

# BRAZILIAN NAVAL DIPLOMACY AND THE PROMOTION OF THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE IN THE SOUTHERN CONE (2021–2023)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines the role of naval attachés in promoting Brazil's Defense Industrial Base (DIB) in the Southern Cone, focusing on the period from 2021 to 2023. It seeks to reflect on how these agents can contribute to the promotion of the BID. Using an exploratory and comparative approach, the study analyzes how naval diplomacy can serve as a tool for advancing national interests within the framework of the blue economy, while also outlining the challenges naval attachés face in their work in this specific domain. The research includes an analysis of the evolution of the defense budget and the impact of recent investments in Brazil's defense industry. Data on Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay were gathered through semi-structured interviews and desk research. The hypothesis tested suggests that greater adherence by naval attachés to the commercial dimensions of diplomacy can generate greater benefits for the DIB.

**Keywords:** Defense Industrial Base. Naval Diplomacy. Southern Cone.

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# A DIPLOMACIA NAVAL BRASILEIRA NO FOMENTO À BASE INDUSTRIAL DE DEFESA NO CONE SUL (2021-2023)

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## Resumo

O artigo investiga o papel dos adidos navais na promoção da Base Industrial de Defesa (BID) do Brasil no Cone Sul, focando no período de 2021 a 2023. O objetivo é refletir sobre como esses agentes podem contribuir para o fomento da BID. Utilizando uma abordagem exploratória e comparativa, o estudo analisa como a diplomacia naval pode ser um mecanismo facilitador para a consecução dos interesses nacionais, dentro do contexto da economia azul, e descreve os desafios enfrentados pelos adidos navais em sua atuação nesse campo específico. A pesquisa inclui uma análise da evolução orçamentária destinada à defesa e o impacto dos recentes investimentos na indústria de defesa brasileira. Foram coletados, por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas e *desk research*, dados com foco em Argentina, Paraguai e Uruguai. A hipótese testada sugere que uma maior aderência dos adidos navais aos atributos comerciais da diplomacia pode potencializar ganhos para a BID.

**Palavras-chave:** Base Industrial de Defesa. Diplomacia Naval. Cone Sul.

# LA DIPLOMACIA NAVAL BRASILEÑA EN LA PROMOCIÓN DE LA BASE INDUSTRIAL DE DEFENSA EN EL CONO SUR (2021–2023)

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## Resumen

Este artículo investiga el papel de los agregados navales en la promoción de la Base Industrial de Defensa (BID) de Brasil en el Cono Sur, centrándose en el periodo comprendido entre 2021 y 2023. El objetivo es reflexionar sobre cómo estos agentes pueden contribuir a la promoción de la BID. El estudio utiliza un enfoque exploratorio y comparativo para analizar cómo la diplomacia naval puede ser un mecanismo facilitador para el logro de los intereses nacionales en el contexto de la economía azul y describe los retos a los que se enfrentan los agregados navales en su trabajo en este ámbito específico. La investigación incluye un análisis de la evolución del presupuesto de defensa y el impacto de las recientes inversiones en la industria de defensa brasileña. Los datos centrados en Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay se recopilaron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas y investigación documental. La hipótesis probada sugiere que una mayor adhesión de los agregados navales a los atributos comerciales de la diplomacia puede aumentar los beneficios para el BID.

**Palabras clave:** Base Industrial de Defensa. Diplomacia Naval. Cono Sur.

## 1. Introduction

Brazil is a country of continental scale and holds an invaluable asset in its Atlantic coastline, which provides a maritime territory rich in biodiversity and economic resources, while also serving as the main route for its foreign trade, as Pereira (2021) notes:

The Blue Amazon area encompasses the pre-salt reserves, from which approximately 85% of the country's oil, 75% of its natural gas, and 45% of its fish are extracted. More than 95% of Brazil's foreign trade is transported via maritime routes. This area harbors natural resources and a rich biodiversity that remain largely unexplored.

Furthermore, in today's dynamic and interconnected international order, submarine cables carry the data traffic that underpins nearly all global communications, including Internet connectivity. Thus, the defense industry has benefited from this blue economy through recent contracts leveraging specific segments of the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), such as the acquisition of ships by the Brazilian Navy (MB), which strengthen the country's security, development, and defense (Brazil 2022). Similarly, it appears that Brazil could expand its DIB by increasing the supply of these defense products (PRODES<sup>5</sup>) within its strategic environment, particularly in the Southern Cone.

With respect to the timeframe, this study will analyze the period between 2021 and 2023, enabling a study of the relationship between the DIB and the measures undertaken for its development in light of key milestones during that period. For context, it is known that in 2021 the national budget proposal, under the budgetary policies then in place, contributed significantly to an increase in military spending.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the head of the Executive Branch at the time of writing, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, announced in 2023 a new Growth Acceleration Plan (PAC) which earmarked US\$ 10.6 billion for defense, with resources directed toward the modernization and strengthening of the country's defense industry.

In this context, diplomacy and defense are, by definition, instruments for advancing a country's interests abroad, and it is hoped that the Ministry

5 PRODES—comprises all goods, services, works, or information, including weapons, ammunition, means of transportation and communication, uniforms, and materials for individual and collective use employed in defense-related activities, with the exception of those intended for administrative use. [https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/assuntos/industria-de-defesa/copy\\_of\\_perguntas-frequentes](https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/assuntos/industria-de-defesa/copy_of_perguntas-frequentes).

6 See: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/bbc/2020/08/31/gastos-bilionarios-que-bolsonaro-propoe-para-a-defesa-levarao-a-cortes-em-outras-areas-em-2021>.

of Defense (MD) and the Armed Forces, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), as specialized bureaucracies,<sup>7</sup> will build synergies that guide the pursuit of national objectives. It is thus inferred that, among the agents of the aforementioned institutions, naval attachés have the potential of employing their duties as diplomatic tools in the exercise of foreign policy (Silva and Gonçalves 2010).

As for the normative framework underpinning this research, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 (VCDR) (Brazil 1965), establishes in Articles 3 and 7 that diplomatic missions include military, naval, or air attachés, and it is their responsibility, among other duties, to negotiate within their respective areas of government political action. Therefore, in defense diplomacy, civilians and military personnel working in the Ministries of Defense and the Armed Forces can serve as diplomatic actors in the execution of tasks related to the non-coercive use of defense resources (Silva 2018).

