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(De)Securitisation Theory and Regional Peace:
Some Theoretical Reflections and a Case Study on
the Way to Stable Peace

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Abstract

Critically taking on the premises of securitisation theory, this paper seeks to establish a dialogue between the theory of (de)securitisation and the theories of stable peace. In order to do this, I study the connection between the processes of (domestic) desecuritisation of regional relations, and stabilisation and consolidation of (regional) peace. I argue that these two seemingly distinct developments in fact constitute two aspects of a single parallel process.

The paper focuses on regions that were once zones of negative peace, yet in which states underwent processes of desecuritisation, and succeeded in improving the quality of regional peace. This highlights the existence of different types—qualities—of peace as well as several stages of the process of positive peace construction. I claim that the sequence *security→desecuritisation→asecurity* constitutes the domestic transformation of intersubjective perceptions of threat, whose external complementation is often the sequence *fragile/unstable peace→cold peace→positive peace* (stable peace and pluralistic security community), which refers to a bilateral or regional relationship. However, I notice that this correlation, though likely, is not necessary.

I identify two stages in this 'desecuritisation/peace' process. The first phase is about regional peace stabilisation and the first few steps towards domestic desecuritisation. The second phase involves peace consolidation, expansion of mutual desecuritisation, and growth of mutual trust. Explanations of the mechanisms triggering the process of desecuritisation/stabilisation of regional peace, and those of the expansion of the solidity of this peace are, I argue, of a different nature. The paper explains how the resort to realist International Relations (IR) theory hypotheses and to social constructivist hypotheses helps us to understand the development of these two phases. It also highlights the role of mutual trust in determining the type of peace of a dyad or region. The paper uses the case of Argentina and Brazil to illustrate these theoretical claims.

Introduction[1]

The reference to peace is remarkably absent from the literature on securitisation theory.[2] This may have several explanations. Firstly, securitisation refers to the process by which collectivities, such as nations or states, deal with certain issues that they come to see as threats and define in terms of security. In this sense, securitisation is a domestic or internal process—internal to collectivities. Instead, regional peace is an inherently relational concept. It refers to the type and quality of relationship between two or more collectivities.

A further explanation for the absence of 'peace' in securitisation theory may be related to the fact that successful securitisation implies the legitimisation of extraordinary and urgent measures and the introduction of a modality of behaviour that recreates threat-defence sequences (see Wæver, 1995). Thus, securitisation is often linked to the possibility of war, or at the very least, to the use or threat of violence. Consequently, the 'difficulty' of linking (de)securitisation and peace results from the fact that '[u]sually, those who do not feel insecure, do not self-consciously feel (or work on being) secure; they are more likely to be engaged in other matters,' (Wæver, 1998: 71). Thus, the need to conceptually account for this empirical coincidence does not seem so apparent.

This paper seeks to connect the concepts of desecuritisation and regional peace by suggesting that when looked at as processes—desecuritisation process and peace stabilisation/consolidation—they in fact constitute two aspects of a single parallel development, its separation being more analytical than empirical. The focus of this paper is on regions of negative peace in which states have undergone processes of *desecuritisation*. That is, zones in which relations had been defined in the past in terms of antagonism or even enmity, but which in time eased their tension and succeeded in improving the quality of their regional peace. Relations in the Southern Cone of Latin America—especially those between Argentina and Brazil, and Argentina and Chile—followed such a pattern, and therefore will illustrate the claims made here.

The paper seeks to establish a dialogue between the desecuritisation process and the process of stabilisation and consolidation of peace. In order to do this, I argue that the sequence *security→desecuritisation→asecurity* constitutes the domestic transformation of intersubjective perceptions of threat whose external complementation is often the sequence *fragile/unstable peace→cold peace→positive peace* (stable peace and pluralistic security community). While the former sequence involves a domestic transformation, the latter refers to a bilateral or regional relationship. However, it will be acknowledged that this correlation, though likely, is not necessary.

The paper proceeds in four parts. The first section reviews the key elements of securitisation theory, and draws attention to the desecuritisation sequence. The second section focuses on peace categorisations, which highlight the existence of different types—i.e. different qualities—of peace, and the stages of the process of positive peace construction. The third part proposes some theoretical insights about how the desecuritisation and peace construction processes may work and advance. Finally, the last section summarises the previous discussion and highlights the main findings of this paper.

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1 This paper was written in the context of the Latin American and Caribbean Forum, which was hosted at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute during the academic year 2003-2004.

2 For securitisation theory, see Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998), and Buzan and Wæver (2003).

Securitisation and Desecuritisation

Securitisation theory and violence

Securitisation theory emerged in the context of the lively security debate of the 1990s. Traditional approaches to security, such as the one proposed by strategic studies, argued for the need to maintain a narrow definition of security, closely related to military and geopolitical issues. Conversely, critical approaches advocated for the broadening of the security agenda as to include military and non-military threats to a wide variety of actors, not just states.[3]

Given the room left between traditional and critical approaches to security to develop a theory that would envisage a broader, yet coherent and discernible, definition of security, the works of the so-called Copenhagen School constituted an attempt in the direction of bridging this gap. The School emerged from the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) with Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver among its most prolific members.

Building upon these scholars' earlier work, such as Buzan's Regional Security Complex approach and security sectors (see mainly Buzan, 1991) and Wæver's securitisation/desecuritisation (see for instance Wæver, 1995 and 1998), they proposed a novel approach. It sought to reflect the new reality of not exclusively military security while retaining a specific meaning of security that would allow the differentiation between security and non-security policy (Huysmans, 1998a: 487).[4] After a route focusing on European security, this rather theoretical project materialised in their 1998 volume *Security, a New Framework for Analysis* (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998).[5] In it, they sought to find coherence by 'exploring the logic of security itself to find out what differentiates security and the process of securitization from that which is merely political' (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998: 5). Rather than proposing a new list of threats to account for a new definition of security, this project entailed a search for the logic that drives the securitisation process; that is, the process by which issues come to be seen as security matters.[6]

The answer, in Wæver's words, lies in the specificity of security, which 'is to be found in the *field* and in certain typical *operations* within the field (speech acts—"security"—and modalities—threat-defense sequences), not in a clearly definable objective ("security") or a specific state of affairs ("security")' (Wæver, 1995: 51). Building upon language theory, Wæver argues that security can be regarded as a speech act: the mere invocation of something using the word 'security' declares its threatening nature, 'invokes the image of what would happen if [security] did not work' (Wæver, 1995: 61). Thereby it seeks to justify the use of extraordinary measures to counter it.

Hence, security is the realm where emergency measures beyond ordinary political procedures become permissible. When an issue makes it into the sphere of security because it has been successfully presented as a threat, it has been securitised. In other words, securitisation is the process by which a *securitising actor* succeeds in presenting a threat or vulnerability as an *existential threat* to a *referent object* that has a legitimate claim to survival, thereby attaining endorsement for *emergency*

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3 As part of this debate, see the Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (1982); Ullman (1983); Tuchman Mathews (1989); Walt (1991) and the response by Kolodziej (1992); Evans (1993); Mearsheimer (1995; 1994-1995); Wendt (1995); Tickner (1995); Krause and Williams (1996; 1997); Serrano (1998); and Williams (2003).

