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**Civil-Military Relations on the Continent: Confrontation and  
Accommodation**



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**Civil-Military Relations on the Continent: Confrontation and Accommodation**

**BY**

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May 1998

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# Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: Confrontation and Accommodation

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# **Civil-Military Relations on the Continent: Confrontation and Accommodation**

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## **I. Introduction**

A survey of civil-military relations in Latin America, a region marked by recent transitions from military dictatorship to democratization, offers an opportunity to observe these relationships in their infancies, and to identify those critical elements of civilian and military leadership which bring the relationships their greatest chances of success. In this paper I will seek answers to the following questions: What are the features of civil-military relations in states recently exercising civilian control over former military dictatorships? What critical elements of civilian and military leadership ought to be in place to ensure effective civil-military relations? Last, how should these elements be expressed in curricula on civil-military relations, such as at the Inter-American Defense College or the newly established Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies?

In an effort to distill the essential characteristics of civil-military relations in Latin-American, and to highlight signal historical experiences, I utilize a case study approach focusing on Argentina, Brazil and Chile -- major states who share recent experience in post-authoritarian governments struggling to confine and refine roles for their military institutions.

In my examination of the state of civil-military relations of these three countries, I also introduce an orchestral analogy to relate the basic features of post-authoritarian governments which are asserting civilian leadership and recognizing the proper roles of a military institution. Here the musical score represents the constitution; the conductor, the civilian leadership; the brass section, the military; woodwinds and strings, other governmental departments.

The subtitle of this paper is *confrontation and accommodation*. It speaks to a variety of measures which post-authoritarian governments in South America have taken in reconciling past excesses of military establishments, redefining their roles and reintegrating them into civil society. Confronting or accommodating post-authoritarian militaries has both risks and benefits for the future; both approaches contain important lessons for charting stable civil-military relations.

## II. The State of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: Case Studies

*“The richness of comparing regional experiences is not in finding 100 percent replicability, but in drawing on a past to inform the future. Lessons must, to some extent, respect the peculiarities of national histories.”*<sup>1</sup>

### A. Assessing Civil and Military Prerogatives: A Musical Metaphor

The struggle to find the proper balance between civil, democratic governance and leadership over a military establishment can be likened to the competing sections of an orchestra. The brass section, loud and polished, could easily overwhelm the other sections in terms of sheer power. Yet if the orchestra is to have any success as a whole beyond solo pieces dominated by horns and trumpets, the brass has to learn to take the direction of the conductor, who reads from a score which clearly lays out which sections have the melody, which the harmony, and the tempo, rhythm and dynamics of the piece. The sections must play together or risk dissonance. The brass, which could easily overpower its brothers, must be able to blend with the woodwinds and strings; the brass must be able to play softly and be content to remain in the background to other sections which may have the lead, but also be prepared to sound the alarm whenever the score and conductor call for it.

The orchestra as model for civil-military relations points out some interesting features necessary for success. The military brass, though clearly possessing the power to dominate, must be subservient to civilian leadership, true to the constitution and acknowledge that other organs of government are more qualified to play political and economic roles. By the same token, the brass does play an important role in defense of the nation, and needs to be appreciated. When powerful statements do need to be made, the brass must be ready to respond. The constitution as a score must be clear in specifying roles for the brass, acknowledging military power properly applied, setting out clear limits for its use, and supporting its roles with adequate funding. The civilian leadership must possess the moral authority to direct the military to proper roles, support its institutional prerogatives, and take interest in its professionalization which can be achieved through training and appropriate employment of its forces, in, say, protecting national sovereignty or participating in collective security arrangements and international peacekeeping.

Orchestras, brass sections, conductors and scores all take on unique characteristics in the South American setting. In many cases there is a tradition of the brass overthrowing the entire orchestra, writing into the score its own lead, installing one of its own as conductor, presuming to know better than the strings or woodwinds in playing these sections’ passages, or disregarding the audience entirely in playing to suit its own interests. In some cases the brass has widespread support for a leading role. In other cases the brass is condemned for playing

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<sup>1</sup>Sally Shelton, Welcoming Address, Rapporteurs’ report of presentations at 4-6 May 1995 conference, Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: Lessons Learned, p. 3 (sponsored by The Democracy Projects at American University’s School of International Service). (Hereafter cited as Democracy Projects).

too loudly. How can the relationships between the brass and the orchestras of South America, with these often tempestuous pasts be reconciled and put on a more harmonious footing? That is the subject of my inquiry.

## **B. A Survey of the Experiences of Argentina, Brazil and Chile**

After much discussion with prominent scholars, senior researchers and government officials from the US and Latin America, I found the overwhelming consensus on an accurate and comprehensive treatment of the state of civil-military relations in Latin America centered on the work of Professor Wendy Hunter in her *State and Soldier in Latin America*.<sup>2</sup> I therefore benefit from her extensive research in this area in developing my arguments in the following section.

In my assessment of the quality and health of civil-military relations on the South American continent, I focus on the three cases examined by Hunter: Argentina, Brazil and Chile. I confine my study to these three for the following reasons:

- they are the most prominent states on the continent possessing the largest militaries
- they are working under recent constitutional revisions in the area of civil leadership of their militaries
- they share important features which provide illumination of the difficulties faced by nascent democracies attempting to strike the proper role for their military establishments, particularly in a changed world now largely bereft of global military threats – or significant internal challenges to democratic rule
- they are observed closely by the rest of the continent for their successes and failures in economic, military, and social areas
- their evolutions have been insulated geographically and culturally from the effects of their large hemispheric neighbor to the north -- the United States (which all too often attempts to foist its notions of proper civil-military relations on its South American neighbors)

All three states have histories of significant military involvement in their political and economic affairs. Argentina, Brazil and Chile all, to varying degrees, are attempting to circumscribe these traditional military interventions into the political sphere through constitutional checks and balances; assertions of civilian leadership over the military establishment, especially its roles and budgets; and, mostly in the cases of Chile and Argentina, a reconciliation between populace and the military over past excesses.

Argentina, Brazil and Chile are also, of course, distinctly different in many key aspects of their civil-military relationships, and perceive unique geo-strategic challenges which color their militaries' goals and orientation. These differences put into sharp relief those qualities which offer the greatest promise of achieving long-term stability in civil-military relations on the

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<sup>2</sup> Wendy Hunter, "State and Soldier in Latin America: Redefining the Military's Role in Argentina, Brazil and Chile," *Peaceworks* no. 10, October 1996, United States Institute of Peace. (Hereafter cited as Hunter).

continent – and those measures which are certain to be poisonous to healthy relations between civil government and its military arm. In the case of Argentina, for example, the military is refurbishing itself after being taken down to “bare metal” in the country’s attempt to scrape away the terrifying legacies of the Dirty War. Chile’s military represents the opposite pole, where despite culpability in pursuing its own dirty war, its power and prestige have been little diminished. Brazil’s military occupies the middle ground, enjoying widespread public support yet lacking in necessary constitutional and budgetary supports in defining proper roles and missions.

