

Regional Defense Strategies and Mechanisms

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The author examines the political conditions in South America, potential conflicts faced by the region and the state of its defense industry; analyzing what the political and military purpose of a regional organization dedicated to defense issues would be. He analyzes the main courses of action assumed by the South-American Defense Council, and as a conclusion, he determines that this is a “soft” cooperation body, more consultative than operative in its nature and does not include any commitments of its members to amend domestic standards, strategies or policies. This current soft version is, judging by his understanding, functional to a certain leadership exercise that has the same nature. As future objectives, he also analyzes the support given to the solution of regional conflicts in a peaceful and balanced manner, and the assistance to democratic governments; the protection of natural resources and the territorial integrity against foreign powers, as well as the development of a regional defense industry.

Regional Scenario (South America)

South America as an Entity

States don't have permanent friendly relations, but national interests; therefore, durable political alliances –a necessary prerequisite to subscribe substantial agreements concerning defense issues– must be based on shared interests and needs. These can be identified on the basis of a hard core that enables a shared path.

South America is not the most appropriate environment to find those coincidences, since it is very difficult to gather intense bonding factors that justify a strong political proximity; mainly, when homogeneity is not a regional trait, since –even historically– there are differences that raise serious difficulties to a community-based approach.

On the other hand, in view of this diversified mosaic, there is no ideological or political unity that can be expressed by a dominating power; particularly in the current scenario, which must be analyzed beyond its historical issues which are linked to a past where the big powers had direct influence on the domestic policies of the American states.

The economic integration promoted by the Latin American Free Trade Association, LAFTA (ALALC) and the Latin American Integration, LAIA (ALADI) can serve as a reference in the aforementioned sense, since these sub-regional processes, which, in turn, were successively mutating and lagging, are the reflection of different political and economic realities that performed as constraints to an unambiguous expression of the region. Even now, within a global context, integration demands concessions that many countries have not been willing to grant in diverse projects that they have been involved with.

On the other hand, there is not a cultural or ethnical identity either, since diversity is perceived even within the countries themselves, and particularly now, when we are dealing with a continent artificially fragmented in two axes: the “Bolivarian” and the “Monroe”. This hinders an ideological harmony that can uphold a strong strategic political alliance, as the agreements on defense issues would demand. And since diversity is the rule, in some cases, it is impossible to reach a shared perception regarding the threats and risks that may impact the region.

This is valid to such extent that some Caribbean and Andean countries identify the United States as the enemy to be fought, a totally different approach adopted by other countries which, regardless of the discrepancies concerning the foreign policy adopted by different North American governments, develop strategic links both in economic-commercial and in political issues.

Actually, there is no “shared threat” in terms of a true and imminent risk capable to impact at the same intensity level on all or the majority of the countries on the continent.

On the other hand, the existence of a dominating country in South America capable of imposing on others certain behaviors involving the cession of their sovereignty, is not a topic of discussion either; and even though Brazil is the state with a greater influence on the region, it cannot emerge as a power capable of disregarding debate and negotiations with the remaining countries. This scenario has put its leadership on the continent to the test, since other states have proven to be strong competitors based on a different view of the region and, particularly, as to their external insertion and policy on defense issues. This, in response to different approaches that focus on the interpretation given to the non-intervention principle, the type of armament that shapes their defense goals, or their relations with the United States.

The Conflict's Hypotheses

The region shows a series of historical conflicts derived from armed combats and diplomatic tensions experienced in the 19th and 20th centuries, such as the Pacific War (Chile, Bolivia, and Peru), the War of 1942 (Ecuador and Peru), the Beagle conflict between Argentina and Chile, and the Esequibo conflict between Venezuela and Guyana. While most of them are territorial disputes, not all of them can be defined as historical conflicts that still keep nationalistic postures latent. For example, the Triple Alliance War between Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, as a block, against Paraguay; or the Chaco War, between Bolivia and Paraguay (the only military confrontation in the 20th century) are a result of other circumstances derived from political and economic interests typical for those years.

Currently, the historical differences are cause for relatively few heated disputes, even if some of them are forwarded to the International Court of The Hague, thus withdrawing from armed conflict scenarios. However, the nationalistic argument continues to be the best excuse to justify a defense budget, Armed Forces equipment and the need to communicate signals among the states regarding their military capability balance (the most evident case is Chile and Peru).

