

A stylized sun with a human-like face, rendered in white lines on a yellow background. The sun's rays are depicted as thin, curved lines radiating from the top and bottom. The face has large, almond-shaped eyes, a prominent nose, and a slightly smiling mouth. The sun is centered in the lower half of the cover.

Argentine Civil-Military Relations

From Alfonsín to Menem

Herbert C. Huser

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CENTER FOR HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE STUDIES
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Argentine Civil-Military Relations

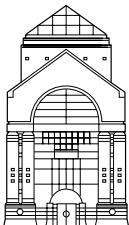
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A Publication of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies



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Foreword

As this book goes to press, Argentina is once more in the throes of political crisis. At the close of 2001, Fernando de la Rúa, Argentina's third popularly elected president since the military government of 1976 to 1983, resigned just 2 years into his term. A constitutional successor resigned after a week, having irritated the factions in his own party to the extent that they refused to support him. Riots that caused the deaths of 26 citizens and 13 police brought the third interim president down. Then more rioters broke into the halls of Congress and set fire to the building, causing the fall of the next successor. A commentator for *La Nación* observed that Argentina was living a "crisis without precedent" and that its political leadership was playing its last card. When Eduardo Duhalde assumed the leadership of a hastily assembled unity government—the fifth president in 2 weeks—he addressed the Argentine people, saying: "The country is broken."

Amidst this chaos, where were the military? Long the arbiters of Argentine politics in the 20th century, throughout the 3 weeks of political and economic crisis, the military remained secure in their barracks while the police handled the rioters. The armed forces leadership was approached, but their response to civilian appeals for military action to restore order was, "Only when commanded to do so by law of Congress." Military leaders demonstrated their clear understanding of the armed forces' objective role in Argentine society.

Herbert Huser's book tells the story of the evolution of civil-military relations in Argentina from the late 1970s through 1999 and the inauguration of President Fernando de la Rúa. It is a story of lessons learned and not learned by both the military institution and the civilian leadership. Huser observes that "the civilian contenders in Argentine politics have been inconsistent about the objective place of the military within the state

apparatus.” This may be the keystone of Huser’s account: civilian politicians tried, throughout some 20 years, to impose subjective controls over the once-powerful armed forces through budget cuts, personnel reductions, and limits on the scope of roles and missions. Where they often failed, however, was to provide the civilian leadership and direction that the military profoundly desired.

More than a handful of books cover the Argentine political transition and civil-military relations in that country. The analysis at hand complements these other assessments in a number of ways. First, Huser may be the only recent author who has brought a thorough understanding of the military institution itself to the study. A retired Army officer who served more than 6 years in Argentina between 1969 and 1984, Colonel Huser understands better than most the impact of budget constraints, failure to maintain readiness, phantom regiments, and blind insistence on service autonomy while facing growing demands for shared activities—jointness—and even about bureaucratic stubbornness. Huser also understands the idealized system of civilian command and control of the military that Samuel Huntington made popular in *The Soldier and the State*, which was published in 1957. His assessment of the consequences of civilian failure to provide the evolving Argentine armed forces with constructive guidance regarding missions or programs is especially useful and instructive to U.S. Government authorities who often fail to see the differences in process hidden behind similarities in form in U.S. and Latin America militaries.

Huser’s analysis of the shortcomings of efforts to build a strong Ministry of Defense are also insightful. He looks closely at the efforts of Raúl Alfonsín’s government to bolster the role of the civilian Ministry and of the Joint Staff and describes the organizational shortcomings that failed to provide the desired ministerial leverage over the armed forces for so long.

Finally, Huser examines the convoluted path that draft legislation followed before a comprehensive defense law could finally be passed in the Argentine Congress. At the same time, he delineates the intricacies of the “review of the past” as forces seeking accountability for alleged human rights violations in the face of those resisting the review in various trials, uprisings, and pardons.

Throughout the period in question, civil-military relations were a prominent issue in the Argentine political agenda. The issue dominated the Alfonsín government’s agenda, and, while less prominent under Carlos Menem, the military question was never far from being a political hot

button. Huser describes a general failure on the part of Argentina's political authorities to develop a consensus on "the objective role of the military."

Absent civilian leadership, the military itself undertook reforms—in organization, education, and mission. Huser describes the initially tentative and then ever-bolder efforts by the armed forces to institute reforms that would satisfy civilian critics, only to find the critics interested not in positive efforts but in restrictions. During the Menem period, the administration used the military as an instrument for Argentina's reentry into the democratic community of nations, sending first the navy and then the army on peacekeeping missions to global hotspots. The armed forces successfully represented their country, demonstrated a capacity for professional adjustment, and also learned professional practices that they would want to imitate at home. The experience left them even more committed to their revised objective roles.

Reading *Argentine Civil-Military Relations* leaves one with the haunting recognition that the armed forces did much more to reform themselves, and with a much more professional assessment of the role of the military in democratic society, than civilian politicians were generally able to articulate. In coming to this conclusion, one recognizes that the civil-military rapprochement has not concluded in Argentina. The country is still waiting for civilians to decide what specific roles they want their armed forces to play in representing and defending the nation and how they will exercise leadership over their now-subordinate armed forces. The "military question" remains open, waiting for civilian leadership.

This book is an important contribution to the much-needed institutional analysis of the evolution of democratic governance in Argentina. Huser uses the constructs of political culture, organization of the state, and political economy as the pillars of his analytical framework, especially emphasizing political culture to explain Argentina's difficulty in coming to grips with the civil-military problematique. Further analyses of the workings of the institutional underpinnings of successful governance and functional civil-military relations are needed in Argentina and many other countries of Latin America, where, after more than a decade of reforms, civilian leadership is often the absent element in the civil-military equation.

This is the second title published for the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies at the National Defense University. The first, *La reestructuración de las fuerzas armadas y el rol del Congreso: la experiencia argentina* (Restructuring the Armed Forces and the Role of Congress: The

Argentine Experience) by Pablo Carlos Martinez in 2002, documents the Argentine legislature's handling of the 1998 Defense Reform Bill and is written from the perspective of an inside observer to that process. The center's publication program is intended to promote a better-documented and more analytic record of the evolving state of civilian military relations and defense management issues across Latin America. Hopefully, this is just the first of many studies of the fairly dramatic changes that are taking place in defense and security relations throughout Latin America.

Margaret Daly Hayes

Director, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies

Argentine Civil-Military Relations

From Alfonsín to Menem

Introduction

During the past 20 years, the movement in Latin America toward elected, representative governments and away from authoritarian regimes has made democracy—in many cases fragile and conditional but nonetheless real—the overwhelming political choice throughout the Western Hemisphere. Institutions and societies long accustomed to trying to deal with authoritarian, arbitrary, and autonomous political actors, often including military organizations, have been scrambling to adapt to often radically changed, and much more accountable, political settings. The road to a democratic polity in almost all of Latin America has been uneven at best, and in some cases strewn with potholes. But the various peace arrangements resolving decades of violence in Central America and the transitions to elected civilian regimes in all of South America attest to a general sense that force no longer is an acceptable instrument for settling political disputes.

Correspondingly, a body of academic literature on transition to more democratic regimes has appeared in recent decades that tries to explain this sea change in governance in Latin America. Politically, a dispute has erupted among those who have tried to take credit for this new state of affairs and those who sought to affix blame for the existing situation. Consequently, the emergence of democracy is often expressed as a triumph of good over evil, the emergence of civilian regimes and the banishment of military or quasi-military ones. But such morally satisfying judgments border on both self-righteousness and ethnocentrism. Furthermore, they beg more useful questions: What led to authoritarian governance and military politics in the first place? What caused the widespread shift to democratic form and increasingly to democratic substance? How real is the change, and what are its implications?

This book examines the nature and evolution of the crucial relationship that underlies the answers to those questions, the civil-military

relationship, by focusing on the Latin American country where politics would seem to have been clearly conditioned by the nature of and changes in that relationship, Argentina. The nature of the Argentine civil-military relationship and the changes in it are best understood by examining disputes between military and civilian political actors over the legitimacy of political authority and political roles.

Argentina from 1983 to 2000 is a striking example of civilian rule reinstated under stress. Throughout this period, the media were filled with accounts of an Argentina in dire straits, beset by problems that proved to be mostly invulnerable to the ministrations of President Raúl Alfonsín's regime and that continued to challenge President Carlos Menem's administration. Nonetheless, civilian representative government endures. Few would have predicted that Alfonsín would transfer power to another civilian via election and that the electoral process would continue, albeit under a new constitutional regime instituted in 1995. Such an event had not occurred in Argentina in decades.

An examination of the evolving relationships between Argentina's civilian political institutions and its military institutions helps to explain why Argentine politics in the current democratic era developed as it did. It may also help in understanding the contemporary Argentine political scene and is potentially useful in exploring the civil-military relationships and democratic consolidation in other Latin American countries, especially in the Southern Cone.

This work is organized in the following manner: chapter two explores the contributions of the political culture, state, and political economy triangle to the description and explanation of civil-military relations. Chapter three gives a historical perspective of civil-military relations in Argentina as a basis for understanding the antecedents of the contemporary relationships, setting forth the evolution of the political culture and the contest for legitimacy in Argentina, and detailing the events that precipitated a sudden change from authoritarian to democratic governance under the elected Alfonsín administration.

Both chapters four and five examine civil-military relations in the Alfonsín administration (1983–1989) with respect to key factors that compose the substance of the relationships, the *estado militar* (military status). *Military status* is defined as the set of

military prerogatives . . . areas where, whether challenged or not, the military as an institution assumes they have an acquired right or privilege, formal or informal, to exercise effective control over its internal

governance, to play a role within nonmilitary areas within the state apparatus, or even to structure relationships between the state and political or civil society.¹

For analysis of the Alfonsín administration, these prerogatives are grouped into four categories: mission and organization, resources and industry, education and socialization (covered mostly in chapter four), and accountability and discipline (dealt with in detail in chapter five). A commentary on the Alfonsín legacy concludes chapter five.

Chapter six continues the analysis of the civil-military relationship by examining the first Menem administration, which ended in 1995. It is divided into sections on review of the past and accountability, defense policy, and military policy.

Chapter seven considers the continuing Menem administration under a new constitutional regime (a 4-year term that ended in 1999) and analyzes the continuing effects of the Alfonsín and Menem administrations on civil-military relationships and the roles of the military. The final section of chapter seven provides conclusions about the civil-military relationship and democratic consolidation in the current context of Argentine politics and offers observations on their future in that nation.

The Nature of Argentine Civil-Military Relations

Explanation of civil-military relations in Latin America in general and in Argentina in particular typically focuses on three areas: political culture, the state, and political economy. This book relies on political culture to describe and explain civil-military relations in Argentina, but the other two approaches also can make significant contributions to understanding the phenomena of civil-military relations and can provide concepts and frameworks that are crucial to a complete analysis and evaluation.

Combining these approaches usefully examines all three elements in a dynamic political system model that has three major components: inputs, conversion, and outputs.² Political culture is most closely associated with inputs. The state is associated with conversion: how institutions deal with inputs and create outputs through governance. Political economy focuses on outputs, the products of the system.

Political Culture

Political culture and its mechanism, political socialization (the process of induction into or transmittal of political culture), are fundamental to understanding civil-military relations in any context, but perhaps especially in Latin America. Lucian Pye provides a useful synthesis of the basis of the approach:

Political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation in

aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and is thus rooted equally in public events and private experiences.³

The political culture approach is most helpful in explaining legitimacy, a key concept in relating beliefs to behavior in terms of the political actions of both military and civilians.