Understanding the nuances involved in performing this function is therefore relevant for evaluating potential links between diplomacy and defense. In this context, our primary objective is to reflect on the role that naval attachés may play, as agents of Brazilian foreign policy, particularly in naval diplomacy, in promoting the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) within the framework of the blue economy.

This endeavor gains even greater relevance in the context of the so-called “Ocean Decade,” formally the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)—as defined by the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC). It provides an opportunity to reflect on urgent and necessary measures for the sustainable use and protection of the country’s coastal and marine areas. The initiative envisions an ocean that is: (1) clean; (2) safe; (3) healthy and resilient; (4) productive and sustainably exploited; (5) predicted; (6) transparent; and (7) understood and valued—objectives that align closely with the interests of the Brazilian Navy (Santos and Beirão 2021).

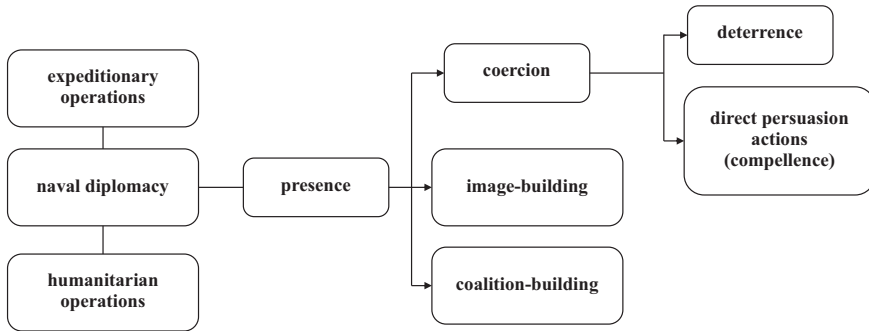
With this in mind, in this analysis, based on empirical evidence and the literature on the subject, we start from the premise that Brazil holds significant regional prominence, objectively compared quantitatively to other South American, when analyzing PRODES spending. This premise is inferred from data compiled by *the International Institute for Strategic Studies* (2024, 403) and the *Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina* (2024, 8–9).

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7 Here we start from the Weberian definition of bureaucracy, understood as a functional body highly specialized in the execution of tasks that require technical expertise and specific qualifications.

There is, therefore, fertile ground for examining the role of naval attachés in promoting the DIB among South American countries, informed by the concepts and understandings of scholars such as Till (2009) regarding the use of naval diplomacy as a tool to achieve desired results:

Figure 1. Components of Naval Diplomacy

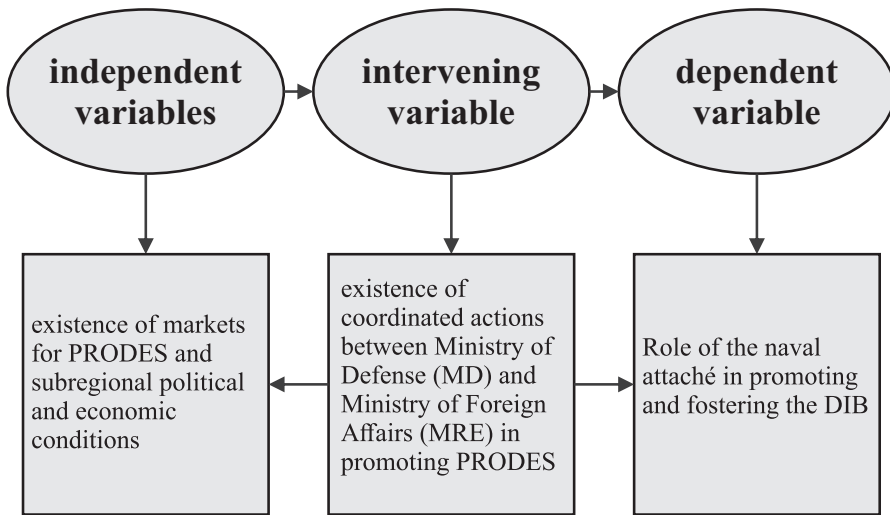


Source: Adapted from Till (2009, 257), our translation.

Therefore, based on this premise, we seek to test the direct relational hypothesis that the greater the adherence of naval attachés to the commercial attributes of diplomacy, the greater the potential for maximizing gains for the DIB. To this end, we have the following specific objectives: 1) to analyze the role of naval diplomacy as a facilitating mechanism in promoting national interests; and 2) to describe the challenges faced by naval attachés within our research scope.

In addition, to test the possible interconnections between diplomacy and defense, we begin with the following causal chain:

Figure 2. Causal Chain<sup>8</sup>



Fonte: Elaborado pelos autores (2024).

As for the spatial scope, in the context of the Southern Cone, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay were chosen, since they overlap the trade borders established by the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)—a bloc created by the Treaty of Asunción in 1991 with the aim of creating a free trade area in the subregion.<sup>9</sup> Finally, regarding methodology, the research adopts an exploratory and comparative case study approach, applying the most-similar systems design. Data collection draws on desk research and semi-structured interviews with naval attachés in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, including both closed and open-ended questions, administered through Google Forms. A copy of the questionnaire template is provided in the appendix at the end of this article.

8 The causal chain lists the variables selected for the study to be conducted. The so-called independent variable is one that affects other variables; these are phenomena that are useful in explaining the characteristics or behavior of the object under study. Accordingly, the dependent variable is what one seeks to explain as a result of the influence of one or more independent variables. Finally, the intervening variable is the one that, within a causal sequence, stands between the independent and dependent variables, helping to explain the process by which the former influences the latter.

9 Bolivia was not considered in the study due to the small size of its Navy.

## 2. Blue Economy

The World Bank (2018) defines the blue economy as a sustainable ocean economy in which economic activity is balanced with the long-term health of coastal and marine ecosystems. This definition has gained prominence in the contemporary world as an evolution of the earlier notion of a “sea economy,” which referred to similar activities but without the explicit emphasis on “sustainability.” In the same vein, Santos and Polette (2020, p.93) define the blue economy as:

the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic development, better livelihoods and jobs, and for the intrinsic health of the ocean ecosystem. The blue economy encompasses aquatic and marine spaces, including the ocean, seas, coasts, lakes, rivers, and groundwater, and comprises a range of productive sectors, such as fishing, aquaculture, tourism, maritime transport, shipbuilding, renewable energy, bioprospecting, seabed mining, and related activities; and ecosystem services.

