturing plants on the banks of the Uruguay River, a bi-national water course that serves as border between the two countries. According to the Argentinians, these industries pollute the river. For diplomatic reasons, an agreement with the Argentine government would have been required, to authorize the installation of these plants in the border area. Uruguay violated the treaty on the river. This conflict is of paramount importance, given the fact that this border has traditionally been characterized by relations of complementariness rather than conflicts and tensions at the local and regional levels. These exchanges have initiated cultural practices rooted in cross-border identities. Encounters and rapprochement have prevailed over conflicts. Tension between the populations along the banks of the Uruguay River is new.

In Argentina, the conflict has produced the emergence of a social movement structured into assemblies, according to the tradition established with the 2001 crisis, which acts not only against the construction of the two cellulose plants, but also against the economic model that these plants represent. In Argentina, the participation of social movements in disputes over natural and mineral resources, water, and land, has been important since the 1990s.

The expression of an intention on the part of the inhabitants to control the development of the space near them is the new characteristic of the conflict. This reveals a new relationship with the territory. It also reveals the effect that civil society has on inter-regional relations, not only with reference to Uruguay, but to other countries of the region, like Chile. The members of the assemblies have blocked not only the bridges between Argentina and Uruguay, but also access routes used by Chilean trucks that transport materials for the construction of the plants. This has created problems in the relations between Argentina and Chile.

On the Uruguayan side, the conflict is presented and perceived as a sovereignty issue. The population feels that the defence of the cellulose plants is a 'national' issue. There is a wide consensus shared even by the left and by the labour-union movement concerning the measures taken by the government. The cellulose plants are viewed as a way out of the employment crisis. The establishment of the cellulose plants and the government's forestry policy are criticised only by ecologists and the extreme left.

At the end of November 2006, the government of Uruguay entrusted protection of the Botnia plant to the armed forces. The measure came in addition to a decree approved in October, which had increased the frequency of patrol missions by the Naval Prefecture along the Uruguay River. While the Uruguayan decision has not militarized the conflict between the two countries, it shows the new strategic condition of the borders. This decision represents not only a change in bilateral relations but also a change in the spirit of the politics of the Uruguayan left. The consequence of controversies over acquisition, control, management of, or access to natural resources may be the redefinition of the external and perhaps also the internal borders of national spaces.

The debate over the appropriation and use of hydrocarbon benefits is associated with the appearance of autonomist movements in the Zulia region of Venezuela and in the Bolivian *Oriente* region. At the beginning of the twenty-first century and by virtue of the stakes associated with hydrocarbons, Bolivia has become the example not only of a relationship between conflict and sovereignty over resources, but also of the durability of certain geopolitical 'tools' of varying degrees of relevance: activism for independence, irredentism, and annexation.

The twenty-first century brought about an attempt on the part of the state to re-appropriate the 'right to manage,' which corresponds to the demand for sovereignty that arose in a large part of the various societies after the 1990s. The strategic representations that began to circulate upon the exhaustion of the neoliberal cycle show that the perception of menace in border territories is not restricted to multiple illegalities – from criminal organizations to illegal immigration through terrorism – as the basis of transnational strategic representations. Strategic representations also turn on a more archaic problem – in the etymological sense of the term – of strategy: natural resources. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, such resources were found, under different forms, at the core of strategic and border questions. Actions by the armed forces were related to the defence of water in Argentina, of the Amazon in Brazil, of oil in Venezuela and in Ecuador, and of gas in Bolivia.

Nevertheless, the strategic dimension of natural resources is a question that acquires different emphasis depending on the definition of national interest and the development model chosen. In Chile and Uruguay in 2006, the governments instructed the armed forces to intervene for the protection of transnational corporations developing activities in the primary sector.

Colombia, Transnational Stakes of a Conflict

The border is a central component of a conflict particularly characterized by its actors' increased autonomy vis-à-vis the state system,¹⁸ their heterogeneity, their command over illegal flows and stocks, and the high level of intervention of the hegemonic

18 The FARC have developed an action of a global nature structured by political and military contacts and support from different actors and nations.

power. The different actors in the Colombian conflict frequently cross the border. The dimension that borders have acquired in the relationship between Colombia and its neighbouring states became evident at both the tactical and strategic levels in the diplomatic consequences of the military operation of March 2008.