The Iberian Legacy

The impact of Iberian heritage on Latin American political institutions and personalities is unmistakable. As Howard Wiarda states, “Latin America . . . remains paternalistic, hierarchical, authoritarian, Catholic, corporate, personalist, and elitist to its core.”⁴ Although an overlay of constitutional republicanism was applied following the revolutions against Spain between 1810 and 1824 and after the Brazilian monarchy in 1889, and although Latin America has modernized considerably in the 20th century, many fundamental attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments inculcated by 300 years of Spanish or Portuguese rule appear tenacious and resilient,⁵ undergirding the “political tradition . . . [which is] absolutist, hierarchical, bureaucratic-patrimonial.”⁶

Civilians and the military share this political legacy. “Despite institutional boundaries and functional equivalency,” says Martin Edmonds, “military armed services reflect the society from which they come and which they serve.”⁷ Non-Latins in particular are tempted to attribute authoritarian regimes to machinations of the military alone. Indeed, military intervention in politics is routinely described as predatory and praetorian, corrupt and reactionary; military authorities are portrayed as usurpers of constitutional government and permanent enemies of the people.⁸ But this belief does not stand up under scrutiny. Civilian authoritarian regimes also have flourished in Latin America, with Mexico providing perhaps the most salient and contemporary example. Latin American constitutional arrangements enshrined a powerful chief executive, relatively unburdened by countervailing institutional powers, such as legislatures, courts, or a federal structure. The tendency to place all significant political power in the hands of one person, or very few persons, reflects the Hispanic tradition of pyramidal power and social structure, run from the top and imbued with the principle of verticality.⁹

The militaries of Spain and Portugal evolving in the 15th and 16th centuries were militaries of orders, castes, and special privileges, *fueros militares*, that gave them the status of a fundamental corporate pillar of political society. The system accommodates force—and its handmaiden, violence—easily.¹⁰ Conversely, little room was available for notions of consensus and compromise. To the extent that subsequent influences do not successfully challenge or counteract this entrenched and resilient Iberian heritage, it is often viewed as antithetical to notions of representative, democratic government. This heritage provided an alternative notion of legitimacy of authority to that of the democratic idea of consent of the governed, and by implication it recognized another route to gain and maintain power in that Latin Americans sometimes view the military as a legitimate alternative to civilian rule.¹¹ Hence, there exist “general legitimized routes to power”—not just elections but “coups, revolts, real revolution, heroic acts, strikes.”¹²

Because indigenous influences played little part in governance in isolated, sparsely populated Argentina, its political culture appears especially indebted to the Hispanic legacy. Although Argentina had a different political climate than Spain, and subsequent externally derived influences would make important impressions on Argentine political culture, such phenomena as isolation and later extensive immigration from Southern Europe tended to reinforce the political legacy of colonial Spain in terms of the substance of political activity. Lawrence Harrison argues that “(The) dominant (Hispanic) cultural characteristics remained basically unchanged. The nation’s problems have typically been solved by force and power.”¹³ Moreover, as shown by Daniel Poneman, “democracy is not rooted in the successive waves of peoples that led to present-day Argentina.”¹⁴

Argentine scholars categorize this phenomenon by the level of political culture. One asserts that despite modernity, Argentina does not have a “mature political culture”—that is, one that would guarantee civil supremacy over the military and eschew the use of force.¹⁵ Military officers also point out that the low level of political culture makes room for the military in government.¹⁶

Concepts of Legitimacy

Force and power characterized the long period of internecine warfare among factions led by personalist, tyrannical leaders (*caudillos*), who embedded themselves in the constitutional constructs in Argentina, undergirded the oligarchical republicanism of the Golden Age (1880–1914), and emerged in 1930 under military auspices, dominating Argentine political

life until 1983. To the extent that the Hispanic legacy to Latin American political culture informed civil-military relations, it would sustain the notion that the Argentine political culture may represent that legacy faithfully and with a high degree of contemporary relevance.

Consequently, notions of legitimacy in the Argentine context could differ greatly from expectations in other contexts. Legitimacy, which is crucial in assessing the civil-military relationship, is a general belief in the appropriateness of political authority. It must “support common notions of the locus of decisionmaking authority, the techniques by which decisions are to be made, and the means by which rulers are to be empowered.”¹⁷ In political communities in which that general belief is unchallenged (for example, in a representative democracy of long standing or even in a monarchy), legitimacy of political authority is not in question. But in Latin America, “no particular techniques of mobilizing political power, nor specific political resources, are deemed more appropriate to political activity than others.”¹⁸ Political actors have disparate resources, and differing notions of legitimacy of political authority are apparent in the Latin American political systems.

Observers would not necessarily view military involvement in politics in Argentina as aberrant behavior. Wiarda claims that “By law and constitution, as well as hallowed tradition and custom, the military, under certain circumstances, has the *right* and *obligation* to involve itself in internal politics.”¹⁹ The military may be seen as the epitome of pure civic culture reflecting the tradition or the dominant values of the parent society.²⁰ Hence, the military hierarchy may undertake political activities that appear illegitimate, illegal, or both to an outsider, but that in the military view—one often shared by many in the society in which they are operating—are neither. Beliefs may predispose the Argentine military to act in certain ways, even at times irrespective of their objective environments.²¹ Three attributes of the military—mission, professionalism, and socialization—best illuminate those beliefs in the context of political culture.

Mission

In Argentina, the military mission has a more transcendental quality than the straightforward, instrumental nature of a tasking in the United States. An idealistic sense of mission propelled the great liberators of Latin America, such as José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar. This literal notion of liberation proved unsustainable, but the militaries of the independence movements and their national heirs retained the legitimizing titles of “liberators” and “progenitors” essential to the creation of the

nation. The military also remained a recognized player in the larger society, part of the “unholy trinity” of army, church, and landed gentry. And the military in Latin America received a broad mandate of *political* functions: defend the nation, maintain internal order, guarantee constitutional rights, and enforce laws.²² This open-ended mission gave the Latin American military establishment pretensions to another title, that of custodian, “some special and indeed unique identification with the national interest.”²³ The mission is “in accordance with their interpretation of what must be done in a given situation to defend the nation and national values.”²⁴

Some Argentines see this legitimization of the military by its identification with enduring values as endowing it with a “latent mission” to form the moral reserve of the republic—the military officer as depository of national values.²⁵ Furthermore, these values are a constant within the military, which sees itself as the preserver and defender of patriotism from any perceived danger.²⁶ The military has been said to act from patriotism when others do not; when military members see things awry, they tend to act. This behavior is an expression of the “super-interest”—the military must act if political parties, government, or the constitution fail and the country is threatened with “not surviving.”²⁷ Hence, the military is legitimized not only as the moral conscience and ethical reserve of society but also as the defender of traditional, constant values. It considers its acts to be those of salvation of the republic.²⁸

In the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina, the military came to wear this custodial mantle as the arbiter of the national interest as embodied in the National Security Doctrine.²⁹ Mission thus can be regarded as one essential element of the relationship of the military officer to the government, and one that in Argentina gave the military a sense of political legitimacy and purpose quite apart from that conferred by popular consent.

Many military officers in Argentina expressed this sense of transcendent mission by disdaining traditional politics—“the politics of antipolitics,” a general belief that a nation’s destiny is too important to be left to the vagaries of partisan politics and incompetent politicians.³⁰ This view, in extremis, becomes messianic: the “pure, vigorous, and patriotic” military, as savior of the nation, is too easily juxtaposed with the “corrupt, effeminate, and cosmopolitan” civilians.³¹ Moreover, the Argentine military has appeared to echo the sentiments expressed by one of its own, General Juan Carlos Onganía, on his assumption of power in 1966: that the military is the “people’s fallback” against civilian depredations, that “the military have a special responsibility, a special mission, that transcends their

obligation to existing authorities.”³² The military’s sense of mission did not change; the armed forces “still saw themselves as independent of the government, exempt from subordination to the law, endowed with the privilege to define the national interest, and with the prerogative to be the central organs for the protection of such interest.”³³ Legitimacy, then, inhered for the military in its mission to protect traditional, national values quite apart from the government of the day.

Professionalism

The second factor scholars often cite when examining the military in Argentina’s political culture is professionalism. Because of the military’s beliefs and attitudes about mission, however, an *instrumental* professionalism—with the armed forces dedicated to the military arts and at the service of government—has been rare.³⁴ But three aspects of military professionalism—expertise, responsibility, and corporateness³⁵—are vital to explain the propensity for the military to take on political roles.

Expertise denotes more than mere technical competence; it implies the ability to counsel on matters relating to the military profession. Attempts in the early 20th century to professionalize the Latin American militaries by means of foreign missions used a fairly narrow definition of expertise and failed to inculcate pristine technical competence. Missions from those countries considered experts at the turn of the century were autocratic or aristocratic and reinforced militaristic values. Discipline, honor, and obedience were as much a part of professionalization as new weaponry, tactics, or doctrine. Thus, professionalization enhanced military capabilities in the application of force, but these capabilities could be, and were, employed in political ways. “The professionalization of the military [permitted] it to regulate itself as an institution and . . . freed the officer corps from control by civilian elites.”³⁶

Responsibility is tied to the question: To whom or what is the military loyal? The beliefs and values that undergird loyalty are fundamental to the question of legitimacy; whom will the military obey? Latin military establishments often sense divided loyalty between defending the *people* of a nation or state on the one hand, and the *rulers* of that nation or state on the other. In the days when the state and the ruler were regarded as indivisible, this issue did not present a problem. But in modern times of competition for governance, loyalty to the state can become a cover for disloyalty to incumbents in government. Because the military considers itself the custodian of the national interest, military officers could conclude that they must not subject themselves to the authority of the current government if they

are to serve the state loyally. This sort of loyalty to the state will push even “professional” militaries into confrontation with civilian authorities.³⁷ Culturally, it might also reflect the *fuero militar* (military privilege) of Old Spain in which “military interests [are] distinct from civil interests, [and] military loyalties [are] distinct from civil loyalties.”³⁸ Therefore, adherence to the idea of *verticalidad*—obedience of and loyalty to authorities in the governmental hierarchy—must compete with *horizontalidad*—the obedience and loyalties engendered by membership in and inculcation into the military institution itself.³⁹

Horizontal loyalty undergirds the military’s corporate identity. Military officers belong to three select fraternities: the army, the navy, and the air force. Rivalries often are maintained between services, but officers share an understanding of things military and a bond in the face of external challenges—membership in organizations that are authoritarian in nature, hierarchically structured, and possessed of a virtual monopoly of force. Officers believe that this special bond devolves upon them a special status, complete with certain perquisites and privileges, reminiscent of *fuero militar* and enshrined in military status (*estado militar*).⁴⁰

This military corporatism and its often seen concomitant, praetorianism—the military exercise of independent political power backed by the use or threat of force—suggest that “Latin Americans [militaries] represent an independent, self-contained, technocratic, corporate elite that . . . wields political influence and enhances authoritarian practices and orientations.”⁴¹ Although Latin American officers are often diverse in political thinking and the military institutions often are susceptible to factionalism along political and other lines, the sense of military identity has often been sufficient to permit even a politically divided officer corps to coalesce in the face of a perceived threat to its corporate identity.

In the contemporary setting, this divided loyalty has other political repercussions. The armed forces as institutional (governmental) entities are at odds with the armed forces as a corporate entity. An Argentine observer, using the Argentine Army as the most salient example, referred to the situation as “an organized and hierarchical army versus a sovietized [unionized] one.”⁴² These dissimilar loyalties severely strain the military officer corps, especially when the fundamental value structure of the military, with its traditionalist, historically generated image as the moral reserve, is threatened. Political expressions of these strains are significant in civil-military relationships.

