Friendship, mutual trust, and the evolution of regional peace in the international system

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Workshop 15
The Politics of Friendship: Bridging the Gap between Theoretical and Empirical Studies
I. Friendship and International Relations: incompatible?

There seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to even thinking in terms of friendship about relations taking place at the international (interstate) level: the alleged anarchic structure of the international system. International Relations (IR) realism, both in its classical and structural versions—arguably the dominant theory in the field of the last sixty years—has made anarchy an unquestioned assumption. Indeed, anarchy has been the driving force behind IR (neo)realist theorising. This has had at least three important consequences. First, it has led to a particular understanding of the functioning of the international system. Secondly, and closely related, it has resulted in a biased research agenda. As Alexander Wendt asserts, “relative to ‘enemy,’ the concept of ‘friend’ is undertheorized in social theory, and especially in IR, where substantial literature exists on enemy images but little on friend images, on enduring rivalries but little on enduring friendships, on the causes of war but little on the causes of peace, and so on.” Finally, and despite realism’s claims of being an objective, non-normative approach, it has led to a particular set of prescriptions regarding how states should behave in the international arena if they want to survive.

According to structural realism, anarchy is a structural feature of the modern international system. Under anarchy, units (states) are sovereign, in that they recognise no higher authority such as a world government, and functionally similar, differing in their (military) capabilities rather than in their responsibilities. This stands in sharp contrast to a hierarchic system, in which units serving different functions are organised under a clear line of authority. Additionally, states are assumed to be unitary and rational actors seeking survival and security. Given the condition of anarchy, every state is solely responsible for its own security, and thus, for the sake of caution, should consider other states as potential threats. The anarchic international system, as described by (neo)realism, is a self-help system where states should aim to accumulate power for defensive and deterrence purposes. An unsolvable problem of this perspective—and of the realist world—is that this defensive

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1 IR realism builds upon the Hobbesian state of nature to draw an analogy between it and the world’s lack of a Leviathan.
2 Structural realism is also called neorealism, and both terms are often used interchangeably. For this approach, see Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publisher Co., 1979).
move easily results in a security dilemma: by trying to ensure one’s own security, the system as a whole becomes more insecure, since other states may (mis)take defensive for offensive build-up efforts and be inclined to strengthen their own military capabilities as well. The likely outcome is arms races and the emergence of balances of power.

If the world is as (neo)realists describe it, these rational, self-interested states do well not to trust fellow states in the system. In this context, it is clear that the emergence of any bilateral or multilateral relationship close to what we would understand as a friendship is simply impossible (or else suicidal).

However, sometimes states do maintain friendly relationships with each other, and even commit themselves to fighting in the name of another state. Arnold Wolfers suggests that alliances and co-operation between states amount to international amity. Yet he warns, “[t]erms like ‘amity’ and ‘enmity’—even more, terms like ‘friendship’ and ‘hostility’—must be used with caution in discussing interstate relationships. […] [D]iplomatic postures of amity and enmity do not depend on emotional conditions and may in fact contradict them.”4 According to Wolfers, “[m]ost states most of the time […] maintain amical [sic] or inimical relations with others on the basis of calculations of interest rather than in response to popular sentiments whether of gratitude or resentment.”5 Indeed, it seems common knowledge in IR that alliances are most often formed because ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend.’ They are ‘marriages of convenience’ rather than ‘marriages of love.’

Wolfers offers a distinction that will prove helpful in trying to trace friendship in international life. According to him, active co-operation—relationships of “going it with others,” in Wolfers’ words—can arise from two incentives that differ in motivation and effects. Firstly, co-operation can result from “the desire to meet an external threat by co-operative effort; here co-operation is predicated on the continuance of the threat.” Secondly, it can arise from “a desire to improve relations within the co-operating group.”6 While both are possible, Wolfers admits—“to the disappointment of idealists”—that the former, outward-directed co-operation proves much more potent than the latter, inward-directed, and when the latter takes place, it is usually pursuing outward-directed defensive purposes as well.

