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# UNASUR beyond Brazil: Argentina's position in support of the South American Defense Council

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## Abstract

In the course of the negotiations for the creation of the Defense Council (CDS), there were two proposals on the table: either to form a collective security alliance, or to establish a flexible forum for cooperation. The aim of this article is to analyze the motives, limitations, and scopes which determined that Argentina opted in favor of the flexible scheme.

**Keywords:** Unasur; South American Defense Council; Argentina; regional security.

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## Introduction

In the course of 2008, amid contradictions, tensions, and different turns of events, the Argentine government evolved from a position of distrust regarding the creation of a Unasur South American Defense Council (CDS henceforth), to one of explicit support. In the initial stages of the negotiations, Argentina rejected the notion that the Council should take the shape of a collective alliance – proposed by Venezuela – and at all times showed clear support for the model involving a forum to discuss policy coordination – in line with Brazil. The position of the Argentine government was that, supposing the project in question was viable, it should be of a simple, agile, and gradual nature. In other words, “cooperation” would be affirmed but “integration” would not be mentioned, and Venezuela’s proposal regarding the creation of a unionist military axis would be swiftly discarded. Moreover, the word “integration” would not appear at all in the text of the CDS founding Treaty – as though integration and defense were irreconcilable concepts, in line with American realist theories.

To explain why the Argentine government adopted the flexible option, the article draws up three main questions: 1) Could Argentina commit itself to participating in a military alliance designed on basis of a common threat when the alliance's members had different visions of what defense actually is? 2) Was it suitable to adopt a rigid option that could affect the broader strategy of international linkages? 3) To what extent could the Argentine government get involved in a security collective scheme, while its supply of military technology was dependent on the major powers?

Within this framework, this paper does not focus on the strategic objectives that motivated Argentina to participate in the CDS<sup>1</sup>. By contrast, it seeks to explain some factors which led the government to refuse any form of support in terms of military integration and opt, instead, in favor of a “Brazilian style” institutional design of flexible cooperation. Those are factors which always have been the backbone of negotiations and therefore considered vital to complement other studies focused on historical and political reasons<sup>2</sup>. The present question consists of three main axes. In the first place, *normative divergences*, especially regarding the definition of the subjects – whom defense is aimed at – ; the dimensions – of the risks and menaces the subjects are to be defended against – ; and the instruments – to be used in order to guarantee effective defense – defined in the regional defense systems. This is illustrated by making a comparative analysis of the Argentine, Venezuelan, and Brazilian designs. Secondly, Argentina's *international insertion strategy* in defense matters, which implies multiple obligations at a global, hemispherical, and regional level. And in the third place, the article focuses on the *extra-regional dependence structure* of the national defense system regarding sustainment logistics.

Thus, the premise of this paper is that, for the Argentine government to move towards a military integration – as Venezuela proposed – would mean a convergence towards a uniform view of the defense dimensions, subjects, and instruments. Likewise, adopting a rigid scheme could force Argentina to reconfigure its highly diversified bilateral and multilateral relationships out of the region. In the third place, a collective security model would lead to a “regionalization” of the technology value chains between the alliance members, while Argentina's military logistics system was deeply dependent on the supply of extra-regional countries.

For this reason, it was better for Argentina to talk about cooperation than integration, because integration required greater commitments. In fact, this would be the majority position of the governmental actors who took part in the CDS negotiations. “I don't think that the object

1 Although the CDS was originally a Brazilian proposition, we agree with Jorge Battaglini who considered that the CDS could also serve the interests of the rest of the South American countries (Battaglini 2009, 79). In the case of Argentina, participation in the CDS might be understood as “a way of striking a balance by counteracting the power of Brazil” (Daniel, Nolte and Wehner 2011, 115). From a different perspective, it might be added that the value of the CDS to Argentina was that it represented the construction of sub-regionalism within a context that was under the influence of the United States (Fuccille and Rezende 2013); it enabled the process of construction of a collective identity (Vitelli 2013); it was a structure to empowerment of the region's industrial potentialities; or it offered the possibility of expanding the preeminence of civilian control of the military in the region. In fact, all these variables are valid reasons to account for Argentina's decision to form part of the CDS, playing a major role in its early years – even furthering the creation of CEED (Strategic and Defense Studies Centre).

