

# Contested Leadership in Comparative Perspective: Power Strategies in South Asia and South America\*

Daniel Fledes\*\*

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany

Thorsten Wojczewski

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany

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## ABSTRACT

Given the importance of the assertion or prevention of regional leadership for the future global order, this paper examines the strategies and resources being used to assert regional leadership as well as the reactions of other states within and outside the respective regions. Secondary powers play a key role in the regional acceptance of a leadership claim. In this article we identify the factors motivating secondary powers to accept or contest this claim. Two regional dyads, marked by different degrees of "contested leadership" are analyzed: Brazil vs. Venezuela and India vs. Pakistan. The research outcomes demonstrate that the strategies of regional powers and the reactions of secondary powers result from the distribution of material capabilities and their application, the regional powers' ability to project ideational resources, the respective national interests of regional and secondary powers, and the regional impact of external powers.

**Key Words:** regional power, secondary power, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Venezuela

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\*\* Daniel Fledes is Schumpeter Fellow at GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany. Thorsten Wojczewski is a research assistant at GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany. Direct correspondence to Daniel Fledes (Email: fledes@giga-hamburg.de).

## **INTRODUCTION: WHY DO FOLLOWERS (NOT) FOLLOW?**

Conflicts over the assertion or prevention of regional leadership will impact the future global order.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we are interested in the strategies and resources being used to assert regional leadership as well as in the reactions of other states within and outside the respective regions. The leading role of states can be based on their greater military or economic potential. In the same way, their legitimacy or representative function for a region might generate bargaining advantages. The positions of Southern regional powers such as Brazil and India, located on the one hand between the center and periphery of the current world system and on the other hand at the nexus of international and regional politics, demand particularly complex foreign policy strategies. The reform of the United Nations has failed, not least because of the lack of acceptance in the candidates' regions. In general, empirical case studies confirm lower degrees of acceptance of regional powers' leadership claims in the neighboring states than at the global level.<sup>2</sup>

Regional cooperation processes such as UNASUR and SAARC can serve as power bases or limit the leaders' foreign policy options as secondary players try to constrain the rising powers by refusing to grant them acceptance and legitimacy. For different reasons, Pakistan opposes India's leadership and Venezuela undermines Brazil's regional-power status. These secondary powers in the regional hierarchies can claim leadership in certain issue areas beyond the region and they are potential cooperation partners for external powers. The former might enable them to project power globally; the latter extend their room to maneuver in bargaining with regional powers.

Secondary powers play a key role with regard to regional acceptance (Huntington 1999; Nolte 2007). The reasons for the 'contested leadership' will be addressed: which factors motivate secondary powers to accept or contest regional powers' leadership claims? In short, why do followers (not) follow? From the neo-realist perspective, the lack of support can be explained by the balance-of-power approach. To maintain the status quo of power distribution, secondary powers can build coalitions with intra- and extra-regional actors to balance the regional powers. On the one hand, it is argued that in the context of global economic integration and the power disequilibrium between the re-

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1 See Acharya(2007), Hurrell(2007), Lake(2007).

2 See Betz(2006), Cohen(2006), Habib and Selinyane(2006), Flemes(2010).

gional powers under consideration and global powers such as the US and the PRC, regional leadership projects must include material and ideational incentives for the followers which compensate their power losses (Schirm 2007). From this perspective, the regional power's aim is to motivate the secondary power to sign up to its lead. On the other hand, it is questionable if the same argument applies to conflictive world regions, where secondary powers' acceptance of leadership seems very unlikely.

To address these questions we will focus on those factors that most affect intergovernmental relations: resources, interests, values and strategies of foreign policy. To capture the relational dimension of these variables, the bilateral relations between regional and secondary powers, marked by different degrees of 'contested leadership' (for example, competition or conflict), will be analyzed by comparing two dyads in regional relations: Brazil vs. Venezuela and India vs. Pakistan. This article aims to explore the preconditions for and impact of the assertion of regional leadership. The results are expected to indicate how regional powers can avoid contestation and motivate secondary powers to follow. Leadership is a relationship 'between a leader and those who follow the leader [...]. This relationship cannot be understood by focusing on the leader alone' (Cooper et al. 1991, 396). We will focus on both the leaders and followers (or contesters of leadership) and contribute to the theoretical debate on the sources of regional leadership. Additionally, we will address external influences on regional contexts: how do the relations between regional and external players (the US, the PRC, Russia and the EU) impact regional power distribution?

First of all, though, we have to address "what makes a region" and "how regions and regional orders are delineated" - crucial questions at the crossroads between comparative area studies and international relations. The underlying thesis is that against the background of an international system moving from a unipolar to a multipolar order, regions are increasingly constructed more from within than from without, mainly through intraregional interaction. The following analysis will take into account regions marked by both cooperation and conflict. Barry Buzan suggests asking first and foremost for patterned interaction amongst the regional states and presents four categories (Buzan 1998, 70-73): types of interaction (military, economic, cultural), the attitudes that go along with interaction (cooperative, neutral, competitive, hostile, conflictive), relative intensity of interaction (degree of institutionalization), and the boundaries that contain interaction (interac-

tion with the global level/external powers). In the event that cooperative (or competitive) patterns can be verified, a second analytical step consists of asking about collective identities inside the regional boundaries. In cases of conflictive regional interaction, the “mode of conflict management” (Lake and Morgan 1997, 11) within the regional security cluster indicates the shared perception of (hostile) regionness. The mode of conflict management in a conflictive RSC consists of the use of power to restrain power and depends primarily on the distribution of power capabilities. The resultant pattern can be regional uni-, bi-, or multipolarity. In each case the states conduct their relations on the basis of their relative material resources (Morgan 1997, 33-34).