The only real hypotheses of a conventional armed conflict in the Region have been the recent confrontations between Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, which –as a distinctive trait– are triggered by the Colombian guerrilla operations and the military and technological US cooperation to fight drug trafficking in the Colombian territory.

On the other side, the anti-US stance adopted by Venezuela –and to a lesser extent by Bolivia and Ecuador– has not surpassed the verbal level, because –among other reasons– the North American administrations, especially Obama's, haven't shown serious concern about the increasing military cooperation between Venezuela and the Russian Federation, or about the purchase of armament from France by Brazil, which could mark the beginning of South America's "nuclearization"¹.

In another milieu, the conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom for the South Atlantic islands remains active –with the entire sub-region's support in favor of Argentina– but without any signs that this historical conflict could trespass the diplomatic level, as in 1982.

Nonetheless, in the present circumstances, no country in the region is able to engage in a military conflict, except for a short skirmish, mainly with its neighbors and in border areas; nor could any country reasonably have resources available to build that capacity in short term either, because –among other reasons– although the economy has had a positive repercussion on the growth of the region, the states are not able to divert massive resources to build a modern and significant arsenal. In the middle term, Brazil could create

¹ Actually, the Russian Federation has no possibilities to conduct long-range conventional military operations, and even providing maintenance to modern equipment, such as the Su-30, poses difficulties. The Russian Federation's strategic priorities rely on its boundaries and its control to the separatist republics. The possibilities of purchasing equipment and procuring technical cooperation between France and Brazil, based on the data available, are not creating a very remarkable imbalance within the region either.

an effective middle-range intervention force (Caribbean, Central America) and a short-range one (Chile and Colombia), but this does not seem to be a priority within its defense policies.

Regional Defense Organization Options

In view of the above, the options of establishing a regional defense organization should be analyzed. To begin with, there is the need to acknowledge that the so called ‘regional arms race’ is non-existent when one compares the procurement of military equipment carried out by non-regional countries with the procurement conducted by countries of other regions which have no active or potential military conflicts at present. However, some of that arms procurement may influence local balances and raise the need to increase defense expenditures of other countries in the region².

On the other hand, it is important to point out that equipping is not the main factor to consider, since the organization of the Armed Forces and furthermore quality and discipline in a state are equally or more relevant factors.

In other words, the Armed Forces, as an institution, acquire great significance in many countries regarding their historical continuum and institutional presence, since they create a national identity for each state and, in many cases, the strategic project of a country that can express itself, but not necessarily through its warfare potential.

In this regard, Brazil is a mandatory benchmark and should be considered a gradually developing state. Even though it cannot be militarily compared –in quantity or quality of its resources– to the level of the other BRIC members (China, India and the Russian Federation), which are among the most powerful nations in the world, it is evident that it needs a minimum of approximation to avoid being simply relegated as the new club’s “economic” member status, particularly because the other members already have nuclear weapons.

Therefore, building up such power will take time and resources, and will force its different governments to overcome significant internal hindrances. It is worth mentioning that in the Brazilian democracy, public opinion weighs much more than it does in India, Russia and China; and that the slogan “Brazil, a power” may be popular until its cost is justified with transparency. Therefore, it is not surprising that the new President of Brazil, Ms. Dilma Roussef, has called off the procurement of armament already negotiated by her predecessor, Lula da Silva, using “fiscal reasons” as her argument. The task of the current Itamaraty is summarized in matching its incomplete regional leadership with an active global positioning policy. In other words, in exercising a peaceful but efficient leadership in the region as to defense policies, capable of promoting cooperation that differs from an approach of permanent confrontation with the United States.

² The Venezuelan acquisition of 24 Su-30 airplanes manufactured in Russia placed this country on top of the regional ranking in this issue. The Su-30 outmatches the Brazilian Mirage 2000, the Chilean F-16 and the Peruvian Mig-29. The Brazilian equipping projects, except for the submarine line (not nuclear but conventional) do not aim to up-to-date material, but to image creation. Brazil’s priority would be targeted to a borderline security network, especially in the Amazon area.



