

Some thoughts on Argentina's strategic culture

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A recent report on the Strategic Culture of Argentina² has facilitated a fruitful and necessary exchange of ideas among academics, diplomats, members of the armed forces and experts on political parties³ about our situation in this field of study, which is essential to the construction of a strategic, long-term vision of our interests and our participation in the international scenario.

Although the concept of “strategic culture” has long-standing historical antecedents⁴, it began to be of particular interest to the United States of America with the start of the Cold War. At that time, it was regarded as a useful tool to help understand the different factors that take part in the decision-making process of opponents and the establishment of their strategic interests - all of which was in turn understood in the framework of the different historical, cultural, religious and ethical aspects of a given country, which condition it to take the decision to go to war to defend its vital interests⁵. Now that the Cold

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² Félix Martín and Marvin L. Astrada: “*Argentine Strategic Culture*”, Applied Research Center, Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University (FIU), April 2010. Available at: <<http://strategicculture.fiu.edu/Studies/Argentina.aspx>>. The FIU has conducted similar studies on other countries in Latin America, which can be found in the aforementioned website. A previous version of this work was presented by the author in the Workshop about Argentine Strategic Culture, organized by the FIU in Miami, on February 4, 2010. Available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>.

³ Dr. Félix Martín held a discussion with Argentine experts at the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI), on June 7, 2010.

⁴ Thucydides, Homer, Tacitus and Sun Tzu have developed these ideas in their writings. See, for instance: Jeffrey S. Lantis, “*Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism*”, Strategic Insights, Volume IV, Issue 10, October 2005.

⁵ Jack Snyder: “*The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options*”, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 1977; Alastair Iain Johnston: “*Thinking about Strategic Culture*”, International Security 19, Num. 4, 1995; Michael C. Desch, “*Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies*”, International Security 23, Num. 1, 1998; Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner and Jeffrey A. Larsen (eds.): “*Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*”, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

War⁶ is over, the concept has renewed its usefulness in helping to describe the mechanisms and values that affect the establishment and implementation of long-term policies -including strategic ones - in a given society⁷.

In 2010, Argentina celebrated 200 years of self-government, albeit bewildered by its relative decline, both in comparison to its neighbors and in the international milieu. In this context, many analysts tend to consider the current situation as the result of a historical incapacity to define and execute our long-term strategic ambitions. Notwithstanding, certain lines of continuity can be traced when the long cycles of our history are analyzed.

The elements that make up the strategic culture of Argentina have derived from our geographic location, our history, the process of configuration and organization of our territory, the relationship between our economy and the global market, and the process by which our population was composed. Racial, ethnic or religious factors, however, have not played an important role.

Located at the southern tip of South America, the total area of the Argentine Republic is 2,791,810 km², making it the eighth largest country in the world by land area⁸. The geography and the international politics in the Southern Cone have determined or influenced the continuity of Argentina's strategic culture for 500 years. The current territory of Argentina is the product of a long process of interaction between the delimitation of outer borders and the occupation, population and productive configuration within this territory.

When the Spanish came to America, what is now the territory of Argentina was very sparsely populated (it is estimated that there were 330.00 native people living there); there were no important cultures nor pre-Columbian empires, but Nomadic hunter-gatherer societies. With the exception of the Northwest, where some settlements were in fact integrated into the fringes of the Inca Empire, aboriginal cities did not exist: the land was practically unpopulated. No gold or silver deposits were known, as the current ones were neither discovered nor exploited by

⁶The Southern Command of the United States has defined it as the "*combination of internal and external influences and experiences - geographic, historical, cultural, economic, political and military - that shape and influence the way a country understands its relationship to the rest of the world. The concept of strategic culture is a useful tool for better understanding why countries react the way they do and how they may react to specific future situations. Strategic culture describes the range of cultural, political, and military experiences that drive a country's approach to the world*". Jeffrey S. Lantis: "*Strategic Culture: A Multifaceted Cultural Approach to the Study of Latin America. Case Study Guidelines*", FIU Applied Research Center, May 2009, p. 6.

⁷Jack L. Snyder: "*The Concept of Strategic Culture: A User's Guide*", paper prepared for Florida International University, Applied Research Center, April 8, 2010, p. 4; Jeffrey S. Lantis: "*Op. Cit.*".

⁸The submerged lands of Argentina (not including its Antarctic claims) under its EEZ cover a similar area: 2.749.585 km². The continental shelf, which extends from the 200 miles of the EEZ up to the outer limits recognized in the Convention on the Law of the Sea, adds a further 1.064.590 km². Argentina has a population of 40.091.359 inhabitants, which sets the density at 14,36 persons per km². 30 % of the population is concentrated in the Province of Buenos Aires, which comprises 9% of the territory.

the Spanish⁹.

The division of the American continent between the Spanish and Portuguese empires, first arranged by the Pope, and then by the treaty of Tordesillas¹⁰, could not prevent either the Portuguese occupation of the territories to the west of this demarcation line, or the growing interest in the region of other European empires. The mission of Juan Díaz de Solís that led to the discovery of the Río de la Plata in 1516 was the product of the Spanish concern over the presence of Portugal in South America and their desire to find an oceanic passage to the East. The contest between the two empires to gain control of the northeast of what is now Argentina stretched throughout the colonial period and continued during the first decades of the nineteenth century, when Argentina was already an independent country. In addition to this principal competition with Portugal, the Spanish Empire also maintained its concerns over the activity of other European powers in the region: The Netherlands, Great Britain and France.

