



Cooperation In Defense in the Southern Cone: Defense as an Integrating Element in Relations between Brazil and Argentina*

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Abstract: The paper aims to address the question: What was the role of Defense Cooperation in shaping the relationship between Brazil and Argentina? The analysis started with the hypothesis that Defense Cooperation served as an integral element in the relations between these two countries: Brazil and Argentina, consequently impacting Mercosur as a whole. Methodologically, the research adopted a historical analysis and qualitative approach, employing document analysis techniques. Despite historical conflicts, the 1970s witnessed a significant shift in the relationship between Buenos Aires and Brasília, with notable collaborative efforts emerging. However, the rapprochement of these states in marked a relevant change in the Southern Cone and it has been possible to evidence up to 1978 in the combined operation “Operação Fraternal”, within navies, to 2004 in the technological cooperation “Projeto Gaúcho”, within armies and to 2010 in the “Projeto KC-390” within air forces. Defense Cooperation played a pivotal role in this process, serving not only military purposes but also as a diplomatic tool, reinforcing friendship bonds. In conclusion, Defense emerges as crucial element for success cooperation and integration, fostering mutual trust camaraderie. Thus, this study confirms the hypothesis that Defense Cooperation is an integral element in the relationship between Brazil and Argentina, with the potential to facilitate regional integration.

Keywords: Regional Integration; Defense Cooperation; Brazil; Argentina

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Cooperación en Defensa en el Cono Sur: la defensa como elemento integrador en las relaciones entre Brasil y Argentina

Resumen: El artículo pretende abordar la pregunta: ¿Cuál fue el papel de la Cooperación en Defensa en la configuración de la relación entre Brasil y Argentina? El análisis partió de la hipótesis de que la Cooperación en Defensa sirvió como elemento integral en las relaciones entre estos dos países: Brasil y Argentina; impactando en consecuencia al Mercosur en su conjunto. Metodológicamente, la investigación adoptó un análisis histórico y un enfoque cualitativo, empleando técnicas de análisis documental. A pesar de los conflictos históricos, la década de 1970 fue testigo de un cambio significativo en la relación entre Buenos Aires y Brasilia, y surgieron notables esfuerzos de colaboración; sin embargo, el acercamiento de estos estados marcó un cambio relevante en el Cono Sur y se ha podido evidenciar desde 1978 en la operación combinada “Operação Fraternal”, dentro de armadas, hasta 2004 en la cooperación tecnológica “Projeto Gaúcho”, dentro de ejércitos y hasta 2010 en el “Projeto KC-390” dentro de las fuerzas aéreas. La Cooperación en materia de Defensa jugó un papel fundamental en este proceso, ya que sirvió no solo para fines militares, sino también como herramienta diplomática, reforzando los lazos de amistad. En conclusión, la Defensa emerge como un elemento crucial para el éxito de la cooperación y la integración, fomentando la confianza mutua y el compañerismo. Así, este estudio confirma la hipótesis de que la Cooperación en Defensa es un elemento integral de la relación entre Brasil y Argentina, con potencial para facilitar la integración regional.

Palabras clave: integración regional; cooperación en materia de Defensa; Brasil; Argentina

Cooperação em Defesa no Cone Sul: a defesa como elemento integrador nas relações entre Brasil e Argentina

Resumo: O artigo pretende abordar a pergunta: Qual foi o papel da Cooperação em Defesa na configuração da relação entre o Brasil e a Argentina? A análise partiu da hipótese de que a Cooperação em Defesa serviu como elemento integral nas relações entre esses dois países: Brasil e Argentina; impactando conseqüentemente o Mercosul como um todo. Metodologicamente, a pesquisa adotou uma análise histórica e uma abordagem qualitativa, empregando técnicas de análise documental. Apesar dos conflitos históricos, a década de 1970 testemunhou uma mudança significativa na relação entre Buenos Aires e Brasília, e surgiram notáveis esforços de colaboração; no entanto, a aproximação desses estados marcou uma mudança relevante no Cone Sul e pôde ser evidenciada desde 1978 na operação combinada “Operação Fraternal”, dentro das marinhas, até 2004 na cooperação tecnológica “Projeto Gaúcho”, dentro dos exércitos, e até 2010 no “Projeto KC-390” dentro das forças aéreas. A Cooperação em relação à Defesa desempenhou um papel fundamental nesse processo, pois serviu não apenas para fins militares, mas também como uma ferramenta diplomática, reforçando os laços de amizade. Em conclusão, a Defesa emerge como um elemento crucial para o sucesso da cooperação e integração, promovendo a confiança mútua e o companheirismo. Assim, este estudo confirma a hipótese de que a Cooperação em Defesa é um elemento integral da relação entre Brasil e Argentina, com potencial para facilitar a integração regional.

Palavras-chave: integração regional; cooperação em matéria de Defesa; Brasil; Argentina

Introduction

Traditionally, relations between Brazil and Argentina have been characterized by conflicts and territorial disputes, including the Cisplatine War (1825-1828) and the War against Oribe and Rosas (1851-1852). However, in the 1970s, the rapprochement between these countries marked a significant shift, leading to the establishing of an important axis in the Southern Cone. Cooperation in Defense played a crucial role during this process, exemplified by joint exercises such as “Operação Fraternal” conducted by the Brazilian and Argentinean navies. These initiatives represented the initial steps toward improving relations and strengthening bonds between Brasilia and Buenos Aires. Subsequently, additional cooperative efforts emerged, such as the technological cooperation known as “Projeto Gaúcho,” involving the armies and the “Projeto KC-390” within the realm of the air forces, both of which will be further explored in this research. It is noteworthy that cooperation within the Navy Forces and Land Forces originated primarily from initiatives led by the Armed Forces of both countries, warranting their inclusion as a case study. Regarding the Air Force, the selection of its corresponding project was based on its status as the most recent cooperation endeavor.

When observing integrationist initiatives in South America, it becomes evident that there are structural factors, such as economic, geographic, and political barriers, hindering integration in the subcontinent. Despite these challenges, various initiatives have been established with the aim of promoting regional integration. Examples include Institutions like the Associação Latino-Americana de Livre Comércio (ALALC), Associação Latino-Americana de Integração (ALADI), Comunidade Andina de Nações (CAN), Mercado Comum do Sul (MERCOSUL), Aliança do Pacífico, Aliança Bolivariana para os Povos de Nossa América (ALBA), União de Nações Sul-americanas (UNASUL) e o Progresso da América do Sul (PROSUL)¹.

