

The Russo-Ukrainian War and Global Security Challenges in the South Atlantic

Ariel González Levaggi

Abstract: The new global context marked by the armed conflagration in Eastern Europe presents a series of risks and challenges to the South Atlantic, a zone of peace characterized by strategic stability and extended cooperation in the post-Cold War period. This article analyzes the systemic impact of the war in Ukraine in three dimensions: the risks of strategic competition between great powers, the response of regional actors to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, and the impact on the economic development agenda.

Keywords: South Atlantic; Russia; Ukraine; security; peace zone; regional stability.

The South American peace zone of the South Atlantic is facing a turbulent international scene and raises great questions about the future of multilateralism and international cooperation.

A WORLD IN COMPETITION

The South Atlantic faces a new global reconfiguration of the post-Cold War order. The United States' (U.S.) hegemony is in crisis, while there is a growing challenge from Russia and China to the economic and security architecture led by the White House, which ranges from the development of post-Western economic projects to the quest to create zones of influence in the post-Soviet space and East Asia, thus isolating United States' influence. The Russian-Ukrainian war is not only an indicator of a less cooperative international pathway, but also a factor of systemic conflict. As Lebelem and Duarte Villa (2022) state, this armed conflict has triggered “strong pressures on international security,” in addition to manifesting the presence of “systemic geopolitical factors that involve and counterpose the interests of actors with the capacity to act globally, such as the United States, China and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] itself.”

In this context, the axis of world politics has been altered by a series of tectonic movements that have produced a shift from general cooperation toward confrontation, where the liberal rules-based order has motivated the return of traditional geopolitics characterized by “great power competition, imperial ambitions and struggles for resources” (Haass 2022). The economic, technological, and military rise of the People's Republic of China in light of containment efforts by the United States, the pandemic COVID-19 crisis, and the revisionism to the international order of the Russian Federation with the invasion of Ukraine reveal a different zeitgeist from the relatively peaceful Post-Cold War period. The unipolar, hegemonic world led by the United States and its network of allies is giving way to a “new world order in gestation” (Serbin 2022a, 11), characterized by a disorderly process of transition to a multipolar configuration in which a block of Eurasian powers — China, Russia, India, and Turkey, among others — have multiplied geoeconomic and geopolitical cooperation schemes on the margins of the West (González Levaggi 2019).

Ariel González Levaggi is an Associate Professor of the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina. Co-Chair of the 'Asia and the Americas' Section of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). His latest book is *Del Indo-Pacífico al Atlántico Sur. Estrategias Marítimas de las Grandes Potencias del siglo XXI* (Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 2022).

Increasing multipolarity has two types of effects: greater geopolitical competition between great powers and the weakening of the global governance system. On the one hand, multilateralism is undergoing a profound crisis. Efforts to advance global governance systems on international security issues are marked by increasingly fragmented agendas and interests. In parallel, global economic interdependence has been subject to a progressive instrumentalization (weaponization) of economic and financial tools to achieve geoeconomic and geopolitical objectives (Farrell & Newman 2019), expressed in the systematic package of sanctions imposed by the West on Putin's Russia. On the other side, deteriorating foundations of international security allowed the emergence of the short-lived but stable unipolar world. Regional dynamics in the post-Soviet space and the Indo-Pacific region are increasingly determined by a structure of cross-alliances between countries and institutions allied to the United States, and those within the framework of ascending Eurasian coordination efforts between Moscow and Beijing (Serbin 2019).

In light of the current global power transition and the growing disorder in global dynamics, the South Atlantic remains a regional security order with high levels of stability and an important degree of intergovernmental cooperation, especially on the South American coast, manifested through the longstanding idea of a South Atlantic Zone of Peace and Cooperation (ZPCAS) and the Coordination of the South Atlantic Maritime Area (CAMAS) (Hoffmann & Macondes 2017). Another interesting instance under the United States' leadership has been the Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation signed in September 2022, where a series of countries from both hemispheres — including Brazil, Argentina, and the United Kingdom — share the commitment of promoting a peaceful, prosperous, open, and cooperative Atlantic region (United States 2022).

Except for the limited interregnum during the last two decades of the Cold War — resulting from the decolonization processes in Portuguese Africa, the South Atlantic Conflict in 1982, and the more active involvement of Soviet maritime and strategic interests in the area —, the region is highly stable and

This article reflects on the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the South American Atlantic space. To this end, the first section frames the South Atlantic as a zone of peace and extended cooperation. The second section analyzes the impacts on regional dynamics related to systemic risks in the South Atlantic...

shows low levels of conflict, partly due to its low strategic maritime relevance and the limited presence of existential counterpoints between great powers. However, given that most of the globe is under growing pressures from the global competition between the U.S. and its allies against China and Russia, the South Atlantic has also been subject to a series of impacts, although most of them indirect given that it does not represent a central strategic stage, like the emergence of the Indo-Pacific (Toro 2021; Cannon 2022) or the Eurasian space (Gresh 2020; Diesen 2017).