Purpose of a Regional Agency for Defense Issues

It is easier to build conflict hypotheses among the countries on the continent than with non-continental powers, since from the Second World War, the armed conflicts did and will take place in other geographic settings, based on new confrontation patterns inherent to globalization.³

In Latin America, one can say that there isn't a true, imminent threat of an outside aggression that would trigger political decisions and the development of a regional strategic and operational response.

In the case of Venezuela, which is the only country that poses a real threat, its stance trespasses the Hemisphere, since it raises a solid confrontation with the US and alliances with countries outside the continent, with globally acknowledged conflicts, such as the cases of Iran and North Korea in terms of nuclear weaponry. Moreover, its attitude may be typified by many as 'ambiguous' regarding issues like international terrorism and the advocacy of human rights, such as the political refuge offering to the President of Sudan, who was charged with genocide by the International Criminal Court.

³ As a matter of fact, all military conflicts occurred within the continent, with the single exception of the Falklands War; and in this case, the conflict was initiated by an Argentinean military action.

The situation in Cuba, although it takes place outside the South-American sphere, is present through political signals transmitted by the governments of the nations that are members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), and even from Brazil. Particularly the latter, through former President Lula da Silva, granted Fidel Castro's regime an unusual support before the entire international community's mistrust. Cuba demonstrated its capacity to survive as a neighbor of the USA for fifty years, even after the dissolution of the USSR; therefore, the submittal of a continental defense project regarding its political situation would simply be an ideological political movement, which the Region is no longer willing to be a part of. Moreover, it is starting to show weariness concerning the Human Rights violations committed on the Island.

In this context, we could design two conflict hypotheses to be explored:

The first one would be an escalation to access South America's vast natural resources which implies an active involvement of extra-continental powers accompanied by an eventual armed assault. Although this does not pose an imminent and placeable threat in the far future, the preparation it takes to face such a hazard also requires an extended time, as well as continuity and adjustment of the region's effort, since it is a potential conflict to be considered, and the analysis thereof should be addressed by means of a well thought out strategy and prepared upon realistic foundations.

The second one is related to terrorism and its connections to international drug traffic and organized crime. Their scope has reached devastating levels and problems cannot be solved without the implementation of middle-term policies based on a regional approach.

This requires a clear, unambiguous stance that condemns any expression of violence and discards a double-standard discourse, prone to classify the types of terrorism based on each state's political interests.

Defining the Type of Threat and Conflict

In this context, it is possible, on one hand, to discard the economic and commercial threats, since presently they do not translate into actual military actions, but its solution resides in a political concentration field or in specific dispute-solving mechanisms, both regional and multilateral.

On the other hand, defining the type of threat and conflict is vital to move forward in terms of defense agreements; and while the threat tends to be potential and remote, but still credible, conflicts may not have a "face", but are identifiable.

In view of the above, an organization such as the South-American Defense Council should not be perceived as just another competition manifestation among international organizations, both regional and hemispheric. Based on institutional foundations, it's evident that a forward motion is driven by countries such as Brazil, which is tailoring its proposals to the direction of its foreign policy. Even if it's arguable, Brazil's foreign policy is logical since it's headed towards assuming a preponderant role in terms of security under the United Nations perspective; this is how it encourages the development of an

armament-oriented industrial infrastructure platform; by getting involved in various venues related to diplomatic solutions for regional conflicts.

This is how –in some cases- a regional Defense agency may perform as an instrument to anticipate the emergence of conflicts; and in others, as a supporting platform to the regional countries that are in conflict with non-regional powers (Argentina – United Kingdom); and, finally, there are other cases, which comply with most of the regional countries, as an answer that explains their belonging and usefulness in the management of regional tensions in the light of a modern security concept.

Nevertheless, as long as the region preserves both its internal and external peace, the member states of the South-American Defense Council shall not face extreme situations in which even the concept of sovereignty itself may result jeopardized. The legal framework that regulates the Council's operation does not anticipate a decision-making system that may be imposed to each State's will; and although the evolution of the South-American Defense Council can progress as an institution in the long run, the Defense topics shouldn't be submitted to a supranational administration, since the political balance is only kept when the states get involved in an intergovernmental organization.

Actually, what really matters in terms of regional defense is that all actions be directed towards a modern policy that enables the countries to cooperate in fighting those problems that pose a threat that trespasses each state, such as drug traffic, terrorism and the environment. In other words, resources destined to arms procurement must respond to a social commitment in terms of quality of life and the preservation of those values that –alongside with peace- result in freedom, a representative democracy, social justice and security, both domestic and international.

