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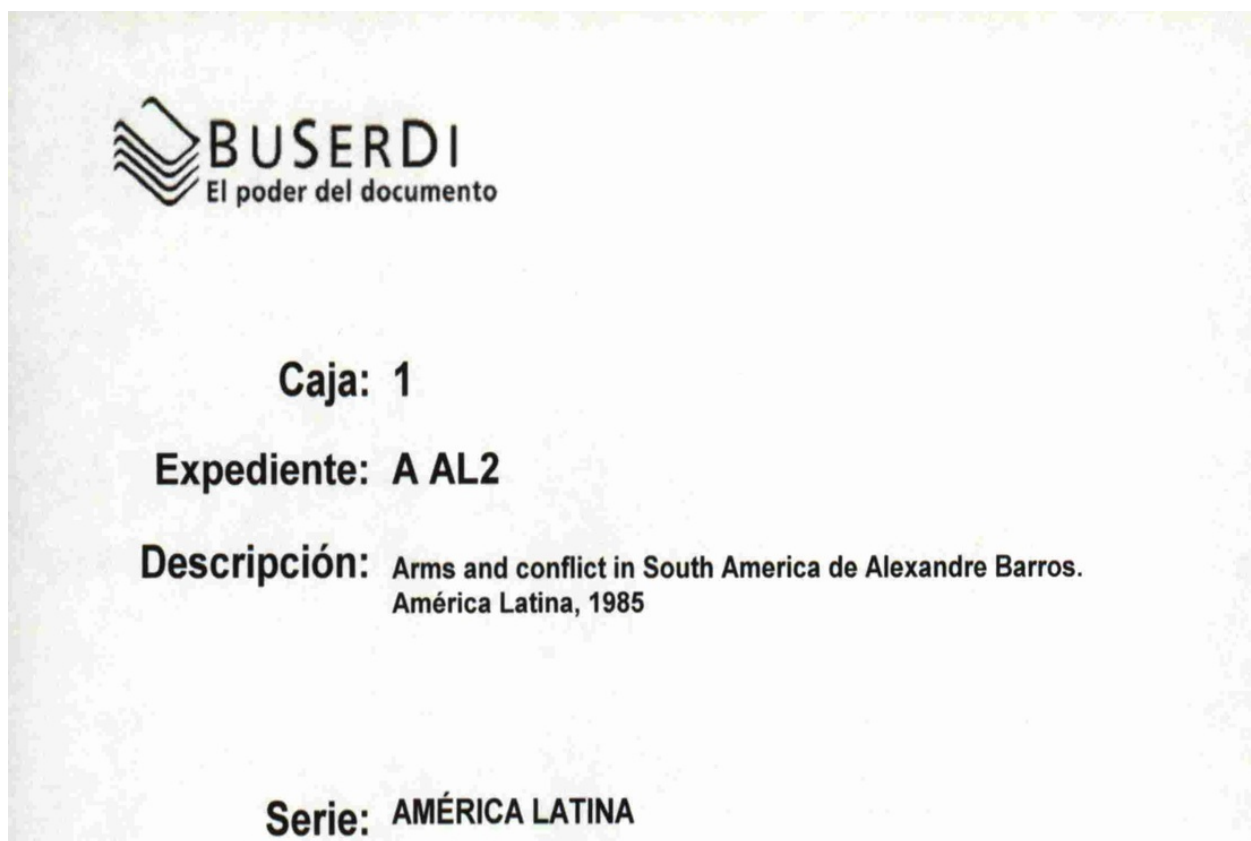
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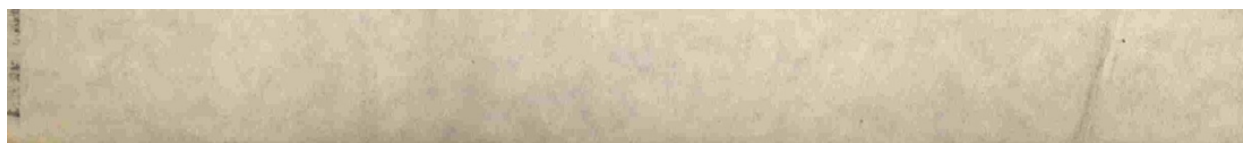
ARMS AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH AMERICA

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Paper prepared for presentation before the Study Group on
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Introduction:

Of all the specters haunting the contemporary world, such as plagues, pestilence, poverty, violence, civil war, class conflict, famine, etc., one was conspicuously absent from South America: war. Armed conflict in the area was limited to internal political violence for a long time. Changing conditions in the area, and in the world, had been pointing towards an increasingly greater probability of war outbreak, or the serious threat of it. The invasion of the Malvinas by Argentinian troops early in the Eighties marked this turning point. From this point on, the mythology that war was not possible in South America any more was in shambles.

