

REGIONALISM AND SECURITY: THE CASE OF MERCOSUR AND THE ABSENCE OF DEFENSE ISSUES

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Introduction

As well known, the 1980s marked a substantial change in the bilateral relationship between Argentina and Brazil. Several authors from both sides of the border analyzed and explained the historical process that had turning point in the agreements between Alfonsín and Sarney, initiated with the signing of the Declaration of Foz do Iguaçu in 1985 and that soon led to the subsequent formation of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), together with Uruguay and Paraguay².

At that time, the integration project was guided by a heterodox economic vision, a multidimensional cooperation scheme, and also by the need to consolidate the recent democracies (Malamud 2013). In this context, the perceptions of threat and inter-state military capabilities that fueled the hypotheses of conflict began to lose prominence, favoring a cooperative pattern of sub-regional relations³. As a result, a framework based on four force ideas

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² We can mention the works of Camargo (1985); Russell and Tokatlian (2003); Bernal-Meza (2008); Merke (2008); de Alvarez, Klagsbrunn, and da Silva Gonçalves (2009); Aguilar (2010); Gonçalves and Lyrio (2003) and Gomes Saraiva (2012).

³ Among the many committees established in Foz do Iguaçu, the presidents included one of "Defense and Armed Forces". In the same way, Argentina and Brazil initiated a policy of nuclear cooperation that culminated in 1991 with the creation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). In the space field, both countries signed in 1989 the Brazilian-Argentine Joint Declaration on Bilateral Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and a Cooperation Agreement on Peaceful Applications of

was presented: peace, democracy, national development and autonomy.

Nevertheless, during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the objectives of integration suffered some changes. The rise of market reform and economic openness programs, coupled with strong presidential dynamics (Malamud 2010), have shaped an institution with a deliberately simple institutionalism (Peña, 1998) and a growing sectorial one-dimensionality⁴. According to Gerardo Caetano (2006), after the signing of the Treaty of Asunción a “Phoenician Mercosur” was formed. That is, a block with limited institutionalization and reduced to a purely economic-commercial agenda. As part of this new direction, the concept of integration as a path to development and autonomy was left aside; and instead the need for the institution to become a strategy for insertion into the global economy had risen. In this way, as Míguez (2013) states the sense of unity between integration, autonomy and development would be replaced by integration, growth and globalization.

In terms of security, changes in the international context in the post-Cold War deepened the process of regional cooperation in security that had begun with the democratic recovery (Battaglini 2008). The idea that barriers and confidence, so fashionable in the economic policies of the time, had to be eradicated, was transferred to the area of defense. In this way, security cooperation among the countries of the Southern Cone focused on topics such as the control and limitation of armaments; non-proliferation agreements; high level political consultations and combined exercises⁵. Likewise, the perception that the other was no longer a foe or an enemy led to a relatively uniform decrease in military spending in the region, which in turn had a multiplier effect on cooperation⁶.

The economic advances occurred in the Mercosur in the first years in-

Space Science and Technologies.

4 Based on what authors as Dabène (2009) or Comini (2016) propose, we define a multidimensional integration scheme as a process that encompasses a great diversity of actors, levels and agendas, without implying that all areas should have the same levels of intensity, speeds or rhythms. One-dimensionality, on the other hand, usually implies that the process of interaction between states is closed around a theme or that a particular area is prioritized – usually the economic area – and from this, it extends the cooperation to other areas.

5 In 1994, the tactical planning operations exercise “*Exércitos de Amigos*” was carried out in the city of Buenos Aires. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia participated; Chile and Peru were incorporated as observers. Two years later, the first combined bilateral exercise between the armies of Argentina and Brazil, baptized “*Cruz del Sur*”, was held in the city of Corrientes. The following year, Uruguay’s army would be added and, in 1998, the Paraguayan army.

6 Argentina’s military budget declined from 2.1% of GDP in 1988 to 1.2% in 1996. In Brazil, it declined from 2.1% to 1.7%, and in Uruguay, the decrease was from 3.2% to 2.8% (World Bank 2018).

creased the expectations of integration expansion to other areas. An example was the progressive incorporation of sectoral meetings of Ministers of Justice, Agriculture, Labor and Interior⁷. Subsequently, the institutional structure consolidation occurred with the Ouro Preto Protocol (1994); the incorporation of Bolivia and Chile as Associated States (1996) and the establishment of the Political Consultation and Consultation Mechanism (1996) also fueled these expectations. In short, these movements revealed that, in addition to the fact that trade issues remained the *leitmotiv* of the bloc, it seemed to be a desire to move towards a more multidimensional scheme.

Nevertheless, there were issues that were practically excluded from the institutional cooperation scheme. The defense field would be one of them: only in July 1998 would the Mercosur Political Declaration as a Zone of Peace would be signed, a more statutory document aimed at consolidating non-proliferation instruments and measures of mutual trust. In March of the same year the Security Plan for the Triple Border was elaborated and, a month later, the Plan of Cooperation and Mutual Assistance for Regional Security. However, both initiatives focused on addressing issues considered primarily as public security issues such as drug trafficking, terrorism, money laundering or smuggling.