¹ Latino-American Free Trade Association (ALALC), the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Andean

This time, centrifugal factors preventing integration hinder the emergence of a synergistic process between the states. Furthermore, the absence of a political process that fosters unity and the lack of an institution to coordinate and bolster the construction of such ties perpetuate the dynamics of this process. Since defense constitutes a State Policy, it possesses a perennial characteristic at this core, essential for an institution that remains unchanged amidst government transitions.

In addition to the introduction and the concluding remarks, this paper comprises three additional sections. Firstly, it will explore the debate surrounding the foundational concepts of security and defense, alongside an examination of the conceptualizations formulated by each South American country on these subjects. Secondly, the paper will delve into Defense Cooperation, elucidating its concept, principles, and offering a concise overview of the cooperation between Brazil and Argentina. Lastly, the third section will present a case study on Defense Cooperation between Brazil and Argentina, highlighting its role in preceding and/or strengthened the Mercosur framework.

To undertake this study, analysis was conducted through a historical and qualitative approach, utilizing document analysis techniques, and including case studies on Defense Cooperation between Brazil and Argentina. The central argument of this paper posits that a history of Defense Cooperation tends to enhance the success and longevity of regional integration initiatives by fostering camaraderie among the Armed Forces of participating countries. The historical period between the 1970s and 2023 was examined to provide framework supporting the central objective of this paper. By adhering to this methodological approach, it is anticipated that this research will affirm Defense as an integrating element in the relations between Brazil and Argentina, and consequently, within the Mercosur context.

Community of Nations (CAN), the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the Pacific Alliance, Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Progress of South America (PROSUL).

Approaches To Security and Defense to Think about South America

The concepts of defense and security sometimes intersect in their interpretation. Such concepts sometimes complement each other, sometimes they are confused (Andrade, 2021). As Hector Saint-Pierre (2014, 138-139) noted, this common interpretation often occurs, particularly when considering the pragmatic reflection formulated by national strategy. Furthermore, according to Saint-Pierre (2008, 59), the concept of security is inherently tied perception, with security representing a sensation rooted in the perception of the threats that may violate physical or moral integrity, property, or interests of those feeling threatened.

In terms of defense, it involves a series of actions aimed at ensuring security against threats. Defense encompasses the use of Armed Forces in military actions or war efforts, including military maneuvers, in the acquisition and use of combat means, or the movement of troops, always aiming to defend the nation from external aggression. Primarily, defense seeks to uphold national sovereignty against external interventions that jeopardize its populace or territory (Cunha, 2018, 63). As noted by Rui Monarca da Silveira (2004, 171), “the concept of security is associated with a state of protection, while the concept of defense encompasses actions, attitudes, and measures”.²

With the onset of the post-Cold War, the focus on strategic-military agendas diminished, giving rise to new international agendas tied to social issues. Rafael Villa (1999, 99) identified economic-technological competition, environmental imbalances, population growth, international migrations, and drug trafficking as constituents of this phenomenon. The specificity of this shift lies in the workings of a civil society that exhibits a more transnationalized characteristic compared to the State itself.

2 In the original “o conceito de segurança está associado a um estado de proteção e o conceito de defesa envolve ações, atitudes e medidas” (free translation).

Consequently, the emergence of non-state actors, such as environmental and human rights groups, among others, challenges traditional security norms established in strategic-military agenda.

From a conceptual standpoint, the essence of social transnationality underscores the necessity for an alternative perspective on international security. Thus, the concept of Global Multidimensional Security (GMS) emerges. According to Villa (1999, 100):

[g]lobal because the interdependence and transnationalization of the new security phenomena allow the concept to encompass meanings that are not just localized, but planetary. Multidimensional because it does not consist only of strategic-military content, but also includes other transnational aspects, such as demographic explosion, ecological imbalances, and international migrations, which enable international security to be viewed from various perspectives³ (own translation)

According to Saint-Pierre, (2013, 135), the concept of multidimensional security is particularly relevant for discussion at hemispheric summits, especially in Latin America, as it aims to specify the characteristics of security that affect the state, society, and individuals. This concept was included in the agenda of considerations at the 6th Conference of Ministers of Defense of the Americas and was articulated in the Declaration of Quito in 2004, where its second paragraph states:

The meaning of the Special Conference on Security and the Declaration on Security in the Americas, which establishes the new concept of security in the Hemisphere, with a multidimensional scope, includes traditional threats and new threats, concerns, and other challenges for the security of the states of the Hemisphere, incorporates priorities of each

3 In the original “[g]lobal porque a interdependência e transnacionalização dos novos fenômenos de segurança permite ao conceito abranger significados não apenas localizados, mas planetários. *Multidimensional* porque não se constitui só de conteúdo estratégico-militar, mas também de outros conteúdos transnacionais, como explosão demográfica, desequilíbrios ecológicos e migrações internacionais, que fazem com que a segurança internacional seja encarada sob diferentes ângulos” (free translation)

state, contributes to the consolidation of peace, development, and social justice, and is based on democratic values, respect, the promotion and defense of human rights, solidarity, cooperation and respect for national sovereignty (6th CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF DEFENSE OF THE AMERICAS 2004, 01)⁴ (own translation)

Following another idea, Hector Saint-Pierre (2013, 135-138) criticizes the use of the concept explained above because this approach is quite broad and does not align with the more specifically objectives of defense policy, as represented in this paper by the Ministry of Defense. This issue becomes relevant when the obligations assumed by Ministry suffer a diversion of purpose and begin to encompass themes such as health, migration, and natural disaster.⁵ Furthermore, the author criticizes the notion of common threats in the region, arguing that idea of security is a collective sensation and is conditioned by geopolitical scenarios. Therefore, the perception of a single threat in South America becomes impracticable, a fact that implies the impossibility of establishing a single security doctrine in the region.

In South America, countries have divergent concepts regarding security and defense, according to surveys conducted by Andrade (2021), based on normative documents of these countries. Nations like Colombia and Bolivia include the domestic environment and elements such as natural disasters and social politics in their defense policy. On the other hand, nations like Brazil and Argentina

view defense primarily as a means of countering external threats. Regarding security, countries like Chile have a strict view, associating security solely with conditions necessary for development. Ecuador, for example, has a broader conception, encompassing institutions, citizens, development, sovereignty, territorial integrity and human rights. This conceptual diversity complicates the creation of a common defense agenda and constrains integration initiatives. This fact underscore that the region has a unique dynamic and imported theories and concepts do not address the needs of South America states. Consequently, there is an urgent need to develop literature about South America from a South American perspective, while still considering external theories.