The process of occupation and control of the territory¹¹ was carried out along three lines of action. The first one started from Buenos Aires and headed north into present-day Paraguay, along the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, and to the East from the eastern bank of the Río de la Plata up to the south of Brazil. The second one proceeded diagonally into the Northwest¹², interacting with the offensive that was led from the Viceroyalty of Peru, while a third one interacted with the Captaincy- General of Chile into the center-west of the country (Cuyo Region). To the south, the campaign was aimed at preventing the settlement of the British, the French and the Dutch on the coast and adjacent islands, as well as securing free transit through the Strait of Magellan into the Pacific¹³.

All actions carried out by the Spanish Empire in what is now Argentina

⁹ Carlos Alberto Floria and César A. García Belsunce: *"Historia de los Argentinos"*, Editorial El Ateneo, Buenos Aires, 2009, p. 57.

¹⁰ By the Bull Inter Caetera of May 3 and 4, 1493, Pope Alexander VI granted the Catholic Monarchs all lands (discovered or to be discovered) to the west and south of a pole-to-pole line 100 leagues west and south of any of the islands of the Azores or the Cape Verde Islands. On June 7, 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas set the partition meridian in 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. The Castilians obtained the right to free navigation in Portuguese waters to reach their sector.

¹¹ Territorial acquisitions during the first period of colonial expansion were in the hands of armed individuals, with state authorization to found cities. In the second period, direct control of the territory was assumed by the Spanish government.

¹² The establishment of the Customs House in Jujuy in 1696 set commercial limits between the territories of Río de la Plata and Upper Peru.

¹³ The first strategic thought originated in the Río de la Plata was that of Hernando Arias de Saavedra (1564-1634), also known as Hernandarias. Born in Asuncion, Paraguay, in 1602, he was appointed governor of Buenos Aires. Hernandarias designed a comprehensive plan for the Southern Cone, foreseeing the population of Uruguay and Paraguay, the dismantling of Portuguese presence east of the Uruguay River and Paraguay, and the occupation of Patagonia and the Strait of Magellan. Ruth Tiscornia: *"Hernandarias estadista. La política económica rioplatense de principios del siglo XVII"*, EUDEBA, Buenos Aires, 1973.

were of a defensive nature: through negotiation, containment, deterrence and the use of force - very limited and only in clearly defined circumstances -, the Spanish tried to prevent Portuguese expansion¹⁴ and British and Dutch attempts to establish bases of operation on the mainland or its adjacent islands¹⁵. The creation, however tardy, of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata in 1776 responded to strategic considerations, and it was also an endeavor to preserve the commercial monopoly from competition by European powers. However, military presence continued to be low-level. As will be shown further on, this concept of defending the territory has always been present in Argentine strategic culture.

When the process of Independence from the Spanish Empire began in 1810, several constituent regions of the Viceroyalties of the Río de la Plata and Peru were liberated by armies from the United Provinces of South America, subsequently gaining independence. In total, Argentina today retains but half of the territory that comprised the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. This gave way to the long-standing idea that the country had suffered an "amputation", stemming both from military defeats as well as mistakes or shortcomings in diplomatic negotiations¹⁶. The final consolidation of the present-day territory of the Argentine Republic was a lengthy process: its conclusion came only in the late 20th century, with the exception of the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) and other islands in the South Atlantic, in dispute with Great Britain.

1825 saw the start of the only war between Argentina and Brazil as independent nations. This war led to the negotiation of independence of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, which, acting like "cotton between two crystals"¹⁷, clearly impeded Brazilian access to the Río de la Plata and territories south of the Uruguay River. The rest of the borders with Brazil were established in a bilateral treaty in 1857, and an arbitral award granted by the President of the United States,

¹⁴ If the demarcation line of the Treaty of Tordesillas was applied today, Brazil's territory would only amount to one fifth of its current extension. Up to 1640, when they were defeated by an armed group of Aborigines organized by the Jesuits of Mbororé, the "bandeiras" (Portuguese military incursions to hunt Indians as slaves) attacked the east of the territory. In 1680, the Portuguese were expelled by force from Colonia del Sacramento, on the Eastern bank of the Río de la Plata. From that moment on, the city had to be recaptured by military means on several occasions.

¹⁵ Cape Horn and Isla de los Estados were discovered by the Dutch, who also settled in Brazil (Bahía, 1623-1625, and Pernambuco, 1630-1640). The British were ousted from the Islas Malvinas in 1770 by a naval expedition from Buenos Aires. The people of Buenos Aires, with local recruits, also repelled two English invasion attempts in 1806 and 1807.

¹⁶ Carlos Escudé and Andrés Cisneros: "*Historia de las Relaciones Exteriores Argentinas*", available at: <<http://www.argentina-rree.com/historia.htm>>, electronic version, 2000.

¹⁷ As expressed by Lord Ponsomby's, an euphemism for "buffer state". It is curious that no representatives of the new country were present at the Preliminary Peace Convention, signed in Río de Janeiro in 1828 by Argentina and Brazil under the auspices of Great Britain. See: Alberto E. Dojas: "*Una reflexión sobre la cultura estratégica del Uruguay*" ("Some thoughts on Uruguay's strategic culture"), paper prepared for the Workshop on Uruguay's Strategic Culture, FIU, September 24, 2010. Available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>.

