

The Union of South American Nations

MAPPING MULTILATERALISM IN TRANSITION NO. 3

SANDRA BORDA

MAY 2014

The global architecture of multilateral diplomacy is in transition and a comprehensive understanding of the new dynamics, players, and capacities is needed. The Mapping Multilateralism in Transition series features short briefing papers on established but evolving regional organizations and select cross-regional organizations. The papers aim to: (1) identify the key role and features of the organizations; (2) assess their current dynamics; and (3) analyze their significance for the overall regional and global geopolitical context.

This paper examines the Union of South American Nations, a principal South American regional organization composed of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Sandra Borda is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia. The author thanks this project's research assistant, Andres Aponte, for his collaboration.

The views expressed in this publication represent those of the author and not necessarily those of the International Peace Institute. IPI owes a debt of thanks to its donors who make publications like this one possible.

Regional politics in Latin America today are defined by a variety of trends: Brazil continues to grow, but its leadership in the region has substantially decreased during the administration of Dilma Rousseff, which began in 2011; several countries—including Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela—have chosen to “Latin-Americanize” their foreign policy, discarding their former alignments with the United States; left-leaning governments, clearly critical of US power in the region, have tried to consolidate organizations such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) to increase their autonomy vis-à-vis the United States; right and right-center governments have responded by deepening their commercial links with the United States and the European Union (EU) and by organizing the Pacific Alliance, a traditional arrangement for free-trade and freedom-of-movement; and, finally, many countries in the region are adopting—independently of their ideological and political orientations—increasingly diversified foreign policies. At the same time, the presence of extra-regional actors has become increasingly visible.

In this context, the region has begun to create multilateral mechanisms that reflect a growing autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), ALBA, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are the principal examples of this new breed of multilateral forum that excludes the US and that, especially in the case of ALBA, serves as a form of explicit resistance to US influence and power. The emergence of these institutions has been accompanied by the growing decay and ineffectiveness of the Inter-American system's institutions. Among them, the Organization of American States (OAS) has been particularly weakened by the region's deep ideological divisions and by the decline in US power. The Rio Treaty (TIAR) has, for a long time, lost much of its relevance.

In this context, UNASUR was created under Brazil's leadership as a mechanism to create and implement regional solutions to regional problems. However, the need to maintain, above all, national sovereignty and self-determination, combined with the current political polarization between right- and left-wing governments, has turned it into a less ambitious and more limited multilateral project.

UNASUR: Membership, History, Mission, and Institutional Features

UNASUR was created in 2008 with the objective of contributing to the regional integration process in matters of education, health, environment, infrastructure, security, and democracy. It is currently composed of twelve members (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela). Panama and Mexico act as observing states.

According to its Constitutive Treaty signed in Brasilia on May 23, 2008, UNASUR has “the objective to build, in a participatory and consensual manner, an integration and union among its peoples in the cultural, social, economic and political fields, prioritizing political dialogue, social policies, education, energy, infrastructure, financing and the environment, among others, with a view to eliminating socioeconomic inequality, in order to achieve social inclusion and

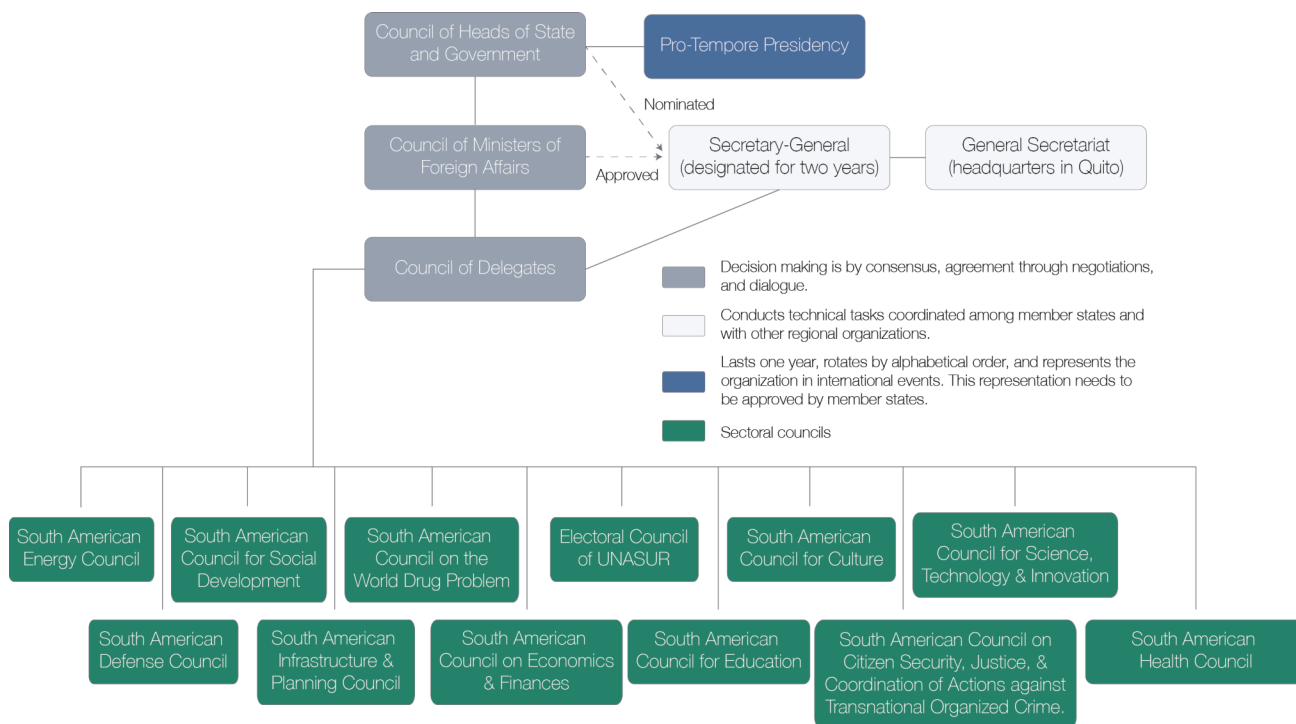
participation of civil society, to strengthen democracy and reduce asymmetries within the framework of strengthening the sovereignty and independence of the States.”¹

Unlike other integration experiments in Latin America, UNASUR did not begin its process by emphasizing economic and commercial integration in the hopes of spilling over into other areas where agreements in terms of cooperation are harder to be accomplished. On the contrary, UNASUR has consolidated itself as an organization where agreements in the realm of politics, security, and defense (among others) have been accomplished first, have prevailed the most, and where there has been less concern for the advancement of economic and commercial issues.

As Figure 1 shows, the organization is composed of a president pro tempore, the General Secretariat, the Council of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Council of Delegates, and twelve sectoral councils.

