

THE BINATIONAL CRUZ DEL SUR PEACE FORCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF TRUST BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present the Cruz del Sur Peace Force as an important element in the evolution of diplomatic relations between Argentina and Chile. Such relations have changed from a conflicting pattern in the area of defense and security until the early 1980s to one of high cooperation. To achieve its goal, the article draws on the regional academic literature about “mutual trust measures” (MTM) to point to the establishment of the binational peace force as strong evidence that the relationship between the two countries is already in the cooperation plan, the ultimate stage of mutual trust in defense.

Keywords: Argentine-Chilean Relations. Cruz del Sur Peace Force. Mutual Confidence Measures.

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INTRODUCTION

The way in which countries pay attention to their own regional or global security issues varies to a large extent according to their national building processes. These include factors such as border formation and regional hegemony projects, among others. According to Raymond Aron (2001), conflict and war - or the risk of them occurring - are key elements in the formation of nations and states, often structuring their social cohesion and shaping their foreign policies. In the case of the relationship between Argentina and Chile, both countries had been persistent rivals who were minutes from a war conflagration due to border disputes in the late 1970s. The complex process of overcoming disputes about the lengthened, mountainous borders of the Andes. It took decades, with profound implications for both countries, as is manifested in their current bilateral relations.

Argentina and Chile's mutual interests in freezing their disputes led to a "conflict transformation process" from the mid-1980s onwards (ORSO & CAPELETTI, 2015), by developing a virtuous cycle that has lasted over 30 years and transformed relations between the two countries. Its foreign and security policies started to have, at high levels, bilateral mutual trust measures (MTM), which ultimately led to the establishment of a permanent binational military force: the Cruz del Sur Combined Joint Force. This unit, whose command structure was created in 2007, represents the most ambitious military integration project in Latin America.

Francisco Rojas Aravena considers that:

Mutual trust measures are an instrument and technique for peace development; they do not resolve conflicts or interest differences; rather, they enable communication, making the various actors' courses of action involved more transparent and predictable. It should be noted that the process presupposes common sense and willingness to avoid confrontation (ROJAS ARAVENA, 2002, p. 34).

Hedley Bull's classic book "The Anarchical Society" (1995) points to three thinking traditions in the study of International Relations. The Hobbesian, which envisages the relationship among states as governed by the sign of war, the Kantian, which focuses on the development of transnational interactions, and the Grocian, which emphasizes the most cooperative aspects in the relationship between states and to which the

author is affiliated. Cooperation creates shared norms and mutually recognized institutions, which constitutes an international society. In the case analyzed, the MTM were an important part of the evolution of bilateral relations between Chile and Argentina towards a more orderly, productive and peaceful interaction. Borrowing the author's argument, we could say that in recent decades international relations in the region would have moved from a Hobbesian pattern to another of Grocian nature.

Such history is also consistent with the idea that the establishment of a Security Community would be underway in the area. This concept implies a situation in which states do not see, under any hypothesis, the use of violence in their reciprocal relations. For the first time observed operating between North Atlantic countries (DEUTSCH et al., 1957), such a community has a level of integration and mutual knowledge among its members that would make it impossible to resolve disputes between them by military means³.

MTM allow transforming the pattern of interstate relationship from a primary hostility situation into another, which is more productive and cooperative. In the case of the long process of trust building between Argentina and Chile, its starting point was the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1984. This was followed by the 1991 Argentine-Chilean Presidential Joint Declaration, signed by Presidents Carlos Menem and Patrick Aylwin. This evolution of mutual trust between the two countries has continued and can be detected to the present time.

The trust achieved in the defense area between Argentina and Chile is more institutionalized and consolidated than that existing, for example, among key strategic partners in South America, such as Argentina and Brazil. However, contemporary bilateral relations between Brazil and Argentina were not marked by territorial disputes that would threaten the preparation and even eventual emergence of war, as happened with Argentina and Chile. The historic Brazil and Argentina geopolitical rivalry has been replaced since the creation of MERCOSUR by close cooperation and dense, diversified dialogue.

The aim of this article is to present and analyze contemporary Argentine-Chilean relations, considering the creation of *Força Cruz del Sur*

³Deutsch divides the Security Communities into two types: amalgamated and pluralistic. The former would have higher levels of integration with centralized decision making. They would eventually lead to the merger of the states involved. Those of the pluralistic type, most commonly found in the international system, would maintain the individuality of cooperative entities (DEUTSCH et al., 1957). The latter type applies to the case.