The divergent dynamics among states can be understood as stemming from historical differences, geopolitical factors, cultural idiosyncrasies, institutional structures, perceptions of threats, and defensive capacities. Under this perspective, three factors stand out as influencing and triggering the actions of South American countries and shaping their concepts of security and defense. The first factor revolves around “territoriality,” with border issues a fueling an arms race and prompting a quest for national sovereignty and the protection of state interests. The second factor is threat perception, which, like the first factor, drives the pursuit of sophisticated weapons. Lastly, the role of Armed Forces in Southern American nations constitutes the third factor. These institutions serve various functions within their perspective state, all in alignment with the defense policy of each country. These actions encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from safeguarding national sovereignty and maintaining internal stability to engaging in subsidiary actions within social programs.

With the end of the Cold War, the existing pattern of military alliances worldwide. Alliances based on the use or threat of force, whether for interventions, defense, or deterrence gave way to a new cooperative pattern (Rezende 2013, 26). Multipolarity, coupled with new types of threats, led states to seek to defend their territories independently, giving rise to Cooperation in Defense, whether bilateral or multilateral (Andrade, 2018, 9).

4 In the original “La trascendencia de la Conferencia Especial sobre Seguridad y de la Declaración sobre Seguridad en las Américas, en la que se establece la nueva concepción de la seguridad en el Hemisferio, de alcance multidimensional, que incluye las amenazas tradicionales y las nuevas amenazas, preocupaciones y otros desafíos a la seguridad de los Estados del Hemisferio, incorpora las prioridades de cada Estado, contribuye a la consolidación de la paz, al desarrollo integral y a la justicia social, y se basa en valores democráticos, el respeto, la promoción y defensa de los derechos humanos, la solidaridad, la cooperación y el respeto a la soberanía nacional”

5 Within the scope of the Brazilian Ministry of Defense, these actions may be observed in Operation Acolhida, Operation Calha Norte and Operation against Covid-19

As stated by Muthanna (2011, 2), the definition of Cooperation in Defense is characterized by encompassing the entire defense system. This framework includes civilian components such as Industries, military components like Armed Forces, defense infrastructure development, research and development promotion, and national defense institutions such as universities and general staff schools.

Within the scope of Cooperation in Defense, Military Cooperation, which is a more restricted area of cooperation. It involves mutual aid actions between states within the context of their Armed Forces. This type of cooperation encompasses the political, strategic, and operational performances of the Armed Forces and serves as an important instrument for the creation and consolidation of political-diplomatic and influence projection. Jointly, these ways “function as instruments to increase the military power of the actors, as well as for their diplomacy”⁶ (Varela, 2021, 35).

Authors such as Lucas Poyares (2021) present the Defense Diplomacy as a joint element falling under the government’s agenda, involving the participation of the Ministry of Defense and its structures related to the Armed Forces. Military Diplomacy, a component of Defense Diplomacy, focuses specifically on the state’s relationship through the military channels in terms of foreign policy advice.

Returning to the debate about Cooperation in Defense, Rocha Paiva (2011, 38) states that Cooperation in Defense can encompass various areas, such as “aid, support, partnerships, exchanges, meetings, combined exercises and missions, partnerships in other fields of science and technology, development, and defense industry”⁷. Regarding the act of Cooperation in Defense, Muthanna (2006) also highlights five guidelines invariably

considered by states when seeking to expand Cooperation in Defense:

- I. It ensures and enhances external and internal national security.
- II. It enhances its own defense and military capability.
- III. It does not compromise its national security interests or the capacity of the military to act independently if necessary.
- IV. It aligns with the capabilities required for the implementation of goals and initiatives of any alliance, arrangement, or agreement the nation is a member of.
- V. It is compatible with other cooperative arrangements or alliances, if any, and does not threaten these relationships.

Cooperation in Defense is structured in two areas: First, the control and surveillance of border regions, strengthened by the exchange of information through intelligence agencies; and the second, strategies for insertions into the international system as part of a bloc or regional arrangement (Soares 2008, 166-167). This type of Cooperation can also foster ties between states and this dynamic can be beneficial for the resolution of disputes through countries’ negotiation (Paiva, 2011, 37-38). Cooperation in Defense also provides balance of power measures that built mutual trust and promotes gun control” (Paiva, 2011, 38)⁸, in addition to preserving national sovereignty and preventing conflicts (Rezende, 2013, 90).

Introducing a technical debate about Cooperation in Defense, it is relevant to note that states cooperate even during peacetime and in various ways. The main areas of cooperation include military education, combined exercises, technology, and intelligence. Another crucial point to note is that, although these areas are technical military, this type of cooperation might be an instrument of diplomatic policy, specifically military diplomacy. First, the Cooperation area focuses on combined operations

6 In the original: “funcionam como instrumentos de aumento o poder militar dos atores, como também para a sua diplomacia”.

7 In the original: “ajuda, apoio, parcerias e intercâmbios; reuniões e órgãos de defesa; exercícios e missões combinadas; parcerias em outros campos da ciência e tecnologia, desenvolvimento e indústria de defesa”

8 In the original: “medidas para o equilíbrio de poder, que desenvolvam a confiança mútua; e controle de armas”

involving maneuvers, exercises, and operations across the Armed Forces of two or more countries. These actions aim to develop interoperability between countries and their Forces (Moraes, 2010, 32).

Interoperability, crucial for Cooperation in Defense, refers to the ability of Armed Forces from countries to operate together towards a common objective (Jasper and Pereira, 2021). In addition to interoperability between nations and their Armed Forces, joint exercises, largely, strengthen relationships of mutual trust. Another aspect of Cooperation is military education, where soldiers undertake courses, and sometimes serve as instructors in military schools in another nation. This practice is common among nations and is sought when a country, or more specifically an Armed Force, has more accurate technical knowledge about a given subject. Consequently, it wishes to share it with another country, or when it is aimed only at an information exchange of the military, thus contributing to the professional training of the military (Moraes, 2010, 33).

Such Cooperation in Defense is evident in the relationship between the Brazilian War College and the Argentina War College. In the scope of this meeting, they established an exchange between officials from both Colleges, searching for specific knowledge about defense and information about academics' research, technical and cultural exchanges.

Another way of Cooperation in Defense is found around military technology. Such Cooperation occurs when two or more states come together to develop military equipment, with this action seeking to reduce the cost and time of manufacturing. Joint projects also enhance interoperability, as standardized equipment manufactured by partner countries contributes to more effective combined operations.