Since the war more attention started to be given to the intra-continental rivalries. In the past, avoiding the issue might have been the result of an attitude of wishful thinking, i.e., people assumed that by not talking about a subject, its chances of occurrence diminished. Alternatively it may have been the result of a continuing belief in the perpetuation of internal conditions associated with underdevelopment, and international conditions associated with the Cold War. The latter froze, to a certain extent, international stratification, and acted as factor



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limiting the likeliness of war in South America. The former severely impaired the capability of South American countries to engage in wars.

The changes which took place within South America have affected several internal aspects of countries. Many of those are especially relevant because they have increased the likeliness of international conflicts, be it by accident, miscalculation, or even as a result of "rational" policies adopted and implemented by the elites of these countries. Among the most important dimensions that are undergoing major changes, and which can contribute to the outbreak of war are the demographic, the economic, the political, and the military ones.

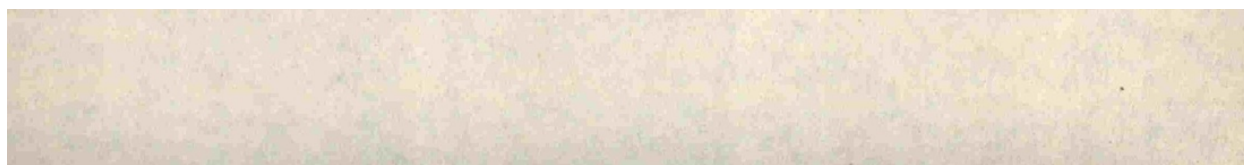
Parallel to internal changes, conditions which prevailed at international level, both within the American hemisphere and in the world in general, also changed. Among these we can count the easing of "traditional" the Cold War tensions (as opposed to the "revived" Cold War of the early Eighties), and a considerable expansion of the pool of arms suppliers. Especially important is the entrance of South American countries--of which Brasil and Argentina should be singled out--in the club of arms producers.



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These changes allowed for the establishment of the new extra-hemispheric alliances, which were not viable in the recent past, and for arms procurement on the part of South American countries, much freer from restraints which existed when the United States held a quasi-monopolistic position as arms supplier to the continent. (FN - Diplomacy of National Security) These changes made uncontrolled arms races viable in the continent. It must be pointed out that such arms races would not be very likely to reach the levels which they have in other parts of the world--if nothing else because of economic and financial constraints which are present in South America--but which would be relevant anyway when measured against past standards of the region.

Undoubtedly, the occurrence of the war cannot be attributed to any one of these single factors. However, the fact that all of them have changed and are changing, points in the direction of a greater probability of war. The interaction of all these dimensions and the effects of the changes they have suffered being very complex makes it necessary to separate them in order to evaluate how changes in each dimension can affect the increasing likelihood of international conflict. So far it seems that the most important factor which can contribute to the outbreak of war in South America is the availability of weaponry and the possibility of reliable sources of supply once the conflict



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starts. The Argentinian experience in the Malvinas seems to have made this very clear to military elites in the region.

Changes in economic, military and political conditions may occur over long periods of time, or quickly, depending on their type. It is important, however, to keep in mind that, in many cases, it is not essential that certain changes actually take place: it is sufficient that certain policies were announced, that the development of certain projects is started or that potential changes are perceived as probable, to make neighbors concerned. This is specially true for military elites who, as Huntington pointed out, are more concerned about their countries' capabilities, rather than at their occasional friendly rhetoric and intentions.

Military elites are not the sole decision makers involving in triggering war. They interact with other elites that may, in some cases, be even more interested in war than professional soldiers. It is not unheard that these elites may exploit military values (which view the world as basically divided in friends and foes) to their own advantage.