(Southern Cross) Peace Force as an important element in the construction of MTM in the defense area between the two countries. To this end, this text is divided into three parts. The first one describes the historical evolution of Argentine-Chilean defense and security relations. After that, we try to evaluate the measures' development of MTM between both countries from 1984 on, based on the theoretical model created by Francisco Rojas Aravena (2002). The creation of Cruz del Sur Peace Force is presented as a planning element for cooperation, the last step in the process of building mutual trust. In the third part, we analyze the political and operational challenges that the binational defense cooperation instrument faces. Lastly we present the final considerations.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR ARGENTINE-CHILEAN RELATIONS

The fact that Argentina and Chile share borders along the Andes has made their bilateral history the expression of a series of borderline disputes that, since the mid-19th century, have focused on their foreign policies. Several controversies were fixed in the historical memory of both nations, such as the arms races of 1898 and 1902, including the impending conflict of December 1901, the dispute for *Laguna del Desierto* (Desert Lagoon) and *Crisis del Beagle* (Beagle Crisis) (FAUNDES, 2009). The latter almost led to war in December 1978. In fact, few moments before direct confrontation, the conflict was avoided by the acceptance of the mediation by Pope John Paul II.

Both Argentina and Chile were colonial constituencies of the Spanish Crown. However, they were administered by different dependencies: the *Virreinato del Rio de la Plata* and the *Capitanía General de Chile*. During the 19th and 20th centuries, border demarcations between the new independent states became undefined, producing a recurring source of tensions and conflicts that were mostly solved in the 1990s (MONCAYO, 2008). The main problems arose in the border area of the Beagle Channel in Patagonia. The history of the conflict dates back to 1888, seven years after the signing of the *Tratado de Limites* (Treaty of Limits)⁴. In 1901 appeared the

⁴The Treaty of Limits, signed in 1881, whereby Chile gave up its claims to Patagonia, while Argentina renounced its rights to the Magellan Strait, had the addition of a protocol in 1883 that established the bi-oceanic principle. The protocol attested that the sovereignty of each state over its respective shoreline was absolute. Therefore, Chile could not claim any points in the Atlantic, nor could Argentina claim any points in the Pacific. However, disputes over the final demarcation of borders in the area have continued (ITURRA, 2014).

first Argentine map on which some of the islands located on and south of the Channel were drawn under Argentine sovereignty. Despite the small size of the islands, their strategic location between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans has led to a long conflict between the two South American states. For Argentina, a resolution placing the rights to the canal under Chilean control would isolate the city and the Argentine naval bases located in Ushuaia, the capital of *Tierra del Fuego* Province. In addition, the islands in the eastern end of the Beagle Channel border the Atlantic, and their occupation by Chile would threaten the ‘bi-oceanic principle’ established by the Treaty of Limits (ITURRA, 2014).

Using a bilateral arbitration agreement, signed in 1971, the dispute was eventually referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, the Court’s verdict, known in 1977, was contrary to Argentine interests and thus rejected. This raised tensions and brought both countries very close to an open war in December 1978. Both were then governed, by military dictatorships. Tension scaled up, with troops deployed, reservists convened and both fleets ready to begin combat operations. It was then that Pope John Paul II interceded and offered to mediate the conflict. His proposal was accepted by the parties and the war was avoided (MONCAYO, 2008).

Relations between the two countries remained cold and full of distrust. During the Falklands War of 1982, Chile, despite its neutral stance, was the only Latin American state to support the British forces, even though not ostensibly⁵.

Papal mediation, however, proved to be successful, by the signing of the above mentioned Treaty of Peace and Friendship in November 1984, under the presidency of Raul Alfonsín in Argentina. This agreement delimited the sovereignty of the two countries on the Beagle Channel and adjacent seas. It granted Chile all the islands in the Channel zone, with territorial sea but no projection to the Atlantic, and recognized Argentina’s freedom of access to its Channel ports. The Treaty created a Conciliation Commission, and also set the conditions for convening an Arbitral Tribunal whose decisions would be binding on the parties. In addition, the Treaty gave rise to a permanent Binational Commission to intensify economic cooperation and physical integration between the two nations (ITURRA, 2014).

⁵ 17 years after the conflict, specific data on such aid came to light. In return for providing attack and reconnaissance aircrafts, anti-aircraft missiles, and long-range radar, Chile provided the British with intelligence data about Argentine forces during the conflict that, in the words of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, made it possible to “abbreviate war and save many lives” (YOFRE, 2011, p. 335).