Finally, Cooperation extends to intelligence sharing. As stated by Fábio Ribeiro (2006, 114), "Intelligence is, in itself, one of the most strategic instruments that the direction of a state has in its list of activities"⁹. Cooperation in intelligence can

9 In the original "a inteligência é por si, um dos instrumentos mais estratégicos que a direção de um Estado tem em seu rol de atividades".

occur when a country gains access to certain sensitive information that is expensive to defend in another country (Moraes, 2010, 34).

Brazil and Argentina: Defense as Integrating Element

Compared to the 20th century, the 19th century was remarkably violent in South America. To illustrate this phenomenon, just the Paraguay War or Triple Alliance War (with about 424 thousand deaths) resulted in more deaths than all wars throughout the 20th century 10 combined (about three hundred thousand deaths) on the subcontinent. During the 19th century, the most disputed zone was in the Rio do Plata Basin, a region claimed by the two Southern American powers. Among the major clashes, the Cisplatina War (1825-1828) (about two thousand deaths), War against Oribe and Rosas (1851-1852) (about 1,3 thousand deaths), and Paraguay War or Triple Alliance War (1864-1870) (about 424 thousand deaths) (Andrade, 2021).

Despite having a conflicted history, the approximation and the cooperation between Brasilia and Buenos Aires are essential for Southern American integration, or as wrote Paulo Visentini (2003, 184), is a "backbone of regional integration"¹¹. Therefore, Brazil-Argentina bilateral relations are viewed as the base of stability or instability in South America. As pointed out by Buzan and Weaver (2003) there are three key points to understand the movement of conflict to cooperation in the Southern Cone: I) the rapprochement Brazil-Argentina, being the most relevant point; II) the Mercosur emergence; III) the borders disputes solution, apart from Bolivian case and the claim for access to the Pacific Ocean.

Dealing with rapprochement, in the 1970s was an important milestone for the Brazilian and Argentina mentality change, until then they saw each

10 Chaco war (1932-1935) Bolivia x Paraguay, about 90 thousand deaths. War of Leticia (1932) Colombia x Peru, about 1,2 thousand deaths. Malvinas War (1982) about 1 thousand deaths. Conflicts between Ecuador and Peru (1941, 1981 and 1995) each conflict with about 100 deaths (Moraes, 2010)

11 In the original: "espinha dorsal da integração regional".

other, most of the time, as rivals. The cooperation between them built a stabilized axis in the Southern Cone and favored the maintenance relations more friendly in the region. With the Pacific resolution of the Chilean and Argentine border disputes, the environment in the Southern Cone was strengthened and differences and rivalries eased (Buzan and Waever, 2003, 322-323).

In this approximation process, the defense had a relevant role. The combined exercises between the Armada da República Argentina (ARA)¹² and the Marinha do Brasil (MB)¹³ was an inflection point for the approximation. The transgovernamental relation was essential for this cooperation to take place since the actions were carried out independently by the Armed Forces of the respective nations (Moraes, 2010, 89). This fact clarifies a prominent issue to understand this research, presenting the defense as a perennial policy, most permanent when compare that the governmental policy. For, as stated by General José Benedito de Barros Moreira, ex-commander of Escola Superior de Guerra (ESG)¹⁴ and former military adviser to the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN:

[t]his Military Cooperation in the Mercosur, even preceded the Mercosur. We always get along very well with the militaries from neighboring countries. The politician might not be very well, however, we, the militaries, always were right. There are student exchanges to study, there are bilateral meetings, there are combined exercises” (Brazil, 2007, s/p, emphasis added)

In security and defense, relations between Argentina and Brazil are characterized, nowadays, by their transparency and the progressive advancement of ties of friendship and mutual trust. However controversial its evolution, the development of this alliance undoubtedly mitigated the possibility of war clashes between Brazil and Argentina. This factor corroborates the imminent advance in the stability of strategic-military relations between Mercosur countries. Along with advances in

international security, important advances can be noted in the field of internal security in the context of Mercosur. The author Jorge Rivera (2013) presents the meeting of Ministers of the Interior and the Forum for Political Consultation and Concertation as catalyzing events in this process. In the context of these meetings, initiatives to combat drug trafficking, terrorism, and other cross-border crimes stand out. Rivera (2013, p. 299) highlights that “in the face of an increasingly interdependent scenario, such common threats have also functioned as catalysts for intergovernmental cooperation, within the scope of integration”. Furthermore, he adds, “These advances in homeland security have served as a necessary complement to the development [of a] security community.”

The Cooperation in Defense might be used as a diplomatic instrument, therefore reinforcing, or creating friendly bonds and cooperation among nations (Moraes, 2010, 91). Cooperation in the military field was one of the initiatives that preceded the Mercosur Foundation. Therefore, we may observe the defense as an integrating element in Brazil and Argentine relations, consequently in the Mercosur field. In addition, even though Mercosur is *a priori*, one economic bloc, we note that there are some defense cooperation activities in Mercosur, as presented below (Andrade, 2021).

Combined Exercises: In Brazil and Argentina relations, one example of this Cooperation is the “Guarani Operation.” The exercise had as objective the information and experience exchanges, the development of the combined exercise doctrines, and develop the interoperability between Brazilian and Argentine squads. The operations were organized by Bilateral General Staff Conference Brazil-Argentina (2012), in which was realized a subunit attack demonstration against two squads, a water transposition using the Guarani tank,¹⁵ and finishing the exercises shooting from collective weapons (Brazil, 2023).

Technologic Cooperation: this Cooperation, stands out as two partnerships. First, we might be observing the “Gaúcho Project,” an airborne general-purpose light vehicle that was, strictly,

12 Navy of the Argentine Republic

13 Brazil’s Navy

14 Higher School of War

15 A Brazilian Armored Personnel Transporte Vehicle

engineered by Brazilian and Argentine Armies. Second, another project that stands out is the “KC-390 Project”. It is a cargo and in-flight refueling aircraft, with a capacity to transport twenty-three tons, it was projected to operate in extreme weather conditions, and to land in a semi-built and built airstrip (Andrade, 2021)

Educational Cooperation: analyzing the area of military education, stands out the Regional Military Exchange Meetings annually realized. In addition, stands out the doctrinal bilateral meeting (2018), which included interventions of both Armies on organizational aspects, structural fundamentals, execution, and practices cable of sharing the Doctrine of each country. Finally, stands out the 19th Consultation meeting between the General Staff of Brazil and Argentina, which included the exchanges between Military Schools intending to acquire more detailed knowledge among Schools. At Defense High School, for example, the cooperation provides: exchange among members, academic informational exchange, conferences, workshops, courses, congress, etc., from Brazil and Argentina (Brazil, 2023)

Intelligence Cooperation: one of the main cases of this area occurred with the creation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. In which the nations jointly abdicated the use, development, and possession of nuclear weapons. The agreement also served to consolidate the strategic partnership, an area that is overly sensitive to defense (Andrade, 2021).