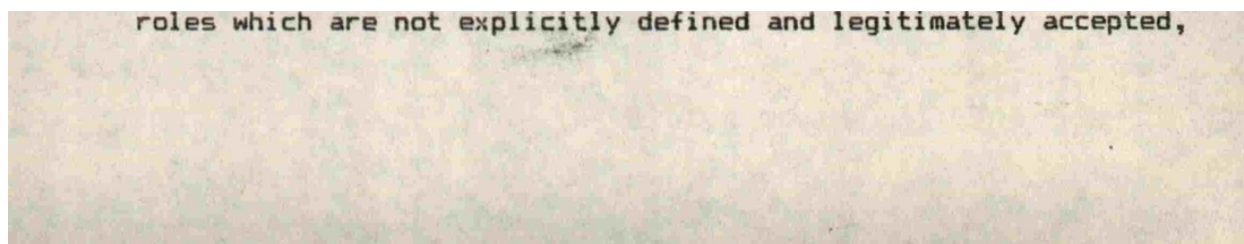
Recent political developments in South America have been removing the military from the forefront of the political scene. After many years of being the incumbents of power qua members of the



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military institution, military officers are leaving formal positions of power. From the institutional point of view, then, what we can hypothesize is that in the new situation political systems in South America face the challenge of having to learn a modus vivendi with groups which are highly organized, more homogeneous in terms of values than any civilian elite, highly trained, and, above all without a clear definition of which role they should play.

The internal political role which the military played, especially since the early Sixties, seems to be somewhat exhausted--if nothing else--for some time. Thus, what we have is a professional group which was not destroyed by the political changes which took place since 1983, and which has not had its formal role redefined. (FN - Some analysts are arguing that the military, in Brasil, for instance, have maintained virtually the same role--or even increased it--without being so much in the forefront. Although this might be true from the point of view of the role which professional soldiers play, it is not necessarily satisfactory from the point of view of the self-image of the institution. In other words, in the dynamics of military sociology, it is very difficult to see the case of military establishments playing "hidden" roles, so to speak. Given characteristics of these organizations, it is very difficult for them to accept



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be it for its own members, be it for the society to which they are supposed to serve. Thus, the idea that the military will accept the role of having "a lot of influence" in government without a clear definition of this translated into laws and into their own doctrine is untenable for a long time. Namely, this situation may occur for sometime, but it is unlikely to remain as "a role for the military.")

In this situation, then, it must be expected that civilian governments will try to redefine the role for their professional soldiers and, in the absence of an internal role to be played, there is a strong chance that an external defense role will be defined. For instance, President Alfonsín has been making efforts to diminish the role of the military in the Argentinian political system, but he has not taken care of defining another role for the military to play. This may very well be in the roots of the recent--as of October 1985--bombings which are taking place and which are, allegedly, of military inspiration. President Alán García of Peru is also cracking on the military. As long as the cracking refers only to matters pertaining explicitly illegal acts, they may be tolerable. When such cracking involves stripping the armed forces of their role the situation becomes more difficult in the measure that the absence of a legitimate role tends to be unacceptable for the military.

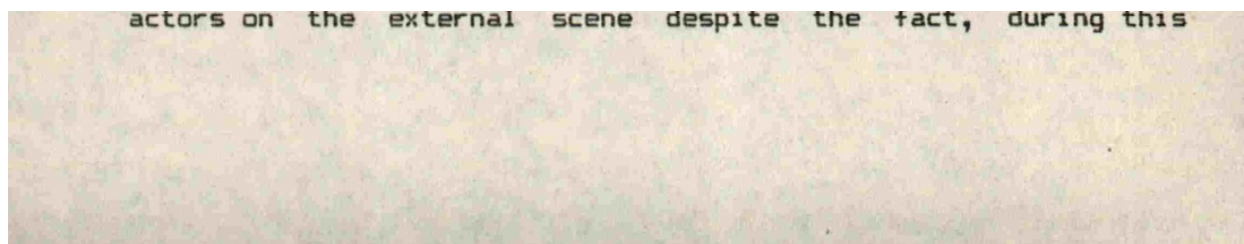


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After all, national military organizations, because they are trained to interact violently with each other, share a great number of characteristics which have an impact on their values. Despite the fact that particular experiences of given military institutions may create differences between them, ultimately they may well share similar professional characteristics which may make them react more or less similarly to measures adopted by civilian governments.

