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# Explaining Defense Cooperation With Process-tracing: the Brazilian Proposal for the Creation of UNASUR South American Defense Council

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## Abstract

How can defense cooperation with process-tracing methodology be explained? To answer this question, this paper tests the ability of process-tracing explanations in the case of the Brazilian proposal for the creation of the Union of South American Nation's (UNASUR) South American Defense Council (CDS). Combining process-tracing methodology with a case study research design, this paper analyzes which causal pathways, mechanisms, timing of events, and policies best explain Brazilian behavior.

**Keywords:** Defense Cooperation, South American Defense Council, Brazilian Foreign Policy, UNASUR.

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## Introduction

The study of defense and international security plays a significant role in the establishment of International Relations as an academic field. Issues of war and peace, but also of cooperation, have occupied a central stage in this effort. In this area of inquiry, Latin and South America has provided an extensive proving ground for theories and explanations of defense and security cooperation (Buzan and Waever 2003; Hurrell 1998; Kacowicz 1998; Mares 1997; 2001). Along with the numerous institutions and regimes created to foster cooperation, some countries have occasionally played a decisive role in the maintenance or changing of patterns of defense cooperation in the region. In this paper, Brazil and its proposal for the creation of the South American Defense Council (CDS) is the case study.

Brazil participates in a broad range of institutions, organizations, and regimes that promote defense and security cooperation at both the hemispheric and regional level. This net

of cooperative arenas constitutes a hemispheric defense architecture, most prominent of which is the Organization of American States' (OAS) security and defense cooperative mechanisms.

Although Brazil has been an active member of this architecture for several decades, in 2008 it led the creation of an alternative institution with similar objectives to those of the OAS, but which excluded Central and North American countries. This institutional novelty in defense cooperation was the CDS, one of several Councils that compose the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The CDS is significantly different to previous defense and security institutions in the Americas. One of these differences is the central role played by Brazil in its creation. By proposing and leading the negotiation for the creation of the CDS, Brazil demonstrated its will to begin leading the region within agendas such as defense cooperation. While Brazil had previously played a significant role in South America as a regional stabilizer, defender of the status quo, and conflict mediator, the country had never before been so explicit in its desire to lead the region in high policy agendas, such as those of the CDS.

Even though this was a major shift in Brazil's traditional pattern of defense cooperation, the existing explanations for this provided in the literature do not satisfactorily explain the Lula da Silva administration's motivations in proposing the creation of the CDS. In order to understand the complex question of what caused the decision, we aim to use process-tracing to provide causal explanations regarding Brazilian defense cooperation. The analysis with the use of process-tracing has gained a new impetus in recent years. The use of this tool has been encouraged by several authors, including Checkel (2005), Schimmelfennig (2013), Mearsheimer and Walt (2013).

In the first section, process-tracing as part of a case study research design is discussed. A review of the literature from which the main competing empirical and historically-based explanations for the Brazilian proposal of the CDS have emerged is then presented. In the second section, the paper connects the previous debate on methodology and literature to possible theoretical explanations for the case study scenario. This is achieved through a discussion of hypotheses from three competing approaches to security and defense cooperation: contingent realism, balance of power, and security communities. By presenting each theoretical hypothesis and its main conditions, possible causal pathways and mechanisms are determined. The third part of the paper verifies these causal mechanisms through analysis of the timing of policies and events. Lastly, the conclusion proposes a causal narrative that stresses cooperation as self-help and soft balancing logic as the main causal mechanisms that drove Brazil to propose the CDS. Due to space limitations, historical accounts and complex processes are presented through the use of figures and tables.

## Methodology and Literature Review: Process-Tracing, Case Study Research Design, and Competing Explanations

This paper intends to explain a decision in the realm of defense cooperation, a case study focused on Brazil, through the use of process-tracing methodology. It shares two basic features found

in similar studies: it is “outcome-oriented” (George and Bennett 2005) and also *case-centric*<sup>1</sup> (Beach and Pedersen 2013). An important method in case study research design, according to Beach and Pedersen (2013), process-tracing can be divided into three categories: *theory-testing*, *theory-building*, and *explaining-outcome*. The present paper fits into the latter category of explaining-outcome, which seeks to build a sufficient explanation for a particular historical scenario. In contrast to the Congruence Method (George and Bennett 2005), which focuses on investigating correlations between x and y, process-tracing investigates causal mechanisms that contribute to the production of a particular outcome.

In methodological terms, the objective of process-tracing is to elaborate an explanation. To achieve this, process-tracing can be combined with a case study research design<sup>2</sup>. According to Vennesson (2008, 226), “A case is a phenomenon, or an event, chosen, conceptualized, and analyzed empirically as a manifestation of a broader class of phenomena or events [...]”. Quoting Ragin, Vennesson continues,

“A case study is a research strategy based on the in-depth empirical investigation of one, or a small number, of phenomena in order to explore the configuration of each case, and to elucidate features of a larger class of (similar) phenomena, by developing and evaluating theoretical explanations” (Vennesson 2008, 226).