In this way, the sharing of experiences inherited by Cooperation in Defense reflects on the strengthening of tied within Mercosur. As Moraes (2010) stated, the EB itself recognized that the purpose and importance of Cooperation in Defense are both technical-operational and political in nature. This Cooperation “contributes to the maintenance of a peaceful environment, (...), and solidarity along national borders (...), in particular with those of Latin America.” Furthermore, “the force in charge of protecting their territories realizes the importance of exercises of this nature, consolidating, in Mercosur, the so-called Military Diplomacy.” Next, other Cooperation in

defense initiatives will be presented that preceded the Mercosur foundation and/or strengthen an operating environment, further strengthening the assertion of the relationship between defense and integration.

Fraterno Operation: The Navies Cooperation

The history of Cooperation in Defense between Brazil and Argentina goes back to the activities of *Unitas* Operation during the 1960s, the formation of the Atlantic Maritime Area Control (AMAC), established in 1967 and the *Atlantis* Operation in 1968. Regarding AMAC, the exercise was characterized by being a bilateral operation between Brazil and Argentina, however without an autonomous initiative. Another factor to be highlighted is that the exercise fell within the scope of hemispheric security, given that the South Atlantic Maritime Area (SAMA) comprised a subdivision, within the scope of TIAR, in the maritime area of the Americas.

After this joint exercise, there was another exercise, called *Atlantis*, a second edition of AMAC, in which all the states, until then, components of Mercosur participated. In this context, the Brazilian Navy and Argentine Navy played a key role in establishing Cooperation in Defense between them in rival times, this phenomenon was important to gradually ease tensions.

As a result, of this harmonization, since 1978, Brazilian and Argentine Navies realize a combined exercise called *Fraterno* Operation. This Cooperation is truly relevant because it was the first military operation organized by the Navies of both countries. Throughout various *Fraterno* Operation editions, many means of combat were used, such as corvettes, submarines, tankers, and frigates. The operation is so successful that, except for 1979 and 2001, the exercise happens until today's days (Moraes, 2010, 95), showing that the Cooperation in Defense, in this case, has a long-term nature. In a document addressed to the Presidency of the Republic, Minister of the Brazilian Navy, Admiral Maximiliano Eduardo da Silva Fonseca, set out his analysis of combined exercise.

In 1978, a combined operation was conducted with the Navy of the Argentine Republic along the Brazilian coast, with the participating ships entering national ports. In addition to contributing to the professional improvement of the members of our Fleet, Fraterno Operation, as this operation was called and is known, contributed positively to ratifying the understanding that must exist between the Argentine and Brazil Navies regarding continental defense, as well as for mutual trust between two countries. For the current year, the Argentine Navy has proposed that exercises be conducted on its coast and that the ships visit the Mar del Plata and Buenos Aires ports. The Fraterno Operation should be carried out during the period between the end of June and the beginning of July, not implying expenses with foreign currency. (...) (Navy Documentation Service 1980, *apud* Moreira 2008, p. 124, emphasis added).¹⁶

Through this assertion, one may observe the concern and interest on the part of the Brazilian Navy in strengthening mutual trust, not only between the Armed Forces but also between countries. It is worth mentioning, “the first edition of the operation took place even before the signing of the Itaipu-Corpus Tripartite Agreement (1979), an important turning point in Brazil-Argentine relations” (Moraes, 2010, 96). In the Argentine Navy, the operation also obtained high acceptance and this fact was expressed in the letter addressed to the Minister of the Brazilian Navy, written by the Commander-in-Chief of

the Argentine Navy, in which the desire for the exercise to take place annually was exposed (Moreira, 2008, 124).

I am particularly grateful to address Your Excellency, to ratify what was personally discussed during his visit to our country, of the high degree of interest of our Navy in conducting the Combined Fraterno Operation annually. The success achieved from a professional and personal point of view in the two previous Operations carried out in 1978 and 1980 are favorable antecedents to support the annual performance of these operations. With entry by the respective participating units at the corresponding ports. As we also discussed, an Amphibious Operation could be added to the combined exercises to complete the professional part of them (Navy Documentation Service, 1980, *apud* Moreira, 2008, 124-125, emphasis added).¹⁷

The Fraterno Operation in 1981 was remarkable because the Argentine group participation to assist in the planning of the next Fraterno Operation (Moreira, 2008, 125). In the report, the officers stated, “that they felt as if they were working in their units.”¹⁸ In addition, they also declared “that they considered that moment to be historic for both Navies.”¹⁹

Another exercise, in 1993, contributed to consolidating the relationship between the Brazilian and

16 In the original: “Em 1978, foi realizada uma operação conjunta com a Armada da República Argentina ao longo do litoral brasileiro, tendo os navios participantes entrado em portos nacionais. Além de concorrer para o aprimoramento profissional dos integrantes de nossa Esquadra, a Operação FRATERNO, conforme foi denominada e é conhecida essa operação, **contribuiu positivamente para ratificar os entendimentos que devem existir entre as Marinhas da Argentina e do Brasil quanto à defesa continental, bem como para a confiança mútua entre os dois países.** Para o corrente ano, a Armada Argentina propôs que os exercícios fossem realizados em seu litoral e que os navios visitassem os portos de Mar del Plata e Buenos Aires. A Operação FRATERNO deverá ser realizada durante o período compreendido entre final de junho e princípio de julho, não implicando em despesas com moeda estrangeira. (...)”

17 In the original: “Sou particularmente grato de me dirigir a V. Exa. para ratificar o conversado pessoalmente em sua visita ao nosso país, do alto grau de interesse de nossas Armadas em efetuarem anualmente a Operação Combinada FRATERNO. **São antecedentes propícios para fundamentar a realização anual destas operações, o êxito alcançado desde o ponto de vista profissional e pessoal nas duas Operações anteriores concretizadas nos anos de 1978 e 1980.** As Operações poderiam realizar-se em forma alternada, em um ou outro litoral marítimo, com entrada das respectivas unidades participantes nos portos correspondentes. Como conversamos também, poder-se-ia agregar aos exercícios combinados uma Operação Anfíbia, para completar a parte profissional deles. (Serviço de Documentação da Marinha 1980, *apud* Moreira 2008, 124-125, grifo nosso).