The criteria of patterned interaction and its relative intensity can help in delineating and comparing international regions. But whether we have to detect common identities or modes of conflict management as further criteria for how regional boundaries are generated depends on the character of the interaction. Once the regional borders of leadership and potential followership are delineated beyond the auxiliary reference to regional organizations, the comparative framework can be applied. In the following, the foreign policy resources, interests, values, and strategies of regional, secondary, and external powers will be theoretically discussed and operationalized.

## **SHAPING CONTESTED LEADERSHIP: RESOURCES, INTERESTS AND STRATEGIES OF FOREIGN POLICY**

### ***Material and ideational resources***

Both material and ideational resources have to be taken into account in order to assess whether the regional power possesses the necessary resources to make a difference in regional and international bargains. Often, material power preponderance is seen as a precondition of leadership. Some theoretical background to this is provided by the theory of hegemonic stability (Keohane 1980; Strange 1987), which, particularly in its liberal version, argues that a materially advantaged state has a strong interest in providing leadership to its influence sphere. This means, for instance, the provision of public goods (Kindleberger 1981). From a realist perspective, power is defined by the disposal of material resources. Military strength is the key factor because force is the *ultima ratio* of international politics (Mearsheimer 2001, 56). Military power is based on the latent power of a country, which consists of its economic and demographic resources. A broader approach to material

power incorporates technology, infrastructure, and energy indicators as well. The national political process is the vehicle for converting these capabilities into military power (Treverton and Jones 2005).

There are many approaches to ideational power in the international relations literature. Lake (2006; 2007) introduces the concept of authority, distinguishing it from coercion, as the defining character of a power relation between two actors. In such a relationship, legitimacy and moral obligation are the drivers that motivate the follower to follow. Other authors describe ideational resources as having a symbolic (Noya 2005, 7), psychological (Ferguson 2003) or subjective (Lukes 2005, 486) dimension, but always emphasizing the actor's legitimacy and credibility. Nye (2004, 5) defines soft power as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. In effect, ideational power is based on resources such as the culture of a nation; its norms and values; and its foreign policy, which reflects these. The means of converting ideational resources into political influence are instruments of diplomacy characterized by consensus power (Czempiel 1999), such as discourse control or mediation.

### ***Foreign policy interests***

Classical realists (Morgenthau 1951) argue that states are rational unitary actors pursuing their national interest. The overriding national interest of each state is its national security and survival. In pursuit of national security, states strive to amass resources. This classical understanding of national interest is particularly relevant to the analysis of power-balancing strategies pursued by regional, secondary and extra-regional powers. In sharp contrast, Alexander Wendt (1992) notes that 'anarchy is what states make of it', implying that the international structure constitutes state action by constituting the identities and interests of states. The constructivist approach to state interests is of great significance to the analysis of foreign policy ideas and the mutual perceptions of the states under consideration. Liberal theorists in international relations (Moravscik 1997) focus on the formation of domestic preferences, arguing that a variety of actors influence the domestic policy process, including social and economic interest groups, political parties, the legislature and the executive. Based on these theoretical assumptions, we will identify the interests of secondary, regional and external powers in order to weight the convergences and divergences.

### ***Strategies of regional powers***

In the practice of international relations, states can pursue different

combinations of foreign policy strategies at different systemic levels. Baldwin (2002, 187) comments that power can be exercised in the formation and maintenance of institutions, through institutions, and within and among institutions. Regional institutions empower weaker states by constraining the freedom of the regional powers through established rules and procedures. It is therefore puzzling that we can observe empirically that regional powers are the key players, and often creators, of regional governance institutions. A possible explanation of this is offered by the theoretical concept of ‘co-operative hegemony’ (Pedersen 2002).

### ***Strategies of secondary powers***

Which foreign policy options can secondary powers exercise in relation to regional powers? Secondary powers command limited foreign policy options in view of the superior hard power of regional powers. In outlining state strategies, the two most common concepts in the theoretical literature on international relations are *balancing* and *bandwagoning* (Waltz 1979; Schweller 1994). In cases of contested leadership marked by conflict, we can expect secondary powers to pursue counterbalancing strategies. Whereas in cases of contested leadership characterized by patterns of cooperative regional relations bandwagoning seems more likely. Although the literature often portrays states’ alignment decisions as a dichotomy between balancing and bandwagoning, these are only the two most extreme polar positions a weaker state can choose. *Soft balancing* (Pape 2005; Paul 2005) is a middle strategy that does not directly challenge the more powerful state’s military preponderance, but uses non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine the superior state’s unilateral policies. Soft balancing involves institutional strategies such as the formation of limited diplomatic coalitions or ententes to constrain the superior power. It also involves strengthening economic ties between peers, which can possibly shift the balance of economic power against the more powerful state in the long term. Questioning the legitimacy of unilateral policies will increase the costs of using unilateral power by reducing the number of countries likely to cooperate with the superior power. Territorial denial, entangling diplomacy, economic strengthening, and signaling of resolve to participate in the balancing coalition are further mechanisms of soft balancing (Flemes 2007).