4 See Huysmans' essay also for a review of how the Copenhagen School developed the ideas of security sectors, the meaning of security, and regional security dynamics.

5 For some of their earlier works, see Jahn, Lemaitre, and Wæver (1987); Wæver, Lemaitre, and Tromer (1989); Buzan, Kelstrup, Lemaitre, Tromer, and Wæver (1990); and Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, and Lemaitre (1993).

6 Also Jef Huysmans (1998b: 226) argues that 'although the debate on expanding the security agenda to non-military sectors and non-state referent objects launched an interesting discussion about the security (studies) agenda, it has not really dealt with the meaning of security'.

measures. These measures would otherwise not have been granted the necessary legitimisation by the *securitising audience*.

This approach highlights the fact that issues in sectors other than the military may also be subject to securitisation, as long as they successfully follow this logic. In the words of the authors (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998: 204),

> Security issues are made security by acts of securitization. We do not try to peek behind this to decide whether it is *really* a threat (which would reduce the entire securitization approach to a theory of perceptions and misperception). Security *is* a quality actors inject into issues by securitizing them, which means to stage them on the political arena (…) and then to have them accepted by a sufficient audience to sanction extraordinary defensive moves.

In a similar vein, Jef Huysmans implicitly understands security as a speech act, and argues that security in a thick signifier approach 'becomes self-referential. It does not refer to an external, objective reality but establishes a security situation by itself. It is the enunciation of the signifier which constitutes an (in)security condition' (Huysmans, 1998b: 232).

The definition of security as socially constructed implies that it is not simply about a subjective perception of threats; it is not a matter that individuals decide alone, but rather has an intersubjective character. Consequently, the actual content of the concept of security is built up by the securitising actor in a delicate bargaining process with the legitimising audience on the grounds of actual facts. Once these facts have been extensively perceived as existentially endangering something and have made it into the security agenda, they translate into security policy. As this argument implies, the process of securitisation is mostly a domestic political choice. It is the combination of both facts and successful spreading of perceptions of threat that makes up security and becomes security policy, as will be discussed below.

Within this conceptualisation of security, I find the role of *emergency measures* to be key. The link between emergency measures and violence has been implicitly played down in the authors' recent works, probably in an attempt to avoid the easy association of security and the military sector, and to show that security is about a particular logic that can be applied to other sectors. Yet the idea that securitisation internalises the 'logic of war''—thus legitimising by extension the possibility of violence—was more forcefully present in Wæver's article 'Securitization and Desecuritization' (1995):

> the logic of war—challenge-resistance(defense)-escalation-recognition/defeat—could be replayed metaphorically and extended to other sectors. When this happens, however, the structure of the game is still derived from the most classical of classical cases: war (Wæver, 1995: 54).

Following this argument, I would claim that what differentiates the structure of the game 'war' from the structure of an alleged game 'competition' is the inherent violence-component of the former. Successful securitisation legitimises emergency measures that make reference to violence, either because the audience agrees to the recourse to violence, or because it agrees to extraordinary action that should avoid later violence. Thus, emergency measures in the securitising move are about the legitimisation of the use of violence or of other measures that will prevent a later violent outcome. Directly or indirectly, the element of violence returns to the securitisation process. This becomes more apparent when the desecuritisation process is considered (see next subsection).[7] In this way, the type of legitimated emergency measures becomes the key to differentiating a process of securitisation from one of politicisation. Whilst politicisation may also imply policy priority, mobilisation of resources, urgency and gravity (without implying secrecy, though), it does not even metaphorically replay the logic of war.

This emphasis on violence still allows for a wide range of threats, referent objects and actors. For instance, in the 1970s the River Paraná's water resources became a security issue between Argentina

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7   Unfortunately, the Copenhagen scholars do not offer an extensive discussion on desecuritisation.

and Brazil, since both sides contemplated the violent option in order to solve the issue. The concrete and explicit dispute was not about borders, arms balances, identities or ideologies. Rather, it simply regarded the capacity of the Brazilian dam, which was being built upstream, and whether or not it would affect Argentina's projected dam, to be built downstream.[8] In the eyes of Argentine geopoliticians, the potential consequences of Brazil establishing the dam's capacity too high would range from floods to droughts to the spread of diseases. In the eyes of Brazilian geopoliticians, Argentines just wanted to slow down the speed of their industrial and economic growth, for which this dam was crucial.

If this issue were to be located in a security sector, it would be either the environmental (as it was about natural resources) or the economic sector (as the dams were for the production of hydroelectric energy needed for industrial development). What made it a security matter—regardless of in which security sector—was that securitising actors presented the issue as so dangerous and important that they received endorsement by the audience (in this case, political, military, and some segments of the scientific elites, since both states were ruled by authoritarian regimes that left little space for public opinion) to resort to violence, if necessary.

Another example that shows the need for a reference to force in order to successfully securitise an issue is given by the treatment of the Amazonia issue from the 1960s through the early 1990s on the part of successive Brazilian governments. The issue of the exploitation of natural resources in Amazonia and the international debate that it generated was picked up by the Brazilian military, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The military institution made Amazonia a top priority of their agenda gaining influence on the Executive power both during the authoritarian government and the first years of the democratic rule, which signals that it had become a security issue. The question, certainly, was not only about the environment, but also about sovereignty, potential foreign intervention, and economy (see Feitelberg Jakobsen, 1997).

Desecuritisation

With this understanding of securitisation making explicit reference to violence, now the process of desecuritisation can be also rephrased. The brief definition by Buzan et al. states that desecuritisation involves 'the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere' (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998: 4). Yet more could be said; it implies that issues for which the potential use of force had been legitimised before, now start to retrace their steps taking the opposite direction, whereby violence ceases to be a legitimate option.

The same or other actors that had previously advocated for securitisation may now encourage the process of desecuritisation by renegotiating appropriate responses with relevant audiences. This time, the aim will be to remove certain issues from the security agenda. When these involve relationships with neighbours, the domestic process of desecuritisation may advance positive changes at the regional level. In a similar vein, securitisation moves may provoke regional escalation and crises. The ultimate goal of desecuritisation is the achievement of a situation in which the issue in question is no longer seen as threatening, and thus is no longer defined in security terms. Such a situation can be called 'asecurity' (Wæver, 1998: 81).

Building upon this understanding of desecuritisation, we can imagine an issue or a relationship to transcend the security language in two ways. Either it loses its threatening image because agent and audience perceive changes in the nature of the threat that render it no longer intimidating. Or they perceive a qualitative change in the relationship between them and what was seen as threatening, so that they gradually begin to trust the fact that it no longer poses a danger on them. For instance, if we

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8   There were, naturally, many more issues at stake, such as a historic rivalry for regional hegemony and a race to achieve nuclear capacity. The 'official' dispute, however, was about hydroelectric resources.

are talking about regional interstate relations, we could say that either the other state is seen as having lost its capacity to launch a successful attack, or the terms of the relationship have changed in such a way that an attack is no longer expected or feared even if the other state has the capacity to carry it out.