However, it should be noted that the absence of defense issues in the Mercosur framework was not due to a lack of interest on the part of the States members. In fact, some of them came to consider during the first years of the bloc several initiatives to articulate a regional defense mechanism. Most of these proposals would be developed by Argentina, although initiatives from Paraguay and Bolivia can also be found⁸. In addition, the rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil; between Argentina and Chile, as well as non-proliferation initiatives and the realization of multilateral exercises among Mercosur countries also showed that there was an interest in moving towards a

7 In March 1991, the Southern Common Market Council agreed to “promote Meetings of Ministers or officers of equivalent hierarchies” (Mercosur, 1991). In 1999, meetings of Ministers of Economy and Presidents of Central Banks, Ministers of Education, Justice, Labor, Agriculture, Culture, Health, Interior and Industry had already been set up. Specialized Meetings were also organized, under the Common Market Group, to address issues not covered by the Common Market subgroups but linked to the objectives of the Treaty of Asunción.

8 To mention some of these initiatives, in 1992 the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina discussed a proposal to institutionalize a Meeting of Defense Ministers of Mercosur and Chile. In addition, in 1997 the Argentine government would consider the proposal to form a Mercosur “Common Security System” (Clarín 1997) and in 1998 the Law 24.948 “for the restructuring of the Armed Forces” would mention the possibility of developing a Defense System within the scope of Mercosur (Argentina 1998). Bolivia, in turn, would propose in 1998 the creation of a Center for Conflict Prevention and Confidence-Building Measures in Latin America.

process of cooperation in security terms.

These previous issues inevitably leads us to wonder why it was never possible to establish some type of defense mechanism within Mercosur, although there have been proposals in this regard. Or, according to Flandes (2004), why the process of regional linkage in military matters has been more characterized by a pattern of bilateral cooperation than by sub-regional integration. In a preliminary way, it could be said that the causes are varied and respond to historical and political reasons, to factors that have to do with the very nature that Mercosur acquired during its beginnings, and others linked to the national realities of the countries of the bloc. As a result, this article aims to develop a specific set of factors that, to a lesser or greater extent, have been decisive in preventing the possibility of institutionalizing defense issues in Mercosur. These factors are: the one-dimensional preeminence of the block; the different levels of civilian control of the Armed Forces between member States, and the different conceptions of what each country understood as defense and security.

In methodological terms, to develop the first of these factors, a description of the institutional structure of Mercosur and a quantitative analysis of the decisions taken by the highest body of the bloc is made: the Common Market Council. These indicators seek to determine the primacy of economic-commercial issues in the integration scheme. On the other hand, to analyze the autonomy of the Armed Forces in each country and the different conceptions between defense and security, a comparative approach is used through the national regulations and government documents of the states part of the so-called “extended Mercosur”⁹.

Regarding the time frame, the article focuses on the period beginning with the foundation of Mercosur in 1991 and ends in 2004, with the creation of the South American Community of Nations (SACN). This temporal decision has to do with the fact that the SACN will be the entity that will monopolize the discussions about whether or not to create a sub-regional defense mechanism in a context characterized by the “left turn” in Latin America; the rise of Brazil as a regional power (Nolte, 2006), and the rise of post-liberal regionalism (Sanahuja, 2009). These discussions will culminate in 2008 with the formation of the South American Defense Council of the Union of South American Nations (SDC-UNASUR).

⁹ Based on our timeframe, which is justified in the sequence of the text, the specific countries are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Chile.

The economic one-dimensionality of Mercosur

A brief overview of how the institutional structure of the bloc had been consolidated is a good indicator to illustrate the primacy of commercial and economic issues. As Malamud (2013) points out, the articles of the Treaty of Asuncion only considered economic objectives: to promote the free circulation of goods, services and productive factors; the establishment of a common external tariff and a common trade policy, and macroeconomic policies coordination (Mercosur, 1991). The Treaty also established that the decision-making bodies would be the Common Market Council (CMC) and the Common Market Group (GMC)¹⁰. Three years later, the Ouro Preto Protocol added the Mercosur Trade Commission (CCM) as part of intergovernmental decision-making bodies. Being completely permeated by economic issues and numbers, the new institutional configuration would only deepen the bloc's commercial profile.

The charter of Mercosur did not express any explicit intention to include non-commercial areas among its objectives. As a result, integration regarding other issues seemed to be subject to economic integration spillover. In fact, the success of the integration process during its early years motivated the organization to incorporate new topics and seek to enhance its political component¹¹. Thus, between 1995 and 1999, meetings of the Ministers of Education, Justice, Labor, Agriculture, Culture, Health, Interior and Industry were institutionalized. Added to them, came along the Specialized Meetings that were dependent on the GMC and created to address those issues not covered by the Common Market subgroups, but linked to the objectives of the Treaty of Asuncion. On the other hand, the creation of the Forum for Consultation and Political Coordination in 1998 and the Joint Parliamentary Committee – established in the Treaty of Asunción itself – would aim to reinforce the political imprint of the bloc. However, like the ministerial meetings, these bodies would play a rather subsidiary role, with limited capacity to influence

¹⁰ The CMC is composed of the Chancellors and the Ministers of Economy, to which the Heads of State are added at least once a year, as the highest authorities. The GMC, on the other hand, represents the executive body of the bloc and is composed of representatives of diplomatic and economic bureau and representatives of the Central Banks. In addition, the GMC included different subgroups of work aimed at coordinating macroeconomic and sectoral policies on issues such as commercial and custom policies, besides fiscal and monetary policies related to trade or agricultural policy.