As the soft-power approach demonstrates, between the two extremes of balancing and bandwagoning we can identify middle strategies through which weaker states avoid making an obvious choice; it is

theoretically and empirically important to distinguish these middle strategies from the extreme polar opposites. Labels for strategies within this middle area include buffering (Gries 2005), binding (Ikenberry 2003) and niche diplomacy (Cooper 1997).

### ***Regional impact of external powers***

From the perspective of external powers, we can identify three strategic options with a view to the regions under consideration. Firstly, intra-regional balancing processes could be supported by external powers in order to contain the regional powers by obliging them to commit resources to their own backyards instead of projecting power to others' (Mearsheimer 2005). A 'special relationship' between external and secondary powers can potentially open windows of opportunity for the latter to exert decisive influence (in certain issue areas) at the systemic level. Secondly, external powers could support regional powers in maintaining regional stability through their own diplomacy, prestige and military power because the political and economic costs of constant intervention for extra-regional powers are too high. This scenario is more probable in regions marked by conflictive relationship patterns. And thirdly, a *laissez-faire* approach by external powers would consist of letting the politics of a region unfold and take their 'natural course' without significant outside intervention (Arquilla and Fuller 1996). Each of these strategic choices leads to different impacts on the regional power dynamics.

## **THE HIERARCHY OF POWER IN SOUTH AMERICA**

For a long time Brazil was regarded as a passive regional power in South America. Traditionally, Brazil's foreign policy has oscillated between a close relationship with the US and different versions of 'third worldism'. In the inaugural speech of his first administration, President Lula da Silva defined a prosperous and stable South America as the priority goal of his foreign policy.

In South America we observe economic, military and cultural interactions that are predominantly marked by cooperative attitudes. The relative intensity of economic and military (defence and security cooperation) interactions can be assessed by undertaking a short evaluation of the regional institutions. MERCOSUR was initiated by the treaty from Asunción in 1991. It suffers from structurally rooted and recurrent internal trade conflicts as well as from the asymmetry between its

members. In particular, the regional initiatives of the da Silva administration have introduced a shift from the institutional deepening of MERCOSUR to its extension. Or in other words, a shift from trade- and economy-driven foreign policies to a more political or strategic focus concentrated on the construction of a regional power base for global diplomacy in the new world order after unipolarity. The admission of Venezuela as the fifth full member of MERCOSUR in July 2006 reaffirmed Brazil's intention to extend its room to manoeuvre into the north of South America. The extended MERCOSUR is thus – apart from Surinam and Guyana- geographically congruent with UN-ASUR, a Brazilian integration initiative started in 2004 that includes all South American states.

Brazil plays a leading part in defence and security cooperation in South America as well (Flemes 2006). The intensity of interaction (degree of institutionalization) in the multilaterally organized fight against transnational security threats is greater than in defence cooperation. The Conference of the Home Secretaries of the MERCOSUR is the most significant forum for the dialogue on transnational threats and common measures for their containment. In terms of military and defence cooperation in South America, the UN Haiti mission MINUSTAH is of great importance. In March 2008 President da Silva proposed the creation of a South American defence council (CSD) focused on the establishment of a NATO-like defence alliance and, in the long run, South American armed forces and a regional armaments industry. Brazil will be the dominant player in the CSD, as it is in UN-ASUR.

Alongside common values such as democracy and human rights articulated by all South American state leaders, the region is marked by sharp differences: for instance, some South American states, such as the Venezuela of Hugo Chávez and the Bolivia of Evo Morales, no longer share the market economy paradigm. In stark contrast, Chile, Columbia and Peru have signed bilateral free trade agreements with the US. And while Bogotá seeks security and military cooperation with Washington in the framework of the *Plan Colombia*, Caracas feels threatened by potential military intervention by the United States. Brasília takes a moderate stance and tries to mediate between these polar positions.

Venezuela is referred to as a regional middle (Cardozo de Da Silva 1987) and regional leading power (Boeckh 2003) in South America, a classification which stresses the country's 'petropolitics' (Bodemer 2007) and its alternative regional integration project of the ALBA



(Flemes 2007). But before examining Venezuela's role in regional politics, we will shed light on South America's material power hierarchy. In UNASUR, material resources are distributed relatively evenly in comparison with other world regions such as South Asia. Hence, we have to consider more players which are potentially competing for secondary-power status, namely, Venezuela, Argentina and Chile. However, Brazil's regional-power status is confirmed by the regional distribution of material resources. For an overall picture and as a basis for comparison, the material resources survey consists of a set of military, energy, demographic, geographic and economic indicators.

Table 1. Brazil and Venezuela's material resources

	Brazil's material resources		Venezuela's material resources	
Military	Military expenditure (US\$ billion) 2008	20.15	Military expenditure (US\$ billion) 2008	3.31
	UNASUR ranking	1	UNASUR ranking	4
	Total armed forces (thousands) 2008	326	Total armed forces (thousands) 2008	115
	UNASUR ranking	1	UNASUR ranking	3
Energy	Oil production (million barrels/day) 2007	2.28	Oil production (million barrels/day) 2007	2.67
	UNASUR ranking	2	UNASUR ranking	1
	Natural gas production (billion cm) 2007	9.8	Natural gas production (billion cm) 2007	26.5
	UNASUR ranking	4	UNASUR ranking	2
Economy	GDP (US\$ billion) 2008	1.665	GDP (US\$ billion) 2008	328
	UNASUR ranking	1	UNASUR ranking	3
	Global Competitiveness Index Rank 2008	64	Global Competitiveness Index Rank 2008	105
	UNASUR ranking	2	UNASUR ranking	10
Demographics /Geography	Population (million) 2008	191.9	Population (million) 2008	26.4
	UNASUR ranking	1	UNASUR ranking	5
	Land area (thousand sq. km)	8,514.9	Land area (thousand sq. km)	912.1
	UNASUR ranking	1	UNASUR ranking	6