Grover Cleveland, on February 5, 1895¹⁸.

The borders with Paraguay were fixed after the war that was fought between that country and an alliance formed by Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina in 1865. This war was the last military confrontation for the settling of national boundaries among the successors to the Spanish and Portuguese empires¹⁹. As a result of complex negotiations between the parties after the defeat of Paraguay, Argentina obtained – by the Treaty of 1876 -, the area of land up to the Pilcomayo River, along with some islands which were of strategic value for the control of the Paraná and Paraguay rivers. An arbitral award granted by the American President Rutherford Hayes on November 12, 1878, ceded Paraguay the territories north of the Pilcomayo River. The war with Paraguay would be the last time the Argentine armed forces saw action until the Malvinas crisis in 1982.

In spite of the efforts deployed by three successive armies sent from Buenos Aires to defeat the imperial troops, only when Simon Bolivar's forces intervened did present-day Bolivia gain definitive independence, which Argentina supported. However, doubts about the sovereignty of an area that encompassed the departments of Tarija and Potosi existed between the two countries. This led to several military confrontations until it was awarded to Bolivia by a treaty signed in 1889, in exchange for an area in the Atacama Plateau, which Bolivia had lost in the war against Chile²⁰.

The delimitation of the border that Argentina and Chile share –which is more than 5000 km long- was not conclusively set until the late 20th century. The strategic objectives of Argentina during this long negotiation were four, as follows: to recognize the Andes Mountain range as the natural border; to keep that part of Patagonia which lies to the east of the Andes; to ensure free navigation into the Pacific; and to obtain a portion of the Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego. After 200 years, Argentina achieved all its strategic objectives.

Argentina recognized Chile's independence in 1818, after San Martin's military campaign. In 1843, Chile established a fortification in the area of the Strait of Magellan called "Fuerte Bulnes" (Bulnes Fort), which provoked both a protest from Argentina and a debate on the borders between the two countries; the signing of the Boundary Treaty of 1881²¹ between Chile and Argentina represented the first step

¹⁸The award determined which were the Pepirí Guazú and San Antonio Rivers mentioned in the Treaty.

¹⁹Carlos Alberto Floria and César A. García Belsunce: *"Historia de los Argentinos"*, Editorial El Ateneo, Buenos Aires, 2009, p. 580.

²⁰Quirno Costa-Vaca Guzmán Treaty of 1889. On October 31, 1891, Bolivia agreed to modify the first article of the treaty, thus granting Argentina the Jujuy Plateau, Salta and Catamarca, up to the high summits of the Andes. On September 16, 1892, the Bolivian Congress approved the modified version of the Quirno Costa-Vaca Guzmán Treaty. This led, in turn, to boundary negotiations with Chile.

²¹Argentina conveniently took advantage of the complex situation Chile was in, due to the War of the Pacific with Peru and Bolivia. In 1879, before the signing of the Treaty, Argentina's armed forces occupied Northern Patagonia, which could have been militarily conquered by Chile, in an operation called "Campana del Desierto" (Desert Campaign).

to a solution. This treaty defined the border as the line marked by the highest summits of the Andes which divide the waters to the Atlantic and the Pacific. Additionally, boundaries were established in the Strait of Magellan, the Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego and other islands south of the Beagle Channel.

The application of this general criterion resulted in a series of discrepancies, which were resolved only after more than 100 years of negotiations and arbitration. Through these, Argentina consolidated its presence in the Atacama Plateau²², and prevented Chile from getting the eastern slopes of the Andes. Nevertheless, two situations led to conflict: an arms race that had its peak towards the year 1900, during which Argentina equipped itself with a modern army and a significant naval capacity which could compete with that of Chile -victorious from the Pacific War-, and the Beagle Crisis. The latter had arisen from the refusal of the Argentine military junta to recognize the arbitral award issued by the British Crown in 1977 over the islands south of the Beagle Channel, and escalated to the point where both countries were on the brink of war in 1978. Both situations were resolved through negotiation²³. The end of the arms race with Chile would later allow an agreement among Argentina, Brazil and Chile in 1915, which would consolidate a balance of power in the Southern Cone that was reasonable to Argentina.

Another two conflicts would bring Argentina face-to-face with Great Britain. The first one, which lasted from 1840 to 1850 and which also included France, was related to free trade and free navigation of the internal rivers of Argentina. Although it was resolved through negotiation, it was not exempt from military pressure –such as naval blockades-. The second is the still current controversy over the Islas Malvinas and other islands in the South Atlantic, which would eventually develop into the so-called Falklands war between both countries in 1982.

Thus, it can be argued that the consolidation of the Argentine territory was brought about as a result of 200 years of using the same tools as the Spanish had used since 1516: negotiation, pressure, deterrence, containment and war²⁵.

During the period of dominance of the model of export-oriented agriculture, the territory of Argentina was organized in a radial form, with the lines of communication converging on the port of Buenos Aires. The armed forces played

²²The award issued by the American Plenipotentiary Minister in Buenos Aires William Buchanan on March 24, 1899, granted 64,000 km² of the territory (85% of the total 75,000 km² in dispute) to Argentina and the remaining 11,000 km² (15%) to Chile.