The main topic is international drug traffic and terrorism, which intend to weaken the social structure in each country, and particularly, the defense institutions that perform a vital role in their suppression, since those institutions are the only ones that have weaponry available and end up being the main support for an institutional strengthening of the entire state. There are plenty of examples in the region, such as the complex Mexican experience, the one in Colombia, and even recently, in Brazil, where their Armed Forces were used to fight drug traffic in various “favelas”.

Therefore, a topic that can be discussed is the Armed Forces' modern role as part of an ethical and social commitment that detaches them from old patterns of power struggles derived from ideologically biased political projects.

In the light of the above, this modern institutional, ethical and social role embedded into a dynamic sovereignty concept, turns the dismantling of the Armed Forces' path, unfeasible. To a great extent, because there is no average pattern that may be applied to all the states. Each state has not only its own history and a particular relation between its national identity and the Armed Forces' role but also different, non-transferable national variables that do not accept a methodological uniformity when addressing defense issues. Furthermore, because the Armed Forces and the defense policy cannot be an executive



branch's executing arm that wants to make its way through the checks and balances inherent to the separation of powers principle. The concepts of national security, identity and sovereignty cannot be subjectively handled by giving the Armed Forces a role tailored to a head of state's will or to the perspective of a political force exercising the power. And if this cannot be done within each state's boundaries, it is even less convenient to do so at a regional level.

In other words, problems are above the governments' will and must be faced through state policies aside from circumstantial conveniences, since defense, as mentioned, is linked to a modern expression of foreign policy. And if there should be a lack of continuity and sustainability for its projection, it would only emphasize existing asymmetries.

The South-American Defense Council's Course of Action

The course of action outlined by the organizations, usually provide a much more accurate view of the institution's nature and purposes than the objectives stated in the documents that created them. In the case of the South-American Defense Council, the Brazilian secretary of defense envisioned it –since its initial proposal– as a counseling body without operative functions, foreign to the political will of constituting collective Armed Forces.

Defense Policies

In this area, said actions include the creation of an information network on defense policies (Council's website); the conduction of seminars regarding the Departments of Defense's

modernization and mutual confidence measures proposals; information exchange concerning expenses and defense affairs economic indicators (the creation of a shared methodology to measure the military expenditure is in progress); the definition of conceptual approaches of defense, and the region's risks and threats; the identification of risk factors and threats that may affect regional and global peace; the creation of a mechanism to formulate the region's joint positions in multilateral forums on defense (concerning peace consolidation, confidence and cooperation; democracy, Armed Forces, security and solidarity; increased hemispheric cooperation related to natural disasters); and the establishment of a consultation mechanism, information and immediate assessment in situations that pose a risk to peace.

There is a difference between each country's defense policies being collectively analyzed and discussed, and preparing a system that is imposed upon national policies. It is clear that the scheduled activities consider the Council as a system to do the former.

Military Cooperation, Humanitarian Actions and Peace Operations

Within this sphere, those intended actions are: planning of a combined assistance rehearsal in case of catastrophes or natural disasters; arranging a conference on the lessons learned in peace operations, both in domestic and multilateral fields; preparing an inventory on defense capabilities offered by the countries to support humanitarian actions, and exchanging experiences in that area, in order to establish immediate-response mechanisms to enable humanitarian actions upon natural disasters.

Education and Training

The actions foresee an elaboration of a registry containing defense academies and instructional centers and their curricula, as well as creating a South American network for defense training and education, that enables an exchange of experiences and a joint curricula development; proposing scholar and student exchange programs, standardization, assessment, and studies validation, degrees recognition and scholarships among the existing institutions concerning the defense subject; as well as creating and implementing the South American Center for Defense Strategic Studies (CSEED).

Industry and Technology

Finally in this regard, the foreseen actions are focused on the defense industry of the member states' diagnosis, identifying capabilities and strategic partnership areas to promote complementarity, research and technological transfer; those actions also focus on the promotion of both bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives for the protection of industry as well as for production purposes in the member states within the Council's framework.