Military: The *Military Balance*(2009)

Energy: CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Economy: Human Development Report 2007, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/buildtables/>

Global Competitiveness Report 2008-2009: World Economic Forum, <http://www.weforum.org>

Demographics/Geography: World Bank Data & Statistics(2009), [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

While Brazil commands by far the greatest military capabilities in the region, Chile's military expenditure was higher than Venezuela's in 2007. However, Venezuela commands more military personnel than Chile and Argentina. Venezuela is by far the biggest oil producer in the region and uses its oil-fuelled affluence as a political weapon in the regional arena. Argentina produces more natural gas than Venezuela and Brazil, but does not base its regional diplomacy on its energy resources. Argentina's absolute GDP is higher than Venezuela's; when

considering GDP per capita, Chile ranks above Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. Additionally, Chile has a much more competitive economy than Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela. Argentina commands more population and land area than Venezuela.

Depending on the weighting of these indicators, both Argentina and Venezuela could be defined as secondary powers in the UNASUR region. However, Venezuela plays a pivotal role in the region's integration dynamics. For instance, UNASUR itself can be seen as a Brazilian-Venezuelan initiative (Flemes 2009). In addition to the previously mentioned ALBA process, President Chávez has proposed a 'South American NATO' (Boeckh 2003) and a regional broadcasting company (Telesur). Additionally, Venezuela has concluded numerous bi- and subregional energy agreements with the Caribbean (Petrocaribe), the Andean states (Petroandino) and Southern Latin America (Petrosur) which provide oil according to special conditions.

## **RELUCTANT FOLLOWERSHIP: VENEZUELA ACQUIESCES TO BRAZIL'S LEADERSHIP**

President Chávez champions the integration of Latin America on his own terms through ALBA as an 'anti-neoliberal' counterproposal to the US-led project of the FTAA. Venezuela's resource-based diplomacy constitutes a competing leadership claim. Venezuela is an alternative partner for smaller countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador, something which gives these states room to maneuver in their bilateral relations with Brazil. What are Brazil's strategic options for responding to Chávez's initiatives on the one hand and for generating regional acceptance and a regional power base on the other?

First, Brazil is trying to attract and integrate Venezuela in regional cooperation processes on the basis of the two players' rather limited common interests. The Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), pushed by Brazil and Venezuela, can be realized without political and ideological convergence. As South America's greatest economy, Brazil will benefit most from upgraded infrastructure and energy security. A further common interest of Brasília and Caracas is the exclusion of the United States from South American politics and security affairs. The foundation of UNASUR and, in particular, its defence council can be seen through this lens. For Brazil's foreign-policy makers, regional integration projects generally seem to be becoming less important as means of cooperation. Instead, such

projects are increasingly seen as instruments for locating their initiators in the regional and global orders.

Second, Brazil can gain regional legitimacy and acceptance by projecting norms and values that include the ideational beliefs of its potential followers in its regional project. This has proven to be difficult as political and ideological cleavages separate not only Brazil and Venezuela but also the whole subcontinent of South America, where diverse political economies have evolved in the course of the last decade. Brasilia is attempting to bridge political and ideological cleavages by guiding the states of the region towards the shared goal of a South American space. The main ideas of its 'consensual hegemony' consist of the protection of democracy, economic growth and regionalized responses to the challenges of globalization through multilateral deals within South America (Burgess 2008, 75). The *Itamaraty* is selling this approach and the multilateral institutions as being in the wider region's interest. But IIRSA and MERCOSUR lead to surpassing advantages for the greatest regional economy because Brazil is the greatest exporter of manufactured products as well as the leader in terms of its FDI in South America. Brazil exerted its power through the proposal of initial ideas and the subsequent guiding of discussions. Brazilian diplomats have highlighted the strategy of pushing collectivized responses based on discussion and inclusion as one of their strengths. In particular, in the course of IIRSA and UNASUR the *Itamaraty* has articulated a pluralistic agenda and has led a discourse of consensus creation in South America.

Third, Brasilia can operate its material resources to offer material incentives to Caracas and neutralize its regional initiatives. The latest oil discoveries in Brazilian territorial waters will most likely make the Amazon state one of the top-ten oil producers in the world (*Economist*, 17.04.2008). Incentives such as the provision of regional public goods and the payment of integration costs would not only enhance Venezuela's followership but would also generate more acceptance in South America as a whole. Through its various mediation engagements and security-cooperation initiatives, Brasilia provides regional stability. Additionally, Brazil invests in the public goods of regional energy security and infrastructure.

However, Brazil is not taking on a great share of the economic integration costs. For instance, Brazil does not support the smaller members through payments into structural funds. In Brazil most parts of the society are sceptical of regional integration and not ready to pay the costs of regional leadership. By contrast, President Chávez has in-

vested generously in corporate and financial opportunities in South America in recent years in order to give his ALBA vision improved traction over the Brazilian approach of ‘consensual hegemony’. Hence, Brazil’s willingness to provide public goods differs with regard to the issue area under consideration. Brasilia is not ready to pay the costs of economic integration, but is willing to do what is necessary to provide regional stability. The willingness to do the latter can be explained by the expected economies of scale induced by providing regional security and protection. Brazil has recently been increasing its military spending in order to secure the status of the region’s dominant military power (Flemes 2008).

