



The **thematic agenda** discussed and approved during the Preparatory Meeting held in March 2014 in Peru revolves around five axes:

1. Coordination of specialised conferences of the military institutions with the CDMA.
2. Cooperation in military health.
3. Cooperation in search and rescue capacities.
4. Environmental protection and defence.
5. Exchange of experiences regarding the involvement and effectiveness of the armed forces in security tasks within the region and the hemisphere.

Special Issue

Looking to the next Conference of Defence

Ministers of the Americas (CDMA)

A few thoughts on the present situation of the Hemispheric Conference that shaped history by fostering democratisation and cooperation in the defence sector.

The XI Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas (CDMA) will be held in Arequipa, Peru (host country) in October 2014. This Conference was created in 1995 and since its inception has been organised every two years by a host country.

Although it is not a binding mechanism, since its creation the Conference generated a crescendo in addressing issues related to the strengthening of cooperation within the hemisphere, such as confidence-building measures, transparency with regard to budgets and conventional weapons, gender perspective in the armed forces, peacekeeping, and the role of defence in natural disasters, in addition to security concerns.

Today, many in the hemisphere wonder what happened with the regional thrust that led up to these Conferences and whether its relevance has waned. For this reason, we asked two of the foremost regional experts on the subject to contribute their views in order to improve our understanding of the present situation of this hemispheric mechanism.

Experts who contributed to this Newsletter:

Loreta Tellería (Bolivia)
Roberto Cajina (Nicaragua)

The opinions expressed in the articles are solely those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by RESDAL.

Urgent reflections about the CDMA and its future

Loreta Tellería Escobar

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The Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas (CDMA) is defined as "an international high-level meeting whose goal is to contribute to the development of its member countries from the point of view of Defence and Security"¹ *A few months before its eleventh meeting, it can be said that the CDMA's past and present development shows results characterised by a low level of execution, and that at the present time its agenda is in danger of losing its relevance. Given this situation, its contribution to the member countries' development in the areas of defence and security is, to say the least, questionable.*

There are several aspects that make the CDMA a mechanism full of paradoxes. Without denying the fact that its biennial meeting is the only regional forum for the political discussion of defence issues, its impact is limited to certain levels of subregional interest. The first paradox is that the CDMA presents a heterogeneous scenario in a forum that claims to be egalitarian. The presence in the Conference of the United States, with Canada as its unconditional ally, implies the existence of a determining influence on the countries acting under its protection, in areas ranging from the design of agendas to the support thereof. Curiously, these agendas deal with issues concerning only Latin America and the Caribbean. The second paradox reflects an ambivalent discourse on

peace-building. While each and every CDMA Declaration has advocated peace-building as the core principle of harmonious coexistence among peers, the United States consistently spread a spirit of belligerence in every corner of the world. However, this does not elicit any condemnation from the Conference. Lastly, the third paradox lies in the scope of the provisions adopted by past Conferences, which apparently apply only to certain countries. Issues which are considered to be regional goals, such as the implementation of confidence-building measures, budgetary transparency, democratisation of institutions and others, are presented as cooperation and transparency mechanisms and are adopted on a random basis.

Nevertheless, beyond these contradictions, most agendas discussed in the CDMA have dealt with current defence and security issues. A look at these issues shows that nowadays, the countries in the region discuss regular issues such as military education reform, gender equality in the Armed Forces, the participation of the Armed Forces in peace missions, natural disasters and domestic security (gangs, criminality, drugs, etc.), as well as new issues such as the use of drones by the military and cyber-defence as a security mechanism. However, an examination of the XI CDMA agenda not only shows that most of its items are foreign to the current debate on regional defence but also that its subjects are irrelevant, at least from the perspective

¹ CDMA Regulations.

of the academic world that closely follows these meetings. Three of the five subjects found in the agenda are: coordination of specialised conferences of military institutions with the CDMA; cooperation at military health level; and cooperation in the search and rescue capacities area.

In the first place, the agenda item on the coordination of specialised conferences of military institutions with the CDMA, such as the Cooperation System of American Air Forces (SICOFAA), the Conference of American Armies (CEA) and the Inter-American Naval Conference (CNI), reflects a sudden interest in articulating strictly military conferences with a mechanism which is essentially political in nature. Apart from the fact that military conferences maintain an umbilical relationship with the United States' security interests, it is important to note that this potential new relationship (since none exists at present) should be based on the democratic principle of the true subordination of the military world to political authority. Otherwise, the CDMA risks being subsumed into military interests, which will lead it to discuss operational and even marginal subjects, such as military health and, to a certain degree, cooperation in the search and rescue capacity area.