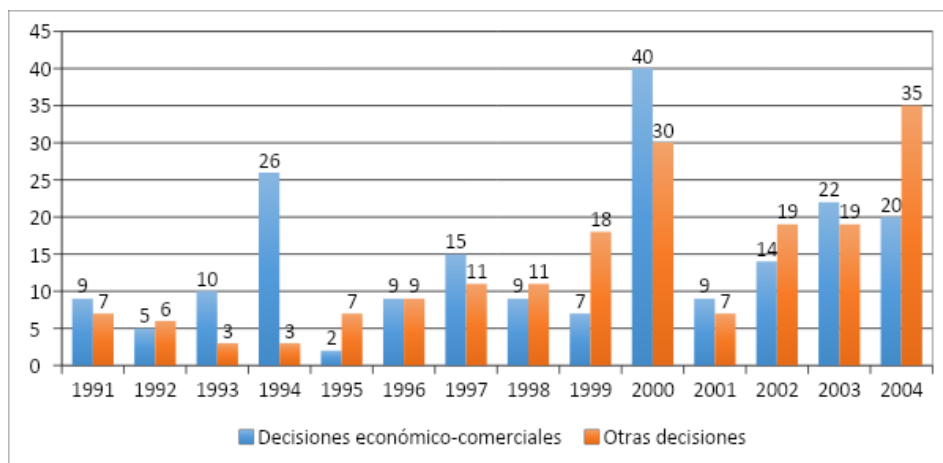
¹¹ Roberto Bouzas (2001) argues that the Mercosur first stage, which runs from 1991 to 1994, was characterized by a rapid growth of intra-regional trade flows; by the low temporal distance between agreements and their implementation, and by a low transfer of conflicts and trade disputes to the political arena (the author defines this variable as a "politicization bias").

the decisions of States, since they could only issue recommendations.

In addition to the rigid and formal analysis that institutional frameworks often offer, we can find other indicators that explain the commercial bias that affected the bloc during the 1990s. One of them is the decisions adopted by the Common Market Council: between 1991 and 2004, such a Council adopted a total of 381 decisions. Of this total, 197 – or 51.7% – corresponded to economic and/or commercial issues¹².

Graphic N° 1. Mercosur CMC decisions (1991-2004)

In blue, the Economic-Commercial Decisions; In orange, Other Decisions



Source: elaboration by the author based on the data obtained from the Information System on Foreign Trade of the Organization of American States (SICE-OEA).

Controls and autonomy of the Armed Forces

The different levels of civilian control of the Armed Forces that coexisted in Mercosur is another factor that conditioned the possibilities of dealing with defense issues. But before moving on to a detailed analysis, it is important to clarify why it is considered that the autonomy of the Armed Forces, or rather the degree of civilian control over the military, is a variable that affects the scope of regional cooperation. One of the central reasons has

¹² In addition, it should be clarified that 43.3% of the remaining decisions were not necessarily decisions linked to other issues. Many of these were related to administrative or institutional matters that depended on the Common Market Council.

to do with the fact that civil-military relations not only affect the democratic game between the constitutional actors and the military institution, but also affect the international actions of a country. Earlier in the 1950s, sociologist Charles Wright Mills (1957) argued that no power sector is more influenced by the military than foreign policy. Similarly, Anabella Busso (2008) points out that civil-military relations can be taken as a deep force that affects the identity of a state and, consequently, its external strategy¹³.

Thus, assuming that civil-military relations affect foreign policy, it is worth asking how the relations between the two actors can impact on such a specific element as the formation of a regional defense mechanism. A first response might be that in those countries where the Armed Forces enjoy greater autonomy and influence over the design of defense policy, they are more likely to find it unnecessary or even threatening to create regional mechanisms led by civilian authorities.

Related to the above, we can add a second variable that, according to Monica Hirst (1996), can be defined as the “sovereignty problem”. Historically, the Latin American Armed Forces have shaped their external and security thinking on the basis of realistic paradigms, for which sovereignty is the greatest good to be preserved in a hostile interstate environment. The great majority of military academies and military educational institutes have structured – and can be said to still structure – their educational programs based on this type of thinking (Frenkel, 2016). In practical terms, these worldviews have repercussions on the willingness to participate in multilateral schemes that may result in the renunciation or conditioning of national prerogatives.

Having said that, and before moving on to the country-by-country analysis, it is necessary to establish two final clarifications: first, as authors such as Acuña and Smulovitz (1996) and Alves Soares (2008) affirm, civilian control over militaries in the countries of the Southern Cone were deeply conditioned by different ways and means by which each state underwent the process of transition to democracy. The second clarification has to do with the emphasis placed on military autonomy. In this sense, we agree with Saín (2010) on the fact that “measuring” civilian control based on the degree of military autonomy can minimize the analysis of the role of civilian leaders. Even so, we believe that in this case it is enough to just understand how the relations between civilians and the military were articulated in the Mercosur countries.

¹³ The author takes the concept of deep forces from the French school of International Relations. In this sense, the concept encompasses and contains those elements that are denominated as constituents of the identity, whether geographic or cultural elements.

Argentina: collapse and subordination

Unlike other countries in the region, Argentina experienced in the 1980s a process of transition to democracy through collapse, which favored the conditions for greater civilian control over the Armed Forces (O'Donnell 1989). The discrediting of the military class after years of state terrorism, mismanagement of the economy and especially defeat in the Falklands War prevented the military from conducting a transition process that would ensure them a strong influence over public affairs. This weakness, coupled with the political will of the democratic government, created a fertile ground for political parties to arrive at a political framework to strengthen the power of constitutional authorities, while distinguishing external defense and internal security. Still, this did not prevent the Armed Forces from being able to maintain some veto power at the beginnings of the democratic recovery. In fact, the military revolts that opposed the trials for human rights violations forced the government of Raul Alfonsín to sanction the Full Stop law and the law of Due Obedience.