One of the fundamental aspects of the process initiated by the 1984 Treaty was the official establishment of a Binational Commission for Physical Cooperation and Integration between Chile and Argentina in October 1985. The first years of operation of this commission were not very fruitful, which was reversed from 1990 (ARANCIBIA CLAVEL, 2006, p.13). The impacts of the creation of the Binational Commission happened at two levels. The first was bilateral, which directly affected the countries concerned. The second was local and reached regions that, through physical integration - enabling of border crossings and creation of corridors - allowed mutual development and interdependence. According to Ruz (2008), Percoco (2014) and Iturra (2014), in the long run this treaty would be the cornerstone for the integration process of the two countries, as it has shaped a consistent and sustainable solution of border problems in the southern zone and projected a non-belligerent future scenario for bilateral relations through the establishment of conciliation and arbitration mechanisms.

Later, the political conjuncture defined by the processes of transition and democratic consolidation in both countries created the conditions, on both sides of the border, for governors to politically propel an integration process (RUZ, 2008). This process began in May 1990, with a series of bilateral meetings, which resulted in the Joint Declaration of Presidents Carlos Menem and Patricio Aylwin, through which a common bilateral agenda was drawn up. A decisive day for their convergence was August 2, 1991, when, together with the signing of the Presidential Declaration of Limits, the delegates signed another eight documents, promoting "the basic conditions for the physical integration of both nations (FAUNDES, 2009, p. 58). In the declaration, a Joint Limits Commission was established to resolve 22 pending borderline points, and a decision was made to refer the boundary demarcation in the sector between *Hito 62* and Mount Fitz Roy - *Laguna del Desierto* to arbitration. Miriam Colacrai (2004) highlights that the breadth of subjects covered has made possible a shift in the axis of bilateral relations, from conflict over bordering controversies to a work agenda on the way to integration.

An indicator of the new ties development was that between 1990 and 1995, Argentina and Chile reached a series of agreements on the most diverse topics, such as transportation, trade, education, physical integration, energy integration, customs, environment and tourism. This integrative effort was accompanied by increased reciprocal trade,

the creation of an integrated border controls system and, finally, Chile's accession to MERCOSUR as an associate member (PERCOCO, 2014).

However, one of the controversies that continued during the 1990s was the *Hielos Continentales* (Continental Ice) dispute. In order to reach a solution in this area, a polygonal line⁶ had been drawn, which should be approved by the Argentine and Chilean parliaments. However, after intense political and diplomatic negotiations, the "polygonal" was set aside. Finally, in 1998, Argentine Chancellor Guido Di Tella and his Chilean counterpart Jose Miguel Inzulza signed the "Agreement to draw the boundary from Mount Fitz Roy to Cerro Daudet" (1998), which determined the solution of all main border issues between both nations (COLACRAI, 2004). From that moment on, the bilateral relationship became stronger and several mechanisms of dialogue were established, such as the Argentine-Chilean Joint Parliamentary Commission. It contributed to qualify the political profile of the relationship, recognizing parliamentary work as the axis of the democratic system and as a factor for strengthening bilateral ties. Likewise, the establishment of the Permanent High-Level Policy Consultation and Coordination Mechanism, between both chancelleries, created a space to coordinate issues on bilateral, regional and international agendas (COLACRAI, 2004, p. 33).

The practice of the *Cumbres Presidenciales Anuales*, installed from 1990, continued during the early years of the 21st century. The visit of Chilean President Ricardo Lagos, in May 2000, inaugurated the cycle of the new millennium. This visit resulted in the Argentine-Chilean declaration, which for the first time characterized their relationship as a "strategic alliance", emphasizing complementarity and shared common interests. Since then, as Lorenzini (2017) points out, the term "strategic alliance" has been frequent in the presidential statements and foreign policy speeches of both countries.

From 2003, after the assumption of President Néstor Kirchner and during the three Kirchnerist mandates, the direction for deepening cooperation between both nations continued but, as Percoco (2014) and Lorenzini (2017), pointed out, presented also some crises in the relationship, such as *Crisis del Gas*⁷; the episode of "espionage" that took place in

⁶ This line was established from straight lines that linked points, rocky outcrops and other geographic features. Designed by former Argentine Foreign Secretary Ambassador Juan Carlos Olima, it followed a midline between both Argentina and Chile's maximum lines (COLACRAI, 2004, p. 62).

⁷ Crisis del Gas (Gas crisis) started in 2004 due to the Argentine decision to reduce the

Punta Arenas⁸, and the case of *Nuestros vecinos argentinos* (Our Argentine neighbors)⁹. However, the rapid and effective diplomatic solution of several of these frictions was clear evidence of the depth that the bilateral bond had reached (PERCOCO, 2014). The fact that such incidents did not escalate also demonstrated the political will on both sides to pursue the path of cooperation.