But corporateness as reflected in the Argentine military is not an aberration to the general political culture in which *all* rulers are organized in corporate fashion, a series of contentious groups battling for power. The military is one such group, with an elaborate and exclusive system. For instance, “Argentina is one type of society that produces (military) intervention: convulsed with value crisis, divided and fractured in stagnant compartments, different sources of legitimacy are argued, simultaneously and exclusively by the groups in contest.” The civilians and military have trouble “penetrating the psyche and value hierarchy of each other.”⁴³ In the blunt words of a senior retired Argentine Army officer, the military and civilian elites talk past, not to, each other.⁴⁴

This conflicted polity has not agreed on the basis for legitimacy—a common set of values undergirding appropriateness of authority. Irreconcilable value differences and lack of understanding result in a deteriorated civil-military relationship: “the [civilian] government can’t run what it doesn’t understand, or understand what it does not know about.”⁴⁵ The sense of compartmentalization is palpable.

Professionalization and creation of a self-aware corporate entity in Argentina had significant political repercussions. Modernization, aimed at removing the military from politics, marked the end of civilian hegemony in nearly every country in the region. Consequently, the “armies, in emancipating themselves from civil society and the ruling class, became repoliticized on a different basis according to their own organizational logic.”⁴⁶ Corporate identity gave the Argentine military a sense of the need to act politically to fend off threats, real or fancied, to the military institution. According to one scholar, “In short, the process of professionalization gradually turned the Argentine military, especially the army, into a formidable political force—quite apart from, and sometimes antagonistic to, the country’s constitutional apparatus.”⁴⁷

Socialization

Military education and socialization have given continuity to these attributes. In many Latin American countries, professionalization and corporate identity were accompanied by the creation of an elaborate set of educational institutions, quite apart from the civilian ones, that assured the intergenerational transmittal of the attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that strengthen the military political culture. “Specific socialization and re-socialization of officers by military institutions” occurs.⁴⁸ Of particular importance is the recruitment of future officers from among carefully selected teenagers, providing them with a military education that imbues a

“deeply rooted corporate spirit.”⁴⁹ The competence of the military establishment in addressing any given subject will rarely be subsequently questioned, despite internal differences. Systems of professional military education have reinforced this process of procurement and indoctrination.

Argentina represents the refinement of this military socialization process through successive educational endeavors. Many observers credit the country’s system of military schools with instilling the Argentine military officer with such a sense of professional perfection that he presumes himself suited for national decisionmaking at the highest levels.⁵⁰ The system includes military high schools, *liceos militares*, a principal source of reserve officers; the *Colegio Militar de la Nación*, the only source for army regular officers (with counterpart academies in the other services); and an array of branch, service, technical, and command and staff schools for each service. Moreover, the intensity and isolation of these experiences and their emphasis on the traditional military values of honor, discipline, and duty have until recently left little room for support of democracy (and the free expression and consensus that accompany it) in the military education process. In the words of an Argentine general of the Peronist era, antidemocratic feelings have been inculcated in the military. He expressed that the fundamentals of Argentine military doctrine on this issue are a phobia against the essential forms characterizing political cooperation in the great Western democracies; a lack of confidence and a deprecation for every citizen who feels a vocation for problems of a public nature (so-called professional politicians); and a lack of faith in the citizenry.⁵¹

Reinforcing the isolation of the educational experience is the physical isolation of military officers and their families, who have tended to live in military neighborhoods, either official or unofficial. Outside the capital or other large metropolitan areas, military members go about their routine in self-contained, often physically isolated posts and garrisons. They associate mostly among themselves, carrying their highly structured, formal occupational demeanor into their social and, often, family life. For the Argentine military officer, the military ethos and the national ethos are frequently undifferentiated. This service in remote areas emphasizes the extent to which the military is seen as set apart in society. The military political culture, then, became the apotheosis of the general political culture in the view of the military, and the institutions became the repository for *Argentinidad*—an overwhelming sense of nationality, of the “ideal” Argentine.

Nonetheless, political culture is an imperfect analytic tool, and maintaining some reservations about its use is wise. Scholars have credited

political culture with both instilling an apolitical stance in the military and reinforcing its proclivity to intervene.⁵² Some allow that the political culture approach is somehow useful but criticize it as difficult to operationalize and faulty in its categories of analysis.⁵³ Others, referring specifically to Latin America, excoriate the notion of cultural reductionism and tend to reduce the influence of political culture on political behavior to an absurdity. Ad hominem attacks dismiss the leading political culture advocates as all North American and incurably ethnocentric with respect to Latin America.⁵⁴

But these attacks are not constructive. Acceptance of the concept of political culture implies acceptance of the notion that beliefs guide behavior and that the source of these beliefs is important. Most criticism seems to rest in the difficulty of explaining which beliefs are associated with which behavior. Nonetheless, when combined with significant contributions from the other two approaches, political culture and socialization provide the best baseline for a useful construct to explain civil-military relationships in the context of this work.

The State

Political culture seeks to deal with the propensity of Latin America and, in particular, the Argentine military establishments to get involved in political matters. The military political culture is a necessary factor to explain or predict military political action, but it is not by itself a sufficient condition. Another crucial factor is the relationship of the military institutions to the other political institutions in the nation.

One conceptual framework for exploring this relationship consists of three political arenas: civil society, political society, and the state.⁵⁵ Civil society incorporates the intermittently political, social institutions of a polity, such as special interests, civic organizations, and other such groupings. Political society encompasses the core institutions of politics: parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, alliances, and legislatures. But the state gives pattern to this substance in terms of civil-military relations, the state being more than government—“the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic, and coercive system that attempts not only to manage the state apparatus but to structure relations between civil and public power and to structure many crucial relationships within civil and political society.”⁵⁶

However, structure alone does not empower; public people such as civilian and military bureaucrats, seeking autonomy and freedom of action

in political decisions and allocations, determine the relative scope and power of the state in the larger polity.⁵⁷ Intrinsic to the notion of state power in any country is the indispensable link between authority and coercion. To the extent that the military subsumes the coercive powers of the state in both internal and external dimensions, the military as claimant to legitimate authority is enhanced.

Where the military is a major political player, the state as an arena of politics takes on a different character. It may be not only a forum for the activities of politically oriented, independent interest groups or parties but also an arena for competition and conflict over autonomy and governance among institutions intrinsically a part of the state. Resolution of such competition sometimes consists of acceding to elections, the formal expression of popular consent, but often takes the form of autonomous actions by one institution of the state vis-à-vis others. The implication of the use of force, coercion, and often violence is clear. The vehicle for such re-ordering is often not the election, but the coup d'état.

Power Relationships

The nature and arrangement of political institutions are important to an understanding of the civil-military relationship within, and beyond, the state. The significant attributes to examine are the strength or weakness of the civilian and military institutions in relation to each other, the roles of the military within the political framework, and civil-military boundaries.

The strengths of civilian political institutions are often seen in Latin America to be conditioned from the outset, but several circumstances enhance the chances for civilian control of the state. One is the diminution of political violence, often cited as being endemic to Latin American political systems.⁵⁸ Succeeding in this task rests on the amount of public support that the civilian sectors can aggregate, largely determined by the ability to allocate, communicate, and mobilize.⁵⁹ The state approach, then, deals with legitimacy in terms of the effectiveness of political structures and institutions.

Another way to view power relationships and authority of state actors is through subjective and objective control. Subjective control seeks to maximize civilian control by having the military subscribe to the same code of conduct, ideas, and policies as the dominant civilian institutions. The object is to civilianize the military. Objective control, on the other hand, seeks to militarize the military, making it professional in the functional

sense and instrumental in conduct, a tool of the state. Samuel Huntington, originator of this approach, states, “The antithesis of objective civilian control is military participation in politics.”⁶⁰

But the political strengths of military institutions have often determined the political role or roles of the military establishment in Latin America. Appeals to force and violence have been common. In Argentina, the coercive capabilities of the military have taken on particular importance because the civilian contenders in Argentine politics have been inconsistent about the objective place of the military within the state apparatus. Various factions of the civilian political establishment have sought out the military as an ally in political conflict. These circumstances have created opportunities for the military to engage in a higher level of political activity. Although the proximate causes of any particular case of military increase in political action are many (corruption, domestic policy failure, massive withdrawal of popular support, riots, insurrections, or guerrilla activity with a concomitant increase in the level of violence and appeals to force), the military most often has been politically involved when a civilian faction or sector has sought it out as an agent of political change.

In Argentina, as in most of Latin America, the military has been an autonomous political actor, picking and choosing its political alliances or foes and not being definitively subordinate to the government in power. Social groups in Argentina often intervene in politics directly rather than through formal government institutions.⁶¹ Those institutions may be too weak to cope with the political power of sectoral interests in Argentina, such as the wealthy, the middle class, the working class, the church, the military, and the universities. For a significant portion of its modern political history, Argentine politics has been the product of a clash between two forms of this sectoral politics: civilian *movimentismo* and military praetorianism.

Movimentismo helps to describe the “civil” in civil-military relations; it is a manifestation of a political culture rooted in the Hispanic colonization.⁶² It may be seen as a form of populist corporatism, found in societies based on highly developed integrative movements (such as Hipólito Irigoyen’s Radicalism and Juan Domingo Perón’s Justicialism). Crucial to *movimentismo* is a strong personal streak—a *caudillo* in charge, which reinforces an authoritarian bent—and *verticalidad*, since the movement is organized from above and constantly seeks to transcend class or sectional divisions. It also relies on the state as the mechanism of promoting political harmony and distributive justice in a paternalistic fashion.⁶³

But the Achilles' heel of *movimentismo* is the difficulty of translating it into highly institutionalized, complex political regimes, the bulwark against corporate military involvement in politics.⁶⁴ The civil polity in this case apparently plays by the rules that the military finds most congenial, what one Latin American author refers to as the “praetorianization of Argentine society—autonomous, sectorial, corporate political actors.”⁶⁵ This leads to the pervasive Argentine political syndrome of various political factions seeking the political support of the military, the “knocking at the barracks door.”

The weakness and debilitation of Argentine civilian regimes may provide the prime consideration for intervention: that the corporate and bureaucratic interests of the military are threatened. In a society in which the military establishment has exercised a monopoly of force in defense and domestic order, such uncertainty can trigger a response on the part of the military to exercise autonomous political power—to engage in praetorian rule.

But the exercising of political power by the military is not an “all-or-nothing” proposition. If it were, the term *civil-military relations* would have little meaning. The military in Argentina has played various political roles, which may be better understood by examining classifications of roles that permit analysis in specific situations.

A British student of civil-military relations offers the first of two such frameworks especially relevant to the Argentine case.⁶⁶ He not only deals with the relative strength of civil and military power but also provides the concept of boundaries between civil and military institutions. He posits that separation is key to objective control, that maintaining an “integral” boundary between the duties and missions of the military and civilian institutions is essential for civilians ever to emerge as dominant. But this situation obtains virtually exclusively in the Western democracies of long standing—for example, the United States, the United Kingdom, and much of Western Europe. However, he regards subjective control, a “permeable” boundary, as confined to revolutionary regimes—best represented in Latin America today by Cuba, where military and civilian authority are indistinguishable. Praetorianism, which most nearly describes the Argentine case, is expressed as a “fragmented” boundary. This situation lends itself to competition for political authority and to disputes over the legitimacy of that authority.

Another classification scheme particularly for Argentina is an adaptation of one originally applied to the Spanish military. (See table 1.) This

Table 1. Taxonomy of Political Roles of the Military

Political Role	Political Entity	Form of Action	Historical Examples	Indicators during the Radical Government
Influences	Interest	Solicits	Logia de San Martin (1921)	“Full Stop”
Pressures	Pressure Group	Imposes	Decrees for annihilating subversion ('75)	“Due Obedience”
Replaces	Power Contender	Guides (Tutelary)	Argentina from 1955 to 1966	
Substitutes (Institution)	Military “Party”	Exercises Power	Argentine Revolution ('66) and Proceso ('76)	

Source: Rosendo Fraga, *La cuestión militar, 1987–1989* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1989), 133.

differentiation of military roles as expressed in the Argentine case is useful in the analysis of contemporary Argentine civil-military relations.