Of these councils, one of the oldest and most important is the South American Defense Council (CSD), created in 2008. It is a project that was

Figure 1. Organization of UNASUR



1 Union of South American Nations, “South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty,” May 23, 2008, available at www.comunidadandina.org/ingles/csn/treaty.htm.

driven mainly by Brazil and has the objective of “constituting itself as an active forum for political dialogue as a means to deactivate potential belligerent conflicts in the region.”² But the CSD is not a political-military professional alliance. In fact, initially Venezuela attempted to create a South Atlantic Treaty Organization (SATO) that would “speak harshly” and defend itself from a world of “imperialism, neoimperialism, and preventive wars.” However, Chávez’s vision—shared by Bolivia and to a lesser degree by Ecuador—implied a clear confrontation with the United States, a stand that was neither shared nor promoted by Brazil.³

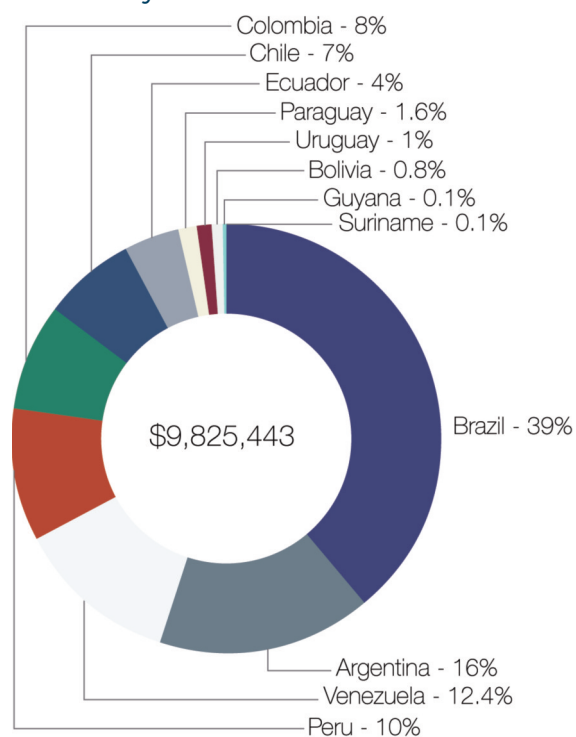
As stated by the former Brazilian minister of defense, Nelson Jobim, “this council does not aim at becoming a classical military alliance. There is not pretension in creating a South American defense force.”⁴ The CSD does not have the objective of creating South American transnational armed forces; it does not intend to shape a combined operative capacity nor a common command, nor is it intended for a common defense policy.⁵ However, what the CSD is aiming for is the consolidation of South America as a peace zone, constructing a South American “identity” in terms of defense, and generating consensus to strengthen regional cooperation for these issues. Additionally, “but not least important for a region with a strong history of military dictatorships, the CSD aims at advancing military subordination to civil authority and promoting the sovereign defense of natural resources.”⁶

In terms of the organization’s bureaucracy, UNASUR’s Constitutive Treaty stipulates that the General Secretariat must support other organs in their ability to follow through in their functions, promote initiatives and monitor their implementation, and take care of the administrative functions of the organization. The secretary-general is designated by the Council of Heads of State and

Government for a period of two years with possibility of renewal once, and the position cannot be preceded by a person with the same nationality. Néstor Kirchner was designated as the first secretary-general, and, at his death, both Colombia and Venezuela presented candidates to the Secretariat. The Council of Heads of State and Government decided to grant a one-year mandate to the Colombian candidate, María Emma Mejía, and a one-year mandate to the Venezuelan candidate, Alí Rodríguez, who is currently UNASUR’s secretary-general.

In 2013, a \$9,825,443 budget was destined for the functioning of the General Secretariat. The distributive quota mechanism⁷ per country is reflected in Figure 2 below.⁸

Figure 2. Distributive quota mechanism per country



2 Carlos Malamud Rikles, “El Consejo Suramericano de Defensa: Entre grandes expectativas y una realidad compleja y fraccionada,” in *La creación de UNASUR en el marco de la seguridad y la defensa, documentos de seguridad y defensa* 29, comp. Ministerio de Defensa de España (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa de España, 2010), p. 58.

3 Rikles, “El Consejo Suramericano de Defensa,” p. 63.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 64.

6 Andrés Serbin, “Regionalismo y soberanía nacional en América Latina: Los nuevos desafíos,” in *América Latina y el Caribe: Multilateralismo vs soberanía: La construcción de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños*, ed. Francisco Rojas Aravena (Buenos Aires: Teseo/FLACSO, 2011), pp. 86–87.

7 The South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty establishes in Article 16 that “[t]he financing of the ordinary budget for the functioning of the General Secretariat will be based on differentiated contribution quotas of the Member States to be determined by a Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, following a proposal by the Council of Delegates, taking into account the economic capacity of the Member States, shared responsibility and the principle of equity.”

8 Union of South American Nations, *Managing Annual Budget, UNASUR: UNASUR’s Secretariat General 2013 and Common Initiatives 2013*, UNASUR/CD/Resolution No. 2, 2012.

In 2014, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs approved an annual budget of \$9,830,375.⁹

The president pro tempore is the office in charge of representing UNASUR in international events and makes public, also at the international level, the declarations and opinions of the organization. The presidency is exercised successively by each state in alphabetical order and for one-year periods. The presidency prepares, convenes, and presides over the meetings held by the different organs in UNASUR. It presents UNASUR's annual activities program for consideration, assumes commitments and signs declarations with third parties, and guides the direction of the sectoral councils.

Hence, UNASUR is a structure that has a permanent character created with the objective of promoting a structured political dialogue, with legal personality, and the capacity of adopting binding norms, but only by consensus. In other words, UNASUR is in the midst of consolidating itself as a multilateral space for interstate coordination and cooperation but not as an instrument for supranational integration. In fact, many of UNASUR's challenges are the result of the organization's operation and institutionalization. Since its decision-making process is determined by the principle of unanimity due to its strict commitment to respect national sovereignty, non-intervention, and self-determination,¹⁰ the accomplishment of consensus is a difficult objective to achieve due to the region's ideological and political diversity. The fact that the agreements adopted by the organization will only be mandatory once they have been incorporated in the domestic legal order of each member state means that the organization has a weak capacity to generate binding decisions that are able to produce changes in the behavior of the member states.¹¹

As stated above, UNASUR's priority is not in regard to commercial exchange. In fact, its statutes do not have a clear characterization or allusion to the regular modes of market integration—free trade zones or customs unions.

A BRIEF HISTORY

On September 1, 2000, the First Meeting of South American Presidents took place in Brasilia. The *Brasilia Declaration* proposed that, due to geographic contiguity and the existing community of values in the South American region, it was important to come up with a common agenda. The process for the creation of the organization, since the beginning, was lead and guided by Brazil. In 2004, during the Third Meeting of South American Presidents in Cuzco, UNASUR was created.¹² In 2007, during the First South American Energy Summit in Isla Margarita, priorities were fixed and the organization adopted its name.

In 2008, in Brasilia, the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government was held. It approved the Constitutive Treaty and designated Quito as the headquarters of the organization. In this year, the first two sectoral councils also were constituted: the South American Defense Council and the South American Health Council. In 2009, the presidency pro tempore was assigned to Ecuador and to its president, Rafael Correa; and the South American Councils on the World Drug Problem, Infrastructure and Planning, Social Development, Education, Culture, and Science, Technology, and Innovation were created. The following year the first secretary-general was elected, the former president of Argentina, Néstor Kirchner.

In this same period of time, the Center for Strategic Defence Studies (CEED) was created, a type of think tank dedicated to “create a regional strategic thinking, which contributes to the coordination and harmonization of defense policies in South America.”¹³ Additionally, the United Nations gave UNASUR observer status. Finally, in 2011, the Electoral Council of UNASUR was created, and it was given its first mission for the October 2012 presidential elections in Venezuela.