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5 Ibid., p. 33-34.
6 Ibid., p. 27.
7 Ibid.
Outward-directed arrangements clearly conform to the traditional definition of alliances as “formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership.” IR thought on alliances rests on (neo)realist premises, according to which alliances result from the systemic balance-of-power mechanism that works to prevent one state or group of states from becoming too strong and dominant. Were this to happen, we could witness a structural change in the international system from anarchy to hierarchy, and along with it, a change of system itself. However, weaker states may ally, thus pooling their capabilities, and preclude world domination by one strong state or coalition, thereby also restoring the balance needed for their survival as sovereign units and the survival of the system as a whole. Explicitly enough, John Mearsheimer contends, “[p]eace is mainly a function of the geometry of power in the international system, and certain configurations may be very peaceful while others are more prone to war”—although balance-of-power theorists have not decided yet whether bipolar systems are more stable than multipolar ones, or vice versa.

In addition, there is disagreement as to whether states join alliances to balance against power or against threats, and indeed as to whether states join alliances for balancing purposes or, under certain conditions, in order to bandwagon with the stronger side. Nor does it seem to be all that clear that states are more likely to enter into an alliance with culturally, politically and/or ideologically similar states, or whether similarity makes for more cohesive alliances. There are cases that show, and scholars who argue, that the opposite is true. However, it seems clear that what drives the formation and maintenance of alliances is some sort of rational calculation seeking the unit’s and system’s survival. For this same reason alliances are only temporary: as soon as the balance of power (or of threat) shifts, so states shift alliances.

Although differently explained, the shaky grounds on which alliances lie had already been noticed by Thomas More in 1515:

> no confidence is put in alliances, even though they are contracted with the most sacred ceremonies. The greater the formalities, the sooner the treaty may be dissolved by twisting the words, which are often purposely ambiguous. A treaty can never be bound with chains so strong, but that a

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government can somehow evade it and thereby break both the treaty and its faith.¹¹

Not just alliances, but also international agreements more generally have been seen as equally precarious. Edmund Burke, reflecting on the possibility of peace in Europe, drew attention to the fact that,

[in the intercourse between nations […] we lay too much weight upon the formality of treaties and compacts. We do not act much more wisely, when we trust to the interests of men as guarantees of their engagements. The interests frequently tear to pieces the engagements, and the passions trample upon both. Entirely to trust to either is to disregard our own safety, or not to know mankind.¹²

It is worth noting that more contemporary writings do not often differ from Burke’s observations.

In sum, there seems to be agreement that alliances and international treaties, at least by themselves, provide at best only thin grounds for true and long-lasting mutual understanding. In contrast, we would expect friendship, or its international equivalent, to be built on more stable bases. As will be seen below, I will argue that the key is to be found in what More identifies as missing from alliances—mutual confidence and trust.

Arnold Wolfers’ caution, if not scepticism, about the chances of successful inward-oriented co-operation in the absence of external threats nicely reflects the general prudence that dominates IR scholarship when it comes to international friendship. Nonetheless, even Wolfers eventually acknowledges that “some form of regular and institutionalized political co-operation among nations […] may be able under certain circumstances to assure a high degree of amity among the participants […]”¹³ Similarly, an increasing number of IR scholars have come to recognise that relations comparable to those of friendship have grown in certain regions of the world where the condition of anarchy has taken a different form from what realism predicts.¹⁴

In the rest of the paper I will focus on the development of what Wolfers has called regions of inward-oriented co-operation. I see this reflected not necessarily in actual agreements, but in states’ ability and willingness to maintain regional peace. Drawing upon the securitisation approach developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and their colleagues of the so-called Copenhagen School, I argue that the maintenance of stable regional peace is connected with domestic processes of desecuritisation taking place at the regional level. The next section, section II, briefly reviews the concepts of securitisation and desecuritisation. Section III turns to the concept of peace and proposes a peace typology to identify different qualities of regional peace. Next, section IV explores the connection between desecuritisation and the evolution of regional peace, emphasising the role of mutual trust. I suggest that the improvement of regional peace can be understood as a two-phase process, and I illustrate this with the case of the rapprochement in the Southern Cone of South America. Indeed, in the late 1970s and following a protracted history of rivalry and hostility, Argentina and Brazil began a process of bilateral détente that resulted about ten years later in the creation of Mercosur, the common market of the South. Finally, the last section highlights the main issues discussed in the paper and offers some final thoughts.