### **1. Argentina: *Having the brass play new themes***

The Argentine military had been an important player in Argentina’s birth as a nation, demarcating its borders, quelling internal challenges and repelling external threats. By the 1930 military coup, the Army had arrogated to itself the roles of “guardian of the nation” and “supervisor of the political system.” Such extra-military roles were in full sway in the dictatorship of 1976-1983, during which time the economy crumbled, a systematic state repression resulted in the “disappearance” of some 9,000 Argentine citizens (presumed subversives and innocents caught in the cross-fire), and finally an ill-conceived war with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands.

The disaster of military dictatorship came to an end with the return to civilian rule in the election of Raul Alfonsín in 1983. Alfonsín’s approach was to confront directly the military, ushering in with widespread public support numerous reforms aimed at limiting the military’s roles, autonomy, and budget, and establishing a civilian-led ministry of defense. As Wendy Hunter reported in *State and Soldier in Latin America*, “the crux of government policy under President Alfonsín was oriented more toward restriction and exclusion than redirecting the institution into activities and missions aimed at keeping its members out of politics.”<sup>3</sup> In taking the military down to “bare metal,” the Alfonsín reforms created serious civil-military tensions and led to a military backlash in a series of revolts by junior and mid-grade officers (the *carapintadas*) between 1987 and 1988. Miscellaneous concessions by the government, including absolution of officers below the rank of colonel for human rights abuses, relieved crisis pressures and resulted in a fragile truce between the military and civilian leadership.

Alfonsín’s successor, Carlos Menem, sought accommodation with the military in an effort to restore its institution, define its roles narrowly and modestly and grant it a degree of autonomy in professional matters. Menem sought to purchase cooperation with the military by issuing a blanket pardon in July 1989 to officers imprisoned for their role in the Dirty War and extended this pardon to leaders of the three military rebellions under Alfonsín. Although a fourth rebellion by extremist elements of the armed forces erupted in an effort to extract more concessions from the new government, the Army leadership quashed this revolt under orders from President Menem. By 1990, Menem had achieved a degree of accommodation with the

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<sup>3</sup> Hunter, p.12.

military, pardoning the perpetrators of the “dirty war” yet brooking no dissent over the primacy of civilian control; reestablishing the autonomy of the military institution yet holding the military leadership accountable for its members. Most importantly, Menem has succeeded in re-directing the roles of the military into new areas in an effort to professionalize the institution and restore its credibility with the populace it now serves.

If Alfonsín sought to *demilitarize* the Argentine military by directly confronting its jurisdiction, Menem has *de-politicized* the institution by channeling its role toward the explicitly external role of national defense and, in an important but highly visible secondary role, international peacekeeping. While providing justification for the military in a post-authoritarian Argentine – and in a post-Cold War international environment – participation in international peacekeeping has provided the Argentine armed forces with, as Wendy Hunter noted, a “respectable, explicitly military contribution to make in the sphere of foreign relations.”<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Brazil: *Playing from a score with plenty of room for improvisation***

Although sharing with Chile and Argentina a legacy of military intervention into the political and economic spheres, Brazil’s military can be distinguished from the experiences of her two large neighbors by a record of comparatively low incidence of human rights abuses, and rather broad roles ranging from civic action to the defense of Brazil’s sparsely populated, resource-rich northern frontier of Amazonia. The former distinction has resulted in broad-based public trust in the military. The latter distinction arises out of Brazil’s unique geo-strategic situation: a nation facing few, if any, credible external threats, yet possessing a large, unprotected frontier which the military views as its historical responsibility to fortify and develop. Indeed, Amazonia is the one mission the military has held up as a primary role to justify a portion of Brazil’s limited budgets. Civic missions have also extended into urban areas of operations, where the military has been sought out to combat crime and drug trafficking because of a weak and corrupt police force. Together, these uniquely Brazilian aspects allow for a military institution to operate in a somewhat ambiguous station in her society.

As a model of Brazil’s ambiguity over roles for the military, the assertion of control over Amazonia is at once internal and external. The mission is internal in that the army is the sole governmental presence in large areas of this frontier, and has taken on a public works responsibility. The external responsibilities include establishing presence in the region to guard the 4,000-mile border and protect the region’s vast natural riches from foreign interests. “Life, Work and Combat” is the motto of the Army’s frontier garrisons, which betrays an amalgam of missions from civic action, to border patrol to conventional defense of territory.

There are some concerns raised by Brazil’s lack of a concrete definition of her military’s place and function from a civil-military perspective. Although there is widespread public support for the military’s role in internal security – indeed, a demand for it in instances

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<sup>4</sup> Hunter, p. 19.

where the police force has proved to be corrupt and ineffective – the institution risks involvement in law enforcement activities for which it is inadequately trained, and is vulnerable to falling into abuses of power *vis-a-vis* the citizenry. Likewise, lack of definition in external roles leaves the institution without great political clout in fighting for a share of the national budget. Whereas Argentina under the Alfonsín government could be faulted for going too far in isolating and restricting the military, Brazil's civilian leadership may have erred in allowing the military to improvise roles. Wendy Hunter points to this danger in claiming "it does not bode well for democracy that the army, upon expanding into internal operations, comes to be regarded as more effective than the civilian police. Nor is it salutary for civilian supremacy that military units are virtually the sole representatives of public authority in rural areas."<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Chile: *The brass leads the brass band*

Chile's armed forces enjoy the greatest degree of independence from civilian authority of the three cases I discussed in this paper. The Chilean military occupies a privileged station in Chilean society. Constitutional safeguards at once define the strictly combatant roles of the military and protect its institutional prerogatives, including assuring an adequate level of funding for the roles the armed forces have defined for themselves. Unlike Argentina's drive to justify its post-authoritarian/post-Cold War military through participation in international peacekeeping, or Brazil's comfort in broadly defined roles for her military, the Chilean military's *raison de ser* is warfighting. Whereas Brazil's area of strategic concern is her northern frontier, Chile looks decisively to economic and geo-political predominance in the South Pacific, underwritten by a highly professional and thoroughly modern military. On a per capita basis, Chile's military is the largest standing force on the continent<sup>6</sup>.