2 There are several works that have studied the genesis of the CDS from political, historical, geopolitical, economic, or ideational reasons (Costa Vaz and Jácome 2009; Diamint 2009; Donadio 2010; Pagliari 2010; Teixeira Junior 2010; Ugarte 2010; Barrios 2011; Battaglini 2012; Saraiva 2012; Abdul-Hak 2013; Lima 2013; Sanahuja and Verdes-Montenegro 2014).

of CDS is to act as an ‘integration’ scheme, at least not at present. Leap-frog integration is not advisable”. Those were the words of a high-ranking Peruvian officer, who added that “what we require, in this first stage, is cooperation and, above all, to generate trust among the countries that form part of it” (Interview N° 9 2011). On the other hand, a Brazilian ex-minister stated that the conception of the CDS was merely to “coordinate policies and postures” (Interview N° 3 2015). From Buenos Aires, a former Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs expressed that it was likewise inadequate to incorporate the word “integration” because what had really been established was “the constitution of a forum of consultation to seek consensus, and for the construction of cooperation which will enable the seeking of a common identity in defense matters as well as of common postures in extra-regional forums” (Interview N° 7 2014). “It does not seem possible, considering the short time elapsed since the creation of CDS, to assert that its members are likely to achieve an integration scheme” were the words of a Chilean CDS negotiator (Interview N° 8 2011). In short, none of the parties interviewed considered it fit to mention integration, but rather preferred to use terms referring to actions such as “coordination” or “cooperation”.

The analysis of each one of the three mentioned axes – normative divergences, international insertion strategy, and extra-regional dependence structure – is centered in the negotiation context of the working group that created the Council, which explains why the temporal domain is delimited by the state of affairs in 2008.

## Conceptual Framework: Conceptions of Security, Regional Security Models, and Explanatory Factors of Foreign Policy

The analysis of the conformation process of a regional organization involves the consideration of a diverse number of variables. This implies not only dwelling on the subject at the national level – i.e. the positions adopted by the states – but also taking into account issues concerning regional dynamics. In this regard, the conceptions of defense, the models of regional security, and the elements which define a state’s foreign policy are some of the concepts that ought to be clarified in order to shed light on the process leading to the conformation of the South American Defense Council and of Argentina’s posture in the course of the negotiations.

There are two distinct approaches in the Security Studies field: a more limited or restricted conception of security and a more expanded or wider perspective of security. There is a wide variety of differences between them – some are epistemological, others are of a methodological nature, and still others are ontological. Yet for practical purposes, analytical differentiation between the two approaches will be made taking three aspects into consideration: 1) who are the subjects? (i.e. who is/are supposed to be defended); 2) which are the dimensions? (i.e. risks and threats); and 3) what instruments are to be applied in order to confront danger and defend the subjects?

The notion of limited security considers that international security is defined on the basis of the systemic elements which determine behavioral patterns among states. According to Møller (1996, 775), security is a synonym of territorial sovereignty and integrity<sup>3</sup>. Nye and Lynn-Jones (1988) state that the latent threat lies in the use of military force. The state is, thus, a preeminent actor in the international system as well as a reference subject of security; the threats are generally nations state or military; and the Armed Forces are the most appropriate instrument to repel eventual aggressions from other states.

On the other hand, the expanded approach to security argues that the changes that took place after the Cold War – such as a global redistribution of power or the reduction of military conflicts between states – reveal the insufficiency of the traditional security approaches in order to account for the present dynamics of international security. One of the latest aspects of this outlook is that the problems related to international security – labeled as “new threats” – are not necessarily military, and do not only affect states but also societies and individuals. In this context, the expanded focus on security questions the preeminence of the state as a preponderant subject of security, thus emphasizing societies, individuals, the free market, or collective identities, among others, as being likewise susceptible to threat. Threats – of various natures – are product of social relations constructed upon inter-subjectivity<sup>4</sup>; and the instruments defined to guarantee security – which may or may not be the Armed Forces – become increasingly blurred and flexible.

Since the end of the Cold War, the South American states have swayed from a more restricted focus – differentiating National Defense from Public Security – to an expanded approach which involved packing the defense agenda with non-traditional questions. This tension between restricted and expanded focuses was in the background of the negotiations that would eventually shape the South American Defense Council and, as we shall further analyze, would have a decisive influence on the Argentine stance in favor of the model of cooperative forum rather than the collective security scheme.

The second conceptual component is provided by the international security schemes. This work makes it clear that, at the time when the South American countries put forward the creation of a Defense Council, there were two opposing alternatives: on the one hand, to constitute a flexible forum of consultation and cooperation, and, on the other hand, to organize a collective security alliance. The former was promoted by Lula’s government, while the latter’s main exponent was the Chávez administration (Comini 2015).

In conceptual terms, the Venezuelan proposal corresponds to a collective security model (Thompson 1953; Claude 1962; Schatzberg 1989; Kupchan and Kupchan 1991; Hurrell 1992; Thakur 2006; Orakhelashvili 2011; Wilson 2014), based on the premise that a conflict only can

3 In his work “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace”, Hans Morgenthau states that “national security must be defined as integrity of a national territory and its institutions” (Morgenthau 2000, 553).