The first mechanism is a rather passive one. It seems to involve almost no effort on the part of agent and audience; the threat seems to just lose its power or capabilities—however this is not necessarily true, as what ultimately change are intersubjective perceptions of threat, in addition to the possible 'real' changes in the threat itself. The outcome of this mechanism may well just be indifference. Instead, the second mechanism requires a more active qualitative transformation, since it alludes to a redefinition of the relationship. It refers not only to something/someone 'being-no-longer-a-threat' but also to it not being a threat because something in the relationship has changed. The other has become trustworthy, regardless of its capabilities, because the relationship itself—that is, both self and other, and the way they link—has been reassessed.

Yet, what encourages this move? It will be a combination of several different factors that will need detailed study in each empirical case. They can range from changes in the constitution of domestic governments, changes in domestic preferences, pressure from interest groups in one direction or another, emergence or decline of related concerns that make actors re-rank priorities, and regional and global transformations, among many others. Important to remember is that although they might affect and be affected by external factors, securitisation and desecuritisation are ultimately domestic developments.

Within the process of desecuritisation, several stages can be identified (Wæver, 1998: 81). First, when an issue—for instance, another state—is seen as threatening and one feels to lack adequate defence, the situation can be characterised as *insecurity*. By contrast, if sufficient counter-measures are felt to be available, either because one sees the threat to have diminished or because one's own defensive capabilities are considered to have improved, the situation has evolved to one of *security*. A common feature of both insecurity and security is the presence of perceived threats, and therefore an attitude involving wariness and lack of serenity. Conversely, by the slow erosion of the perception of threat, what emerges is a situation of *asecurity*, in which neither the security language nor the security logic apply.

Such domestic transformation is likely to have a regional/international correlation. In interstate politics, threats are rarely perceived unilaterally, as the security dilemma and the phenomenon of arms races clearly prove. In a similar manner, the gradual fading away of threat perception may feed back into the regional/international environment, progressively easing bilateral or regional tension,[9] although this turn of events is rarely discussed in IR literature. This argument is based on the assumption—admittedly only moderately constructivist—that successful securitisation and desecuritisation are processes constructed on the grounds of some actual facts (which is not the same as claiming that threats are objective!). According to Wæver (2000: 252-253), the presence of conditions historically associated with threat is one of three 'felicity conditions' of a successful security speech act:

> it is more likely that one can conjure a security threat if there are certain objects to refer to which are generally held to be threatening—be they tanks, hostile sentiments, or polluted waters. In themselves, they never make for necessary securitization, but they are definitely facilitating conditions.

As the next section discusses, revised perceptions may influence external behaviour producing according changes in the pursued regional foreign policy. This, in turn, will have an effect on the regional environment. This renewed (even if this only means slightly transformed) regional setting will feed back into one's own perceptions of it, thus allowing for virtuous (or vicious) self-reinforcing circles. Domestic processes desecuritising the perception of the neighbours are likely to relax regional relationships. Equally, a more relaxed regional environment is likely to facilitate the parties' deciding

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9   I use deliberately 'may,' as there is no causal or necessary relationship.

to advance domestic desecuritisation. In this manner, a parallel process of gradual improvement of the quality of regional peace is expected to develop. The third section of this paper will enquire about what triggers and sustains processes of desecuritisation and stabilisation of regional peace. But first, let us examine the concept of peace more closely.

Stabilisation and Consolidation of Peace

Although the securitisation of issues may result in violence, this is not the necessary outcome. It is quite possible to find tense—securitised—regional relationships, which are, however, conducted short of war. Certain issues within the relationship, and even the relationship itself, may be defined in security terms, yet violence may be successfully avoided. But the presence or absence of securitised issues will determine the quality of the resulting regional peace. We can expect peace to be more stable and solid in the absence of mutual security concerns or when issues have been effectively desecuritised. As will be seen next, trust plays a crucial role in the move from security to asecurity, and in the actual quality of peace achieved. In order to explore this, types of peace, including peace scales, are the subject of this section.

The following assumptions about peace serve as a background to the discussion. Firstly, no particular type of domestic political regime is indispensable for the maintenance of a zone of peace, broadly defined. Stable democracies seem to favour it, but other types of regimes have been equally capable of avoiding war, conducting peaceful relationships, and even initiating a process of peace stabilisation, as the example of the Southern Cone of South America will show below.

Secondly, peace at the international level refers to the type of relationship that two or more states maintain. When the talk is about peace, rather than about a pacific foreign policy, clearly more than one state—or other type of collectivity—has to be involved. It can thus be said that international peace is a *relational* concept. It is necessary that two or more states conduct some sort of relationship or interaction to be able to say that it is peaceful. Therefore, the mere absence of war may be pointing to the lack of relationship rather than to meaningful peace. In a regional context, however, it is very rare to find neighbouring states with no relationships at all.

Finally, peace is a *process*, and as such, *dynamic*. To be maintained, peace demands permanent attention and dedication. There is nothing in even the most stable type of international peace that makes it irreversible. On the contrary, it is an inherently fragile process, much easier to reverse than to build. However, if successfully built, peace tends to be self-reinforcing, resulting in an increasingly stable and consolidated type of peace.

Several scholars have already allowed for the distinction between types of peace. Accordingly, they have constructed scales or typologies of peace that typically cover all the range from a very fragile and unstable peace to situations of consolidated and stable peace. A possible further step that some authors consider in these gradations is the establishment of a pluralistic security community, alluding to the situation in which war has become unthinkable due to the emergence of a sense of transnational community among elites and societies of the states involved.

In general, the typologies are not essentially divergent. In fact, they all point, with slight differences in emphasis, to similar stages of a same peace continuum. Possible differences relate more to each scholar's research interests than to fundamental conceptual disagreements.[10] Drawing upon these authors' peace scales and categorisations, I have found a more detailed analytical typology to be more helpful in capturing the peace-desecuritisation connection (see Table 1).

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[10] See Boulding (1978); Holsti (1996); Morgan (1997); Kacowicz (1998); George (); and Miller (2000b; 2000a).

An initial broad distinction can be made between negative and positive peace.[11] Negative peace refers to the situation where the absence of threat or use of force is not necessarily expected. Domestically, bilateral or regional relationships have been securitised, and the security lens and security language permeate all perception of them. Under negative peace there is no war, but there are preparations and contingency plans for war. Depending on how frequently and how distant in time violent clashes last occurred, this category can be subdivided into fragile, unstable, and cold peace.

Highly securitised visions of the neighbour(s) will translate externally into fragile peace, in which pending disputes survive, the armed forces work on regional conflict hypotheses, and states prepare for war. Military clashes occasionally interrupt peace, but they are kept below the level of international war—hence it can still be called a zone of peace. Yet the resort to violence to resolve or protect securitised issues is seen domestically as a legitimate option. The chances of escalation are high, and the situation is perceived as one of insecurity; war may indeed break out. For instance, Argentina and Chile had a relationship of just fragile peace for most of the twentieth century, with many territorial disputes pending, preparing themselves to go to war against one another, playing balancing games and displaying power, and occasionally exchanging fire in border zones. Until a few years ago, also Israeli-Palestine relations were in fragile peace, later became a zone of war, and more recently they moved again into a fragile peace situation.