The Chilean military's unique institutional safeguards were never more apparent than in General Pinochet's recent retirement from the post of army commander to take his place as "senator for life," a post he had written into the constitution. After a coup in 1973, General Pinochet ran the country until 1990, during this time presiding over Chile's own dirty war where about 2,700 real or imagined enemies have disappeared. Unlike in Argentina, the Chilean military has largely remained immune to prosecution for crimes committed during Pinochet's rule.<sup>7</sup>

The strength of the Chilean case, setting aside for the moment the long-term consequences of the military's refusal to come to terms with the excesses of the Pinochet reign, lies in the military institution's self-confidence in adhering to professional standards and limiting itself to strictly military roles. The institution is benefited by constitutional safeguards in funding and defining for itself its proper missions, and the extraordinary economic and social successes of Chile's center-left governments since 1990 -- which have given the military little cause to intervene.

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<sup>5</sup> Hunter, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Treason doth never prosper," *The Economist*, 14 March, p. 38.

Chile has not yet had to undergo the wrenching process of reconciliation between the military dictatorship's abusive past and the citizenry under today's civilian-led democracy. In a later section this paper suggests that this is an important element of successful civil-military relations. But there are other concerns about the preeminence of the military in civil society in relation to its neighbors: "While the Argentine military is busy keeping global peace, Chile is buying arms and training soldiers for a conventional war. Both Argentina and Brazil have cut back on training of troops, but Chile proceeds with full force, creating the general impression that it would be better prepared than its neighbors to fight an actual war should the eventuality arise."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Chile has made the decision to build a modern air force with the recent purchase of new fighter aircraft.<sup>9</sup>

### C. Summary of the Cases: The Need for a "Liberal Bargain"

The overall trend in the sample cases of Argentina, Brazil and Chile has been diminishing influence of their militaries under increasingly assertive and competent democratic governments. Indeed, the institution of formal democratic rules and procedures in these countries has had the most significant effect on the balance of power between the military and civil governance.<sup>10</sup>

What factors in the decline of these militaries' influence on civil society are most beneficial to stable, long-term civil-military relations? The most important foundation is a civil-military compact which establishes the supremacy of civilian leadership of the military, and the proper recognition and support of the civil government in the institution of the military. With the power of control over the armed forces also comes the responsibility for the health and success of the institution of the armed forces. Put another way, it is what Joseph Nye, Harvard scholar and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense, has termed "the liberal bargain:" civilians respect and support the special role and responsibility of the military to provide for the sovereign integrity of the country and the security of its citizens; the military, in return, accepts the rule of law and remains non-partisan in its respect for civilian authority.<sup>11</sup>

How have the test cases of Argentina, Brazil and Chile fared in striking the liberal bargain? Chile stands out as having the strongest bargain: a highly respected military institution, firmly supported by a democratic government, though one suspects some degree of brute force in striking a bargain so favorable to the military. Argentina stands out for winning the bargain through a wholesale redefinition of the military institution, which to date has allowed new found respect for the military's role in international peacekeeping. Brazil's bargain must be judged a

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<sup>8</sup> Hunter, p. 34

<sup>9</sup> David Fulghum, "Latin America Faces Tough Military Aircraft Decisions," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, March 16, 1998, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians against Soldiers* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Nye, Concluding Address, conference on Civil-Military Relations and the Consolidation of Democracy, 13-14 March, 1995, The National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, DC. (Hereafter cited as National Endowment for Democracy).

“gentleman’s agreement:” ambiguity on both the civil leadership side and in the leadership of the military allows for adequate control and support of a military with broad, undefined roles.

### III. Achieving Stable Civil-Military Relations

#### A. The Challenges Facing Civilian Leadership

Just like a composer begins writing a new score of music for an orchestra, so must a constitution be composed to lead a country. The constitution must have key elements laid out for the country to have democracy as its ideal. Ambassador Sally Shelton of the US Agency for International Development succinctly stated this notion in her remarks before a conference on civil-military relations in Latin America:

Democracy is more than the military returning to their barracks. It means civilians taking responsibility for governing through the formal institutions which make up the political system and through social institutions which allow individuals to express their concerns. In Latin America, the waning of the dictator has not always meant the dawning of democracy. Throughout the world, some countries have achieved more enduring progress than others. Examining the successes provides us with some lessons: the stronger the civilian control of government and the more deeply rooted the democratic consensus, the less likely it is that authoritarian challenges to governance will ensue.<sup>12</sup>

This is particularly relevant in the United States when the framers of the Constitution declared in Article II that the President, a civilian, be dual-hatted as the chief executive and “shall be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States . . .”<sup>13</sup> This ensures that the civilian chief executive stands at the head of the military chain of command, and through command authority ensures civilian control over the making of military policy.

To provide a balance of power for the President, the American Founding Fathers gave the legislative branch, in Article I, the power “to provide for the common Defense,” “to declare War,” “to raise and support Armies,” “to provide and maintain a Navy” and “to provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions.”<sup>14</sup> This ensured that the executive branch could not alone go into war without the consent of the legislature. Additionally, the founding fathers, specifically Thomas Jefferson, insisted on having a “Bill of Rights” to protect human rights of the people. In this document, the Second Amendment reestablishes the role of the citizen-soldier by stating that “A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”<sup>15</sup>

Essentially, the “citizen-soldiers” were the Founding Fathers who took it upon

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<sup>12</sup>Sally Shelton, Democracy Projects .

<sup>13</sup>U.S. Constitution, Article II, Section 2, Clause 2

<sup>14</sup>Ibid

<sup>15</sup>U.S. Constitution, Amendment 2

themselves to write these principles to keep them “honest brokers” when many later went to serve as Presidents, legislators, scholars, inventors and tax payers. They had fought in the Revolutionary War against Great Britain as soldiers and wrote the Constitution and Bill of Rights as civilians without a “uniform” to tarnish the authenticity of these documents. Louis Smith wrote that “civil dominance, regardless of how securely grounded it may be in the Constitution and in the statutes, is not self-implementing. Like any other principle, it must be cherished in the public mind if it is to prevail. Like any other policy, it requires translation into effective administration.”<sup>16</sup>

In Latin America, constitutions also have been rewritten to reshape a country’s way of life and have taken on the idea that militaries need to be led by civilians. Although each nation has had their own unique history that led them to this conclusion, it will take much conviction and vision to stay the course and act on the words that are written in their constitutions. It is only recently that these constitutions have taken the bold step to change the uniform of their countries’ leaders to one of a civilian citizen. This is very much like a marching band leader who changes the fancy, glittery uniform to one of a more subdued color and join a larger orchestra.