In contrast with the positivist epistemology, which values the principle of parsimony and generalization (Evera 1997), the use of process-tracing combined with case studies provides robust explanations by embracing causal complexity, incorporating a larger set of variables, and being cognizant of time and context. Confronted by the trade-off between the ability to achieve generalized knowledge or to produce more specific, yet deeper and more complex explanations, process-tracing chooses the latter.

Even though the event analyzed in this paper is specific – the Brazilian proposal of the CDS – the event is related to a broader class of phenomena, namely security and defense cooperation. Besides the necessity of immersion within the chosen object of inquiry, empirical analyzes must be combined with pre-existent theories and literature that may shed light on the phenomenon, and therefore, on the case itself. Theories can be used to explain a wide range of phenomena (general theories), a limited and specific class of issues (middle-range theories), or a single event. Good theories are expected to contain rich concepts and deal with behavior expectations and causality relations (Evera 1997). In this sense, case studies are powerful instruments for the development and testing of theories, but also for explaining particular events by using theories and causal mechanisms (George and Bennett 2005). This research’s strengths are significantly enhanced when

<sup>1</sup> Beach and Pedersen (2013) state that, despite the traditional literature which privileges theory centric process-tracing (George and Barnnett 2005), the majority of the literature that applies the method opts to use it in a case-centric approach.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Vennesson (2008), who understands process-tracing as a method for case studies, Beach and Pedersen (2013) see process-tracing as a part of ‘small-n’ research strategies. This paper uses a traditional perspective on process-tracing as case study methodology (George and Barnnett 2005).

combined with process-tracing. Accordingly to Vennesson (2008, 231), process-tracing consists of “a procedure for identifying steps in a causal process leading to the outcome of a given dependent variable of a particular case in a particular historical context”.

The combined use of case studies and process-tracing allows for the development of strong inferences on causal mechanisms that may explain the research inquiry. By combining the description of the object, causal pathways, and mechanisms, process-tracing converts historical narratives into causal explanations. The blending of case study and process-tracing methodology may allow robust explanation to be elaborated as to what led President Lula da Silva to propose the creation of the CDS, a turning point for Brazilian defense cooperation in South America. In order to establish a causal explanation, the competing explanations already provided by the existing literature on the subject must first be explored.

Since the creation of the CDS, Brazilian and foreign academics have tried to understand and explain the reasons that led the Brazilian government to shift the traditional pattern of defense cooperation in South America. The academic debate about the CDS can be understood as part of a broader debate about Brazil and Defense Cooperation. The debate about the CDS in particular presents distinct interpretations and explanations.

Although studying defense and security cooperation prior to the CDS, Cervo (2008) offers a helpful hint about the importance of the interrelation between foreign policy, security, and defense. Although the CDS was not Cervo's focus, his analyses of the changes in regional defense cooperation and foreign policy are relevant to our understanding of the creation of the CDS as a possible rupture with the previous pattern of hemispheric cooperation. Using Cervo's typology, we can detect that a change from a “strategy of association” to a more autonomous path and regional governance of defense issues was imminent.

In a similar manner, to explain regional security and Brazilian actions in Defense such as the CDS, Fiori (2010) departs from a perspective of competition between Brazil and the U.S. By using the concept of “competitive pressure”, Fiori claims that competition for regional leadership was increasing, which directly affected Brazil, including in issues of security and defense. Like Cervo (2008), Fiori (2010) emphasizes factors from the hemispheric and regional levels.

Another perspective was developed by Argentinian analyst Calle (2010), who questions if the Brazilian CDS proposal was made possible because the U.S. had delegated responsibilities in regional security governance or whether, on the contrary, there was a process whereby Brazil ascended as a regional power with global aspirations. When analyzing the President Lula government, Calle highlights the importance of Brazil as a regional moderator in the region. He also points to projects for modernizing national defense structures in Brazil as important dimensions of changes in the country that demonstrate, in particular, a clear desire to pursue leadership status as a regional power. In contrast to Cervo (2008) and Fiori (2010), Calle (2010) does not stress the centrality of U.S.-Brazil competition for influence in South America. In this perspective, the CDS can be explained by changes in Brazilian objectives and the related strategies of foreign policy in reaction to hemispheric and regional politics.

Flemes and Radseck (2009) also contribute to the debate about the role of the CDS in Brazilian foreign policy. They consider the institution to be not only a means to establish Brazilian cooperative hegemony in the region – which could help the country to project its power globally – but also as a mechanism to avoid ‘free-riding’. According to this perspective, through the creation of the CDS, Brazil was able to promote regional stability while avoiding being the sole bearer of the costs. In view of this context, multilateralizing the responsibility of maintaining regional stability through the CDS and its principles of mutual aid and reciprocity could be seen as a solution to the free-riding issue.