On March 11, 2011, the organization came into force and was converted into an international legal entity when the condition of the ratification of the

9 Union of South American Nations, *UNASUR's Annual Budget for 2014*, UNASUR/CMRE/Resolution No. 6, 2013.

10 See Article 12, Union of South American Nations, “South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty,” May 23, 2008.

11 Ibid.

12 It is important to highlight that, even though UNASUR is mainly a political forum, it does not exclude its activity in other realms. For instance, during its creation, UNASUR was partially conceived as an institution that would later absorb the Community of Andean Nations (CAN) and the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), organizations with an economic and commercial profile. Additionally, the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America (IIRSA), proposed by Brazil in 2000, also was integrated into UNASUR, first during the creation of the Comunidad Suramericana in 2004.

13 Center for Strategic Defense Studies, “Mission,” South American Defense Council, available at www.ceedcds.org.ar/English/01-CEED/01-Mission.html.

convention by at least nine signatory states was met. Colombia was the tenth state to ratify the Constitutive Treaty; Brazil, the eleventh; and Paraguay, the last.

Key Areas of Engagement Since 2012

UNASUR's operation has been focused on the following issues: the conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom for the Falkland Islands, organized crime, issues related to the region's democratic consolidation (i.e., the participation of the electoral mission in the Venezuelan elections, and its reaction to the deposing of Paraguay's President Fernando Lugo), and, finally, incidents among member states and foreign powers in issues related to espionage (i.e., Julian Assange's asylum in Ecuador, and the incident related to Evo Morales' detention in Europe due to suspicion of transporting Edward Snowden in his plane).¹⁴

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS OR LAS ISLAS MALVINAS?

In early January 2012, UNASUR's role at the regional level was related to the diplomatic crisis between Argentina and the United Kingdom in regard to sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, which Argentina refers to as Las Islas Malvinas. UNASUR's member states decided to block access to ships with the Falkland flag that were trying to go into their ports. This was a product of a decision made en bloc, in which the South American states expressed their total support of Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the islands. Even after efforts were made by UK Foreign Secretary William Hague to establish relations with countries such as Brazil in order to change their positions, UNASUR member states reacted in a uniform way and highlighted that the only way ships would be able to go into port was through the use of alternative flags.¹⁵

In April of the same year, UNASUR decided to take a letter signed by its twelve members to the United Nations in which they expressed their

support for the Argentinian claim of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. The letter requested that the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon play a role as a mediator and encourage both parties to negotiate.

COMBATING ORGANIZED CRIME

Throughout the first months of 2012, the dominant subject matter in UNASUR was the crisis and diplomatic tension over the Falkland Islands. Meanwhile, a new issue became relevant for UNASUR's agenda: multilateral cooperation to combat organized crime. This initiative was reflected in a bilateral meeting held by the Colombian and Peruvian ministers of defense—Juan Carlos Pinzón and Alberto Otalora, respectively—in which both countries committed themselves to combating transnational organized crime through combined actions. According to the Peruvian minister, this was due to the fact that this phenomenon affects many countries, and, thus, it was necessary to elevate it to the multilateral level of UNASUR. Likewise, Colombian Minister of Defense Juan Carlos Pinzón emphasized Colombia's willingness to help the region on issues regarding security and offered Colombia's national experience for other countries to learn from to counter the influence of organized crime. "We have complete disposition and humility to coordinate operations. If we share, we will be able to hurt crime."¹⁶

In terms of defense, in Quito, UNASUR delivered the first South American registry of defense spending that made evident the states with the most amount of military investment between 2006 and 2010: Brazil (43 percent), Colombia (17 percent), and Venezuela (10 percent). This report fulfills part of the organization's objective of providing transparency to the process in which member states invest in armaments. The report evidenced the visible increase in the regional military expenditure, showing that the money was destined to the purchase of armaments and the maintenance of personnel and military operations, among others.

14 For previous precedents about the organization's functioning see Sandra Borda, "Desafíos y oportunidades de la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas—UNASUR," Documentos CRIES 18, Buenos Aires: SSRC Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum/Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, April 2012.

15 Natasha Niebieskikwiat, "Uruguay y Chile ratificaron que no aceptarán la bandera de Malvinas" *El Clarín*, January 12, 2012, available at www.clarin.com/politica/Uruguay-Chile-ratificaron-aceptaran-Malvinas_0_626337404.html.

16 Redacción Justicia, "Países de la Unasur deben estar unidos contra el crimen: Mindefensa," *El Tiempo*, February 16, 2012, available at www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-11149802.

IMPEACHMENT IN PARAGUAY

During the second half of June 2012, UNASUR's attention went to Paraguay's internal situation. Paraguay's president, Fernando Lugo, was called into trial by the legislature for irregular management in his administration, especially concerning the confrontation that occurred between the public forces and peasants, which led to seventeen deaths. UNASUR's Council of Heads of State and Government decided to send the member states' foreign ministers and the secretary-general to analyze the situation in that country, to talk to Lugo and defend democracy in Paraguay, and to ensure due process in his trial: "The presidents expressed their conviction that Paraguay's stability and democratic order must be preserved and respected, observing the full compliance to constitutional devices and assuring the right of defense and due process."¹⁷

Lugo claimed that his right to due process had not been guaranteed during his trial, and he followed a constitutional act to postpone it. In an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government, it was decided to use the organization's democratic clause that states that in case of an interruption of the democratic order in one of the member states, the rest of the member states may take action upon it and, for example, may suspend the membership of such a state until its situation is back to normal.¹⁸ However, when Lugo was removed from office, UNASUR was not able to react in a unanimous way: while many states acted by imposing economic sanctions, closing their borders, and refusing to recognize the newly established government, Colombia rejected how fast the change happened and refused to acknowledge a violation of the democratic order.¹⁹

In the end, after the completion of UNASUR's extraordinary summit that was held in Argentina on June 27, 2012, the regional bloc decided to

sanction Paraguay by suspending it from the organization until new presidential elections were held, which meant until 2013. The council not only suspended Paraguay from the organization but also ended its role as UNASUR's pro tempore president, and it designated Peru to take this position.²⁰ Meanwhile, Paraguay reacted and stated that it would evaluate its permanency in UNASUR.²¹ For the presidential elections held in April 2013, Paraguay refused any type of presence from UNASUR as a response to the organization's exclusion of the incumbent government. Nonetheless, even though the government rejected it, the Superior Court of Electoral Justice authorized the participation of members of UNASUR, the OAS, and the EU as election observers.

UNASUR publicly revoked Paraguay's suspension from the organization due to the elections held in April 2013, in which the organization's electoral mission did not report any animosity and, on the contrary, gave a positive report. In these electoral polls, current president Horacio Cartes of the center-right Colorado Party was the winner.

THE FIGHT OVER JULIAN ASSANGE

In August 2012, during an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers, UNASUR began to discuss the conflict that was arising between the governments of Ecuador and the United Kingdom. Ecuador decided to grant asylum to Julian Assange in its embassy in London. As a result, the Ecuadorian government claimed that a letter sent to it by the British threatened forceful entry by British authorities to the Ecuadorian embassy to be able to extradite Assange to Sweden, where he was convicted of committing sexual crimes.²² This accusation aggravated the diplomatic tension between both parties. The perceived threat was interpreted by the Ecuadorian embassy as a violation of the Andean country's sovereignty. Ecuador called a meeting of UNASUR to find a

17 Alberto Armendariz, "Alarma y movilización en la región," *La Nación*, June 22, 2012, available at www.lanacion.com.ar/1484080-alarma-y-movilizacion-en-la-region.