4 To clarify this, Buzan et al. (1998) adopt the concept of *securitización*, i.e. a process through which certain matters in the public agenda become security matters requiring emergency control measures.

be prevented if an alliance of states agrees upon a joint response to any eventual aggression by an individual state, resorting to collective force, if need be. It is an “all against one” *ex-post* – i.e. once the deed has been perpetrated – which seeks to dissuade by threatening with the use of force.

On the other hand, the Brazilian proposal of a flexible forum corresponds to the principles of the so-called cooperative security. This model, extensively dealt with in security studies (Steinbruner 1988; Evans 1994; Varas 1995; Moodie 2000; Flockhart 2014) and may be defined as a system of actions and interactions among states with the object of preventing a potential conflict, thus acting on the factors which might lead to a spiral of insecurity. Agreements, political consultation mechanisms, transparency measures, and mutual trust are the foundations of this type of action. Unlike collective security, which foresees the response to aggression and its defeat, cooperative security aims at its indefinite prevention (Patiño Mayer 1993). According to those in charge of deciding on these matters at the time when the CDS was conceived, collective security was linked to the idea of integration, while the cooperative security scheme was more related to the notion of cooperation<sup>5</sup>.

Finally, the third conceptual element permeating this work belongs to the field of foreign policy. Thus it should be made clear that we assume foreign policy to have an *intermestic* condition - unlike those who sustain that foreign policy is the result of actions and reactions to the limitations and opportunities granted by the international system, or those who claim that the behavior of states beyond their boundaries mainly is determined by domestic factors<sup>6</sup>. In other words, that the explanatory patterns of change and continuity of a foreign policy are determined both by systemic and domestic factors (Rosenau 1969; Klaveren 1992; Putnam 1996; Milner 1997; Rose 1998; Busso 2014; Amorim Neto and Malamud 2015).

In this case, a number of variables are postulated in order to analyze Argentina's position before the CDS. Some may be internal or external, as well as structure or agency oriented. Namely, normative divergences concerning the definition of subjects; the dimensions and instruments of the region's defense system; the framework of international insertion in matters of defense; and the Argentine extra-regional dependence structure in logistics and defense systems.

As anticipated in the introduction, these factors are assumed to have always been part of the background of the negotiations, which explains why they must be seriously taken into account in order to understand the Argentine government's standpoint in the negotiations which defined the new regional defense strategy.

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5 The neo functionalist theory of regional integration is among the ones that placed more emphasis on the distinction between regional integration and cooperation. In this line of thought, Schmitter (2011) asserts that the cooperation patterns may or may not be rooted in specific organizations, yet are always subjected to the voluntary, unanimous, and continual decisions of their member States. On the other hand, integration implies a certain legitimate (though limited) capacity for autonomous action by fostering proposals, making decisions and/or implementing policies beyond national interests.

6 The approaches which emphasize internal variables tend to give preeminence to agencies above structures and usually define foreign policy as a public policy subjected to the preferences, negotiations, and articulations of society and the pressure groups. The political regime (Russell 1989; Holsti 2016); the culture (Berger 1993); the identity (Banchoff 1999); the inter-bureaucratic disputes (Allison 1988); or the preferences of decision-makers (Snyder et al., 1962; Jervis, 1976) are some of the forces of the internal field. On the other hand, the studies based on systemic factors claim that the major explanatory variables of foreign policy are the distribution of power or the position within the capitalist world-system.

## Methodology

The methodology applied in this article is predominantly qualitative, of the flexible type. In the first place, for the analysis of the normative frameworks of Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela, a comparative methodology was applied, judged to be adequate for the study of few cases with different interacting variables (Sartori 1992), thus allowing systematic analysis (Collier 1994). In fact, a comparative analysis of each of these countries' idea of defense, what they identify as threats, and the instruments they propose to apply for their defense have allowed us to place emphasis on the uniformities and differences between the different cases (Panebianco 1990), and understand the impact that these divergences have had on the discussions that gave shape to the CDS.

We also used semistructured in-depth interviews with key governmental actors as a technical-methodological tool in order to explain the reasons that account for the Argentine government's decision to favor the forum of consultation and policy coordination above the option of collective security alliance. The selection of units of analysis was conducted on the basis of intentional non probabilistic sampling, identifying relevant actors who took part in the negotiations of the Defense Council. In this context, 20 interviews were carried out with key participants. Presidents, Foreign Affairs Ministers, Defense Ministers, State Secretaries and Sub-secretaries, high military officers and government advisors, complete the list of interviewees.

Another technical-methodological step consists in the collection and analysis of primary sources which served the purpose of constructing the variable indicators. Laws, decrees, agreements, memoranda, and other governmental documents – both national and regional – have allowed us to account for Argentina's dependence on logistics; for the region's normative differences in matters of defense; and for Argentina's polygamous international insertion framework.

