



CHILE and ARGENTINA:



From Measures of Trust to Military Integration

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IN THE 21ST CENTURY, Chile and Argentina are undergoing a complex and exciting period as they strengthen their relationship and collaborate on political, economic, security, and military issues. Bilateral relations are in excellent condition.

This has not always been the case. When the two nations declared their independence from Spain in the early 1800s, they both claimed the totality of Patagonia.¹ Although efforts were made to settle the border dispute during the subsequent years, it was not until the Beagle Canal conflict in 1984 that negotiations finally resolved the problem and Chile and Argentina signed the *Tratado de Paz y Armistad*, or Peace and Friendship Treaty.² There were some difficult times in the preceding years, but both governments made it a priority to improve relations, particularly those regarding political and economic issues.

More recently, bilateral relations in the area of security and defense have improved; in fact, Chile and Argentina have embarked on an effort to integrate their security policies and forces. A brief review of the integration process carried out over the last 20 years demonstrates that their relationship is transitioning from mistrust to cooperation in the realm of security and defense.³ Is it possible that Chile and Argentina have improved their relations to the point that they could create a permanent combined military unit?

The Integration Process

Chile and Argentina's agreement on the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1984 was the turning point in their troubled relationship. The treaty resolved the long-standing conflict over possession of three islands south of Tierra del Fuego and navigational routes in the Straits of Magellan and Beagle Channel. Two commissions were established as a result of the treaty. The first was the Argentina/Chile Permanent Conciliation Commission, which was set up to arbitrate disputes, and the second was the 1985 Binational Commission on Economic Cooperation and Physical Integration, intended to encourage economic growth. The latter called for cooperative development and binational use of free ports and navigational zones, land transportation systems, air navigational routes, electrical interconnections, telecommunications systems, and the like.⁴

Although the Peace and Friendship treaty established the foundation for cooperation and integration, several border disputes remained an issue, and mistrust between the two nations in the political, economic, and military

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realms persisted for several years. Despite these difficulties, an evolution was taking place within the Chilean-Argentine bilateral sphere, as well as within the multilateral framework processes in the Southern Cone and Latin America as a whole.

Developing a Bilateral Agenda

In the 1990s, relations improved dramatically between the two nations. With the end of the cold war, globalization and integration became the predominant concepts in relations among countries and blocs of countries. This impetus reinserted Chile and Argentina into the international community as both nations' newly elected democratic governments changed their foreign policy to reflect a greater desire to cooperate with one another and with their neighbors.⁵

On 2 August 1991, Presidents Patricio Aylwin (Chile) and Carlos Menem (Argentina) signed the "Presidential Declaration on the Border Between the Republic of Chile and the Republic of Argentina," definitively settling 22 border disputes between the two countries. Shortly thereafter, disputes over the Laguna del Desierto and the Southern Patagonia Ice Field were also resolved.⁶ These resolutions were followed by the creation of a bilateral agenda focused on physical integration, Chilean investment in Argentina, and power-grid interconnection. This agenda had great potential to improve relations in the political, economic, and defense and security realms.

Although collaboration waned at the end of the century as an economic crisis gripped the region, when economic indices improved in 2000, interest in cooperation returned.⁷

Military Integration

Despite the positive interactions between Chile and Argentina in the political and economic arenas in the 1990s, both countries continued to base their national security policies on a so-called "hypotheses of conflict" and on a balance of power, rather than on a cooperative regional security program. Basically, Chile and Argentina continued to view national security in the same manner as they had in the cold war era.

Argentina was the first to assume a more cooperative approach to security, either rejecting or minimizing these hypotheses. This change may have originated for a number of reasons—the advent of democracy,

the subordination of the armed forces under civilian authority, the resolution of border disputes, the need for integration to comply with security agreements with other states, or the shift in Argentina's foreign policy brought about by President Menem.

Chile's concept of security during this period was much more conservative. Then-Minister of Defense Patricio Rojas clarified the Chilean view of this period in his assessment of the defense sector between 1990 and 1994: "given the uncertainty of the international system and the transition process following the end of the cold war, defense policy focused on optimizing deterrent and defensive capabilities in the area of risk and contingency assessment that could affect the climate in the country."⁸

So the government felt the need to maintain the hypotheses of conflict, with a greater emphasis on deterrence. When the defense policy changed, it was built on a foundation for globalization and regional cooperation. Today, no one asserts that all suspicion has disappeared between the two countries, but a level of cooperation exists that was considered unthinkable only a few years ago.