The bordering countries within the context of 'The Colombia Plan'¹⁹ have expressed their concerns about the porosity of their borders. Governments have grown increasingly worried because of the expansion of the armed struggle, particularly towards the Amazonian basin. Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela have indicated that the military component of the Colombia Plan will eventually affect the whole of Amazonia: expulsion towards their borders of narco-traffickers, guerrillas, the migration of population, action undertaken by irregular military organizations, the expansion of illegal crops, and pollution.²⁰

Brazil has militarily reinforced its border with Colombia, which was one of the priorities of the United States of America and has launched the *Calha Norte* plan to keep guerrillas and narcotraffickers from crossing the border. Brazil has also developed the training of anti-drug military units in the jungle. Considering narcotraffic increasingly as a matter of national security, the military has become involved in the fight against criminal organizations related to drugs. However, President Lula's Minister of Defense, José Viegas-Filho, does not want the government to amend the constitution in line with U.S. policy.²¹

Constant penetration of the Colombian army into Ecuador in pursuit of guerrillas, as well as the flow of immigrants, has negatively affected relations between the two countries. Differences became intensified in 2006 when the Uribe government started fumigating drug crops at the border with Ecuador.²² In 2007, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa endorsed the statements of his minister of defence indicating that the country's border in the north is not with Colombia but with the FARC guerrilla. He added that the southern Colombian border was not protected by the regular Colombian forces and that the Colombian conflict was very costly for Ecuador. In March 2008 the elimination of Raul Reyes, the number-two man in FARC, by the Colombian Army led to an escalation of tensions, the

19 The original version of the 'Colombia Plan' was officially conceived by the administration of President Andrés Pastrana to attain an economic and social revitalization and a strengthening of the state that would make it possible to end both the armed conflict and drug production. Within the framework of the bilateral agreements with the United States as the main supporter of the Plan, the state strengthening and pacification goals started to be increasingly less sought through an institutional reform and an improvement in the social and economic conditions, and more and more through the modernization of the army and the security forces to become the main guarantors of the re-establishment of order and territorial control. The objective of ending drug trafficking resulted in an open war against the insurgent movements. It was no longer related to the original mission that Pastrana had intended to accomplish at the beginning of his term.

20 *Clarín* 1 September 2000.

21 O Estado de S. Paulo 9 March 2003.

22 Ecuadoreans assert that they do not control the border with Colombia.

most serious in the region for many years among the three Bolivarian nations.²³ The violation of Ecuador's sovereignty by Colombia in 2008 not only re-launched the debate in Latin America over the 'no-law zones,' but also introduced the concept of 'preventive war' in the region.

Panama increased the deployment of its security forces along its border with Colombia as well. FARC activities should also be mentioned: organized crime, kidnappings, drug and arms traffic, and illegal immigrants. There is also a humanitarian problem that has two aspects, first, the Colombian refugees in the Darien region, and the elimination of alleged FARC collaborators by paramilitary forces that cross the border also in pursuit of guerrillas. Both the Panamanian and American governments perceive these actions as threats.

The porosity of the border between Colombia and Venezuela is a central element of the 'cold war' between Chávez and Uribe. Miraflores Palace blamed Uribe for the incursions of paramilitary forces into Venezuelan territory, particularly for kidnappings for extortion and the murder of Venezuelan military; Colombians blame the latter on the guerrillas. Sovereignty has been a central issue in the controversy between Colombia and Venezuela because of the capture of FARC leader Rodrigo Granda. Hugo Chavez has accused the Colombian government of having violated territorial sovereignty with the support of the United States of America. The members of the Colombian military forces in general and the Uribe government in particular accuse Venezuela of being a sanctuary for the guerrillas and maintain that this country does not take action against international terrorism. Hugo Chavez regards the FARC neither as a threat against his government nor as a terrorist organization.