Another possible line of explanation stresses the analysis of institutional performance and international organizations; especially the institutional responses countries deliver when they fail. Klepak (2007) argues that the hemispheric security system is silent on and sometimes irrelevant to the majority of the defense and security issues faced by Central and Latin American countries. Klepak (2010) reduces the influence of the U.S. in his explanation of the OAS’s systemic failure. Similar to Fiori (2010) and Calle (2010), Herz (2010) understands that events like the diplomatic crisis between Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, in March 2008, helps to make sense of the need for an organism like the CDS. Herz (2010) diverges from Calle’s view in suggesting that the CDS can be understood in the context of changes and problems faced by the Inter-American system. In this view, the creation of an institution like the CDS is explained by factors exogenous from the countries, such as the historic record of functional failure in the OAS conflict resolution mechanisms.

The organizational and institutional approach is countered by several opposing ideas. Saint-Pierre (2006) points out that the continent is under U.S. hegemony and that, in this sense, Latin America merely a ‘backyard’ for the U.S., which cannot tolerate either instability or the loss of freedom of action in the region. In Saint-Pierre’s view, one that Fiori (2010) seems to agree with, the regional problems faced by the U.S. have their origins either in troublesome states with crisis tendencies, or in emerging states that act as competitors with the capability to reduce U.S. freedom of action in South America (2006). Although this analysis was done prior to the creation of the CDS, it is convergent with other cases discussed in this paper and may assist in understanding the CDS as a possible balancing movement.

Saint-Pierre and Castro (2008) also put emphasis on the problems of the hemispheric mechanisms of conflict resolution. However, they claim that the Brazilian proposal of the CDS was driven by national interest, not as a reaction to institutional failure. They argue that OAS failure in conflict resolution was a contextual feature, but that it did not have causal force. As a proposal related to national interest, the Brazilian attitude was seen as suspicious, not only by the U.S., but by regional neighbors. Saint-Pierre and Castro (2008) conclude by stating that the Brazilian initiative was of a strategic nature. Aligned with Saint-Pierre’s (2006) diagnosis, Comini (2010) argues that the CDS is an important tool to generate greater independence from United States visions of security. Battaglini (2012) analyzes UNASUR as a conflict resolution institution. The author states that the classic triad involving democracy, trade, and institutions operates as a form of curbs if the disputes arise. In this sense, the CDS-UNASUR would be a mechanism to



increase the costs of a war and, in this way, to avoid disputes if they rises in intensity. Sanahuja and Escánez (2010) argue, still within the framework of institutionalization, that the CDS allows the creation of mechanisms that favor the regular cooperation of the countries and the construction of consensus, even in a region characterized by the different “speeds” of participatory engagement.

Table 1 presents a synthesis of the possible explanations of the research problem provided in the literature reviewed above.

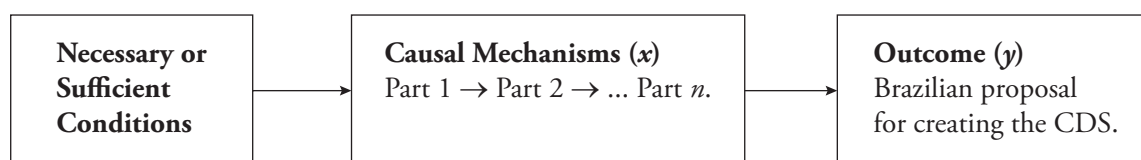
**Table 1: Competing Explanations on the Creation of the CDS**

Level of Analysis	Key players	“Trigger” for the Proposal	The CDS as
Domestic	Government; decision-makers.	Changes in foreign policy.	Instrument for defense and foreign policy.
Regional	Brazil; Colombia; Venezuela.	“Competitive pressure”; Colombia-Ecuador crisis.	Regional security management and balancing.
Hemispheric	United States; Brazil.	Institutional failure; leadership and competing agendas.	Balancing; consolidation as regional power (status quo).

Source: Based on Calle (2010), Cervo (2008), Fiori (2010), Flandes and Radseck (2009), Herz (2010), Saint-Pierre (2006), Klepak (2007), Saint-Pierre and Castro (2008).

In trying to uncover the reasons that led Brazil to propose the CDS, the literature points to several distinct possible explanatory paths. Some authors’ analysis emphasizes conjunctural factors that may be related to the creation of the CDS but do not necessarily make clear which mechanisms were part of the causation of the decision itself.

Despite the absence of casualty links in the specialized literature, the synthesis presented in Table 1 may allow the researcher to present a relation between  $x$  (independent variables)  $\rightarrow y$  (dependent variable – the outcome). Regardless of the importance of the competing explanations presented, the discovery of the mechanisms that connect  $x$  and  $y$ , in other words, the political process, is crucial.