In this regard, the last major event in bilateral diplomacy was the signing of the *Tratado de Maipú de Integración e Cooperación* (Treaty of Maipú for Integration and Cooperation), on October 30, 2009, by Presidents Cristina Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet. The agreement contemplated the deepening of relations in a wide range of topics, among which the creation of a working group to prepare an agreement for free movement of persons between both countries. It also included the commitment to construct a central transandine train and tunnel in the Aguas Negras pass, as well as stimulate joint productive activities between regions and provinces of the two countries. (TREATY OF MAIPÚ, 2009). According to Colacrai, this treaty provides new elements and mechanisms that, if put into practice, could transform the dense and deep relationship of bilateral cooperation between Argentina and Chile into a true strategic alliance (COLACRAI, 2014 apud LORENZINI, 2017).

THE ARGENTINE-CHILEAN EVOLUTION OF TRUST

The concept of “Mutual Trust Measures” (MTM) applies in a broad sense. They constitute agreements and commitments managed between states to mitigate threat perceptions. It should be noted that they are not limited solely to the scope of defense (ROJAS ARAVENA, 2002).

To describe the evolution of MTM between Argentina and Chile, we refer to works by Chilean researchers such as Faundes (2009) and Rojas

volume of gas exported to Chile due to the energy crisis that the country suffered because of its economic recovery after 2001 (LORENZINI, 2017).

⁸ Case occurred in Punta Arenas, at the Argentine Consulate headquarters on November 10, 2003. A note from former Chilean ambassador to Argentina, Juan Gabriel Valdez, in January 2004, acknowledged that the incident was the product of the “rancid anachronistic rivalry”. The officials close to the Argentine chancellor Rafael Bielsa understood the fact in the same way (CECI, 2005).

⁹ “Our Argentine neighbors” was the title of an article published in the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio*, in May 2004, later reproduced by the Argentine newspaper *Clarín*. In this article, Ignacio Walter, renowned Chilean politician, voiced harsh criticism of the Argentine government and the person of President Néstor Kirchner, generating strong controversy on both sides of the Cordillera (NUESTROS VECINOS ARGENTINOS, 2014).

Aravena (2002), as well as Argentines' such as Colacrai (2004), Percoco (2014), Barbarian (2014), among others. These authors share the view that the 1984 Peace and Friendship Treaty was the starting point of the MTM between Chile and Argentina as the beginning of a virtuous cycle aimed at overcoming hostilities and old suspicions. Its consequences can be glimpsed at present by the high level of institutionalized cooperation between the two countries. This is best understood through the four depths of trust detailed by Rojas Aravena (2002, p. 35-36). Are they:

1) Eradication of Distrust: At this first level, states seek to act primarily on the elements that threaten the relationship and thus to show that there are no offensive or threatening behaviors. In this instance, the following types of measures can be highlighted: conflict prevention; construction of communication lines; eradication of suspicion sources; improvement in mutual knowledge; establishment of guiding principles for the "new relationship" and advancements in unilateral actions.

2) Trust Building: implies the establishment of a systematic set of actions that allow the structuring of a new relationship pattern. At this stage, the design of institutional frameworks and the definition of more permanent relationship architectures play a fundamental role. Such instances should alleviate or abolish threat perceptions related to the use of force.

3) Deepening Confidence: At this stage, there is an increase in the various areas of interrelationship: economic, commercial and financial links are normally performed between a significant numbers of social actors. The conflicts and differences that arise do not spill over into other areas, in particular politics. Each thematic area has its own dispute settlement mechanisms.

4) Cooperation Planning: It is associated with the establishment of a political-strategic alliance in which structures, links and networks of interdependence are formed. This is the time for the establishment of common policies among the different state actors, including foreign and defense policies.

ERADICATING DISTRUST

As already mentioned, the foundational measure in the process of building trust, and hence the beginning of eradicating mistrust between Argentina and Chile, was the 1984 Peace and Friendship Treaty. Its importance lies in the fact that it excluded the threat or the use of force

in reciprocal relations and established the obligation of employing only peaceful means to resolve disputes of any kind between the two countries (COLACRAI, 2004).

On the other hand, the Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons, also known as the “*Compromisso de Mendoza*” (Mendoza Commitment), of September 1991, and the ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty, jointly with Brazil, in December 1994, can be understood as highly significant advances in this process (PERCOCO, 2014). According to Colacrai (2004, p. 41), such measures “were key steps in consolidating regional confidence and security, and served also as a facilitating framework for bilateral approximation”.

Other important events happened to consolidate this step. In 1991, the defense ministers of both countries agreed to hold annual meetings of their staffs to address military issues of common interest and possible defense cooperation and coordination formulas. Later, in 1994, the rounds of Conversation between the High Commands of the Armed Forces were celebrated, alternately held in Santiago and Buenos Aires (BARBARO, 2014).