The arrival of Carlos Menem to the presidency, nevertheless, supposed a change of scene: the new administration repressed the last military insurrection; negotiated loyalty in exchange for “closing the past”; appointed military leaders not linked to the rebel sectors and sought to transform the military into a foreign policy tool through cooperation with the countries of the region and participation in peacekeeping missions. As Ernesto López maintains: “all these issues have played in favor of appeasing civil-military relations and of affirming the standard of subordination of military institutions to the public authorities” (López 2007, 32).

On the other hand, we should also mention that although Menem managed to neutralize the veto power of the military, defense management would not be a priority for political bodies (Battaglini 2013). As a result of this lack of interest, a “delegative approach” crystallized which ultimately allowed the military to maintain certain margins of institutional autonomy (Eissa, 2013). In conceptual terms, this dynamic of political-military interaction can be defined as “subordination with military autonomy” (Diamint 2008; Sain 2010) or “conditional subordination” (Canelo 2007). However, it is also worth mentioning that these interstices did not prevent Argentina from being, from all the countries of Latin America, the one that realized the most notable changes to advance on civilian control of the Armed Forces.

Chile: the permanent autonomy

Unlike Argentina, the transition process to democracy in Chile was permeated by the permanent military conditionalities. This was due fundamentally to the fact that the military still enjoyed considerable support from citizens despite the repressive policies implemented¹⁴.

In this context, the democratic recovery that led to the election of Patricio Aylwin in 1989 did not prevent the Armed Forces from maintaining certain authoritarian enclaves (Lorenzini 2010). Whether it was to self-govern or influence the general direction of state policies. The result, as defined by the Chilean diplomat Carlos Huneeus (1997), would be that of a state of “protected democracy”. Manuel Garretón (1999), on the other hand, would define it as an “incomplete” democratization.

According to Maldonado Prieto (2002), the autonomy that Chilean military retained after the arrival of democracy became visible in five indicators: 1) the ability to appoint commanders of the forces for a certain period without the president being able to remove them ; 2) the promulgation of a law establishing a minimum quota for the defense budget (to which was added the so-called “copper law”, which gave the forces 10% of the royalties resulting from exports of the copper state-owned company); 3) the participation, guaranteed by law, of a minimum of 50% of the military in the Council of National Defense; 4) the existence of senators nominated by the Armed Forces and Carabineers themselves; and 5) the strengthening of the Military Justice and the promulgation of an amnesty law.

The first point, for example, allowed Pinochet to remain at the lead of the army until 1997. This unprecedented situation meant that the former dictator remained a relevant actor in Chilean politics, as well as prolonging his influence on the rest of the forces. In practice, the army would eventually function as a power in itself, almost without any kind of political control (Gutiérrez Palacios 2007). In addition, the budget guarantee available to the Armed Forces assured them the ability to influence defense policy and foreign policy. Mainly because the discretionary management of the budget allowed the allocation of resources for the acquisition of military armaments and resources, conditioning the relationship with neighboring countries¹⁵.

¹⁴ In 1988 a plebiscite was held to determine whether or not Pinochet would lead the government until 1997. Although he lost the race, the former dictator gained support from 44% of the electorate.

¹⁵ An example of this is the mistrust that the purchase by Chile of American *F-16* and German *Leopard* tanks in the late 1990s caused in Argentina and other countries in the region.

Similarly, the existence of a military bench in Congress allowed the military to permanently influence the sanction of national laws.

Brazil: the untouchable actor

Similarly Chile, Brazil is another case in which the military managed to cross the democratic return without any changes in the attributions to self-government. As Mathias (1995) explains, the military allowed the restoration of constitutionality, only if two requirements were provided: on the one hand, to maintain its capacity to intervene in civilian politics. And, on another hand, to ensure that democratic governments would not change the socio-economic order established during the authoritarian period. Thus, even when the claims for “*Diretas Já*”¹⁶ took the streets, the military managed to ensure the transition to democracy through an indirect election in Congress¹⁷. This withdraw, negotiated and directed “from above”, was also favored by a relatively stable economic scenario (Beltrán 2000, 51).

As part of the same package, the Armed Forces also ensured that there would be no judgment for repressive actions during the dictatorship and, of course, they were responsible for resisting any interference by the federal civilian government over its autonomy spaces. As Eliezer Rizzo de Oliveira (1994) points out, the withdrawal of the military from the center of political power originated a structure of “tutelage” over the government of José Sarney. This situation was especially seen at the time of the drafting of a new constitution: the constitution promulgated in 1988 established rather ambiguous and inaccurate terms on the role and organization of the military apparatus. We must also add that it was guaranteed a ministry for each force and military control over nuclear policy.

Military opposition to the creation of a Ministry of Defense – one of the promises of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s campaign – would become one of the most remarkable indicators of the Brazilian military’s power over civilian authorities. The fear of losing prerogatives was a determining factor so that the military did not support the measure. To this, adds Soares Alsina Jr. (2003), the military also saw the initiative as an attempt by the United States on behalf of the “police-ization” of the Armed Forces and to involve them in the fight against drug trafficking. Finally, one can say that both have

¹⁶ “*Diretas Já*” it was the motto with which a large part of Brazilian civil society was mobilized between 1984 and 1985, which required the direct election of the president and vice president.