18 Eleonora Gosman, "La Unasur envió una misión urgente de cancilleres a Asunción," *El Clarín*, June 22, 2012, available at www.clarin.com/mundo/Unasur-mision-urgente-cancilleres-Asuncion_0_723527720.html.

19 Reuters, "Santos lamentó 'remoción' de Lugo de la presidencia paraguaya," *El Tiempo*, May 23, 2012, available at www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-11967343.

20 UNASUR, "Decisión No. 26/2012," Reunión Extraordinaria del Consejo de Jefes y Jefes de Estado y de Gobierno de Unasur, Mendoza, June 29, 2012, available at www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/dmer/dv/unasur_suspende_paraguay_july2012/unasur_suspende_paraguay_july2012_es.pdf.

21 Federico Franco, "Paraguay amenaza con dejar la Unasur," *El Clarín*, June 30, 2012, available at www.clarin.com/mundo/Paraguay-amenaza-dejar-Unasur_0_728327423.html.

22 Rob Hastings, "Ecuador's Embassy in UK Claims Threat over Julian Assange," *The Independent*, August 16, 2012.

regional response to such a threat.

After the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting held in Guayaquil, it was decided to give full support to Ecuador in the dispute with the United Kingdom.²³ The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted a resolution suggesting a dialogue between the parties as a means to find a consensual solution to the dispute, a confrontation in which—according to the resolution—Ecuador acted upon its right to full sovereignty when it decided to offer the right to asylum. Therefore, the resolution insisted that any attempt taken by the United Kingdom would be perceived as a violation of international norms.²⁴ UNASUR's Secretary-General Alí Rodríguez read the resolution during a press conference.

At the end of August, the diplomatic crisis between Ecuador and England began to resolve. The United Kingdom assured Ecuador that it never had the intention to break into or infringe the Ecuadorian embassy. Furthermore, it called on Ecuador for a dialogue to find a consensual solution to the tensions.

ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA

After a partial solution to the crisis was accomplished, UNASUR embarked on another important responsibility at the regional level: monitoring the Venezuelan presidential elections to guarantee their transparency. Following President Chávez's death in the beginning of March 2013, the Venezuelan National Electoral Council convened new elections in April 2013, in which the main candidates were Nicolás Maduro and Henrique Capriles. Moreover, an invitation was made for UNASUR to play a supervisory role in the electoral polls, by being independent, impartial, and respecting Venezuelan sovereignty.²⁵ The agreement between Venezuela and UNASUR was signed on March 25th, and it formalized UNASUR's commitment to observe elections in that country.

The representative of the regional bloc's mission, Carlos Alvarez, made his trust for the Venezuelan electoral system explicit and reiterated the civic behavior that would be portrayed by it. The multilateral organization deployed approximately forty-two observers who were in charge of supervising the normal preparation for the elections through, among other ways, the monitoring of the machines in charge of registering the electronic votes.

After election day, Alvarez maintained that the results that were divulged by the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) had to be respected, and hence, a possible recounting of the votes did not concern UNASUR, due to its acting as a neutral actor. If a recount happened, then it would be a sole concern for the Venezuelan authorities. This situation arose because the opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles, refused to recognize the results due to the narrow margin that led to his loss and, moreover, to the irregularities presented during the polls: “[The CNE] declared chavista Nicolas Maduro as the winner with 50.66% of the total votes, against 49.07% attributed to the opposition candidate Henrique Capriles, who did not accept the result and asked for a recounting of the total votes.”²⁶

Even though a consensus was achieved among the heads of state in regard to this issue, in the beginning Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos manifested his intention to ask for a recount of the votes. Meanwhile, the heads of state of Argentina and Bolivia—Cristina Fernandez and Evo Morales—expressed their total rejection of this proposal.²⁷ Furthermore, a delegation from UNASUR, composed of Brazilians, evidenced irregularities in the machines that identify fingerprints and showed that it was possible to vote without a proper match between identification number and fingerprint. However, the Council of Heads of State and Government adopted the *Lima Declaration* in April

23 “Unasur respalda a Ecuador y exhorta a diálogo para solucionar pulso,” *El Mercurio*, August 19, 2012, available at <http://www.elmercurio.com.ec/345268-unasur-respalda-a-ecuador-y-exhorta-a-dialogo-para-solucionar-pulso/#.U3ELPi9zGX0>.

24 “Unasur expresa apoyo a Ecuador en disputa con Reino Unido por Assange,” *El Tiempo*, August 19, 2012, available at www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12142671.

25 Yamis Urbano and Carla Navarro, “Campaña para presidenciales será del 2 al 11 de abril,” *El Nacional*, March 10, 2013, available at www.el-nacional.com/politica/Campana-presidenciales-abril_0_150587501.html.

26 “Observador de Unasur dice que el recuento de votos en Venezuela no les atañe,” *El Nacional*, April 15, 2013, available at www.el-nacional.com/mundo/Observador-Unasur-recuento-votos-Venezuela_0_172782778.html.

27 Redacción Internacional, “Secretos de las tres horas de la cumbre de Unasur en Lima,” *El Tiempo*, April 20, 2013, available at www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12751933.

2013 in which they continued to urge the parties to recognize the results.²⁸

COLOMBIA—NATO CONTROVERSY

In June 2013, UNASUR's attention centered on the military realm, due to an announcement made by the Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos to apply for membership in NATO and to establish cooperative relationships with this organization. The negative reaction, led by the Bolivian President Evo Morales, consisted of rejecting the declarations given by the Colombian president due to UNASUR's perception of NATO and its military power as threats to the peace and stability of the region. Morales asked for an extraordinary summit of the South American Defense Council to analyze the issue and ask for clarification from the Colombian government.

Even though NATO declared that it could not grant membership to Colombia due to its conditions for admission, it did express its intention to collaborate with the South American country. This also generated criticism from UNASUR's secretary-general due to the idea that such a military organization could use Colombia to be able to get into the region and violate its natural resources—as it did in Syria, Iraq, and Libya—and, furthermore, threaten to introduce arsenals into the region.²⁹ This crisis brought back the debate that occurred within UNASUR about Colombia's allowance, during Alvaro Uribe's presidency, of American military presence in different military bases installed in its territory.

SEARCHING FOR EDWARD SNOWDEN

Finally, one of the most current and prominent declarations made by UNASUR took place due to a crisis that occurred in European territory over the retention of the plane that Evo Morales was flying to go back to Bolivia, after an official visit in Moscow. Returning from Russia after a meeting of gas-producing countries, Evo Morales made

requests to refuel that were rejected by the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese governments who argued that Edward Snowden could be on board.