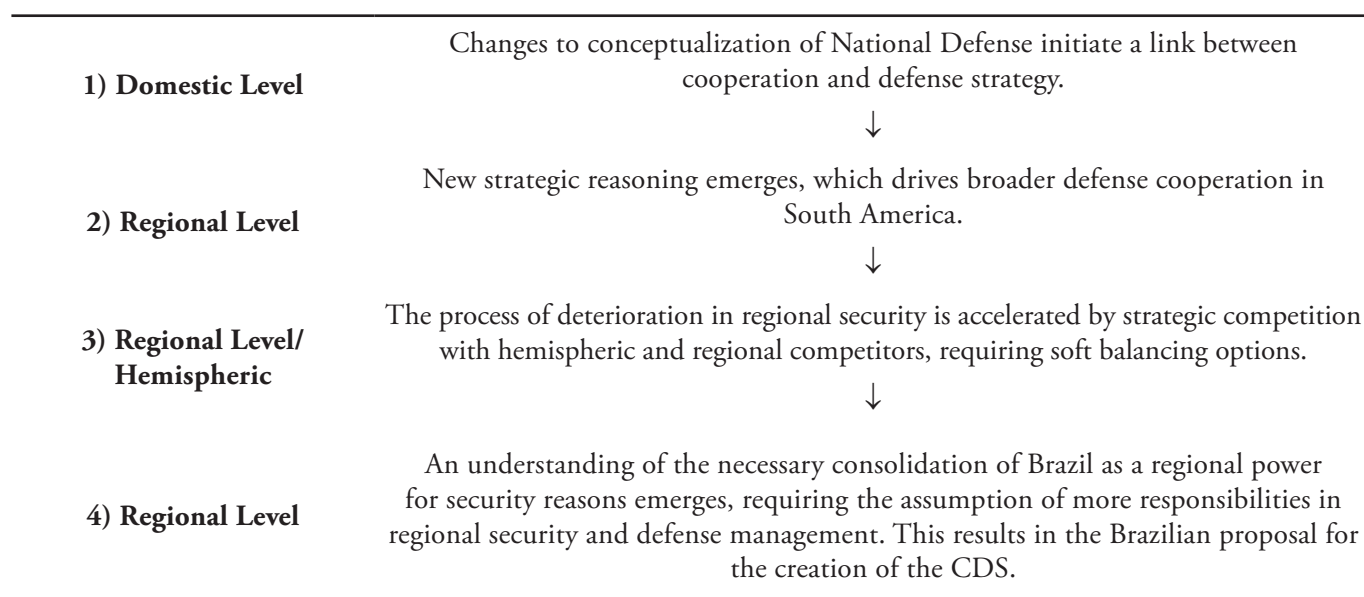
Source: Author's compilation.

**Figure 1: Process and Causal Mechanisms between X e Y**

Process-tracing methodology teaches that, through literature and history, it is possible to establish a potential set of antecedent, necessary, or sufficient conditions. As shown in Figure 1,

the dependent variable, known here as the outcome, provides the *y*, or the possible explanatory variables. However, *x*, known as the parts and the causal mechanisms that connect during the causation of the event being explained, needs to be uncovered. But what are the mechanisms in action? How might these factors join to produce the outcome, in our case, the Brazilian decision to create the CDS?

Taking the analyzed literature as a starting point, it is possible to develop a causal hypothesis: the Brazilian initiative to propose the South American Defense Council resulted from a temporary emphasis on using the defense agenda to achieve foreign policy objectives, such as regional stability and the maintenance of the status quo (Figure 2). The observed change of behavior towards defense and regional cooperation is not related to a shift in the state's reasons for cooperation, but in its role in the Brazilian international strategy at the time.



Source: Author's compilation.

**Figure 2: Causal Sequence of the Hypothesis on Brazilian Proposal for the CDS**

During his second term presidency, Lula da Silva tried to articulate the importance of diplomacy (cooperation) and strategy (defense) in fostering the current perceived national interest. This hypothesis presents a sequence of events that demands testing in order to prove its explanatory power. It is also important to state that the suggested explanatory sequence articulates itself as a causal pathway (Beach and Pedersen 2013).

Although the reviewed literature acknowledges a set of possible connected historical events – which are fundamental for implementing a timing of events and policy test – it does not connect the event and scenario to theoretical explanations. Although it is an empirical problem in a case-centric approach, the goal of unfolding the reasons that led Brazil to propose the CDS may be better served by making connections between the empirical (history-based) hypotheses and possible explanatory paths provided by theory.



## Building Causal Pathways and Competing Explanations with a Theory-based Hypothesis

The search for solid and causal explanations leads to the development of a hypothesis that goes beyond the historical and empirical aspects of the case itself. To do so, it is necessary to connect the case (event) with possible explanations at the theoretical level. The Brazilian proposal of the CDS, while being an event, is also part of a wider range of phenomena in defense cooperation. In this sense, the theoretical debate makes it possible to create hypotheses based not only on historical accounts, but also to take possible causal paths and mechanisms into the analytical framework.