Fourth, Brazil could build inclusive and democratic institutions that allow for the participation of secondary players like Venezuela, Chile and Argentina –and also the smaller South American states- in regional decision-making processes. Co-operative hegemony includes the readiness to share power on a permanent basis. But Brazil does not share power with its neighbors on a permanent basis, because MERCOSUR and UNASUR have no significant competencies. Brazil has leading roles in these regional institutions without being prepared for economic concessions or the transfer of sovereignty to regional institutions.

Brazil does not support the institutional consolidation of MERCOSUR. On the contrary, it is the country that ratifies the fewest MERCOSUR resolutions. The fact that MERCOSUR today is neither a common market nor a complete free trade area is partly a consequence of Brazilian foreign policy, which is focused much more on national sovereignty than on the country’s integration into regional institutions in the long run. Under these circumstances the regional acceptance of Brazil’s leadership status and the willingness of potential followers to follow will be rather limited (Pedersen 2002).

Fifth, many external players impact the regional power hierarchy, but few of them pursue interests related to the region of South America. The US seeks mainly to contribute to regional stability by supporting Brazil. Brasilia and Washington cooperate mainly in the energy and education sectors<sup>3</sup>. Washington is still the most influential external player in South America and delegates some of its power to Brasilia, which is more able to control Caracas because it enjoys more legitimacy than the US in South America. The EU is Brazil’s most important trade partner and engaged in a strategic partnership with Brazil in 2007. The strategic partnership stressed effective multilateralism, cli-

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3 See Nolte and Stolte(2007).

mate change, sustainable energy and poverty reduction as major cooperation fields. Similar to the EU's approximation to Brazil, the relations of Russia and China with South America's regional and secondary powers are based more on international system-level calculations than on their interests in South America.

In particular, Moscow's military cooperation with Venezuela (and Cuba) aims to contain Washington by obliging it to commit resources to its 'backyard' instead of projecting power to Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Since 2005 Caracas has bought Russian armaments for US\$5 billion. In addition, Venezuela has opened strategic sectors of its economy –gas, oil, bauxite and gold mining- to Russian investors. The relations between Russia and Brazil are also marked by armament supplies and military-technological cooperation. The PRC focuses on trade, energy and infrastructure cooperation in South America. While the growing share of Brazilian exports to and imports from the PRC reached approximately 9% in 2006, Venezuela's share of trade with the PRC is less significant. The planned civil nuclear cooperation with Venezuela gives cause for concern in Washington. Since 2005 the PRC has also strengthened its ties with Brazil, investing in strategic sectors such as air and space engineering and civil nuclear technology. From the Brazilian perspective the influence of Russia and China are less worrisome because they do not have the potential to impact the regional hierarchy of power. This is not least because Brazil maintains cooperative relations with both Russia and China and, additionally, shares the common interest in (soft) balancing Washington with Caracas, Moscow and Beijing.

The relationship between Brazil and Venezuela oscillates between cooperation and competition. The two players share regional interests such as infrastructure construction and energy security in South America. Additionally, Brazil provides the public good of regional stability, for example, by mediating between Venezuela and Colombia. Brazil maintains cooperative relations with all extra-regional powers, and the most important external player, the U.S., tries to constrain Venezuela and grants legitimacy to Brazil, supporting its regional leadership claim. Through our analysis we have identified only two factors that potentially motivate Venezuela to contest Brazil's leadership. First, the fact that, despite its superior material resources, Brazil is not ready to pay a significant part of the economic costs of regional integration. And second, the fact that Brasilia preserves regional power asymmetry by not building inclusive and democratic institutions that would allow for Venezuela's participation in regional decision-making. The second fac-

tor particularly limits Venezuela's willingness to follow. Nevertheless, and to conclude, Venezuela acquiesces to Brazil's regional leadership more than it accepts or contests it.

## **THE HIERARCHY OF POWER IN SOUTH ASIA**

The South Asian region emerged out of the independence of British India in 1947 and its violent partition. The partition had two main consequences: on the one hand, the communal conflict between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress got transformed into an interstate, military-political conflict between an Islamic Pakistan and a secular and multicultural but Hindu-dominated India (Buzan 2002, 2). On the other hand, India arose from the partition as the dominant state in relation to all its neighbors in the region. India perceived itself as the natural regional hegemon and an emerging great power. While India pursued a coercive hegemonic policy with imperialistic tendencies towards its smaller neighbors without providing a regional integration project, its foreign policy on the global level was—in the shadow of the Cold War—characterized by the principles of non-alignment and 'third worldism'. The end of the Cold War and India's economic liberalization at the beginning of the 1990s marked a major change in its global and regional policy. India has refrained from its role as a patronizing regional hegemon and is gradually realizing the advantages of a cooperative and integrative regional policy. Despite these changes, the India-Pakistan rivalry still shapes the configuration and dynamics of the region.

In South Asia we can find military, economic and cultural interactions that are predominantly characterized by conflictive patterns. The intensity of military interactions is relatively high and shaped by military threats and violence. The high level of military interactions results first and foremost from the India-Pakistan conflict. India and Pakistan have fought four wars; they have also mobilized their troops in the border region but then stopped short of war several times. There is no defense and security cooperation occurring within the region.