²³The “Pactos de Mayo” (“May Pacts”), signed on May 28, 1902, included a convention on the Limitation of Naval Arms. Mediation of the Holy See helped to avert war and contributed to the signing of an agreement over the Beagle Channel islands in 1984.

²⁴A treaty, known as “ABC” (Argentina, Brazil and Chile), was signed on May 25, 1915.

²⁵Argentina also claims a territory in Antarctica of 965,697 km² (including the Islas Orcadas del Sur (South Orkney Islands), which comprise 750 km²), y the Islas Georgias del Sur (South Georgia) (3,560 km²) y Sandwich del Sur (South Sandwich) (307 km²) islands.

a double role in controlling the interior of this territory: strengthening the presence of central government in those areas controlled by the Indian tribes²⁶, and securing state presence in border areas. A new configuration of the territory, that might be conducive to integration among the different regions and facilitate access to the markets of the Pacific and Brazil, for years received neither political attention nor sufficient budgetary resources²⁷. The economic crisis and the action of different sectional interests threw Argentina's once vast railway network into disarray and led to its virtual disappearance. The spatial distribution of the armed forces over the territory requires substantial modification – because of changes in the regional and global scenario, and of the technological revolution. Such modification should be supported by a modern conception of the territory²⁸.

For 120 years²⁹, the armed forces of Argentina did not take part in any conflict nor did it get involved in the use of force. Their strategic conception was guided by the idea of having a deterrence and containment role in the Southern Cone, thus preventing any alliance among the countries of the region from threatening Argentina's security in military terms. This idea stemmed from confidence in the superiority of the country, based on the size of its economy and its relatively higher level of development³⁰.

As for the international scenario, Argentina did not detect any direct threats to its security and maintained a pacifist position, tending towards neutrality. Shortly before the end of the Second World War³¹, its pro-Allies neutrality was interrupted by the coup d'état of 1943, which showed its preference for the Axis, to the point of bringing the country to international isolation. During the Cold War, Argentina maintained a pro-Western position, though it sought to avoid participation in any intervention in the region led by the superpowers³².

²⁶ The last military campaigns took place between 1881 and 1883.

²⁷ Several plans have tried to come up with a “new” territorial strategy to replace the “radial” model. Among them, the five-year plans during the first Perón administration and the authoritarian attempts of the “Plan Nacional de Desarrollo y Seguridad” (National Plan for Development and Security) in 1966. The “Plan Estratégico Territorial 2016” (Strategic Territorial Plan 2016), issued by the Ministry of Federal Planning and Public Utilities in Buenos Aires, on February 2008, is currently in use.

²⁸ Gustavo E. Ainchil and Alberto E. Dojas: “Una reflexión en torno de la noción de ‘territorio’” (“Some thoughts regarding the notion of ‘territory’”), *Revista de la Defensa*, Número 5, 2010, Ministry of Defense, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Available at: < <http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>.

²⁹ The period between the Paraguayan War (1965) and the Malvinas War (1982).

³⁰ An example of this can be found in the writings of Brazilian treatise author Mario Travassos: “*Today, the magnificent expansion of the Argentine State, which increasingly consolidates the incomparable scope of its influence, under the same language, the same religion, and the territorial continuity inherited from the old viceroalties, is more than an example, for it is a true role model. The Argentine State, with the development of communications, shows the most complete understanding of its geopolitical destiny in the light of two existing antagonisms in the continental scenario (...)*”. Mario Travassos: “*Proyección continental del Brasil*”, Biblioteca del Oficial, Círculo Militar, Buenos Aires, 1941.

³¹ Carlos J. M. Martínez: “*Estrategia: su teoría, planeamiento y realidad en la Argentina*”, Centro de Formación e Investigaciones en Ciencias del Comportamiento Humano, Buenos Aires, 2004, p. 290.

³² Julio César Carasales: “*National Security Concepts of States: Argentina*”, United Nations, New York, 1992, doc: UNIDIR/92/14, p. 5.

Our country had a very high growth rate from the period of national organization up to the crisis of 1930, which allowed it to face its strategic challenges without major complications³³. Because of those “glorious” eighty years, most Argentines cling to the idea that Argentina was once a great country, and to the hope and wish that it will be one again. That is the reason for the existence of certain bewilderment at its relative decline in importance both in the regional³⁴ and in the international milieu. Two circumstances had an impact in this period of Argentine strategic culture: the end of confidence in the permanent growth of the economy after the crisis of 1930, and the fear of social turmoil caused by the action of left-wing groups and political parties. The combination of these two elements brought about a wave of nationalist and anti-liberal ideas that spread across an important part of the armed forces.

On the one hand, the difficulties which the model of export-oriented agriculture had in generating, on its own, a technologically advanced industrial sector that could compete internationally³⁵, had a role in developing an approach called “industrialism” in the armed forces. “Industrialism” proposes that the government should, in order to ensure defense, develop certain industrial capabilities that the private sector could not create. For that purpose, the armed forces ought to have a scientific and technological apparatus that would give them the ability to develop the defense industries autonomously.

In spite of a number of internal and external factors impeding the full development of this plan, the “industrialist” approach has remained in Argentinean strategic thought. These ideas converge with those of a predominantly civil sector, which considers that mastering advanced dual-use technology plays a significant role as a deterrent in the international scenario, even when the arms systems that would employ this technology have not been developed. This is why they believe this is a strategic matter in which the country should try to keep the upper hand in the region.

