

**CONSOLIDATION OF SOUTH AMERICAN NATION STATES BASED ON
BORDERS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

***CONSOLIDAÇÃO DOS ESTADOS NACIONAIS SUL-AMERICANOS A PARTIR DAS
FRONTEIRAS E DA INTEGRAÇÃO REGIONAL***

***CONSOLIDACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS NACIONALES SUDAMERICANOS SOBRE LA
BASE DE LAS FRONTERAS Y LA INTEGRACIÓN REGIONAL***



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How to reference this article:

DHENIN, M. Consolidation of South American nation states based on borders and regional integration. **Teoria & Pesquisa: Revista de Ciência Política**, São Carlos, v. 32, n. esp. 3, e023030, 2024. e-ISSN: 2236-0107. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14244/tp.v32iesp.3.1041>



| **Submitted:** 30/04/2023
| **Required revisions:** 20/06/2023
| **Approved:** 11/09/2023
| **Published:** 20/12/2023

Editors: Profa. Dra. Simone Diniz
Prof. Dr. Eduardo de Lima Caldas
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Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this paper is to offer readers a broad overview of the process of consolidation of South American borders in the light of regional integration, from the beginning of the 16th century to the present day. To this end, we mobilize conceptual elements from the field of history and geopolitics to analyze the main developments and lines of thought used during the construction process of South America. The argument of the article is that the regional dynamics result from the tension (or dialectic) between the (geo)political centers and the border areas, inserting itself in the processes of internal consolidation of the South American nations. As a result, we can affirm the historical resistance, on the part of the nations of the South American continent, in politically deepening the process of regional integration, particularly in light of the experience lived during the global pandemic.

KEYWORDS: State. Nation. Border. Integration. South America.

RESUMO: *Esse artigo tem como propósito principal oferecer aos leitores um panorama amplo do processo de consolidação das fronteiras sul-americanas à luz da integração regional, desde o começo do século XVI até os dias atuais. Para tal, mobilizamos elementos conceituais oriundos do campo da história e da geopolítica para analisar as principais evoluções e linhas de pensamento utilizadas durante o processo de construção da América do Sul. O argumento do artigo é que a dinâmica regional resulta da tensão (ou dialética) entre os centros (geo)políticos e as áreas de fronteiras, inserindo-se nos processos de consolidação interna das nações sul-americanas. Como resultado, podemos afirmar a resistência histórica, por parte das nações do continente sul-americano, em aprofundar politicamente o processo de integração regional, particularmente à luz da experiência vivenciada durante a pandemia global.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Estado. Nação. Fronteira. Integração. América do Sul.*

RESUMEN: *El objetivo principal de este artículo es ofrecer a los lectores un panorama amplio del proceso de consolidación de las fronteras sudamericanas a la luz de la integración regional, desde principios del siglo XVI hasta la actualidad. Para ello, movilizamos elementos conceptuales del campo de la historia y la geopolítica para analizar los principales desarrollos y líneas de pensamiento utilizados durante el proceso de construcción de América del Sur. El argumento del artículo es que la dinámica regional resulta de la tensión (o dialéctica) entre los centros (geo)políticos y las zonas fronterizas, insertándose en los procesos de consolidación interna de las naciones sudamericanas. En consecuencia, podemos afirmar la resistencia histórica, por parte de las naciones del continente sudamericano, a profundizar políticamente el proceso de integración regional, particularmente a la luz de la experiencia vivida durante la pandemia mundial.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Estado. Nación. Frontera. Integración. América del Sur.*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to give readers a broad overview of the process of consolidating borders and regional integration projects, from the 16th century to the present day. Depending on the length of the period covered, it is mainly a question of presenting some lines of thought to approach the processes of constitution of states and the border dynamics that have influenced the construction of South America. As a starting point, we take existing historical and geopolitical elements in the light of the construction of South American nationalisms. This exercise is carried out in three stages:

In the first section of this chapter, we discuss the formation of borders in South America, from the colonial era to the republican period at the end of the 19th century, quickly passing through the wars of independence. The second section starts from the post-war period in 1945, a period marked by regional initiatives to encourage development on the continent, from the 1950s to the mid-1990s. Finally, the last section aims to briefly present current social issues in South America, from the perspective of current issues (political, commercial and public health).

A brief history of border formation in South America

The historical impact of the colonial era (15th-19th centuries)

The maritime expansionism of the European powers was aimed at opening up new trade routes, shifting efforts from the Mediterranean region to the Atlantic. This began with the annexation of territories in Africa. Through slavery, the South American colonies were shaped by violence, particularly in the regions dominated by the Spanish Crown. At first, the exploitation by the Iberian colonizers of primary resources such as wood (brazilwood) or precious metals proved to be very lucrative (CHAUNU, 2010).