Advances in the political and economic realms encouraged the two countries to seek more agreeable relations between their respective armed forces. To help with this process, "Measures of Mutual Trust" were instituted. The four measures—eradication of mistrust, trust building, deepening of trust, and cooperation planning—initially were rather formal or symbolic, bound to certain visits and meetings, their use limited by protocol. However, they were important after a period in which bilateral relations in the region, especially military relations, were largely distant.⁹

Mutual Trust

By 1995, the general staffs of Chile and Argentina were meeting regularly and cooperating on security and military issues much the same as the politicians were doing at the national level. This led to the creation of the Permanent Argentine-Chilean Security Committee (COMPERSEG).¹⁰ Among the noteworthy bilateral actions that resulted were consultation meetings between the ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of defense of the two countries (2+2) and establishment of the *Mecanismo de Interconsultas*, a committee comprised of members of the Chilean Defense Staff and the Argentine Joint Staff to ensure more fluid communication between the two countries' armed forces.



Argentine President Eduardo Duhalde (left) and Chilean President Ricardo Lagos sign treaties of mutual cooperation between both countries at the presidential palace in Santiago, Chile, 29 October 2002.

The COMPERSEG is considered an especially relevant development in defense integration. An analysis of the themes discussed in the numerous meetings conducted since its inception shows that the committee has considered a substantial number of actions and adopted measures related to defense and security. It is in this committee that different initiatives in matters of security and defense originate and/or come together.¹¹

Chile and Argentina created the Mecanismo de Interconsultas involving the two general staffs to foster mutual trust and develop security policy in a South American regional framework. The mechanism has the technical authority to ensure coordination among the various committees.¹²

In addition to the committees mentioned above, presidential summits, meetings of ministers of defense, personnel exchanges among the branches of the armed forces, and professional meetings between leaders of garrison and frontier naval zones were part of a marked increase in bilateral relations in the area of security and defense throughout the region. With these inroads, there is now a real possibility that Chile and Argentina will soon consider measures to create a permanent combined military force.

The benchmarks for the Measures of Mutual Trust specified that, by the mid-1990s, bilateral relations in the military realm would be at the second level—trust building. This level would be distinguishable by specific actions allowing a new way for organizations to relate to one another.

Overall, the program was completely successful and opened avenues for growing communication and a steady flow of information. A direct by-product of the program was increased collaboration among the military organizations, which included participation in combined military exercises and the formation of integrated units to serve in peacekeeping operations. What is most important is that it institutionalized the architecture for bilateral relations.

Combined military units can bridge the gap from the cooperation encouraged by the Measures of Mutual Trust to actual collaboration in military and defense issues. But to do this, Chile and Argentina must have the political will to forge ahead

with substantive discussions on technical and military matters. The politicians in both nations must add this proposal to the political agenda to stir debate.

Integration Measures

One must bear in mind that the overall integration process will not be complete until it extends to the areas of security and defense. It is understood that security is based on deterrence, and that regional security is in every nation's interest. This thinking forms the foundation for combined military forces. Bilateral military integration can allow Chile and Argentina to work together to prevent aggression and live in peace, liberty, and cooperative security. At the same time, it will not interfere with the contributions made by these nations to other regional and hemispheric organizations.¹³ Chile and Argentina have the political will to advance military integration, but what measures do they need to take to do so?

In 2005, the two nations' ministers of defense signed a protocol of understanding that called for a working commission to create a combined peacekeeping force.¹⁴ Shortly thereafter, both ministries signed the resultant agreement—a bilateral accord establishing a combined peacekeeping force and the guiding principles for the formation of a combined joint staff.¹⁵ The combined peacekeeping force has participated in United Nations' stabilization missions in Haiti and Cyprus. Although this is a great initiative, it still seems insufficient compared to other models of combined forces in the world.