¹⁷ The elected candidate was Tancredo Neves. However, Neves died shortly before assuming office, leaving the position in the hands of the vice-president, José Sarney.

fulfilled their mission: Cardoso managed to fulfill his promise after four years of negotiations and in 1999 the Ministry of Defense was created. The Armed Forces, in turn, continued to maintain practically the same attributions as before.

Bolivia: the absence of statehood

As the majority of the Andean countries, the civilian institutionalization regarding defense was one of the unresolved tasks of the young democracies that had risen in the 1980s. As pointed out by Juan Ramón Quintana Taborga (2005), Bolivia remains one of the Latin American countries with less institutional development in the military sector. Among other things, such institutional weakness allows the military to get permanently involved in defense's design and planning. According to Quintana, there are three elements that explain this high level of prerogatives: the first one refers to a phenomenon rooted in the country's institutional fabric: the lack of a culture of adherence to sustainability and the search for efficiency in the public management. The second element is related to the high priority given to internal security and to the resolution of social conflicts by military and police means. The third conditioning is a permanent neglect by the civil authorities to the full exercise of its faculties. As a result of these factors, there is a successive transfer of responsibilities that culminates in the normalization of the military monopoly over the defense management.

Paraguay: autonomy through omission

In the same way that happened in most of the countries of the region, the consolidation of democracy and the efforts to further civilian rule did not prevent the Paraguayan military from maintaining wide margins of autonomy when deciding the country's defense policy.

First, one ought to highlight that the Colorado Party has not modified its close links with the military inherited from Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship. This meant that the attempts to reverse the military government were few and unclear. During Andrés Rodríguez's administration (1989-1993), for instance, a new constitution was sanctioned and the General Organization of the Armed Forces law was promulgated. Even though the constitution declared that the president was the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, this latter law established a figure of the Commander-in-Chief of the Military Forces that could only be exercised by an officer.

Another characteristic of the military autonomy is the permanent omissions in what concerns the normative framework. According to the laws in force at the time, the Armed Forces are not ascribed to the task of intervening in internal conflicts. Nonetheless, this legal body would not prevent the military from successively acting according to their own *modus operandi* in situations such as the fight against drug trafficking, smuggling or in the repression of social uprisings. Accordingly, in many occasions, the lack of control over the military reflects in cases of institutional violence and authority abuse that occurred with the connivance of the judiciary apparatus¹⁸.

Uruguay: the delegated subordination

The Uruguayan case is probably the most particular one among all the described until here in what concerns civil-military relations. As explained by González Guyer (2007), Uruguay has always been characterized for having a culture of military subordination to the democratic authorities, through which its presidents have governed the military institutions based on its own hierarchical-disciplinary structure. Such subordination, however, has as its counterpart the delegation of discretionary handling of military policy issues. In other words, Uruguay represents the typical case of what Alves Soares (2006) calls institutional autonomy: the Armed Forces keep the ability of influencing in its area's policies without surpassing its delimited field of action. This particular combination of military self-government alongside subordination to the president fostered a distancing of defense matters in the Uruguayan political leadership. In terms of external cooperation, such indifference translates in a lack of interest in the promotion of bilateral and regional mechanisms with other countries' Ministries of Defense.

Briefly, one may conclude that, by the time that the first initiatives aimed at designing a regional mechanism of defense were established, Mercosur's countries experimented different degrees of civilian control over the Armed Forces. Therefore, for instance, while the Chilean model shows a significant autonomy of the military in relation to the civilian power, Argentina represents a case of subordination – tenuous, but still subordination. In Brazil, for its turn, the Armed Forces, in spite of being subordinated to the political power, maintain wide prerogatives.

¹⁸ Some examples of this kind of participation carried out by the Paraguayan military are detailed in the following section of the article.

Table 1: Civil-military relations in Argentina, Brazil and Chile in the 1990s]

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile
Transition to democracy	By collapse	Guardianship	Protected/incomplete
Ministry of Defense	Yes (civilian)	Yes (from 1999 on. Before, there was one ministry per Force)	Yes (civilian)
Control by the Ministry of Defense	Intermediate	Non-existent	Low (wide budgetary autonomy and impossibility of appointing military leaders)
Degree of conflict between the political power and the Armed Forces	Low	Low	High
Institutional projection of the Armed Forces: differences within the results	Few prerogatives and low contestation of constitutional authorities	Intermediate prerogatives and low contestation	High level of prerogatives and intermediate degree in terms of contestation.

Source: elaborated by the author, with some references from Acuña and Smulovitz (1996)

The differences between defense and security

Besides the heterogeneous relations between civilians and the military, among Mercosur's countries there are also different perspectives about what one understands as defense and security. Particularly, these differences are captured in broad or delimited visions about security. Thus, for instance, while Argentina, Chile and Uruguay defined a differentiation between national defense and internal security, Brazil's normative framework establishes more blurred limits between the two scopes, which enables the intervention of the Armed Forces in order to guarantee "law and order". Bolivia, for its turn, sustains a wide view of security; and Paraguay, despite differentiating national defense from public security in its laws, supported a process of providing the military some characteristics of the police, enabling them to participate in issues such as the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime and the repression of social uprisings.