In this section, the empirical literature on Brazilian defense cooperation, discussed previously, will be connected with broader theoretical debates related to this issue. Table 2 presents a synthesis of three theoretical approaches that may contribute to solving the puzzle: cooperation as self-help or contingent realism (Glaser 1994-1995), balance of power (Barletta and Trinkunas 2004; Flesmes 2010; Mares 2001; 2012; Paul 2004), and security community (Deutsch 2003; Flesmes 2010; Hurrell 1998; Kacowicz 1998;).

**Table 2: Possible Theory-based Interpretations of the Brazilian Proposal of the CDS**

<b>Theory/ Approach</b>	<b>Motivates for Cooperation</b>	<b>Mechanisms</b>	<b>Possible relation to the Brazilian initiative to propose the creation of the CDS</b>
Cooperation as Self-Help	Reduce the probability of a Security Dilemma; decrease uncertainty; maximize security.	Security and defense cooperation (known as “Cooperation as self-help”); transparency.	Strategy to maximize the state security environment; does not imply shifts in preferences; does not involve the reduction of military capabilities.
Balance of Power	Answer to security risks or threats; competition or conflict; maximize security.	Soft or hard Balancing; institutional response (though alignments to alliances).	Strategy to contain states perceived as competitors in relation to capabilities and regional agendas.
Security Communities	Enhance bilateral or regional security through peaceful mechanisms; transcendence of security to positive peace.	Peaceful change; banish the use of force; institutional response.	Strategy to maximize state security; changes in preferences related to the use of force and the level of compromise of the state in relation to international norms; regional institution capable of producing enforcing norms.

Source: Author's compilation.

The objective of this synthesis is to evaluate different reasons that may have driven Brazilian defense cooperation. Excepting Security Communities, all the others explain cooperation in accordance with political realism. The first option (cooperation as self-help) seeks to explain why states cooperate in defense issues. The second (balance of power) creates understanding of how and why states coordinate their action in cooperation. The third (security communities) promotes an alternative understanding about the reasons and mechanisms that may explain interstate defense cooperation.

Departing from the theoretical approaches discussed above, it is possible to infer distinct causal pathways in the attempt to explain the Brazilian case of defense cooperation. In order to advance to a robust explanation on that topic, theoretical analysis must be articulated in combination with the chosen methodological strategy.

Based on a possible ‘cooperation as self-help’ hypothesis, Brazil’s reasoning behind its proposal of the CDS would be related to an understanding that its security would be better guaranteed through regional defense cooperation than by pursuing it unilaterally. The underlying hypothesis behind this reasoning and behavior is related to uncertainty regarding potential adversaries, and their motives and objectives. In this context, cooperative defense policies should work as a kind of self-help (Glaser 1994-1995). The expected relation between cooperation and the reduction of uncertainty, which would cause an increase in security, can be better evaluated using the following hypothesis<sup>3</sup>:

1. Even if cooperation does not eliminate the adversary’s uncertainty about the other state’s [Brazil’s] motives, cooperation is still valuable because it reduces the adversary’s insecurity by limiting the military threat they face.
2. Cooperation can reduce the adversary’s uncertainty by convincing them that the state [Brazil] is motivated more by insecurity than by ambition.
3. By reducing the adversary’s insecurity and exposing the state’s motives, cooperation shall reduce the probability of conflict caused by insecurity.

A second set of theory-based hypotheses can be derived from the balance of power theory (Paul, 2004). The traditional understanding of balance of power tradition highlights that when a state is threatened with the emergence of a power (or a group) with hegemonic pretensions, balancing will take place in order to maintain the balance of power. As discussed by Flesmes (2010), when considering Brazilian strategic behavior in the international arena in terms of balancing, the best way to describe it would be as ‘soft balancing’. Therefore, the Brazilian proposal of the CDS can be analyzed as a soft balancing initiative. As seen below, the balance of power hypothesis can present a causal pathway<sup>4</sup>:

1. In the presence of possible threatening states or emerging powers, soft balancing will take place.
2. In contexts with low interstate rivalry, states will prefer institutional responses rather than the use or threats of use of military power.
3. In contexts with low interstate rivalry, states will prefer tacit balancing rather than creating formal alliances.

Despite being part of the realist tradition, contingent realism assumes different motivations and causal relations when explaining cooperation, either through ‘cooperation as self-help’ or balance of power explanations. In the former, security and defense cooperation are intended to deal with a security dilemma, thus reducing mistrust. In this sense, cooperation is a means to reduce tension and conflict. For the latter, balancing is concerned with using cooperation to foster the maintenance of the balance of power. It consists of reactive behaviors when facing a threat or conflict (latent or real) situation. Even though both present different explanations for defense cooperation, both agree that cooperation has an instrumental nature, as it is part of the state’s behavior in its attempts to achieve its preferences, albeit through distinct strategies. It follows that both approaches can be combined for analytical purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Based on Glaser (1994-1995).

<sup>4</sup> Based on Paul (2004).