II. Securitisation, desecuritisation and the domestic construction of asecurity

The securitisation approach has initially been developed in various articles by Ole Wæver, eventually fully materialising in a volume published in 1998 and written in collaboration with Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis. The theory is to be understood in the context of a debate flourishing during the 1990s regarding the definition of security, and the need to expand it or keep it narrow. Rather than proposing a new, longer list of threats, the securitisation project entails a search for the logic that drives the securitisation process; that is, the process by which issues come to...
be seen as security matters.\textsuperscript{16} Building upon language theory, Wæver argues that security can be regarded as a speech act: the mere invocation of something using the word ‘security’ declares its threatening nature, “invokes the image of what would happen if [security] did not work,”\textsuperscript{17} thereby justifying the use of extraordinary measures to counter it.

Hence, security is the realm where emergency measures beyond ordinary political procedures become permissible. When an issue makes it into the sphere of security because it has been successfully presented as a threat, it has been \textit{securitised}. Using the jargon of this approach, securitisation is the process by which a \textit{securitising actor} succeeds in presenting a threat or vulnerability as an \textit{existential threat} to a \textit{referent object} that has a legitimate claim to survival, thereby attaining endorsement for \textit{emergency measures}. These measures would otherwise not have been granted the necessary legitimisation (approval) by the \textit{securitising audience}.

Although the authors deliberately leave the definition of emergency measures open and implicitly play down the link between these measures and violence, I think that there is a case to be made for reconnecting the two.\textsuperscript{18} The idea that securitisation internalises the logic of war is more forcefully presented in an earlier work by Wæver.\textsuperscript{19} There, the author contends that “the logic of war—challenge-resistance(defense)-escalation-recognition/defeat—could be replayed metaphorically and extended to other sectors. When this happens, however, the structure of the game is still derived from the most classical of classical cases: war.”\textsuperscript{20} Following this argument, I would claim that the logic of a game called ‘competition’ would not substantially differ from Wæver’s war game. What indeed makes them two different games is the inherent component of violence of the logic of war. Successful securitisation legitimises emergency measures that make reference to violence, either because the audience agrees to the recourse to violence, or because it agrees to extraordinary action that should avoid later violence.

\textsuperscript{16} Also Jef Huysmans argues that “although the debate on expanding the security agenda to non-military sectors and non-state referent objects launched an interesting discussion about the security (studies) agenda, it has not really dealt with the meaning of security.” Jef Huysmans, ‘Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier’, \textit{European Journal of International Relations} vol. 4, no. 2 (1998), p. 226.
\textsuperscript{17} Wæver, ‘Securitization and Desecuritization’, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{18} It is not surprising that the authors leave this definition open. They are trying to avoid the easy association between security and the military sector, arguing that security is about a specific logic that can also be applied to the other sectors of security—political, economic, environmental and societal. See Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, \textit{Security: A New Framework for Analysis}.
\textsuperscript{19} Wæver, ‘Securitization and Desecuritization’.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 54.
However, more interesting for the present discussion on friendship is the concept of desecuritisation, on which the authors, unfortunately, do not expand very much. In principle, desecuritisation involves “the shifting of issues out of the emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere.” Yet using the revised understanding of emergency measures, it can be said that the process of desecuritisation implies that issues, for which the potential use of force had been legitimised before, now start to retrace their steps taking the opposite direction, whereby violence ceases to be a legitimate option. This time, the aim will be to remove certain issues from the security agenda. When these issues involve (aspects of the) relationships with neighbours, the domestic process of desecuritisation may advance positive changes at the regional level, in a similar fashion as securitisation moves may provoke regional escalation and crises.