The state approach is limited by the difficulty of concentrating on that which is to be explained rather than on that which explains. An advocate of examining civil-military relations in this way asserts that he purports to deal with *how*, and not *why*, the military is important in governance, the “black box” of the political system.⁶⁷ But this approach is helpful in exploring the range of possibilities of military involvement, the resources available, and the boundaries (or lack of them) in the civil-military relationship.

Political Economy

The state’s relationship to the socioeconomic setting is also important to the civil-military relationship. The nature of the military establishment may be further illuminated as well by analyzing it in the national social and economic context.

Economic considerations condition military political behavior and affect the civil-military relationship. As the waves of economic modernization lapped against Latin American shores, the military establishments, professionalized and possessed of an aura of technical competence in an escalating technological environment, have “increasingly felt themselves not only qualified to deal with national economic and social development

and the concomitant tensions and crises but also superior to civilian regimes in their ability to perform these endeavors.”⁶⁸ But this was, at least intuitively, a break with past reasons for questioning civilian rule; that is, civilians were not up to the task of preserving the national interest as the military saw it. This fissure resulted in the traditionalist-modernist division within the military establishments. Would the military involve itself in political decisionmaking to promote socioeconomic change or to prevent it? In either case, could the causes for military involvement be derived from socioeconomic factors?

Assuming that modernization is inherently destabilizing, the military in many places could perceive an inability on the part of civilian institutions to cope, leading to institutional crisis and partisan bickering and raising alarms in the military establishment concerning the safety of national interests. In Latin America, the state has been perceived as an engine of development and modernization.⁶⁹ The state sector has rivaled the importance of the private sector, particularly in matters of economic infrastructure. Economic relationships have been much more likely to be tightly controlled and regulated, reflected in such things as government control of unions; issuance of permits for almost any type of economic activity; control of international commerce and trade; and pervasive government intrusiveness into all aspects of economic life, perpetrated by an extensive bureaucracy. The state has been in the business of setting economic goals and planning the utilization of both state and private resources.

This state dominance in setting state-society boundaries creates an atmosphere congenial to military control. Although early development of military industries in Latin America during World War II was modest by the standards of the belligerents, such efforts were undertaken in the name of self-sufficiency in Argentina and elsewhere and laid a basis for an economic role for the military. Also, as the military sought to modernize itself, it became increasingly aware of a link between national security and national development. Consequently, the 1960s witnessed the emergence of a conceptualization of national security that embodied much more than defense. This would come to be elaborated as the National Security Doctrine, encompassing almost the entire national enterprise—political, economic, and social—within the rubric of national security. The military was, by tradition and capabilities, the guarantor of national security. Military role expansion thus was seen as a consequence of modernization and national economic development, and the civil-military relationship reflected these factors.⁷⁰

Another model using the political economy approach is useful in explaining military presence in societies undergoing economic development and modernization. This is the bureaucratic-authoritarian model, with its emphasis on capital formation, a technocratic bureaucracy, and repression, responding to the interests of upper-class economic elites themselves beholden to external machinations of the world capitalist system. The main contention of this formulation is that the military institutions would provide stability, order, and national leadership (that is, control), while selected other sectors (principally technocrats, bureaucrats, and upper-level private economic and social sectors) would harness efforts to the creation of national economic growth and power. Some sectors, particularly the urban organized workers, peasants, and much of the middle class, would have to contribute major resources without any real prospect of major gain.⁷¹ This model suggests that the military's predispositions and attitudes about socioeconomic matters had more to do with repression in Argentina during the institutional military regime known as the *Proceso* government than did any real danger posed to security by guerrillas.⁷²

The military involvement in politics and the civil-military relationship itself go beyond a sorting of the military and civilian roles in the polity. Not only is the boundary between the state and society moved outward when the military becomes involved in modernization and development, but also the boundary between the civilian and military institutions becomes permeable, with little or no distinction in political terms.

In the Argentine case, the civil-military relationship in terms of political economy has tended to center on the competition and conflict between two politically active sectors not contemplated in the constitutional Argentine political structure, the military and organized labor (refer again to praetorianism and *movimentismo*).⁷³

Although the political economy approach offers significant insights into the nature and scope of the civil-military relationship, it may be less fruitful overall than the other two approaches. Economic-based theories have been criticized as being both conspiratorial and instrumental, blaming intervention of the military on manipulation from abroad and making the military merely the jack-booted economic police of the higher social classes.⁷⁴ It is open to the charge of economic reductionism. In the case of the most elaborate and rigorous example of this approach that addresses Argentina—the bureaucratic-authoritarianism theory, in which military intervention is tied to the phenomena of incomplete industrialization and class conflict in highly dependent countries—this may be plausible but not

causal. Economic factors per se do not really explain military political action; the military is much too autonomous, corporate, and self-centered for that.⁷⁵ But the economic factors that inform the civil-military relationship in Argentina are important and play a part, in different ways, in discussion of both the Alfonsín and Menem administrations. The historically extraordinary place of military industries (*Fabricaciones Militares*) of the army and like enterprises of the other two services in the civil-military relationship and in Argentine society suggest that considerations of political economy will provide a necessary part of this work.

Conceptual Framework for Civil-Military Relations

The concept of legitimacy is crucial to understanding and explaining political activity, whether by military or civilian. The fundamental assumption of representative democracy anywhere is that the legitimacy of governmental authority is a settled issue. That is, in a democratic polity, a single mechanism, enshrined in a democratic regime and its basic political configuration, is agreed upon as conferring political authority, expressed in both succession and governance. The mechanism is the competitive election by which political leaders are selected and held accountable to the people.

The political evolution of the Latin American republics rarely has manifested this fundamental assumption. Rules have not been agreed upon; there have been varied political actors, individual and institutional, “power contenders” being a useful formulation.⁷⁶ Various succession mechanisms are repeatedly observable in Latin American politics (coups, countercoups, palace revolts, revolutions, dynasties, and several types of elections). Recurrent accountability of all political authorities to the people has been more an exception than a rule in most of Latin America.

Argentine scholars examining civil-military relations in their country note that these power contenders base their claims of authority in differing, often conflicting notions of legitimacy. Argentine politics may be characterized as different sources of legitimacy being advanced, simultaneously and exclusively, by groups in contest. In other words, democracy is not a given in the political culture, and a single rule of legitimacy does not apply; fragmented legitimacy and conflicts are apparent.⁷⁷ The military exhibits divided loyalties and puts forth notions about legitimacy of authority based on values and beliefs inconsistent with democratic governance.⁷⁸

Therefore, examining the notions of legitimacy as expressed by the contenders for power in Argentina will permit, in both historical and

contemporary contexts, an appreciation of the country's evolving civil-military relationship and a detailed understanding of the disputes over legitimacy of authority that are reflected in *estado militar*.

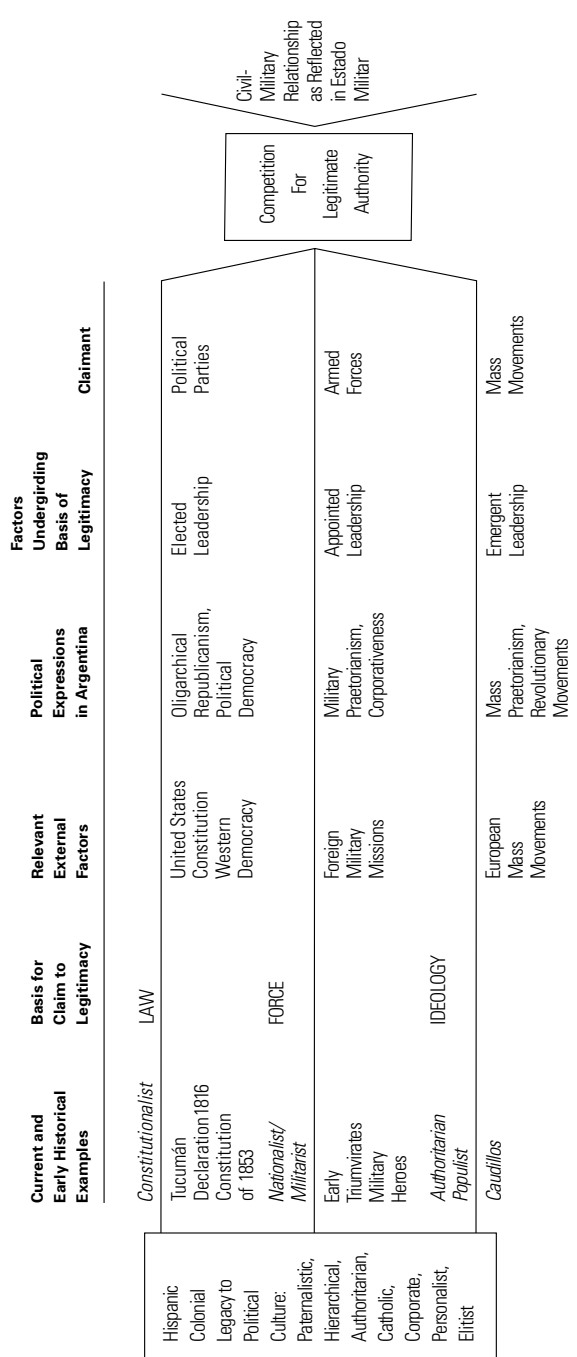
A civil-military relationship is based on how coercive force is organized and controlled in a polity.⁷⁹ Fundamentally, then, the distribution of a state's power between civil and military elements forms the basis of civil-military relations.⁸⁰ Since the emergence of the nation-state as the dominant pattern of political organization, this distribution has come to refer to the "patterns of subordination, control, and influence involving the armed forces (principally the officer corps) and civilian governmental leadership."⁸¹ These patterns have meaning within the entity known as the state, in which authoritative political decisionmaking for the society occurs. Generally, the state distinguishes among the military services (army, navy, and air force)—the "formal, legitimate, and permanent instruments of armed coercion at the disposal of national governments,"⁸² engaged in the protection of the nation from the threat or use of violence by other states—and other authorities imbued with coercive means, particularly those engaged in law enforcement. In cases where the military writ may transcend that distinction, the civil-military relationship takes on added significance. Argentina has been such a case.

The patterns of behavior that constitute the civil-military relationship are reflected in *estado militar*, the changes in which reveal the outcomes of the contests over legitimacy of authority. Hence, the political roles of the military may be analyzed in terms of *estado militar*. In Argentina, these disputes arise because the developing political culture spawned alternative sets of beliefs and attitudes that motivate political behavior by differing claimants to authority and that are reflected in different views of the role of the state and its institutions.

Three currents are identifiable within the Argentine political culture stream. The use of the term *current* seeks to maintain that these identifiable representations of Argentine historical political culture are contained within a common stream that is informed by the Hispanic colonial political heritage.⁸³ Each current is, in important ways, beholden to that legacy, but each responds as well to exogenous influences in the course of Argentina's history as a nation. The constitutionalist, nationalist militarist, and authoritarian populist currents provide alternative bases for the assertion of legitimacy of political authority. (See figure 1.)

These currents offer differing notions about the appropriate underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system;

Figure 1. Currents in Political Culture



hence, legitimacy, the derivation of a general belief in the appropriateness of authority, is not a settled question. Political actors express these concepts of legitimacy in competing claims to authority. The civil-military relationship as revealed in *estado militar* expresses the patterns of subordination, control, and influence that result from the competition for legitimacy of authority.

The premise that legitimacy of authority is not a settled question in Argentina is recognizable and verifiable through examination of *estado militar*. The constructs outlined above make clear the nature of the civil-military relationship, both in its historical manifestations and in the Alfonsín and Menem administrations:

- The roots of the civil-military relationship lie in common political culture.
- Within the Argentine political culture are identifiable currents that are associated with competing notions of political legitimacy of authority.
- The civil-military relationship in Argentina is an expression of the outcome of competition by the claimants to legitimate authority.
- The civil-military relationship is made manifest in *estado militar*, the set of prerogatives that gives substance to the institutional and personal roles of the military in the polity and reflects the boundaries between the state, the military, and the civil society.
- The civil-military relationship in Argentina, therefore, is neither capricious nor arbitrary, and a thorough analysis of the phenomenon will help to describe and explain the relationship and the role of the military and the civilians in the contemporary evolution of representative democracy in Argentina.