A detailed analysis of the normative frameworks of Mercosur's coun-

tries between 1991 and 2004 allows us to make such differences clear. In order to summarize these characteristics, Buzan's and Hansen's (2009) three dimensions to divide the distinct perspectives about security are used. Namely: 1) the security-related objects (that is, what or who shall be secured); 2) the nature of the threats (whether they are of internal or external character; military or non-military); and 3) the tools established to combat these threats. According to how these dimensions are combined, one may have a limited or a broad vision of security.

In the former, the security-related object is only the sovereignty and the territorial integrity; the threats are of state and military nature and, hence, the Armed Forces the fundamental instrument in counteracting them. The broad perspective of security, on the other hand, assumes that the security issues – called as the “new threats” – are not necessarily military and do not affect only the states, but also the societies, the individuals, the free market, the collective identities, among others. Within this framework, the mechanisms to guarantee security become increasingly blurry and flexible, opening up space for the adoption of police's characteristics by the Armed Forces, which ends up eroding the boundary between national defense and public or internal security.

The choice of specifying the external defense/internal security variable is based on the fact that the ways in which the purpose of defense is conceived and the role of the Armed Forces without any doubt have an impact when it comes to sitting down to propose, negotiate, articulate and materialize common initiatives among several States. In this sense, we are in accordance with Jorge Battaglini (2008, 11), who sustains that “different perspectives regarding which are the security-related objects, the threats and the responses to them [...] hamper the construction of a regional concept of security” (Our translation).

Argentina, Chile and Uruguay: limited perspectives of security

Through a relatively solid and clear normative body, Argentina established – by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s – a differentiation between the assignments of the Armed Forces and the correspondent to the police forces. Thus, the National Defense Law of 1988 states that defense is “the integration and the coordinated action of all the Nation's forces to the solution of those conflicts that require the employment of the Armed Forces, in a dissuasive of effective way, in order to face aggressions of external origins” (Our translation). Furthermore, it sustains that “defense has as its fi-

nality to permanently guarantee the sovereignty and the independence of the Argentinian Nation, its territorial integrity and its capacity of self-determination; to protect the lives and freedom of its inhabitants” (Argentina 1988. Our translation). Some years later, the White Book would clarify that the external aggressions are those that, for its character, have the military forces as their central pivot (Argentina 1999).

In these definitions, it was well summarized which were the defense-related objects (sovereignty, territory, and its inhabitants’ lives and freedom); which were the dimensions of the threats (a military aggression of foreign origin); and which instrument is supposed to dissuade and repel an eventual aggression (the Armed Forces).

Such difference between the external – associated to the defense – and the internal – linked to public security – is strengthened with the enactment of the Law on Internal Security in 1992. In fact, such law determines that internal security refers to police action against illicit acts that compromise the freedom, life, heritage of the inhabitants, their rights and guarantees (Argentina 1992). In this way, according to such law, the employment of the Armed Forces within the internal security’s scope can only occur in determined circumstances – in cases of logistical support to the police forces – or in exception situations, such as in the declaration of a “State of exception”¹⁹.

In Chile, defense regulations also separate the military activities from those of the forces of order and law and public security. The Organic Constitutional Law of the Armed Forces of 1990 establishes that the military “constitute the armed corps that exist for the homeland’s security” (Chile 1990. Our translation). The National Defense Book, published in 1997, however, is more explicit when defining the security vision in the Andean country. According to this document, national defense implies keeping “properly equipped and trained forces, enough to prevent and neutralize any external threat or repel an eventual foreign aggression” (Chile 1997. Our translation).

In other words, to the Chilean state, threats are eminently external and the instrument to face them are the Armed Forces. In this sense, the white book clarifies that “the risks, perils or threats that are associated to delinquency, drug trafficking or others that affect the internal order are a matter of internal security”. Similar to Argentina, the Chilean normative allow the military to perform internal security tasks, but only in exceptional situations of internal emergencies, natural catastrophes or other circumstances provided in the laws and Constitution (Chile 1997).

¹⁹ Also, as a result of this norm, the National Gendarmerie and the Naval Prefecture - two militarized security forces - passed from the orbit of the Ministry of Defense to that of the Ministry of the Interior.

Uruguay is the third country of Mercosur's group of states that conceive security in limited terms. For instance, the law 15.808 – on the Organic of the Armed Forces – of 1986, defines that “the Armed Forces have the fundamental purpose of defending the Republic's honor, independence and peace, the integrity of its territory, its constitution and laws, always acting under the superior command of the President” (Uruguay 1986. Our translation).

In 1999 there would be an integral explanation of the concepts and directives that govern the public management of defense with the publishing of a sort of a “white book”, called “Basis for a National Defense Policy”. Through this document, Uruguay states that “the National Defense shall not be mistaken with Security, even though both concepts are closely related”. While the latter comprises all the acts aimed at ensuring the preservation of internal order and peace, Defense implies a more restricted concept, since it only refers to the maintenance of conditions that allow the country to secure its primary interests against potential threats or external actions (Uruguay 1999).

Furthermore, Uruguay is also close to Argentina and Chile in what concerns the possibility of employing the military in security tasks in exceptional situations. As a result, the national defense objectives are reduced to: conserving national sovereignty and the state's independence; maintaining its territorial integrity; generating the necessary security conditions to face external threats; support the internal security forces in some cases as provided by the competent bodies and contribute to the promotion and maintenance of international peace (Uruguay 1999).

Brazil: an intermediate case

Even though during Mercosur's first years the Brazilian normative demonstrated an effort to distinguish national defense from public security, the boundaries between these two areas would become blurrier in the following years. This is due to the ambiguity of the laws and norms that governed the nature, the goals and the operation of its defense system.