18 In the original: “que se sentiam como se estivessem trabalhando em suas próprias unidades”.

19 In the original: “também que consideravam aquele momento como histórico para as duas Marinhas”.

Argentine Navy, Araex Operation, which had the purpose of using naval air means. As it has not had an operational aircraft carrier since 1988, the Argentine Navy expressed exercises with the Brazilian Navy aimed at maintaining the training and technical capabilities of its naval aviation (Moraes, 2010, 96-97). Over the years, the cooperation between the navies intensified, and in 1997, when the Brazilian Navy acquired twenty-three fighter bombers²⁰, the Argentine Navy sent two officers to join the Brazilian entourage and assist both in negotiations and technical evaluations (Castro and D'araújo, 2001, 284-285).

The Argentine participation in this acquisition was due to the experience they had with the A-4 Skyhawk aircraft and the relationship they had, in 1994 Brazil sent its first pilot to be trained in Argentina and Uruguay. Due to disagreements between the Brazilian Navy and Air Force, the support given by the Argentine Navy was essential for the creation and development of fixed-wing aviation in the Brazilian Navy. This relationship became so close that a direct connection between the Naval Commands was created. Admiral Mauro César Rodrigues Pereira, Minister of the Brazilian Navy at the time, reported that, when he acquired the fighters from Kuwait, he needed a specialist to help him in the negotiations and asked the Argentine Navy for advice (Castro and D'araújo, 2001, 285).

On the part of the Air Force, the then Minister of Air Force, Brigadier Lélío Vianna Lobo stated that the acquisition of the aircraft surprised him and that, concerning training with Argentina, the information came to his attention “through different channels”.²¹ Differences about fixed-wing aviation were not only between the Navy and the Air Force, the Army also opposed this attack by the Brazilian Navy and General Zenildo Zoroastro de Lucena, at the time Minister of the Army, even classified as “crap” the A-4 Skyhawk. In response, Admiral Mauro César made the dispute against the Brazilian Air Force public, stating that this debate had already taken place during the

Castello Branco government (1964-1967) (Castro and D'araújo, 2001, 222-284).

Furthermore, since then, Navy officers were not allowed to train even as civil aviation pilots. Therefore, the Brazilian Navy sent its pilots to Argentina and Uruguay to obtain their aviator's licenses and did not choose to train them at the Brazilian Air Force. Another collaboration between Navies occurred in the acquisition, by Brazil, of the Greenhalgh class frigates. Because they had turbines that were unknown to Brazilians, Argentina was asked to support the training of sailors, given that the Argentine Navy had more qualified professionals for this type of equipment (Castro and D'araújo, 2001, 222-284).

Gaúcho Project: The Armies Cooperation

Following the example of Fraternal Operation, the Gaúcho Project, an airborne general-purpose light vehicle – “Viatura Leve de Emprego Geral Aerotransportável” (VLEGA) –, was a partnership between two Armed Forces, specifically, the Brazilian and Argentine armies. This development was not the result of a dialogue between foreign ministries or defense ministries. This project stands out in the scope of this work, as it is the first partnership between two states in the Cooperation in Defense field, strictly, in the Military Technology Cooperation.

Figure 1. The airborne general-purpose light vehicle “Gaúcho”



Source: Ctex, 2022

20 The Brazilian government purchased 23 Douglas A-4 Skyhawk Fighter-bombers from Kuwait

21 In the original: “por vias transversas”.

As previously mentioned, relations between the armed forces of Brazil and Argentina were marked by a history of hostilities, however, Guillermo Lafferriere e German Soprano (2015, p. 155) highlight that such diplomatic relations, especially between the land forces, “have changed significantly since a historic change took place. in bilateral relations with the issues raised by their democratically elected civilian governments in promoting the 1980s.” According to the authors, with the end of dictatorships in both countries, the Armies of Brazil and Argentina found themselves in a position to build new bilateral relations through cooperation in defense to advance a more cooperative and integrative process (Lafferriere and Soprano, 2015).

Regarding Gaúcho Project, the agreement between the Commands of both Armies emerged after the visit of the Argentine Commander to the Brazilian Commander, in June 2003, with the beginning of the project in December started. At a meeting in Rio de Janeiro, the Armies defined the vehicle’s components and the location where they would be built. In Brazil, the Army Technological Center was responsible for developing the fuel system, electrical system, brake system, cooling system, accessories, and weapons. In addition, Rio’s War Arsenal was responsible for manufacturing the prototype, and the Army Evaluation Center and Columbus Company were responsible for evaluating the prototype (Defesanet, 2006; La Nación, 2006).

In Argentina, the Directorate of Research, Development, and Production of the Army was responsible for developing the steering system, shock absorber system, chassis cage, bodywork, transmission, and powertrain. In addition, the La Plata University and the National Institute of Industrial Technology, responsible for the research, Mechanizes Brigade 11th and Armored Cavalry Exploration Squadron Coronel Juan Pascual Pringles, responsible for testing and evaluating prototype (Defesanet, 2006; La Nación, 2006).

In May 2004, finally, was jointly announced by the Brazilian Defense Minister, José Viegas Filho, and the Argentine Defense Minister, José Pampuro. Regarding the division of trademarks and patents, all rights were divided fifty percent for each. Already in the making of the vehicle, the

assembly of the first phase began in Argentina, and, in 2005, this first prototype was transported to Rio de Janeiro (Gomes, 2007). In the same year, on November 30 in Puerto Iguazú, the Framework Agreement on Cooperation in Defense between Brazil and Argentina was signed. This agreement stated that:

The principles of equality, reciprocity, and mutual interest will govern Cooperation between the Parties, in line with the respective national legislation and with the assumed international obligations. Its main objective is to strengthen political cooperation in defense matters, through the exchange of experiences in the design and management of defense policies and actions in the areas of planning, budgetary management, research and development, logistical support, and the acquisition of products and services of defense.”²²

The agreement was particularly important because paved the way to institutionalize Brazil and Argentina’s cooperation and introduce the chancelleries and the Ministry of Defense in the development of the project. The Army Technological Center was responsible for building and evaluating the vehicle, which was sent semi-manufactured. In March 2006, the prototype was presented at the Brazilian Army Headquarters, with the visit of the Army Commander, the Chief of the Science and Technology Department, and the Chief of the Army Technological Center, the Argentines Commanders, were represented by the Chief of the General Staff and the Chief of the Directorate of Research, Development and Production. After the presentation, the vehicle returned to Argentina, and after finalizing the tests, in January 2007, the Gaúcho was brought to Brazil again for

22 In the original: “A cooperação entre as Partes será regida pelos princípios da igualdade, da reciprocidade e do interesse mútuo, em consonância com as respectivas legislações nacionais e com as obrigações internacionais assumidas. Tem por objetivo principal fortalecer a cooperação política em matéria de defesa, por meio da troca de experiências em desenho e gestão de políticas de defesa e de ações nas áreas de planejamento, gestão orçamentária, pesquisa e desenvolvimento, apoio logístico e aquisição de produtos e serviços de defesa”.

final evaluation (Gomes, 2007; Defesanet, 2006; Defesanet, 2005).