For the purposes of this research, it is therefore appropriate to analyze the relationship between the blue economy and Brazil’s maritime vocation in order to map potential outcomes of this synergy. Notably, Brazil has the fifth-largest coastline in the world (Carvalho 2021), enabling the existence of ports capable of mooring large vessels and supporting robust coastal navigation.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, it should be noted that the South Atlantic holds undeniable strategic importance, given its direct connection to trade routes, access to Antarctica, and other opportunities. Furthermore, Brazil possesses an extensive underwater area of approximately 900,000 km<sup>2</sup> with significant potential for exploration, known as the Rio Grande Rise (ERG).<sup>11</sup> This region is rich in minerals and chemical elements, with such importance that it has even been referred to as the “pre-salt of Brazilian mining” (Ferreira, 2023), underscoring both its promise and the countless challenges for exploration and surveillance (CPRM [...] 2020).

10 Coastal navigation refers to transportation conducted between ports or locations within Brazilian territory, using maritime routes or a combination of maritime and inland waterways.

11 Red clays containing minerals such as kaolinite, magnetite, oxidized magnetite, hematite, and goethite. <https://portaldaminerao.com.br/estudo-revela-que-elevacao-do-rio-grande-era-gigantesca-ilha-tropical-proxima-ao-brasil-e-rica-em-minerio/>.

This potential of the blue economy, represented by maritime transport, as well as the exploitation of wealth and other resources, highlights the importance of safeguarding these assets. Ensuring this protection requires the acquisition of the necessary means and other PRODES aligned with the development of the DIB. This strategic mindset can be identified in the Navy's Strategic Plan (PEM 2040), which advocates the potential of the Naval Power Core Construction Program, including the Submarine Program (PROSUB), the Tamandaré Class Program (PCT), among others, as initiatives that “leverage the development of national industry and related segments, fostering the establishment of ‘maritime clusters’<sup>12</sup>, with the generation of skilled, direct, and indirect employment” (Brazil 2020a, 83). These programs require the production of dual-use technologies for the DIB, whose commercial appeal can be further advanced through the work of naval attachés.

Thus, it can be inferred that the Brazilian Navy is well-positioned to play a leading role in this debate, by consolidating of the concepts of the Blue Amazon and the blue economy, and by fulfilling the responsibilities of the National Maritime Authority through monitoring, surveillance, and use of innovative technologies in promoting the DIB (Santos and Beirão 2021).

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### 3. The DIB in the Context of the Blue Economy

As noted above, Brazil's maritime vocation, together with its relevance in the international economic arena, allows for the consideration of several initiatives that enable the defense sector to fulfill its constitutional mission,<sup>13</sup> particularly with regard to the Defense Industrial Base (DIB). This raises the question of what benefits these potentialities may generate for the country's interests in the Southern Cone, especially in terms of promoting the DIB.

In that case, it is first necessary to define what the DIB encompasses. In Brazil, the National Defense Strategy considers the DIB to be the set of public and private companies “that carry out or conduct research, design, development, industrialization, production, repair, conservation, revision,

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12 An association responsible for bringing together companies from different sectors linked to the maritime economy, a maritime cluster plays an important role in the development of countries.

13 Art. 142 of the Federal Constitution of 1988: “The Armed Forces, comprised of the Navy, the Army and the Air Force, are permanent and regular national institutions, organized on the basis of hierarchy and discipline, under the supreme authority of the president of the Republic, and are intended for the defense of the Country, for the guarantee of the constitutional powers, and, on the initiative of any of these, of law and order.”

conversion, modernization, or maintenance of PRODES [defense products] in the country” (Brazil 2020b).

Along these lines, elements associated with the DIB can also be found in key defense documents, such as the National Defense Policy and the National Defense Strategy (PND/END),<sup>14</sup> particularly in their provisions to “support for foreign policy.” Thus, in the context of international relations, the connection between the DIB, the Naval Policy,<sup>15</sup> and the Navy’s Strategic Plan (PEM)<sup>16</sup> becomes evident.

In turn, the Brazilian Industrial Development Agency (ABDI) understands that “the DIB brings together state-owned and private companies, as well as civil and military organizations, that participate in one or more stages of research, development, production, distribution, and maintenance of Strategic Defense Products” (Abreu 2015). Reinforcing this framework, in 2012, Law No. 12,598/2012 established a new set of incentives for the procurement, contracting, and development of defense products and systems in Brazil, thereby providing an important legal foundation for strengthening the DIB (Brazil 2012).

A mapping of the DIB carried out by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea 2016), analyzed eight segments, examining factors such as production, human resources, and innovation for international trade. In most of these segments, exported products were found to have medium and high technological intensity, indicating higher added value. Most companies reported difficulties in accessing international markets due to competition from major producing countries. In contrast, relatively few companies made use of public instruments designed to support exports (Brazil 2020b).

In this context, as a result of efforts to expand the DIB, progress in DIB exports and in the defense and security segment were highlighted during the panel “Industrial Defense Base—Protection, Development, and Job Creation,” held at the 6th DIB Brazil Exhibition (December 7–9, 2021), in Brasilia.<sup>17</sup> The DIB currently generates 2.9 million jobs in Brazil, including 1.6 million direct and 1.3 million indirect positions, and accounts for approximately

14 The National Defense Strategy (END), as a normative framework, is administratively organized into National Defense Objectives (OND), from which the Defense Strategies (ED) derive, and, consequently, Strategic Defense Actions (AED).

15 Document prepared by the Brazilian Navy Command that guides the Force’s strategic planning and establishes naval objectives, among them “supporting foreign policy.”

16 Document prepared by the Brazilian Navy Command that presents high-level conceptual and doctrinal elements, along with corresponding strategic actions, providing a vision of the future up to the year 2040.

17 See: <https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/noticias/defesa-supera-1-5-bilhao-de-dolares-em-exportacoes-em-2021>.

US\$ 1.5 billion in foreign sales. Analyses of Brazilian exports and the share of defense and security in the GDP over the last few years indicate steady growth in investments across this sector (Nóbrega 2021; Vicara 2024).

These facts indicate that Brazil seeks to consolidate, in its highest-level policy documents, a strategic mindset that can contribute to the development of the DIB and its use, producing and operating PRODES. This orientation is evident in the PND, which considers fundamental that:

Budgetary resources allocated to defense must ensure the budgetary stability of investments aimed at the acquisition of Defense Products (PRODE), stimulating technology development programs in the quest to reduce the technological gap of the Armed Forces and, thus, strengthening the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) (Brazil 2020b, 13).