Under unstable peace, preparation and contingency plans for war are also present, but without any armed confrontations having occurred, or only in the distant past. However, confrontations and even war have not only *not* been ruled out, but also deterrence and threats continue to play a critical role in this type of relationship. This is what makes this type of peace unstable. Domestically, it still is the security language that defines the relationship. Thus the situation is perceived in terms of insecurity or security, depending on how one's own capabilities are assessed vis-à-vis the adversary, but never in terms of asecurity. The Argentine-Brazilian relationship can be analysed in this way at the time of escalating tension due to the Itaipú-Corpus dispute (1960s and 1970s). Clearly, US-USSR relations during the tensest periods of the Cold War also fit into this category.

When the situation is not perceived in terms of insecurity, either because domestic actors consider their defensive capacity to be superior, or because a gradual process of détente has begun, the situation is one of cold or conditional peace, i.e. a less extreme type of non-war. It is still the absence of war, rather than the presence of confidence, that characterises bilateral or regional relationships. Nonetheless, war and violent confrontation do not appear to be such a realistic eventuality. In other words, although the use of 'extreme measures' has not been discarded and issues in the relationship are kept securitised, violence does not appear to be as likely an outcome as in fragile and unstable peace. Display of force can be used as a means to apply pressure during negotiations—parties have no reason not to expect this. Argentina and Brazil have had such a relationship for most of their history as independent states. This is also the sort of relationship conducted by Argentina and Britain in the years that followed the Malvinas/Falkland Islands war of 1982.

If absence of war is the defining feature of negative peace (fragile, unstable, and cold peace), then the presence of confidence and trust is what defines positive peace. States in a relationship of positive peace do not prepare for war, nor do they expect other states in the zone to do so. They do not read bilateral or regional issues in security language. This does not necessarily mean that all disputes have been resolved. Issues and disagreements may persist, but no party conceives of force to sort them out. Under positive peace we can find zones of stable peace and pluralistic security communities. In both, members have ruled out the possibility of war among themselves and are confident that fellow members have done so too. All are certain that any potential changes in the status quo will be peaceful and agreed.

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11 Kenneth Boulding made first the argument that peace could be either positive or negative, the former involving 'good management, orderly resolution of conflict, harmony associated with mature relationships, gentleness, and love,' and the latter implying 'the absence of something—the absence of turmoil, tension, conflict, and war' (Boulding, 1978: 3).

A pluralistic security community stands out because it appears as a more 'participatory' kind of stable peace in that not only has war become unthinkable, but also the societies involved have developed links, mutual sympathies, and some sort of common identification[12] that makes them perceive each other as members of the same community. In addition, states may be bound by common political institutions, similar political systems, and considerable economic interdependence. To be sure, all pluralistic security communities are zones of stable peace. However, not all zones of stable peace are pluralistic security communities (Kacowicz and Bar-Siman-Tov, 2000: 22). Examples of stable peace are the current Argentine-Chilean relationship, and relations among members of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since the late 1970s. On the other hand, members of the European Union, as well as Canada and the United States are clear examples of pluralistic security communities, whereas Argentina and Brazil can be said to be part of an incipient security community.

Table 1: Peace Categories

Negative Peace	Fragile peace Unstable peace Cold or conditional peace
Positive Peace	Stable peace Pluralistic security community

Trust, desecuritisation, and evolution of regional peace

The categorisation presented above implies the consideration of mainly two variables: the stability of peace, temporally determined by the duration of the absence of military confrontation, and the solidity of peace, signalled by the presence or absence, and degree, of trust in the relationship. Of the two, I consider the solidity of peace to be the crucial element in distinguishing between the different types of peace and moving the desecuritisation process forward.

The factor of time plays a weightier role in situations of negative peace, where aggressive behaviour may have occurred in a not too distant past. Collective memory of past aggression influences the degree of trust between states and peoples, and thus issues are more likely to remain securitised. However, while it holds true that recent armed conflicts make the development of trust more difficult, the opposite is not necessarily the case. Even relationships with a long record of absence of actual military conflict may be dominated by mistrust. Therefore, time, while important (especially if there have been recent confrontations), tends to only indirectly influence the type of peace, mostly by affecting the level of mutual trust.

Consequently, the development of mutual confidence is key to understanding the process of desecuritisation implied in the transformation of negative into positive peace, and in the stabilisation and later consolidation of peace. The level of mutual confidence indicates the solidity of the peace upon which the relationship rests. In other words, the higher the degree of mutual confidence, the more solid the peaceful relationship. And also, the harder it will be that the process be reversed (although not impossible). Conversely, the higher the degree of distrust—and therefore the less solid

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12 I prefer to use the term 'identification' over that of 'identity,' as the former suggests a looser conceptual understanding. It implies common perceptions of potential shared benefits and costs, mutual sympathies, and identification of areas of common interests, which may facilitate co-operation and policy coordination, both at the public and private levels. It also involves a growing curiosity about and familiarisation with the other's politics, culture, society, and so on, which is in fact reflection of a increasing interest in the other as such. In sum, the term 'identification' implies a positive image of the other that tends to advance co-operation rather than competition, and that does not see a negative impact on one's own state in the other state's gain, but appreciates that it can instead redound to one's own benefit (absolute gains).

the basis for peace—the easier it will be that even a minor misunderstanding or misinterpretation develop into military violence, and possibly war.

Although stability can be measured in years of absence of conflict, I am reluctant to set a fixed number of years to indicate whether peace has become unstable, cold, or stable. Rather, I understand it to be a delicate blend of stability (time) and solidity (trust) pointing to one type of peace or another. However, one might go with Arie M. Kacowicz (1998: 9) and say that a zone of peace, whether negative or positive, is one in which

> a group of states have maintained peaceful relations among themselves for a period of at least thirty years—a generation span—though civil wars, domestic unrest, and violence might still occur within their borders, as well as international conflicts and crises between them.

A quantitative measurement of trust appears to be even more difficult. Instead, one has to rely on the interpretation of the presence or absence of certain indicators.[13] For instance, the deployment of troops along a common border is most probably a sign of securitised relationships and fragile or unstable peace. The presence of a system of mutual accountability through confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) is likely to be indicative of cold or stable peace, in which some issues are still securitised and thus need to be closely monitored. Common institutions, high level of interdependence, compatible domestic regimes, withdrawal or absence of troops on common borders, among others, point to the existence of trust, and thus to a situation of stable peace, or even to a pluralistic security community, or, as Wæver called it, an *asecurity* community (1998: 104).