Argentine Political Evolution and Civil-Military Relations

Democracy generally requires community, consensus, organization, and accountability. It also requires a military establishment divorced from politics. Making a case that all, or indeed any, of these conditions have prevailed in Argentina for significant periods of time before or since independence is difficult. Democratic form has been observable in Argentine political history, but it has rarely been accompanied by democratic substance. The legitimacy that would accrue to democratic institutions has been seriously contested in Argentina because alternatives to democracy also have been presented as legitimate. In this sense, Argentina lacks a civil tradition or dimension in which the political art is concerned with the rights and duties of citizenship.⁸⁴ Governance, then, has not been concerned primarily with the elaboration of civil rights, the achievement of compromise, or the rule of law. The explicitly political tradition emanating from the Hispanic political legacy, with its focus on acquiring and maintaining political power and control of the state, motivates political actors, including those involved in the civil-military relationship.

The Hispanic political tradition of the colonial era (1536–1810) in Argentina offers no reinforcement of civic culture or mitigation of political culture as the primary motivation for the activity of the state. Rights were conferred by the sovereign, who by definition was the embodiment of the law; his authority was not questioned. Because political organization was corporate, recognized groups (including the military) acquired rights at the behest of the sovereign; the rights of the military, *fuero militar*, were the “special privileges and obligations that ensured the military

an especially elevated position in the social and political order.”⁸⁵ Consequently, there were “military interests distinct from civil interests, military loyalties distinct from civic loyalties.”⁸⁶ Likewise, other corporate interests were recognized in colonial Argentina, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and holders of land granted by the king (the future *estancieros*). The people—the fundamental basis of democratic thought and action—had no substantive meaning.

Moreover, the circular problem of whether the political culture affects the political institutions or vice versa was moot in Argentina as the country began to acquire a national identity. Both culture and institutions were imported without significant modification from militant, Catholic Spain in the 16th century. No significant indigenous influences played a part in isolated, virtually unpopulated Argentina. The Hispanic political culture applied with special intensity; no clash of form and substance occurred then. The struggle for independence, when it came, was a war of separation, not of revolution. The political mindset of *criollos*, the Hispanic inhabitants born in the New World, did not differ significantly from that of *peninsulares*, those born in Spain. Argentina had as antecedent a negative or immature political culture inconsistent with a democratic republican life. Authorities had a paternalistic disposition to impose or oblige political conduct. There was little tolerance or moderation, and society was predisposed to segregate politically into self-interested, corporate groups, with little room left for compromise or a sense of the larger community.⁸⁷

Era One: 1810–1870

Argentine political history before 1883 is divisible into 3 eras, each approximately 60 years in length. The first era, from the declaration of separation from Spain in 1810 to the end of the War of the Triple Alliance in 1870, was one characterized by intermittent civil war, a period in which Argentina’s national identity, let alone its sense of political community, was unclear. In a reverse of the conventional wisdom about democracy in Latin America (all form, no substance), in Argentina the substance of the Hispanic political legacy outlined above remained but the forms disappeared; that is, the Crown, through its colonial administration, vanished as the locus of sovereign authority. Even as *criollo* hero (and idolized military leader) José de San Martín undertook the liberation of southern South America from Spain, early attempts to consolidate Argentina from the ex-vice-royalty of Río de la Plata failed. The absence of the Crown fragmented political leadership, and the new United Provinces of the South, established

at Tucumán with a formal declaration of independence on July 9, 1816, were anything but unified. By the time San Martín completed the expulsion of the Spanish from the southern half of the continent in 1824, Bolivia and Paraguay had broken away, with Uruguay following suit in 1828. Central authority, such as it was, disintegrated, and the *caudillo*, epitomized by luminaries such as Juan Manuel de Rosas and Facundo Quiroga, came to express the quest for a new locus of authority. Politics by force of arms was given a long and bloody birth. The *caudillo* aspired to sovereignty, recognizing no authority higher than his own. Legitimacy, as it had been with the Spanish kings, was personalized. These circumstances constituted *militarismo sin militares*⁸⁸ (militarism without soldiers) since no national military institution truly existed at the time. *Factitious chaos*, a term later coined by Argentine author H.A. Murena, could be said to characterize Argentine politics throughout this first era. The personalism of the *caudillos*, their resort to threat and use of force and violence, and their reluctance to be circumscribed by an independent legal standard resonate in Argentine politics and government to this day.

Nonetheless, during this same era, a number of Argentine political leaders or aspirants, intellectuals, and even generals sought an alternative to governance by unaccountable warring bands. The victory of inner-provinces alliance leader General Urquiza over Buenos Aires Province *caudillo* Rosas at Caseros in 1852 provided an opportunity for the introduction of a new constitutional regime in Argentina. The constitution, promulgated on May 25, 1853, formally evidenced the current of constitutionalism in Argentine political history. Although Argentine intellectuals, notably Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and José Alberdi, had long insisted that no relief from the barbarism of *caudillos* was possible without a constitutional government and its implications of representation and democracy, no precedent in the culture existed for the formulation of such a regime. Framers of those constitutions that evolved “borrowed eclectically from abroad, and conformed too rarely to political and social realities at home.”⁸⁹ In the Argentine case, the model was the Constitution of the United States, a decidedly Enlightenment document at odds with Hispanic-based political culture.⁹⁰

But if the form of government outlined by the Founding Fathers in Philadelphia was the model, many of its most important precepts, particularly those enshrining separation of powers and compromise and consent as its basis, were vitiated by provisions of the Argentine Constitution of 1853. Prominent among these were the preponderant powers of the

executive, the provisions for state of siege (during which constitutional guarantees could be suspended), and the power of the president to intervene directly in the provinces.⁹¹ Moreover, this document provided the theoretical foundation, but not the practical guidelines, for popular sovereignty.⁹² Because it was not congruent with the political culture, the Constitution did not replace other pretenders to political legitimacy, although during the second era of Argentine political history it superficially appeared to have done so. In reality, a distance remained between the constitutional order and the political order.⁹³ The 1853 Constitution itself exacerbates the problem in terms of the civil-military relationship, proscribing as sedition the military as governor in one article, but at the same time codifying essentially political roles as the fundamental military missions: “to guarantee the defense of the nation, to maintain internal order, to guarantee constitutional rights, and to enforce the laws.”⁹⁴ The document would not definitively establish the rule of law (*estado de derecho*) over the rule of force. The forms of representative democracy were not enough; the habits of democracy did not accompany them.

Era Two: 1870–1930

Scholars have characterized the second era of Argentine politics, roughly from 1870 to 1930 (when the first military coup against a constitutional government occurred), as a period of limited liberal democracy, an oligarchical republic, and a time of laissez-faire and linkage to the outside world.⁹⁵ Politics—both franchise and governance—was in the hands of a few, relatively wealthy, usually landed men. These liberal-oligarchical regimes had a marriage of convenience with the military.⁹⁶ This sector dominated the Golden Age of 1880–1914, as Argentina became a strong national entity, built a modern infrastructure, and organized its economy principally around agricultural commodities for export. At the same time, the previously underpopulated Argentine Republic experienced a tremendous surge of immigration, mostly from Southern Europe. Urban Argentina, especially Buenos Aires, took on a *fin de siècle* European air, with cultural artifacts and demographics to match. Laissez-faire capitalism on the British model flourished, largely with British money. The sense of aristocracy was palpable, and the new cultural colonization of the turn of the century reinforced the Hispanic tradition brought by the original colonizers 350 years earlier. The economic liberalism of the Golden Age was not accompanied by political liberalism.

In the last third of the 19th century, the military had become much more defined as a national force, and academies to produce officers for the army and navy were established in 1869 and 1872, respectively. The latter date also saw the introduction of conscription, and by 1882 the Argentine Army had four divisions comprising three branches (infantry, cavalry, and artillery). In 1884, the General Staff was organized, and the military became much more organized and institutionalized throughout the 1880s and 1890s under the leadership of General Julio Roca (also twice president of Argentina in this era). Changes capping the 19th century were the establishment of *Escuela Superior de Guerra* (Superior War School) in 1900 and the 1901 reforms of War Minister Ricchieri that codified much of *estado militar*. Much as in the United States, this small national military was largely occupied with establishing the national writ throughout the country's territory and fighting a series of Indian wars in the south (similar to those in the American West, and with similar results).

Roots of *Movimentismo*

Midway through the second era, tenuously linked events occurred in the civilian and military realms. In 1890, the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR), popularly known as the Radical Party, was formed and began to challenge the “aristocratic, oligopolistic, hierarchical, and stratified society dominated by the *estanciero* [rancher].”⁹⁷ Within 2 decades, the Radicals had become the political vehicle of the evolving middle class (based considerably on the expanding population of immigrants) and were dedicated to popular sovereignty (or at least adult male participation, achieved in 1912). The UCR became the first mass party in Argentina and combined constitutionalist and populist elements. It was, in its early incarnations, the first expression of *movimentismo* in Argentine politics.

This first movement—there would be two *movimientos* and a speculative third one, all of which would be heavily involved in civil-military relations—was led by Hipólito Irigoyen, the founder of modern populist, partisan politics in Argentina. He succeeded in unifying the Radicals (a feat not achieved again until 1983), and he became president in 1916. With his alter ego Marcelo Torcuato de Alvear, he presided over the “Radical experiment” from 1916 until 1930, when he was ousted by Argentina's first military coup. His legacy was a Radical Party that, more than any other party in Argentine history, would be cited as the vehicle of failed civilian politicians. Factionalism engendered even during his tenure would come to haunt the Radical Party, and uncompromising factions in the civilian polity often were cited by the military establishment (even as a fraction of

its number perpetrated a takeover) as its reason for having to rescue the nation from squabbling politicians. The military became the bane of the Radicals' existence, and the underlying distrust and enmity reverberate to the present day.

But to no small degree, the Radicals witnessed the creation of a modern, professional military establishment in Argentina, and the evolution of the Argentine military (especially the army) under the Irigoyen and Alvear administrations had profound effects on the civil-military relationship in the following era.

20th-Century Changes

If the first half of the 19th century was characterized as *militarismo sin militares*—the era of the *caudillo*—and the second half as *militares sin militarismo*—the military, essentially the army, being an armed adjunct of the oligarchic political elites—then the 20th century could be characterized as *militares y militarismo*.⁹⁸ The transformation of the Argentine Army and Navy into corporate, professional armed forces was the remaining current forming the basis for an aspirant to legitimacy of political authority. From this point on, “the military factor” or “the military question” became increasingly important in Argentine politics and governance.

The first agent of this transformation in Argentina was an Imperial German military training mission, a program established in 1899. The following year, the *Escuela Superior de Guerra*, the preeminent school of military doctrine and thinking, was founded. German tutelage fostered the emergence of a professional uniformed officer corps. But the result was not a pure military professionalism, an institution acting solely as the armed servant of the state and loyal to the incumbent civilian authority. The result instead has been characterized as professional militarism—a corporate, institutionalized military officer corps, loyal to the nation in an abstract sense, but above all loyal to themselves.⁹⁹ This reality created a bifurcation of loyalty, horizontal versus vertical, that became important in the civil-military relationship beginning with the Irigoyen presidency in 1916.