BUILDING TRUST

Strengthening mutual trust measures came at a crucial time in November 1995, when Argentina and Chile signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at strengthening cooperation on issues of mutual interest in the area of defense and security. In effect, the Permanent Security Committee (COMPERSEG) was created, with the goal of strengthening bilateral communication channels in the defense sphere. The committee’s first meeting took place on May 7, 1996, in Buenos Aires (VARNAGY, 2010; BARBARO, 2014). From the outset, COMPERSEG has set itself up as a forum for the advancement and progress of bilateral cooperation and the development of common positions.

In June 1997, the Chilean National Defense General Staff and the Joint Military Staff of Argentina signed the “Regulations of the Inter-Consultation Mechanism between the Joint Chiefs of Defense and National Defense and the High Commands of the Chilean and Argentine Armed Forces”. The regulation was approved through COMPERSEG, and establishes a regime of annual consultation meetings, held alternately in each country (PERCOCO, 2014).

Shortly thereafter, in July 1997, began the annual meetings of the so-called “2 + 2 mechanism” of foreign ministers of defense of Chile and Argentina. This instrument was dedicated to improving Chilean-Argentine bilateral relations in the fields of international security and defense (BARBARO, 2014). In the context of these meetings, it was agreed to carry out joint activities between the Chilean and Argentine military forces. It was agreed to consider the establishment of cooperation formulas in Antarctic territory, deepened the joint analysis of measures to implement the MERCOSUR plus Bolivia and Chile Political Declaration as a Zone of Peace, discussed the strategic situation in the region, and advanced on themes of the disarming agenda (PERCOCO, 2014).

Another important breakthrough within the “trust building” stage was the instrumentation of a “common standardized methodology for measuring defense spending”, an international unprecedented initiative and of great impact at the regional level, which was introduced in November 2002, at the celebration, in Buenos Aires, of the IV Meeting of Consultations of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense of Argentina and Chile (BARBARO, 2014).

Thus, from the second half of the 1990s, a number of bilateral defense structures were institutionalized, notably the *Mecanismo de Interconsultas dos Estados Maiores*, as (Staff Consultation Mechanism), the 2 + 2 meetings, and the COMPERSEG. Thus, MTM reached the second level of “Confidence Building”.

DEEPENING TRUST

This new level is particularly expressed in the intensification of trade and the settlement of the last border dispute (BARBARO, 2014, PERCOCO, 2014). These advances motivated the then Chilean Foreign Minister Juan Gabriel Valdés to announce to the UN General Assembly that the resolution of the last border dispute at the *Continental Hielos*, between Chile and Argentina, would allow the region to develop not only a process of integration but “a true strategic alliance” (VALDÉS, 1999).

However, at the beginning of the new millennium, serious political and institutional problems would occurred at the Argentine internal level. After three years of recession, Argentina falls into an economic, political and social crisis, the highest expression of which is recorded on December

20, 2001, the month of *cacerolazos*¹⁰, looting, and the decree of siege states. In 12 days, Argentina had five supreme mandators. The situation affected the bilateral relationship, but not the political will to cooperate. In this regard, President Eduardo Duhalde's visit to President Ricardo Lagos in October 2002 was significant, in thanks for his efforts before international organizations to assist the neighboring nation. In April of the following year, in the statements made by the Transandine representative, it was pointed out that relations between both nations were going through an excellent moment "marked by the end of the chances of conflict between them and the joint work of the Armed Forces in peace in Cyprus "(CECI, 2005).

It was precisely in the midst of a crisis that the breadth of the defense and security process was best appreciated. The Crisis del Gas of April 2004 can be understood as evidence that the bilateral relationship was in a third level of MTM (FAUNDES, 2009). In essence, the diplomatic conflict unleashed by Argentina's hydrocarbon supply cuts had caused a loss of confidence in the neighboring country's ability to comply with its agreements. Chile sought energy integration with Argentina under the principle of non-discrimination, while Argentina's suspension of supply to Chile was based on serving the internal market. As the problem has reiterated each winter, keeping increasing in the following years, the relationship "gasifies" (FAUNDES, 2009). This was particularly reflected in the letter of protest that Chancellor Soledad Alvear sent to Buenos Aires on April 6, 2004, stating that the gas cut meant "severely eroding the integrative process." However, the issue remained in the sphere of dialogue, discarding the use of force and any pressure measure that could break reciprocal diplomatic relations (FAUNDES, 2009).