In light of the environment described above, this article reflects on the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the South American Atlantic space. To this end, the first section frames the South Atlantic as a zone of peace and extended cooperation. The second section analyzes the impacts on regional dynamics related to systemic risks in the South Atlantic, the international positioning of Argentina and Brazil, and the consequences on economic development.

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC: A ZONE OF EXTENDED PEACE AND COOPERATION

In recent years, a multiplication of approaches to regional security issues has been reported, thus diversifying traditional visions beyond the issues of war and peace in Latin America (Mares & Kacowicz 2015). Despite the existence of a peaceful environment showing a significant degree of economic interdependence, advanced levels of democratic institutionalization, and the diffusion of regional and sub-regional institutions, there are still certain aspects that keep the region away from a Kantian “paradise.” While the existence of peace in terms of the absence of armed conflicts over the last three decades cannot be denied, there are issues, such as diplomatic crises, political conflicts, militarized disputes, and the expansion of transnational threats that raise certain questions about the scope of a certain peace based on the European Union model.

As Cameron Thies states, there are two dominant approaches to understanding war and peace in Latin America, which can be extended to the South Atlantic: “The first attempts to explain specific classes of conflict: war, rivalry, militarized interstate disputes (MIDs), and civil wars as phenomena in their own right. The second approach tries to explain the type of regional order (e.g., zone of peace) that prevails at any given time and is mostly oriented toward explaining relatively peaceful regional relations” (Thies 2016, 113).

Regions, per se, are not given objects but are socially constructed and thus express contested political visions. In this case, regions have both material and identity dimensions. On the one hand, they have a territory and a state organization, but

on the other hand, there is an additional element that is often difficult to concretize: a collective idea that gives meaning.

Regions are “given” by geography and “manufactured” through politics (Katzenstein 2005, 36). Therefore, politics — that authoritative assignment of values in its agonistic phase or that tool that allows consensus — plays a crucial role in defining a region. The South Atlantic maintains a peaceful dynamic and the probability of military conflicts is almost nil, beyond the existing militarization around the “Fortress Falklands” by the United Kingdom, an issue about which the Argentine Republic protests systematically in various international forums (MRECIC 2021), and the issue of sovereign claims over the Antarctic territory. Not only is the probability of an armed conflict limited, but in recent years a series of diplomatic and maritime security initiatives have been developed to allow the development of a “community of security practices” (Medeiros & Moreira 2017).

While militarized crises still occur in Latin America and border and territorial disputes exist in the Andean zone of South America, Central America and the Caribbean, there is a clear difference in the patterns of behavior in the western South Atlantic. On the one hand, traditional, realist mechanisms do not operate in the typical strict sense, due not only to the non-existence of armed conflicts since the South Atlantic Conflict in 1982 to date but also the low recurrence of militarized crises among main regional actors, the development of multiple bilateral agreements, and the impulse to build regional institutions such as MERCOSUR. On the other hand, despite the existence of a series of liberal variables considered fundamental to deepen cooperation — democratization, economic interdependence, and common institutions — the region has suffered from stagnation with regard to regional integration (Malamud & Gardini 2012) and little progress in the development of a collective defense structure and, even less, of military integration (Frenkel 2020).

What structural geostrategic factors attach importance to the Atlantic maritime space? Carlos De Meira Mattos (1990, 222) pointed out three elements: constituting a transportation route, forming an area of military power projection, and being a source of resources. With regard to the former, Cape Horn is shown as a vital communications artery given its alternative role in the transport of oil from the Persian Gulf to European markets, especially in the case of transportation through the Suez Canal being limited. The same would apply to the Strait of Magellan if the Panama Canal suffers any serious inconvenience. Secondly, the United Kingdom’s strategic dominance of the island triangle of St. Helena, Ascension (also used by the United States), and Tristan da Cunha and the complex of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and South Sandwich Islands claimed by Argentina, but under the colonial control of the United Kingdom. In addition, “Fortress Falklands” is pro-

jected as an alternative gateway to the Antarctic territories outside the South American continent. In terms of resources, the exploitation of living resources — fish, krill, and whales — and non-living resources — hydrocarbons and polymetallic nodules — has been an element of additional interest not only for the Soviets, but also for the major naval powers in the region.

In a cooperative environment, the South Atlantic remains a vital reference point for the global interests of Argentina (Fraga 1983, Alessandrini 2019) and Brazil (Saravia 1997, Duarte 2016). Moreover, the sustained presence of extra-regional powers such as the United Kingdom (Dodds 2012) and the United States (Espach 2021) cannot be ignored, in parallel with the growing projection of Eurasian powers such as the People's Republic of China, Russia and India (Abdenur & Marcondes 2013, González Levaggi 2022). The literature on the South Atlantic has various interpretations of the regional reality, characterized by the turbulence following the Falkland Islands conflict, the impact of the Soviet presence in the area during the last stage of the Cold War (Coutau-Bégarie 1988, Kelly & Child 1990), the uncertainty surrounding the irresolution of the sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands (Dodds 2012, Alessandrini 2019) and, finally, the existence of stable patterns of cooperation that have allowed the development of peace zone (Medeiros 2002, Abdenur, Mattheis and Seabra 2016). Concerning the latter approach, it is possible to offer an interpretation of the trajectory of the South American South Atlantic regional order by looking at the contributions made by the Southern Cone's peace zone literature.