Historically, in certain sense, the South American military have been going around a circle. In a first moment they had as their primary role that of promoting and consolidating the process of independence of their countries. They moved, therefore, from an externally relevant role (performed during the wars of independence) to an internally relevant one, closing the circle for the first time. In a second stage, they got involved in some of the international wars which took place in the continent during the XIXth Century. At this point they again established their role as externally relevant actors.

During the first half of the XXth Century, South American professional soldiers, although primarily involved in internal politics, maintained an image remnant of that of the XIXth Century, i.e., they continued to consider themselves as relevant



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period, the performance of relevant international military functions was virtually nihil. The exceptions are Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay in the 1930's and the participation of Brazilian forces on the side of the allies during World War II. This situation prevailed until the outbreak of the War over the Malvinas, in 1982.

After the Second World War the South American military returned to a relevant internal role, this time rationalized by a combination of the Cold War environment which dominated the world with the doctrine de la guerre révolutionnaire (imported from the French after their experience in Indochina and Algeria) and the doctrines of internal security developed by the North American together with the military of some of the more advanced countries in the continent.

Nowadays the exclusive concentration of the South American Military on an internal role seems to have been exhausted, creating the need for the development of another role, which, once again will tend to be an external one. The locus for the performance of this renewed role will be the continent itself, since given economic and technological constraints, it is difficult for the South American Military Forces to operate beyond the limits of the continent on their own.



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Furthermore, I hypothesize that the external projection for the military in terms of the performance of international role is a sine qua non for the diminution of their internal role, although I am not implying that this shift of function will take place on the basis of a zero sum game.

Another factor which must not be forgotten is that the few wars which occurred in South America, although minor if measured by world standards, were of major importance both to shape value systems of South American military establishment, and to establish international frontiers in the area.

This was a process whose outcome was not equally satisfactory for all the nation states involved. In this sense, due to limited, but relevant, war experiences, prevailing value systems among military elites in South America have always implicitly identified "who are the enemies" in the area. This fact itself did not provoke conflict, however, which are now emerging, with the military in the continent projecting themselves externally, these historical experiences may very well be resuscitated to rationalize, legitimize and justify territorial claims which were until now dormant.



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War Probabilities

1. Demographic Changes

Demographically South American countries have high population growth rates. If we add to this the fact that there is already a great disparity of sizes of populations in the area among countries, we can see why the issue is an object of preoccupation to several of the nations. Major changes in the size of populations do not occur overnight, and may, in most instances, be anticipated well ahead of time. In this sense, the population dimension of countries is being watched and compared by several others. There are already speculations about national policies aimed at increasing the populations of some countries. However, since this variable is relatively stable along extended period of time (except for massive international migrations), no matter which policies are adopted, the future size of population of South American countries will be still possible to be anticipated well ahead of time.

In terms of relative stability, what is true for the size of population is not true of their location and distribution. Historically, South American have been highly concentrated in coastal areas and/or around capital cities. In recent years some



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governments in the area have been making efforts, by means of more or less deliberate policies, to relocate populations closer to border areas, so as to provide for the actual physical occupation of their territories. This is being done as part of their efforts aimed at state building. Efforts to populate remote areas has generally been accompanied by the setting up of military installations.

Occupying territories does not mean per se that countries have aggressive intentions. However, the fact that population move to regions close to international borders and settle there brings people from different countries into closer contact. The occupation of border areas has two immediate results. Firstly, population start to notice differences (cultural, linguistic, economic and ethnic, etc.) between each other. Secondly, they move across international borders if conditions— especially economics ones — prove to be better on the other side. This process may have different outcomes. Population may either strengthen their loyalties to the country of origin, or they may transfer loyalties to the countries where they have settle. Whichever of the two occurs, involved governments get concerned, and generally extend nation-state institutions—especially installations—in order to insure their sovereignty over those areas, and to prevent incidents across borders, thus creating spots where tension is likely to increase.



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This increase in the movement of population across national lines is taking place not only in regions close to international borders, but in some cases, it is occurring in cities and regions which are far from international frontiers. An additional complication to the problems of international migration is related to its motivations. Some of the populations movements are caused by the economic interest of the individuals, some other occurs because of reasons such as political persecutions and some others are caused by a combination of reasons. With the respect to the influence which such migration may have upon the prevalence of peace or the occurrence of war among nations, it is important to consider as key variables, besides the location, direction and motivations of the migrations, also their intensity and pace.