Three conditions (or states) of security can be identified. First, when one feels to lack adequate defences to counter perceived threats, the situation is one of insecurity. If, by contrast, sufficient counter-measures are felt to be available, the situation has evolved to one of security. A common feature of insecurity and security is the presence of perceived threats, rendering necessary an alert attitude; precluding serenity. Conversely, by the slow erosion of the perception of threat, what emerges is a situation of asecuritisation, in which neither the security language nor the security logic apply.

Perhaps because both securitisation and desecuritisation are processes that take place inside states or other collectivities, the reference to (regional) peace has been remarkably absent from the literature on this approach. While desecuritisation is a domestic process, peace is inherently a relational concept, as will be seen below; one that compels us to look beyond state behaviour, towards regional patterns of interaction.

III. Types of peace

The decision to focus on regional peace rather than on regional agreements partly follows from the earlier discussion. As many scholars have stressed, the fact that states can walk away from, or violate the terms of, agreements without their co-signatory partners feeling emotionally betrayed can be explained by the absence of a global enforcer (anarchy). However, it can be also explained because states need not conduct friendly relations, let

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22 Wæver, ‘Insecurity, Security, and Asecurity in the West European Non-War Community’, p. 81.
alone be friends, in order to sign agreements. In contrast, the link between regional peace and friendship is more intertwined. Regional peace, I suggest, is a necessary condition for regional (interstate) friendship, although not a sufficient one. It is necessary because without regional peace, we cannot talk about regional friendship. However, we may find regions where the absence of interstate violence, even if for extended periods of time, is the product of relationships very different from friendship: a regional balance of power, 23 the presence of an overriding regional hegemon that sorts out disputes short of war, 24 strong influence of an extra-regional power with the same effect, 25 or alternatively impotence, geographical isolation, or sheer strategic irrelevance. 26 The fact that we can still talk of peace even without international friendship points to the need of distinguishing between different kinds of peace. If not just any type peace is a sign of mutual trust, mutual responsiveness, etc., but only some types of peace, then we need to qualify peace.

The recognition of different types of peace is by no means a novel idea. Several scholars have constructed scales or typologies that typically cover all the range from a very fragile and unstable peace to situations of consolidated and stable peace. A possible further step that some authors consider in these gradations is the establishment of pluralistic security communities, alluding to the situation in which war has become unthinkable due to the emergence of a sense of transnational community among both elites and societies of the states involved. In essence, the typologies are not fundamentally divergent. They all point, with slight differences in emphasis, to similar stages of one same peace continuum. Possible differences relate more to each scholar’s research interests than to fundamental conceptual disagreements. 27

Drawing upon these authors’ peace scales, I have found that a more detailed analytical typology would help to better capture the different stages of a peace relationship (see Table 1 on page 12). Before turning to that, the following assumptions should be made clear. Firstly, no particular type of domestic political regime is indispensable for the maintenance of a zone of peace, broadly defined. Stable democracies seem to favour it, but other types of regimes have been equally capable of avoiding war, conducting peaceful relationships, and even initiating a process of peace stabilisation, as the example of the Southern Cone of South America will show below.

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

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

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


28 The argument that peace could be either positive or negative was first made by Kenneth Boulding, for whom the former involves “good management, orderly resolution of conflict, harmony associated with mature relationships, gentleness, and love,” whereas the latter implies “the absence of something—the absence of turmoil, tension, conflict, and war” (Boulding, Stable Peace, p. 3).
Highly securitised visions of the neighbour(s) will translate externally into *fragile peace*, in which pending disputes survive, the armed forces work on regional conflict hypotheses, and states prepare for war. Peace is occasionally interrupted by military clashes, but they are kept below the level of international war—hence it can still be called a zone of peace. Yet the resort to violence to solve or protect securitised issues is seen domestically as a legitimate option. The chances of escalation are high, and the situation is perceived as one of insecurity; war may indeed break out. For instance, Argentina and Chile had a relationship of just fragile peace for most of the twentieth century, with many territorial disputes pending, preparing themselves to go to war against each other, playing balancing games and displaying power, and occasionally exchanging fire in border zones. Until a few years ago, also Israeli-Palestine relations could have been said to be in fragile peace, later becoming a zone of war, and more recently moving again into a fragile peace situation.