### Conditioning factor number 1: normative divergences

One of the main factors which explains the reason why Argentina opted in favor of the forum for cooperation is directly related to the fact that, in terms of defense, each state often makes reference to different things. In this regard, two extremes may be highlighted: limited or restricted conceptions of security, or expanded and more comprehensive ones. Though in the course of the negotiations Argentina favored a restricted conception of security – differentiating National Defense from Public Security –, this would not be the case in other instances. With the object of illustrating Unasur's latent plurality during the period in which the working group designed the CDS statute, the Argentine model was contrasted to an expanded conception – the Venezuelan model – and to an intermediate archetype – proposed by Brazil.

Regarding the *subjects* of defense, the Argentine law is centered on guaranteeing sovereignty, independence, territorial security, and self-determination, as well as the protection of citizens' life and freedom (Argentina 1988). Regarding the *dimensions* of the risks and threats which the



subjects should be defended against, defense legislation makes it explicit that the former must be external (Argentina 1988). For different reasons, the regulation of this principle would take decades to be implemented. It was not until 2006, through decree 727, that the foreign policy dimension exhibited a higher degree of specificity. To that end “external aggression” was defined as the “use of the armed forces of a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of our country, or in any other manner regarded as incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations”. It was thus defined that the military defense *instrument* – i.e. the Armed Forces – should be used “to counteract external aggressions perpetrated by the armed forces of another/other state/s” (Argentina 2006). Hence, a classical national defense strategy was formally established, according to which its military instrument should act exclusively against the armed forces of other states.

In this context, the national defense system would be barred from all activities related to the space of domestic security – both in terms of doctrine, planning, and training, as well as of intelligence or provision of equipment and means; nevertheless certain exceptions were contemplated<sup>7</sup>. Public security is in charge of the domestic security system, which implies the use of the police corps and security forces. Yet, they may only act beyond the federal boundaries in cases in which “the lives, freedom, and patrimony of the citizens of a certain region were at risk”; in the case of these being “under serious threat” – at a national or local level – “affecting their constitutional rights and warranties, or the full force of the institutions of the representative, republican, and federal system”; or in case of disaster (Argentina 1992).

In light of these normative definitions, it is of major importance to illustrate a model which, regarding the subjects, dimensions, and instruments, is situated at the opposite extreme of the Argentine conception. We are referring to the Venezuelan model. Probing into the differences between both normative frameworks allows us to understand the precise reasons which motivated the Argentine government to dismiss Venezuela’s proposal for a collective security alliance in the course of the CDS negotiations.

As in the case of Argentina, we consider that inquiring into the definition of “defense” as conceived by the Bolivarian Republic would be an appropriate starting point. The National Organic Security Act 37.594, passed in December 2002, establishes a profound interrelation between defense, development, and security. In this context, the act makes reference to the idea of “integral self-defense”, defined as a “set of systems, methods, measures, and actions of defense” which, irrespective of their nature or intensity, might be actively formulated, “coordinated and executed by the State [...] with the intention of safeguarding the independence, freedom, democracy, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and integral development of the Nation” (Venezuela 2002). From this last point we infer that the safeguarding of Venezuela’s integral development is one of its major objectives.

7 In this respect, Public Law 24.059 of Home Security allows the subsidiary use of the Armed Forces for security operations, as it contemplates the fact that the aforementioned might act, exceptionally, in cases when home security was insufficient to fulfill the aims (Argentina 1992, art. 31).

Regarding the *subjects* of defense, the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1999) does not make reference to national defense, but concentrates on the nation's security, for which it renders both the state and the civil society as co-responsible. In this context, national security comprises of a wide spectrum of diverse aspects such as independence, democracy, equality, peace, liberty, justice, solidarity, environmental promotion and conservation, or the affirmation of human rights as its main subjects. The latter is related to the need for a progressive satisfaction of “the individual and collective needs of the men and women of Venezuela, on the basis of productive and sustainable development extended to the whole of the national community” (Venezuela 1999).

Situated at the opposite extreme of the Argentine model, the Venezuelan alternative incorporates the area of defense against both internal and external threats, among its *dimensions*. In fact, the terms of the Security Act 37.594 regarding the integrated defense concepts, account for this: while, on the one hand, it includes classical questions which coincide with the Argentine conception – such as safeguarding territorial integrity or freedom – , on the other hand, it juxtaposes objectives such as the protection of democracy or integral development (Venezuela 2002). Moreover, the amalgam between the internal and external contexts becomes more evident, for instance, when security zones are established to forestall both internal and external threats; or in the powers granted to the armed forces.