In the naval industry sector, recent years have seen notable benefits from military orders associated with the renewal of Brazilian Navy vessels, contributing to the presence, protection, and preservation of the waters of the Blue Amazon<sup>18</sup> (Brazil 2020a). Among the projects for the re-equipment and acquisition of new means of action, in the defense sector, the Defense Coordination and Equipment Plan (PAED) stands out. Within the shipbuilding industry, key initiatives include the Submarine Development Program (PROSUB) and the Surface Vessel Acquisition Program (PROSUPER), which encompasses the acquisition of Tamandaré-class ships (Brazil 2020a).

Nevertheless, a brief analysis based on GDP performance highlights structural challenges. While Brazilian exports reached US\$ 340 billion in 2023, driven by agribusiness and the extractive industry, foreign sales by the manufacturing industry fell by 2.3% (Brazil 2020b). This contrast underscores the need to better understand variables that can impact the successful integration of the DIB into global markets. In this context, it is clear that the State plays an important facilitating role: its support for financing programs, development, production, acquisitions, and commercialization of PRODES tends to provide greater confidence to potential buyers (Brazil 2020b).

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18 Concept associated with the fact that Brazil possesses an extensive maritime area, of unquestionable importance as the main route for the country's foreign trade, for its diversity of natural resources, such as fisheries and marine biodiversity, for oil and gas reserves, and other mineral resources, as well as its influence on the Brazilian climate. This area, covering 67% of Brazil's land territory and with dimensions and biodiversity comparable to the Amazon rainforest, has come to be known as the Blue Amazon. See: <https://www.marinha.mil.br/secirm/pt-br/amazoniazul>.

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#### 4. Promotion of the DIB in the Southern Cone

As mentioned, projects for the re-equipment and acquisition of new capabilities in the defense sector, particularly within the naval industry, create opportunities to leverage the DIB through an increase in offers of these PRODES abroad. As noted in the introduction to this text, we chose to focus our research on the South American continent, specifically the Southern Cone, as it coincides with the trade borders established by MERCOSUR.<sup>19</sup>

In 2021, the Presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, on the occasion of the 59th MERCOSUR Presidential Summit, recognized in a Presidential Declaration on Defense Cooperation the importance of building trust in the region through dialogue and cooperation on defense and security issues.

They highlighted the importance of having a strong DIB in the countries of the region and of integrating defense industry supply chains, as a means of contributing to economic prosperity and social development to consolidate an environment of mutual trust within the bloc, as well as the desire to stimulate trade, research, and development in innovation and defense technologies among the countries in MERCOSUR.<sup>20</sup>

According to Kinsella (1999), among the most relevant factors that determine the production of PRODES in developing countries, particularly for those with higher levels of participation such as Brazil and Argentina, are: regional security dynamics, domestic forces (economic and political factors), and military technological and cultural diffusion. There is evidence that production capacity depends on national industrial capacity, reinforced by opportunities for export.

For the purpose of this analysis, a specific assessment of the countries covered is warranted, starting with Argentina. As a brief historical overview, which will aid our analysis, it is clear that the country's armed forces have experienced a steady process of deterioration in since the Falklands War (1982). Since then, Buenos Aires has progressively reduced allocations to the defense sector, which has led to the exponential obsolescence of equipment and facilities (Neves and Franchi, 2021).

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19 One of MERCOSUR's main objectives is to provide a common space that generates commercial and investment opportunities through the competitive integration of national economies into the international market by creating a free trade area. See: <https://www.mercosur.int/pt-br/quem-somos/em-poucas-palavras/>.

20 See: [https://www.gov.br/mre/pt-br/canais\\_atendimento/imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/declaracao-presidencial-do-mercosul-sobre-cooperacao-em-defesa](https://www.gov.br/mre/pt-br/canais_atendimento/imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/declaracao-presidencial-do-mercosul-sobre-cooperacao-em-defesa).

In the naval sector, in 2007, the Tandano shipyard was renationalized, and the Domecq Garcia shipyard, renamed *Almirante Storni*, was reopened. These facilities later merged to form the Argentine Naval Industrial Complex (CINAR), tasked with the maintenance and repair of Argentine military vessels (Garré, 2009) and also involved with the production of ocean patrol vessels through a technology absorption agreement with Chile, as a way to address the loss of technological capacity (Argentina 2010). Despite these initiatives, this history of low-scale production indicates the modest development of Argentina's DIB, largely due to the low level of activity over the past decade.

This situation may open opportunities for the Brazilian DIB. As an example, in January 2024, the Brazilian defense company Mac Jee signed a contract to supply fuzes<sup>21</sup> to the Argentine Air Force (FAA), being chosen as a supplier due to its established expertise in the market, mainly in the defense and aerospace segments (Wiltgen 2024). This case illustrates the potential for PRODES exports by companies that are part of Brazil's DIB.

With regard to Uruguay, in April 2024, the government presented an action plan to strengthen national industry. On that occasion, the Uruguayan Chamber of Industries (CIU) pointed out that, over the past decade, around 6,000 industrial jobs had been lost and 50 national companies had ceased operations. Currently, the industrial sector generates US\$ 17 billion annually, with US\$ 10 billion destined for exports, and employs 266,000 people directly and indirectly (Government [...] 2024). These data indicate that this is a modest sector, particularly in the field of the Uruguayan naval defense industry, when compared to other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina.

Similarly, Paraguay's defense industry is still in its early stages, relying heavily on imported equipment, which represents a potential opportunity for the promotion of Brazilian PRODES. In 2024, negotiations began for the sale of Embraer aircraft, led by Brazil's Minister of Defense, José Múcio, and Paraguay's president, Santiago Peña, in a deal that could reach around US\$ 100 million (Bergamasco 2024). In the naval defense industry, Paraguay faces additional challenges due to the obsolescence of the ships in its fleet. In 2017, vessels with more than 80 years of service were decommissioned and, as a result, the Paraguayan Navy has sought to renew its resources through supplier markets in the naval industries of Spain and Italy, but also in South America, such as the proposed acquisition of a landing ship designed and built by the Colombian naval industry (Lopes 2017).

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21 Small device that receives the impact from a firearm's firing pin and serves to ignite the gunpowder charge in the projectile.