Economic interaction, on the other hand, has gradually increased over recent years due to greater regional cooperation in the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which was founded in 1985 and comprises eight member states: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives and Afghanistan. Though the countries agreed to establish a free trade

area in 2006, the regional trade is still at a very low level and there are several obstacles to cooperative and intensive trade relations, especially between India and Pakistan (Hogg 2007): first, there is a massive economic asymmetry between the member states, with India commanding a GDP of 2.7 trillion US-Dollar and thus almost 80% of the regional GDP; second, their economies are hardly complementary; and third, the regional infrastructure is very poor.

The region's cultures are also rather heterogeneous. Apart from the Sanskritic social order with its hierarchically structured social system and moral codes, which is prevalent in all religious communities of the region, and the shared colonial background (Jørgensen 2001, 128-129; Paranjpe 2007, 224), there has been no integrating cultural bond between the countries in the past: however, with India's economic liberalization and the very recent developments in Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal, market economy and democracy have become the region's dominant economic and political paradigms. While there is thus a growing sense of community between India and most of its smaller neighbors, the differences with Pakistan remain. Pakistan is a semi-authoritarian state whose national identity is based on the idea that Hindus and Muslims cannot live together peacefully. As a result, Pakistan rejects India's secular state model and perceives itself as the unitary state for all Muslims of the subcontinent (Nasr 2005, 179, 192).

Due to the predominantly conflictive regional interaction, the mode of conflict management is marked by a shared perception of hostile regionness. It consists of the use of power to restrain power and depends on the distribution of power capabilities. The regional power hierarchy is dominated by India. India accounts for more than 75% of the region's population, almost 80% of its GDP and about 65% of its land area. India's defence budget exceeds Pakistan's military expenditure by almost six times and the number of its armed forces by more than two times. India's dominance is not limited to material capabilities, but can also be found in the realm of ideational resources. The appeal of India's culture, its democracy and freedom and its dynamic and expanding economy are important resources for India's growing influence, credibility and legitimacy. Despite India's material and ideational primacy, Pakistan, as the only state in region, possesses sufficient resources to contest India's claim to regional leadership. Pakistan has not only attacked India three times, but it also balances India's dominance with its nuclear force. The regional order has thus long been characterized by a bipolar structure.

Table 2. India and Pakistan's material resources

	India's material resources		Pakistan's material resources	
Military	Military expenditure (US\$ billion) 2008	25.3	Military expenditure (US\$ billion) 2008	3.56
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2
	Total armed forces (thousands) 2008	1,281	Total armed forces (thousands) 2008	617
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2
Energy	Oil production (million barrels/day) 2007	0.88	Oil production (million barrels/day) 2007	0.69
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2
	Natural gas production (billion cm) 2007	31.7	Natural gas production (billion cm) 2007	30.8
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2
Economy	GDP (US\$ billion) 2008	1.078	GDP (US\$ billion) 2008	126
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2
	Global Competitiveness Index Rank 2008	50	Global Competitiveness Index Rank 2008	101
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	3
Demographics /Geography	Population (million) 2008	1.147,9	Population (million) 2008	167,7
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2
	Land area (thousand sq. km)	3.287,3	Land area (thousand sq. km)	796,1
	SAARC ranking	1	SAARC ranking	2

Military: *The Military Balance*(2009)

Energy: CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Economy: Human Development Report 2007, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/buildtables/>

Global Competitiveness Report 2008-2009: World Economic Forum, <http://www.weforum.org>

Demographics/Geography: World Bank Data & Statistics(2009), [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

Due to the geopolitical changes in the last decades (the end of the Cold War and the rise of Islamist terrorism as a new security threat), Pakistan's fragile statehood and India's increasing economic, political and strategic importance in the international system, the regional order gradually shifted to a unipolar structure (Buzan 2002, 14-20). As Buzan and Wæver (2003, 121) note: 'India no longer feels strategically threatened from within South Asia, at least not severely so, and [...] has the resources and the will to carve out a wider great power role on the Asia stage'.

## **NON-FOLLOWERSHIP: PAKISTAN'S HARD AND SOFT BALANCING AGAINST INDIA**

Though Pakistan has the power and will to contest India's leadership in South Asia and thus prevents the region from becoming a power base for India, India has not developed a coherent regional strategy to deal with Pakistan and increase its own acceptance in the



region. India's strategic options with respect to Pakistan and South Asia in general depend on the influence of common and divergent interests and values, relative material resources, the role of regional institutions, and the regional impact of external players.

First, India is trying to solve the conflict with Pakistan through a bilateral composite dialogue. Though the negotiations have been moving slowly and have been interrupted by terrorist attacks several times, India and Pakistan have been able to make some progress (Mishra 2007, 515; Patil 2008, 2). The dialogue thus reflects India's attempt to convince Pakistan of its peacefulness and to promote cooperation based on common interests. This attempt has so far not been successful due to the relatively low number of common interests and Pakistan's semi-authoritarian and military-dominated system of government. Pakistan's foreign policy is driven to a high degree by strategic considerations and the military's interests. The military sees relations with India through a very restricted strategic prism and uses the conflict to legitimize its dominant role within the state.

Second, India has never shown great interest in projecting certain norms and values, such as democracy or human rights. Though India has now begun to, unlike in the past, refrain from impeding democratic transitions, its support of the recent democratization processes in Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives was rather limited. India seems to be more interested in stability than in democratization. Regardless of the democratization processes in South Asia, Pakistan is still a semi-authoritarian state and could thus not be integrated into a democratic regional project, were one to occur. As a result, the only common ideational goal India could promote in South Asia is economic growth and successful socio-economic development; all countries in the region have a relatively low degree of development and thus face common challenges in this respect<sup>4</sup>.