The conflictual relationship between Uribe's Colombia and Chavez' Venezuela brought back, at the beginning of 2005, the fear of an arms race in the region. U.S. military support to Bogota via the 'Colombia Plan' transformed the Colombian forces into the second military power after Brazil in which led to the purchase of weapons by Venezuela. The United States underlined its suspicion that Chavez was arming the Colombian guerrilla.²⁴ Since Alvaro Uribe took office, Colombia, the main ally of the United States in the region, has been playing a central role in the politics of the American continent to contain the Bolivarian republic and its 'radical populism,' defined by Washington as a 'new threat.' George Bush's proposal for U.S. aid to be used against every 'menace against Colombian national security' closes a cycle. Originally intended to be used in the anti-drugs fight and actually used in the 'anti-terrorist' fight, the request of the U.S. president would have permitted the use of such aid in a hypothetical conflict with Venezuela.²⁵

The Colombian issue shows that the strategic revaluing of borders must not be related only to the nature of the threats of the Post-Cold War era, to their perception, or to their effects. Revaluing borders must also be associated with the development

23 Ecuador and Venezuela concentrated military forces along their borders with Colombia and broke diplomatic relations with Bogota. *Liberation* 3 March 2008.

24 *Clarín* 16 February 2005.

25 *El Tiempo* Bogota 3 March 2006.

of a vision of security that is closely related to hegemonic strategic representations at the base of the international system and supported by the United States. These representations stress the global character of the stakes at play and of the security reactions. They sustain the assertion that the defence of sovereignty shall no longer be limited to the protection of borders and the territory in their traditional forms. The armies must approach the protection of each country on the basis of a regional perspective, working together towards the defence of sovereignty with a regional awareness and with an international solidarity. The argument raised over the fight against terrorism and drugs, which promotes control over the so-called 'porous borders', 'no-law (lawless) zones', and 'failed states' (Manero 2007b), implies a re-definition of the concept of sovereignty. Borders are no longer respected and sovereignty has become a conditioned privilege that depends, ultimately, on the national interest of the USA.

During her trip to Brazil in March 2008, the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice proposed a regional combat policy against terrorism and justified Bogota's military incursion into Ecuadorean territory against the FARC as preventive action. The United States defended the concept of preventive attack at the OAS meeting. She proposed that countries in the region join together in the fight against 'narcoterrorism' and suggested that Ecuador and Venezuela were in complicity with the FARC. According to Rice, borders are important but they cannot be a refuge for terrorists who kill innocent people. She stated with assurance that it was time that the region revises the matter of security in the border areas while suggesting that Washington keep tabs on the evolution of the situation, undertaking whatever was necessary.²⁶ Rice repeated that the FARC is a 'terrorist' organization with which there is no room for negotiation.²⁷ This position is opposed not only to that of Venezuela. Brazil's foreign affairs minister Celso Amorin reiterated that his government does not characterize the Colombian guerrilla as a terrorist organization. For the USA, transnational threats do not respect geographical limits; they are common to all and confronting them demands group action. In March 2003, Commander Hill of the U.S. Southern Command stated that, according to the United States, the main threat against the countries of the region did not come from the military force of a neighbour or from an invading foreign power. The enemy was composed of terrorists, drug-traffickers, and international crime (false documents, the arms trade, money laundering). He referred especially to the 'narcoterrorist' (Hill 2003). In 2005, his successor reiterated not only how important it was to build a co-operative security community, but also the threat that 'populism' represented for the states of the region, the existence of radical Islamic groups that participate in illegal activities, and support to the Colombian government in the struggle against armed movements (see Craddock 2005).

The case of the 'Triple Border' area is an example. The Triple Border²⁸ is a security concern based on several menacing situations: criminal networks linked to Islamic

26 Página 12 14 March 2008.

27 Página 12 14 March 2008.

28 Since 2002, the Triple Border concept has been used to describe other places, such as the

fundamentalist groups setting up in the region, the presence of sleeping terrorist cells, operation fields for new attacks, activities financed by Islamic contributions, and illegal businesses. In Brazil and Paraguay, migrant colonies from the Middle East (especially Syria and Lebanon) have existed for a long time and increased with the arrival of Lebanese Shiites after the civil war in Lebanon.