In general terms, it can be said that the gas crisis served as proof of the strength of the bilateral institutionality manifested in an urgent situation: while the pace of the relationship was changing, defense ties were deepened, with the integration of Chilean forces in Argentine units in Cyprus, starting in 2003, and the creation of the combined peacekeeping force (PERCOCO, 2014). In this regard, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the 2 + 2 meetings, Defense Minister José Goñi maintained that Chile and Argentina have begun a new phase in defense. Following proposal by Nilda Garré, Argentine Defense Minister, Minister Goñi ratified that "we will stop talking about MTM to start

¹⁰ Cacerolazo is a kind of protest in which people make noise with pans (NT).

talking about cooperation and integration work of the Armed Forces” (MINISTERIO DE LA DEFENSA NATIONAL, 2010).

According to Percoco (2014), Faundes (2009) and Bárbaro (2014), this statement demonstrated a complete paradigm shift, which is the result of a political process of more than 20 years, oriented to a substantial change in the nature of the bilateral bond. There was also a tacit and official recognition that both countries were approaching the fourth generation of MTM, defined by the “planning of cooperation” and the effort towards military integration.

PLANNING COOPERATION: THE CRUZ DEL SUR COMBINED FORCE

The 1984 Peace and Friendship Treaty, the 1991 Presidential Joint Declaration and the resolution through direct negotiations on the gas crisis in 2004 are milestones in the process of consolidating friendship and trust between Chile and Argentina. This course allows us to understand how Buenos Aires and Santiago were able to elaborate a military integration project along the lines of the Cruz del Sur Force, which symbolizes the first steps towards the fourth level in MTM: the planning of cooperation (FAUNDES, 2009; BARBARO, 2014; PERCOCO, 2014).

The first intention to form a joint force took place at a COMPERSEG meeting held in October 2003. It was there that Chile presented a proposal entitled “Measures to develop force training to fulfill Peacekeeping Operations and joint participation in Future Peace Operations” (GARCÍA & TIBILETTI, 2008). This proposal was reviewed by the Armed Forces Joint Staff, the Ministry of Defense, and the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship. Later, in June 2005, the “Ninth Inter-Consultation Meeting of the Armed Forces of Argentina and Chile” was held. On this decisive occasion, it was agreed to discuss the theme of “Joint Combined Participation in Peace Operations” (CALAFELL, 2011).

The joint participation of the two countries sets important precedents in the integration of Chilean fractions in the Argentine contingent operating in the United Nations Mission in Cyprus - UNFICYP, since 1995, and in the mutual collaboration that the contingents of both countries have lent themselves to the United Nations Mission. Stabilization Program - MINUSTAH. In the same vein, we cannot overlook the significant experiences of cooperation and exchange between the respective Peace

Operations Training Centers: CAECOPAZ, Argentina, and CECOPAC, Chile (VÁRNAGY, 2010; GARCÍA & TIBILETTI, 2008).

A decisive step for the formation of the Cruz del Sur Force took place on August 29, 2005, in Santiago, with the signing of the Protocol of Understanding between the Ministries of Defense of the two countries. On that occasion, Argentine and Chilean Defense Ministers José Pampuro and Jaime Ravinet made a commitment to develop, in the short term, a permanent combined peacekeeping force with joint command and personnel and equipment from both countries. (LA INFORMACIÓN, 2005). During the same year four bilateral working meetings were held by the Joint Chiefs of both States, with the responsibility to advance joint cooperation in peace operations. As a result of these meetings, the “Minutes of the Bilateral Agreement between the Ministries of Defense of the Republics of Argentina and Chile for the Establishment of a Combined Peace Force” was signed in December 2005. This agreement established the format of the Joint Joint Staff - EMCC, an essential step for the creation of the Force (VÁRNAGY, 2010).

As a result of this effort, an important agreement was reached between the two countries, entitled “Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Defense of the Argentine Republic and the Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Chile regarding the Combined Cross Peace Force “(MOU), signed December 4, 2006 (CALAFELL, 2011). This MOU (2006) came into force on January 1, 2007 and constitutes the legal-political basis on which the Binational Force was structured. The purpose of the agreement was “to determine the organization and future employment of the Peace Force under UN mandate, by official call and subject to political approval by both countries.” The MOU (2006) contained the following guidelines and actions definition: creation of EMCC composed of personnel from the Argentine and Chilean Armed Forces, with a one-year operation in each country with rotating headquarters in the cities of Buenos Aires and Santiago; organization of land, air and naval components, ready to deploy from May 2008 (MOU, 2006). The last date was not met, but the EMCC began its activities in January 2007, with its initial headquarters in Argentina. The Cruz del Sur Force was initially established with a reduced structure, a total of 12 EMCC officers, would facilitate rapid missions. The administration and financing of the Force ran through independent channels in each nation, as did the contingent that each

country made available to the Force, without the troop constituting a body in itself (ESTADO MAIOR CONJUNTO, 2012).