Third, India could make use of its material resources to offer material incentives to Pakistan and the smaller countries of the region. In spite of its overwhelming resources, India has been unwilling to provide public goods to its regional neighbors in the past. However, India's economic liberalization has increased its readiness to provide such goods as it is now more interested in liberal trade and a stable regional environment. For instance, New Delhi now adheres to the principle of nonreciprocity, meaning that the biggest power in the region has a special responsibility for regional cooperation and needs to make unilater-

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4 See Dash(2008), p. 49.

al concessions. This principle, however, is only applied to the country's relations with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives (Hogg 2007, 7). At the same time, India increasingly provides these countries and Afghanistan with development aid. India's development policy, however, shows a clear preference for bilateral cooperation (Chaturvedi 2008, 30). Though India has promoted the establishment of a free trade area within the framework of SAARC, it remains skeptical of multilateral institutions and is not ready to pay the costs of a regional integration project.

On the other hand, due to its dependence on a stable regional environment for its development, India is to a certain extent willing to provide regional stability, as displayed by the active role the Indian navy played in the rescue mission after the tsunami in 2004 and in the protection of the sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean. However, as in the case of economic integration, India's commitment to maintaining regional stability is driven by its national security interests and is hardly viewed in the context of regional leadership. Similarly, India's continuing military build-up and modernization reflect its great-power ambitions, its concerns about economic and energy security, and its attempt to keep up with China's increasing military capabilities rather than a commitment to the security of its region and its smaller neighbors.

Fourth, India's readiness to share power, transfer sovereign rights to multilateral organizations, and assume a leading role by paying the biggest share of the integration costs remains highly limited. The slow progress in the establishment of a free trade area, for example, and the concentration on rather secondary policy fields such as agriculture are a result not only of the paralyzing impact of the India-Pakistan rivalry but also of India's lack of commitment. On the other hand, there are also, as already shown, several obstacles to an inclusive and successful regional integration project which includes Pakistan.

Fifth, external powers have affected and still affect the developments in the South Asian region. During the Cold War, the United States build Pakistan up as a regional ally to counterbalance Iranian nationalism, to contain the impact of the Soviet Union on the region and to constrain India's global ambitions and its non-alignment policy which was seen as a threat to American geostrategic interests (Kapur 2005, 132-133). Given the US support of Pakistan and the rapprochement between the US and the PRC in the 1970s, India was confronted with a potential alliance between the US, the PRC and Pakistan and therefore formed a strategic partnership with the USSR.

After the end of the Cold War, India not only lost the security guarantee provided by the USSR, but also the non-alignment movement lost its standing – the most important parameters of India's foreign policy thus ceased to exist. Given the unipolar world order and the economic liberalization initiated, India pursued a policy of rapprochement towards the US. Relations between the two countries improved very quickly, and they formed a strategic partnership in March 2000. Within the framework of this strategic partnership they concluded an agreement on defense cooperation and a nuclear agreement which de facto acknowledges India as a nuclear power.<sup>5</sup> Though Pakistan remains an important regional partner and is a key state in the “War on Terror”, the US now has better relations with India and holds a far more critical view of Pakistan (Mohan 2008, 145).

While the US is now more supportive of India, China remains a challenge to India's leadership role in South Asia. Relations between India and China have been tense since the late 1950s, mainly as a result of an unresolved border conflict which led to war in 1962. After the war, China formed an alliance with Pakistan and supported Pakistan's military build-up. By building up a counterweight, the Chinese leadership tried to contain India's regional and global ambitions (Kapur 2005, 148, 151; Malik 2003, 36). Moreover, China directly interfered in the wars between India and Pakistan and in the Kashmir issue.

China not only played a decisive role in compensating Pakistan's material inferiority vis-à-vis India, but it also forced New Delhi to concentrate its efforts on China and subordinate other foreign policy objectives to its China policy. The Sino-Indian antagonism has been a key factor preventing India from becoming a regional leader. As a result, the recent improvement in their bilateral relations has important implications for India as a regional power. For instance, China has renounced its direct intervention in the India-Pakistan conflict. The strategic partnership formed in 2005 was an important next step in institutionalizing and broadening the two countries' cooperation (Yuan 2007, 134).

In contrast to the active role of other external powers in the region, the EU neglected South Asia for a long time and has only very recently increased its political engagement by forming ties with SAARC and a strategic partnership with India. While the EU expresses its support for India as a regional leader, it has no common foreign policy towards Pakistan (Rothermund 2008, 583).

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5 See Ganguly, Shoup and Scobell(2006); Samuel(2007).

In terms of the variables analyzed, Pakistan's regional strategy is derived from its fear of India's overwhelming power capabilities and a deep suspicion of its motives, from the divergent norms and interests which impede regional integration, and from India's limited ability and willingness to provide an inclusive regional leadership project. Though Pakistan cannot take on India's power resources, it possesses sufficient capabilities to resist India and has been able to find partners willing to balance the power disparity. This external support at one time enabled Pakistan to sustain the bipolar structure of the security complex. India's increasing power resources, its rapprochement with Pakistan's main allies, and its higher international status have, however, gradually undermined this capability. In addition, due to international pressure, Pakistan's reliance on Islamist terrorists as a strategic asset in the conflict with India can hardly be continued.