The foreign missions encouraged military assumption of national goals, broadened the horizons of the Argentine military, and gave its members the sense that they could define as well as defend the national interest. Consequently, the military establishment, especially the army, was poised to become a political contender. The agents of Wilhelmine Germany, in their role in the formation of a powerful, armed, politically aware military establishment, had done nothing to inculcate any notions of democratic form or substance. On the contrary, the European military missions reinforced the

political culture of the Hispanic tradition in its military manifestation. Through visiting professors, student exchanges, and rotating staff assignments between Argentina and Germany, the Imperial General Staff passed its notions of discipline, duty, and professional modalities on to a significant part of the Argentine Army officer corps.

However, it was the movement politician and Radical Party leader Hipólito Irigoyen who set the military on the long road to overt political intervention. Elected president in 1916 as a Radical tide (made possible by the expanded franchise and the growing immigrant-based middle class) temporarily swept aside the oligarchical republicanism of the Golden Age, Irigoyen sought to subordinate the military to the party. His efforts would have caused no concern in the “pre-professional” days since the ruling elites did the same thing as a matter of course. But Irigoyen tried to make the prerogatives of *estado militar* less contingent on the evolving professional attributes of the military than on the political loyalties of the officer corps to radicalism. Hence, politicians constantly challenged an increasingly corporate, professional armed force on its position in society and its perquisites. Moreover, the foreign advisors returned to Europe and to World War I as the Irigoyen administration came in.

In 1921, several senior army officers founded the *Logia de San Martín*, a secret society intended to counteract, through the *Circular Militar* (Officers’ Association) and the army high command, the politicization of the officer corps by Irigoyen and his cronies in the UCR. An example of what they hoped to combat was Radical efforts to reward and reinstate officers who had sided with them in the tumultuous early days of the UCR, including during factional rebellions in 1890, 1893, and 1905. The first such society, the *Logia Lautaro*, had been founded by San Martín himself in 1812 with significant political influence in the early days of separation from Spain.

Although it existed only until 1926, the *Logia de San Martín* became the first vehicle for military involvement in politics in Argentina. Paradoxically, although the *Logia* was created to counteract partisan political activity, this high-level association of army officers became a corporate political interest group, seeking to counteract Irigoyen’s interventions in promotions, pay, and budgets.¹⁰⁰ It was the first political expression of horizontal loyalty in the military, the sense that corporate interests came before governmental interests and that the military was more likely to embody and protect the national interest than any regime of “mere politicians.” Throughout the 1920s, civilian and military factions jostled

for control of the distribution of military prerogatives. Although the constitutional regime survived the 1920s and Irigoyen was reelected in 1928 to succeed his lieutenant Alvear, the construct of the Argentine Army officer corps—corporate, increasingly self-aware, politicized, and discontent with political assaults on *estado militar*—was inclined toward political action, indeed overt intervention. Its opportunity was not long in coming.

Era Three: 1930–1983

The third era extends from the coup in 1930 to the inauguration of Raúl Alfonsín as president in 1983. The reelected Irigoyen was an old man, and his return, while a popular triumph, papered over divisions in a Radical Party rent by factions and increasingly unable to govern. (The eerie reprise of this situation in the return of Juan Perón to the presidency in 1973 is illuminating.) One scholar put it best as a time of “economic crisis and political arteriosclerosis.”¹⁰¹ Propensity and opportunity for a small but motivated fragment of the military, tacitly supported or at least not resisted by the rest, to take power directly reached a flashpoint on September 6, 1930, as General José Uriburu and his band of followers ousted a caretaker regime created to cover Irigoyen’s senility. Thus began the long, overt involvement of the military in Argentine politics.

Military in the Wings

Even though a military faction overthrew a civilian regime and would do so next in 1943, the military would not dominate political affairs for some time after the 1930 coup. The times of institutional military rule were yet to come. From 1930 to 1943, the military was the backstop of the *Concordancia*, an attempt to return to the ancien régime of 1880–1914, which the oligarchy saw as the Golden Age of Argentine history. General Uriburu, a disciple of the German militarism that had heavily influenced the modernizing Argentine Army and a proponent of fascism, had been unable to consolidate a truly military regime. Uriburu, dying of cancer, was obliged to yield to General Agustín Justo, Minister of War in the 1920s and a constitutionalist who became president after a fraud-riddled election in which the Radicals did not participate. His inauguration ushered in what opposition sectors called the *década infame* from 1932 to 1943, characterized by close links between the economic elite of Argentina and British interests that were formalized in the Roca-Runciman Pact between the two countries.

The military supported this conservative regime, and the politics of Argentina returned to elite group dominance. The populism of the Radicals

was submerged but not forgotten. However, the military was not enthusiastic about the liberal-internationalist bent of the *Concordancia* and admired the apparent successes of Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco in Latin political environments not unlike their own and having much more authoritarian-nationalist overtones.¹⁰² Hence, the military became identified not only with corporatism but also with fascism, a characterization that dogs it still.

The Perón Era

World War II strained the marriage of the military and the traditional conservative elites to the breaking point. Another *logia*, the *Grupo de Oficiales Unidos*, was formed; among its leaders was Colonel Juan Domingo Perón, the one man whose political shadow would rival that of the military institution itself. Perón created a *segundo movimiento*, expanding his part in the coup of 1943 and the military government that followed into a major political role based on his mobilization of urban labor. As Minister of Labor in the Edelmiro Farrell government (1944–1945), he created a militaristic, personalist movement that became a contestant for the mantle of legitimacy. Mobilizing urban organized labor beyond the confines of party politics or military machinations, Perón bested both the military authorities (who briefly imprisoned him on the island of Martín García in the River Plate) and the Radicals (who sought to beat him in the 1946 electoral contest), and rode a wave of populism to overwhelming victory in an open, if highly charged, contest. Perón thus used the forms of constitutional democracy to grasp the reins of power. But he gave great impetus to the militarization of Argentine society. The process was characterized by escalating institutional military participation in the state, especially in the creation of military industries or the vast expansion of those organized under the direction of General Savio during World War II; the martial design and functioning of the Peronist movement; and the limitation of constitutional practice, as, for example, Perón's abrogation of the 1853 Constitution in 1949 in favor of one of his own.¹⁰³ Despite having gained office through election, Perón did not seek legitimacy by appeal to constitutionalism. He embodied the *movimentismo* approach to power and represented the authoritarian populist current of legitimacy in the political culture.

Of the six revolutionary movements¹⁰⁴—the military overthrows of duly constituted civilian regimes between 1930 and the present—the first two (in 1930 and 1943) saw the military establish itself as a force to be reckoned with in Argentine politics, a corporate sector involved first with the agro-industrial interests of the *Concordancia* and then as one of the

first Perón administration's twin pillars, along with urban organized labor. Although the military establishment as institutions did not at that point exercise direct control of the state apparatus (even though Generals Uriburu, Ramírez, and Farrell were military presidents by virtue of forceful intervention), the presence of the military as a major political player was recognized. But the military intervening in this "corrective" fashion proved to be an unstable political partner, unseating the oligarchy in 1943 and Perón himself in 1955.

Through the next two revolutionary movements (in 1955 and 1962), the military sought legitimization of its authority by resort to its custodial mission, using force to "set things right" and "restore" civilian government. The military sought to order Argentine political life along constitutional lines but with the military accorded a role as the final arbiter of "proper" civilian governmental practice. This led to military action to suppress *movimentismo* as practiced by Perón, and the public accorded considerable latitude to the military in this effort. Many cheered the demise of Perón's regime, and Lieutenant General Pedro Aramburu, who became the president shortly after Perón was overthrown, was highly regarded. He restored Argentina to constitutional government, but neither he nor the military established representative democracy as the unquestioned, legitimate source of authority. Although the elections of 1958 and 1963 resulted in civilian democratic governments, they were flawed and did not change the underlying political culture that fostered competing claimants for legitimacy. The major political actors of note at this time—Radicals, Peronists, and the military—clearly represented the three different currents in the ongoing stream of Argentine political culture. Summing up the situation at the end of the 1950s, "[around 1960] competing groups indulged in sectarian nostalgia, each recalling a different golden age and looking forward to a partisan utopia."¹⁰⁵

The main problem that Radical presidents Arturo Frondizi (1958–1962) and Arturo Illia (1963–1966) confronted was not running the country but controlling the military, and both ultimately would fail. Subsequent events confirmed the trends in military involvement, which by then were quite clear. The political involvement of the military was becoming increasingly institutional and cross-service, with its implications of rivalries both within the different services and between them. But these rivalries generally were not ideological; they were based on turf battles between the services and other such military cleavages as branch of service or year of graduation from the service academy. These internecine quarrels were

largely confined to the very highest levels of the services' respective hierarchies.¹⁰⁶ Before 1987, the only instance of open factionalism occurred in the army, with the armed contests between the *Azules* (constitutionalist soft-liners favoring at least the forms of civilian rule) and the *Colorados* (military hard-liners favoring military rule and continued prohibitions on the Peronists). But even these forceful disputes were over means, not ends. The threshold for overt military intervention was pushed lower and lower. And the time between military intrusions to overthrow civilian governments was becoming shorter and shorter (1930–1943, 13 years; 1946–1955, 9 years; 1958–1962, 4 years; 1963–1966, 3 years; 1973–1976, less than 3 years).

Upsetting an Uneasy Balance

However intrusive the military was in Argentine politics from 1955 to 1966, a balance of sorts remained in the civil-military relationship. Civilian institutions stayed intact, including political parties (the Peronists, although branded illegal, continued functioning underground). The military justified the 1955 and 1962 intrusions as necessary to set things right; military intervention in politics was still seen as corrective and tutelary in nature but dealing with things that were at least nominally constitutional. But the military also clearly set itself up as an unaccountable judge of the fitness of civilian regimes, becoming in fact as well as in theory the political arbiter. Two results were possible. One was that the military, having saved Argentina (in its view) from the depredations of Peronism in 1955 and 1962, could declare victory and return to the barracks. The limited nature and time frame of the military administrations from 1955 to 1958 and from 1962 to 1963 (with a civilian interim president in the latter period) gave some credence to that theory.

But the military's perceptions of threats from within and without were significantly heightened in the early 1960s. The Peronist movement refused to die, despite Perón's lengthy exile. And the Cold War, embodied for the Argentine military in the militant, revolutionary communism of Fidel Castro, increasingly was challenging the idealized Western, Christian society the military espoused and believed should be reflected in *Argentina*. A new and powerful idea, the National Security Doctrine, was evolving in which external and internal security could not be divided and security and development could not be separated.¹⁰⁷ The military, aware of the Brazilian experiences of the early 1960s, not reassured by the weak, ineffective government of Arturo Illia, obtained a second result: military institutional rule.

Coup of 1966

General Onganía, leader of the constitutionalists in the fighting within the army in 1962, was, ironically, the architect of the *Revolución Argentina*, as the coup of 1966 was called. He was picked (and later ousted) by a triservice military junta, an organism designed to mitigate interservice rivalries by including the commanders in chief of all three. The Constitution of 1853, restored after Perón's fall in 1955, was replaced by a Statute of the Revolution, a document created and imposed by the military alone. Civilian institutions of political action, such as the legislature and political parties, were disbanded or proscribed. Onganía and his administration were the embodiment of corporate military institutional rule, the custodians of the nation, the final repository of the national interest. Onganía himself most cogently expressed the motivations involved in the action shortly after the coup: The overthrow of Arturo Illia was a "revolutionary action [that] finds its irrefutable principles in the defense of the essential values of the republic." Moreover, "the Armed Forces constituted the medium of legitimate expression of that popular will which has been isolated through cunning." Hence, "the armed forces actively participate in the national interest."¹⁰⁸ Consequently, all political activity came under military auspices.

The submerging of the constitutional current meant that the question of political legitimacy was less settled than ever. The quest for political authority became a battle between actors who regarded force or violence as primary political resources. The military was in charge of the government and met challenges with repression and coercion. The Peronists, though repressed and underground, had not given up their dreams of a restoration. And a new actor emerged that would become the *bête noire* of the bureaucratic-authoritarian military governments that came into being in 1966 and 1976: armed insurgents of the extreme left. In the 1970s, these three autonomous, nonconstitutional political actors—the military, the Peronists, and the guerrillas—vied for political power in Argentina. "Factitious chaos" was again the order of the day.