The force was structured on three essential principles: a) Combined and joint; b) Following the “Haiti” model; and c) Balanced (MAC-KINNON & PÉREZ, 2008). Together, these principles provide the necessary breadth for the three elements of the armed forces of each country to participate, obeying the combined character of the action (CALAFELL, 2011). The key issue, however, was that it was a structure in which the search for balance has to do with the initiative’s own political purpose: to make available to the international community a truly binational force (PERCOCO, 2014).

That MOU (2006) determined the organization and use of the joint force under UN mandate, according to the parameters and procedures of the United Nations Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS). This meant that the use of the binational force could only be carried out when an official request was made by the UN and as long as it had the approval of both countries (VARNAGY, 2010). It was also considered an indispensable condition for a Security Council resolution to be deployed, with a response capacity within 30 to 90 days, as soon as the Security Council’s mandate or resolution was known, and duration up to six months (MOU, 2006).

Bilateral activities and meetings did not cease with the signing of the 2006 MOU. An important collection of lessons learned was generated, which was based on a new MOU, signed in November 2010. This new MOU incorporated the need for the mission approved by the Security Council, in which joint force would be employed, under the control of the Peacekeeping Operations Department, and would also allow parties to offer the joint force for use without prior UN request (MOU, 2010). Another important issue was the possibility of third countries joining the Force, with the prior approval of the UN and the founding members of the Force.

In December 2010, the presentation, before the UN, of the units that would be part of the Cruz del Sur Combined Peace Force, would take place officially by signing a MOU between the UN and each of the countries separately, defining the resources that both nations made available to the UN under the combined force scheme. It was predicted that it would be available for use from 2012 (PERCOCO, 2014). This event officially culminates the force creation process.

The organization of Cruz del Sur is broadly defined as a Force composed of two main components: a Land Task Force and an Air

Component, both integrated, and a Naval Component, with resources from Argentina and Chile.

The Force has about 1400 combatants. The land component is composed of the Argentine and Chilean armies and navies. Its units are two mechanized infantry battalions and one logistic battalion. The naval element consists of units of the Armed Forces of both countries, with an oceanic patrol ship equipped with a helicopter on board, and a corvette. Finally, the air component consists of two Chilean Air Force helicopters, two Argentine Air Force helicopters, two Chilean Army helicopters, and two Argentine Army helicopters (ESTADO MAYOR CONJUNTO, 2012).

Its concept of employment aims to provide the UN with a presence in crisis areas to prevent the escalation of violence. It will serve to assist, monitor, or facilitate a ceasefire (VÁRNAGY, 2010). Cruz del Sur Peace Force's action is limited to a second stage of deployment of a peace mission, not as a fighting force - peace enforcement operations - but as a transitional force for a period of 6 months, extendable if necessary, for one year ago, under the UNSAS system (PERCOCO, 2014). That is, employment will come after the action of a peace-imposition force, either by a coalition or regional body. (FAUNDES, 2009).

BALANCES AND CHALLENGES

The creation of the Cruz del Sur Binational Peace Force has a solid foundation in the development of MTM between Argentina and Chile. A dense network of institutions, positive perceptions, and personal exchanges formed the foundation on which it was built. In turn, the Cruz del Sur Peace Force can also be understood as the antecedent, or embryonic project, of a supranational force capable of incorporating other countries (VARNAGY, 2010). Certainly Argentine and Chilean officials conceived it as an important step into creating a regional security and collective defense system. In this regard, former Argentine Defense Minister Nilda Garré emphasized in December 2006:

Argentina and Chile are able to articulate a scheme with capacity for expansion in the region, whose main focus is this integration process that starts from the binational scope and that has the faculty to incorporate other countries, such as Brazil (VÁRNAGY, 2010, p. 200).

In qualitative terms, the composition of Cruz del Sur force has a very advanced project, both in regional and global context, because of its combined and joint nature. This feature makes it advantageous, constituting a broader vehicle for the development of coordination and interoperability among different national military units (CALAFELL, 2011).

The most attractive and frequent missions for the Argentine-Clilean force will be those linked to peacekeeping operations, support for electoral processes and also punctual humanitarian operations and post-conflict stabilization. These are relatively safe and low risk operations. These qualities set Cruz del Sur apart from other combined force initiatives, such as the African Stand by Force (ASF), whose structure, although also designed to fit the UN system, was built up to deploy combat forces that could operate in situations of high risk conflicts. It is also designed to act in settings where it could develop peace-enforcement operations with the support of the African Union. On the other hand, Cruz del Sur is not sufficiently developed compared to other models of combined forces in the world, such as the Franco-German Brigade, which forms the basis of the Eurocorps and has developed respectable levels of interoperability, operating in crisis scenarios and having the virtue of being useful to the three pillars of European security: NATO, European Union and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (VÁRNAGY, 2010).