Through Ordinance nº111, on September 21, was created the Permanent Monitoring Committee of Commission VLEGA's Binational Development Project, Gaúcho Project, by the Brazilian Army to observe the project development. In addition, search for a public/private partnership to participate in vehicle production and present a business proposal about the propriety rights with the industries. The tests finish around the end of 2007 with the eight vehicles manufactured, finalizing the pre-series of the productions. One prototype was sent, in March 2009, to Brazil for new tests, however, because the financial issues, the production did not begin in 2009, being postponed to the second period of 2010 (Amarante, 2013, 39; Brasil, 2007, s/p; Argentina, 2007, s/p).

As stated by Moraes (2010, 113), is important to highlight the army's productivity in cooperating and producing the Gaúcho. He signals that the project does not represent "an action inserted one set of foreign policy measures," because until 2005, with the project finished, both chancelleries had not signed the bilateral deal. When the government perceived the success of the project, introduced in a bilateral deal a Complementary Adjustment to the Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement, in November 2005.

Observing project regional impact, José Carlos Albano do Amarante (2013, 45), presents "the fact of the Gaúcho being a development with the Mercosur components had attracted the interests of other countries, such as Uruguay".²³ The Cooperation in Defense in military technology might represent an advantage to Uruguay and all the region, as it reinforces friendships and mutual trust among them, improves the Armed Forces interoperability, and reduce acquisition and transport costs, in addition, to reinforcing the commercial bonds among countries.

23 In the original: "o fato de o Gaúcho ser um desenvolvimento com componentes exclusivos do Mercosul tem atraído o interesse de outros países da região, como o Uruguai"

kc-390 Case: The Aeronautical Cooperation

Analyzing the Aeronautical Cooperation stands out the kc-390 project, a multi-mission tactical freighter. The cargo plane development sets up such as a more recent Technological Cooperation between Brazil and Argentina, however, it should be noted this case does not set up bilateral cooperation as the other cases.

Figure 2. The Multi-mission Transport Aircraft kc-390



Source: FAB, 2023.

Around the 2000s, searching substitute for the cargo plane Hercules C-130, the Brazilian Air Force realized an Analysis of Alternatives to assist in decision-making. In this research, the Air Force pointed 4 alternatives: I) to change parts and make actualization in the C-130; II) substitute the C-130; if the best alternative is the substitution; III) acquire the C-130J, the modern C-130; or IV) acquire/develop a new freighter. Observing operational conditions, logistics, development of the Brazilian Defense Industry, and risks and aligned with the National Defense Strategy, the Air Force choose to develop a new freighter aircraft (Ribeiro, 2017, 253-254).

A relevant fact to present is the research by Advanced Project Department from Embraer, even before the Air Force viability studies, searching develop a medium-sized military cargo plane. First, Embraer, for being the most offered load capacity on the market, opted to develop a new aircraft of about 3 and 20 tons. After that, the company focused on the cargo with 25 years of operations

that, because of that, would be substituted in a few years. In the final part of the viability study, Embraer found a potential market of about seven hundred units (Dalla-Costa and Souza-Santos, 2011; Pereira and Jasper, 2022).

In 2007, after presenting the project to the Ministry of Defense, the purpose to develop cargo planes was presented to Aeronautic General Staff, and in this meeting, was defined the aircraft specifications. Around 2008, was auditioned in the deal the operational requirements established per General Staff jointly technical required, logistical, and industrial. The inclusion of that requirement assists the customer to know if the company can attend to the demands. This stage is essential to both parties, it allowed a positive classification of the viability of conducting the project. After that, the parties made a common deal, and in April 2009, signed the contract to develop the KC-390 (Ribeiro, 2017, 254-255).

After the contract enters into force, the phase of preliminary studies begins, which ended in May 2010, after a year of studies. Next the initial definitions phase began, the stage responsible for detailing the project and its structure, as assembly, interface, and design. Subsequently, the Joint Definition Phase began, in which the parties define the connections and systemic interfaces of the aircraft. This phase is truly relevant as only after its completion is it possible to detail the cargo plane's components and deliver to each company the part that it is responsible for developing. After this stage, Embraer begins the search for partnerships and the search for potential customers, in addition to also discussing the conditions for delivery and the values of the possible transaction (Ribeiro, 2017, 255-256).

In 2012, the initial phases were concluded, and the final phase began, already having the structure design, aerodynamics, technologies, systems, and processes to produce the aircraft. From then on, the manufacturing stages of two prototypes and civil and military certification began. Proceeding with the construction phases, in March 2013, the Critical Project Review was conducted, with the participation of the Air Force in visits to Embraer's facilities. During these visits, the company presented models and tools used in the manufacture of the KC-390, as well as the full-size simulator and cockpit structure.

This phase was responsible for demonstrating the project maturity and the prototype manufacturing consolidation (Ribeiro, 2017, 256).

The first aircraft presentation event, the so-called roll-out, took place at the Embraer factory located in Gavião Peixoto in October 2014. After the prototype presentation, it was held the first test flight with the aircraft, in February 2015. Around 1,110 Embraer specialists were tasked with evaluating the performance of the plane and in the third month, the prototype had already flown more than 50 hours, a fact that demonstrated the project's maturity. The series of tests continued in 2016, reaching 150 hours of flight tests. That same year, the second prototype construction was completed and, like the first, it entered the testing campaign (Ribeiro, 2017, 256-257).