In the “ABC” countries - Argentina, Brazil and Chile - each country’s constitution provided for safeguards for their military institutions, while the US constitution determinedly constrained the military by making it subject to checks and balances. Argentina ensured that it could not incriminate its previous military leaders for human rights violations. Brazil’s constitution made allowances for each military service to have a representative in uniform on the President’s cabinet, and Chile made a very specific provision in their constitution to make General Pinochet, former dictator, “senator for life” with immunity from charges of human rights violations. Interestingly, each of these constitutions had extensive military influence in its drafting. Like the authors of the U.S. constitution, many had military experience or were serving in the military at the time of the writing of the constitution. It appears that over time, the people’s convictions to having a democratic form of government have inspired changes in their constitutions to take into account their changing view of the military. Today in Brazil, the President is on the verge of declaring the first civilian minister of defense, and had campaigned on this issue in his previous election.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Louis Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power: A Study of Civil Control of Military Power in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

<sup>17</sup>Luis Bitencourt, telephone interview, 22 March 1998, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

For democracies to achieve a level of “checks and balances” or stability, three political processes will be critical:

First, the principle structures of democracy -- political parties, legislatures, judiciaries, local government, and interest groups and media in civil society (not least, independent trade unions and business associations) -- must become institutionalized: that is, they must become stable, coherent, regularized (even bureaucratized), and effective, both in their own functioning and in their various relations with one another. Second, formal democracy must be deepened; it must become more authentic, genuine...democratic. In this process, competition becomes more open, vigorous, and extensive; participation and representation broader and more autonomous; civil liberties more comprehensively and rigorously protected; accountability more systematic and transparent. Third, political values and beliefs must change in the direction of greater tolerance, trust, and willingness to participate, bargain, and compromise.<sup>18</sup>

It cannot be emphasized enough that strong “checks and balances” must occur across all the branches of government to have credibility with its people and military.

According to Ambassador Hernan Patino Mayor, the following are measures that new democracies should orchestrate:

1. Recognize that the military is an important part of state power. The military is a very special bureaucracy, and there is always a tension between elected officials and bureaucracies. Civilians must either accept the role of the military or opt for not having one. It is not good to try to suppress the military indirectly.
2. Improve the ability of civilian politicians to make informed decisions regarding military issues. This requires civilian expertise. Civilians will not get the respect of the military if they do not know them, like them, or understand them.
3. Make a clear determination of the mission of the military. But this must also be somewhat flexible. The civilian leadership and the military must agree on the primary threats to national security. Typically, there is a mix of external and internal threats (including, for instance, drugs and guerrillas).<sup>19</sup>

Assuming these circumstances occur in Latin American, consolidation of democracy will start to take hold and the military will begin to see itself as truly subordinate to civilian leadership and will respond to its governance. More importantly, civilians will begin to have greater confidence in leading their country and their military forces.

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<sup>18</sup>Larry Diamond, “Democracy’s Future,” a panel discussion commemorating the Fifth Anniversary of the *Journal of Democracy*, 19 January 1995. (Hereafter cited as Democracy’s Future.)

<sup>19</sup>National Endowment for Democracy, p. 6

In the transition from military dominance to civilian leadership in Latin America, civilian leaders have the high order to become legitimate leaders, legislatures, judges and decision- and policy-makers in their own eyes and in the eyes of the public, particularly with the military. This legitimacy must be recognized and acknowledged by the public and particularly the military establishment. Consequently, civilian leaders must be well informed in all areas -- economic, social, and defense issues. Strong preparation in all aspects of running a nation is more important than ever as these countries try to wrestle with the many demands of governing a nation. I would argue that expertise in economics will be the key in truly legitimizing civilian leaders. As Jorge Dominguez and Abraham Lowenthal have so eloquently stated: "Democracy speaks to the soul, but has yet to fill the belly."<sup>20</sup> However, in the area of defense expertise, it is imperative that civilian leaders prepare themselves to be good stewards of military resources (personnel, training, and equipment). Civilian governments must develop a strategy that will gradually reform the military and maintain an adequate level of *esprit de corps* in the armed services. This becomes a difficult task when many of the military budgets in Latin America have had to come down to meet other pressing needs on the economic and social fronts.

Moreover, the civilian leaders have the dual challenge of tackling a tough job as civilian defense ministers without the best defense policy preparation and without the perceived credibility from the armed forces and general public. Juan Rial, an Uruguayan researcher, notes that:

In Latin America as in other developing regions, the task of overseeing the armed forces is a thankless one that creates powerful enemies and rarely enhances political careers. Jealous of their institutional autonomy, military commanders are normally reluctant even to share their plans with the defense ministers, much less to seek its approval.<sup>21</sup>

Civilians must make all efforts to improve their defense expertise, to validate the civilian defense minister's position to one that has high credibility and prestige within the executive cabinet, and with the legislature, the military and the public. Gradual military reforms in many cases will be the preferred route for newly appointed defense ministers to take (if time and funding permit it). This will give the defense minister sufficient time to be well informed about defense matters to base a credible and accurate defense policy. The progressive nature of this strategy would also allow the armed forces to initiate their own internal reform and build bridges with the civilian leadership. Eventually, civilian and military leadership will bring a new generation of people that have developed their professional careers against a democratic backdrop and should improve civil-military relations. I envision these professionals of the future could come from the growing middle class of Latin America, where one sibling chooses to pursue a military career and another a political or a scholar's career track. This would be an ideal situation but it illustrates how each of these siblings will have an appreciation for each

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<sup>20</sup>Democracy's Future, p 9

<sup>21</sup>Juan Rial, "Armies and Civil Society," *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 58. (Hereafter cited as *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*.)

other's professions and seek each other out for counsel.

It is vital that the defense minister not appear in actuality or in perception to fall in the trap of being a prisoner to the military. Civilians should learn as much about the military as possible. Reading military history and attending their national defense colleges may also be useful in preparing to lead the military. The defense minister's staff should also establish the protocol that the military should follow in properly addressing a defense minister and in following proper etiquette in receiving honors at a military parade to illustrate that civilian leaders are in charge. Civilians need to develop the tools to properly provide crucial oversight of the defense budget without appearing to be solely dependent on the military's persuasive arguments. I cannot say enough about the importance of civilians becoming "defense experts" to truly be "defense leaders." A civilian defense minister should evolve in making the nation's defense plan as his own and not just managing the military's defense plan. Taking ownership of developing and composing the national defense plan will be the foundation for the defense minister's defense policies.