The Organic Law of the Bolivarian Armed Force was even more specific in delimiting the role of the military *instrument*: it ranges from the defense of full sovereignty in continental, insular, air, and maritime spaces, to the preparation and organization of the people for comprehensive defense, for the preservation and restoration of the internal order, for carrying out police functions, or to support the Executive Power “in the completion of tasks related to the social, political, cultural, geographical, environmental, and economic spheres, as well as in civil protection operations in disaster situations” (Venezuela 2008). In short, it is remarkable how the dimensions which include the Armed Forces are multiple and varied, to the point of giving a somewhat omnipresent image.

In the last place, the Brazilian strategy is presented – in light of its complexity, its nuances, and its exceptions – as an intermediate case between the “Argentine style” restricted model, and the “Venezuela style” expanded one. Its incorporation to this study is justified by two essential reasons. First, the relevant role of Brazil during the configuration process of both Unasur and the Defense Council. Second, the importance of understanding its points of coincidence and divergence with the Argentine archetype – which we consider essential to the interpretation of the posture adopted by the government of Cristina Fernández with regards to the forum for political consultation and coordination. It is worth mentioning that, as in the previously analyzed cases, though the Brazilian model was progressively reformed over the years, this study is limited to the year 2008, i.e. the period when the CDS statute was negotiated.

This being stated, and to continue with the same logics permeating the preceding schemes, it is essential to identify how the Brazilian regulations of those times defined security and defense. In that sense, the 1988 constitution – in the draft of which the Armed Forces played an outstanding role – defines “public security” as the state's obligation and everyone's right and responsibility which is



“exercised to guarantee public order and the people’s integrity and patrimony”. The definition will be polished even further by considering public security as “a whole, as something carried out to protect the citizens, forestalling and controlling actual or potential criminal and violent manifestations, thus ensuring the full exercise of citizenship within the scope of the law” (Brazil 2017).

Nevertheless, the constitution did not offer a single definition of national defense. It was the National Defense Policy (2005) which eventually would yield a general definition of that concept, relating it to “the set of measures and actions of the state, with emphasis on the military expression, for the defense of the territory, sovereignty, and national interests against predominantly potential or manifested external threats” (Brazil 1999). It may be observed throughout this section that, in the Brazilian case, these definitions tend to become more complex and subject to multiple contradictions.

When it comes to determining the *subjects* of defense in Brazil, we must base ourselves on the latter definition, for it is the one that makes a pointed reference to territory, sovereignty, and national interests. It is worth mentioning that the high level of abstraction and subjectivity to be found in the idea of “national interests” leaves the door open to a wide range of topics.

Concerning the *dimensions*, if we compare the conceptualization of defense with that of security in Brazil, there seems to be no great differences between both definitions, beyond the “predominance” of the external factor in the former, and the explicit transverse dimension of the latter. Nevertheless, security is a concept which has been gradually expanded – to political, economic, social, or environmental fields – , while external defense continues to be preeminently restricted to the armed forces: the National Constitution establishes that the latter’s mission is “the defense of the Country, to guarantee the constitutional powers, as well as law and order, on their behalf” (Brazil 2008).

Thus, though the Defense Policy (2005) places its attention on the external dimension of threats – as well as on the role of the military – the fact is that the constitution endows the Armed Forces with powers which surpass the mere act of repelling purely external threats. In that line of thought, the Complementary Law N° 97 (Brazil 1999) disposes that military action to ensure “law and order” may be the initiative of any of the constitutional powers – though specifying that the latter should only take place in cases when all instruments destined to the preservation of the public order were exhausted.

Beyond these powers, there are other subsidiary dimensions which tend to multiply the strategic contexts of the Armed Forces, thus blurring the boundaries between external and internal dimensions of defense. These are related to the possibility to act – also in a preventive or repressive manner – in terrestrial, maritime, and inland water frontiers, against “trans-boundary and environmental crimes”, all of which is supposed to be carried out independently or in coordination with other bodies of the Executive Power (Brazil 1999).

Finally, the 2008 National Defense Strategy (EDN) further contributed to the confusion by interweaving the defense strategy with the strategy of national development. “The former motivates the latter. The latter becomes a shield to the former; each reinforces the other’s reasons” (Brazil 2016). That was the statement of the EDN, elaborated during the negotiation process of

the CDS. In other words, while, on the one hand, Brazil advanced towards the construction of a limited regional defense scheme, on the other hand, it elaborated a series of hypotheses regarding the action of the Armed Forces – which ranged from the surveillance and control of the Brazilian airspace, territory, and jurisdictional waters, to the threat of highly superior military forces in the region of the Amazon, or the threat of armed conflict in the South Atlantic, and the participation in internal operations to ensure law and order (Brazil 2016).

In a nutshell, from the analysis of this factor we deduce that different instruments are applied according to the different dimensions and subjects. This situation motivates multiple significances, representations, and interpretations of the contents, limitations, and boundaries between home defense and national defense in South America – which have negative effects when it comes to establishing regional agreements. In other words, the divergences compel a minimal basket of common interests which hinders the construction of models that may imply the concession of national prerogatives to regional entities. In the case of the CDS, a collective security alliance would be regarded as the loss of autonomy to actors supporting different – and in some cases, radical – views on defense.