Brazilian defense industry exports hit a historic record in 2024, reaching US\$ 3 billion, almost double the amounts recorded between 2021 and 2023, which stood at approximately US\$ 1.621 billion, US\$ 700 million, and US\$ 1.440 billion, respectively (Bergamasco 2024). This trajectory suggests the possibility of addressing the questions posed in the introduction, particularly with regard to analyzing and identifying opportunities and examining how naval attachés can maximize gains for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) in Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

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## 5. Diplomacy and Defense as Drivers of National Interests

There is an inseparable correlation between diplomacy and defense. As Silva and Gonçalves (2010, 165) note, “international negotiation can be considered the very essence of diplomacy.” Similarly, Till (2009, 259) points out: “[...] so much of international politics is about perception, of how strong and resolute you seem in the eyes of others.”

In this sense, diplomacy and defense, shaped by multiple factors, particularly geopolitical and economic, present themselves as two sides of the same coin, as highlighted by Pinto, Rocha, and Silva (2004, 49), when they point out that:

[...] foreign policy and defense policy are complementary and constitute fundamental dimensions in the life of the State. It is through them that Brazil, like any State, relates to other States, exploring external possibilities to meet the needs of the nation. Both foreign policy and defense policy are intended to protect the interests of the State and defend its integrity. In other words, diplomacy and force are two sides of the same coin which, throughout the history of civilizations, have always gone hand in hand, with one prevailing at times and the other at others.

Therefore, as Cottey and Forster (2004) argue, defense diplomacy involves the cooperative use, in times of peace, of the armed forces and related infrastructure (mainly the Ministries of Defense) as instruments of foreign and security policy.

For the purposes of this article, it is also worth highlighting the contributions of Drab (2018) on defense diplomacy as the use of dialogue and cooperation in peaceful international activities by the MD and the institutions and forces under its authority, supported by bilateral, multilateral, and

international security arrangements. It is the exchange between the armed forces of a given state and their counterparts in shaping foreign and security policy, including principles of cooperation with other state institutions, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The aim is to promote bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation in the military, security, and defense domains, with the preparation, negotiation, and signing of regulatory instruments in the area of defense, as well as the supply of military equipment and materials, logistical assistance in crises and humanitarian operations, support in building military infrastructure, provision of advisory services, training, or the transfer of military equipment and weapons, and technical cooperation in the field of defense industries.

Having woven these brief semantic–conceptual reflections into this investigation, we draw on the aforementioned contributions to present defense diplomacy, and, more specifically, naval diplomacy, as tools to leverage Brazil's DIB. Accordingly, the following section is dedicated to an analysis of the importance of this crucial variant for this research.

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## 6. Naval Diplomacy

Naval diplomacy benefits from the fact that naval forces, in times of peace, enjoy the freedom to navigate the oceans and visit foreign ports, even while carrying weapons on board, without causing any kind of commotion. Taking advantage of this characteristic, many governments make political use of their navies, particularly to promote their Defense Industrial Base (DIB) (Abreu 2010). Alonso Torres and Uribe-Cáceres (2022), interpreting the work of Le Mière (2014), distinguish between naval diplomacy and maritime diplomacy, noting that the latter is broader in scope, as it encompasses all actors who use the sea as a medium of movement, resource exploitation, or other related activities.

Along the same lines of reasoning on defense diplomacy, regarding the dependence of diplomacy on a state's capacity to project power, Till (2009) reinforces this idea by stating that attacks launched from the sea are often confined to the realm of naval diplomacy. The Brazilian Naval Military Doctrine (DMN) defines naval diplomacy as the use of naval power to support the state's foreign policy, with a view to, among other objectives, securing agreements and alliances and demonstrating intentions in areas of common interest.

According to Navy Strategic Plan (PEM 2040), the Brazilian Navy regards naval diplomacy as a prime instrument of international relations, with a

particular emphasis on cooperation, which can mitigate future antagonisms and also foster the DIB. This view is clearly expressed by Vice Admiral Victor Lopo Cajarabille (2012, quoted in Penedos 2014, 85), who highlights that:

Another important aspect of naval diplomacy is [...] economic [...] directly related to the use of naval resources to promote the construction of national shipyards, as well as defense industry equipment. Conducting on-site demonstrations of naval resources in potential buyer countries, with detailed explanations of the operation and functioning of systems, is the best way to promote the national naval industry.

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## 7. MRE and MD in the Promotion of National Interests

Although Brazilian diplomacy formally falls within the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE),<sup>22</sup> other state bodies also participate in this endeavor, such as the Ministry of Defense (MD) and the Brazilian Navy (MB), particularly through their attachés. This is the view expressed by Brigagão and Fernandes (2012, 188) when they state that “foreign policy goes beyond diplomacy and diplomats. It is the result of the actions, with or without political–diplomatic coordination, of the various actors that shape the country’s international projection.”

Furthermore, Alonso Torres and Uribe-Cáceres (2022) argue that naval diplomacy must be versatile, pursuing national objectives with the political tools proper to foreign relations, in an environment of harmonious relations with the ministries of foreign affairs and defense.

This underscores the importance of Brazilian naval attachés maintaining close alignment with the respective diplomatic representations of the MRE in the countries where they serve, engaging in constant dialogue to secure effective negotiations for strengthening the DIB through the interaction between the Navy and the MRE. However, Alsina Jr. (2009, p. 185) offers a more pessimistic view of the degree of coordination between defense and foreign policies, warning that:

in Brazil, there is *insufficient articulation between defense and foreign policies*. [...] A complex range of factors contributes to this. [...] only

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<sup>22</sup> Article 44 of Law No. 14,600, of June 19, 2023 (Brazil 2023).

four factors will be mentioned to help explain the reason for the aforementioned insufficiency: the low priority given to defense policy, the absence of effective political direction over defense policy, the non-confrontational profile of foreign policy, and the *absence of operational mechanisms for coordination between the two* [emphasis in the original].

Similarly, Cortes (2019, quoted in Abreu 2020, 29) observed that “Itamaraty’s tradition has always been to maintain good relations with [the] defense sector, but one would rarely find formal documents on the subject, given its sensitivity.” According to Abreu (2020), for example, the MRE would not demonstrate the same level of interest in the Atlantic as the military, particularly in contrast to the importance attributed to the region by the defense sector, and especially by the MB.