Under *unstable peace*, preparation and contingency plans for war are also present, but with no armed confrontations having occurred, or only in the distant past. However, confrontations, and even war, have not only *not* been ruled out, but also deterrence and threats continue to play a critical role in this type of relationship. This is what makes this type of peace unstable. Domestically, it still is the security language that defines the relationship, thus ensuring that the situation is perceived in terms of insecurity or security—depending on how one’s own capabilities are assessed vis-à-vis the adversary—but never in terms of asecurity. The Argentine-Brazilian relationship can be analysed in this way at the time of the escalation of tension due to the Itaipú-Corpus dispute (1960s and 1970s). Clearly, U.S.-USSR relations during the tensest periods of the Cold War would fit into this category.

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

If negative peace and its three subcategories (fragile, unstable, and cold peace) are defined by the absence of war, then positive peace is defined by the presence of confidence and trust. It is in situations of positive peace that states can achieve relationships are comparable to those of friendship. In positive peace, states do not prepare for war, nor do they expect other states in the zone to do so. They do not read bilateral or regional issues in security language. This does not necessarily mean that all disputes have been resolved. Issues and disagreements may persist, but no party conceives of force to sort them out. Zones of positive peace can be subdivided into zones of stable peace and pluralistic security communities. In both, their members have ruled out the possibility of war among themselves, and are confident that their fellow members have done so too. They are all certain that any potential changes to the status quo will be peaceful and agreed.

A pluralistic security community stands out because it appears as a more ‘participatory’ kind of stable peace in that not only has war become unthinkable, but also the societies involved have developed links, mutual sympathies, and some sort of common identification\(^29\) that makes them perceive each other as members of the same community. In addition, states may be bound by common political institutions, similar political systems, and considerable economic interdependence. To be sure, all pluralistic security communities are zones of stable peace. However, not all zones of stable peace are pluralistic security communities.\(^30\) Examples of stable peace are the current Argentine-Chilean relationship, and relations among members of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since the late 1970s. On the other hand, members of the European Union, as well as Canada and the United States are clear examples of pluralistic security communities, whereas Argentina and Brazil can be said to be part of an incipient security community, as I will argue below.

\(^29\) The term ‘identification’ is preferred here over that of ‘identity,’ as the former suggests a looser conceptual understanding, implying a common perception of potential shared benefits and costs; mutual sympathies; recognition of areas of common interests that promote co-operation and co-ordination in different fields, both at the public and private levels; growing curiosity about and familiarisation with the other’s politics, culture, society, etc., that is in fact reflection of a growing interest in the other as such; and, in general, a positive image of the other that tends to advance co-operation rather than competition, and that does not see a negative impact on one’s own state in the other state’s gain, but appreciates that it can instead redound to one’s own benefit (absolute gains).

Table 1: Peace categories

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<tr>
<th>Negative peace</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Unstable peace</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cold or conditional peace</td>
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<td>Positive peace</td>
<td>Stable peace</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pluralistic security community</td>
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IV. Trust, desecuritisation, and the evolution of regional peace

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

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

Consequently, the development of mutual confidence is critical to understanding the process of desecuritisation implied in the transformation of negative into positive peace, and in the stabilisation and later consolidation of peace. The level of mutual confidence indicates the solidity of the peace upon which the relationship rests. In other words, the higher the degree of mutual confidence, the more solid the peaceful relationship, and the harder (although not impossible) it will be for the process to be reversed. Conversely, the
higher the degree of distrust—and therefore the less solid the basis for peace—the easier it will be for even a minor misunderstanding or misinterpretation to develop into military violence, and possibly war.