A third and alternative group of hypotheses can be found in the Security Communities theory. In this perspective, Brazilian reasoning for proposing the CDS was intended to build, not to balance, a South American Security Community. However, in what conditions would that be possible? This theory reasons that, when confronted with interstate violence, states will create mechanisms to guarantee that disputes will be solved peacefully. Here, security and defense cooperation would allow regional security conditions to transcend to a peaceful settlement. These are the expected causal relations behind these expectations (Deutsch 1982):

1. A [pluralistic] Security Community, which maintains the independence of its national decision centers (sovereignty), will create the conditions that makes war between members of the community impossible.
2. The mechanism responsible for making war impossible is the peaceful change.
3. Peaceful change consists of the resolution of social problems through institutionalized procedures, without recourse to large-scale physical violence.
4. For such conditions to exist, some kind of international or regional organization that provides cohesion is necessary.

Each of the competing theoretical explanations discussed above portray a set of conditions that need to be met in order to validate whether or not causal logic and mechanisms of security and defense cooperation are in place. Table 3 synthesizes the main conditions for verifying if Brazilian behavior, when proposing the CDS, can better be understood by contingent realism, the balance of power perspective, or the security community approach.

**Table 3: Conditions for Verifying the Theory-Based Hypotheses**

	Theory		
	Cooperation as Self-Help	Balance of Power	Security Communities
Conditions	Brazil should express concern about uncertainty related to intentions and capabilities.	Development of ententes.	Intention to create or actual creation of a security community.
	Measures to reduce uncertainty should be put in action.	Creation of limited security understandings.	Preference for conflict resolution by peaceful means.
	Motivations (insecurity versus ambition) would be explained in a cooperation proposal.	Limits on the increase of military capabilities.	Consensus about the rejection of large-scale physical violence.
	The belief in the ability to reduce the probability of conflict originating from insecurity.	Engaging in ad hoc cooperative exercises. Collaboration in regional or international institutions.	Creation of a organization that promotes cohesion.

Source: Author's compilation based on Glaser (1995), Paul (2004) and Deutsch (1982).

The explanatory strategies discussed in this section portray several causal pathways. While process-tracing may be complementary in some instances, for it to work, the best explanation possible needs to be determined. The next section will test the distinct causal pathways and mechanisms produced by both the empirical literature and the hypothesis based theories of security and defense cooperation.

## Verifying the Causal Mechanisms through Timing of Policies and Events

After introducing the debate through the empirical and theoretical literature and presenting several hypotheses that may help to explain the reasons for the Brazilian proposal for the creation of the CDS, it is now possible to proceed with the verification of the mechanisms and possible causal pathways that may best explain the case. Figure 3 synthesizes the timing of policies and events, making it possible to map the sequence of events that led to the outcome and test the competing causal paths.

Arena Level	Location	Key Players	Decision-making (timing)	Negotiation process	Political outcome
Hemispheric ↓	OAS, Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas.	United States; Brazil.			
Regional	Reunion of South American Presidents; CASA; UNASUR.	Brazil; Colombia; Venezuela.	2006	→ 2007 → 2008	Proposal and creation of the CDS
↓ Bureaucratic	Presidency of the Republic; Ministry of Defense; Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	President; Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministers			

Source: Author's compilation based on Calle (2010), Chile (2009), Fiori (2010), Flesmes and Radseck (2009), Herz (2010) and Saint-Pierre and Castro (2008).

**Figure 3. Timing of Events and Policies Related to the Brazilian Proposal of the CDS**

By taking into account the three reviewed causal pathways, it is possible to state that the South American Defense Council proposed by Brazil results from the operation of two mechanisms: cooperation as self-help and soft balancing. Nevertheless, though connected, these mechanisms worked at distinct levels and acted at different times. Cooperation as self-help logic appeared first, acting in the changes in Brazilian strategy to satisfy old security preferences in the regional and global arenas. Since 2005, National Defense Policy (Brazil 2005), the idea of an Brazilian Strategic Surroundings helped to bring together a geopolitical perspective to the country international objectives. The strategic idea was reviewed in the National Defense Strategy (Brazil 2008), released in the same year that CDS was proposed; once more reinforced Brazilian emphasis on South America and highlighted its desired area of influence (Fiori 2013). South America was then as fundamental to state security from external shocks as instrumental to Brazilian international insertion (Neves and Spektor 2011). As Lima and Hirst (2009) stated, Itamaraty was more and more explicit about its desire and determination to conquer a position of leadership in South America. In this sense, cooperation as self-help logic produced the “trigger” that allowed distinct key-players of the Brazilian government to act in the reform – although incomplete – of regional cooperation as a foreign policy instrument.