2. Economic Change

Economically speaking, South American countries have different rates of development. Availability of economic resources, capital, technology have always been unevenly distributed in the area, but recently, unevenness has been increasing: its perception is also becoming sharper. Countries are now more aware of their



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neighbors' capabilities, prestige, and opportunity for development, and are becoming concerned about this.

On the one side, economic capability and industrial development are increasing general differences. Additionally, specific capabilities for the creation of indigenous arms industries are also emerging in the more advanced countries in the area.

As a result of these changes, the stratification of countries of the area, which had been relatively unchanged for a long number of years, is being altered in two senses. Firstly, some countries are experiencing status mobility vis à vis others. Secondly, the differences between countries in the ranking are becoming greater. The quick speed with which these changes are occurring may very well create situations of status inconsistency, making countries more inclined to engage in conflict behavior.

The oil crisis created problems of varying magnitude for countries in the Continent. Brazil was the hardest hit of all. This is so because Brazil was heavily dependent on imported oil, and more, most of its oil used to come from a sole supplier: Iraq. Argentina and Venezuela were in a far more comfortable situation than their larger neighbor.



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Argentina and Brasil are the two most important countries in the region, as well as the ones which have developed arms industries to a level that they may make a difference at the continental level. Given these facts associated with the traditional rivalry which has been perceived as permeating the relationship between the two countries, it is very easy to fall in temptation and admit the high likeliness of a conflict between Brasil and Argentina. The fact that both countries are under civilian rule, and the fact that its ruling elites discard the possibility of a conflict points in the direction of "friendly competition" (See Wayne Selcher, "Brazilian-Argentine Relations in the 1980's: From Wary Rivalry to friendly Competition," in Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs, volume 27, number 2 (1985), pp. 25-53)), however does not seem to be the major deterrent to conflict between the two countries.

*instead, it is important to keep in mind that, from the point of view of the international system, Argentina and Brasil are just too big and too important nations to be able to get involved in direct military conflict without inviting, inevitably, the intervention of other powers. The possibility of this occurrence acts as a serious restraint for whichever bellicose intentions may prevail among sectors of the elites of both countries.



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In this sense, we must eliminate the hypothesis of a direct confrontation between the two great countries in the region and explore the hypothesis of indirect confrontations. This seems to be much more viable. It is in this context that the existence of weapons industries in both countries gains importance since this is an asset which both Argentina and Brasil may use in their attempts to widen there spheres of influence over countries in the continent.

Chile and Argentina have border problems at the very tip of the Southern Cone on what is known as the Beagle Channel Dispute. So far the problem seems to under control by means of a treaty, however, it is clear that treaties survive only in the presence of responsible behavior on the part of the parties involved and in the absence of a real interest which may make it worthwhile to pay the political price of violating or disregarding a treaty. To put more bluntly, treaties are only limited guarantees against international violence.

In view of this currently dormant dispute, it may be in the best interests of Brasil to supply Chile with weapons to counter-balance Argentina, something which Brasil has apparently been doing, especially during the darkest period of Chilean history, when the country has imposed an international blockade of arms supply. During the Geisel administration in Brasil (1974-1979),



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the Brazilian policy has been one of avoiding alienating Chile, without necessarily committing itself so openly to Chile that this might operate against the interest of Brasil in other international fronts. The inauguration of the Figueiredo Administration in Brasil in 1979 seems to have shifted this policy. The Brazilian president has, in a bold and perhaps unwise move, visited Chile early in October 1980. This was done however, only after an exchange of visits between the presidents of Argentina and Brasil during the earlier part of 1980.

Another points which must not be forgotten is that the relationship between Argentina and Brasil does not take place only in the extreme tip of the Southern Cone, but also occurs in other places.