In the second place, it is remarkable how civil society, and specifically the academic world, is increasingly excluded from agenda discussions. In fact, the view of defence subjects in the framework of the CDMA seems to have undergone a substantial shift. Although its development gave rise to the implementation of public consultation and participation mechanisms -which have contributed crucial issues to the agenda, such as the democratisation of the Armed Forces and the defence sector- priority is now given to basically military subjects. Thus, the current agenda is focused on linking the Conference with clearly operational, not

political, issues - but this does not mean that the core issues have been exhausted.

What seems to be happening is that, similar to the inter-American defence system made up of TIAR, IADB and IADC, the CDMA is undergoing a crisis which can threaten its very existence, more so because of the creation of sub-regional mechanisms pretending to be more operative, such as the South American Defence Council within the framework of UNASUR.

Lastly, the fact that the CDMA is evolving in this direction leads us to believe that an in-depth analysis of its relevance, usefulness and impact -both at regional and world level- is needed and should be undertaken as soon as possible within the framework of defence ministries, civil society and military institutions. *Undoubtedly, if the Conference shifts its focus and starts dealing with minor subjects, as opposed to outstanding issues such as the democratisation of the defence sector and peace-building, it will run a serious risk of accelerating its loss of relevance.*

¿Quo vadis CMDA?

Roberto Cajina

Mr. Cajina is a member of RESDAL's Board of Directors and a civil consultant in the area of Security, Defence and Democratic Governance. He is also a historian and has studied Social Sciences and Latin American History and Studies. He was Adviser on History for the Sandinista Popular Army. From 1994 to 1997 he worked as researcher for the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research (CRIES). Mr. Cajina also served as external adviser for Nicaragua's Defence and Governance ministries and as a teacher in the Nicaraguan Military Academy. Mr. Cajina has published several articles, books and book chapters in his area of specialisation, and was a member of the Pro-Tempore Secretariat of the VII CDMA, held in Nicaragua in 2006.

The Defence Ministerial Conference called by the then Defence Secretary of the United States, William J. Perry (Williamsburg, July 1995), later known as the I Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas (CDMA), laid the foundations for the construction of a new relationship between the institutions in charge of the external security of the countries in the hemisphere in general, and between Latin America/the Caribbean and the United States in particular.

The context in which the Ministerial Conference was organised and held was more than favourable: the Cold War years were over and unprecedented transition processes from authoritarianism to democracy were under way in Latin America. This was precisely the spirit that imbued the Williamsburg Declaration, which focused on six cardinal principles: the indissoluble link between security and democracy; the role of the armed forces in the defence of democratic States' legitimate interests; the subordination of the armed forces to legitimately constituted authorities; the debate on Defence issues; the negotiated solution of disputes; and the promotion of cooperation in the security sphere.

Five years later, the Defence ministers, spurred by the Williamsburg spirit, discussed issues of high interest to the countries participating in the IV CDMA (Manaus, Brazil, October 2000): hemispheric security; confidence-building measures; regional cooperation for defence and development; and the role of the armed forces in democracy.

Every two years, as Conference followed Conference, the official documents issued at the end of each, though repeating the Principles of Williamsburg as if by inertia, started to experience a sort of acromegalia that made each declaration a little bulkier (36 items in the Santiago 2002 declaration, 46 in the Quito 2004 declaration), although with severe quality deficits in their contents. They became documents heavy with rhetoric but empty of specific agreements, of actual effects on hemispheric security. This trend is however not spontaneous. At the Manaus meeting, the same ministers placed a straitjacket on the CDMA by stating that "The Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas has the exclusive goal of fostering mutual knowledge and the exchange of ideas in the field of defence and security". This clear restriction turned the CDMA into one more link of the typical summit diplomacy, where final statements are pompous but lack any binding effects.