The social revolutions that took place in the early 20th century³⁶ brought about fears of social uprisings. It was the beginning of what would later be known as “Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional” (National Security Doctrine), which was characterized by the intervention of the armed forces in domestic political life, and eventually, in the internal repression and forced disappearance of individuals.

³³ An outline of this question can be found in: Edward L. Glaeser: “*What Happened to Argentina?*”, The New York Times, October 6, 2009.

³⁴ The decline continued after the restoration of democracy: Argentina's GDP in 1983 accounted for 65% of that of Brazil, and 526% of that of Chile. In 2008, it was 21% and 193%, respectively.

³⁵ The convenience of “promoting” (subsidizing) national industry was subject of heated debate in Congress in 1876, with regard to the Customs Law, when free trade ideas finally prevailed.

³⁶ The armed forces were used on a few occasions to quell political protests up to 1930. Fear was caused by socialist, communist and anarchist ideas brought by European immigrants.

Since Argentina did not face any external threats at the time, strategic thinking continued to be relegated to military spheres. These were influenced by various Western geopolitical and strategic approaches that had either been learned abroad by their personnel, or brought by military attachés from overseas missions, or instilled by foreign professors who were invited to military academies and diplomatic missions of friendly countries. Military instruction was starting to be regarded as a matter that concerned only the armed forces, beyond the scope of civil influence or audit.

As a consequence of this, each branch grew to develop its own use of force doctrine. Their competences were, in turn, divided on the basis of the territory in which they take action: land, sea, and airspace remained under the strategic responsibility of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, respectively.

Civilian experts on military affairs were few, and they were usually linked, directly or indirectly, to the armed forces. As military intervention in Argentina's political life grew, chances of civilian deliberation on, or an independent university-level assessment of, military and strategic matters became almost non-existent. Influence of the civil political power on strategic thinking decreased in proportion to the increase of military involvement in domestic political life³⁷.

Although the debate on these questions is addressed in the press –albeit not in a systematic manner–, it is not among the priorities of public opinion. As a consequence of this, the debate remains in the realm of experts, diplomats, members of the armed forces and certain broader circles of those who are interested in the topic. Political parties have very poor structures for conducting independent analysis, and while their authorities consult various known specialists, there is little open discussion within the parties themselves. Universities do not sufficiently fulfill the role of articulators of rational analysis, and businesspeople keep their distance from public debate - very rarely do they finance institutions and events in which these matters are analyzed. In the civil society, there are very few organizations with an active role in the debate, with the exception of the Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (Argentine Council for International Relations –CARI), which has a clear though not always public concern on the matter. The State does not adequately finance research and opinion centers on strategic matters³⁸.

³⁷ For a history of legal ideas and instruments: Carlos J. M. Martínez: *“Estrategia: su teoría, planeamiento y realidad en la Argentina”*, Centro de Formación e Investigaciones en Ciencias del Comportamiento Humano, Buenos Aires, 2004, pp. 289 ff., and *“La evolución del Pensamiento estratégico en la legislación argentina. Experiencia y futuro”*, Revista de la Escuela Superior de Guerra, Ejército Argentino, Buenos Aires, Number 522, July-September, 1996, pp. 55 ff.

³⁸ Argentina does not have a center of an international standard that studies the eight countries on which its strategic preoccupation is (or should be) focused: the five neighboring countries plus Peru, the United States and Great Britain.

The decline of Argentina has been the result of the difficulty of designing a successful readjustment to the global market and the failure to comprehend the role of scientific and technological innovations, and the consequent maturing of the business and industrial sectors to relaunch economic growth³⁹. Beginning with the crisis of 1930, Argentina has had difficulties trying to interpret favorably the opportunities and risks posed by the international scenario⁴⁰.

The Argentine State has not had a sufficiently sophisticated (i.e. as objective as possible) mechanism of interministerial analysis that could evaluate the international situation. These could be formed by a permanent body of professionals, and be available for consultation by political parties and the society. The private sector and the civil society have also failed to redress this shortcoming. This lack of shared assessment has centered the political controversy on what the "facts" are, rather than carrying out an objective evaluation (as accurate as possible) of the facts, that is, in elucidating how to influence a given situation, taking into account the national interests and the political preferences of the appointed government.

Ever since the end of the supremacy of the model of export-oriented agriculture, one of Argentina's weaknesses has been the difficulty with which political parties are faced when trying to build a basic consensus on long-term policies. Not only is it of vital importance in different aspects of the life of the country, but it is critical in matters of national defense and its integration with the foreign policy.

As shown in the Table "Periods of Argentine Strategic Culture", the history of Argentina has been marked either by periods of a political hegemony or by strong competition among different sectors: periods of successful negotiations towards political agreements have been very brief. Throughout the history of the country, the practice and culture of building long-term political agreements (which

³⁹"A widespread idea in Argentina states that it is enough for a society to create the conditions for foreign investment for it to become developed automatically. That theory has no practical justification in any historical case. Conditions for private investment, a good supply of natural resources and a more or less trained and cheap labor force, will not bring, by themselves, Scandinavian rates of development. For an economy to reach the level of an advanced Western democracy, it needs, among other things, the production process and the social life to have a permanent mechanism of knowledge incorporation, to drive international competitiveness towards high added value products, which are the ones that can sustain high salaries among workers". Alberto E. Dojas: *"Nuclear cooperation between Argentina and Brasil"*, available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>. It is a revenue-biased view of the economy, derived from the imperial history and the perception of an almost "unlimited" supply of resources for a small population. It is one the facets of the Argentine "exceptionality" myth.