This notion was hammered home in off-the-record remarks on the conduct of the Gulf War by a senior U.S. defense official. Though Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney had not himself served in uniform, he took it upon himself to become a defense expert – indeed, he had compiled an impressive record as a defense expert in his years as a congressman. When presented with the war plan for ejecting Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1990, Cheney reportedly recognized that it was proper for the Commander in Chief of the Central Command and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to draft the military war plan. He respected their recommendations and challenged their conclusions. He also studied the war plan in sufficient detail to "own the plan" himself. In this way, Cheney accepted the proper role of the military leadership – and decisively carried out his own role as the civilian leader of the Department of Defense charged with carrying out the orders of the President.<sup>22</sup>

## **B. The Challenges Facing Military Leadership**

Erik Kjonnerod suggests the making of an identity crisis for Latin American militaries: Lacking credible external threats and -- now with the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War -- lacking significant internal threats as well, Latin American militaries find themselves without enemies around which to organize and mobilize. This lack of credible threats is coupled with these militaries' loss of political power. Indeed, democratization across Latin America has created greater constraints on military action. There is the realization that military solutions have not worked well when applied to non-military problem areas. Yet, Kjonnerod finds some reason for optimism as Latin American militaries face down these challenges:

Despite these problems, there have been significant improvements in civil-military relations. In a number of countries the military is seeking to reform itself, civilian and military leaders are seeking out new missions,

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<sup>22</sup> The source of the quotation is from an off-the-record briefing.

and there have been radical realignments in military thinking.<sup>23</sup>

The greatest challenge to the militaries of Latin America is to redefine their identity and role in their country, and to carve a sense of identity that reflects the democratic change that starts with civilian leadership. First, they must get back to basics and accept their new chain of command, starting with their commander-in-chief who no longer wears a uniform but is wearing civilian clothes. They need to learn to salute a civilian president and defense minister and not deny them the honors they deserve. Being apolitical must be a goal. Second, they must embrace the change as one that is permanent and not a transitional one. They need to shift their image of themselves from being the rulers and center of power to a role of being instruments of the new civilian leadership. They need to see themselves as the ones that serve their country as opposed to having their country serving them.

While these identity issues are being worked out psychologically and bureaucratically, the military has the challenge of dealing with morale problems. To many uniformed personnel, stepping down from the role of “ruler” to a subordinate position in government may have been viewed as a “demotion.” However, the military must help chart a new course with their newly elected civilian leadership while maintaining a sense of identity and dignity. Civilian leadership must not be viewed as competition but rather an integral part of running a nation. It is imperative that each uniformed officer and enlisted person read their new constitution and see for themselves the new and different framework of government they must abide by.

As difficult as it may be, the older and more senior officers of the military should follow the basic leadership principle of not speaking harshly of their civilian leaders to their subordinates. Indeed, one of the time honored “Laws of the Navy” memorized by every Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy is particularly germane: “Take heed what you say of your seniors. May your words be spoken softly and plain. Lest a bird of the tell the matter, and so ye shall hear it again.”<sup>24</sup>

It is instructive that in the four rebellions launched by Argentine junior and mid-grade officers (the *carapintadas*) between 1987 and 1990, only the fourth -- and so far the final -- rebellion was put down by the military leadership acting under orders from President Menem. In this early test of Menem’s administration, the senior military leadership took responsibility for the conduct and loyalty of their own institution.

Looking down the chain of command, the military leadership should support the policies of the civilian defense leadership as though these policies were their own. Looking up the chain of command, the military leadership should provide sound advice and counsel to the civilian leadership and recognize that they are an integral part of the defense posture of the nation. Military leaders should view themselves as part of the team to help formulate a defense strategy

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<sup>23</sup>Erik Kjonnerod, National Endowment for Democracy

<sup>24</sup>*The Laws of the Navy*

that makes sense and work with civilian leadership to define proper roles, particularly in a vastly changed international security environment. Moreover, the military should make every attempt to open the doors to dialogue with their civilian leaders and even propose an education or indoctrination program for civilians to learn more about the military. The military needs to strive to avoid isolating themselves from society and must become more open about their profession.

With the onset of a democratic government and civilian leadership, militaries must also confront budget cutbacks and become as resourceful as possible. Initially, they need to totally grasp the concept that they are being paid and supported by the nation and that they are stewards of democracy. They need to master downsizing without having it erode their institution which in many cases is interpreted as a contradiction in terms. Military officials need to understand that downsizing of their armed services does not mean that the country is going downward. Instead, they need to recognize that other elements of society (particularly in the economic arena) are competing with military resources and that the civilian leadership is not only going to yield to the military needs. The reality is that across Latin America, the military's defense spending as a share of GNP has declined in recent years. Between 1985 and 1993, defense spending fell in Argentina from 2.9 percent to 1.7 percent of GNP; in Chile, from 6.8 percent to 2.1 percent; and in El Salvador, from 4.4 percent to 1.6 percent.<sup>25</sup>

Many of the militaries must also confront their legacy of having had a highly oppressive regime that may have committed human rights violations in prosecuting "dirty wars" and under a newly democratic form of government, may have to answer for these charges. This situation has the potential to further erode the perception that the public has of the military and can make it difficult for civilian leadership to improve their relationship with the military. This legacy may also make the military more isolated from society at precisely the time when they need to be more open to society. There is a need for the military to admit the past and reconcile with the civil society which the military is sworn to protect. Witness the failure of the Chilean military to participate in the National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation hearings into the excesses of military rule: the danger is that the distrust of the military will become inter-generational, perhaps to rear its head in backlashes in years to come.

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<sup>25</sup>Juan Rial, *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, p. 57.

### C. Common Concerns of both Civilian and Military Leaders

*“ . . . I have come to view civil-military relations in three ways: from the perspective of civilians, the military, and the interaction between the two.”*<sup>26</sup>

Having discussed the challenges faced separately by civilian and military leaders in adjusting to post-authoritarian democracies, I now turn to how the interaction of these two players might meet the challenges they both face in creating stable civil-military relations. The Liberal Bargain noted earlier, which describes the mutual respect and support between civilians and the military institution, must serve as the foundation for fruitful interaction. Samuel Huntington has observed a positive trend in this regard for post-authoritarian democracies, in that “there is a growing acceptance of the norms of military professionalism and civilian control.”<sup>27</sup>

Underlying these norms is the need to define decisively the appropriate roles for the armed forces -- a key challenge which requires civilians and military working together in constant dialogue. Appropriate roles are in each other’s best interests: for the military, proper roles nourish their sense of professionalism. For the civilians, achieving definition of proper roles shows support of the military institution, and is key to protecting the vital interests of the country.