At the VII CDMA (Managua, October 2006), the Final Declaration was reduced to 15 items. Moreover, an attempt was made to obtain the ministers' pledge to create an International Humanitarian Demining Centre in Nicaragua; their only response was, however, a declarative "support" of the Nicaraguan initiative. *Four years later (Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 2010), a new attempt was made and this time the ministers at least stated "their agreement to consider the proposal entitled "Strengthening partnerships in support of humanitarian assistance and aid in case of natural disasters",* in work groups coordinated by the CDMA's Pro Tempore Secretariat, where participation is voluntary and open to the member States. These groups were scheduled to meet in 2011 in order to develop a collaborative mechanism among Defence ministries aimed at enhancing the military's humanitarian aid capabilities to support civil authorities at national level and other pertinent instances, always in response to the request of a State affected by a natural disaster and without prejudice to any existing or future initiatives. However, the agreement was overshadowed by a disagreement regarding the role that five countries, led by the United States, tried to assign to the Inter-American Defence Board (IADB) in this area.

For the same reason, the disagreement reappeared in the X CDMA, and the proposal "Strengthening partnerships in support of humanitarian assistance and aid in case of natural disasters" was shelved waiting for better times to come, perhaps when the cloud of suspicion and deception that have accompanied the CDMA from San Carlos de Bariloche to Punta del Este is finally lifted. Meanwhile, a huge number of people in Latin American and Caribbean countries continue to suffer the consequences of recurring disasters that take a heavy toll on

lives and cause significant material damage.

This is not an overly pessimistic view of the CDMA. Rather, it is an undeniably objective appraisal of this body in the light of its past and, more worrying still, looking to the immediate future, as the agenda for the XI CDMA to be held in Lima, Peru, does not offer the slightest hope for a return to the Williamsburg Principles; rather, it seems to mark the start of an alarming shift to extremely light issues that look more like an escape hatch created to avoid a courageous approach to the pressing challenges currently faced in the sphere of hemispheric security and defence.

	Bariloche	Cartagena	Manaus	Santiago	Quito	Managua	Banff	Santa Cruz	Punta del Este
Condemning outlawed armed groups/terrorism.		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Civil society contribution.							x	x	x
Inter-American Convention: transparency in conventional weapons.		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cooperation on natural disasters.		x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Humanitarian demining.			x	x	x	x		x	x
HHRR/IHL education.		x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Military education/training.							x	x	x
Promotion of meetings and exchanges.		x		x	x				
Civilian training/inclusion.			x	x			x	x	x
Multiculturalism.								x	
Multidimensionality/new threats according to domestic laws.			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Non-proliferation.			x	x	x	x	x		
Peace operations.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gender perspective.				x	x		x	x	x
Institutional modernisation processes.					x	x		x	
Small arms and light weapons proliferation.		x			x	x	x		
Promotion of confidence-building measures.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subregional realities/flexible architecture.			x	x	x	x	x		
Democracy-security-economy relation.				x	x	x			x
Budgetary transparency.			x	x	x		x	x	x

Source: RESDAL. A grouping of principal topics covered in each declaration is presented.



RESDAL

LATIN AMERICAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE NETWORK

RESDAL is an organisation that builds, connects and enhances the capacities and efforts of decision-makers, academics and civil society members in the area of security and defence in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ORGANISATION

BOARD

Formed by recognised experts from the region, the Board acts as an important source of consultation for research, courses of action, and in RESDAL's vision

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Formed by professionals from a variety of countries, it coordinates projects, administers resources and organises the daily activities inherent to the functioning of RESDAL.

MEMBERS

Regional experts in security and defence that maintain contact to exchange ideas, generate discussions, and participate in the implementation of the various research programs.

ACADEMICS +

PRACTITIONERS

Its mission is to be a think-tank and a centre of action, serving as a "clearinghouse" for the generation of projects and a space for advocating the democratic advancement of security and defence sectors.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS MAY GENERATE POLICIES, EXPERIENCES AND INITIATIVES WHICH, IN TURN, PRODUCE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE HEMISPHERIC AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT.

OBJECTIVES

- Reinforce the capacities of civil society and State institutions dedicated to security and defence in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Promote dialogue and the exchange of experiences among individuals, institutions and regions.
- Communicate original democratic ideas and practices that may contribute to the development of security and defence institutions.
- Provide diverse and accessible data, information and analysis on relevant subjects.
- Assist national and international institutions in the development and management of democratic policies in the area.

RESDAL WORKS IN

The production of informative tools for academics and decision-makers

Assistance to international processes

Training

Support to government institutions, international organizations, academic centres and organisations

Diagnosis on Institutional Development