The Church was one of the central institutions of the Ibero-American colonial project. In fact, mass catechization by the Jesuits satisfied the indigenous populations, forming a mestizo elite. This elite was dedicated to economic and administrative activities, such as triangular trade (GUILLERMON, 1992). On the other hand, it is notorious that local mestizo elites were formed, which played a unique role in reproducing coloniality, articulated in the dialectic between knowledge and power (QUIJANO, 2005).

From the point of view of territorial management, Portuguese America opted to set up a system of hereditary captaincies, located along the coasts of present-day Brazil. These were

unable to sustain a flourishing trade because of the many difficulties. Little by little, the South American territories were transformed from a place of primary production into a kind of platform for the international slave market between Africa, Europe and the Americas (VESPÚCIO, 2003).

The formation of territories in the Spanish and Portuguese Americas (but also in the Guiana Shield) was the result of long and coordinated movements by European and then Creole elites to create the ideal conditions for the exploitation of natural resources. At the end of the 18th century, the expulsion of the Jesuits by the Portuguese and Spanish crowns marked the end of this cycle, due to the lack of enthusiasm for demarcation expeditions and the difficulties encountered in carrying out expansionist projects (HOLANDA, 1989).

The impact of the wars of independence on border formation

During the 19th century, South America saw the emergence of new states. Colonial development strengthened local economies and was a factor in the consolidation of powerful local oligarchies for many years. From a geopolitical point of view, it is important to note that treaties were signed to liberalize maritime trade in South America. This was particularly the case with the opening of ports to British companies in Brazil (CLIMACO, 2010).

The Napoleonic Wars in Europe accelerated the process of the War of Independence, spreading like wildfire in the first decade of the 19th century. In Spanish America, personalities such as José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar were born and left their mark on these movements. The wars of independence lasted until 1830, with the independence of Uruguay, a major geopolitical stake in the Southern Cone (FREGA, 2011).

These independence movements were marked by the rejection of the demands of the unitary currents (particularly the polarization of the elites), the centralization of power by local leaders and, above all, the maintenance of a society with particularly unequal economic and social structures. In 1822, Prince Regent Pedro I transferred the capital of the empire to Rio de Janeiro, which *effectively* transformed Brazil into an independent state (ENDERS, 2008).

Faced with this expansion movement in Brazil, projects to bring the young independent nations closer together or integrate them began to be structured around the figure of Simón Bolívar (WASSERMAN, 2010). During the Congress of Panama in 1826, the project of Latin American territorial unity was debated, but this ran up against the interests of the Creole elites who wanted to maintain their influence over these states. Thus, at the end of the 19th century,

the South American states began to adopt republican models, which put an end to the time of empires in South America (CERVO; BUENO, 1992).

The emergence of young republics and the construction of nation states

The republican movements in South America were marked by great instability, with numerous coups d'état that brought the military to power. It was at the beginning of the 20th century that the figures of the diplomat and the military gained importance, in order to consolidate the interior of these strategic spaces (Amazonia in Brazil, with the important mission of Rondon or even Patagonia in the framework of Argentina's development). It was a question of affirming the role of the national state on the South American borders, with little or no connection to the capitals and economic centers. The First World War was also an opportunity for many countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, to rekindle historical tensions, such as those linked to the demarcation of national borders (COMPAGNON, 2013).

One of the important issues of the time was Bolivia's access to the sea and the conflict with Paraguay. We can also mention the negotiation of the purchase of the territory of Acre in 1903. A diplomat also played a key role in Brazil's territorial consolidation. Indeed, the Baron of Rio Branco, José Maria da Silva Paranhos Junior, was the basis of an arduous work of diplomatic negotiations with neighboring countries. He skilfully used international arbitration to define Brazil's vast borders, whether with the contested French Guiana (recognized in 1900) or as already mentioned in the west of the country with Acre (BUENO, 2012).

Other South American statesmen also had a marked influence on this period. At that time, the Chaco War (1932-1935) between Bolivia and Paraguay had a lasting impact on South America. This is linked to Bolivia's defeat during the War of the Pacific, but also because of the discovery of hydrocarbons in the *Gran Chaco* region. This conflict was particularly deadly and was responsible for more than 200,000 deaths (BANDEIRA, 1998).

But the arrival of fascism in Europe in the mid-1930s also marked the young republics, with important geostrategic choices and alliances with the Axis (Nazi Germany, Benito Mussolini's Italy and Imperial Japan) or relative neutrality. Once again, border demarcation processes were influenced by the events of the Second World War in Europe between 1939 and 1945.