In addition, according to Faundes (2009, p. 69), there are still doubts about bilateral political and institutional capacities to advance the project symbolized by the Cruz del Sur Force. Argentina and Chile have just entered a new model of relations, based on integration, but with flaws. Although they have solved their major border problems, there are still some slight differences in the borderline aspect, which historically has been a source of crises in the bilateral relations of the two countries¹¹. The combined force obeys the political will of the rulers in countries with presidential political systems. Contingency may affect the functioning of the bilateral organism. Most importantly, however, the Force does not have a well-defined strategic political concept. Therefore, its function is and will be conditioned by political factors (FAUNDES, 2009, p. 70).

¹¹ There is a small area between Mount Fitz-Roy and Cerro Murallón where the borders have not yet been properly specified. This issue may become a new factor of discrepancies between the two nations. For more details, see BAEZA, 2016.

In turn, Percoco (2014, p. 94) highlights other difficulties related to the growing gap in the military hardware of Argentina and Chile. While Chilean military spending represents 1.87% of its GDP, in the Argentine case it does not exceed 0.95% (DATOS MACRO, 2016). Most of the defense systems and military equipment available to Argentina are obsolete and/or lacking maintenance, with technology developed in the 1960's and 1970's (SARNI, 2013 apud PERCOCO, 2014). For its part, Chile's defense budget invests in a modernization plan that includes the purchase of Leopard 2 tanks; M-113 transports in different configurations; Marder vehicles; F-16 aircrafts; missiles; Type 23 L and M frigates; Scorpene submarines; a large logistic ship; a French amphibious landing vessel and other state of the art equipment (SARNI, 2013 apud PERCOCO, 2014). Such technological differences between the two forces may directly affect the possibilities of interoperability of combined unit herds. For example, mismatch between communication teams could jeopardize correct force performance (PERCOCO, 2014, p. 95).

The biggest challenge of Cruz del Sur, however, is in its deployment (FAUNDES, 2009; CALAFELL, 2011). As it is a force that has not been sent to real scenarios so far, a doubt remains on how it will perform in such operations. Both troop and joint force officers must be prepared to handle all sorts of situations. A relevant case was the proposal made by UNASUR General Secretary and former Colombian President Ernesto Samper in April 2015, suggesting the participation of Cruz del Sur Peace Force in the process of pacifying the conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (SCUTICCHIO, 2015). This proposal arose when the dialogue between the conflicting factions was going through one of its worst moments, although some form of dialogue still existed. In such a circumstance, it was necessary to have an external referee who could identify irregularities and stress points before they escalated. Samper suggested that a regional peacekeeping force would be the most appropriate mediator during both the negotiation and later demobilization stages.

In principle, Argentina and Chile welcomed Samper's idea. In March 2016, after a bilateral meeting in Santiago, the defense ministers of Chile and Argentina highlighted the special interest in collaborating with Colombia, together with the UN (LA INFORMACIÓN, 2016). However, so far there was no concrete advancement or preparation of Cruz del Sur to be used in this scenario. The same could be said of the Haiti case, to where

the force was originally intended to go (SCUTICCHIO, 2015). Therefore, there are serious issues about the operative effectiveness of Cruz del Sur.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although Cruz del Sur Peace Force is relatively small - in terms of military personnel, operability and equipment - and still lacks participation in a real operation, its formation places it as the most ambitious and advanced military integration instrument in Latin America. Argentina and Chile presented themselves as being capable of generating the highest and most complex levels of institutionalized cooperation and joint action plans in terms of regional military cooperation in the region, by delegating operative functions to a common military instrument, based on a combined command structure and multiple binational decision making instances.

The Cruz del Sur Peace Force also stands out as a space that strengthens Argentina and Chile's commitment to the UN. Both countries place, under the orbit of the United Nations, a brigade specifically prepared to carry out the proper tasks of a peacekeeping operation. Indeed, both Chile and Argentina have positioned themselves as regional examples of multinational military cooperation in peace operations.

Above all, however, if we consider the adversarial situation in which Chile and Argentina were in 1978, with clearly threatening postures in their bilateral relations, Cruz del Sur must be understood as an instrument of mutual trust - MTM - which has diminished perceptions of reciprocal threat, becoming a measure of integration in the area of defense that reaffirms the transformation from one conflicting relationship to another of peace and friendship.

In addition to its bilateral scope, Cruz del Sur has a flexible legal structure open to neighboring countries, enabling it to become a new space for regional military integration under the direction of its founding members.

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