The existence of pending disputes need not be in itself an indication of distrust. Certain issues may be disputed without being securitised. For instance, there may be a firm commitment to reach agreed solutions. Conversely, distrust can define a relationship even in the absence of apparent conflict. While by no means an exhaustive list, I suggest that the presence or absence of the following indicators should be taken into account when the solidity of regional peace is to be assessed:
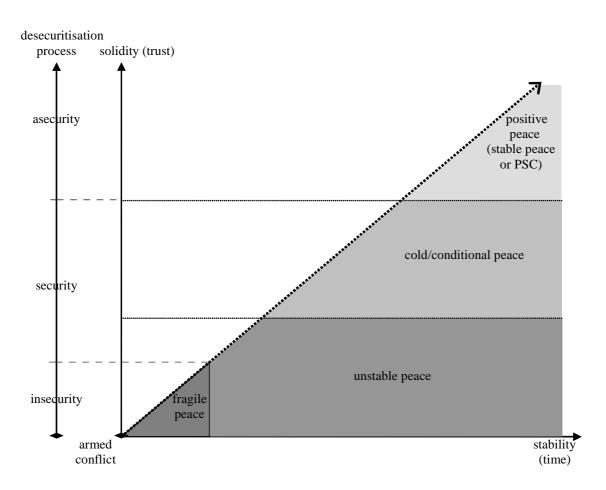
- recent war, repeated exchanges of cross-border fire, deployment of troops in border areas, arms races, existence of contingency plans for war, few and distant (in time) diplomatic visits, mistrust and antipathy between societies, obstacles for the mobility of persons;

- diplomatic visits and public speeches pointing at the easing of tension, CSBMs, problem-solving mechanisms;

- fluid communication channels, common projects that involve expectation of joint benefits (a common market, for example), common institutions, high degree of interdependence and exchange, compatible self-images, free or easy mobility of people.

The *first* set of indicators points to a situation of either fragile or unstable peace, depending mainly on whether force has been used in the recent past or not. In any case, it reveals a high degree of distrust and suspicion, a high level of securitisation, and the rather ease with which peace can be reverted. The *second* set of indicators manifests a clear intention to try to avoid potential misperceptions, implicitly acknowledging that they may indeed occur. Mutual confidence is not high, but parties have developed common mechanisms for making their behaviour more predictable and transparent, if not accountable. These mechanisms represent the basis for whatever degree of mutual confidence might exist. States in such a situation have a relationship of cold or conditional peace. If one of these mechanisms fails, peace can revert into an unstable or fragile type, and even war can break out. Conversely, regional states may make explicit efforts to increase the degree of mutual confidence and trust, and thus succeed in transforming their negative peace into positive peace. Nevertheless, they might choose to stay in conditional peace without pursuing closer links, leave some issues securitised, and remain alert and vigilant, but being careful not to make peace unstable. Even in

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13 For a conceptualisation of trust in interstate relations, see Hoffman (2002).

this case, I argue, peace is a dynamic process, in that its maintenance will require an active effort on the part of governments.

The *last* set of indicators signals a high level of mutual trust, which can point to a relationship of stable peace, or even to the existence of a pluralistic security community if a sense of 'we-feeling' and community among states and societies has also developed. The most important feature of such a high level of mutual confidence is that the use or threat of force has become unthinkable to resolve disputes and disagreements, and indeed all parties perceive it in this manner. States in a situation of stable peace or in a security community neither expect this situation to change, nor are they prepared to resort to the threat of force in their mutual relations. Figure 1 shows link between different levels of securitisation and different types of peace, and the role of time and trust.

Figure 1: Desecuritisation and the Peace Process

Desecuritising and stabilising peace

So far, I have set out a descriptive framework indicating connections between the processes of desecuritisation and peace stabilisation/consolidation. The relevance of considering both processes simultaneously rests on the fact that it encourages us to take on a more comprehensive perspective; one that focuses more consciously on the mutual effects of domestic and regional developments. The

relationship between these two levels in a regional peace process is complex.[14] While in some cases domestic developments promote changes at the regional level, in others the beginning of the process is to be found in the region (or beyond, at the global level) and will encourage domestic desecuritisation from the 'outside.' In other words, the process can start at either end, thus being a bottom-up process or a top-down one. However, once in motion, domestic and regional transformations start feeding back into each other, making the distinction between domestic desecuritisation and stabilisation of regional peace merely an analytical one. In fact, for all practical purposes, they become so mutually influential and intertwined that they soon come to constitute two dimensions of a complex and *single* process.

In addition to the domestic and regional dimensions we can identify a temporal dimension entailing (at least) two phases in the desecuritisation/peace process. This will help us to understand different mechanisms at work enabling the advancement of peace at each stage. The first phase accounts for the process's initiation. This is a critical moment, since it involves overcoming inertia. Actually, it is even more difficult; it involves a change of 'direction' from a negative relational pattern to a gradually improving one. As it were, the 'engine' of the desecuritisation/peace process is to be switched on to start going, and this, as in the case of cars, is a challenging and demanding task.

By contrast, the second phase refers to the moment after which the process has been initiated; that is, the moment of its development and consolidation. While the first phase is about regional peace stabilisation and the first few steps towards domestic desecuritisation, the second phase is about peace consolidation, expansion of reciprocal desecuritisation, and growth of mutual trust.

Distinguishing between these two phases allows for different types of questions to be raised at each stage. A key issue in understanding the initial part of the peace process refers to how it is that governments decide to change their regional attitudes. What accounts for the beginning of détente? At the second stage of the process, instead, we need to understand how the solidity of this peace expands. What keeps the process going? Explanations of the mechanisms triggering the process of desecuritisation/stabilisation of regional peace, and those of the expansion of its solidity are, I argue, of a different nature.

The first phase: desecuritisation/peace stabilisation

The question of how the beginning of a process of positive transformation can be explained implicitly assumes that even when regional states have not been involved in war and armed conflicts, such eventualities have been part of their calculations and preparations. What may encourage the shift that can later render possible the gradual emergence of mutual trust?

Rationalist approaches to IR, both in their (neo)liberal and (neo)realist versions, offer strong explanations for the absence of war and the beginning of détente. In what follows, I propose to borrow some rationalist arguments in order to shed light on the mechanisms at work in this first phase of rapprochement. The present resort to rationalist arguments does not imply an endorsement of realist or liberal ontologies, let alone their epistemologies.

Theories of interdependence and institutionalism take on a liberal stance. They argue that states— or at least economically developed and prosperous states—are inclined to avoid war because they hold absolute gains higher than relative gains, and regard negatively the costs of going to war and positively the benefits of trade and commercial exchange. Furthermore, it is argued that these states will recognise the importance of a peaceful environment for the achievement of the latter. Such states value more the benefits of trade and commerce than those of territorial conquest (Rosecrance, 1986; Keohane and Nye, 1971). In addition, neoliberal institutionalists emphasise the role that international institutions play in achieving common goals and overcoming the difficulties created by

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14 Given that the focus of this paper is on the domestic and the regional, extra-regional and global factors are presently bracketed out of the analysis.

interdependence (Keohane, 1984). In other words, according to neoliberals war avoidance and even co-operation can take place in the context of anarchy mainly because the actors involved see more instrumental advantages in peace and co-operation than in a different international conjuncture (Hurrell, 1998: 228-229). Through this lens, peace and co-operation are more *convenient* than war, and are therefore preferred by the actors.

Also realism offers solid arguments to explain the absence of war. According to (neo)realists, in an anarchic system actors (states) seek to survive. The safest way to ensure survival is through the accumulation of power, which they measure in capabilities. Given that all states do the same, more important than the absolute amount of accumulated power is the position of one's own capabilities vis-à-vis the capabilities of others. Thus, all states seek to gain relative advantages, taking note not only of how much they have, but also how much others possess.