Stages in the construction of South American integration: from ECLAC to Unasur (1948-2008)

The question of development at the heart of debates on regional integration

The process of regional integration developed around two movements. On the one hand, there was the attempt to build a Pan-American confederation. Despite its failure, the Pan-American doctrine left a legacy on the continent, especially with the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948 (SANTOS, 1998). On the other hand, Brazil's expansionist policy and growing trade openness formalized the birth of two of South America's main regional blocs: the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) and the Andean Community (CAN).

Within the framework of the Latin American Free Trade Association (ALALC), the regional integration project favored the economic sphere, influenced by functionalist thinking, which also favored the creation of the European Communities (in 1957, with the Treaty of Rome). This project was also linked to the economic thinking developed within the framework of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), created in 1948 (QUENAN; VELUT, 2011).

Cepalist thinking was forged around import substitution industrialization and regional integration as a strategy for the economic development of developing countries. The creation of the Institute for Latin American Integration (IILA) through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 1966 reflected the importance given to regional integration at the time. With the opening of democracy, two nations joined forces to establish a more political integration project (BUENO *et al.*, 2014).

In fact, Presidents Sarney (Brazil) and Afonsín (Argentina) signed the Iguazu Declaration in 1985, which created a High-Level Binational Joint Commission to speed up the process of regional integration in South America. In the 1990s, both countries adopted very liberal economic policies, considered unprecedented. In this context, the two neighbors formed a common market. The signing of the Buenos Aires Declaration in July 1990 officially established the Common Market Group, which, as its name suggests, was responsible for setting up Mercosur (CAMARGO, 1993).

Liberal integration in the 1990s: the impact of regionalization on the South American integration process

Despite their bilateral origins, Uruguay and then Paraguay joined the regional integration project in 1991. The opening up to other countries in the region as associate members was decided by the acceleration of the Initiative for the Americas, orchestrated by the United States. Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay ratified the Treaty of Asunción in 1991, which deepened trade, mainly by speeding up the liberalization of the Mercosur bloc's markets, specific regimes, safe conducts and systems for resolving disputes (SEITENFUS, 1992).

With the entry into force of the Ouro Preto Protocol (1995), Mercosur gained the status of an international organization with legal personality and definitively marked South America's entry into the world's regional integration blocs (DABÈNE, 1995). Based on historical precedents, the Mercosur member states signed the Declaration of Democratic Commitment in 1996, in which they reaffirmed their full adherence to democratic principles and institutions, the rule of law and respect for human rights and freedoms. In 2002, the Ushuaia Protocol ratified this historic decision (MONTES; ANASTASIA, 2017).

Regional asymmetries, linked to the demographic weight of Brazil and the financial crisis in Argentina, made it difficult for the regional bloc to flourish, a determining factor in the rejection of the opening of a more intense process of regional integration at the end of the 1990s. It was at this time that the Initiative for South American Regional Integration (IIRSA) was conceived. The aim was to stimulate the financing of major investment projects in ten major areas. The topics discussed are transportation, energy, telecommunications and tax reforms (DHENIN, 2015).

Influenced by neoliberal policies, IIRSA made it possible to integrate industrial production areas and natural resources with domestic and foreign markets. To this end, major infrastructures (such as bridges, highways, gas pipelines, railway lines and ports) were launched with the help of many public-private partnerships. As part of Unasur, IIRSA was restructured in 2008 to form the South American Infrastructure and Planning Council (Cosiplan).

In the early 2000s, the newly elected and progressive presidents Lula and Nestor Kirchner strengthened the regional integration process with the creation of the Community of South American Nations (CASA) in 2004, in accordance with the ratification of the Cusco Declaration. This became the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) whose aim, from 2008, was to bring the countries together politically around the same integration project, taking advantage of a kind of momentum, with ideologically aligned governments (NERY, 2016).

Those who are more inclined to develop a more autonomist policy. Finally, Unasur has been criticized by some nations on the continent, arguing that it would serve Brazil as a diplomatic platform to exert its influence with the great powers. One of President Lula's stated objectives was the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with the arrival of Brazil as a permanent member of the Council.

Beyond Mercosur and the CAN: alternative integration models?

In recent years, observers have pointed to a relative displacement of South America as a subsystem of growing importance for its high-level domestic and foreign policies, particularly in relation to North America (here lies the influence of the United States). In fact, the process of regional integration has become more complex, notably due to the fragmentation of economic alliances, which are more pragmatic. We are referring here to the rise of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Pacific Alliance (2011) in the early 2000s (REIS, *et al.*, 2014).