According to Battaglino (2013, 8), the Southern Cone can be interpreted as a zone of positive peace in which the possibility of using force is unlikely. In the same vein, later interpretations present the region as normal (Miller 2007) or stable (Oelsner 2009) peace. However, it is important to recapitulate on the concept of a zone of peace. This concept was coined by Arie Kacowicz (1998, 9), who defined it as a “discrete geographical region of the world 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.” According to this definition, this concept includes the Southern Cone region, since its member States have maintained relations without armed conflict since the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870), where Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina confronted Paraguay led by Francisco Solano Lopez.

In addition, Kacowicz distinguishes negative or precarious peace, stable peace, and pluralist security community, the latter in line with Karl Deutsch (1957) and later Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998). In the first scenario, war is a concrete possibility, although States generally have no intention of changing the

territorial status quo. In stable peace, the use of military force is not expected since maintaining peace relies on reciprocal consensus, while economic rather than military issues set the agendas. Finally, the pluralistic security community (or security community) posits the existence of expectations of peaceful change rooted in States that share common norms, values, and institutions, with the development of a common identity and a high degree of interdependence (Kacowicz 1998, 9-10).

The Southern Cone will also be presented as an incipient pluralist security community (Kacowicz 1998, 21). However, the authors do not fully agree on whether to designate the Southern Cone as a pluralist security community or simply as a zone of stable peace. Based on Hurrell's (1998) contribution, Adler and Barnett (1998, 21) interpret that in the Southern Cone, there seems to be

stable expectations of non-use of force, non-fortified borders, and institutionalized habits of dialogue between the military establishments of Argentina and Brazil indicate that a security community may already exist between these two states. Moreover, a security community seems to be embedded in an increasingly dense process of economic integration and in the idea of a "club of states" to which only some governments are allowed to belong, and cooperative security becomes the symbol of democratic identity and the end of old rivalries.

However, Oelsner (2016, 182) posits that, although Southern Cone seems to be a security community, there are certain limits in relation to the emergence of a common identity in this region. An advance that seems to have remained frozen in the second stage of evolution but reflects a series of positive expectations regarding the peaceful change that allowed the Southern Cone regional order to transform in the 1980s from a negative peace zone to a positive peace.

In any case, the consensus on the applicability of the notion of a zone of peace is relatively widespread, both in the academic world and among foreign policy decision-makers, expressed in two fundamental aspects. Firstly, in the development of regional institutions in the economic sphere (MERCOSUR), the diplomatic sphere (ZPCAS), and in relation to maritime security (Coordination of the South Atlantic Maritime Area). Secondly, the approval of regional documents such as the Ushuaia Protocol of 1998 by MERCOSUR and Associated States leaders, later extended to the South American Peace Zone at the first Meeting of the Presidents of South America — a predecessor of UNASUR —, held in Brasília in 2000.

Although this cooperative and peaceful prospect was not subsequently chal-

lenged, a trend towards the “logic of decoupling” between Argentina and Brazil can be glimpsed during the last decade. Moreover, in the South Atlantic, it is reflected in the “stagnation of the South Atlantic Zone of Peace and Cooperation (ZPCAS) mechanism” and the positioning of the maritime region as a “space of dispute and geostrategic projection of the great powers” (Malacalza & Tokatlian 2022). In any case, within the framework of a more conflictive context, there is a regional interest in revitalizing instances of cooperation such as the ZPCAS; or also creating spaces for new hemispheric cooperation that coordinate the North and South Atlantic, such as the Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation previously mentioned.

Regarding this aspect, the perspective of the zone of peace centered on State-centric dynamics and limited to the regional sphere fails to address challenges from transnational threats, in addition to the systemic factor in which the regional periphery is increasingly subject to global pressures due to the strategic competition between great powers (Russell & Calle 2022).

THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT: CHALLENGES TO REGIONAL STABILITY

The Russian military intervention in Ukraine has changed perceptions of decision-makers in the region on their relations with Russia, resulting in an alteration in the security agenda calculations with the United States and NATO partners. While uncertainty about the medium and long-term consequences prevails, the impact of the crisis in the South Atlantic has several dimensions. In a more dangerous world, the South Atlantic presents itself as an oasis of peace and stability, but there are a series of challenges for the regional “zone of peace.” Among the main ones, we consider the risks derived from the strategic competition between great powers, the international positioning of regional actors in the face of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the impact on the economic development agenda.

In a more dangerous world, the South Atlantic presents itself as an oasis of peace and stability, but there are a series of challenges for the regional “zone of peace.” Among the main ones, we consider the risks derived from the strategic competition between great powers, the international positioning of regional actors in the face of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the impact on the economic development agenda.