Onganía learned that the military's "special responsibility" as he had enunciated it during the 1966 coup could transcend military presidents and administrations as well as civilian ones. The military institution, unsuited to governance (but very well suited to intervention and veto), was exposed to political demands that did not square with its notion of custodian of the national interest. Elimination of constitutional form and the eclipse of aspirants to political authority based in that current of

legitimacy enhanced the viability of those aspirants based in the authoritarian-populist current, be they Peronists or guerrillas. The military became increasingly disenchanted with Onganía as he sought more personal power and freedom from the junta and removed him from power in 1970. They replaced him first with an unknown, General Roberto Marcelo Levingston, and then with General Alejandro Agustín Lanusse, the serving Army Commander in Chief.

Turbulent 1970s

Argentina was a political battleground in the 1970s, with the unaccountable and heavily armed contenders vying for political control. Although the military as a political actor sought refuge in constitutionalism as a way of further reducing its exposure and accountability, the result was a display of democratic form over democratic substance. General Lanusse led the residue of the Onganía military administration to an electoral outcome with the 1973 presidential victory of Héctor Cámpora, a left-leaning Peronist functionary. Cámpora immediately issued an extensive pardon to imprisoned guerrillas, vitiating the legal battle against guerrilla warfare; the Congress then passed a law granting amnesty on May 27, 1973. Renewed confrontation with the military was assured.

Nonetheless, the effect of the Lanusse initiative was to restore a measure of political legitimacy to the Peronist movement, with Perón himself, 18 years in exile, soon to be returned to Argentina to lead it again. But the movement was riven by factionalism and included armed elements of both the left (epitomized by the youth arm, the *Montoneros*) and the right (the notorious Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance). Other armed revolutionary bands were increasingly active, especially the People's Revolutionary Army (*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*, or ERP), which engaged in armed attacks against military and civilians alike. Even Perón's triumphal return to Argentina in 1973 was marred by lethal conflict between armed bands seeking the right to be the anointed militants of Perón.

In 1973, a parody of the constitutional process involving the military, the Peronists, the Radicals, and other groups restored Juan Perón to the presidency. But the old and frail Perón could not control the antipathies of the various wings of his own movement for each other, let alone take on the guerrillas—some of whom even proclaimed allegiance to him. On July 1, 1974, Perón was dead, and his third wife and vice president, María Estela Martínez de Perón (Isabelita), became the first woman president of Argentina (a role denied even the legendary Evita, Perón's second wife).

Mrs. Perón, who had little support even within the Justicialista (Peronist) party, could not match the political savvy and power of any of the other contenders for political control. Finally, hoping desperately to preserve a Peronist legacy, she set the armed forces against the guerrillas in an officially supported campaign to end insurgency in Argentina. The military pocketed that mandate but was not content with it. Allowing the Peronist regime to slide into chaos, the military solidified its claim to be the guardian of the nation, protector of the state, and custodian of the national interest. On March 24, 1976, in the face of vanishing popular support for the Peronist regime and amid official and unofficial clamor for action, the military answered the call once again.

The Proceso

The *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (National Reorganization Process), or simply the *Proceso*, was a “classic representation of conservative, institutionalized military dictatorship.”¹⁰⁹ Under the *Proceso*, corporate, praetorian military rule reached its apogee. Taking literally its role as custodian of the nation, the military government became the avatar of messianic military idealism, the Western, Christian military knights protecting the Argentine way of life against the onslaught of totalitarian communism.

The military took over almost all aspects of governance. Most major government officials were military personages. The military president, General Jorge Rafael Videla, ruled with the junta, composed of the commanders in chief of the army, navy, and air force. The *generalato* (flag officers) of each service and their advisors (the *Comisión de Asesoramiento Legislativo*) acted practically as a political party, providing an ersatz deliberative body to back up rule by decree. The military intervened in many areas of national life, including labor unions and government banks. Those entities not intervened in were abolished, including the legislature and political parties. In effect, the military sought to marginalize the Argentine populace from politics: no participation, no roles.¹¹⁰

The goals of the *Proceso* were to eradicate the terrorists, especially the ERP and the *Montoneros*; to establish a robust laissez faire economy, led by an elite, technologically aware private sector and unrestrained by popular concerns or demands; to restore traditional values, led by Christian morality and emphasizing suitability and efficiency; and to establish Argentina as a reliable Western ally in the larger arena of geopolitics and the East-West conflict.¹¹¹ These goals were to be effected by whatever means were necessary, including the use of force in repressing and coercing not only the subversives (the definition of which became ever

broader) but also opponents of the economic programs of the *Proceso* government, especially the unions and the now-sub-rosa political parties. Ostensibly, the ultimate goal of the *Proceso*, as expressed in the “Act Fixing the Purpose and Basic Objectives for the Process of National Reorganization,” was “the future installation of a republican, representative, and federal democracy.” However, no time limit was set, and in the early years of the *Proceso*, no one expected that any such result would obtain in the foreseeable future.

The most immediate task of the military government was to deal with the guerrillas, rural and urban, who continued to plague Argentina. The military had made clear its belief that this struggle was nothing less than a counterrevolutionary war, in which only annihilation of the enemy would be considered a satisfactory outcome. The military actions followed the French pattern that emerged in their response to anticolonial insurgency rather than the American counterinsurgency format. No quarter would be given; the supporting infrastructure, whatever the military determined that to be, would be destroyed. Operations would be decentralized, carried out in military zones free from civilian interference and with civilian security and police forces clearly subordinate to the military.¹¹² The military commonly employed the language of organicism to justify and explain its actions, a vernacular common among many institutions organized along corporate lines. The Argentine body politic was envisioned as a real body, diagnosed as fearfully ill from “cancer,” a “social pathology” that required surgery and “extirpation of the diseased tissues.”¹¹³ The cancer was thought to be so severe that any means used to arrest it were noble. In practical terms, this meant that the military would employ all means necessary, which included kidnapping, torture, and murder, to liquidate the guerrillas and those considered their sympathizers (collectively called *subversivos*). The military saw this approach as meeting the guerrillas, especially the ERP, on their own terms, as they had not hesitated to attack military personnel as well as to kidnap and assassinate them in pursuit of their goals. But the military extended this campaign far beyond battles with the “regular” guerrillas, resulting in that body of individuals caught up in the fight who became known as *desaparecidos* (the disappeared). And the unrelenting savagery of the tactics on both sides in the conflict left a residue of bitterness and divisiveness that still taints civil-military relations and that gave the antisubversive operations an abiding nickname: the Dirty War.

By 1979, the first objective of the *Proceso* government had been accomplished. The guerrillas, along with thousands of others regarded as

supporters or sympathizers, were killed, imprisoned, or driven into exile. The Dirty War was a tactical success, but in a larger, strategic sense it was a failure. Domestically, it resulted in a public regard of the military as oppressors on the wrong side of the struggle of good and evil (which the military regarded the antisubversive operations to be) and as no better than their adversaries, maybe worse. Internationally, the operations turned Argentina into a pariah state, regarded as a bastion of unmitigated military rule that paraded all the sins of the authoritarian right, as unremitting in the abuse of its own people as the totalitarian left to which it presumed to be an alternative. And the Dirty War engendered a new factionalism within the military that eventually undermined the *Proceso* government itself.

The tactical victory convinced a significant part of the military, particularly younger officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who had fought directly against the guerrillas, of the rightness of the cause and of the messianic vision of Argentina that accompanied it. The Malvinas conflict (the South Atlantic War) in 1982 would reinforce the ultranationalist, fundamentalist, and conservative religious views of these individuals and their sympathizers, who were to play a major role in the evolution of civil-military relations in the Alfonsín regime. They manifested and exacerbated the conflicting horizontal and vertical loyalties that so conditioned military beliefs and behavior in respect of civilian and military authority.

Argentina under the *Proceso* was a proponent of an open economy even as it held on to and intervened in the vast network of state enterprises that undergirded economic life. As the country became very involved in the international capital and goods markets, it went heavily into debt, financing both capital acquisitions and consumer spending with borrowed money. The peso became tremendously overvalued, creating the *plata dulce* (sweet money) of 1979–1980. But the euphoria did not last long. Argentine economic productivity could not sustain the bubble, which burst in 1980. Much of the borrowed money had been squandered on unproductive enterprises or nonproductive expenditures (such as military equipment) or had taken flight overseas. With the guerrillas gone and the economy spiraling downward in 1981, disgruntled civilians and even considerable portions of the military began to question the continued presence of a pervasive, repressive military regime. Full governmental control was hard on the military institutions and was resulting in considerable wear and tear and loss of prestige. Absent the unifying goal of fighting and winning the anti-subversive war, the political activity of the armed forces began to turn inward on the *Proceso* regime itself, and events that would profoundly affect a future transition to civilian government began to unfold.

Transition

In March 1981, internal military politics led to the replacement of President Jorge Rafael Videla by Lieutenant General Roberto Viola, “in accordance with the constitutional norms of the Process of National Reorganization.”¹¹⁴ Viola wanted to change the policy of the *Proceso* by reorienting economic policy and negotiating with traditional political parties.¹¹⁵ In other words, he recognized the need to find some modalities of governance that would take the pressure off the military establishment. In this sense, Viola started a transition toward something other than outright military rule.

Viola, as leader of the *blandos* (soft-liners), initiated several steps to reach some accommodation between the military institutions and the disaffected civilian sectors. He reduced the role of José Martínez de Hoz, the economic czar of the *Proceso*, and appointed more civilian ministers to reduce military visibility. He created the *Multipartidaria*, a forum for dialogue with the political parties. And he sought labor and business accords to try to reduce the animosities engendered by the deteriorating economic situation, as the economic bubble of false prosperity burst in the early 1980s. For a few months, the government seemed to be finding the road toward republican government that it had promised at the time of the 1976 coup.

But others in the military found little to recommend Viola’s conciliatory posture. After Lieutenant General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri became Commander in Chief of the Army in May 1981, the junta itself increasingly became a redoubt of the *duros* (hard-liners). These officers, motivated by the consequences of the antisubversive campaign and the deteriorating economic situation, had little patience for Viola’s efforts to reduce the hardening animosities between military and civilian sectors. The hard-liners wanted a return to repression of dissent and a continuance of the economic policies of Martínez de Hoz. They saw no future in the liberalization approach, long under way in Brazil and something of a model for Viola. The hard-liner answer coalesced into an internal front, which in turn organized a tripartite arrangement in which the three armed services literally exercised a third of the political power, with their chiefs still constituting the junta to which Viola had to answer.¹¹⁶ This arrangement was the ultimate corporate organization: the only type of representation was virtual, and the only voices in government were those of the armed services, each service acting as a party and accountable only to itself.

The political activities of the junta independent of President Viola vitiated most of his efforts to find a future course for the military government in the face of widespread disintegration of support for it. Viola was not up to the task, and he became physically ill. On November 21, 1981, Major General Horacio Tomás Liendo took over as an interim president, a situation that gave the hard-liners the opportunity to make their move for full control. On December 11, 1981, Army Commander in Chief Galtieri took over as president in a "palace coup."

Galtieri hoped to reassert the original goals of the *Proceso*, but he could not heal the splits within the military establishment nor restore the confidence of other sectors of the Argentine body politic in military governance. His only hope lay in some sort of transition that he could try to control from above. But by March 1982, the political parties (more vocal since the founding of *Multipartidaria*) and labor unions were openly opposing continued military rule. Galtieri, backed by junta members Admiral Jorge Anaya and air force Brigadier General Basilio Lami Dozo, searched for a way to overcome public animus toward the military for the antisubversive war and for the deterioration of the economy. The military, its rule based on force, needed a forceful demonstration of its continued right to political authority. Denied that opportunity by the unfortunate consequences of the internal war, the junta looked beyond the normal territorial environs of the Argentine Republic. Only one external issue aroused almost unanimous feelings in the Argentine people: the recuperation of the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) and the other South Atlantic islands that Argentina had claimed, and the United Kingdom had held, for almost 150 years.