One stage of this relationship has been Bolivia. After several years of tenure of General-President Hugo Banzer (a pro-Brazilian), there were several attempts to re-democratize the political system which were interrupted by a coup in July 1980. The Argentinian participation in the staging of the coup was intense as well as open, as reported by the international press and by exiles who managed to escape from Bolivia. From this point of view, the coup which brought General Garcia Meza into power was a Argentinian victory at the expense of Brasil. The Argentinian

choice of surrogates, however, seems to have been disastrous at

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least in two senses. Firstly, because of the involvement of officers more closely related to the government with international drug traffic. Secondly, due to the fact that given a military government, the officer among the Bolivian military who is politically more competent and who was managed both a military and a civilian base of support has been Banzer. This may very well bring him back into power, a fact which would, in principle, a defeat for Argentina. In more recent elections Banzer stood as candidate and lost. This has not eliminated him from the roster of candidates, however. Thus, indirect disputes in these areas are likely to continue to exist between Brasil and Argentina. So far they have not taken a military format, and developments do not point in this direction, however, the big difference between now and the past is the existence of the means to make war in South America.

The other setting which Argentina and Brasil dispute for influence is constantly being tested is Paraguay. In this case, most important issue is that of the use of the electricity produced by power plants under construction along the rivers on the border between the two countries. Itaipu, the biggest of the power plants planted on the Plata Basin. Its construction was highly controversial. This was so because of the size of the project but also because it is upstream, and the use of the

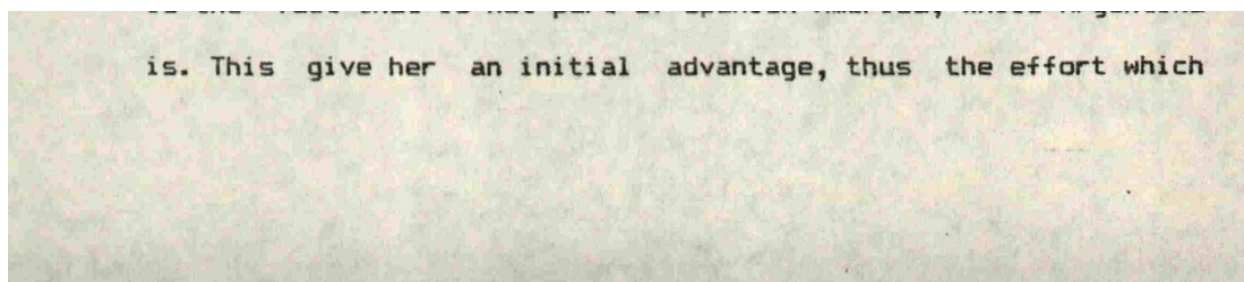
downstream waters for other power plants depended on technical

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details of the construction of the Itaipu Dam. As if this things did not suffice, there is the Argentinian paranoia that in case of conflict, the Brazilian could blow up the dam and flood the province of Buenos Aires, destroying roughly 50% of the Argentinian industrial production capacity.

Whether this last point makes sense objectively or not is irrelevant. The important point is that this has been a calculation which has been present in the mass consumption of the implication of the building of Itaipu. A further point complicating the triangular relationship among Brasil, Argentina and Paraguay has to do with the succession of president Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay. Stroessner is getting old and there is no provisions for his succession, so it is possible as soon as the opportunity presents itself both Brasil and Argentina will try to influence the process of selection of his successor. In a sense Stroessner has played between Argentina and Brasil with a reasonable degree of success for Paraguay, however, it seems that once he is gone both Brasil and Argentina would respectively prefer to have someone more committed to their policy.

One factor which cannot be disregarded in Brazilian calculation is the fact that is not part of Spanish America. while Argentina



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Brasil has to make to court Paraguay and Bolivia is more intense and it is in this that the new non-traditional exports by Brasil are important, the most important among these being weapons, education and training which involve the use of Brazilian technology. These kind of exports create links which are very necessary to Brasil to implement its policy.

Another situation in South America which seems to be potentially explosive--and which also involves Brasil and Argentina, albeit very indirectly--is that represented by rivalries and border disputes involving Chile, Peru and Bolivia. It seems that it is there that one can find the deepest and most painful scare resulting from international conflict in South America. The current configuration of possession of territory around the Tropic of Capricorn in the territories of Chile, Peru and Bolivia results basically from the outcome of the War of the Pacific which took place more than 100 years ago.