States' preoccupation with relative gains soon results in a security dilemma. States arm themselves for their own security and seek to maintain and increase their relative advantage over others. The latter, in turn, may (mis)interpret this action as an offensive rather than a defensive strategy, and as a consequence may feel compelled to increase their own arsenals. The fact that states react to their neighbours' capabilities rather than intentions leads to arms races. For realists, arms balances and deterrence are indeed very effective mechanisms to prevent wars.[15] Explicitly enough, John Mearsheimer contends, '[p]eace is mainly a function of the geometry of power in the international system, and certain configurations may be very peaceful while others are more prone to war' (Mearsheimer, 1991-1992: 220). Other factors that, according to realists, may prevent regional armed conflicts are the presence of a regional hegemon (Aron, 1966), the strong influence of an extra-regional power (Buzan, 1991),[16] or the existence of a common external threat that may encourage alliance formation (Job, 1997: 171). Other than these, if states in a region do not engage in war it is probably because of impotence, geographical isolation, or sheer strategic irrelevance (Kacowicz, 1998: 34-39).

Moreover, with its emphasis on rational models and strategic alliances, (neo)realism can also explain the first stage of détente and desecuritisation. Indeed, bilateral or multilateral rapprochement can be seen as the outcome of power, interests and capability calculations, according to which strategic co-operation is evaluated as more efficient for the accomplishment of certain goals than alternative means, such as war.

These rationalist claims bear important explanatory weight when it comes to the motivations of regional adversaries to start easing tensions. Against a backdrop of hostility, if a state is to revise its attitude towards its neighbour-slash-rival without experiencing it to be a political defeat—or a political concession at best—it needs to perceive strong incentives. In regions of negative peace, states will be more willing to start working towards détente if they identify concrete and material advantages to do so, rather than for moral or normative reasons. Interdependence theorists will define these advantages in economic terms, whereas neorealists will cast them in terms of military power and capabilities. In any case, the importance of rivals conceding that détente might bring about potential benefits must be stressed again, since it renders possible—maybe for the first time—a different type of relationship to enter into their scope of foreign policy options. Envisaging the option of advancing rapprochement with a hitherto rival already has a value in itself.

The case of Argentina and Brazil in the late 1970s is illuminating in this regard. It allows for a fairly conventional power/interest-based interpretation of détente, but one that took shape in an atypical context. After a long history of rivalry and competition, shortly following a significant deterioration of bilateral relations, and with both countries under military rule, détente between the

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15 See, classically, Waltz (1979). See also Walt (1985) and Mearsheimer (1990). From the English School tradition, Hedley Bull (1995) has also advanced arguments in favour of the balance of power, particularly chapter five 'The Balance of Power and International Order', at pp. 97-121.

16 As mentioned earlier, Buzan (1991: 219-221) calls this effect 'overlay'.

neighbours evolved quickly, and indeed opened the door to more committed, long-term co-operation between these former rivals.

Since before becoming independent states, Brazil and Argentina had constructed their relationship upon negative perceptions of one another, which reinforced the dominant relational pattern defined in terms of rivalry. The emergence of a dispute over water resources at Itaipú on the River Paraná in the 1960s made both countries' militaries update their 'war hypotheses' against one another; a fact that was aggravated by the context of their race to develop nuclear technology.

By then, the cold peace that had prevailed between the two countries began to deteriorate. If so far competition, display of military capacity, and zero-sum calculations had dominated the military's and politicians' frame of mind, during the 1970s, when the Itaipú dispute escalated, the relationship reverted to a situation of unstable peace. Bilateral tension increased to the extent of making dialogue very difficult and the threat of resorting to violence more credible. During this period, peace was just precariously sustained.

However, it was also at this time that international, regional and domestic circumstances concurred to generate a favourable environment for co-operative postures to gain influence on domestic decision-making circles. These postures can be read in terms of power-balancing strategies and rational calculations on the part of both states.

Internationally, U.S. pressure on nuclear development matters clearly made possible the identification of a common ground for policy co-ordination. Brazil's 'special relationship' with the United States, which had historically played a role in the Argentine-Brazilian confrontation, had come to an end in 1967, when Brasilia refused to join the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco). In the second half of the 1970s the 'special relationship' had only worsened as a consequence of Jimmy Carter's human rights and nuclear proliferation policies, which were punishing Argentina as well. In addition, by the late 1970s there were clear signs of exhaustion of Brazil's economic boom and its model of inward-looking industrialisation. These developments, coupled with the government's decision to deepen the gradual *abertura* (or liberalisation) of its political system and strengthen relations with Latin America, as well as its recognising the superiority of Argentina's nuclear programme, encouraged Brasilia to reorient its foreign policy and seek to ease tensions with Buenos Aires.

In turn, Argentina was facing a critical period. Internal politics were in a state of havoc, and relationships with Chile were deteriorating rapidly. The Videla government had recognised Brazil's industrial, economic, and conventional superiority. In addition, some sectors, such as the pragmatic liberals in charge of the economy and the nationalist-developmentalists in charge of the military industry, were exerting pressure on the junta for an entente with the larger neighbour. Confrontation with Brazil implied a race that they were no longer certain to win, while rapprochement could bring about some material advantages, as well as help to balance Santiago de Chile.

In the face of these adverse circumstances, decisive actors in both states favoured a process that implied the gradual abandonment of contending perceptions, and the adoption of more positive images of one another with the prospective goal of easing tensions and pursuing co-operation. As securitisation theorists predicted, this development involved a domestic bargaining process. Being both states under authoritarian rule, public opinion did not constitute the desecuritisation audience. Instead, bargaining took place between different factions within the military governments, and between each government and the local economic and scientific (nuclear) elites. In any case, through this mechanism a slow process of desecuritisation of the bilateral relationship evolved.

In October 1979 Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay signed the Tripartite Agreement on Itaipú-Corpus that brought the dispute to an end. In May 1980, João Figueiredo visited Buenos Aires, in what constituted the first visit of a Brazilian president to Argentina in 40 years. In August, President Jorge Rafael Videla reciprocated the visit. These summits were of paramount importance. They lasted

several days, and the presidents travelled with large delegations of ministers and state secretaries. On the occasion of the visits, 22 documents establishing co-operation in eleven areas were signed; among them, an agreement on nuclear fuel cycle co-operation, which—despite being rather symbolic—represented the end of competition and the beginning of collaboration on nuclear matters. In addition, joint infrastructure enterprises were agreed, such as the construction of a bridge over the River Iguazú linking Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) and Porto Meira (Brazil), the first of its kind since 1947; hydroelectric co-operation, the export of Argentine gas to Brazil, and the interconnection of their electricity systems. Other important gestures that eased rapprochement were Brazil's agreement to represent Argentine interests in London during and after the Falklands/Malvinas war and its support for Argentina's sovereignty claim at the U.N. and the Organisation of American States (OAS), as well as its decision against authorisation of British airplanes flying to the South Atlantic to schedule a regular refuelling stop in Brazilian territory.