In the cases of the ABC countries, both Argentina and Chile, I would judge, have succeeded in defining appropriate roles for their armed forces, albeit arriving at different conclusions. Argentina has taken on the role of global peacekeeper -- a necessary external role for a military institution needing to cast off its ugly legacies of internal involvement. International peacekeeping for Argentina also has the added beneficial feature of orienting the military outwardly even when no credible external threat exists. Argentine participation in peacekeeping is a professionalizing role, bringing benefits in training opportunities, foreign deployments and better pay, and makes it possible to rebuild prestige at home. Argentine troops have deployed to such areas as the Persian Gulf, Croatia, Cambodia, Angola, Morocco and the Sinai. Recently, President Menem had offered Argentine forces to be available in responding to the crisis over UN inspections in Iraq. President Menem has also underscored the notion of collective security in the post-Cold War world: a democracy such as Argentina would be unlikely to face a global security challenge alone, but would serve in concert with friends and allies. Such a link to collective action perhaps softens the blow of severely declining defense budgets.

It is fascinating to note that the Argentine military, once responsible for national disgrace in the perpetration of the “dirty war” and the disastrous war over the Falklands, now has made it possible for Argentina to be granted “Major Non-NATO Ally” status by the United States. In this the Liberal Bargain has been completed: the civilian government takes pains to re-orient

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<sup>26</sup>Democracy Projects, p.7

<sup>27</sup>National Endowment for Democracy, p.2

the military institution, supporting it in new roles; the military finds in this a new, professionalizing *razon de ser*.

Chile has sought to emphasize the potential external threat, defining rigorous, strictly warfighting roles for her armed forces. The result is a confident, professional military institution thriving under new civilian leadership. Here too it appears that the norms of civilian leadership and military professionalism have been accepted, albeit against the backdrop of Chile's unique accommodation with General Pinochet. When General Pinochet ultimately passes from the scene (he will serve out his days as "senator for life"), I believe the country will have to come to grips with the excesses of the Pinochet's rule from 1973-1990. This lack of reconciliation must be seen as a caveat to Chile's Liberal Bargain. I discuss the role of reconciliation in my conclusions.

In my assessment of Brazil earlier in this paper, I noted that the Brazilian military had the benefit of widespread public trust for its rather broad and undefined roles, including direct roles in providing internal security. It is instructive that neither Argentina nor Chile possess the degree of public trust enjoyed by Brazil – or the appetite for roles involving internal security.<sup>28</sup> For the moment, public trust appears to be sustaining the Liberal Bargain between Brazil's democratic government and the military. But there are dangers in not specifying distinct external military roles for the Brazilian armed forces. Already the Brazilian military has been drawn into law enforcement operations, for example, in rooting out crime and drug trafficking in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, because of the ineptitude of the civilian police force. In addition to the pitfalls of the armed forces participating in civil law enforcement (temptations to be drawn into corruption and the slippery slope of falling into human rights abuses), without concrete agreement between civilian leadership and the military leadership on the explicitly military roles for the armed forces, the Liberal Bargain could fall apart due to lack of appropriate funding and support of the military institution.

Brazil serves as an example of the dangers all Latin American militaries face today: Unsprung from the constraints provided by the bi-polar world of the Cold War, new threats are proliferating to challenge even the most clearly focused militaries: drug trafficking, migration, and international crime. Measures to combat these new threats raise questions about the nuances of public security versus national defense, the changing definition of national security, and military versus non-military aspects of national defense. The delicacy and urgency of these questions require continued and sophisticated dialogue among civilian and military specialists. Accordingly, the appropriate roles and missions of the gamut of state organizations, not merely the army, need to be reevaluated: law enforcement, intelligence, disaster relief and civic aid.

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<sup>28</sup> I would submit that Chile lacks implicit public trust because of the unresolved excesses of the military under Pinochet's rule, though explicitly there is great public support of the military. Argentina is in the process of building explicit trust in the public of its military because of the military's open admission of responsibility for the Dirty War. Over the long term, Argentina's position may be the stronger of the two.

A discussion about what constitutes national sovereignty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – and therefore how vital interests which would be defended by the commitment of “blood and treasure” are defined – is beyond the scope of this paper. But it is safe to conclude that the militaries of Latin America and their civilian leadership, in their post-authoritarian dawn, jointly face daunting challenges in defining appropriate roles even as they struggle to institutionalize roles which have been traditional for democratic, industrially advanced societies.

As a final thought on the common challenges faced by civilians and the military, the need for economic security perhaps provides the best opportunity for a civil-military approach to a vital national interest. The enhancement of economic security reinforces the norms of civilian leadership and military professionalism: as a vital interest, the government is responsible to organize all of the state’s resources to protect it. The military would be a key player; the government supports the military institution in its special role, while the military derives respect and *esprit de corps* for its participation in defending a national vital interest. Chile’s strategic vision for the South Pacific comes to mind, which envisions a central role for the armed forces in advancing Chile’s economic prosperity – and orienting the military toward external, professional missions.

## IV. A Prescription for Improving Civil-Military Relations on the Continent

### A. Essential Checks and Balances

*“For democracy to be born, elites must be willing to ‘put rules above personal power.’”*<sup>29</sup>

Democracy is the single greatest guarantor of effective and stable civil-military relations. The most fundamental requirement for a proper balance of power between civil governments and their armed forces is the institution of formal democratic rules and procedures. These formal rules and procedures must include:

- the primacy of civilian control of the military
- the “power of the purse” vested in a civilian legislature, with rigorous participation between both civilian defense experts and the uniformed professionals in determining appropriate spending priorities
- rigorous debate leading to consensus between civilian leaders and the uniformed professionals on the appropriate roles and missions of the armed forces

Roles and missions must be defined carefully. First, post-authoritarian societies have the basic need to redefine military roles away from internal security to strict military roles externally oriented. Taking this first step is akin to satisfying “survival needs” as in Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Once the basic need is met, more advanced roles and missions could be defined against new threats such as drug trafficking, international crime, economic security, and responses to international threats to peace, natural disasters and humanitarian assistance.

Louis Goodman has suggested three criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of a mission for the military:

1. Does the military’s involvement shut out other parties -- such as police -- from that activity and thereby preventing them from developing such expertise?
2. Do the armed forces by their involvement gain added privilege, promoting their own institutional interests at the expense of other entities?
3. Does the military begin to neglect its core defense mission?