⁴⁰There are people who consider that this phenomenon is the product of a "strategic draw" between the free-market, export-oriented agricultural sector, and the protectionist industrial sector. This explanation takes us back to the reasons why both sectors could not arrive at a compromise to get over the apparent conflict of interests, or why political parties and the public opinion could not arbitrate on these differences in a democratic context. There have been conflicts of interests of this sort in many other countries without going to the extreme Argentina has seen, with military coups, repression and economic decline. Usually, these analyses underestimate the importance of political culture.

in Argentina are known as “consensuses” or “State policies”⁴¹), have been practically non-existent. Strategic planning and the elaboration of certain action guidelines in matters of territory or the strategic situation in the Southern Cone have been the product of policies instituted during the periods of hegemony. Some vestiges of those ways were carried over to times of competition, as the internal logic of the political regime prevented the elaboration of a consensual alternative policy.

Argentina’s Executive has not equipped itself adequately for the integrated elaboration of long-term policies, while the Congress, for all the aforementioned reasons, has not been able to provide for that goal either. On a ministerial level, offices of planning never existed or did so only sporadically, and neither a bureaucratic structure nor an administrative culture for the coordination of long-term policies exists. In the few existing institutions that do provide training for a professional public service, long-term planning and elaboration of governmental strategies have been neglected as subjects of study, which has a significant impact on the subsequent working habits of these bureaucracies.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the only one that possesses a structured, professional body able to fulfill the role of a political link in those matters that we define as “strategic” or “geopolitical”. In fact, on many occasions the internal decision-making process of this ministry makes up for the lack of formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination of policies. Such a thing would be unusual in advanced democracies, where sophisticated mechanisms of political planning do exist in each ministry and in key state agencies; they also have a coordination service at the level of the Chief of Government, which brings unity and a sense of direction to each sector’s actions.

The “Cancillería” (Chancellery), or Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, runs on an extremely low budget, and it has rarely been able to set up the guidelines for a long-term policy and have it accepted by another ministry. Thus, it focuses its work on persuasion, interinstitutional cooperation and articulation of policies with each state agency, rather than leading a coordinated, external national strategy.

Another two characteristics of the Argentine State that have to do with strategic planning are:

- The “political profile” of ministries and agencies – that is, the level down to which political figures of the incumbent government are designated as

⁴¹ Basic agreements among major political parties on the need to keep certain matters that are considered essential to the future of the country, out of the everyday confrontation, thus assuring their continuity through the supply of the necessary budgetary resources.

public officials in the bureaucracy-, is very high and intrusive. As a result, career bureaucracy is to a great extent subordinated to political authorities, which at the same time always control the budget in their area⁴². For this reason, the permanent structures of the State do not have the long-term foundations, either political or budgetary, which would enable them to design and execute a strategic concept.

– The professional bodies of executive management (which in Argentina are known as “the career”) in the administration are practically non-existent in the ministries. Administration is in the hands of political appointees of the government in office, which makes use of the permanent staff members, that is, those public officials whose appointments and promotions are based on political grounds only, and who have no incidence in the decision-taking process. Whenever the administration in office changes, certain of these political appointees retire, while others become the new permanent staff. Also, in public selection procedures for jobs in the administration that require technical and professional skills, it is rare to have open, public, transparent and competitive recruitment procedures.

A paradigmatic case of these problems is the lack of coordinated planning between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense: in spite of the almost 30 years that have passed since the restoration of democracy, there has been no political will to provide the Ministry of Defense with a professional body similar to that of the former, nor to create a common structure of analysis and planning for both ministries⁴³.

Notwithstanding, since the restoration of democracy in 1983, a series of agreements have been achieved among the major political parties over questions that we could consider “geopolitical”, in the sense that they deal with matters concerning foreign and defense policies. They are based on two assumptions: that democracies tend to be more pacific and less aggressive among themselves than authoritarian regimes, and that a network of economic and social relations ought to be set in motion in order to give sustainability to peace, through the development of shared interests.

Offsetting out from these starting points, Argentina actively supported the processes of democratic transition in the region, and campaigned for the establishment and implementation of the “democratic clause” as a condition for integra-

⁴²The Chancellery is also an exception in this regard. Career diplomats graduated from the National Institute of Foreign Service (Diplomatic Academy) have regularly held the position of Vice Minister and in two cases –though briefly-, the position of Minister of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship.

⁴³All of this has led to frequent changes in diverse aspects of the foreign policy that also affected the defense policy. It can be seen in detail in Carlos J. M. Martínez: “Estrategia...”, pp. 393 ff.

tion. Regarding the question of defense, the country advocated for the “full applicability of the representative system in matters of defense”, which means that “all decisions that are political in nature are adopted by actors that have been elected in agreement with an open, free and competitive process, which should follow a procedure established by a Constitution, the legality of which is based on the approval by representatives freely elected by the people”⁴⁴. In the region, this idea promoted the creation of Ministries of Defense under civil command.