For instance, consider the Franco-German Brigade that forms the foundation of the Eurocorps. Called the driving force of the European Union (EU), the brigade has benefited both nations, boosted European integration, and had the virtue of being useful to the three pillars of European security: NATO, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Could the Chilean-Argentine efforts to establish a combined military force represent the beginning of a similar multinational military organization?¹⁶

Combined Chilean and Argentine ad hoc units such as those in Cyprus and Haiti allow the two countries to gain invaluable experience that will facilitate the future creation of permanent combined units. But what became clear with the deliberations of the special working commission is that there was no central institution to address bilateral security and defense issues in a comprehensive way. Agencies created in the mid-1990s, such as COMPERSEG and the Mecanismo de Interconsultas, are fragmented and only address specific issues and initiatives. This makes it necessary to design a model that includes all of the elements of security and defense. The Franco-German Security and Defense Council (FGSDC) could serve as the model. It links the ministries of defense and foreign relations of both countries, which allows for coordination and cooperation on security initiatives and enables implementation of the two nations' political directives. Such a relationship builds trust and allows discussion of a variety of themes. It led to a number of security and defense initiatives in Europe.¹⁷

The creation of a combined Chilean-Argentine unit specifically for bilateral security and defense is the first step toward further integration. To ensure its success, Chile and Argentina should—

- Place the combined military unit under one command.
- Ensure mutual understanding between the armed forces of Argentina and Chile.
- Establish common work methods.

- Harmonize living conditions.
- Train for and establish interoperability between military units.
- Standardize materiel and equipment as efficiently as possible.¹⁸

In addition to contributing to regional security and defense, the unit should be an essential contributor to hemispheric and world peace. Other missions can include peacekeeping, peace restoration, and humanitarian actions.

As has already been suggested, Argentina and Chile must explain this initiative to their neighbors to negate mistrust in regard to the combined unit's purpose and scope. Moreover, in the not-too-distant future, this bilateral initiative should naturally evolve to a multilateral initiative—a multinational combined unit formed with the participation of all regional actors that wish to contribute to regional and world security and defense.

Conclusion

The Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1984 has served as the roadmap for Chilean-Argentine integration, generating the diverse accords and protocols signed over the last 20 years on a variety of issues—political, economic, and, of course, security



AP: Santiago Llanquin

A ceremony between Chile and Argentina in the Andes marking the centennial of a statue of Christ erected there as a tribute to peace in Cristo Redentor, Chile-Argentina border, 13 March 2004.

and defense. Without a doubt the treaty is the single most important milestone in Chilean-Argentine cooperation and integration. Chilean-Argentine relations are not limited to dealings between government leaders, but cut across all boundaries and at different levels in the decision-making process. Due to the sheer number of participants, there is an increasingly complex interdependence between the two countries.

This relationship is focused on cooperation and integration, and has rid itself of conflict by solving the causes that generated it. New problems might appear in the future, but an institution now exists to confront and solve them.

The Measures of Mutual Trust allowed Chile and Argentina to eradicate mistrust and build trust in its stead. The measures outline many of cooperative and integrative actions, including the ad hoc formation of combined units, combined training, officer exchange, naval repair, and defense-systems technology exchange.

Now is the time to plan yet other measures. Chile and Argentina must design a new institutional process to—

- Advance a common security and defense policy.
- Bring together political, politico-strategic, and strategic managers to obtain efficient results when common goals present themselves.
- Define and monitor the creation of combined units.
- Establish military personnel systems that facilitate interoperability.
- Standardize armament, materiel, equipment, and logistic procedures.
- Continue with other developed measures.

There are no obstacles on the horizon to prevent Argentina and Chile from forming a permanent combined unit. The goals of such a unit will depend on its size, composition, and functions. However, Chile's and Argentina's combined military forces should plan on contributing to internal and international security missions involving conflict resolution, regional crisis management, common defense, and peacekeeping operations. Missions should be progressively and deliberately adapted to the integration process.

Today's mission-based peacekeeping forces can be the foundation for future combined units. Argentina and Chile can invoke the concept of common defense

to establish more combined units in the future, so that integration efforts do not become simply cosmetic.