## Conditioning factor No 2: international insertion strategy

A second factor which explains the Argentine support of the forum for consultation and policy coordination – to complement what has been expressed so far – is directly related to its international insertion strategy, thus representing a plainly *polygamous* profile<sup>8</sup>. In this regard, though in the course of 2008, the national authorities made a progressively explicit move towards prioritizing the South American space (Forti 2008; Garré 2008; Perceval 2008). It is a fact that the Argentine structure of cooperation agreements and institutional mechanisms cannot be detached from its support of the configuration of a scheme rooted in an architecture which is more flexible and free of ties.

Back then, Argentina was subject to a great plurality of agreements and mechanisms in the field of defense, among which some were part of the denominated Inter-American Defense System (Connell-Smith 1966). The abovementioned agreements coexisted with a complex network of regional commitment. In addition, there were also a great number of extra-continental agreements. Being conditioned by these networks of polygamous commitments usually becomes tangible in the economic field. A former Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs illustrates these conditions by explaining that, “integration is not an easy matter in South America due to the fact that some nations have free-trade agreements with the United States and many other countries, which makes economic integration somewhat limited” (Interview N° 2 2015). In this case, a similar situation might be portrayed, to the point of stating that polygamy in the defense field of the Argentine state operated as a restrictive factor when it came to negotiating the position to be adopted by the CDS.

8 By using the term ‘polygamous’ we make reference to an international insertion strategy based on a transverse structure together with simultaneous negotiations at global, hemispheric, and regional levels. This strategy does not discard the possibility of becoming involved in integration processes with other countries, so long as these do not imply a degree of commitment which might hinder their possible individual agreements with third parties (Comini and Frenkel 2014).

In fact, the Brazilian CDS proposal was not presented as a replacement for global, hemispheric, multilateral, and bilateral bodies, but as a complement to them. On the occasion of his visit to Washington, the Minister of Defense, Nelson Jobim, met with the Secretary of State of the United States: “I was not asking her for her permission, but just informing her about what we were doing”. Then he added: “The council is not against anyone”<sup>9</sup>. He informed the rest of the countries the same thing, among them Argentina. The idea was not a CDS as an instance to suppress their matrix of international relations.

This concept of complementarity was well reflected in the particular case of the inter-American security system, where the United States has had a historic influence (Hirst 1995; Desch 1998). The South American countries adopted different positions when they analyzed the designs and contents of hemispheric security or when they had to decide to create a regional security instance without Washington’s participation. That situation depended on their short-term positions and their rapprochement with the United States at a given time. At the extremes, positions and initiatives could be a way of counterbalancing the US influence or a strategy of folding Washington’s interests.

At the time of the creation of the CDS, Argentina moved through an intermediate position. In 2009, the Argentine government expelled the Southern Command from its offices in the Ministry of Defense and questioned the usefulness of the Inter-American Defense Board. Moreover, in 2010, the Minister of Defense, Nilda Garré, at the 9th Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, proposed to begin a process of reformulation of the hemispheric defense system. As explained by the Argentine representative, the eventual reform should consider “the existence of existing and developing subregional mechanisms, as in our case the CDS” (Garré 2010). However, even when Argentina assumed critical positions in relation to the inter-American instruments and claimed the priority of the CDS, it never proposed to replace the inter-American system as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela did<sup>10</sup>. Although the government sought greater autonomy vis-à-vis Washington and the inter-American defense instruments, during these times it conceived the CDS as a complementary platform to existing agreements in order to: a) discuss issues; b) influence the regional agenda; and c) contribute to the construction of regional public policies in the field of defense. This revisionist Argentinean non-contested position is explained, to a great extent, by the existence of a matrix of international linkage greatly committed to the hemispheric context, both at a multilateral and a bilateral level.

The following multilateral schemes are representative samples of this statement: the Inter-American Defense Board (JID), the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR), the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement, the Inter-American Naval Conference (CNI), the Conference of American Armies (CEA), the System of Cooperation among the American Air Forces (SICOFAA), the Inter-American Defense College (CID), the Military Juridical Committee of the Americas (COJUMA), the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas (CMDA), the Committee of hemispheric Security, or the different existing conferences, such as the ones on Illicit Manufacturing of and

9 Jobim, Nelson. Transcript of the Speech Offered by Nelson Jobim at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Washington, D.C. March 21, 2008.

10 In 2013, these three countries – along with Nicaragua – announced their retirement from the Inter-American Defense Board and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.

Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, or Transparency in the Acquisition of Conventional Weapons. Besides, the country already had different bilateral spaces of defense cooperation with actors belonging to the aforementioned hemispheric system, such as the United States and Canada.

At the time of the CDS negotiations, Argentina had also become committed to multiple agreements with the countries of South America, both multilateral – normally extensive to Latin America – as well as bilateral. At a multilateral level, for instance, the country was part of the “2x9” for Haiti, and the Latin American Association of Training Centers for Peacekeeping Operations (ALCOPAZ). At a bilateral level, there was a complex network of agreements, memoranda, and treaties with other South American countries like Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay.

Beyond all the other commitments acquired at a regional and hemispheric level, around 2008, the Argentine state also had strategies that connected the country to extra-continental counterparts in the area of defense agreements which were in force. In that context the country was, among other things, a party to regimes, agreements, and global conferences on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. The responsibilities assumed in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in spaces such as the Ottawa Convention – on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, – and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and Small Arms and Light Weapons illustrate the abovementioned. The cases of Germany, China, United Kingdom, and France are instrumental in the perception of the degree of complexity of Argentina’s polygamous quality of international insertion in defense issues.

In this light, we presume that the abovementioned polygamous framework of international ties conditioned Argentina into opting in favor of the launching of a forum for consultation and policy coordination, rather than taking part in negotiations leading to the creation of a collective security mechanism.

### Conditioning factor No 3: structure of extra-regional dependency

Finally, a third factor which cannot be overlooked in an attempt to understand the Argentine posture in the course of the CDS negotiations – and which is directly related to its polygamous insertion framework – is the structure of extra-regional dependency of the country’s defense system. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that the Argentine government could possibly support a rigid defense scheme of an exclusively South American character when, the country was, in fact, tied to actors situated beyond the boundaries of this region. In this section we shall assume that the polysemic concept of dependency (Santos 1970; Amin 1973; Marini Ruy 1973; Puig 1980; Cardoso and Faletto 1996; Pinheiro Guimarães 2005) implies a situation of multi-dimensional characteristics, of internal and external roots, which sets limits and restrictions upon the leeway of the affected actors.

That is why this work initially questioned whether Argentina really could support a collective security model while its defense system is highly dependent on the major powers. The initial answer is no. Mainly because none of the countries that supply Argentine weapons systems were represented on the CDS. To justify this assertion, the attention will be exclusively focused on the dependency of the Argentine defense system, in terms of logistics, which, in our opinion, represents a heritage of shared endogenous and exogenous responsibilities. Concretely, in order

to describe the logistic dependency around 2008 this question will be approached on the basis of an analysis of the military supply and maintenance regarding certain modes of air and naval transport, and to certain Military means of transportation.

“There is a worldwide oligopoly of inputs. Regarding air transportation, there are barely five producers in the world; not even the developed countries have their own plant”. Those are the words of an official of the Argentine Ministry of Defense who adds that “in the air force and its subsidiaries, dependency is over 90%” (Interview N° 12 2010). It may be asserted that, around 2008, the supply and maintenance activities related to air transportation depended almost exclusively on relations with extra-South American countries. Namely: in those times, Argentina owned 11 Mirage III aircraft – produced by the French company Avions Marcel Dassault and acquired between the late 1960’s and early 1980’s – , which have a turbo-reactor engine manufactured in France. The spare parts and durables of the Mirage planes were not necessarily acquired in France, in fact – like the rest of the weapon systems – they might come from other states which had decommissioned their fleets, or even from some secondary market. What we are certain of is that, beyond the fact that some of the pieces – which range from batteries and propellers to pumps, valves, couplings or screws – might be manufactured in the country or obtained in the region, supply and maintenance were largely dependent on France.

In addition to the French dependency, the 33 Lockheed Martin A-4AR Fighting Hawk aircraft Argentina had in 2008 are of US origin. and had been made by the same company which had obtained the branch of “Área Material Córdoba” in the mid 1990’s<sup>11</sup>. The aforementioned utilize engines, radars, digital computers, and navigation systems produced in the United States.

Dependency in matters of logistic maintenance was also apparent in air transportation. The ten Hercules aircraft – the main transport aircraft in Argentina – were also from the United States, as well as its main contractors – Lockheed Martin or GE Aviation Systems. Its turbo propeller jet engines are produced by the British Rolls-Royce, which brought about serious problems when it came to obtaining spare parts, on account of the British embargoes following the Malvinas War.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out – and this also goes for the naval and terrestrial weapon systems – that by 2008 many of the components, accessories, and instruments were no longer manufactured, which made it highly difficult to obtain spare parts to keep them functioning. The later acquisition by the state of the aircraft manufacturer situated in Córdoba, renamed “Fábrica Argentina de Aviones Brigadier San Martín” (FAdeA) would attempt to counteract this complex situation.