In conclusion, as one can see in the courses of action aforementioned, the profile of the South-American Defense Council responds to a "soft" cooperation agency profile, which does not include commitments that may compel its members to modify national standards, strategies, or policies. In turn, it is basically intended for a better understanding and relationship among the defense ministries, and to improve the coordination possibilities in terms of humanitarian or peacekeeping actions.

Consequently, it is of a counseling nature more than an operational one, since a cooperation-based agency does not require a previous definition of the external threat or risk, but should serve to boost a political dialog capable of analyzing them. Eventually, it can act in order to influence intraregional conflicts solutions, without directly intervening in them.

A Perspective from Uruguay

Defense strategies are shaped to solve existing problems or hypotheses about conflicts within a wide and modern framework. International cooperation in this issue is based on eventual conflict hypotheses that may vary over time, but they are usually well defined. Historically, political-military alliances emerged from the identification of a shared enemy or threat. For example, the NATO was the opportune answer to the Warsaw Pact, and currently keeps an eye on the Russian Federation, and the other on international terrorism and its derivatives; the US alliances with Korea and Japan have their sight set on North Korea, and in the long run, also in China; the support received by the US to intervene in Afghanistan and Iraq represented the proof of fidelity for its allies, and even the recent crisis in Egypt showed varied responses to prioritize global stability and eventual repercussions in economic and social issues, such as oil price and migration tides towards the European continent.

Also in this regard, regional agreements must be compatible with the national strategies of the countries involved. On one hand, it means including the handling of situations that are considered a priority in terms of defense; on the other hand, cooperating with the neutralization or reduction of conflict potential among the involved countries.

Within this context, an effective South-American agreement must consider /should consider objectives such as:

- 1) The joint action to face terrorism and drug traffic threats, either regionally or internationally.

This is probably the only realistic objective that answers to an active conflict. However, the South American countries' stances are not consistent. Regarding drug traffic, Bolivia defends its cocaine production, while Peru and Colombia are engaged in a frontal fight against its production and commercialization. Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay are concerned about local traffic and transit, while the other countries do not seem to put much effort into the subject.

In terms of terrorism, criteria unification has to be carried out, as to identify terrorist actions without distinction between international organizations and some regional movements, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Terrorism is a scourge and even though it is expressed domestically, its devastating actions are projected outside the states where it develops.

Therefore, a defense organization should seek clearer, more effective commitments in terms of fighting against drug traffic, international terrorism, and domestic or local expressions⁴.

⁴ This does not seem to be a priority to the South-American Defense Council.

2) The Support to a Peaceful, Balanced Conflict Solution among the Countries in the Region.

This should be the regional defense agency and the UNASUR's goal, because solutions cannot be imposed, and they must always be submitted to the opinion or resolution of remarkably unbiased jurisdictional bodies.

This is the field in which the asymmetry principle plays a rougher role, since the outcomes of non-fulfillments are different based on each state's strength. For example, if it relates to a small state, a wrong decision could place it at the very edge of an identity crisis; but a bigger state always has the non-compliance or even the strength resort available, even if it lacks legal firmness to further its postures.

3) The Support to Democratic Governments against Internal or External Threats, Within Certain Parameters.

This is a topic that remained latent after the unfortunate events in Honduras. The support to democratic governments must be compatible with the states' non-intervention and self-determination principles. It is not a topic that can be defined simply in regard to many of the region's governments, particularly if one considers the democratic system's distortions that are being witnessed in some countries, where the heads of state seek to compel the institutional mechanisms to perpetuate themselves in office or promote reforms that are related to respecting Human Rights as to its widest meaning, and particularly, by applying the double standard, based on the degree of affinity with the country involved.

4) Defense of Natural Resources' and Territorial Integrity against Foreign Powers.

Natural resources - as a military objective- are part of a problematic vision of the future, concerning the conflict for the availability of those resources: water, fuels, food, and other first-need commodities. Even if we are facing a long-term potential conflict, it is also true that an effective defense community should be functioning and built to reinforce a deterring or resistant capability much superior to the current one.

5) Developing a Regional Defense Industry.

The idea of an industrial development in the sphere of defense poses difficulties in terms of technological availability, as well as remarkably accentuated differences among the countries' industrial infrastructures.