On the other hand, according to Coutinho (2022), the process of institutional dialogue between the Brazilian Navy (MB) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) has evolved gradually, primarily through the National Defense Policy (PND) and the National Defense Strategy (END). It is worth noting that the Navy began its approach to foreign policy, albeit without the direct involvement of the MRE, starting with the PND in 2005 and the END in 2008. Thus, despite the great importance and need for institutional dialogue between both bureaucracies, the process of rapprochement has been somewhat slow. According to Coutinho (2022, n.p.):

Gradually, the National Defense Policy and National Defense Strategy documents began to bring defense closer to foreign policy. Initially, still without the participation of the MRE, the promulgations of the PND [of 2005] and the END [of 2008] sought to instrumentalize the relationship between defense and foreign policy by mentioning the Armed Forces as important for the country’s projection in the international system and for the country’s objectives abroad (Ferreira, 2019). Despite the progress, the efforts were made without the presence of the MRE, a factor that corroborates the dichotomy between the MD and the MRE [...] From 2012 onwards, with the revision of the END [of 2012], it became clear that the Armed Forces should join foreign policy in order to support it internationally.

Therefore, it is in this context of using the Navy as an instrument of foreign and security policy, whether in the sense of Le Mièrè’s (2014) cooperative diplomacy, or Till’s (2009) coalition-building diplomacy, that this article seeks

to understand the role of naval attachés (as representatives of the Brazilian Navy) in promoting the Brazilian DIB through the exercise of naval diplomacy in accredited States,<sup>23</sup> particularly in the Southern Cone countries.

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## 8. The role of the naval attaché

The National Defense Strategy (END) (Brazil 2020b) highlights that, in times of peace, the defense sector plays a role in supporting the diplomatic actions undertaken by the country. This is reflected in diplomatic defense efforts that aim, among other things, to strengthen ties and mutual understanding, as well as to develop cooperation, guiding the deepening of relations with the defense sectors of other countries.

It is clear, therefore, that within the structure of the defense sector, the Brazilian Navy (MB) plays a strategic role in the country's foreign and security policy, acting as an agent of cooperative diplomacy and coalition-building, in accordance with the concepts discussed above, developed by Le Mière (2014) and Till (2009).

Naval attachés, as representatives of the MB, are key actors in this scenario. Their role transcends traditional military functions, encompassing the promotion of national interests and the expansion of international collaboration networks in the fields of security and defense. Through the exercise of naval diplomacy, these attachés operate in the accredited states and, as highlighted in earlier sections, may be employed with a special focus in Southern Cone countries, fostering partnerships and cooperation that enhance Brazil's defense capabilities and consolidate its strategic presence in the region. In practice, naval attachés become *de facto* ambassadors, with the potential to promote PRODES.

Those actions can be linked to the concept of “defense diplomacy,” which, according to Cottey and Forster (2004), denotes a broad and alternative means of achieving security and foreign policy objectives, involving the peaceful use of the armed forces and related infrastructure as a tool of foreign and security policy. By comparison, this context includes military attachés,<sup>24</sup> given that

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23 The accrediting state is the one that sends the diplomatic representative, exercising the right of active legation. The accredited state is the one that receives the diplomatic mission, exercising the right of passive legation. See: <https://www.jusbrasil.com.br/artigos/relacoes-diplomaticas/402262446>.

24 According to MD53-I-01: General Instructions for the Relations between the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, the military attaché (ADIMIL) is the military advisor of a diplomatic mission, a position held by an officer of the armed forces (FA) assigned to the respective mission to perform any of the following roles: defense attaché (ADIDEF)—a military attaché representing the MD; naval attaché (ADINAV)—military attaché belonging to and representing the Navy; Army attaché (ADIEX)—military attaché belonging to and

they have specific advisory tasks to the Ministries of Defense and armed forces of their respective countries, as provided for in Decree No. 8,654, of January 28, 2016, which establishes guidelines for the MD and the Navy, Army, and Air Force Commands in handling such matters (Brazil 2016).

This alignment with the characteristics that define the concepts of military cooperation within defense diplomacy, associated with the fact that the attachés are tasked with representing their country before the armed forces of the states to which they are accredited,<sup>25</sup> under the leadership of a defense attaché or military attaché, who is an officer of the sending state's armed forces, may open up possibilities in various areas of relations.

It should be noted, initially, in this diplomatic context, that the selection and appointment of naval attachés to diplomatic missions, as established by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) (Brazil 1965), provides for privileges and immunities, as well as rights and duties arising from the act of notification or accreditation of the diplomatic agent by the accrediting state to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the receiving state.

The acceptance of the diplomatic agent is an attribute of the sovereignty of the receiving state, which include the prerogatives of granting *agrément* for military attachés or the accrediting members of the diplomatic staff. This category includes, under the terms of Article 1, subparagraph “e,” the members of staff of the mission—that is, those who hold diplomatic status, establishing as a rule for their characterization that they be recognized as such by the accrediting state (Article 9), through consultation or formal communication to the receiving State (prior approval, in the case of attachés).<sup>26</sup> This procedure enables the naval attaché to carry out various interactions and dialogues with the structures of the host country, characterizing the use of naval diplomacy.

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representing the Army; Air Force attaché (ADIAER)—military attaché belonging to and representing the Air Force. It is also possible to hold multiple positions: defense and naval attaché (ADIDEF/NAV)—military attaché representing both the MD and the Navy; defense, naval, and Army attaché (ADIDEF/NAVEX)—representing the MD, the Navy, and the Army; defense, naval, and Air Force attaché (ADIDEF/NAVAER)—military attaché representing the MD, the Navy, and the Air Force; defense, naval, Army, and Air Force attaché (ADIDEF/NAVEXAER)—military attaché representing the MD, the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force; naval and Army attaché (ADINAVEX)—military attaché representing the Navy and Army; and naval and Air Force attaché (ADINAVAER)—military attaché representing the Navy and Air Force.

25 According to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), accreditation is the act by which the Brazilian government grants authority to an individual to represent their State, in the specifically designated capacity, before a foreign nation or international organization.

26 Complementarily, Article 6 of the Annex to Decree No. 8,654/2016 (Brazil 2016) provides that the selection for this position requires it to be filled by senior officers in the last two ranks who have completed the Command and Staff Course or its equivalent, as defined by the respective Service. Besides the indispensable requirements for holding the post, professional merit and aptitude are considered decisive factors for the appointment.