The outcome of the war ended up allowing Chile to incorporate some Peruvian territory, as well as depriving Bolivia of the possibility of an exit to the Pacific. When 1979 was coming closer, some observers became nervous with the possibility that the Peruvians might try to take a belated revenge on Chile. These worries were aggravated by the ideological differences between the governments of the two countries on the occasion of the 100th



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Anniversary of the outbreak of war. Although the date went by without major incidents, the degree of sensitivity of the situation can be measured, among other things, by the fact that any movement of troops near the border on the part of either country due to internal political reasons--such as the staging of a coup, for instance--are reported in advance to the other country, so as to avoid misunderstandings which might cause the accidental outbreak of hostilities.

If one considers the problem in which Chile, Peru and Bolivia are involved not only as a local one, but as a wider issue which involves the Chile-Argentina relationship, then the questions becomes much more serious. This is so because when one considers the problem faced by Chile at its extreme Southern and extreme Northern tips, the risks become far greater. This further aggravated by the geographic shape of Chile. Considering that Brasil and Chile have been in close terms, it is not absurd to hypothesize that Brasil might support the Chilean claims against Peru, a country to which Argentina has been increasingly closer in recent years, to the point of the two countries signing a --symbolic-- treaty of nuclear cooperation. The importance of symbols must not be disregarded and a proof of this is the --also symbolic-- treaty of nuclear cooperation which has been signed between Brasil and Chile in October 1980, when the Brazilian President visited Chile.



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The key pawn in this case is Bolivia, which is very interested in obtaining an exit to the sea. Although Brasil does not oppose the Bolivian claims to such an exit, the Brazilian position has one of offering Bolivia a corridor to the Atlantic through Brazilian territory (a fact which would undoubtedly put Bolivia more under the Brazilian sphere of influence). The Brazilian position is tenable up to the point that there is a spark around the Tropic of Capricorn. In the event of occurrence of such a conflict Brasil will certainly have to take a position, if nothing else because Argentina undoubtedly will.

Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to call all these situation volatile, as compared to what happens in other regions of the world, but it is not difficult to see the issue of weapons supply in the region will be important for both Brasil and Argentina since they are specializing -- according to the international division of labor of arms production -- in weaponry of middle technological level, which is exactly the type of arsenal which may be crucial in the event of such a conflict.

Aside to these intra-continental problems, we must take to account one additional point, namely that South American countries are in different stages of import substitution process and they have a basic interest in maintaining relatively stable and



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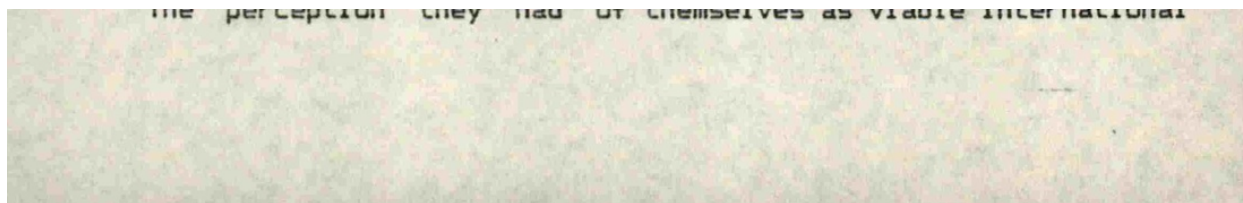
peaceful for international trade within the area. This may act as a further deterrent for conflict. However, they are becoming more competitive for markets outside of the area. Whether this is likely to favor the occurrence of trade wars is a matter to be seen, but the relative lack of success of the international common markets which are being set up in the area points in this direction. The record of achievement of LAFTA and of the Pacto Andino is debatable, not only per se, but also because the degree of agreement on these matters seems to be low, and to exclude partners as well.

3. Military Changes

Military Forces act according to values they share, ideologies they have, doctrines (in the strategic, not in the tactical sense) which prevail at given points in time, self-perceptions they have about their role and mission as well as strategic and power limitations they perceive in themselves, and in armed forces of their countries.

Concerning values, it can be said that South American military groups are acquiring a self-image (and, in some cases, a new self-confidence) both as professional soldiers and as citizens.