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

a group of states have maintained peaceful relations among themselves for a period of at least thirty years—a generation span—though civil wars, domestic unrest, and violence might still occur within their borders, as well as international conflicts and crises between them.31

A quantitative measurement of trust is even more difficult. Instead, one has to rely on the examination of certain indicators.32 For instance, the deployment of troops along a common border is most probably a sign of securitised relationships and of fragile or unstable peace. The presence of a system of mutual accountability through confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) is likely to be indicative of cold or stable peace, in which some issues are still securitised and need to be closely monitored. Common institutions, high level of interdependence, compatible domestic regimes, withdrawal or absence of troops on common borders, among others, point to the existence of trust, and thus to a situation of stable peace, or even to a pluralistic security community, or, as Wæver called it, an asecurity community.33

The existence of pending disputes need not in itself be an indication of distrust. Certain issues may be disputed without being securitised, if, for instance, there is a firm commitment to find agreed solutions. Conversely, distrust can define a relationship even in the absence of apparent conflict. Short of producing an exhaustive list, I suggest that the presence or absence of the following indicators should be taken into account when the solidity of regional peace is to be assessed:

- recent war, repeated exchanges of cross-border fire, deployment of troops in border areas, arms races, existence of contingency plans for war, few and distant (in time) diplomatic visits, mistrust and antipathy between societies, obstacles for the mobility of persons;

31 Kacowicz, Zones of Peace in the Third World: South America and West Africa in Comparative Perspective, p. 9.
32 For a conceptualisation of trust in interstate relations, see Aaron M. Hoffman, ‘A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations’, European Journal of International Relations vol. 8, no. 3 (2002).
• diplomatic visits and public speeches pointing at the easing of tension, CSBMs, problem-solving mechanisms;
• fluid communication channels, common projects that involve expectation of joint benefits (a common market, for example), common institutions, high degree of interdependence and exchange, compatible self-images, free or easy mobility of people.

The first set of indicators points to a situation of either fragile or unstable peace, depending mainly on whether force was used in the recent past or not. In any case, it reveals a high degree of distrust and suspicion, a high level of securitisation, and the relative ease with which peace can be reverted. The second set of indicators manifests a clear intention to try to avoid potential misperceptions, implicitly acknowledging that they can indeed occur. Mutual confidence is not high, but parties have developed common mechanisms for making their behaviour more predictable and transparent, if not accountable. These mechanisms represent the basis for whatever degree of mutual confidence might exist. States in such a situation have a relationship of cold or conditional peace. If one of these mechanisms fails, peace can revert into an unstable or fragile type, and even war can break out. Conversely, states may make explicit efforts to increase the degree of mutual confidence and trust, and in this way succeed in transforming their negative peace into positive peace. However, states might choose to stay in conditional peace and not pursue closer links. They may leave some issues securitised and remain alert and vigilant, yet being careful not to make peace unstable. Even in this case, I argue, peace is a dynamic process, in that its maintenance will require an active effort on the part of governments.

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

So far, I have set out a descriptive framework indicating connections between stages in the processes of desecuritisation and of peace stabilisation/consolidation. The relevance of explicitly and simultaneously considering both processes rests on the fact that it stimulates us to take on a more comprehensive perspective; one that focuses more consciously on the mutual effects of domestic and regional developments. The causal relationship between these two levels is more complex. While in some cases domestic changes promote transformations at the regional level, in others the origin of the process can be found in the region (or beyond, on the global level) and encourage domestic desecuritisation from the ‘outside.’\textsuperscript{34} In other words, the process can start at either end, thus being a bottom-up process or a top-down one. However, once in motion, domestic and regional dynamics start feeding back into each other, making the distinction between domestic desecuritisation and regional stabilisation of peace merely an analytical one. In fact,

\textsuperscript{34} See, for instance, Miller, ‘The International, Regional, and Domestic Sources of Regional Peace’.
for all practical purposes, they become so mutually influential and intertwined that they come to constitute two dimensions of a complex and delicate single process.