SOUTH ATLANTIC: RISKS IN LIGHT OF NEW GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION

The literature on regional security orders underlines the interconnection between the projection of extra-regional powers in such spaces, whether by overlapping (Lake & Morgan 1997), penetration (Buzan & Wæver 2003), or the type of involvement (González Levaggi 2020). In this regard, translating global geopolitical competition to the South Atlantic and Latin America has three potential difficulties.

First, the possibility of more assertive responses by Russia to respond to the United States' and NATO's actions in the war in Ukraine that go beyond traditional "symbolic reciprocity" (Rouvinski 2022) would imply the deployment not only of military personnel but also advanced weapons systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. As an indicator, during the turmoil of the Venezuelan crisis surrounding the conflict over international legitimacy, a series of Russian actions ranged from explicit support for Nicolás Maduro to the dispatch of Russian military contractors from the Wagner group to reinforce the security of the Venezuelan leader.

Second, a potential formal or informal expansion of the transatlantic military alliance beyond Europe or simply increased security cooperation to counter China or Russia may affect the South Atlantic. For now, Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina have achieved Grand Ally status outside NATO, although their commitment varies depending on the governments in office. For example, Bogota remains the U.S.' South Atlantic key security partner since the inception of Plan Colombia in the late 1990s, but the recent arrival of Gustavo Petro to the Palacio de Nariño raises doubts in Washington about whether this strategic partnership will continue. Countries such as Bolivia, Nicaragua, or Cuba may assist China or Russia in establishing a military presence in Latin America to counter the threat from Washington and its allies. In addition, Russia and China could alternatively pressure their allies in Latin America and seek an advanced presence in the "backyard" of the U.S., although this is still a remote possibility, given that Washington's strategic priorities are the Indo-Pacific and Eastern Europe. While this scenario is conjecture, Latin America and the South Atlantic were peripheral contested territories in the Cold War period. The projection and activism of the Eurasian powers — mainly Beijing — is a fact of reality. In light of a series of bilateral agreements with Argentina, China installed a Deep Space Station in the Argentine province of Neuquén, which collaborates with the Chinese Program for Moon Exploration but created doubts regarding an eventual dual use; in turn, establishing an Antarctic Logistic Pole in Ushuaia with potential Chinese financing has attracted the attention of the Southern Command of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Third, a shift in multilateral support for the nonproliferation regime could become problematic (Tokatlian 2022). At the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in August, President Gustavo Zlaouvinen acknowledged that the “nuclear risk is at the highest levels since the end of the Cold War” (Bañez 2022). This statement reflects high-level concerns about the responsible handling of nuclear devices and a renewed fear of the spread of nuclear technology or the disruption of nuclear programs currently used for peaceful purposes. The proliferation regime could be challenged if extraterritorial countries such as China, Russia, or North Korea attempt to transfer nuclear technology to United States’ enemies in direct confrontation. In this context, the declaration of Latin America and the Caribbean as a nuclear-weapon-free zone under the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco and the strong commitment to nonproliferation by the region’s peaceful nuclear powers — Argentina and Brazil — has been key to the strategic stability of the region. In the case of Argentine-Brazilian cooperation, the creation in 1991 of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and its support to the present — beyond political changes — continues to be the basis of bilateral understanding (Nascimento Plum & Rollemberg de Resende 2016) and its scope of application become more legitimate by including naval nuclear propulsion.

INTERNATIONAL POSITIONING IN THE FACE OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

The region’s countries reacted with relative affinity, but without consensus. Although most Latin American countries condemned the actions in different international forums and various public statements by their main leaders, the region not only did not have a homogeneous position, but also lacked cooperation to establish common positions. During the vote on resolution ES-11/1 of the United Nations General Assembly condemning Russia for its actions in Ukraine, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, among others, voted in favor and a number of countries such as Nicaragua, Cuba, Bolivia and El Salvador abstained, while Venezuela was unable to vote due to suspended voting rights because of unpaid debts to the international organization. In another multilateral instance, within the United Nations Security Council, both Brazil and Mexico condemned the invasion in Resolution 2623 (vetoed by Russia) on February 27, 2022. Finally, Argentina — which holds the Presidency of the UN Human Rights Council — voted in favor of suspending Russia from the Council, while Brazil and Mexico abstained, although they had supported investigating human rights violations in certain regions of Ukraine. At the Organization of American States (OAS), Argentina, Brazil and Mexico abstained in the vote that

suspended Russia as a permanent observer to the OAS, while, despite Western recommendations, none of the region's countries chose to accompany the sanctions against Russia, in line with the diplomatic tradition against implementing measures of this type.