In spite of some initiatives taken in 2008, such as the functional merger of the shipbuilding companies Tandanor and Almirante Storni into the Argentine Naval Industrial Complex (CINAR), dependency on extra-regional actors was also becoming evident in the naval field. Regarding war transport, at the time of the CDS negotiations, Argentina had four MEKO-360 destroyers, all of them made in Germany. Besides, the armament of these destroyers consisted of French Exocet missiles,

11 Towards the end of 2008, the Argentine State would assume control of the stake of the company that, in those times, formed part of Lockheed Martin Aircraft Argentina S.A. (LMAASA), and would rename it “Fábrica Argentina de Aviones Brigadier San Martín” (FAdeA).



Italian Selenia/Elsag Albatros torpedo launchers, Oto Melara cannon – also Italian – and Swedish Breda Bofors. Apart from the destroyers, there were also Espora Class corvettes, also of German design, though license-built in Argentina, which require French, British, and Italian parts and armament.

On the other hand, the Navy also had multi-purpose ships built in the United States, their motors and generators included (Argentina 2015). Besides, the “Almirante Irizar” icebreaker – which had suffered a serious accident approximately a year previous to the CDS initial debates – was fitted with French engines and British radars.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that some of the military means of transportation are a clear example that, towards 2008, the Army also had a strong dependency relationship with extra-South American countries. Like in the abovementioned cases, it is not a question of encompassing all the available means of transportation, or even probing into the specific aspects of each component. Our intention is simply to describe the general framework status.

In this context, it ought to be pointed out that, though the VC TAM tanks had been produced by a state company – Tanque Argentino Medio Sociedad del Estado – their basic design and engines were German. Their cannons were manufactured in Argentina, yet they required ammunition produced by countries like the United States, England, France, Russia, Israel, or South Korea. Back then, the country had an Austrian tank which also functioned with ammunition manufactured in non-South American countries.

On the other hand the greater part of the fire support transports available were mortars developed in Israel. There were cannons developed in Argentina, but they require ammunition manufactured by companies in the United States or European countries. Similarly, their Italian howitzers functioned with French ammunition.

In the long run, as expressed by the Argentine Secretary of State for Planning, “the Argentine Armed Forces always purchased what they thought was best and, in general, a great amount was manufactured in the United States; there was also European, especially German, French, British manufacture” (Interview N° 6 2011). In light of all the above mentioned, we may conclude that, in this attempt to unravel the complexity of the factors that moved the Argentine state to dismiss a “Venezuela style” rigid scheme for the CDS, while supporting the construction of a “Brazilian style” flexible one instead, we should not overlook the fact that the logistic needs of the Argentine defense system were explicitly dependent on extra-regional providers. In this context, any ties might put the provision of weapon systems at risk.

## CONCLUSIONS

### On defense and integration

Usually, regional integration is presented as a linear, progressive, and cumulative process in which countries advance in stages from the most simple to the most complex. We can say that this view characterized the governmental actors who took part in the CDS negotiations.



At the beginning of this article, there was allusion to the fact that the word “integration” was not mentioned even once in the founding statute of the Defense Council – as though, following US realist perspectives, defense and integration were irreconcilable concepts. Thus, instead of conceiving integration as a process which might be based on a single axis or several axes, which might or might not imply transferring sovereignty, and which might take different forms, routes, representations, and symbologies, these perspectives seemed to entertain the idea that integration – a term related to the Venezuelan model of collective security – would imply transferring sovereignty from one state to a regional organization. Something which, according to the actors involved, must not occur in the military space.

In the case of Argentina, beyond the will that could have existed to create an agency to unify the defense conceptions between the South American countries, or to reduce extra-regional logistic dependency, the reality showed that a rigid scheme was not a good starting point to achieve these goals. Establishing a military alliance, in the short term, would require a modification of the legal framework, a drastic reconfiguration of international links, and a reevaluation of arms acquisitions, historically tied to extra-regional countries. Furthermore, the manner in which the CDS was negotiated had not allowed shaping the rigid scheme in such a short time. In that case, it would have been necessary to include other actors who were absent in the negotiations, such as high-ranking military officials, members of the Congress, and other government representatives, not just the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The interesting aspect of this question is that, in the long run, the process initiated in the CDS is merely an expression of the multi-dimensional shape adopted by Unasur. Yet, while the internal divergences in the regional context did not prevent the Unasur Constitutive Treaty from posing the need to construct a space for union and integration, the existing normative divergences related to the frameworks of international insertion in defense matters, or regarding the extra-regional dependency structures, seemed to have a direct impact on the Argentine state policy – as well as on most of the countries in the region – namely by supporting the forum of consultation and cooperation (with all its distinctive features) and excluding the word “integration” from the CDS statute. In time, the various stumbling blocks might still be surmounted.

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