Even though these rationalist approaches may help to understand the unfolding of détente, its first few steps, their accounts tend to imply the presence of a somewhat contingent type of peace based on circumstantial calculations rather than on some deeper commitment. As a consequence, it might not be durable (Mearsheimer, 1994-1995), nor necessarily encouraging of further advancements of the peace/desecuritisation process.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, although these incentives do not take us much further than to a negative type of peace where mutual trust is still absent, they do play a very important role. By bringing to the forefront and highlighting the potential advantages of easing existing tensions, they make rapprochement a conceivable option. They make it be seen as a possibility; an alternative that might not even have been imaginable to the parties at an earlier stage. Once desecuritisation is perceived as a convenient, and thereby feasible, policy option, the process of domestic desecuritisation and stabilisation of regional peace may unfold. This first stage already opens the door to a different type of relation between regional states. Mutual trust is still absent, but interaction, exchange, more fluid relations, and, of course, strong political will may work positively towards its gradual emergence.

The second phase: towards asecurity and peace consolidation

If the initial changes continue to develop in a positive manner and become sustained, they will facilitate the advance to the second stage of the process, the one involving a redefinition of the relationship. It is this latter phase that leads to more durable changes, which in turn will result in a consolidated type of peace and a domestic situation dominated by a sense of asecurity; that is, a situation that has transcended security codes.

To redefine the relationship means not just to reassess how one perceives the other(s). Rather, it implies to simultaneously re-evaluate the vision one has both of the other and of the self. An important move in this direction will already have taken place during the first stage, when a different type of relationship will have been envisaged as possible. Once this has happened, interaction and exchange will again feed back into the process, encouraging parties to further revise self and mutual images, which can lead to the gradual emergence of mutual trust—the key to understanding peace consolidation and the establishment of a situation of asecurity.

The resort to social constructivist theory helps to understand the process at work here. Constructivism incorporates into the analysis of IR the role of identities, ideas and perceptions, and understands that they are transformed through interaction. Furthermore, it claims that neither identities nor interests are static or invariable, but that they are altered through practices and habits.

As Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998) indicate, transactions and international organisations and institutions facilitate processes of social learning, which imply a re-assessment of actors' meanings, beliefs and understandings. The latter form their cognitive structure, influencing the way they perceive others and themselves, which in turn constitutes and constrains (or broadens) their

perceived range of possible policy actions. When this is a positive process, it redounds to the expansion of trust, which is in turn reflected in policy decisions, such as withdrawal of troops from common border areas, expansion of co-operation, and so on.

According to Kacowicz and Bar-Siman-Tov (2000: 24-25), this complex learning process

> requires a redefinition or reevaluation of the parties' national interests, so that each party will perceive a mutual interest in establishing and maintaining the peace between them as the most important factor in assuring each other's security and even existence.

Thus, the development towards a more consolidated peace involves 'an active process of redefinition or reinterpretation of reality—what people consider real, possible and desirable—on the basis of new causal and normative knowledge.' During this process social actors 'manage and even transform reality by changing their beliefs of the material and social world and their identities' (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 43-44). Crucial actors in this process are policy-makers and other political, economic, and intellectual elites, who will try to transmit to the public (audience, in the language of securitisation theory) their re-interpreted perception of reality—that is, their modified cognitive structure—with the aim of producing concrete policy, broadly legitimised.

In this phase the domestic and the regional interact very clearly. As regional relationships become (domestically) desecuritised and regional states show themselves ready to trust one another, coordinated positions, shared discourses, common projects, and even common institutions can be expected to evolve. Regional peace thus becomes *positive* peace. Neighbours not only have ruled out the possibility of war among themselves, but also are confident that the other states in this zone of stable peace have done so too.

In this way, regions that were previously characterised by mistrust, hostility and competition can gradually evolve into zones of stable peace. Moreover, once mutual trust, links, and interdependence have grown among regional states, they may also cascade through to these states' civil societies. As indicated earlier, deeper and stronger ties among civil societies are the basis of pluralistic security communities, in which mutual sympathies, solidarity, and some sort of common identification exist, so as to make participating publics perceive each other as members of a shared *community*.

Indeed, the second phase of the Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement can be interpreted along the lines of the emergence of mutual trust, complete (military) desecuritisation of bilateral relations, establishment of stable peace, and incipient emergence of security community, facilitated by the construction of shared projects and discourses. Partly because democracies seem to be better at developing reciprocal trustful relationships, and partly because of the evolution of events in the Southern Cone in the early 1980s, the unfolding of positive peace had to wait until 1985, when both countries had initiated their democratic transitions.[17] Also, it was after the fall of the military governments and with the restoration of democratic rule that both states were in a propitious moment to reassess identities and perceptions of both themselves and the other.

Under the leadership of Raúl Alfonsín (Argentina) and José Sarney (Brazil) mutual gestures of goodwill multiplied. While initially these declarations and gestures did not translate into an immediate programme of action, they were crucial signs that these governments were sending to one another and to their domestic publics. Indeed, in addition to overcoming a history of mutual mistrust, the governments needed to persuade newly empowered public opinion in both countries that the neighbour no longer represented a realistic threat. To this end, two factors—rhetoric as the manifestation of political will, and the construction of co-operative institutions and organisations— proved useful in helping to build up trust and confidence, and develop these into viable policies backed by the public.

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17 Among the events 'diverting attention' from rapprochement were the Falklands/Malvinas war, the untidy fall of the Argentine military regime, and the death of Trancredo Neves—the first President elect of Brazil after 20 years of military rule—shortly before taking office.

Regarding the first factor, manifestations of political will, the second half of the 1980s offers plenty of examples. In 1985 the presidents signed a Joint Declaration on Common Nuclear Policy stating their commitment to developing nuclear energy with peaceful purposes and reiterating the goal of close co-operation and mutual complementation. The following year, among numerous co-operation protocols, one on immediate information and reciprocal assistance in case of nuclear accidents was signed. In 1987 and 1988, for the first time in Argentine-Brazilian relations, Presidents Sarney and Alfonsín carried out mutual visits to their nuclear facilities; a most significant event given both the bilateral history and the sensitive nature of the issues involved.

In addition, the two presidents resolved to revive the project of Latin American co-operation and integration, starting with a bilateral Programme for Economic Integration and Co-operation (PICE) in 1986. This signalled the culmination of the process of détente that had gained momentum since 1979, when the negotiation of the Itaipú-Corpus dispute came to a satisfactory end. After 1986 the relationship became firmly grounded on the 'positive half' of the peace continuum.

Despite its name, PICE was not promoted by the ministries of the economy, but by the ministries of foreign affairs, which highlights the deep political commitment lying at its core, as well as a broader convergence of foreign policy orientations and of perceptions of shared domestic and external challenges. Goals such as strengthening peace and discouraging regional arms races, keeping Latin American outside of the strategic conflict of the superpowers, consolidating continental representation instances, and advancing Latin American integration became part of a shared vision. Argentina and Brazil took common stances on the crisis in Central America, the Uruguay Round of negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), nuclear proliferation regimes, and the South Atlantic peace zone. Regarding common domestic and external challenges, both governments shared concerns about issues such as high inflation, democratic transition, improvement of their international images, the external debt crisis, and the developed countries' trade protectionism. Regional integration was conceived of as a strategy with multiple purposes, as much political as economic (if not *more* political than economic), and domestic and regional as well as international.