In South America, the middle of the decade marked the establishment of South-South structures that questioned and challenged the asymmetries of the international system. Indeed, it was during this period that alternative organizations to liberalism (a response to the Washington consensus) were formed, thus adopting a model of post-liberal regionalism, such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac) and the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) (BRICEÑO-RUIZ, 2021).

Faced with these movements, the United States has sought to hinder the consolidation of these sub-regional initiatives for the integration of South America. This was demonstrated by the signing of the Lima Declaration in 2011, which gave rise to the Pacific Alliance, with Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Peru as the founding states. This adopted a model of liberal regionalism, clearly favoring economic and trade issues. However, the divergent profiles of its members did not bring the expected results (MALAMUD, 2015).

The South American integration process then followed two distinct trajectories: a first "Pacific" axis, which was more liberal and commercial, and a second "Atlantic" axis, which proposed a more interventionist and autonomist model. In the second case, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) was launched in 2004 on the initiative of Hugo Chávez, then president of Venezuela. Many Caribbean countries joined. ALBA's declared

aim was to form a political bloc and develop an integration model that was fairer, showed more solidarity and was less dependent on pressure from the United States (ALTMANN, 2011).

For its part, the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) has long been politically disjointed. It was created in 1973 from the institutional reorganization of the Andean Pact. It was only in 2006 that these founding members established a defined free trade area. Its basic model provided for a supranational dimension, with the creation of the Andean Parliament. The influence of the more liberal governments of Colombia and Peru hindered the emergence of a possible customs union and gave rise to a simple free trade area, interspersed with a few bilateral treaties that largely favored privileged relations with the United States (BRESSAN; LUCIANO, 2018).

In 2011, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was an important step in the integration process of South American and Caribbean states. Indeed, CELAC has essentially served as a political space for consultation and exchange between nations in order to reduce asymmetries with the United States. Some analysts have pointed out that CELAC could, in a way, replace or serve as an alternative to those OAS countries traditionally associated with the US (AUROI, 2009).

With regard to CELAC, it is important to briefly recall the role of the Caribbean Community (or Caricom) in the South American integration process. This regional bloc was created in 1973 and is based in Georgetown, the capital of Suriname. This country is located, like its neighbor Guyana, geographically in South America, but shares cultural and diplomatic trade relations to a large extent with the Caribbean states (FARIAS, 2000).

Geopolitical consequences of a declining integration process

South America in crisis: regional integration weakened by the end of Unasur?

With the wave of elections of right-wing/conservative and liberal governments, South American regional integration was a turning point in this process from 2013 onwards. In fact, that year marked the coming to power of Horacio Cartes in Paraguay, followed successively by Mauricio Macri in Argentina in 2015, then Peru with the victory of Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in 2016, Levín Moreno in Ecuador in 2017, Ivan Duque the following year in Colombia and Luís Callé Pou in Uruguay in 2019. The regional projects and governments set up in the first decade of the 2000s were criticized and questioned by the newly elected right-wing governments, who

described them as corrupt, the fruit of the mafia systems of the former left-wing governments (GIBLIN, 2018).

One of the main decisions of these right-wing and far-right governments was to collectively leave Unasur. This was orchestrated by Colombia in 2016, followed by Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Peru and finally Ecuador. All these countries came together under the aegis of Chile to launch the Forum for the Progress of South America (Prosur). In short, it was not a question of offering a credible alternative to Unasur, but rather of preparing a rather vague agenda of actions around issues related to infrastructure, energy, health or national defense (BRASIL, 2019).

Despite the departure of several important countries from Unasur, as mentioned above, it continues to exist, albeit suspended, with the help of Bolivia, Venezuela, Suriname and Guyana. However, its diplomatic and economic influence cannot be compared to when it was created in 2008. On the other hand, we can also put into perspective the importance assumed by Mercosur, which has been marginalized during Bolsonaro's presidency, due to the election in Argentina of Alberto Fernández, of progressive tendencies in 2019. The framework agreement with the European Union being at the center of issues related to agribusiness and the protection of the Amazon, the two economic blocs represent around ¼ of the world's GDP. (PENNAFORTE *et al.*, 2018).

The Mercosur-EU agreement in sight: two very different models?

The South American integration process, as we have seen, is marked by advances and setbacks due to economic, diplomatic or trade issues. In this sense, it is important to understand the complexity of these issues in order to look briefly at the signing, in June 2019, of the framework agreement between the European Union and Mercosur. From a business point of view, this is a significant step forward after decades of negotiations (DROGUE; RAMOS, 2005).