The agreement among major parties from 1983 onwards was complemented by other courses of action:

- The pacific solution of controversies and the definitive establishment of borders with neighboring countries.
- The establishment of integration processes and the development of a network of common interests, that would help maintain peace in the long-term.
- The setting in motion of a series of measures for the promotion of mutual trust and security, the allaying of suspicions and the promotion of military and defense cooperation.
- The commitment to a low level of conventional arms.
- The commitment not to get involved in an arms race.
- The proscription (prohibition and eventual destruction of stocks) of weapons of mass destruction.
- The establishment of mechanisms for non-proliferation, along with bilateral and multilateral verification procedures that would provide a sufficient safeguard for the compliance with the proscription of this kind of weapons.

Argentina achieved all of these objectives, hence its strategy can be considered successful. However, the country still has a few reasons to be concerned. Borders have been settled, but not only is the controversy with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands yet to be resolved, but British interests in exploiting the oil reserves in the area have heightened Argentina’s concerns.

Also, Argentina’s two main neighbors have significantly strengthened

⁴⁴“That involves:

- a) That the legitimately appointed political authorities design and control the defense policy.
- b) The information on military and security matters circulates with relative ease in the society, and is permanently available to civil authorities.
- c) The identification of threats and national interests, the development of strategic concepts; and the decisions on the purchase, sale and production of arms, are the primary responsibility of the appointed political government authorities.
- d) The role of the Armed Forces is to advise civil authorities on these matters, and implement their instructions in a consistent manner”.

Alberto E. Dojas: “Estrategia argentina sobre armas de destrucción en masa y su no proliferación. El caso de las armas químicas” (*“Argentine strategy concerning weapons of mass destruction and their non-proliferation. The case of chemical weapons”*). Available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>.

their conventional forces, while Argentina's arms stock has remained stagnant and unmaintained; the imbalance is, thus, growing. At the same time, there are sectors in Brazil that consider that the country should become a military power, which would correspond with its economic development, and thus should set up a large-scale (in regional terms) manufacturing and conventional equipment plan⁴⁵.

The recent *"Directiva de Política de Defensa Nacional"* (Directive on National Defense Policy)⁴⁶ has ordered the planning of the national defense based on an assessment of the international scenario which considers that the USA *"possesses an undeniable military supremacy"* and that in the most immediate South-American area there is little possibility of inter-state conflict with military consequences⁴⁷, although three potentially disruptive situations do exist. These are: *"unresolved inter-state discords regarding territorial sovereignty, the persistence of colonial enclaves"*⁴⁸ and *the existence of vast territorial spaces that are effectively and potentially rich in natural resources and will be subject to claims of sovereignty in the immediate future"*⁴⁹. In addition to this, a collection of situations that might require the "subsidiary" employment of the Armed Forces⁵⁰, derived from the action of non-state actors –transnational or otherwise-, or by conflicts originating in *"food crises, contests for scarce resources or natural riches, ethnic, religious and/or racial confrontations, or from trans-boundary criminal activities such as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, or the illegal trade of small arms, conventional arms or weapons of mass destruction, among others"*⁵¹.

⁴⁵ There are some sectors in Brazil –however small-, that have publicly expressed that making Brazil a nuclear power should remain an option. If that were to happen, the whole of the Argentina's strategic thinking would change. Alberto E. Dojas: *"Nuclear cooperation between Argentina and Brasil"*, available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>. Meanwhile, certain Argentine authors have added to the list of worries the debate over the party system and the liberal representative democracy in some South-American countries, where experiences of direct democracy with a strong State intervention –not exempt from some international quarrel- are being promoted. Also, the growing influence in some countries of States and actors with which Argentina holds controversies on terrorism issues; the impasse in which the process of economic integration in Mercosur is now in, and the fact that the sale of sophisticated technologies of Argentine origin to the countries in the region are running into "non-commercial" difficulties.

⁴⁶ Decree 1714, signed on November 10, 2009. The Directive is "the document of highest Planning level, from which are to be derived the main guidelines of Defense Policy, Military Policy and, consequently, Joint Military Planning, which will oversee the design of the Military Instrument of the Nation". It is interesting to verify that the assessment does not differ substantially from the contents of the *"Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional"* (White Book of National Defense), 1999.

⁴⁷ This optimism is based on the *"generalized support to initiatives for the establishment of the region as a 'zone of peace', the extended commitment to collective regional and global security schemes, or the verified increase in mutual trust and military cooperation measures, both bilateral and multilateral"*. Argentina is building a "Joint Peace Force" with Chile and a Binational Company of Engineers with Peru. The Directive makes a difference between the Southern Cone and the Andean Region in South America, in which some countries *"show serious challenges to their security due to drug-traffic-king, insurgency or the action of armed paramilitary groups, along with the existence of potential inter-state conflicts derived from persistent boundary disputes, difficulties to implement cooperative actions in the administration of transnational security issues, and also because of the same vicious circle of mistrust that these enduring dynamics generate, all of which contributes to the creation of a scenario and a tendency towards strategic instability"*.

⁴⁸ A reference to the controversy over the Malvinas Islands, among other situations.

⁴⁹ This can be read as a reference to maritime spaces that do not belong to any one country.

⁵⁰ Because according to Argentine legislation, it is under the scope of the State Security Forces.

⁵¹ The Directive also establishes that the armed forces could be used in case of natural disasters or situations of humanitarian emergency, for their administration and containment.