Specifically with regard to the DIB, the responsibilities of naval attachés include serving as a channel of dialogue between the Brazilian Navy and its counterparts in the host country, as well as collaborating in the dissemination and promotion of Brazilian PRODES and security industries. Their role also includes reporting possible intentions to acquire defense and security equipment, and assisting in the promotion of the presence of Brazilian PRODES companies at fairs and conventions (Brazil 2016).

Within this framework, we identify an opportunity to employ naval diplomacy, within the spectrum outlined by Till (2009), particularly through the application of coalition-building.

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## **g. Diplomacy and Defense: What Does the Empirical Evidence Reveal?**

With the aim of contributing to the studies and bibliographic research employed in this work, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Brazilian Navy officers who are serving or have served as naval attachés in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay during the period under study. These officers observed firsthand the interconnections that have taken shape through naval diplomacy in each of the countries where they are or have been stationed. The results of these interviews are presented below, allowing us to draw causal inferences between the variables in our causal chain.

### **g.1. Analysis of Responses to Question 1**

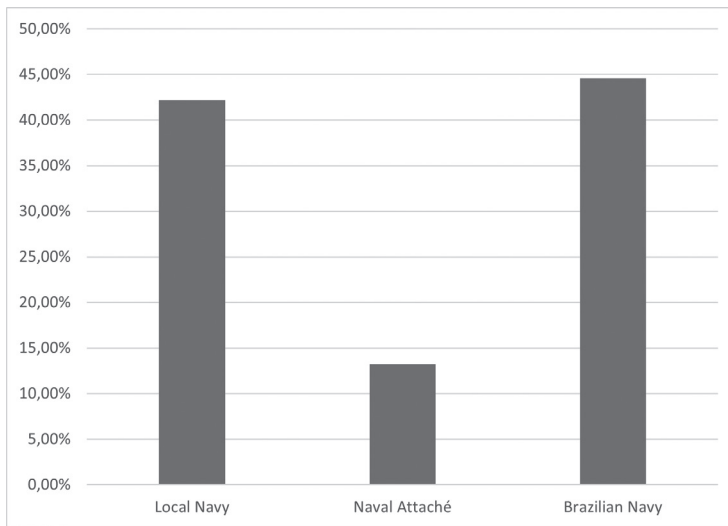
When asked whether, during the period in office, *they had the opportunity to address issues related to the Defense Industrial Base*, 100% of the naval attachés in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay responded affirmatively. However, upon analyzing the frequency of such actions, it was noted that these interactions did not exceed a dozen negotiations per year, with a subtle difference also in how often each attaché dealt with the matter. This fact may be interpreted as a lack of standardization of PRODES-related activities by the higher administrative echelon, which could be solved, for example, through the creation of a structured agenda to guide such engagements and the specific frequency of these approaches, thereby enabling more homogeneous and assertive results.

### **g.2. Analysis of Responses to Question 2**

Regarding the origin of engagements concerning matters related to the DIB, when the naval attachés from Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay were

asked to describe *whether such initiatives stemmed from the Brazilian Navy, from the local Navy, or from the naval attaché’s own effort*, it was found that most of the negotiations were carried out at the request of the Brazilian Navy, with a considerable number of actions also resulting from the initiative of the local navy, as illustrated in the chart below:

Chart 1. Question 2—Origin of Initiatives



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

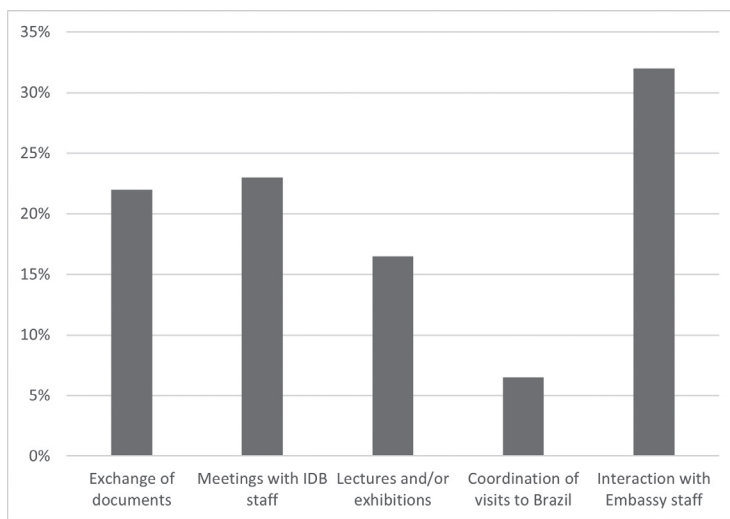
### 9.3. Analysis of Responses to Question 3

The naval attachés in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay were asked about *which mechanisms were employed in the interactions addressing the DIB*. In this diplomatic context, it is worth noting the potential use of mechanisms from the MERCOSUR structure as a means of strengthening dialogue concerning PRODES. As an example, the implementation of a Joint Declaration drafted between Brazil and Argentina in 2023 stands out, which can be used as a tool for cooperation in the field of defense, whose resulting guidelines can be implemented with the support of naval attachés.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the results

27 On January 23, 2023, the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, made an official visit to the Argentine Republic at the invitation of that country’s President at the time, Alberto Ángel Fernández. Meeting in Buenos Aires, the two Presidents reaffirmed the strategic alliance between their countries, reviewed the broad scope of bilateral relations, and assessed the status of existing commitments.

pertaining to the mechanisms used in interactions involving the DIB are presented in the chart below:

**Chart 2. Question 3—Mechanisms Used in Interactions that Addressed the DIB**



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

It should be noted that, among the various possibilities listed, the interactions of the naval attaché with the diplomatic staff of the embassy of the country to which they are assigned stand out.

#### 9.4. Analysis of Responses to Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7

When asked about the *difficulties encountered in carrying out measures pertaining to DIB-related negotiations*, the responses indicate that, from the point of view of the naval attachés, the greatest challenges lie in the availability of material and financial resources needed to give greater dynamism to such initiatives. With regard to *whether dialogue was directed more closely through the embassy’s diplomatic corps or via the MRE, through the Navy*, the responses suggest that there was a flow of information and updates on negotiations with local military forces, shared with the Brazilian ambassador and his

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In this context, they reiterated their intention to deepen and strengthen bilateral dialogue in strategic areas, including the defense sector.

advisors. This included negotiations for potential PRODES acquisitions and coordination to address the matter in bilateral diplomatic meetings.