Pakistan's strategy vis-à-vis India consists of hard and soft balancing: while the high level of defense spending, the nuclear deterrence, the alliance with China, and the latent support of terrorists represent the hard dimension of Pakistan's attempts to balance India, the soft elements can be found in Pakistan's policy of constraining India in SAARC. However, given China's current interest in good relations with India and the relatively low importance of regional acceptance to India's global policy, Pakistan's contestation today has greater implications for India's domestic security than for its foreign policy.

## **CONCLUSION**

In our analysis we could identify two different types of "contested leadership": while Venezuela follows reluctantly and acquiesces to Brazil's regional leadership, Pakistan refuses to follow while hard and soft balancing India. But how have the independent variables examined impacted the secondary powers' strategic approaches? Why do followers contest regional leadership to different extents?

We can find convergent interests among the regional and secondary power in South America. Brazil and Venezuela are both interested in infrastructure construction and energy security in South America as well as in the exclusion of the U.S. from regional security affairs. In contrast, the South Asian dyad is marked by divergent interests. Pakistan is not willing to normalize trade relations with India and has converse security interests, seeing Islamist terrorists as a strategic asset in its relations with India rather than as a common threat. From this

comparison we can hypothesize that secondary powers with a high range of common interests tend to bandwagon with the regional power; those with a high range of divergent interests tend to balance.

With a view to the application of material resources, the partial acceptance of and acquiescence to the Brazilian leadership seems to be connected with the readiness of the regional power to provide the public good of regional stability. Brasilia engages in regional peacekeeping and mediation. In contrast, India is only to a limited extent willing and able to provide regional stability: Due to its patronizing hegemonic policy vis-à-vis its smaller neighbors in the past, there is deep suspicion towards India and its intentions in the region and thus little room to maneuver for it to provide regional stability. Most countries would perceive such moves as renewed attempts by India to intervene in their domestic affairs. At the same time, New Delhi's increasing readiness to pay the costs of cooperation excludes Pakistan.

The comparison of the two regional powers' capacities to project ideational resources suggests a nexus between the existence of an inclusive ideational leadership project on the one hand and the acceptance of and acquiescence to leadership on the other. Brazil's "consensual hegemony" leadership project is based on the protection of democracy, economic growth, and regionalized responses to the challenges of globalization. In contrast, India shows no great interest in projecting values such as democracy and human rights to South Asia. It is true that New Delhi promotes socio-economic development as a common ideational goal, but Pakistan is excluded from India's development aid.

The strategic approaches of the regional powers are a product of their national interests, their relative material and ideational resources as well as of the virulent regional order; hence, it is the intraregional variable impacting most strikingly on the secondary powers' decision to follow or contest leadership. The comparison confirms that Brazil's approach in South America is largely cooperative reflecting a combination of consensual hegemony and cooperative hegemony through asymmetrical federation (high power-aggregation and commitment capacity, but low power-sharing capacity). India's regional strategy of unilateral hegemony, by contrast, is conditioned by the conflictive relationship patterns in South Asia, which impede power sharing through the transfer of sovereignty to multilateral organizations.

With regard to the regional impact of external powers, the results of the study suggest a positive correlation between a weak external influence and relative followership. In South America, Brazil maintains cooperative relations with all extra-regional powers, whereas the US tries

to constrain Venezuela and grants legitimacy to Brazil by supporting its regional leadership claim. The overall impact of external powers as well as the degree of leadership contestation in South America is lower than in South Asia. In the latter region, extra-regional influence has traditionally been highly pronounced. The support of the US and China has enabled Pakistan to sustain the bipolar structure of the security complex since the Cold War. However, India's rapprochement with Pakistan's main allies has gradually undermined this capability and is contributing to transforming the bipolar structure of South Asia into a unipolar one.

Finally, we look at the reasons for the respective strategies of the secondary powers from a comparative perspective, stressing the factors which limit or promote the willingness to follow in each case. Venezuela's reluctance regarding followership is favored by Brazil's lack of readiness to pay great parts of the economic costs of regional integration, for example, by granting market access. Additionally, Brasilia preserves the power asymmetry by not building inclusive and democratic institutions. The resulting lack of participation of, for instance, Venezuela in regional decision-making processes seems to be the Caracas's main motivation to avoid a pure bandwagoning strategy. The reasons for Pakistan's non-followership are founded on its fear of India's overwhelming power capabilities and on the nuclear bipolarity, which allows Islamabad to pursue a balancing strategy. Likewise, the divergent interests, norms, and values of both states impede Pakistani followership. Pakistan's hard- and soft-balancing approach is fostered by India's limited ability and willingness to provide an inclusive regional leadership and the respective public goods.

The research outcomes demonstrate that a multidimensional theoretical approach integrating material, institutional, and ideational factors offers a comprehensive analytical framework for studying emerging regional powers and regional orders. The two case studies suggest that the behavior of regional powers and their contesters is driven not only by power considerations but also by norms and values which are the basis for convergent interests. Similarly, the importance of extra-regional powers must be taken into consideration, as they represent the geopolitical environment in which regional and secondary powers pursue their interests and can, as the case of India in particular has shown, constrain or strengthen the regional actors. By applying a comparative perspective, this study has shed light on the different regional patterns and thus contributed to a better understanding of regional orders. Given the prospects of a more multiregional international system reflect-

ing the spread of power poles across various world regions, the shifting relationships between regional and global orders will play a pivotal role in the future study of international relations. The authors hope to have provided a basis for studying these developments from a systematic and comparative perspective.

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