Russia and Latin America have a long tradition of ties but have never been as close as in the last two decades (Jeifets, Khadorich & Leksyutina 2018). The Putin era has been characterized by having a great political initiative toward the region and fostering the generation of friendly ties with these countries, whether due to political affinity — as in the case of Venezuela —, shared visions on the international order — as it occurs with Brazil — or merely a pragmatic agenda based on mutual benefit. This is the case of Argentina. Beyond the reactions to the invasion and the opposition to the sanctions, Latin American countries' relations with Moscow are likely to diminish for a considerable time to avoid displeasure with Washington and Brussels, while the White House has approached Venezuela to normalize bilateral ties and avoid a Russian reaction in the region — as happened after the crises in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 — based on the logic of “symbolic reciprocity” (Rouvinski 2022, 23).

In terms of ties with South Atlantic countries, Russia perceives both Brazil and Argentina as partners in a post-hegemonic multipolar world, although given the weight of trade ties, strategic stature and participation in the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) forum, Russian diplomacy prioritizes ties with Brasília. As for Buenos Aires, the agenda's focus is more pragmatic than geopolitical, of low strategic intensity but great political content, expressed both in the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2015 between the Cristina Fernández de Kirchner Administration and the Kremlin; and in the preferential provision of Sputnik V vaccines to the region to face the COVID-19 pandemic; as well as with Moscow's support for Argentina's entry into the BRICS+ platform, looking to a forthcoming expansion of the global forum. In recent years, political dialogue has been maintained at good levels beyond the political changes in Buenos Aires, trade returned to exceed the one billion dollars barrier in 2021, and there are investments in areas such as hydroelectric power and railroads, together with a series of projects in the port, space, and nuclear areas.

As an expression of this relationship, President Alberto Fernandez visited Russia at the beginning of February this year. He voluntarily declared that “Argentina has to be the gateway for Russia to enter Latin America” (Bimbi 2022). Beyond the controversy surrounding this proposal, the phrase was not entirely accurate. The doors to the region were already open for Russia in several dimensions. Venezuela has been the main Latin American buyer of Russian weapons and Brazil Russia's

main trading partner, while Argentina facilitated the entry of the Sputnik V vaccine into the region. However, Russian access to Latin America (and vice versa) after 24F has a problem that is difficult to solve in the short term. The costs of amplifying relations have risen in light of sanctions and the decoupling of the Russian economy from developed countries. Every advance in Russian-South American relations almost automatically entails a call for attention — or the exertion of pressure or even the application of sanctions — by the United States and European countries.

In general terms, the Argentine reaction after the Russian invasion was relatively prudent. From the point of view of its international positioning, it condemned the illegitimate use of force by Russia. It called on the parties to de-escalate the conflict using peaceful means and return to the negotiating table. In addition, Argentina stressed the importance of respect for the sovereignty of the United Nations' (UN) Member States and their territorial integrity, a key principle of Argentine foreign policy linked to the Falkland Islands. Furthermore, in line with the normative traditions of the country and the region, the country did not adhere to any sanctions regime nor explicitly limit any of the channels of economic ties with Russia. In a position of equidistance, defense ties suffered with the slowdown of the implementation of the military-technical cooperation agreement signed in December 2021, which included training of Argentine military personnel in academies of the Russian Ministry of Defense, and the Russian offer of MiG-35s are no longer priorities. At the same time, there is an intention not to take advantage of sanctions to perceptibly improve business with Russia.

In Brazil's case, the Bolsonaro administration has shown a progressive rapprochement with Moscow based on an agenda of critical concrete needs for the large South American economy, such as ensuring the secure supply of fertilizers and making diesel purchases at more affordable prices (Cronista 2022). Toward the end of September of the same year, Brazil refrained from condemning the annexation of four Ukrainian regions to the Russian Federation in UN Security Council Resolution 2652 — vetoed by Moscow — while Mexico condemned the action. This attitude presents a rather paradoxical standpoint for the Bolsonaro administration, which has managed to incorporate itself as an extra-NATO ally during the Trump era but has had a refractory position to the priorities and guidelines of the White House and its NATO allies in supporting Zelenski-led Ukraine. While the divergence of agendas between the Biden and Bolsonaro administrations explains part of the Brazilian equidistance in the conflict, the global visions on the construction of a multipolar world, as well as the affinity in populist narratives that appeal to a conservative and nationalist paradigm are relevant elements for understanding the Russian-Brazilian agenda beyond economic interests.

Finally, global tensions may also appear in the Antarctic, where the growing strategic competition between great powers may generate additional incentives for China or Russia to take a revisionist stance with greater militarization; this would break the original status quo, while forcing geopolitical alignments in countries with sovereign claims over territorial portions of the white continent — particularly Argentina, Chile, and the United Kingdom. One of the indicators of the problems in Antarctic multilateral cooperation has been the Russian decision to reject — for the first time — a limit on the fishing of Patagonian toothfish within the the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), which has caused the United Kingdom to issue licenses that Argentina considers illegal due to the sovereignty dispute, giving rise to tensions in the South Georgia waters (MRECIC 2022).