In short, to get an idea of its size, it is necessary to define the extent to which the regional blocs will be able to cooperate in a market that brings together around 800 million people. In this agreement, it is established that the two parties can negotiate the legal statutes, health standards and other aspects related to intellectual property necessary to deepen trade between Europe and South America. In any case, the framework agreement marks a significant step for the latter, in particular to increase its exports. In fact, the agreement provided that we would go

from 24 to 90% of Mercosur products with zero import tariffs for the period 2019-2029 (PENNAFORTE *et al.*, 2018).

On the European Union's side, the agreement has favored up to 100 billion dollars in exports from the bloc by 2035. From the point of view of its creators, this agreement aims to increase international competitiveness by putting into direct competition sectors that often benefit from protectionist laws, as was the case with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Given this decision, it is understandable that sectors such as agriculture or the service sector may be dissatisfied within the European Union, mainly due to production costs, labor laws and issues related to sustainable development. While the EU-Mercosur agreement meets the long-standing expectations of consolidated markets in Brazil, it is also the target of criticism, especially in light of the Bolsonaro government's environmental policies. We understand that the EU-Mercosur agreement is still far from unanimous and will certainly take a few years to be ratified (MARIANO, *et al.*, 2019).

South American borders in the face of COVID-19: a dramatic human cost

In addition to foreign trade cooperation agreements, South America, like all regions of the world, has been a victim of the impact of the Sars-Cov-2 or Covid-19 virus pandemic. From a geopolitical point of view, this crisis of unparalleled magnitude has highlighted the continent's shortcomings in dealing with this global public health problem. When the first cases reached airports, South American countries quickly closed their land, sea and air borders.

This has happened in a chaotic, uncoordinated or planned way, creating delicate situations for tourist or expatriate families wishing to return to South America. In a way, the Covid-19 crisis has marked a return to political realism, with increased border security. In this, the foreign ministries have made protection against external threats their *leitmotif*, not hesitating to offend neighbors and ignoring diplomatic agreements (VENTURA, 2020). The issue of international migration has been at the center of public health issues, showing very clearly the disparities between South American countries.

In addition, the inability of the Southern Cone countries to find diplomatic solutions to the problems mentioned has been noted. Overnight, thousands of families were arbitrarily separated, the beginnings of humanitarian crises were felt, border dynamics changed completely, and only goods were left to transit between the countries. One example of regional tensions has crystallized around the situation in Venezuela, mainly due to the waves of migrants to Colombia and Brazil. The governments of these two countries have taken advantage of this

situation to increase geopolitical tensions in order to destabilize the much-criticized Maduro government (JAROCHINSKI-SILVA; BAENINGER, 2021).

Health and social services quickly showed their limits, and the human cost was catastrophic for South America. In June 2021, the continent became the epicenter of the global pandemic, with hundreds of thousands of new cases a day. One of the reasons was the spread of policies to deny the pandemic, whether by not wearing masks, not banning public gatherings or the difficulties in launching effective vaccination campaigns. In all cases, border regions have been particularly affected, especially in the Amazon.

Final considerations

As we have seen throughout this article, we can conclude that the regional dynamic in South America has resulted from the tension (or dialectic) between the (geo)political centers and the border areas, as part of the internal consolidation processes of the South American nations. As a result, we can affirm the historical resistance on the part of the nations of the South American continent to politically deepening the process of regional integration.

In recent years, the process of regional integration in South America has weakened and the borders of nations have closed in on themselves. As we have seen with the global Covid-19 pandemic, the countries of South America have been unable to articulate their national public health policies and have weakened bilateral relations, as has been the case with Colombia with Venezuela, or Brazil with its neighbors, with the explosion in the number of cases since May 2020.

Since 2016, the wave of disinformation, ideological radicalism and rejection of existing regional institutions has reinforced the idea of the end of a virtuous cycle of cooperation in South America. In fact, joint actions, cooperation and the union of the South American peoples seem to be weakened, especially with the current pandemic scenario. As we have seen in this chapter, South America is historically vulnerable to electoral dynamics.

The public policies that are implemented are often altered or replaced by the government that comes to power. The more conservative question the social and/or economic advances, not hesitating to label them "populist". In short, we understand that the development prospects of South American countries are limited mainly by the weight of policies linked to right-wing or left-wing governments, to the detriment of more sustainable state policies. This also applies to cooperation for regional integration in South America.

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CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: Not applicable.

Funding: Not applicable.

Conflict of interest: There is no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval: The work respected research ethics. It did not go through an ethics committee.

Availability of data and material: Yes.

Authors' contributions: The main author is the author of all the content of the article.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