The French government denied the transit through its air space while Portugal denied an authorization to land. Due to this affront, the Ecuadorian government asked for an extraordinary meeting from UNASUR to evaluate the situation and, in this way, to adopt a position en bloc: "This meeting's objective," said Alí Rodríguez, "is the pronouncement of South America for the virtual kidnap of President Morales in various European countries, who impeded the flying of Bolivia's presidential airplane. This was a clear violation of international norms."³⁰

The meeting held by the heads of state in Cochabamba, Bolivia on July 4th led to the *Cochabamba Declaration*.³¹ In the declaration, the organization manifested its solidarity and support toward the Bolivian president and denounced the violation of international norms by not permitting the landing of the plane for refuelling. UNASUR maintained that this affront was not only against Bolivia but also against the entire bloc, and, as such, urged the European countries to give reasons for the detention and to apologize for the matter. Meanwhile, President Santos, after he had expressed his solidarity toward Morales and complete rejection for the actions committed against him, called upon avoiding the acts from escalating into a diplomatic crisis.³²

The past couple of years have demonstrated that the organization has created mechanisms for rapid reaction when one of the member states is involved in a diplomatic crisis, in issues related to security with extra-regional actors, or when its democratic institutional order is threatened. Even though reactions as a bloc have been possible, important traces of dissent remain among the members of the

28 Adrian Rivera, "Unasur presenció irregularidades con uso de máquinas captahuellas," *El Nacional*, April 19, 2013, available at www.el-nacional.com/politica/Unasur-presencio-irregularidades-maquinas-captahuellas_0_175182486.html; Presidencia de la República del Perú, "Declaración del Consejo de Jefes y Jefas de Estado y de Gobierno de la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNSAUR)," Lima, April 19, 2013, available at www.presidencia.gob.pe/declaracion-del-consejo-de-jefes-y-jefas-de-estado-y-de-gobierno-de-la-union-de-naciones-suramericanas-unasur.

29 "Rodríguez Araque: Que la OTAN siga su camino de guerra fuera de la región," *El Nacional*, June 4, 2013, available at www.el-nacional.com/mundo/Rodriguez-Araque-OTAN-camino-guerra_0_202779923.html.

30 Prensa Unasur, "Se analizará la respuesta del bloque a ofensa de varios países europeos al Presidente Evo Morales," Quito, July 3, 2013, available at www.unasur.org/inicio/centro-de-noticias/archivo-de-noticias/comunicado-de-la-secretaria-general-de-unasur.

31 Prensa Unasur, *Declaración de Cochabamba*, Cochabamba, July 4, 2013, available at www.unasur.org/inicio/centro-de-noticias/archivo-de-noticias/declaracion-de-la-unasur-frente-al-agravio-sufrido-por-el-presidente-evo-morales.

32 "Buscan que 100 gobiernos condenen a Evo Morales," *El Tiempo*, July 6, 2013, available at www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12912804.

organization. Nonetheless, judging by the advances that have been achieved and taking into account the most recent agreements and the difficulties that the organization went through during its beginnings to establish common ground, there seems to be a learning curve in matters of collective actions and reactions among UNASUR's member states. The set of reactions described here imply that the region's heads of government have achieved a way to coexist despite deep political disagreements; it does not imply that member states' positions are growing increasingly cohesive.

In spite of this, UNASUR's reactions are still the result of presidential initiatives—either individual or collective. The organization does not count on formal mechanisms to achieve its goals, and a very low level of institutionalization characterizes it. Hence, some critics have even suggested UNASUR is more of a “presidents club” than a regional organization. Presidents in the middle of political crisis can convene an extraordinary summit of heads of state to obtain some political support and legitimacy, but, beyond this, the organization's ability to act in a preventive and more institutionalized fashion, instead of in a merely ad hoc manner, is very limited.

Relations with Other International Actors

THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

The most difficult relation UNASUR has is with the Organization of American States (OAS), a hemispheric organization whose political agenda is similar to UNASUR's, but whose function generates harsh criticism from UNASUR's member states. This is due not only to its inefficiency but also to the historical powerful influence of the United States in the OAS.³³ However, UNASUR has some areas of overlap with the OAS: It has a concern with the consolidation of democracy, even though it does not legitimize intervention as a way to achieve such consolidation, and it has partici-

pated in the solutions of crises on which the OAS also has worked.

Besides the most recent cases explained above (i.e., Paraguay and Venezuela), one of the first interventions for the maintenance of democracy took place after an upsurge of violence in Bolivia resulting from the demands made by provincial departments seeking more autonomy from the central government. The departments demanded that Morales give back the money acquired from hydrocarbon production. This money was used by the president to pay a bonus to the elderly.³⁴ On this occasion, the pro tempore president of UNASUR, Michel Bachelet, summoned a meeting of heads of state of the organization. With the confrontation that erupted during the crisis between Washington, DC, and La Paz, Bolivia due to Washington's support to the opposition, the Bolivian government decided to privilege UNASUR's actions. Even though the OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza participated in the debates held in Santiago de Chile, his organization had to opt for a modest profile.

However, the attitudes of UNASUR member states toward the OAS vary substantially. Colombia has become more committed to UNASUR, but it is clear that it does not see UNASUR as a substitute for the OAS. This is one of the major tensions among the governments of the region: While some states see UNASUR as one of many multilateral forums, others see it as the exclusive arena where regional differences should be negotiated with the hope that its consolidation could lead to the demise of the OAS as a final result of the region's independence from the United States.

Still, the relationship between both organizations is not all about confrontation; there have been important instances of cooperation. During the attempted coup against the Ecuadorian government in September 2010, UNASUR reacted in a much more rapid way than the OAS. However, both organizations got together to conform a solid opposition to the threats made against the Ecuadorian institutional order. This case, unlike

33 It is important to clarify that the tendency of Latin American countries to stop the US influence by the creation of multilateral entities, both regional and subregional, and the integration of schemes that deliberately exclude the presence of the United States is not new. That was the spirit of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) and the 1967 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Tlatelolco Treaty). See Thomas Legler, “De la afirmación de la autonomía a la gobernanza autónoma: El reto de América Latina y el Caribe,” in *América Latina y el Caribe: Multilateralismo vs soberanía: La construcción de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños*, edited by Francisco Rojas Aravena (Buenos Aires: Teseo; FLACSO, 2011), pp. 23–48.

34 Part of the requirement implied the detention of the referendum to approve the new socialist constitution.

the Bolivian case, did not show tension between the organizations. On the contrary, the combined efforts resulted in a rapid restitution of civil power.

Other instances exist where UNASUR has looked for combined actions with the Inter-American bloc. Although some states, such as Venezuela, insist on the obsolescence and uselessness of the OAS, other members have tried to augment its influence in front of the hemispheric organization through the formation of a combined position in UNASUR. For example, in February 2010 the OAS's secretary-general, José Miguel Insulza, and a delegate from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Ciro de Falco, were invited to assist the UNASUR extraordinary summit in Quito. The main subject discussed during the summit was aid to Haiti.³⁵ Likewise, Insulza participated in various meetings of the organization destined to resolve tensions in the region.

Nevertheless, the instances of confrontation between both organizations are far from disappearing. For example, in May 2011, Argentina, in front of the foreign ministers of the South American Defense Council, put into consideration a motion for the South American bloc to ask the OAS to call for a special conference to revise the whole Inter-American system of defense. The Argentinian minister of defense at the time, Arturo Puricelli, justified the initiative by declaring that it was necessary to “overcome an Inter-American system conceived around the interests of non-South American countries,” such as the United States and Canada, through a global formulation that takes into account “UNASUR’s vision.”³⁶ However, from the OAS’s standpoint, Secretary-General Insulza has stated clearly that the OAS does not compete with UNASUR and, actually, he has been one of the major promoters of the South American initiative.³⁷

Finally, several countries from the region with different levels of aggression have fomented the reform process of the Inter-American System of

Human Rights (SIDH). In various cases, the intentions to reform have tried to lighten or weaken the system’s pressure mechanisms that are aimed to accomplish a higher level of compliance by the member states with international human rights norms. Even though this opposition has not been consensual among the states of UNASUR, several of the member states (Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia, among others) have undertaken a diplomatic offensive to weaken the system. Some, such as Venezuela, have even proposed to end the SIDH and substitute it with a sectoral council in UNASUR dedicated to human rights issues under which the member states would be held responsible.

OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Latin America is an exceptional example of an environment where regional and subregional organizations tend to proliferate.³⁸ Some have argued that this proliferation only creates frictions and hence leads to divisions instead of unity in the region.³⁹ However, this proliferation is usually in reference to organizations focused on economic integration; this type of organization was more common in this area of the world prior to the emergence of UNASUR and after CELAC. The fact that UNASUR does not attempt to consolidate itself as a supranational organization for economic and/or commercial integration means that it is not competing with other organizations such as the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) that were designed to pursue economic integration. As a matter of fact, neither the Constitutive Treaty nor the declarations allude to or give a clear characterization for market integration, i.e., free trade zone or customs union.⁴⁰ However, there are no explicit statements against it either:

The fact that, except for a generic mention in the Treaty’s preamble, CAN and MERCOSUR do not figure as constitutive elements or as organizations associated with UNASUR, indicates the lack of

35 Sección Internacional, “OEA y BID estarán representados en cumbre de Unasur en Quito,” *El Universal*, February 9, 2010, available at www.eluniversal.com/2010/02/08/int_ava_oea-y-bid-estaran-re_08A3409531.shtml.

36 “UNASUR, CDS, OEA: Relaciones y Cambios,” *Télam*, May 13, 2011.

37 Sección Justicia, “La OEA no está en ninguna competencia con Unasur, afirmó José Miguel Insulza,” *El Tiempo*, August 24, 2010, available at www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-7878299.

38 Detlef Nolte, Brigitte Weiffen, and Leslie Wehner, “Overlapping Regional Security Institutions in South America: The Case of OAS and UNASUR,” *International Area Studies Review* 16, No. 4 (2013): 370–389.

39 A. Malamud and G.L. Gardini, “Has Regionalism Peaked? The Latin American Quagmire and its Lessons,” *The International Spectator* 47, No. 1 (2012):116–133.

40 José Antonio Sanahuja Perales, “Regionalismo e integración en clave Suramericana: Los orígenes y evolución de Unasur,” in *La creación de Unasur en el marco de la seguridad y la defensa*, *Documentos de Seguridad y Defensa* 29, comp. Ministerio de Defensa de España (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa de España, 2010), p.53.

consensus in regards to their role for the formation of a common South American economic area. It also predicts the future difficulties for the relation between these economic organizations and the political “umbrella” that is UNASUR.⁴¹

It is important to acknowledge that its most immediate precedent, the South American Community of Nations (CSN) created during the Third South American Summit in Cuzco (December 2004), was consolidated around three central ideas. These were: foreign policy consultation and coordination; the convergence of CAN, MERCOSUR, Chile, Guyana, and Suriname in the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); and physical integration through the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA). Moreover, it further emphasized “the commitment to cooperate in other issues. This agenda was expanded afterwards for integration in matters of energy, the treatment of regional asymmetries, and the financial cooperation through the Banco del Sur (Bank of the South).”⁴²

Even though matters have advanced in regard to foreign policy consultation to create a common international position from the bloc, integration with other subregional organizations has not been automatic, and there is dissent in regard to the process. In terms of infrastructure, energy, and finances,

the CSN-UNASUR agenda has also encountered problems. IIRSA has demonstrated a relatively low degree of commitment due to financial difficulties. In 2005, “The Agenda for the Consented Implementation” was approved for the period of 2005–2010. It had thirty-one pillar projects selected from 348; however, only one third of them are being executed. Furthermore, its environmental impact is very high, and there is reasonable doubt whether IIRSA will contribute to the articulation of regional markets or will serve the “primary-exporter” model that seems to reappear due to the high demands for commodities from Asia.⁴³

Consequently, since the time of CSN, UNASUR has avoided a “hard” integration scheme and has

intended to privilege its status as a political forum and as a regional coordinator. Under this framework, although there is no open contradiction with other regional organizations, it cannot be stated that there is a complete coordination or a clear-cut division of labor among them.

CELAC’s objective is to create a more balanced space for interlocution with the United States and the promotion of political integration and consultation at the regional level, and to fill a space “in regards to the existence of a Latin American political forum for dialogue.”⁴⁴ One of the main objectives of CELAC is to facilitate the rationalization and organization of the proliferation of organizations of integration, coordination, and consultation. Thus, CELAC aims at replacing the Rio Group and the Latin America-Caribbean Summit. Afterwards, the same is expected to happen with the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) and ALADI. Venezuela, one of the biggest promoters of CELAC, together with Chile and Ecuador, has insisted that CELAC could eventually substitute the OAS.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that even though there is no formal mechanism for dialogue and consultation between UNASUR and the Pacific Alliance, the latter generates an interesting dynamic in matters of integration in the region. The Pacific Alliance attempts to accomplish a more traditional type of integration, putting emphasis on commercial, economic, and mobility issues. Furthermore, it constitutes itself as a consultation forum for countries that can be defined in ideological and political terms as centrist, with little desire to use the organization as a tool to defy the power of the United States in the region. Its members are countries that have more pragmatic foreign policies, are more oriented toward the United States, and are less ideological. In spite of their differences, Colombia, Chile, and Peru are members of the Pacific Alliance and UNASUR simultaneously.

41 Perales, “Regionalismo e integración en clave Suramericana,” pp. 53–54.

42 Ibid., p. 48.

43 Ibid., p. 50.

44 As Alcides Costa Vaz suggests, the difficulties with revitalizing the OAS, the denouncement of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) by Mexico, and the failure in the negotiations of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA), made “evident the various limitations and resistance that the attempt [...] for regional multilateralism had to deal with. It facilitated in this way the emergence of a Latin American bloc.” Alcides Costa Vaz, “La Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños: ¿Es una opción viable para consolidar el multilateralismo y la integración Latinoamericana?” in *América Latina y el Caribe: Multilateralismo vs soberanía: La construcción de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños*, ed. Francisco Rojas Aravena (Buenos Aires: Teseo/FLACSO, 2011), p. 161.

THE UNITED NATIONS

In 2004, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was inaugurated, and from the start the participation of the South American members of MERCOSUR has been integral to it. Brazil and Chile, at the time both members of the UN Security Council, played a fundamental role in the drafting of Resolution 1542 that gave a legal status to the mission. Initially, Brazil led this with the deployment of 1,200 men and the mission's military chief, General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira; Chile committed to send nearly 600 infantry men; Uruguay, 500; and Paraguay, 200. Argentina's participation at the time was not yet clarified. Even though the South American countries adopted a political commitment to the stabilization of Haiti, the initial deployment of troops did not permit the withdrawal of French and Canadian troops that were operating in Haiti since the fall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government. However, the withdrawal of French and Canadian troops was foreseen to happen within ninety days of the beginning of the mission, and it opened the possibility for the countries of MERCOSUR to widen their contingencies after the first months of the UN mission.⁴⁵

On May 13, 2005, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay's vice heads of state and defense began a series of meetings to formulate solutions for the Haitian crisis and to guarantee greater success of MINUSTAH. A year after its creation, "the officials from the four countries coincided in the recognition of the Haitian crisis as one of political, economic, and social nature, and therefore, its solution was not only of military character."⁴⁶ Out of this meeting, the idea emerged to create an informal working group among these governmental bodies as a means to coordinate positions and actions; and furthermore, it was proposed to summon all the countries in the region (even those that were not part of MERCOSUR) to be a part of the effort to stabilize Haiti.