IMPACT ON THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

In the face of growing concerns about potential energy and food insecurity in the world (European Commission 2022, Besheer 2022), the region has a historic opportunity as a global supplier of raw materials and beneficiary of commodity booms. Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia are the main regional producers of crude oil; Mexico, Bolivia, and Argentina lead the rankings in gas production; Brazil and Argentina play an important role in the global food chain, especially for products such as wheat, soybeans, meat, and corn; and several Latin American countries are key suppliers of silver, lithium, copper, zinc and iron ore, among others. However, not all countries have an equitable distribution of these resources, so disruptions in the global supply chain and rising energy and food prices affect each country differently. The economic consequences of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine have also affected government finances, and many economies have yet to recover. Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador have witnessed widespread protests and social unrest in the last five years.

Despite the difficulties, the current global economic crisis also offers opportunities. Commodity prices, for example, have risen by almost 30% between August 2021 and 2022, according to the S&P Goldman Sachs Commodity Index, and oil prices have exceeded US\$100/barrel on several occasions during the year. While the coming winter looks complicated in the northern hemisphere, the impact in the region appears to be much milder, although it may lead to an inevitable increase in subsidies in the coming years, which will affect limited national budgets. In addition, with the need to resort to international borrowing to address the lack of funds, it will likely face higher interest rates in the Global North.

The outcome of these dynamics in the South Atlantic is mixed; Brazil and Uruguay have the chance to optimize their international insertion in the commodities sector, while Argentina faces serious macroeconomic problems with a strong currency devaluation and inflation above 80% in 2022. In any case, unilateral responses can hardly be fully effective. The South Atlantic development agenda requires rethinking new forms of regional economic cooperation that allow for greater flexibility in addressing trade links without neglecting the commitments undertaken within MERCOSUR.

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC: REGIONAL CHALLENGES IN A DISORDERLY WORLD

The Russian-Ukrainian war presents economic and security challenges to the South Atlantic that require prudence and balance to avoid falling into the trap of global geopolitical competition. As Serbin (2022b, 71) states, in this new international context, “navigating is difficult.” The commitment to condemn unjust wars remains, but so does the quest for international autonomy and support for multilateralism and global governance. In an increasingly complex and competitive global environment, the region’s countries have presented positions based on their agenda, in addition to avoiding the logic of alignment. Faced with a geopolitically more competitive global environment, the region finds itself fragmented and with important internal dilemmas, especially in the political sphere, with a decline in the quality of democracy and the rise of left and right-wing populism. In addition, there is a possibility that extra-regional powers — in light of progressive global disorder — may want to increase their strategic projection toward the South Atlantic space, and specifically the Antarctic space, seeking to affect the position of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.

The Russian-Ukrainian war presents economic and security challenges to the South Atlantic that require prudence and balance to avoid falling into the trap of global geopolitical competition.

Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for the region’s main countries to develop a “possible strategic autonomy” that would allow them to have a greater margin of freedom in the face of potentially greater instability in the global economic

and financial system. The key to this equidistant positions in conflict and greater regional integration based on successful initiatives such as the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). Finally, the region — especially the Southern Cone — has a historical trajectory that has allowed it to become a regional peace zone, something that could be offered as a counterexample to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the destabilization of security in Eastern Europe. However, the peace zone must face global challenges where the drums of war are beating louder and louder. ■

References

- Abdenur, Adriana & Danilo Marcondes de Souza Neto. 2013. "Brazil in the South Atlantic: growing protagonism and unintended consequences." Policy Briefs. NOREF: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.
- Abdenur, Adriana, Frank Mattheis & Pedro Seabra. 2016. "An ocean for the Global South: Brazil and the zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic". *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29 (3): 1112–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2016.1230592>.
- Adler, Emanuel & Michael Barnett. *Security communities*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511598661>.
- Alessandrini, Ricardo. 2019. "Escenario geopolítico del Atlántico Sur". In *La política de defensa en debate*, edited by Universidad de la Defensa Nacional, 139-158. Buenos Aires: UNDEF Libros.
- Bañez, Gonzalo. 2022. "Un argentino preside la conferencia de armas nucleares más importante del mundo: 'Hay altos niveles de riesgo'". *Todo Noticias*, August 8, 2022. <https://tn.com.ar/internacional/2022/08/08/un-argentino-preside-la-conferencia-de-armas-nucleares-mas-importante-del-mundo-hay-altos-niveles-de-riesgo/>.
- Battaglino, Jorge. 2013. *La evolución de la zona de paz sudamericana*. Ministerio de Defensa. Escuela de Defensa Nacional.
- Besheer, Margaret. 2022. "WFP Chief Raises Alarm on Potential Food Shortages in 2023". *VoA News*, July 20, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/wfp-chief-raises-alarm-on-potential-food-shortages-in-2023-/6667210.html>.
- Bimbi, Bruno. 2022. "Argentina tiene que ser la puerta de entrada para que Rusia ingrese en América Latina". *Telam digital*, February 3, 2022. <https://www.telam.com.ar/notas/202202/582589-argentina-tiene-que-ser-la-puerta-de-entrada-para-que-rusia-ingrese-en-america-latina.html>.
- Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver. 2003. *Regions and Powers - The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cannon, Brendon & Kei Hakata. 2022. "The Indo-Pacific as an emerging geography of strategies". In *Indo-Pacific Strategies: Navigating Geopolitics at the Dawn of a New Age*, edited by Brendon Cannon & Kei Hakata, 3-21. London: Routledge.
- Coutau-Bégarie, Hervé. 1985. *Geoestrategia del Atlántico Sur*. Buenos Aires, Instituto de Publicaciones Navales