The perception they had of themselves as viable international



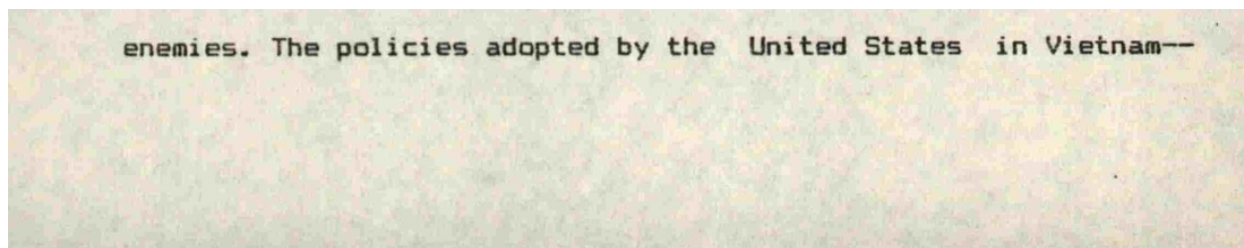
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actors was subdued, for at least three decades, by the assumptions of the Cold War, in which most of the situation demanding international actions in their contingency plans were to be undertaken within the context of major inter-continental wars between super powers.

In these situations they were supposed to be, at most, pawns in a big game. Notions of the cataclysmic war became less and less credible along the Sixties and Seventies for the Great Powers and for the small ones as well. It took a long time for these change in values, ideological and strategic outlook to gain momentum in South America.

Presently, it seems clear that sizeable sectors of the responsible military elites already see the world through lenses other than those of the Cold War, i.e., the enemy is not necessarily on the other side of the world but may very well be much closer. A major strategic aspect of the Cold War was the South American military forces, if they had to engage in international warfare would do so as small partners in big alliances. This is still a valid notion, but no longer the major one.

The military doctrines--in the strategic sense--now imply a greater concern with close neighbors than with distance



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and in Angola and Iran as well--reduced the U.S. reliability as an ally. If for the older and more conservative Cold Warriors of the area this may have created the sensation of fatherlessness, for the younger mid-career officers it is a signal of the necessity for a rapid redefinition of strategic doctrines, more based on self-sufficiency and on a less dependent alliance with the United States, or whoever else.

Armed Forces in South America never were, until now, self sufficient either in terms of hardware, or in terms of strategic doctrines.

In spite of a basically dependent position on the United States, the several military establishments in South America have been developing their own training systems at the level of senior military officers, i.e., Command and Staff Schools, and War Colleges.

These institutions have been growing more independent from North American military missions and have been working in the creation of their own strategic doctrines sometimes involving cooperation with other South American Countries. These doctrines are based on relative self-sufficiency and on more flexible alliance systems than those which prevailed during the years of the Cold War. This

new doctrinaire orientation of the South American military is

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providing them with a new self-esteem, at the same time that it is making them more aware of the strategic and power limitations that they have vis-à-vis each other.

The new awareness of power limitations is contributing to emergence and solidification of a new arms supply pattern. From the end of the Cold War II until the late sixties, the United States was practically the sole arms supplier for the region. Except for a few token sales by other sources, the United States enjoyed a de facto monopoly. This situation prevented the occurrence of uncontrolled arms races, i.e., the United States sold what it wanted, the amounts it wanted, and for the tactical purposes it defined. The desire of purchasers was irrelevant. What counted was the disposition of the supplier.

Additionally, the arms sold by the United States carried a great amount of political commitments. These became increasingly less acceptable for South American countries. The growth of the Western European arms industry, and its more business-like attitude, proved to be more attractive for South America. In other words, the "packages" supplied by Western European producers were more in accordance with the desires and aspirations of the purchasers, and carried less political strings attached.



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Additionally, it must be also pointed out that the diversification of sources of supply is exposing the South American military to other tactical military and weapons deployment doctrines which were absent when the U.S. monopoly prevailed. All arms supply involve a "package" (the weapons themselves, maintenance services, replacement parts, specific training in the use of weapons, etc.). The packages provided by Western European suppliers are more flexible and convenient in terms of providing opportunities for technology transfer and absorption on the part of the purchasers.

These arrangements have contributed to the development of arms industries in some of countries in the area, especially Argentina and Brasil. These are still, in most cases, in an embryonic stage, but already exist and are providing to be capable of producing significant numbers of some types of conventional arms, although, in most cases, still with imported technology based on licensing agreements. (FN - Recently Brasil unveiled the first prototype of its fighter the AMX, developed using Italian technology)

A further detail that must be pointed out is the Brazilian policy of arms sales is becoming more integrated with the overall

foreign policy of the country. The operationalization of this
integration started to take place during the Geisel Administra-