Additionally, I would argue that we need to distinguish two phases in the desecuritisation/peace process. This will help us to understand the different mechanisms at work at each stage enabling the advancement of peace. The first phase accounts for the initiation of the process. This is a critical moment, since it entails overcoming inertia. In fact, the task is even more difficult. It involves a change of ‘direction,’ from a negative relational pattern to a gradually improving one.

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

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

a) The first phase: desecuritisation/peace stabilisation

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

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

Theories of interdependence and institutionalism take on a liberal stance. They argue that states—or at least economically developed and prosperous states—are inclined to avoid war because they hold absolute gains higher than relative gains, and regard negatively the costs of going to war and positively the benefits of trade and commercial exchange. Furthermore, it is argued that these states will recognise the importance of a peaceful environment for the achievement of the latter. Such states value more the benefits of trade and commerce than those of territorial conquest. In addition, neoliberal institutionalists emphasise the role that international institutions play in achieving common goals and overcoming the difficulties created by interdependence. In other words, war avoidance and even co-operation can take place, according to neoliberals, even in the context of anarchy, mainly because the actors involved see more instrumental advantages in peace and co-operation than in a different international conjuncture. Through this lens, peace and co-operation are more convenient than war, and are therefore preferred by the actors.

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

These rationalist claims bear important explanatory weight when it comes to the motivations of regional adversaries to start easing tensions. Against a backdrop of hostility, if a state is to revise its attitude towards its neighbour-slash-rival without experiencing it to be a political defeat, or at best a political concession, it needs to perceive strong incentives. In regions of negative peace, states will be more willing to start working towards détente if they identify concrete and material advantages to do so, rather than for moral or normative reasons. Interdependence theorists will define these advantages in economic terms,

whereas neorealists will cast them in terms of military power and capabilities. In any case, the importance of rivals conceding that détente might bring about potential benefits must be stressed again, since it renders possible—maybe for the first time—a different type of relationship to enter into their scope of foreign policy options. Envisaging the option of advancing rapprochement with a hitherto rival already has a value in itself.

The case of Argentina and Brazil in the late 1970s is illuminating in this regard. It allows for a fairly conventional power/interest-based interpretation of détente, but one that took shape in an atypical context. After a long history of rivalry and competition, shortly following a significant deterioration of bilateral relations, and with both countries under military rule, détente between the neighbours evolved quickly, and indeed opened the door to more committed, long-term co-operation between these former rivals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In October 1979 Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay signed the Tripartite Agreement on Itaipú-Corpus that brought the dispute to an end. In May 1980, João Figueiredo visited Buenos Aires, in what constituted the first visit of a Brazilian president to Argentina in 40 years. In August, President Jorge Rafael Videla reciprocated the visit. These summits were of paramount importance. They lasted several days, and the presidents travelled with large delegations of ministers and state secretaries. On the occasion of the visits, 22 documents establishing co-operation in eleven areas were signed; among them, an agreement on nuclear fuel cycle co-operation, which—despite being rather symbolic—represented the
end of competition and the beginning of collaboration on nuclear matters. In addition, joint infrastructure enterprises were agreed, such as the construction of a bridge over the River Iguazú linking Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) and Porto Meira (Brazil), the first of its kind since 1947; hydroelectric co-operation, the export of Argentine gas to Brazil, and the interconnection of their electricity systems. Other important gestures that eased rapprochement were Brazil’s agreement to represent Argentine interests in London during and after the Falklands/Malvinas war and its support for Argentina’s sovereignty claim at the U.N. and OAS, as well as its decision against authorisation of British airplanes flying to the South Atlantic to schedule a regular refuelling stop in Brazilian territory.

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

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

b) The second phase: towards a security and peace consolidation

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

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

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

As Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett indicate, transactions, and international organisations and institutions facilitate processes of social learning, which imply a re-assessment of actors’ meanings, beliefs and understandings. The latter form their cognitive structure, influencing the way they perceive others and themselves, which in turn constitutes and constrains (or broadens) their perceived range of possible policy actions. When this is a positive process, it redounds to the expansion of trust, which is in turn reflected in policy decisions, such as withdrawal of troops from common border areas, expansion of co-operation, and so on.