Considering the first criterion, Brazil’s armed forces may be more effective in combating crime and drug trafficking in Rio De Janeiro’s slums, but such intervention does little to develop the police force’s proper role in responding to a problem clearly in their jurisdiction. The second criterion gets at the heart of defining military missions for the military: the military is not suited to dictate social or economic policy. The final criterion is at the root of defining roles which enhance the professionalism of the military -- a key element in keeping the Liberal Bargain with the civilian leadership.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Denise Dresser, *Democracy’s Future*, p.8

<sup>30</sup> Louis Goodman, *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, p. 38.

Many of these new threats pose the grave challenge of blurred distinctions between law enforcement and military intervention. I would strongly support the need for a *Posse Comitatus* provision in a state's constitution which specifically circumscribes the use of armed forces in domestic law enforcement needs. Such a provision must take into account Latin America's unique relationships among civilians, police and the military. Some states, such as Colombia, have a National Police which are explicitly a civilian force, yet fall under the Ministry of Defense along with the military. Interestingly, the National Police had been a part of Colombia's Interior Ministry but were seen as becoming too politicized; their movement under the Defense Ministry was taken to reaffirm the National Police's apolitical professionalism. Further study is warranted of Latin America's unique civil-military-police relations.<sup>31</sup>

Combating drug trafficking is an urgent threat which can have great influence on civil-military relations, especially for states who have taken deliberate steps to relieve their military from internal security responsibilities. The arguments for military involvement in combating drug trafficking include the trans-national – and therefore national security nature of the threat; bringing to bear military organization, discipline and firepower in the “war on drugs;” the utility of using Latin American armed forces directly against their own region's drug producers and trans-shippers. But the potential effect of military involvement on civil-military relations is grave, especially for states just now fulfilling their basic “survival needs” in defining appropriate military roles and missions. The chances for military recidivism in corruption and human rights abuses are simply too great. The result would be renewed cycles of public distrust and antipathy toward the military institution, with associated de-professionalization of the military. The Liberal Bargain would be broken.

Military support to combating drug trafficking could be carefully defined with serious, deliberate dialogue between civilian leadership and the uniformed professionals. A *Posse Comitatus* legislation for military participation in the war on drugs could be drafted, carefully limiting military roles to logistics support, surveillance and intelligence. Apprehension, arrest and interdiction of traffickers must be left to appropriate law enforcement bodies.

## **B. The Need for Reconciliation**

In the process of democratization, many Latin American states have had to confront past abuses of military dictatorships against their own citizens. Since 1974, a number of these states, including Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and El Salvador, have established “truth and reconciliation” commissions in an effort to: disclose the truth about past excesses; apply justice to the perpetrators; prevent future abuses; and provide for reparations to the victims of abuse.<sup>32</sup> Each of these elements is vitally important for a nation to move forward toward vibrant

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<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey B. Demarest, “The Overlap of Military and the Police in Latin America,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, 2 April 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Seminar, “Forgiveness in Conflict Resolution: Reality and Utility. The Experiences of the Truth Commissions (South Africa, El Salvador and Chile), The Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University, 11 March 1998. (Hereafter cited as Forgiveness.)

democracy and the rule of law. But perhaps the most germane aspect of the commissions to improving civil-military relations is the goal of preventing future abuses. Ultimately, civil-military relations will founder if, because of unreconciled differences between the citizenry and the armed forces, the seeds of discord and distrust are allowed to be sown today, only to erupt generations later.

A formal process of reconciliation allows for a public airing and a public recording of facts. Perpetrators can be required to come forward, acknowledge acts, (ideally) express remorse, and face justice. Only in this manner can individual forgiveness be fostered. Indeed, in the experience of many of the truth and reconciliation commissions, the simple acknowledgment of “who did what to whom” is sufficient for forgiveness to be granted. Many relatives of the “disappeared” simply needed to know what happened. Ultimately, the truth and reconciliation process can achieve a national consensus and closure.<sup>33</sup>

Argentina’s truth commission, operating from 1983 to 1984, received widespread attention and is held up as a model for other countries seeking truth and justice in difficult situations. The commission was charged with investigating the violence of the seven-year military regime, 1976-1983. The commission’s final report, *Nunca Mas*, documented the cases of over 9,000 persons who had disappeared; published as a book, *Nunca Mas* became a national best-seller.<sup>34</sup>

By contrast, Chile’s National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, established by President Aylwin in 1990, came to an uncertain conclusion. Although the commission investigated 3,400 cases, the armed forces declined to participate. A spate of assassinations, including that of a prominent opposition senator, followed closely on the release of the commission’s report. Whereas *Nunca Mas* became a national best-seller in Argentina, it has been reported that tens of thousands of copies of Chile’s truth commission report have been warehoused to keep them from circulation.<sup>35</sup>

Of the two experiences just discussed, Argentina’s full accounting may appear a more satisfying result. But the Chilean case demonstrates another aspect of repairing civil-military relations in post-authoritarian regimes: there is the danger of provocation in easing the military out of its formerly supreme position.<sup>36</sup> This may argue for a non-confrontational approach, for the time being, to the question of redressing past abuses of power. One is left, nonetheless, with a feeling of incompleteness in hearing the story of Chile’s attempt to air the truth.

On a final note on the role of reconciliation, both Argentina and Chile extended an amnesty law to the alleged perpetrators of both their dirty wars. While such an effort was

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<sup>33</sup> Forgiveness

<sup>34</sup> Priscilla Hayner, “Fifteen Truth Commissions -- 1974-1994: A Comparative Study, *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 16, p. 614. (Hereafter cited as Hayner.)

<sup>35</sup> Hayner, p. 621-22

<sup>36</sup> Forgiveness

deemed necessary to purchase peace, in the case of Argentina, or perpetrators giving amnesty to themselves, in the case of Chile, there is the possibility of unfinished business when such amnesty laws are viewed from an international justice perspective. If anything was learned from the Nuremberg trials, it is the notion that there are some orders worth disobeying, that some actions are blameworthy under any circumstances. The lesson for other governments watching how Argentina and Chile manage their transitions to democracy is: who can grant amnesty for crimes against humanity?<sup>37</sup>

### C. Confidence-Building Measures

*“We will share ideas and experiences on these changes and how to approach them. For example, we will talk about greater ties between civilian and military institutions and the urgent need for civilian expertise. One way this expertise could be developed is by expanding national security studies at the Inter-American Defense College, so that civilians and military can better understand each others’ contributions.”*<sup>38</sup>

In order to assist with the foundation of confidence-building measures for civilian and military leaders, I will make some observations and recommendations that can be built upon. First, I feel that civilians and military need to return to the school house. This can be done in various ways and would encourage Latin America to do this inside their borders and outside their borders. I would agree with Secretary Perry’s comment at the first Defense Ministerial of the Americas that one of the places where civilians and military can be brought together under one roof to improve relations is the Inter-American Defense College. A school house is also a place where there is a level playing field, where relationships are not impeded by rank, seniority or position in government. This would also be in keeping with the evolution of military letting go of institutions that had been created when the military was “in charge.”