- Cronista. 2022. "Bolsonaro rompe el bloqueo a Rusia y anuncia un acuerdo para comprarle diésel a Putin". *El Cronista*, July 11, 2022. <https://www.cronista.com/internacionales/bolsonaro-rompe-el-bloqueo-a-rusia-y-anuncia-un-acuerdo-para-comprarle-diesel-a-putin/>.
- Deutsch, Karl. 1957. *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Diesen, Glenn. 2017. "Russia, China and 'Balance of Dependence in Greater Eurasia'". Valdai Papers, Valdai Discussion Group. <https://valdaiclub.com/files/13795/>.
- Dodds, Klaus. 2012. "Stormy waters: Britain, the Falkland Island and UK-Argentine relations". *International Affairs* 88 (4): 683-700. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23255613>.
- Duarte, Érico. 2016. "Brazil, the Blue Economy and the maritime security of the South Atlantic". *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 12 (1): 97-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2015.1067384>.
- Espach, Ralph. 2021. "A New Great Game Finds the South Atlantic". *War on the Rocks*, 22 de marzo de 2022. <https://warontherocks.com/2021/03/a-new-great-game-finds-the-south-atlantic/>.
- European Commission. 2022. "Ensuring Global Food Supply and Food Security". Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/agri-food-supply-chain/contingency-plan_en.
- Farrell, Henry & Abraham L. Newman. 2019. "Weaponized Interdependence. How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion". *International Security* 44 (1): 42-79. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00351.
- Fraga, Jorge. 1983. *La Argentina y el Atlántico Sur: Conflictos y objetivos*. Buenos Aires, Pleamar.
- Frenkel, Alejandro. 2020. "Argentina, el Mercosur y los intentos de establecer una política común de defensa". *Revista De Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia Y Seguridad* 14 (2): 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.18359/ries.3973>.
- González Levaggi, Ariel. 2019. "Eurasia en ascenso: cambios y continuidades en los órdenes regionales de Asia Central, el Cáucaso y Medio Oriente". *Pensamiento Propio*: 143-168. <https://repositorio.uca.edu.ar/handle/123456789/10789>.
- González Levaggi, Ariel. 2020. *Confrontational and Cooperative Regional Orders: Managing Regional Security in World Politics*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429198199>.
- González Levaggi, Ariel. 2022. *Del Indo-Pacífico al Atlántico Sur: Estrategias Marítimas de las Grandes Potencias del siglo XXI*. Buenos Aires: Instituto de Publicaciones Navales.
- Gresh, Geoffrey. 2020. *To Rule Eurasian Waves: the New Great Power Competition at Sea*. London: Yale University Press.
- Haass, Richard. 2022. "The Dangerous Decade. A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis". *Foreign Affairs* 101 (5): 25-38. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/dangerous-decade-foreign-policy-world-crisis-richard-haass>.
- Hoffmann, Andrea & Danilo Marcondes. 2017. "Maritime Regions and the South Atlantic". *Contexto Internacional* 39 (2): 229-236. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-8529.2017390200001>.
- Hurrell, Andrew. 1998. "An Emerging Security Community in South America?" In *Security communities*, edited by Emanuel Adler & Michael Barnett, 228-64. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511598661.007>.
- Jeifets, Victor, Lilia Khadorich & Yana Leksyutina. 2018. "Russia and Latin America: Renewal versus continuity." *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* 17 (2): 213-228. https://doi.org/10.1386/pjss.17.2.213_1.
- Kacowicz, Arie. 1998. *Zones of Peace in the Third World: South America and West Africa in Comparative Perspective*. Albany: State of New York Press.
- Kacowicz, Arie. 2005. *The Impact of Norms in International Society: The Latin American Experience, 1881- 2001*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Katzenstein, Peter. 2005. *World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*. Ithaca &