In addition to these aspects, naval attachés were asked *what further opportunities for improvement they could identify for promoting the DIB*. The responses point to possible initiatives, such as increasing engagements with the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, better preparation of attachés for the mission, with regard to the DIB, and promoting visits by authorities from these states to events held in Brazil, such as LAAD.<sup>28</sup>

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## 10. Final Considerations

This article sought to analyze the contribution of naval attachés to the promotion of the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) in the Southern Cone of the subcontinent, specifically Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, between 2021 and 2023, from the perspective of naval diplomacy. To this end, key theorists on the field—in particular Till (2009)—were used as epistemological support for interpreting data collected through documentary research and semi-structured interviews.

We sought to contribute to understanding the correlation between diplomacy and defense, listing synergies that indicate pathways of achieving national objectives, particularly by identifying the potential of employing naval attachés in promoting PRODES in the Southern Cone between 2021 and 2023.

The research also showed that the blue economy, defined as the sustainable use of ocean resources to foster economic development, improve livelihoods, and ensure the health of aquatic ecosystems, integrates aspects of sustainability that were not considered in the traditional sea economy. Furthermore, in the Brazilian context, the blue economy is strongly linked to the country's maritime vocation, given that Brazil possesses one of the world's largest coastlines, as well as a significant underwater area with high potential for exploration, exemplified by the Rio Grande Rise.

It was also identified that Brazil has sought to align its maritime capabilities with the blue economy, emphasizing the development of the DIB. This includes the production of dual-use artifacts (civil and military), such

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28 LAAD Defence & Security—International Defence and Security Fair—is held in Brazil with the institutional support of the Ministry of Defense, the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Justice, and the Brazilian Public Security structure. The exhibition brings together manufacturers and suppliers of technologies for the Armed Forces, Police, Special Forces, defense and security industry executives, and government agencies. See: <https://laadexpo.com.br/>.

as patrol vessels and merchant marine vessels. Despite advances, the DIB faces challenges, such as difficulty accessing international markets and low utilization of public instruments to support exports. However, initiatives such as the 6th DIB Brazil Exhibition symbolize the sector's growth potential, which already generates millions of jobs and contributes to the country's exports.

The research also examined the role of the DIB from the perspective of naval diplomacy as a strategic instrument for leveraging the sector. The study focused on the integration between diplomacy and defense, highlighting that these two areas are complementary and fundamental to Brazil's international projection. It was observed that the DIB has great potential for growth and exports, particularly to MERCOSUR countries, where the demand for defense equipment and services can be explored. In this context, it was found that naval diplomacy stands out as an essential tool for strengthening diplomatic and military relations, as well as for opening new markets for the Brazilian defense industry.

Regarding the elements of the causal chain, specifically concerning the coordinated actions between the Brazilian Navy (MB) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) as an intervening variable, the open-ended responses to the questionnaires identified initiatives to promote PRODES, using naval diplomacy as a key instrument. This points to the potential for interaction between the MB and the MRE.

It should also be noted, as highlighted in the semi-structured interviews, that this diplomatic channel can be expanded to obtain more effective results through: 1) increasing the flow of information and updates on negotiations with local military forces, 2) support from the local Brazilian ambassador and their advisors, including negotiations for possible PRODES acquisitions and coordination to address the matter in bilateral diplomatic meetings, and 4) promotion of possible initiatives, such as increased engagement with the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces. In addition, better preparation of attachés for the mission regarding the DIB can enhance the effectiveness of the tasks they perform.

In exploring the dependent variable, the research identified critical conditions that must be considered in strategies for achieving national objectives, specifically for the promotion of PRODES, namely: 1) building of a trust-based environment, which constitutes the central element of naval diplomacy; 2) promoting interactions through negotiations, meetings, and participation in events, which can materialize the use of foreign policy under the responsibility of the MRE, with the contribution of the MB, expanding the potential for support and promotion of PRODES and the DIB. These

aspects result from the use of the appropriate diplomatic channel and the trust established between the naval attaché and the Navy of the host state, to deal with matters related to PRODES.

Therefore, the study points out that increasing the synergy between defense and diplomacy, through coordinated action by the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, is vital to maximize the opportunities for the DIB in the Southern Cone. In this sense, naval attachés, in addition to performing their traditional role of diplomatic representation, emerge as strategic agents in building a network of international cooperation focused on the development of the defense industry.

Finally, during the period analyzed (2021–2023), the attachés acted not only as intermediaries between governments and armed forces but also as facilitators of business opportunities for the DIB, promoting technologies, products, and services of the Brazilian military industry in Southern Cone markets. These results corroborate the hypothesis that naval diplomacy, through attachés, plays a strategic role in strengthening the DIB, expanding its presence and competitiveness on the international stage, and acting as a driver of the DIB's growth by contributing to Brazil's integration into regional production chains.

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**APPENDIX—Questionnaire administered to Brazilian Navy attachés to the Argentine, Paraguayan, and Uruguayan navies**

1. During your term in office, did you have the opportunity to deal with matters related to the IDB?

- Yes. If so, how often were these actions carried out?
- No.

1.1. If you answered “yes,” how often were these actions carried out?

2. Could you describe who took the initiative to address issues related to the IDB, in approximate percentages?

- % of negotiations carried out at the request of the Navy: \_\_\_\_\_
- % of negotiations conducted in response to a request from the local Navy: \_\_\_\_\_
- % of negotiations on the initiative of the naval attaché: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Could you indicate which mechanisms were used in interactions dealing with the IDB, in approximate percentages:

- % of interactions using only the exchange of documents: \_\_\_\_\_
- % of interactions using work meetings: \_\_\_\_\_
- % of interactions attending or presenting lectures: \_\_\_\_\_
- % of interactions for coordinating the sending or receiving of IDB representatives: \_\_\_\_\_
- % of other types of interaction: \_\_\_\_\_ (which ones?)

4. What difficulties were encountered in carrying out these actions?

- availability of time
- availability of financial and material resources
- other
- none

4.1. If you chose “other,” would you please describe the difficulties you encountered in carrying out these actions?

5. During your term in office, with regard to matters related to the IDB, was there any guidance or dialogue with the embassy’s diplomatic corps or directly by the MRE, via MB? How often were these actions carried out?

6. What opportunities for improvement do you see to increase the promotion of the IDB, with regard to the initiatives implemented that can count on the support of the naval attaché?

7. Would you like to make any other comments on the role of the attaché in promoting the IDB?