The early 1990s, in turn, was the time of the construction of a common institutional framework, including both formal organisations with material entity, and common social practices. For instance, the new presidents, Carlos Menem (Argentina) and Fernando Collor (Brazil), agreed on a Joint System of Accountability and Control that included reciprocal inspections to be applied to all nuclear activities, which was administered by the Argentine-Brazilian Agency of Control and Accountability (ABACC) created in 1991. Furthermore, later that year Argentina, Brazil, the ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) signed an agreement on full-scope safeguards; something the two states had hitherto refused to do. Additionally, by 1994 Argentina, Brazil and Chile had ratified the Tlatelolco Treaty. With these developments, the nuclear issue definitely entered the category of asecurity in regional relations.

While in the 1980s PICE had not gone far beyond good intentions—partly as a result of domestic programmes of economic stabilisation and reform—in the 1990s it gained momentum when Menem and Collor implemented unilateral trade liberalisation. In 1990 they agreed to accelerate PICE's scheduled timetable for the establishment of the bilateral common market by the end of 1994. In 1991, Paraguay and Uruguay joined the project, and the four countries signed the Treaty of Asunción creating Mercosur. During the first half of the 1990s genuine dynamics of interdependence became evident between the Mercosur countries. In turn, growing exchange, interaction and interdependence brought the business communities closer together, increasing communication and making dialogue more fluid. During this period, and as Mercosur consolidated an external agenda, a shared sense of regional bloc matured. The incorporation of Chile and Bolivia into Mercosur as associated members (1996), and the decision to play as a single actor in international negotiations—such as those on the formation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and on economic co-operation with the EU—reinforced this feeling.

Finally, Mercosur's evolution began to include slowly (and limitedly) social and cultural areas, which are key to the development of compatible identities and potential emergence of a common identification between societies. It is more directly through social and cultural issues—such as arts, music, languages, literature, cinema, television, academia, student exchanges, holiday destinations, and the likes—that societies get to know more about one another than through international trade treaties and commercial exchange. Thus, at the level of societies, cognitive structures may be more easily transformed by social learning in these areas, bolstering positive changes in the mutual visions of societies, and in turn, rendering a security community possible.

In Mercosur the construction—however limited—of compatible identities has been mostly promoted by its two larger members, Argentina and Brazil. It was pursued through initiatives that ranged from exchanges of training-diplomats, to the promotion of Spanish and Portuguese language courses in schools, the training of Spanish teachers from Brazil in Argentina and of Portuguese teachers from Argentina in Brazil, the recognition and homologation of degrees across the region in order to facilitate mobility, and the organisation of festivals and arts exhibitions with artists from the region. Likewise, other events and competitions have been organised open only to Mercosur residents, such as literary awards, photography competitions, and a science and technology prize for young researchers. All this contributed to unfolding a new, distinctive geographic scope, gradually awakening a perception of common or shared destiny not just among political and economic elites, but also in wider circles of society.

This rather optimistic scenario requires a note of moderation. Processes of cognitive change and construction of mutual confidence take a long time to reach societies, and take even longer to consolidate within them. Just when such a development was beginning to take place in the Southern Cone, as discussed above, Mercosur's profile started to become increasingly commercial. Argentine and Brazilian foreign policies proved to be too divergent in the years of Carlos Menem and Fernando Henrique Cardoso for Mercosur to keep up the pace of its political progress. In the late 1990s, Mercosur's political content and basis of support seemed to be thinning down, diluting the timid feeling of community that was only just starting to arise. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that relations between the states of the Southern Cone have improved to levels which were unthinkable only twenty-five years earlier. Although no peace process is ever irreversible, the development that began in the late 1970s with the Argentine-Brazilian détente has consolidated into a stable and strong regional peace in the 1980s and 1990s.

Conclusions

This discussion has highlighted mutual trust and confidence as central elements in stable regional relations. The emergence of trust and confidence amongst states marks the transformation of zones of *negative peace* into zones of *positive peace*. Moreover, if civil societies are so closely interconnected that in addition to their national identities some kind of regional identification emerges, then that zone of *stable peace* has also become a *pluralistic security community*. Where this is the case, a sense of shared destiny explains the long-term stability of a consolidated peace.

Trust can develop when former adversaries succeed in positively redefining mutually held visions and removing bilateral issues from their domestic security agenda. Whether the causes for doing so are structural, regional or domestic is an important question, although an empirical one. Mostly, it is going to be a combination of more than just one cause or one level—yet in order to determine that, a careful study should be conducted for each empirical case.

In an event, the more stable regional peace is perceived to be by regional actors, the higher the chances that they will trust one another more. Equally, the higher the levels of mutual and regional trust, the more stable and positive the type of regional peace will be. This highlights the fact that while the domestic and the regional can be discerned as distinct levels in the beginning of this development,

they soon become two aspects of one single process of transformation that simultaneously advances further regional and domestic changes.

Domestic desecuritisation and regional peace stabilisation become too intimately related to be separated again, regardless of which one originated the other. Desecuritisation may come first and encourage improvements in the quality of regional peace. Nonetheless, it is also thinkable that regional peace stabilisation—as the result of the mere passage of time without armed confrontations; that is the transformation from fragile into unstable peace—may slowly encourage domestic desecuritisation.

Is this too optimistic an approach? Does it all sound like, once the process begins, there is something inevitable about the improving quality of regional peace and the expanding nature of regional trust? In this paper, I chose to follow the move in its direction away from 'securitisation-negative peace' and towards 'desecuritisation-peace stabilisation.' However, the opposite route is not only also possible, but it is 'easier'. The process peace stabilisation and consolidation is demanding, fragile, easily reversible, and needs a great deal of political will. In contrast, securitisation and destabilisation of peace are a likely outcome in the anarchic context, particularly in the case of former adversaries. Nevertheless, they are not a necessary outcome, as this paper has tried to highlight.

There are a number of significant historical instances in which the positive transformation has occurred. Some former rivals, and even former enemies, have succeeded in achieving stable peace, if not security communities, in their regions. A more thorough understanding of how such a transformation works, what encourages it, and what makes it sustain itself in time may offer valuable insights to the search of solutions for protracted conflicts. This paper has sought to contribute to this debate by sketching out the development of peace processes and by stressing factors that only too often are underplayed or overseen.

Finally, supporters of the democratic peace theory (in its many variants) will disapprove of this argument, claiming that the role of trust is emphasised at the expense of that of type of regime. This is partially true. More often than not, even non-democratic regimes have succeeded in keeping external relations short of war, as South America in general, and the Argentine-Brazilian case in particular have shown. Democracy is not a sine qua non for the maintenance of a zone of negative peace. Nor is it a necessary condition for improvement in the first stage of the peace process, the stabilisation of peace, which may facilitate for a zone of fragile or unstable peace to become one of cold peace. Moreover, although democracy seems to favour the emergence of mutual trust, it is not necessary for the existence of a zone of (positive) stable peace. For long periods during the Cold War some governments in Eastern Europe established trustful relationships among themselves and with the USSR.

Nonetheless, democracy is indeed crucial for the emergence of security communities. The role and participation of civil societies, and their linkages in bilateral and regional relations is what turns a zone of stable peace into a pluralistic security community. Hence, it seems reasonable to claim that members of such a community have regimes that allow a great deal of participation and involvement of their civil society and public opinion in all aspects of political and social life; that is, states with high levels of individual and political freedoms. Such states are usually democracies.

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