As a result, on August 19, 2005, the Argentinian, Chilean, Uruguayan, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, and

Peruvian vice heads of state met again. In this meeting, designated as 2X7, the OAS Secretary-General Insulza, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti Juan Gabriel Valdés, and MINUSTAH's military commander, General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira also attended.⁴⁷

After Rene Preval's election in Haiti, the 2X7 reconvened in August 2006 in Buenos Aires and decided to support the newly established government's social and economic policies. They also agreed upon the search for combined positions to modify MINUSTAH's mandate by adding other civil components and support for public security. Bolivia and Paraguay joined the 2X7, confirming the 2X9; afterwards, Panama also joined. During its meeting in Lima in 2007, the group insisted on the importance of quick impact projects (QIPs) to alleviate the population's situation and the need for the Haitian government's approval for actions taken by the international community.⁴⁸

In August 2007 in Guatemala, the Haitian minister of foreign affairs, the secretary-general of the Association of Caribbean States, the secretary-general of the OAS, the head and the deputy special representative for MINUSTAH, and the deputy of high command in Panama, acting as a member of the UN Security Council, attended the meeting of the 2X9. Both Peru and Panama, as members of the Security Council, tried to represent the region's position and pursued coordination for the renovation of the mission's mandate.

Although this process evidences the existence of a connection between the activities of the 2X9 and the United Nations, there are many instances where the coordination between them has not ended as intended. For example, the UN secretary-general's decision to appoint his new deputy in Haiti in August 2007 was not decided in consultation or agreement with the 2X9. Additionally, despite the coordination attempt made by Peru in the Security Council, Resolution 1780, which authorized MINUSTAH's permanence until October 15, 2008, did not include the mandates discussed by the 2X9. These referred to social and

45 Daniel Gallo, "Con demoras, se pidió el envío de tropas a Haití" in *La Nación*, May 22, 2004, available at www.lanacion.com.ar/603423-con-demoras-se-pidio-el-envio-de-tropas-a-haiti.

46 Grupo de Trabajo-Argentina, "El '2X9': ¿Una incipiente comunidad de seguridad en América Latina?" Policy Paper No. 18, Bogota, Colombia: Programa de Cooperación en Seguridad Regional-FES, 2007, p. 2.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

economic cooperation and the implementation of mechanisms for the island's social cohesion.⁴⁹

UNASUR's participation in these instances became more direct and formal after the earthquake of 2010. The organization met in Quito and committed a fund of \$100 million to reconstruction. Out of this, \$60 million was given either in a direct way or through multilateral organizations, and the rest was given through UNASUR's secretary-general.⁵⁰ In May 2010, a mission was sent to Haiti where the main priorities in matters of cooperation were decided upon: infrastructure, food security, and institutional strengthening. On August 31st, a UNASUR-Haiti technical secretariat was established to fulfill the commitment made in Quito and to assume tasks to improve the quality of food, the construction of houses, and legal assistance. On July 11, 2011, UNASUR's Secretary-General María Emma Mejía and the Special Representative for the UNASUR-Haiti Technical Secretariat Rodolfo Mattarollo presented to the public the report of the organization's regional cooperation with Haiti.

This report made it clear that, out of the \$100 million, \$70 million was destined for the implementation of 144 projects that were coordinated and identified as priorities for the Haitian government. UNASUR's cooperation with Haiti has covered issues such as health, food sovereignty, local production, the construction and improvement of infrastructure, a change of the energy matrix, environmental conservation, the strengthening of local capacities, the defense of human rights, among others.⁵¹ However, the issue that is still pending is the legalization of Haitian migrants to UNASUR's member states due to these states closing their borders to these migrants and their toughening of migration policies toward a population with a clear need for international protection.⁵²

Despite the signals of a larger involvement of the region in Haiti, during the second week of September 2011, the Brazilian government announced its desire to gradually reduce its contin-

gent in the island's peacekeeping mission and the withdrawal of 257 uniformed personnel of the peace mission. The then minister of defense Celso Amorim declared that keeping the troops in Haiti would not benefit Haiti in any way and that it was necessary to establish a concrete time for the withdrawal. The minister declared that the withdrawal would be done in coordination with the United Nations and the other nations present on the island to avoid a chaotic situation.

In October 2012, the UN Security Council renewed its mission's mandate for one year. One month later, Brazil began the process of replacing its contingent in MINUSTAH by sending 130 troops out of a total of 642 that would gradually be sent to Port-au-Prince until the completion of its mandate in December 2012. In May 2013, Brazil announced that it would begin the reduction of its military contingent in Haiti and that, between March and June, it would take 460 military troops back and end the second battalion that had been created in 2010 for the emergency resulting from the earthquake. According to the Brazilian government, since 2004 there has been a substantial improvement of institutions and stability in Haiti. Economic problems require a more substantial and comprehensive approach that MINUSTAH was in no position to provide due to the limitations of its mandate. Since Brazilian interests in coordination of the region's efforts guided a great part of the actions in Haiti taken by UNASUR, it is expected that a reduction of Brazilian presence in Haiti would translate into a lower profile by UNASUR, both in presence and in aid.

Even though there are instances of cooperation and agreement between the United Nations and UNASUR, such as cooperation achieved to help Haiti and a recent agreement to cooperate in promoting women's rights, this sort of understanding between both organizations does not appear to be the norm. The evidence seems to suggest that the dialogue between both organizations has not achieved a sufficient level of institu-

49 Grupo de Trabajo-Argentina, "El '2X9,'" p. 6.

50 "Presidentes de Unasur ratificarán cooperación Haití," in *El Nacional*, July 26, 2011, available at www.elnacional.com.do/nacional/2011/7/26/90012/Presidentes-de-Unasur-ratificaran-cooperacion-Haiti.

51 Woolly Edson Louidor, "Cooperación Unasur-Haití: Hora de hacer un balance completo," in *América Latina en Movimiento*, Agencia Latinoamericana de Información, July 13, 2011, available at <http://alainet.org/active/48018>.

52 Comunidad El País, "Cooperación Unasur-Haití: Hora de hacer un balance completo," in *El País*, July 15, 2011, available at <http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/matero11/2011/7/15/cooperacion-unasur-haiti-hora-hacer-balance-completo>.

tionalization. Hence, the relationship between UNASUR and the United Nations could be defined as distant, and constructive work remains to be done in this realm. However, the challenges are not small.

First, Brazilian leadership under the current administration has eroded in the region (mainly due to Brazil's lack of interest), and, without it, UNASUR appears to be facing the crisis that results from the absence of a clear and strategic road map. The death of Chávez left another leadership position in the region that has not been filled by another head of state, and President Santos' leadership plans have not been recognized by Colombia's neighbors yet. Even Ecuador, the host country of UNASUR, is more interested in its new role as a member of the CELAC troika than in investing additional political capital in UNASUR.