In a subsequent development, the changes in strategy that occurred in the domestic arena were subject to foreign inputs: the competitive pressure of Venezuela's dissonant agenda, regional instability increased by the Colombia-Ecuador conflict, and the United States' backing of Colombia during the escalating of the crisis. This sequence of events can be traced since Operation Fenix. Carried out by Colombian military, the operation managed to kill High Value Target (HVT) Raúl Reys, second in FARC's command line at the time. Despite the mission's success, its consequences were severe: the attack took place in Ecuadorian territory and it unleashed a political and diplomatic crisis with Military Interstate Disputes events between Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela (Mares 2012). The United States' backing of Colombia intensified the tension and made clear to Brazil that the US still is a major player in South American regional security management. Perceiving these risks to its security and regional stability, Brazil sought to balance both Venezuela and the United States. In that sense, the CDS proposal was an endeavor driven by two complementary logics: self-help and soft balancing. The causal narrative is resumed in Table 4.

**Table 4. Self-Help and Soft Balancing Mechanisms Through Time**

y	The foreign policy project in the second term of the Lula's da Silva presidency initiates a moment of broad international activism, aimed specially at repositioning Brazil in international relations.
Part 01	The project seeks to articulate diplomacy and strategy as a means to accomplish national security interests and to foster its leadership as an emerging power.
Part 02	In the domestic arena, changes in the concept of National Defense led to the merging of regional cooperation with the state security and defense strategies.
Part 03	The new strategic thought provokes an institutional response about how regional cooperation in defense should be done and its purpose.
Part 04	Brazil's change of strategy towards defense cooperation is faced with regional competition for leadership in several fields, including defense.
Part 05	The Colombian bombing of a FARC camp in Ecuador and the subsequent crisis works as a critical juncture that accelerates the process of polarization between the competing powers in South America.
Part 06	Brazil, Venezuela, and the United States present different ways of solving the conflict, each emphasizing different cooperative mechanisms at the regional or hemispheric levels.
Part 07	Motivated by the maintenance of the status quo and in search of security, Brazil engages in balancing to establish itself as the main power and leader in the region.
Part 08	To produce that effect, the country used an institutional response that could change defense cooperation in the region.
Part 09	The Brazilian proposal of regional defense cooperation has the objective of soft balancing against competing powers that struggled for primacy over Brazil in issues of defense.
Part 10	This change in the Brazilian regional strategy in the struggle to consolidate its place as a regional and emerging global power results in it taking responsibility for security management in South America.
x	Brazil proposes and leads the negotiations that result in the creation of the CDS.

Source: Author's compilation.



Although changes in foreign policy ideas and strategies occurred at the domestic level, when events at the regional and hemispheric level were added to this, the result was the proposal of the CDS by Brazil. The deterioration of security conditions in the region, strongly accelerating between 2003 and 2008 (particularly between 2006 and 2008), functioned as a factor that fostered a perception within the country that Brazil needed to increase its regional security management responsibilities. In *The Military Balance* chapters about Latin America and The Caribbean (IISS 2007; 2008; 2009) the deterioration of security conditions is made clear, especially in relation to the region's participation in arms transfers and its impacts on the South American balance of power. In face of a changing strategic environment, Brazil and other South American countries played a major role in transforming regional security and defense cooperation. In the final years of the 1990s, during his first term in government, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez proposed the creation of a South Atlantic Treaty Organization. This organization would have similar purposes as NATO and would be considered a collective security mechanism (Dieterich 2004). Although several countries in the region, including Brazil, did not welcome the idea, Venezuela continued to attempt to broaden its regional defense cooperation. To do so, it invested in spreading its own ideology and regional project, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA) "from 2004 to 2009, Chávez offered investments, aid, and subsidies to a large number of countries, especially through oil discounts and direct social investments" (Corrales and Penfold 2011, 104).

On the other hand, despite participating in ad hoc initiatives such as the Rio Group, Brazil did not challenge the hemispheric system and its leader, the U.S. As Council of Foreign Affairs analysts state;

"Brazil was instrumental in the 2004 formation of Unasul [...]. In 2008, Brazil led the way to form the South American Defense Council as a cooperative security suborganization under Unasul. Unasul serves as an alternative to the OAS and seeks to provide regional solutions to regional problems" (Bodman et al. 2011, 59).

Even though the Brazilian proposal can be seen as a subsidiary to already existing defense and security management institutions, in March 2008, Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim traveled to the US to meet Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State. One of the main topics on the agenda was to clarify Brazilian intentions with the CDS (Jobim 2008a). However, the centrality of the U.S. to security and defense governance in the region, and the prevalence of the OAS, were to be significantly questioned with the creation of the South American Defense Council, in 2008. The main manifestation of this emerging perspective took form in the regional defense cooperation initiative. In this sense, defense cooperation has become a form of self-help.