The Triple Border consists of three cities: Foz do Iguacu (Brazil), Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) and Ciudad del Este (Paraguay). The main economic activity of Foz do Iguacu and Puerto Iguazú is tourism, while in Ciudad del Este, the trade of smuggled goods predominates. This region is a traditional place of intense clandestine activities, where all kinds of global disorder (for example illicit weapons traffic, drugs, stolen cars, kidnapped human beings and animals, fake identity documents, and counterfeit products) can be observed. The Triple Border region, considered by the United States a lawless area where numerous criminal organizations, especially narco-traffickers and terrorists, have settled, has a high strategic priority. The Triple Border is a 'paradigm' of an ungovernable zone. Formed in the 1990s in the context of the Colombian conflict, the Triple Border illustrates the similarities between the Democrat and the Republican strategic representations. In 1999, the anti-terrorism coordinator of the Department of State, Mr. Sheehan, notified the Argentinean government of U.S. concerns about the increasing presence of terrorist and drug-trafficking groups in the region.

In the context of the war against terrorism, the United States has noted that there are Islamic groups in the Triple Border, arguing that the ties between drug dealing and the FARC will be strengthened by the war in Afghanistan. The damage caused to heroin trafficking by the Afghan war has promoted an alliance between Colombian drug dealers and Islamic terrorists in order to develop and maintain the production and commercialization of drugs.²⁹ In 2003, General Hill of the US Southern Command said that narco-terrorism activity was fuelling radical Islamic groups associated with Hamas and Hizbullah militants who were operating in such places as the triple-border area of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay and on Venezuela's Margarita Island (Hill 2003).

Since the 1992 and 1994 attacks against the Jewish community in Buenos Aires, the Triple Border zone has been under control. As of 1999, the Argentinean intelligence services have been looking for traces of and connections to Osama Bin Laden. U.S. intelligence services maintain that the authors of the terrorist attack in Luxor, Egypt, in 1997 found shelter in the Triple Border. Hassan A. Mokhler, who was accused of having participated in this attack, was caught on the border between Brazil and Uruguay for carrying fake identity papers; his wife has always lived in the zone. Another suspect in this attack was later arrested in the region.

Under U.S. pressure, a Joint Security Command was created by the countries of the region. Brazil and Argentina have deployed important security mechanisms in order to prevent criminal actions from threatening their vital tourism industries. These mechanisms are used in an integrated way: national and state police forces,

area linking Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, and Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay.
29 O Globo Sao Paulo 28 October 2001.

intelligence services, customs control and private security agencies for hotels and other tourist infrastructures. A contingent of Argentinean intelligence services staff works closely with their U.S. counterparts.

However, terrorist activity in the Triple Border has never been demonstrated. The United States has been unable to prove the existence of terrorist cells and the local armed forces have denied the presence of terrorists in the zone. The lack of state presence exercising efficient sovereignty does not imply, however, that the Triple Border zone is ungovernable.

According to some political and non-governmental organizations,³⁰ U.S. interest in the zone is related to the control of natural resources and access to drinking water. Researchers have revealed that there is a huge supply of drinking water in that zone, in the *Acuífero Guaraní*, which is probably the most important reserve in the world.

In the post-Cold War era, the goals of both international policy and security and defence policies encouraged by the United States in the region are inseparable from a conception of the world which tends to dilute national sovereignties into a globality of interests. These policies lie upon a set of principles that serve as a foundation of the 'global civilization', inspired by 'Anglo-Saxon' representations, which antagonize the precepts of the regional political culture. However, in contrast to the conditions prevailing in the 1990s, the United States has encountered resistance to the imposition of its representations.

Conclusion

In Latin America, the conception of defence and security developed during the Post-Cold War era has shattered the geopolitical logic historically accepted by the Latin American armed forces and has caused the collapse of one of the main elements of their traditional strategic representations: the menacing neighbouring community. This geopolitical determinism which has explained all conflicts since post-colonial times by the influence of history itself and out of rivalry for power and territorial rights has become weak.