According to Kacowicz and Bar-Siman-Tov, this complex learning process “requires a redefinition or re-evaluation of the parties’ national interests, so that each party will perceive a mutual interest in establishing and maintaining the peace between them as the most important factor in assuring each other’s security and even existence.” Thus, the development towards a more consolidated peace involves “an active process of redefinition or reinterpretation of reality—what people consider real, possible and desirable—on the basis of new causal and normative knowledge.” During this process social actors “manage and even transform reality by changing their beliefs of the material and social world and their identities.”

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Crucial actors in this process are policy-makers and other political, economic, and intellectual elites, who will try to transmit to the public (audience, in the language of securitisation theory) their re-interpreted perception of reality—that is, their modified cognitive structure—with the aim of producing concrete policy, broadly legitimised. Although differently put, this was also observed by Wolfers:

> [c]lose and effective interstate amity as among allies should tend to promote emotional friendship. The mere experience of successful common effort can make for mutual confidence and sympathy although it does not necessarily so; old grudges, suspicions, resentments, and jealousies may prevail at least in some parts of the population. But then, even democratic governments need not wait passively for the spontaneous development of public sentiments of friendship to complement their policies. There are many ways in which a favourable image of another nation can be sold to the public, even though anything as radical as the way totalitarian governments manipulate public opinion is incompatible with democracy.

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

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

Indeed, the second phase of the Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement can be interpreted along the lines of the emergence of mutual trust, complete (military) desecuritisation of bilateral relations, establishment of stable peace, and incipient emergence of security community, facilitated by the construction of shared projects and discourses. Partly because democracies seem to be better at developing reciprocal trustful relationships, and partly because of the evolution of events in the Southern Cone in the

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early 1980s, the unfolding of positive peace had to wait until 1985, when both countries had initiated their democratic transitions.\footnote{Among the events ‘diverting attention’ from rapprochement were the Falklands/Malvinas war, the untidy fall of the Argentine military regime, and the death of Trancredo Neves—the first President elect of Brazil after 20 years of military rule—shortly before taking office.} Also, it was after the fall of the military governments and with the restoration of democratic rule that both states were in a propitious moment to reassess identities and perceptions of both themselves and the other.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

V. Final remarks

This discussion has highlighted the difficulties of defining friendship at the international level. However, as Thomas More observed almost 500 years ago, while “alliances do not cement friendship” because they make it seem “as if men who are separated by only a hill or a river were bound by no tie of nature, […] the fellowship of nature among men serves instead of a treaty, and […] men are bound more adequately by good will than by pacts, more strongly by their hearts than by their words.” That ‘good will’ appears to be more decisive when states and peoples are bound by shared interpretations of their social realities. Ultimately, this was already present in Burke’s thoughts:

[Men] are led to associate by resemblances, by conformities, by sympathies. It is with nations as with individuals. Nothing is so strong a tie of amity between nation and nation as correspondence in laws, customs, manners, and habits of life. They have more than the force of treaties in themselves. They are obligations written in the heart. They approximate men to men without their knowledge, and sometimes against their intentions. […] The conformity and analogy of which I speak, incapable, like everything else, of preserving perfect trust and tranquillity among men, has a strong tendency to facilitate accommodation, and to produce a generous oblivion of the rancor of their quarrels. With this similitude, peace is more of peace, and war is less of war.

Allowing for the constraints set by international anarchy, I have advocated for focusing on constructed mutual trust and confidence—the central elements in stable and


peaceful regions—to find relationships resembling friendship at the international level. The emergence of trust and confidence amongst states marks the transformation of zones of negative peace into zones of positive peace. Moreover, if civil societies are so closely interconnected that in addition to their national identities some kind of regional community identification emerges, then that zone of stable peace has also become a pluralistic security community. Where this is the case, a sense of shared destiny explains the long-term stability of a consolidated peace.

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

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

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

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

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