

# Foreword

The third edition of the Comparative Atlas of Defence in Latin America comes up in a particular moment in the hemisphere political history. The scenario where defence policies develop shows itself as dynamic and complex; particularly, a favourable international economic state of affairs towards the regional products and a system of international relations undergoing an identity crisis, are directly affecting the defence in such issues as budget, redesign of legal frameworks, cooperative relations among ministries, and the link between defence and foreign policy.

The movements that this scenario brings about in the defence field are not always rapidly perceived. In general, and perhaps due to some curious link between our expectations and the characteristics of the issue we are dealing with, we tend to see defence as a stagnant field, away from the political scenario, and belonging to a “high” State policy that does not interfere in the comings and goings of the general domestic and international politics. Changes certainly occur; understanding that the defence policy is essentially a policy helps us to identify the scenario in a better fashion, and to adequately assess the possibilities and perspectives of our region.

Defence, in this sense, moves in different backgrounds, which come into play at the moment of decision-making and action: the background of relations among countries, among State institutions and among the State and other non-State actors. Whatever the defence issue being worked upon at a certain moment, these different backgrounds will crop up and impact on the courses of action. A confidence-building measure, for instance, is naturally related to the fluctuations of the general relations among the implied governments. But it is also related to the development of relations among the agencies within a State, which may favour or hamper the relation of that State with others. At the same time, this can happen with regard to issues like education in defence matters or public opinion. The following pages undertake the reflection on the complex interweaving of relations and defence levels; through them we hope to foster a better understanding and performance in this field.

The Comparative Atlas is in turn a source of data for the comprehension of the defence state of affairs within the region, and an illustration of these different levels



where the practice of this policy seems to be underway. All through the making of this publication hard data has been appearing along with the perspectives and attitudes of the actors which are, ultimately, the ones that give life to this policy. They are intertwined, and in their relation the existing political and cultural changes can be perceived. Contradictions are also part of this scenario, and they reflect the tensions between what we are used to accept as valid, and what struggles to come up.

In this sense, two main issues seem to show the elements of change and the permanent interplay of institutional levels and actors: the fluctuations in mutual confidence and in defence international relations, and the progressive conformation of a body of specialists at the State and academic levels, including younger generations that are pursuing their incorporation. The progressive construction of a regional data source shakes our perception of hemispheric construction possibilities in matters of mutual confidence, as well as the participation of new generations in the gathering of data does, thus keeping away the idea that defence is an issue from the past. The disposition and collaboration of national institutions with this publication – which can be found in each and every source – and of the young scholars of each country, depicts the relevance of many actors and institutions when giving shape to this work: a regional source, coordinated by RESDAL but built upon the leading role of many actors that also support the idea that defence is a policy to be constructed, and hence, it deserves to be promoted and accredited.

The VIII Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas, organized on this occasion by the Government of Canada, is a very appropriate instance to offer this publication as a sample of the things we can do when working collaboratively. This has always been the ambition behind the Comparative Atlas, and the current reason of the three simultaneous editions, in English, French and Spanish: a contribution to the thought and analysis towards the interior of the region, and the spreading of data on our defence institutions towards other countries and regions that deserve to know about the Latin-American experience.

Words can hardly express the sensations of a work group, or echo the voice of all those who have collaborated in order to make this work happen. Our public gratitude goes to all RESDAL's members who contributed data and comments, to the acknowledged experts who prepared the papers herein published, and to all ministries and armed forces bodies who provided us with information; only you know how much you had to endure by our side. The more than two thousand pieces of information presented in the Comparative Atlas would not be here if it were not for you. We could not read them in other languages if it was not for the translators' team headed by Clarisa Korovsky and Ines Navarro, who worked with indefatigable professionalism and enthusiasm. Nor could these data be organized but for the group at the Executive Secretariat, a team conformed by scholars from different countries, unyielding when it came about taking challenges. We can only think of one word for Juan Rial and Hal Klepak: thanks.

On the other hand, given that acknowledgements are usually received by the authors of the work, we would not like to leave unsaid the fundamental support that made this possible. Ideas can be better or worse; if we talk about carrying

them out, the best forms appear – in our experience – when we get further away from individual practices. All the way that the Comparative Atlas had to cover up until now, we have had the support of many who encouraged us to gain confidence, freedom and optimism. The Latin America Program from the Open Society Institute supported the idea since its beginning, back in 2005, when it was still a possibility, and has permanently encouraged us to carry it out beyond the known challenges; the outcome we have today owes its existence to their trust and support. As to the Centre for Civil-Military Relations of Monterrey (CCMR), it has collaborated enthusiastically with the English edition; its participation will allow a wide spreading of this material around the diverse places in the world where they perform their institutional job.

Support from the Canada's Department of National Defence when sponsoring this publication has been paramount. Those of us, who have coordinated this work, have also reflected on more than one occasion over the last months upon the significance of the presentation of the Comparative Atlas in the Conference of Ministers.. It is evident from our perspective that the organizers' stance has not only made possible the circulation of Latin-American information to other regions through the use of other languages, such as English and French. It has also introduced to RESDAL, and to those who experience the defence field, a constructive view on the possibilities of communication between the State and civil society. For this chance, we send our gratitude to the team of the VIII Conference, and especially, to Mike Snell, for his view and perseverance to make this possible.

Thus, this special edition of the Comparative Atlas presents us with - besides its information - the possibility to reflect upon how we can think of ways to collaborate and work with the common objectives and interests. Perhaps we will have to saw, during the next defence scenarios in Latin America, the seeds of a deeper opening to defence relations and all their complexities. Therefore, governmental, academic, military and civil society actors should also be included in a collaborative and mutual respect dynamics that allow for the attainment of common goals. This historical experience, though culturally unusual within our region, deserves to be developed and strengthened, as well as the debate and action on common interest issues do, where collaboration can help us find better ways towards the consolidation of democracy within defence institutions.

Since its very outset, this work has sought to contribute to the construction of confidence in the hemisphere and to the institutional strengthening of defence. RESDAL is honoured to present it to those attending the VIII Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas (Banff, Canada), and to those who in due course have access to it, in the hope that it will foster the reflection and debate on the presented issues, as well as the generation and consolidation of mutual confidence, through the shared knowledge of the challenging realities in the regional defence sphere.

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