From the point of view of space, the three traditional geo-strategic logics of conflict – fluvial, maritime, and territorial- sustaining the representations of the menacing territorial neighbouring community were torn apart (see Manero 2002). The patterns and the dynamics of conflicts that now affect land and water are very different. These are fundamental transformations which, because of the scale and speed at which they are occurring, imply consequences for the regional strategic cultures.

30 On this topic, see the documents of the first and the second *Foro Social de la Triple Frontera*. Puerto Iguazú, Argentina, June 2004 and Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, July 2006, respectively.

Even when conflict shows a traditional sub-regional polarity in the form of an inter-state confrontation, as in the case of the Colombia governed by Uribe and the Venezuela presided over by Chavez, it is more closely related to the problems of the Post-Cold War era than to a territorial logic based on the historical relationship between power and space or on a territorial redistribution (the Gulf of Maracaibo). Clearly, such a trend manifests itself at different levels. The differences do not exist simply between countries and regions, but also between security institutions and political and social actors. This situation is clearer in the Southern Cone than in Central America.

The de-legitimation of the menacing territorial neighbouring community constitutes a concurrence, although for very different reasons, among radically antagonistic political and ideological positions. This de-legitimation is as much a central element in the security policies encouraged by the United States as it is in those of different and heterogeneous sectors of South American nation-states promote an expansion of the border as the limit of that which must be defended. However, paradoxically, the dismemberment of the menacing territorial neighbouring community is accompanied by the development of strategic representations that continue to attach great strategic importance to borders.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, border disputes have become more complex in nature than the traditional disagreement over the place where the physical and jurisdictional bordering line must be drawn. The post-Cold War era overdeveloped one of the characteristics of disputes over borders. These disputes, involving a range of problems, generally have characteristics that pertain to more than one type of conflict.

While in Latin America, there is no real possibility of a regional war caused by an indirect spill-over of an inter-state conflict, a fear that conflicts inside the states may spill over is alive in the region. The case of Colombia has been the most evident since the 1990s.

From a strategic point of view, given the end of the concept of space that characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we are confronted with a break in the logic that created spheres of identification that referred to those evoked by the terms of rivalry of nations over the neighbourhood. We are far away from the 1970s. During the Post-Cold War era, the hypotheses of traditional conflict related to the expansionist territorial ambitions of a country have become devalued.

In the strategic hegemonic representations of the post-Cold War era in Latin America, the threat concerning territory thus no longer appears as the result of state power or of actions of neighbouring national armies fighting for possession of the territory. It appears rather as the consequence of other factors: the loss of the *imperium* capability; a weakening of the exercise of sovereignty; or the loss of the states' monopoly of violence in border regions. This permits both the development of organizations considered a threat and the loss of control over natural resources considered of strategic importance, or the development of interventionist policies on the part of the hegemonic power or a neighbouring state.

The post-Cold War era implies a weakened effect of geopolitical conceptions in their traditional form. However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century,

several factors have brought about the reinstatement of the geopolitics felt to be abandoned in the 1990s as a consequence of the 'elimination' of political and social conflicts and the primacy of the economic rationality manifested in the commercial agreements that sought insertion of the region into globalization. These include the end of consensus on the policies of the hegemonic power, the revaluing of the national interest and of nationalism as well as 'high politics', the importance of natural resources, the militarization of U.S. policies in Latin America, the establishment of political projects with a hegemonic spirit in Brazil and Venezuela, and the transnational character of the Colombian conflict.

Global disorder redefined in Latin America security practices and destabilized traditional strategic references and identities as it established new problems and other fields of experience of 'collective survival'. However, a de-naturalization of the defensive function of its borders, redrawn and redefined in various ways, cannot be discerned. At a time when national borders lose their original function in favour of a unification of markets sought everywhere, they necessarily acquire a new strategic dimension. This dimension should grow with the risks and threats that climate change has brought with it. Floods and droughts cause a reduction in the amount of arable land, a lack of water, and a shortage of food supplies. The cycle closes with massive migrations, the collapse of states, political radicalization of conflicts over the control of territories rich in natural resources, and the increase in the military capacity of developed countries in response to the situation.

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