

Abstract

Does Argentina still need to maintain its armed forces and a security policy? After the defeat in the 1982 War and the return to democracy from a military de facto regime, Argentinean Armed Forces lost prestige and their budget is now the lowest in the region. Many authors are of the view that they should be dismantled once and for all, for the era of conflict hypothesis and balance of power in South America is gone. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a counterargument. Scenario methodology allows taking Mearsheimer's offensive realism as a premise for thinking possible futures in South America. Brazil has grown into a candidate for regional hegemony, defined as the capacity to impose the rule of behavior to the other states, sustained by a credible use of force. In this context, what are the options Argentinean decision-makers have in order to check an eventual Brazilian hegemony? Can they rely that the United States will intervene as an offshore balancer? What are the chances of external balancing, i.e. a coalition of South American states against Brazil? What are their main challenges and options in terms of internal balancing? Whether a hegemonic scenario is more likely or not will depend on the answer to those questions. The thesis also recurs to geopolitical thinking and neoclassical realism to complement offensive realism when necessary. The findings will have implications for both offensive realism and Argentinean defense policy.