Nevertheless, the South-American Defense Council must operate within the sphere of cooperation, since an effective organization in the defense field needs consensuses concerning diverse items. In the first place, those regarding an agenda that defines the core topics that the member states must address; and secondly, those related to the need of achieving a balanced decision-making system, that excludes the practice of imposing resolutions against each state's will.

Moreover, a cooperation organization in the field of defense must acknowledge the need of a balanced military power, in order to prevent becoming an instrument manageable by

the state's interests. That the balance conditions vary over time must be taken into consideration, and particularly, due to the influence of global topics linked to international security and to the action adopted by certain governments that drive specific leading roles in this region.

In these respects, some balances are built around current historic conflicts. (Chile/Peru, Colombia/Venezuela + Ecuador), and other nations are beginning to build themselves on the basis of Brazil's more active presence as well as the countries at the Pacific Ocean, that neutralize any intent of supremacy shown by any of the member states.

The competition over a continental leadership, whether explicit (e.g. Venezuela) or implicit (Brazil) can allow a checks and balances game in view to channel in an appropriate manner the region's Defense Cooperation System.

Finally, in order to achieve the aforementioned objective, it is imperative to emphasize that a cooperation agency in the defense field will need a strong institutional foundation, both politically and technically, especially to design an eventual mechanism that helps settle controversies.

Consequently, cooperation resides in the essence of these bodies and cannot be confused with or drift into an integration scheme that will restrict the defense policy in some countries or that could be handy to the asymmetrical interests in the region. This isn't about designing defense policies with a warfare purpose, but about adapting international treaties and domestic regulations to an arms policy that does not have a defensive criterion in military terms as its core objective.

Therefore, foreign policy and defense policy walk hand in hand, and the cooperation required by both needs the establishment of a controversy settling mechanism to rescue the legal certainty principle; this is the most undisputed guarantee available to the member states of an organization that helps them address their asymmetries through an intergovernmental relation.

About the Defense Industry

The defense industry is a tool that provides countries the ability to sustain a conflict and autonomy regarding the other nation's decisions about the armament and equipment supply.

In some countries, it performs a predominant role in the industrial sector and, in those nations in which it became autonomous, it turned into the engine that develops technologies that entail some effects or may be applied on multiple productive sectors oriented both to the domestic market and exports. However, this phenomenon occurred only in the big powers involved in warfare conflicts (US, USSR/Russia, UK, France, Germany); in countries that underwent risks or conflicts under relative isolation conditions with industrial infrastructure and knowledge or the capability of creating it (Sweden, Israel, and –to some extent– South Africa and Spain), and in countries that took advantage of the opportunities to participate in multilateral defense organizations (Holland, Italy, Czechoslovakia).

China itself, which has historically been dependent on the Soviet industry, acquired Western technology and has its own development, although it is still subordinated to imported technologies in the defense systems' critical elements. In the same way, India dedicated itself –with a certain degree of success– to combine Western and Soviet technologies, with a limited development of its own technologies.

There is another level of defense industry, in which the South American countries have no technological autonomy at all in critical issues, although their conditions would allow them to manufacture some elements such as light weapons, artillery, tactical missiles, vehicles, ships, or aircrafts.

The NATO exercised an industrial allocation policy that enabled the automotive, naval, aeronautical, communications, and electronics sectors' consolidation or development in its member countries. An important tool for this policy was comprised by the industrial rewards for acquiring North American or British equipment. A similar behavior was adopted through the Warsaw Pact with the naval industry of Poland, the GDR, and with Czechoslovakia's aeronautical industry.

However, in the Latin American area, there is no country that has reached a modern technological autonomy in the so called critical elements, since even if it had the political will, it would not have enough resources to achieve it.

As recorded by history, around 1950 in South America, Argentina had the foundations to develop defense industries, even at naval and aeronautical levels. (In 1950, Fabricaciones Militares [a state-owned complex] had built an archetype of a fighter jet equally or more equipped than the USA's F-86, that was starting to be mass-manufactured. Political swifts in that decade and the lack of resources were the decisive factors to abandon this and other projects). There was no evolution in that capacity, and the ground, air, and naval equipment remains stalled since the '80s. Brazil developed a commercially successful aeronautical industry based on its own designs, but technologically dependent on avionics, as well as on arms and engine systems. This also happens with military models: such as the Tucano training airplane (also manufactured by Shorts for the Royal Air Force⁶) and the AMX light attack fighter jet, manufactured jointly with Italy. This situation is no different in the naval and military vehicles industries⁷. Chile showed a certain capacity to manufacture armored vehicles and a training airplane, but Peru and Colombia focused on light weaponry and on the capacity to give maintenance to imported equipment, while Venezuela recently set the pace for that trend, by acquiring Russian equipment.