I would strongly recommend that serious attention be paid to Heraldo Munoz’s recommendations in his essay, “A New OAS for the New Times.” He makes a strong argument for bringing the Inter-American Defense Board and Inter-American Defense College under the civilian-diplomatic leadership of the OAS.<sup>39</sup> Such a step would exemplify the transformation we have sought for the militaries of Latin America: the primacy of civilian leadership. I would further develop the concept of having the Inter-American Defense College enhance its curriculum, bringing in a civilian dean and professional faculty of scholars to compliment the uniformed staff. An expanded class size of 100 “defense fellows” could accommodate an equal cross-section of uniformed military and civilian professionals. Additionally, I would propose that the growing number of Latin American “think tanks” also participate by sending visiting scholars to teach and research at the Inter-American Defense College. This could become a tremendous resource for Latin American countries to get some

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<sup>37</sup> Forgiveness

<sup>38</sup> William J. Perry in, “The Ingredients for Democracy,” *Defense Issues*, vol. 10, no. 86

<sup>39</sup> Heraldo Munoz, “A New OAS for the New Times,” *The Future of the Organization of American States* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1993), p. 67-100.

much need research in defense issues and be a key confidence-building measure for civil-military relations. This school could become a “center of excellence” not just for Latin America, but for nations in Africa, Asia and the newly independent states of the Soviet Union who are eager to compare notes on the transition to civilian-led defense establishments.

There are other programs that have assisted in confidence-building measures for civil-military relations in Latin America. Many initiatives have been sponsored by the United States and consist of such programs as the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School’s Center for Civil-Military Relations. This institute supports masters-level academic study centered in a residence program in Monterey, California, as well as mobile training teams which conduct seminars throughout Latin America. Recently, the National Defense University opened the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies with the mission to develop and provide graduate-level academic programs for civilians with defense-related duties in the executive and legislative branches of the government and in the private sector. Many of these programs are extremely helpful but have all the markings of being American-made, directed, funded and authored. Latin Americans want to empower themselves and may need a “jump start” -- but ultimately they must do it themselves. Part of confidence building is to learn to empower oneself after developing the confidence to do so.

## V. Epilogue: What Can the United States Tell Latin America about Civil-Military Relations?

Similarities are seductive, but differences are definitive. In many instances, the example of the United States is illuminating for the nations of Latin America which are building a history of democratic governance and civilian leadership of military establishments. America's Founding Fathers were appropriately suspicious of the "heroic" general and president in the checks and balances woven into the constitution which guaranteed civilian leadership of the military, vested the power of the purse in the legislature, and accommodated rigorous dialogue between civilian and military leaders over defense priorities.

It is just as interesting to note the recent difficulties the United States has had in controlling the defense establishment. It was not too long ago that, after World War II, America sought to unify her military services under a single department. Prior to the National Security Act of 1947, the military services were to a great degree autonomous in establishing their own spending priorities and proposing their roles. Indeed, the Secretary of the Navy was a cabinet officer. His counterpart, the Secretary of War, was also responsible for the Army. There was no Air Force. Within the services themselves there were powerful special interests, such as the Navy's Bureau of Ships and Bureau of Ordnance, all operating as fiefdoms. The task of unifying the recalcitrant services fell to James Forrestal, the first U.S. Secretary of Defense. He had to wrest control of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and the upstart Air Force who were openly revolting in the press over the unification efforts of Forrestal and the attempt to define their roles and missions. The creation of the Defense Department was ultimately successful, but it claimed a casualty in the suicide of Forrestal in April of 1949. Though the reasons behind his suicide were many and complex, Forrestal's battle with the military services over unification had definitely taken a toll.<sup>40</sup>

There are mortal risks to military leadership, both on the battlefield and in the bureaucracies. Admiral Jeremy Boorda, the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, took his life in 1996, ostensibly because of a scandal over unearned military decorations. But Admiral Boorda also confronted an organization which had the potential to being hostile to outsiders: Admiral Boorda was not a Naval Academy graduate, but had risen up through the ranks from Seaman to Admiral; he was not an aviator, but had to challenge Naval Aviation over some very tough issues in the Tailhook scandal; he was criticized for not supporting his own Vice Chief, Admiral Arthur, whose nomination to be commander of the Pacific Command was derailed over charges that Arthur had wrongly agreed to dismiss a young woman aviator from flying duty; he was criticized for being "too political." Like Forrestal, these bureaucratic battles and excessive media scrutiny had probably taken their toll.

The United States does share with Latin America the experiences of forging a democracy and of challenging and accommodating the prerogatives of a military establishment.

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<sup>40</sup> Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

But Latin America is different than the U.S., and the nations making up the continent are all distinct from each other. Witness the great differences between the cases of Argentina, Brazil and Chile this paper examined earlier. All share the challenge of consolidating the democratic rule of law, but they necessarily draw different conclusions out of their unique experiences.

Such powerful differences must temper “American-made” prescriptions for healthy, stable civil-military relations on the continent. Researcher Luis Bitencourt has likened the relationship between the U.S. and Latin America to a condominium which has a well-to-do penthouse resident and a building full of families struggling to make ends meet. One night as one of the families is arguing over bills, the penthouse resident knocks at the door to ask the couple if they’d be interested in meeting to discuss a new security system for the building. While the struggling family may agree with the concept of a security system, there are simply more pressing problems for them to deal with.<sup>41</sup> They would probably view the wealthy neighbor as being out of touch.

In conclusion, a very real concern about U.S.-Latin American relations in general, and civil-military relations in particular, is the pressure to directly involve military forces in counter-narcotics activities. Not only does pressure to do so risk tackling a higher-level goal before the basic needs are met for democratic consolidation and experience in civilian control over the military, it ignores crucial differences of Latin American societies in the role of police forces, the threat of guerrilla insurgencies and the fact that the war on drugs is most likely to be carried out in their own backyards. These definitive differences must be carefully assessed – and are ripe for serious discussion between military professionals and civilian defense leaders.

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<sup>41</sup> Luis Bitencourt, speech at Civil-Military Relations in the Americas for the 21st Century, The University of New Mexico, 3-5 November 1997.

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U.S. Constitution, Amendment 2