The South-American giant defined its defense policy based on a multiplicity of functions assigned to its Armed Forces in the 1988 Constitution. Particularly, article 142 establishes as missions of the Armed Forces: “the homeland defense against foreign military aggression, the guarantee of constitutional powers and the guarantee of law and order” (Brasil 1988. Our translation). Undoubtedly, this latter element – “guarantee of law and order” – opens up a margin for the military action in public security matters without

the need of establishing exceptional situations, as occurs in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. The Complementary Law number 69, of 1991, attempted to attenuate such ambiguity by stating that the military actuation in the preservation of public order will take place by a president's order "after exhausted the proper instruments" to such finality. Still, the preeminence of the constitution over any other law makes it possible to circumvent that reservation. The National Defense Policy, enacted in 1996, and the *Complementary Law* number 97, enacted in 1997, opened up another window for the possibility of the military to act within the internal scope by establishing that one of the Armed Forces' attributions is to "cooperate with national development" (Brasil 1997).

Bearing this in mind, despite the fact that in the political leadership and in the military institution there was a predominance of a refusal to involve the Armed Forces in the combat of non-traditional threats, the normative ambiguity has drawn a porous line between national defense and public security. In practical terms, this lack of normative clarity allowed the participation of the military in the task of guaranteeing "law and order", even after the return of democracy. Examples of this situation are the army's intervention in the *Volta Redonda's* strike of 1998; the participation of military personnel in *Operation Rio*, carried out by the end of 1994 with the goal of combating drug trafficking; and the delegation to the Armed Forces of the security of international summits, such as the Earth Summit (1992) and, more recently, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. As a consequence of this increasingly assiduous presence in public security situations, Mathias and Guzzi (2010) argue that Brazilian citizens end up believing that these tasks are part of the "natural" missions of the Armed Forces.

Bolivia and Paraguay: widened perspectives

Among all Mercosur's member countries, Bolivia is the only one that has explicitly established in its legal framework the existence of a widened conception of security, defining an intersection between the internal and external environments, and, therefore, allowing the military to ordinarily act in public order assignments. The Organic Law of the Armed Forces, enacted in 1992, determines that the aims of the military apparatus are to "preserve the Constitutional Mandate, peace and National Unity as the stability of the state's democratic institutions" (Bolivia 1992. Our translation). Similarly, the eighth article sustains that the President shall be able to employ the military forces in order to: in the external dimension, preserve the existence, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; and, in the internal dimension, maintain the public order when the institutions legally constituted for this

finality show themselves to be insufficient (Bolivia 1992).

Based on this broad view, since the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Bolivian Armed Forces had an active participation in operations against the illegal drug trade – many of them in cooperation with the North-American DEA – and in the repression of strikes and public disturbances. One of the most criticized measures aimed at militarizing the fight against drug trafficking was the release of the “Dignity Plan”, in 1998. Such operation – implemented by military and security forces with the United States’ support – had as its goal the eradication of all “illicit” crops of coca within five years (Ledebur 2005, 187).

Paraguay is another country to express a widened conception of security. Differently from Bolivia, nevertheless, the Paraguayan case has a particularity: the then current laws defined defense and security as two strictly separated dimensions²⁰. The former referred to the Armed Forces, whereas the latter, to the Security Forces. Notwithstanding, in practical terms, there was no distinction between external and internal threats, and the military institution would have a permanent action in the fight against drug trafficking, smuggling and maintenance of public order. This situation would open space to an indiscrimination, through omission, between national defense and internal security²¹.

20 This differentiation would be embodied in the Law on the General Organization of the Armed Forces (1991) and in the Law on National Defence and Internal Security (1999).

21 An example of this was when in December 1995 the Armed Forces and later the National Police, by order of President Wasmosy, unleashed an operation -called “Ñemopotí” - to fight against smuggling in the border area of Ciudad del Este.

Table 2: Normative frameworks in defense and security matters of broadened Mercosur's countries (1991-2004)

	Argentina	Chile	Uruguay
Defense-related objects	Sovereignty and territorial integrity; life and freedom of citizens	Country's independence and sovereignty; territorial integrity; institutionality and rule of law; national identity.	National sovereignty and the state's independence; territorial integrity
Dimensions of the threats	External and military	External and military	External and military
Participation of the Armed Forces in internal security	Only exceptionally	Only exceptionally	Only exceptionally
Differentiation between National Security and Internal Security	<u>Comprehensive</u>	<u>Comprehensive</u>	<u>Comprehensive</u>

	Brazil	Paraguay	Bolivia
Defense-related objects	Territory, sovereignty and national interests; law and order	Sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic	Peace and national unity; sovereignty and territorial integrity; democratic institutions; public order
Dimensions of the threats	Mostly external	External and internal	External and internal
Participation of the Armed Forces in internal security	Allowed	Allowed de facto	Allowed
Differentiation between National Security and Internal Security	Porous	Indifferent	Indifferent

Source: elaborated by the author based on the aforementioned documents and normatives

Conclusions

As previously stated in the introduction, this article had the purpose of answering to the question of why the defense-related subjects were excluded from Mercosur, even when there existed a cooperative environment in security matters and even when some of the member countries showed themselves to be in favor of articulating some type of defense mechanism in the sub regional level. Based on this, one may witness the development of three factors that ended up by establishing a limit to the possibilities of solidifying an instance of this kind.