One of the main problems with intergovernmental cooperation is the risk of defection and the possibility of a previous partner possessing strategic advantages over the other state with which it cooperated. In Glaser's (1994-1995) analysis, cooperation itself can be useful not only in increasing



the state's security, but also in ameliorating the security dilemma. Using this logic, the proposal of the South American Defense Council can be explained as a Brazilian cooperative strategy to assure its own security and increase its defense capabilities without invoking a security dilemma. This would be achieved by maintaining the stability of the offensive-defensive balance and by producing information about defense and military capabilities, as made possible by exposing the actor's motivations and avoiding risks of misperception (Glaser 1994-1995). In the case of Brazil, the restructuring of the Armed Forces and modernization of military equipment did not go unnoticed by its neighbors. According to Glaser's logic, the CDS may be an example of cooperation as self-help for Brazil, if it allows Brazil to increase its military capabilities without producing balancing movements against it.

Under President Lula da Silva and facing new challenges, Brazil decided to increase its regional engagement and take on responsibilities related to security management in South America. Another causal mechanism would be added in the process: balancing. Preferring an institutional response as soft balancing, Brazil decided to create an institution for consultation, cooperation, and coordination in the area of defense; significantly, an area in which it had traditionally avoided regional cooperation. The Lula da Silva administration's proposal for the CDS and the negotiations it established can therefore be seen as a sum of these processes and conditions. From the president's order to Nelson Jobim to tour all South American countries to convince them of the Brazilian proposal of the CDS (Silva 2008), followed by the meetings with US State and Defense secretaries, think tanks and academic community members by the Brazilian Minister of Defense and diplomatic personnel (Jobim 2008a), the debates between Congress representatives (PARLASUR) (Jobim 2008b) to complex and costly bargain inside the CDS UNASUR Work Group during 2008 (Chile 2009); Lula da Silva's government combined an understanding of cooperation as self-help in an insecure environment and saw soft balancing as the best strategy to increase its security and foster its objectives. As seen above, the institutional result was the engagement of Colombia and Venezuela in a peaceful settlement and the ability to push the U.S. back in relation to South American crises management, while at the same time limiting the costs of the Brazilian compromise by ensuring that the CDS retains a minimalist institutional structure. In accordance with Flesher and Radseck (2009), the integration of other countries of South America at the CDS was aimed initially at reducing transaction costs and keeping the decision-making in South America. Strikingly different from what would be expected if the Security Communities hypothesis were valid, the logic of cooperation as self-help and the [soft] balancing behavior converged to produce the Brazilian decision to create the CDS.

## Conclusion

How can process-tracing methodology be used to explain defense policies and events, especially cooperation? To answer this question, this paper has focused on the application of process-tracing to the case of the Brazilian proposal for the creation of the CDS.

After introducing the subject historically, this paper presented the object of inquiry as a puzzle: despite the existence of several competing explanations about what led Brazil to change its traditional behavior in defense cooperation, there was no robust explanation able to provide a plausible causal narrative that took into account events that occurred at distinct levels, such as the domestic, regional, and hemispheric. How could these pieces be put together and why? In search of an answer, the process-tracing methodology was presented and explained. When combined with case study research design, this methodology has proven to be a powerful instrument in problem solving, notably when dealing with case-centric approaches.

The first step of applying process-tracing to the case was to build hypotheses from the main competing explanations. These were characterized by being empirical, mainly historically-based, and focused on cases and events without providing strong connections to possible explanations based on theory. Even though different pathways were produced, it was understood that none of the literature narratives alone offered a sufficient explanation as to what motivated Brazil to propose the CDS. A robust causal narrative that connected the pieces through a multicausal and complex process was required. However, an important lesson from these studies was that the second term of the Lula da Silva presidency should be given particular attention in the subsequent analysis.

The second step was to connect events with their class of phenomenon. This allows the researcher to bring together the empirical object and the theoretical explanations. As good theories provide strong causal claims, creating that link exposes more robust possibilities for causal pathways to be tested. Next, the paper analyzed three theoretical approaches that could give hints as to the conditions that connect to the intervenient mechanisms that linked the conditions to the outcome, that is, the proposal of the CDS. By connecting the case to competing theoretical explanations, it was possible to state distinct causal pathways and causal mechanisms behind the outcome under study. This was provided by the analysis of contingent realism (cooperation as self-help), balance of power, and security communities. These hypotheses, and the conditions used to verify their validity, are important in understanding the logic behind Brazilian behavior in defense cooperation.

The third and final step in applying process-tracing was to test the paper's main hypothesis against the timing of policies and events displayed by the empirical literature and the competing causal pathways and mechanisms. The objective here was to produce a causal narrative that was as close as possible to the best explanation for the puzzling scenario of Brazil and the CDS. While the reviewed literature gave a similar response, this research achieves the intended result of providing an explanation based on causally connected evidence. This explanation is that cooperation as self-help (domestic) and soft balancing (regional and hemispheric), although at different times, were both in action and played a role in the causation of the outcome: the Brazilian proposal for the creation of the South American Defense Council. Despite the apparent soundness of the Security Communities reasoning, this paper concludes that Brazilian behavior was driven by the objective of maximizing security through cooperation and countering regional and hemispheric competitors in its foreign policy orientation towards a regional and emerging global power.

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