Second, UNASUR's lack of institutionalization hinders attempts to construct long-term forms of cooperation with the United Nations or any other international organizations. Member states have not engaged in further efforts to institutionalize and consolidate the organization and, on the contrary, their presidents tend to use it very frequently as a provider of political legitimacy and nothing else. Additionally, UNASUR's secretary-general is a very weak post with very low levels of delegation from the states. This does not allow the organization to go beyond bilateral meetings (such as the one María Emma Mejía had with the UN secretary-general to explore possible areas of cooperation) nor establish long-term mechanisms of bi-institutional cooperation. Again, no permanent instances of dialogue between UNASUR and the United Nations (and its agencies) have been established.

Potential for Growth and Effectiveness

The fact that the organization emphasizes national sovereignty, high-level mediation, and self-determination over norm construction and compliance reinforces the idea that UNASUR is not a supranational organization created by the states with the objective to produce a higher level of

homogeneity in terms of the member states' interests and to transform their *modus operandi* in the international arena. On the contrary, the organization's rules seem to be designed to codify preexistent behavior of its member states and to eventually resolve some collective issues in matters of security and defense. What is clear is that, by the way it is designed, it is not an organization that has the potential to produce or to guide strong convergences among the interests of the South American states. A reform to achieve such convergences is very unlikely if one takes into account the absence of clear leadership within the institution and the deepening of political and ideological differences among member states.

Another factor to the detriment of the consolidation of the organization has to do with its strong presidential component. The Council of Heads of State and Government is the "maximum organ" in UNASUR.⁵³ Therefore, its operation is a result of governmental or personal commitments rather than statist ones. The presidential transitions from more committed frameworks with the region toward more diversified foreign policies may affect the consolidation process in a negative way. This may happen if, as has been happening until now, the General Secretariat keeps having narrow attributions and the member states keep delegating limited power quotas.

The General Secretariat, located in Quito, executes the mandates given by the decision-making organs in UNASUR.⁵⁴ The secretary-general is designated by the Council of Heads of State and Government for a period of two years, with the possibility of a one-year renewal, and without the possibility of being succeeded by a person with the same nationality. Nonetheless, it is an institution that has been an object of harsh criticism due to the limited power granted to it by the heads of state of the member states. The General Secretariat is not a supranational entity with the capacity to practice any type of enforcement. It has a very limited level of delegation and authority over the member states. In fact, the Secretariat's staff is composed of diplomatic representatives from each member state and has a very narrow bureaucracy of its own. Additionally, the budget granted to the

53 See Article 6, Union of South American Nations, "South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty," May 23, 2008.

54 See Article 10, Union of South American Nations, "South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty," May 23, 2008.

Secretariat is very limited, which affects the secretary-general's work conditions.

Given these conditions, UNASUR's election for secretary-general does not create high expectations in matters of execution and implementation. This position simply does not have the necessary levels of autonomy, authority, and power to achieve important objectives. Thus, the election for secretary-general is just a process by which the member states are able to measure each other and achieve certain levels of commitment, representation, and visibility. Taking Colombia as an example, in the midst of the reconstruction of its foreign policy under the Santos administration, it was important to demonstrate its commitment to the region. The ideal scenery implied the recovery of the diplomatic space in UNASUR, and Colombia therefore decided to nominate its former foreign minister, María Emma Mejía, for secretary-general.

Furthermore, under Alí Rodríguez's representation, the General Secretariat has been further weakened as a result of the secretary-general's poor health and his impediment to reside permanently in Quito (the Secretariat's headquarters). This has substantially eroded the Secretariat's capacity to manage and initiate. In fact, there is the general perception that due to this particular circumstance and to the political instability in Venezuela, the General Secretariat is practically foregone.

Finally, the simultaneous presence of Colombia and Brazil in the UN Security Council between 2010 and 2012 made it clear that the region is far from being able to accomplish consensual bloc positions in regard to international issues. Despite the fact that both governments assumed roles of nonpermanent members on the council, each represented Latin American interests according to dissimilar agendas that sometimes were even contradictory. In terms of Haiti's situation, both Brazil and Colombia were able to articulate similar positions. However, in terms of the authorization for the no-fly zone in Libya, their positions were openly different. There was also no consultation with UNASUR's member states about the positions taken. Hence, UNASUR's narrow power has done little to bring the divergent positions of its member states closer in terms of important issues in the

international arena. The region's political differences have not vanished substantially due to the existence of this organization.

Finally, due to the current state of affairs, it is unlikely that UNASUR would experience in the near future growth in its membership or mission. First, Brazil's initial idea was to consolidate South America as a region through the creation of this organization. To some extent, this geographical definition is based on the assumption that Central America and the Caribbean are more closely related to Mexico and a traditional part of its sphere of influence. With the creation of the CELAC, the possibility of an eventual convergence exists, but the form it will take is still uncertain. Second, since the creation of UNASUR, it is very clear that member states do not want to delegate too much power to the organization and do not want it to turn into a supranational mechanism. Member states, as it was suggested before, prefer to protect their sovereignty over consolidating a mechanism of political coordination. That preference remains, and, consequently, it is not very likely that the organization will experience "mission creep" in the near future.

Conclusion

Even though at the level of the Council of Heads of State and Government only resolutions in favor of current presidents and governments seem to be made, there are other instances in which UNASUR is taking steps forward. More concretely, the South American Council of Defense is UNASUR's greatest achievement thus far; its establishment has contributed to the development of many common and joint strategies in a field where South America previously lacked unity. Another important achievement is the South American Council of Infrastructure Planning, an organization that has enabled the region to prioritize infrastructure projects that will boost development and integration. Some projects are stagnated, but there are important developments in terms of road, energy, and communication interconnectivity. Some countries such as Brazil and Peru have been more active; countries such as Colombia, Suriname, Guyana, and Venezuela are falling behind.⁵⁵

55 Socorro Ramírez, "¿Por Unasur a la Casa Rosada?" in *Razón Pública*, May 17, 2010, available at <http://socorroramirezfrace.blogspot.com>.

Additionally, UNASUR's ability to serve as a mediator in bilateral or internal crises has helped to consolidate South America's trust in its own mechanisms to solve conflicts. However, this ability has remained informal and subject to the influence of strong and high-profile personalities such as the late Néstor Kirchner. If the objective is to consolidate and strengthen UNASUR's work as a mediation tool, then this cannot be subjected to the profile of the person who is nominated as a secretary-general. The organization must make an effort to institutionalize the experience and lessons learned from its participation in the resolution of various regional crises. This also will respond to increasing criticisms related to UNASUR's difficulties to remain impartial and independent from member state governments.

Finally, even though UNASUR is partially the result of a leftist regional project, its social agenda has not been the priority for member states. UNASUR has not contributed concrete projects to reduce the prevalent high levels of poverty and inequality in South America through sustainable regional development, as was one of its stated goals during its creation. This is one crucial area in which this organization's mission can expand in an effective manner. If there is no clear political will in the region to undertake this project, then it is very likely that UNASUR would, in the near future, cease to be the post-neoliberal model of integration it promised to be.

The **INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE (IPI)** is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank with a staff representing more than twenty nationalities. It has offices facing United Nations Headquarters in New York and offices in Vienna and Manama. IPI is dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of conflicts between and within states by strengthening international peace and security institutions. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, convening, publishing, and outreach.



777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017-3521, USA

TEL +1-212-687-4300 FAX +1-212-983-8246

Freyung 3, 1010 Vienna, Austria

TEL +43-1-533-8881 FAX +43-1-533-8881-11

52-52 Harbour House, Bahrain Financial Harbour

P.O. Box 1467, Manama, Bahrain

TEL +973-1721-1344

www.ipinst.org