Lastly, the testing phase was completed, and the freighter obtained the certification required for the aircraft to enter operation, such as certifications from the National Civil Aviation Agency, Initial Operation Capability (IOC), and Full Operational Capability (FOC), both certifications are based on the aircraft operational capacity (Ribeiro, 2017, 257). After the initial delay in delivery of the cargo planes, in October 2019, the first KC-390 was delivered to Air Force, in December 2019 the second aircraft was delivered, and in June 2020 the third delivery took place of the fourth freighter. In December 2021, the fifth cargo plane was delivered and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the schedule was delayed. In July 2023, Embraer delivered the sixth aircraft to the Air Force, the latter being the first with FOC certification (Andrade, 2021, Vinholes, 2020).

For the KC-390 construction, Embraer had the collaboration of several international suppliers. Such partners contributed by making a viable investment that would relieve Brazil of the manufacturing cost and committed to acquiring military aircraft examples. Regarding international partnerships, countries such as Argentina, Portugal, and the Czech Republic participated in industrial cooperation, and other nations such as Colombia and Chile started the process, however, they did not sign an agreement on the industrial partnership (Andrade, 2021).

About the partnership with Argentina, a highlight of this work is the company responsible for manufacturing it was Argentine Aircraft Factory. This company supplied parts of the aircraft such as the flap fairing, the landing gear doors, the spoilers, the tailpipe, the electronic cabinet, and the ramp door (Ribeiro, 2017, 264). Argentina’s participation in this project was essential for the country to acquire the cargo plane in the future. Due to conflicting relations between Argentina and England, one of the countries that supply equipment to the KC-390, the Argentines would face an arms embargo, as the freighter has English technology.

Recently, Argentina faced this problem when it tried to acquire about 10 FA-50 Fighting Eagle jets by Korean Aerospace Industries (KAI), from South Korea. In a letter sent to the Argentine Ambassador,

Alfredo Carlos Bascou, the Senior Manager of KAI, Martin Chun, highlighted that in the composition of the jets, there are six main British components.

“We regret to inform you that the UK export license issue has not been resolved at this time. Although KAI has yet to find a solution, KAI is making a reasonable effort to resolve this UK export license issue” (Valduga, 2020, s/p).

The importance of cooperation in military technology at the regional level is highlighter since with the strengthening of the South American Defense Industrial Base, dependence on external technologies and future embargoes is reduced. To illustrate this relationship of dependence on external technologies, below is a list of the main international suppliers of the KC-390 project.

Table 1. Main partner companies of the KC-390 project

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	COMPANY	COMPONENTS
Germany	Liebherr	Air conditioning system Cabin pressurization control system
Germany/ United States/Japan	IAE	Integrated propulsion system
Argentina	FADEA	Flap fairing and spoilers Landing gear doors and ramp doors Syrup cone and electronic cabinet
Brazil	LHColus	Troop Seating and Stretchers
Brazil	Eleb	Landing gear
Brazil	Aerotron	Shielding
Brazil/Israel	Ael Sistemas/Elbit	Mission computer HUD (head-up display)
Brazil/Portugal	OGMA	Fuselage center
United States	Rockwell Collins	Basic Avionics
United States	DRS Defense Solutions	Cargo handling and release system
United States	Goodrich	Electronic actuators and electrical controls for the primary flight control system

France	Safran (Hispano-Suiza)	Emergency electrical system
		Wheel and brake assembly
France	Messier-Bugatti-Dowty	Landing gear hydraulic components brake control system
England	Bae Systems	FBW Flight Command System
England	Esterline	Throttle Lever
England	Cobham	Air Refueling Pod
Ireland	Survitec GR	Lifeboats and Elt
Israel	Elbit	EVS
Israel	ELOP	Self-protection and countermeasures system
Italy	Selex Galileo	Tactical Radar
Portugal	EEA	
Czech Republic	Vodochody	

Source: Andrade, 2021

The approximation and strengthening of dialogues between South American countries and their defense industries would be interesting paths for the technological development of Brazil. Technical and industrial cooperation in defense would mitigate the technological dependence of South American countries on traditional US and European suppliers. Cooperation in the Defense Base brings with it beneficial elements for the development of technologies as costs and industrial intelligence might be shared, procurement might be guaranteed by contract, and can also foster regional integration (Pasqualini, 2021; Andrade, 2021)

Considering the low industrial capacity in terms of defense in South America, cooperation and promotion of the Industrial Base seems to be the best resource. Regional integration would be the best alternative to mitigate technological dependence and vulnerability to embargoes on South American nations. In addition, through integration, the defense industry would gain scale in production, making its products economically competitive in the international market (Pasqualini 2021; Andrade, 2021)

Conclusion

The central objective of this paper was to present the defense as an integrating element in the Brazil and Argentina relations and, consequently, within the Mercosur scope. Since defense is a state policy, it has a perennial characteristic at its core. This factor is essential for an institution not to change or fall apart with changes in government. Based on this assumption, we started with the hypothesis that defense would be an integrating element in the relations between Brazil and Argentina, consequently, within Mercosur. In addition, the construction of an institution dedicated to this purpose, whether based on the expansion of Mercosur or the creation of another regional arrangement, would provide sedimentation of the fundamental political process for integration in South America.

Relations between these countries were marked by a history of conflicts and disputes, such as the Cisplatina War and the War against Oribe and Rosas. However, the rapprochement of the countries in the 1970s marked an important change in Brazilian and Argentine relations, cooperation

between these nations was a relevant stabilizing axis in the Southern Cone and defense played a significant role in this process. Cooperation in Defense, in this case, represented by the combined exercises between Brazilian and Argentine Navies, represented the beginning of the process of approximation and strengthening of relations between the countries over the years.

In addition to the military aspects, Cooperation in Defense was used as a diplomatic instrument, being able to reinforce the bonds of friendship between Buenos Aires and Brasília. Based on this principle, the combined operation, “Fraterno Operation,” within the Armed Forces scope the technological cooperation “Gaúcho Project,” within the Land Force scope, and the “KC-390 Project” within the Air Force scope, were analyzed.

It should be noted that Cooperation in Defense of the Navies and the Land Forces was marked by strictly departing from initiatives by the Armed Forces of both countries. It is worth noting that although the initiative came from the armed forces, such cooperation does not exclude the Defense Ministry’s and its representatives’ participation. In the case of Fraterno Operation, the military regime was still in force, so the degree of autonomy of the military was total. In the Gaúcho project, technological cooperation began between the armies, however soon after the armies became interested in developing a vehicle, the ministries of defense of Brazil and Argentina coordinated the cooperation. Cooperation in Defense brought close and consolidated the ties of mutual trust and an integrating element within Mercosur. Thus, as presented in the paper, the defense was not only an integrating element but also a solidifying element of relations between Brasília and Buenos Aires, also strengthening the Mercosur scope.

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