The 2005 Bilateral Accord Act makes it feasible for Argentina and Chile to create a permanent combined force. The act contains implementation designs for a combined peace force and a combined joint staff. Creating these organizations will require crossing the threshold from measures of trust to true integration. **MR**

NOTES

1. To understand the dynamics of the southern conflict, I recommend reading *La Escuadra en Acción* by Patricia Arancibia and Francisco Bulnes (Editorial Grijalbo, 2004).

2. Chilean Foreign Ministry, Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of the Republic of Chile and the Republic of Argentina (Tratado de Paz y Amistad entre el Gobierno de la República de Chile y el Gobierno de la República de Argentina), Vatican City, 29 November, 1984.

3. Measures of Mutual Trust aim to prevent crises and conflict and enhance international peace and security. Conversely, integration measures address a different phase in the relations of international actors, one that considers cooperation and interdependence within the wider concept of integration and takes into account all of the spheres, and certainly security and defense relations. A great deal of specialized literature regarding the Measures of Mutual Trust addresses these actions in detail. See the works of Augusto Varas, Juan Emilio Cheyre, Francisco Rojas, and Isaac Caro, to name a few.

4. See Annex No. 1 of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship for more on the commission on conciliation. The two-level impact created by the creation of the Binational Commission should be noted. The first level is bilateral and directly affects the two countries in question. The second is local and affects regions through physical integration (laying out border passages and creating corridors), which allows development and interdependence, complements integration at the national level, and permits private participation in local investments of interest.

5. Among other variables that facilitated this impetus and that indirectly affected the integration process or, perhaps better said, contributed to what would develop, was the end of the cold war and the consequent change in the international system, with globalization and integration becoming the predominant concepts in relations between countries and blocks of countries.

6. To better understand the cases of Laguna del Desierto and the Patagonia ice fields, see *Análisis Histórico de la Laguna del Desierto* (Santiago, Chile: Bernardo O'Higgins University, 1995) and Fernando Saenger, *Cuestión, de Límites entre Chile y Argentina* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Cono Sur, 1997).

7. The integrative dynamism of the 1990s is evident in the number of commercial and political agreements signed in comparison to other periods. Between 1984 and 1990, there were only two bilateral accords with Argentina, as opposed to the 38 signed in the 1990s and 12 more between 2001 and 2004. On the economic level, I should point out that during the early years of the administration of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, Chilean investment in Argentina rose significantly, reaching \$5.5 billion, which meant that 60 percent of all Chilean foreign investment was in Argentina.

8. Source not given.

9. For the purposes of this article, I will use the classification of the Measures of Mutual Trust defined by Francisco Rojas Aravena, namely four phases or levels: eradication of mistrust, trust building, deepening of trust, and cooperation planning. However, there are other authors who use other classifications. For example, see Andrés Fontana, *Seguridad Cooperativa: tendencias globales y el continente Americano*, National Foreign Service Institute, Foreign Ministry, International Commerce and Culture, Buenos Aires, Argentina, May 1996.

10. Francisco Rojas Aravena, *Medidas de Confianza Mutua y Balance Estratégico: Un Vínculo Hacia la Distensión y la Estabilidad. Balance Estratégico y Medidas de Confianza Mutua* (Santiago, Chile: La Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales [FLACSO]-Chile, 1996), 35-36.

11. Felipe Arancibia-Clavel, thesis on Chilean-Argentine Integration Process, "Is it Time to Create Permanent Combined Military Units?" (Proceso de integración Chileno-Argentino. ¿Momento para crear una unidad militar combinada permanente?) in pursuit of a masters degree in political science at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, December 2005.

12. Chilean National Defense Ministry, minutes from consultation meetings between Chilean and Argentine ministers of defense and foreign relations (Actas de Reuniones de Consulta entre los Ministros de RR.EE. y de Defensa de Argentina y Chile), 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2001.

13. Chilean National Defense Ministry, Protocolo de Entendimiento.

14. Chilean National Defense Ministry, Bilateral Accord Act.

15. Chilean National Defense Ministry, Protocolo de Entendimiento, Santiago, Chile, 29 September 2005.

16. The author's thesis, previously cited (note 11), has a more detailed analysis of the French-German model and its similarities with and differences from the Argentine-Chilean model.

17. Felipe Arancibia-Clavel, 15.

18. *Ibid.*, 18-19.