- London: Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrf8bbc>.
- Kelly, Philip & Jack Child. 1990. *Geopolítica del Cono Sur y la Antártida*. Buenos Aires: Pleamar.
- Lake, David A. & Patrick M. Morgan. 1997. *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Lebelem, Cristiane & Rafael Duarte Villa. 2022. "The Russia-Ukraine War: Impacts on Regional and International Security." *CEBRI-Journal* 1 (3): 112-136. <https://cebri.org/revista/br/artigo/47/a-guerra-russo-ucraniana-impactos-sobre-a-seguranca-regional-e-internacional>.
- Malacalza, Bernabé & Juan Gabriel Tokatlian. "Argentina and Brazil: Between isintegration and Decoupling?" *CEBRI-Journal* 1 (3): 138-167. <https://cebri.org/revista/br/artigo/48/argentina-e-brasil-entre-desintegracao-e-dissociacao>.
- Malamud, Andrés & Gian Luca Gardini. 2012. "Has Regionalism Peaked? The Latin American Quagmire and Its Lessons". *The International Spectator* 47 (1): 116-133. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2012.655013>.
- Mares, David & Arie Kacowicz (orgs.). 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security*. London/New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315867908>.
- Medeiros, Roberto. 2002. "O Acordo de Cooperação Militar Brasil-Namíbia como instrumento de consolidação da Zona de Paz e Cooperação do Atlântico Sul". *Revista Marítima Brasileira* 122 (7/9): 167-190.
- Medeiros, Sabrina & William de Sousa Moreira. 2017. "Maritime Co-operation among South Atlantic Countries and Repercussions for the Regional Community of Security Practice". *Contexto Internacional* 39 (2): 281-303. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-8529.2017390200005>.
- Miller, Benjamín. 2007. *States, Nations, and the Great Powers: The Sources of Regional War and Peace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MRECIC. 2021. "La Cuestión de las Islas Malvinas". *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto de la República Argentina*. <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/politica-externor/cuestion-malvinas/la-cuestion-de-las-islas-malvinas>.
- MRECIC. 2022. "Pesca ilegal británica en Georgias del Sur desafía el sistema multilateral". *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto de la República Argentina*, 24 de junio de 2022. <https://www.cancilleria.gob.ar/es/actualidad/noticias/pesca-ilegal-britanica-en-georgias-del-sur-desafia-el-sistema-multilateral>.
- Nascimento Plum, Mariana Oliveira do & Carlos Augusto Rollemberg de Resende. 2016. "The ABACC experience: continuity and credibility in the nuclear programs of Brazil and Argentina". *The Nonproliferation Review* 23 (5-6): 575-593. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2017.1339402>.
- Oelsner, Andrea. 2009. "La amistad, la confianza mutua y la evolución de la paz regional en el sistema internacional". *Miriada. Investigación en Ciencias Sociales*, 2 (3): pp. 9-46. <https://p3.usal.edu.ar/index.php/miriada/article/view/397>.
- Oelsner, Andrea. 2016. Pluralistic Security Communities in Latin America. In Mares, David & Arie Kacowicz (orgs.). 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security*. London/New York: Routledge, 173-184.
- Rouvinski, Vladimir. 2022. "Russia in Latin America: A Framework of Analysis". In *Rethinking Post-Cold War Russian-Latin American Relations*, edited by Victor Jiefets & Vladimir Rouvinski, 15-31. London: Routledge.
- Russell, Roberto & Fabián Calle. 2022. "Turbulent and Penetrated Peripheries: Their Role in Expanding U.S. Security Interests in Latin America." *CEBRI-Journal* 1 (1): 167-189. <https://cebri.org/revista/br/artigo/19/periferias-turbulentas-y-penetradas-su-papel-en-la-expansion-de-los-intereses-de-seguridad-de-estados-unidos-en-america-latina>.
- Saraiva, José Flávio Sombra. 1997. *O lugar da África: a dimensão atlântica da política externa brasileira (de 1946 a nossos dias)*. Brasília: EdUnB.
- Serbin, Andrés. 2019. *Eurasia y América Latina en un Mundo Multipolar*. Buenos Aires: CRIES y Editorial Icaria.
- Serbin, Andrés. 2022. "Navegar es Difícil", *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica*, Vol. 22 (2): 71-74.
- Serbin, Andrés. 2022. *Guerra y Transición Global. ¿Cómo se gestó la guerra en Ucrania y como nos afecta?* Buenos Aires: Areté-CRIES.

Thies, Cameron. 2015. "Traditional Security, War and Peace". In *Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security*, edited by David Mares & Arie Kacowicz London, 113-126. New York: Routledge.

Tokatlian, Juan Gabriel. 2022. "Ucrania y la proliferación nuclear". *Clarín*, April 7, 2022. https://www.clarin.com/opinion/ucrania-proliferacion-nuclear_0_2htUs4GGn8.html.

Toro, Juan Pablo. 2021. "La emergencia del Indo-Pacífico: Nuevas narrativas para la competencia estratégica". *AthenaLab*. <https://athenalab.org/la-emergencia-del-indo-pacifico-nuevas-narrativas-para-la-competencia-estrategica/>.

United States. 2022. "Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation". *U. S. Department of State*, September 20, 2022. <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-atlantic-cooperation/>.

To cite this work: González Levaggi, Ariel. 2022. "The Russo-Ukrainian War and Global Security Challenges in the South Atlantic." *CEBRI-Journal* Year 1, No. 4 (Oct-Nov): 171-188.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54827/issn2764-7897.cebri2022.04.04.01.171-188.en>

Submitted: October 17, 2022

Approved for publication: November 14, 2022

Copyright © 2023 *CEBRI-Journal*. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original article is properly cited.