Summarizing, it can be asserted that South American military equipment, especially regarding aviation and heavy equipment, is highly obsolete. In general, the materials are from the '80s or previous decades, and the acquisitions include a high proportion of used

⁵ It was the so called Pulqui II, designed by a team in which Eng. Kurt Tank took part, one of the most prestigious aeronautical designers of the 3rd Reich.

⁶ The Short Tucano has significant improvements over the model that was originally produced in Brazil.

⁷ Recently, Brazil acquired Leopard 1 tanks, a German model from the '60s, considered 'obsolete' by the NATO.

materials. This combined with the existing constraints regarding the development of critical technologies, we can speculate about a realistic profile for the regional defense industry:

- Equipment maintenance, manufacturing of parts and spare-parts, as well as of ammunition for light weaponry, artillery, and similar.
- Upgrade/update of existing equipment (using mainly imported elements)⁸.
- Manufacturing of light weaponry.
- Manufacturing of vehicles and other equipment with no substantial differences as to requirements between civil and military uses.
- Manufacturing, with justifiable quantities, of licensed vehicles and aircraft, and mostly of the imported weapons' assembling, navigation, and communication systems. Businesses between Brazil and France follow this model: partially imported, and partially manufactured under license (an industrial rewards system approach).

The possibilities of developing this profile and stepping –in the middle and long term– into the technologies assimilation and self-owned systems' development, are limited by the countries' demand and the capability of allocating research and development resources in the defense field.

Defense budgets are the main constraint of an updated, efficient defense industry's development, just like the industrial infrastructure is a constraint to equipment that can be manufactured individually or on a short series basis (e.g. ships). However, a demand consolidation could generate industrial opportunities for some kind of equipment, especially if combined with export possibilities, but would demand a balanced cost and benefit⁹ allocation, which is something historically difficult to achieve in the region.

In addition, a defense industries' integration is an economic and political issue. From an economic standpoint, an eventual balance between benefits and costs for the participants could be beneficial, and the technological development is therein included, or at least, a shortcut for accessing foreign technologies. From a political point of view, the evident market for a regional defense industry is the own region (the global market is overflowed with supply) and developing such market supposes that the countries will invest in their own defense systems, with the injection of substantial resources that will restrict their re-orientation possibilities to non-deferrable social policies aimed to amend disparities that brand the region as the most unequal of the planet.

Nevertheless, Brazil would be the natural beneficiary from consolidating this regional demand. The Brazilian rationale could be: “if there will be rearmament in various countries in the region, why not be the supplier?” It could be useful for all, if decisions related to equipment are reasonable (up to the extent of the available resources and foreseeable use)

⁸ For example: engine replacement; weapon systems refurbishment in vehicles, aircraft, or ships; navigation or communications systems and similar.

⁹ There are successful partnership experiences in order to manufacture military equipment. An additional demand from some European countries enabled the creation of consortiums for several fighter jets' manufacture (Jaguar, AlphaJet, Tornado, Typhoon) and airlift crafts (Noratlas, Transall). Other than the European, there are also successful experiences. The CN-235 airlift plane manufactured by a consortium between the Spanish CASA and the Indonesian Nurtanio, based on the demand from both countries, had a remarkable export success.

and negotiations are properly carried out. A different approach would be to promote the countries' rearmament in the region to uphold a regional defense industry, based on weak and remote hypothetical conflicts.

The South-American Defense Council must justify its existence in a practical sense, since it is insufficient to outline the potential conflicts that could emerge in this region. A defense policy must strengthen the Armed Forces' role as an institution, and does not exclusively cease with the resources targeted for their equipping.

In conclusion, this new institutional expression should be put aside from the timelines and interests that are individually pursued by each state, and reject every leadership intent exclusively based on an arms race or on political postures that could engage its efficiency due to the pursuance of objectives outside this new institutional vision and the new roles to be performed by the Armed Forces, both at domestic and regional levels.