As for the first factor, an analysis both of the bloc's institutional structure and the character of the decisions adopted by its highest instance – the Common Market Council – demonstrate the Mercosur concretized itself as dominated by the economic-commercial agenda. To a determined extent, such overrating of the economic dimensions reflects the hegemony of the neoliberal ideas in South America during the 1990s. Those were ideas that, after all, ended up taking the place occupied by other sorts of agendas in the beginning of the integrationist project, by the mid-1980s, as it was the case of the security agenda.

With that said, one may also sustain that the economic unidimensionality was not a completely negative factor. Effectively, by reviewing the integrationist process during its first decade, it is possible to conclude that many of the initiatives to hierarchize the political agenda or to include non-commercial topics in the bloc occurred when the economic agenda became exhausted. The following phases of the transition period, explains Bouzas (2001), were marked by an increase in the commercial conflicts between the countries (especially Argentina and Brazil) and by a growing difficulty in carrying out the agreed measures (the constant exceptions to the Common External Tariff or the lack of coordination of macroeconomic policies are two clear indicators of this gap). Within this framework of difficulties, deepening the cooperation in other thematic areas might be a way to end those bottlenecks. Nonetheless, it seems that this situation has not been severe enough to lead to the inclusion of defense-related themes. As stated by Hurrell (1998), the economic interdependence may be an important engine to demilitarize the interstate relations, however, in the long term, it does not generate enough incentives to lead to a further institutionalization.

The following section had the purpose of analyzing the distinct degrees of autonomy of the Armed Forces (or of the civilian control) in the different states of Mercosur. For Argentina, where there was a greater control over the military, the regionalization of defense themes appeared to be a

good tool for consolidating the Armed Forces' subordination to the political power, or, still, to internationalize the defense policy and "withdraw" even more the military from the internal environment. On the other hand, in those countries where the military maintained a considerable power over the state apparatus – as Brazil, Chile or Paraguay –, the incentives to further coordination mechanisms of civilian and political nature were significantly scarce. Besides, in the strategic culture of most Latin-American military prevailed (and still prevails) a "sovereignist" imprint, hesitant in assuming excessively ambitious regional commitments. In this sense, the military tend to prefer mechanisms of inter-forces relationship or, ultimately, the establishment of bilateral mechanisms through which it would be easier to "control" the commitments assumed by the political bodies. This latter trend could be seen in the following years, when Mercosur was reconfigured in light of the leftist turn in the region. Brazil and Argentina, for instance, continued deepening their relations in defense matters, establishing new mechanisms of political and military cooperation, such as the joint production of the General Employment Airborne Light Vehicle (VLEGA "Gaucho"). A similar situation took place between Chile and Argentina, with the formation in 2006 of the Binational Peace Force "Cruz del Sur".

Finally, a comparative analysis of the normative frameworks of each country evidenced that, among Mercosur's states, different ways of understating security coexist. Thus, for instance, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay are adepts of a restricted vision, while Bolivia and Paraguay maintain a widened perspective, which includes non-traditional issues among the defense systems' competences. This framework of discrepancies reveals that, after all, for a group of countries that does not share a common criterion about what is defense, what is security and which are the instruments supposed to face distinct threats, embarking on the creation of a regional mechanism is an undertaking that requires high coordination levels and, especially, the adaption to several national realities.

However, in light of the previously said, we are aware that the factors developed in this article are not exhaustive nor exclusive. As stated in the introduction, there are other variables that have transversely acted over what was here explained and have contributed, to a determined extent, to explain why it has not been possible to concretize a security mechanism in the Southern Cone. In this regard, we may also mention the distance that Chile has always kept from the bloc or the differences that, for many years, Brazil and Argentina had in terms of foreign policy – especially in what concerns the relationship with the United States and the perceptions of how the other reckoned the integration process. According to Mônica Hirst (2006), these

discrepancies are at the core of the production of sporadic cooperation actions rather than a common strategic view.

Likewise, the importance of the principle of democratic peace in the imaginary of regional integration – according to which the democratic systems foster stable and pacific relations between neighboring countries – did not encourage progress towards more ambitious regional security schemes. As stated by Oliveira and Onuki (2000), the tenet that guided Mercosur's countries was one of avoiding conflicts rather than furthering the coordination of defense policies.

As a final point, it is worth mentioning that, in the Brazilian perspective, Mercosur and especially the relations with Argentina were conceived in broader terms than the Southern Cone. As explained by the former Secretary for Strategic Affairs, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães: "South America is the inevitable, historical and geographical circumstance of the Brazilian state and society" (Pinheiro Guimarães 2005, 171). Added to this, one shall also notice the importance that the subcontinent's Amazon had and still has for Brazil – an area that could be embraced in its totality by a South-American perspective. The latter is crucial for understanding why the formation of the Union of South American Nations in 2004 meant a change in Brazil's position regarding the articulation of a regional defense mechanism. A position that, four years later, would culminate in the proposal of creating a Defense Council within the scope of the brand-new Union of South American Nations.

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ABSTRACT

Despite being established on a commercial basis, Mercosur gradually incorporated other areas of cooperation during its first years, such as health, labor and environment. However, issues like defense were never included in the institutional scheme. On this basis, this article analyses a specific set of factors that were crucial to undermine the possibilities of building a security mechanism in the Southern Cone. These factors are the bloc one-dimension, the divergent civilian control of the armed forces and the different visions of security among member countries.

KEYWORDS

Mercosur; defense; armed forces.

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