The aim of the Directive is to develop an integrated set of military capabilities⁵² to assure national defense, based on a defense model that is “defensive” in nature, and that could “*avert and repel, through the use of the Armed Forces, any external military aggression*”⁵³, so as permanently to guarantee and safeguard the sovereignty, independence and self-determination of the Nation, as well as its territorial integrity, and the life and liberty of its inhabitants”. The Directive also seeks to “*generate a genuine system of Defense science and technology*”, based on a “*comprehensive planning of the guidelines, the policies and the development and research of defense projects in the mid- and long-terms, taking into account the needs and requirements that have been identified by the Joint Military Planning*”, with the prospects of “*developing the Industry of Production for Defense*”⁵⁴.

The execution of the Directive will require the intervention of the Congress to obtain the budgetary means necessary for its implementation, which will provide the opportunity to elaborate an agreement among the major political parties over a long-term defense policy⁵⁵. As opposed to previous experiences, the solution will have to be sought by the democratic system itself, as the authoritarian ways of the past have been rejected by the Argentine society.

The current strategic dilemma of Argentina is, therefore, to elucidate which are the foundations and which are the elements the country needs in order to have adequate deterrence and containment capabilities to protect its territory, keep a safe regional scenario and actively participate in the various arenas in which power is defined and the ground rules of the future are set⁵⁶. The matter is the subject of analysis and debate –albeit not often in public - among politicians, diplomats, mem-

⁵² The Strategic Military Planning and the design of forces will be elaborated in agreement with the “capabilities” criterion, to “*reach and consolidate the aptitude to carry out autonomously the complete range of operations required by all the generic forms of aggression that are manifested in international conflicts of external origin generated by State actors*”.

⁵³ The use of force is scheduled for “*assuring national defense from aggressive actions perpetrated by the armed forces of other states. By ‘foreign aggression’, it will be understood the use of force by any State against the sovereignty, the territorial integrity or the political independence of our country in any way that is not in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations*”.

⁵⁴ “*Argentina counts on a hard core of research and development of advanced technologies centers, formed by the CNEA, the INVAP, CITEDEF, CONAE, CONICET and other advanced research centers in very diverse disciplines. It is a group that, in spite of the situations we have experienced, has succeeded in keeping its internal coherence and a high level of international competitiveness*”. Alberto E. Dojas: “*Fuerza de Submarinos: Nivel Estratégico Nacional*” (“*Submarines Force: National Strategic Level*”), as expressed in the Annual Series of Conferences on Maritime Interests and National Defense “Almirante Storni”, on the subject “*Fuerza de Submarinos, Desafíos Presentes y Futuros*” (“*Submarines Force, Present and Future Challenges*”), Ministry of Defense, Buenos Aires, October 22, 2009. Available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>.

⁵⁵ The number of Argentines that consider that our biggest shortcoming today is the inability to agree on long-term policies is growing. The issue is gaining momentum in society, and sooner or later will have to be addressed by the political regime.

⁵⁶ “*The distinction between foreign relations (i.e. everyday inter-state relations) and foreign policy is a commonplace in the International Relations literature. Having a strategy that provides coherence to every action, in a long-term sense, is the specific element of foreign policy. Those countries that do not have a strategy and do not provide themselves with the necessary capabilities for its execution remain at the mercy of others’ strategies and capabilities, naturally. Will, in communion with capability, creates objective legal situations: the clearest example has been, precisely, the process that led to the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the extension of state jurisdictions*”. Alberto E. Dojas: “*La Argentina en el Atlántico Sur en el Siglo XXI*” (“*Argentina in the South Atlantic in the 21st century*”), intervention at a Seminar organized by the Institute of International Security and Strategic Affairs at CARI, April 28, 2011. Available at: <<http://www.aedojas.com.ar>>.

bers of the armed forces, scientists and scholars. In short, we are dealing with the same approaches and the same courses of action that, as we have seen, have marked the history of Argentine Strategic Culture.

The intellectual requirements that the conception of a strategic and long-term policy for the 21st Century demands have been brought together: we know that we need a strategy and we do have the knowledge necessary to design it. Now is the time to forge an agreement among the major political forces to harmonize their diverse dimensions, to set it apart from everyday political competition and differences of opinion, and to give it budgetary sustainability and the permanent political support that is required for the successful, and lasting, fulfillment of this task.

PERIODS OF ARGENTINE STRATEGIC CULTURE

Period	1516-1776	1776-1810	1810-1820	1820-1852	1852-1860	1862-1916
Main Feature	Settlement, Control and Organization	Viceroyalty	Independence	'Caudillos'	Organization	Oligarchy
Predominant Sector	Spanish Empire	Spanish Empire	Political factions	Province Governments and Armies ('Caudillos')	Divided Conservative Elite	Integrated Conservative Elite
Political Setting	Hegemony	Hegemony	Competition	Competition	Competition	Hegemony
Period	1916-1930	1930-1943	1943-1955	1955-1976	1976-1983	1983-2010
Main Feature	Radicalism (UCR)	Conservative Restoration	Peronism (PJ)	Instability	Dictatorship	Democratic Restoration
Predominant Sector	Middle classes and Conservative Elite	Conservative Elite	State power and lower classes	Armed forces and middle classes	Armed forces and upper classes	Radicalism and peronism
Political Setting	Competition	Weak Hegemony	Weak Hegemony	Competition	Weak Hegemony	Competition