The South Atlantic War

The Argentine invasion of these islands on April 2, 1982, was initiated based on three assumptions: that occupation of the Malvinas and other islands would heal the rifts in the Argentine body politic that threatened to destroy it; that the United States was a *de facto* ally (and also, in the opinion of many Argentines, a *de jure* ally under the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance) and would not oppose such action by a government that was helping combat the communists in Central America with advisors to the Nicaraguan contras; and that Great Britain would not fight to hold on to the residual of the British Empire represented by these distant isles, whose strategic utility seemed to have ended as a coaling station for British warships in World War I. Government leaders viewed the invasion as a crusade, in accordance with the messianic vision of Greater

Argentina that complemented their fundamentalist, unyielding view of political action. Moreover, no project short of war—an enterprise about which all military men could agree—probably could have overcome the divisions within the military. Leaders hoped that a “just war” would heal the rifts between the soft-liners and the hard-liners, and perhaps more importantly, between the junior and the senior officers. The junior officers (lieutenant colonel and below) were increasingly concerned about the corruption that would accompany continued military governance and about the entire military being excoriated for the less salutary political consequences of the Dirty War, which the younger officers felt was tarnishing their victory over armed insurrectionist bands. The Malvinas recuperation was intended as evidence that the military hierarchy should continue, in the national interest, to run the government.

The South Atlantic War was a dismal failure, politically and militarily, for the Argentine military government and for the armed forces in general. Although a generalized euphoria about the recovery of the Malvinas was sustained for a few weeks, the excitement and momentary public support for the junta (and, by extension, for the armed forces) evaporated as it became clear that not only would Britain strike back, but also that no great surge of international support was forthcoming for the Argentines. Branded an aggressor by the United Nations, reduced to seeking solidarity with Cuba and Panama to fight the “imperialists,” Argentina and its armed forces were unprepared for the British reaction. And the United States, after several failed attempts at shuttle diplomacy, supported the United Kingdom as the aggrieved party (and NATO ally).

With the navy bottled up in its main port at Puerto Belgrano and the army pinned down in the Malvinas and unable to support its expeditionary force from Patagonia, the air force valiantly strove to head off disaster. But it could not do it alone. The armed forces’ longstanding policies to operate as three autonomous forces, with little joint capacity in either planning or operations (the Joint General Staff in the Ministry of Defense had always been weak), prevented any effective coordination of effort. This lack of coordination contributed to the Argentine armed forces being ill prepared to fight a major war in the South Atlantic against a great power that had significant outside support. In 10 weeks, all was over. The Argentine military occupation force in the Malvinas, mostly army, surrendered to the British on June 14, 1982.

In the wake of the South Atlantic War, the military establishment sunk to the nadir of its fortunes. Its armed forces in the islands had been

beaten and obliged to surrender. The government's economic program was a shambles and was only worsened by the conflict. The military establishment had alienated public support by losing the external war, and it was beset by charges of massive human rights violations that had arisen from the antisubversive operations. A profound crisis of self-confidence occurred within the military as well. And the younger front-line officers in the Malvinas conflict, especially those of the army, were embittered by the political activities of their superiors that had earned the opprobrium of the Argentine people. The junior officers did not feel that they or the military institution should have to bear that burden. They continued to feel justified in their mission and its execution and were appalled that they ultimately were regarded as butchers and losers, not soldiers.

Collapse of *Proceso*

The parlous state of the Argentine military and the *Proceso* government was testimony that the military leaders had based the government's claim to legitimacy on the use of force and that they had failed. Consequently, all the putative alternatives to constitutional democracy had, at least temporarily, appeared to have failed: exclusionary democracy, corporatist populism, "soft" military rule, and institutional coercive military rule.¹¹⁷ The country was ready for the untried: constitutional government. In any event, a vacuum had to be filled as the *Proceso* government tottered toward collapse. Galtieri was shown the door, and on July 1, 1982, retired army General Reynaldo Bignone, a virtual unknown, was sworn in as interim president, with General Cristino Nicolaides as Army Commander in Chief. The junta dissolved, and the air force and navy entered "political limbo."¹¹⁸ To Bignone fell the task of assembling a mechanism of transition while he was the titular head of a government that had lost all credibility. And he had to insure that the disintegration of military rule was not accompanied by disintegration of the military institution.

Bignone proceeded along two tracks. The first task was to detach the armed forces from the nature of, and responsibility for, the successor government to the *Proceso*. The military was to make no deals with any party to share power (although rumors abounded that some in the military and some Peronists favored, even pursued, such a deal). No arrangements were to be made to accommodate the corporate entities in Argentina, such as the labor unions and the economic elite, in the quest for political power. Competitive election, unconditioned by the military, was to be the sole vehicle for access to political authority. On September 10, 1982, Bignone published a new parties law, putting the political parties and their eventual

candidates forward as the sole beneficiaries of the electoral process. They were to have a chance to demilitarize the state.¹¹⁹

By removing the military from the governing process, Bignone was making a virtue of necessity. The military had acquiesced to the mechanism of constitutional democracy, the competitive election. But the second task in Bignone's two-track process, ensuring the internal health of the military institutions, was of equal consequence in the minds of the military. Not until December 1983, after the elections in October, did the interim military government formally hand over control to the civilians. In the meantime, ensuring the health of the military included such activities as undertaking a rearmament program, restoring discipline and organizational integrity in the ranks, and preempting civilian prosecution of those responsible for the Dirty War and the Malvinas debacle.¹²⁰ Although overt political aspirations by the military were ended temporarily, the Argentine armed forces, individually and collectively, were not prepared to self-destruct. And these initiatives that occupied the lame-duck Bignone administration became major issues in civil-military relations in the future.

The 1983 Presidential Election

Civilians were equally unprepared for the political vacuum in the country after the Malvinas disaster. The political parties, which were in internal political exile under the *Proceso*, needed months to rehabilitate their structures and prepare for and wage the internal campaigns necessary to choose candidates for the general election. Nonetheless, most observers felt the transition proceeded rapidly, a mere 15 months from the designation of Bignone as president to the elections. The year 1983 was one of considerable political significance, and attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments coalesced both within and outside the military establishment that suggested the nature of the civil-military relationship in the coming regime.

The parties now faced the daunting task of bringing about constitutional democratic government. They had the opportunity to decisively establish political authority based on legitimacy accorded by the constitutional current in the stream of Argentine political culture. However, "The institutionalization of democracy presupposes two processes: the weakening of the institutional infrastructure of authoritarianism and corporatism, and the display of at least a modest degree of efficacy by the new political institutions."¹²¹ In other words, the coming political contest needed to be characterized by competition among contenders recognized as legitimate in a democratic election. The military had to be proscribed from acting in any manner as a contestant, and the Peronist movement

had to confine its mobilization techniques to securing votes within the electoral process. Two circumstances augured well for these conditions in the spring of 1983: the almost total absence of political credibility of the military establishment, and the Peronists' lack of a charismatic leader who might be tempted to try to override the electoral process on a wave of popular enthusiasm.

Although 13 national political parties of almost every persuasion competed at some level in the elections of October 1983, two clearly emerged as having a chance to obtain the presidency, a majority in the Congress, and a majority of governors of the provinces: the Peronists and the UCR.¹²² Neither party was unified, and the selection of candidates had significant consequences for the party's chances in the election and for its political leanings in the administration if victorious. In this disaggregated but politically vibrant milieu, Dr. Raúl Alfonsín made his successful bid to become the UCR candidate for president of Argentina. His eventual main opponent, Italo Luder of the Peronists, was not chosen until September 1983, quite close to the election, after internecine squabbles involving not only the Justicialista Party but also the labor unions. Thus, the Radicals had their best chance in decades at the electoral target of a majority mandate for the president and a majority contingent in the Congress as well.

Raúl Alfonsín headed a sector of the Radical Party, *Renovación y Cambio* (Renewal and Change), that he had established. This wing of the party was considered the furthest to the left of the three factions within the UCR. The National, nominally the bulk of the party and once led by long-time Radical politician and candidate Ricardo Balbín, was considered a centrist group, and the Córdoba, from which would emerge the Radical candidate in 1989, Córdoba Governor Eduardo Angeloz, was thought to be center-right.¹²³ Alfonsín eschewed such designations, describing himself as social-democratic and an admirer of the social-democratic regimes in Western Europe; indeed, he visited several Western European countries in the months before the election.¹²⁴

But a major supporting element of the Alfonsín campaign, some members of which became important figures in the Alfonsín administration and the Radical delegation in Congress, was the Radical youth—including university students (*Franja Morada*) and the organization charged with mobilizing the youthful adherents of the Radical Party, the *Junta Coordinadora Nacional de la Juventud Radical*, or *Coordinadora*. Its members were politically to the left of Alfonsín and prompted a more confrontational approach toward the corporate sectors in Argentine society: the

unions, the church, the vested financial interests, and particularly the military. They were at the forefront of the human rights groups and reinforced Alfonsín's affinity for those believed to have been persecuted by the military.¹²⁵ Alfonsín had identified himself early on with the human rights advocacy groups that emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s in response to the excesses of the Dirty War. He was the leader of one such group, the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, and as a lawyer had defended accused those of being subversives.¹²⁶ This role clearly identified him with those who would demand accountability on the part of the military establishment for the "disappeared."

Alfonsín's attitude toward the military establishment was apparent in his campaign speeches made in the 6 weeks before the election. He emphasized two broad themes: the elimination of corporatist politics on the part of the military, and the search for justice for the actions of the military in the antisubversive campaign. In a speech in Resistencia, Argentina, on October 27, 1983, he urged particularly the junior officers "to add themselves to the process of democratization of the country and to break the antidemocratic alliances that the military coup-making high commands had traditionally made with minorities of the country."¹²⁷ (Alfonsín used the term *minorities* to denote other corporate interests, especially economic ones and the unions.) This theme of democracy was a common one. Alfonsín adhered to the view that not only was democracy the right choice, but also that "All else was tried, all was tested, and all failed."¹²⁸ His statement in an early campaign speech indicated that he extended this philosophy directly to the armed forces themselves: "I will take over as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and I will take the necessary [but unspecified] measures to make them democratic, because without democratic Armed Forces it is evident that there will not be stable democracy in Argentina."¹²⁹

But Alfonsín's campaign speeches were most revealing with respect to seeking accountability of the armed forces for the Dirty War consequences. In an interview, he stated that "the responsibilities for the repugnant methodology [used by the military] must be sorted out between those who acted exceeding [their authority] in complying and those who in the face of extraordinary confusion agreed to carry out orders."¹³⁰ Moreover, he believed that by means of this sorting out, "we will seek reconciliation." Alfonsín later established three categories of involvement in the antisubversive activities from 1976 to 1979: the high command issuing the orders, those who exceeded their authority in their zeal to wipe out the

subversion, and those who were just following orders. This triad of responsibility became a major factor in the civil-military relationship.

It was far from clear who the victor in the election would be. The proliferation of parties and the record number of people in the Argentine electorate with declared party affiliations (about a third) reduced the likelihood that any presidential hopeful would garner a clear majority of the vote. Many Argentines were resigned to yet another minority government, with the victor elected by only a plurality of the vote. Because of this situation, the results of the election represented a considerable, and at the time very welcome, surprise. Raúl Alfonsín won the presidency with 52 percent of the vote, with only 40 percent going to his principal opponent, Peronist Italo Luder. The two parties thus garnered 92 percent between them at the expense of the center-right parties—especially the Center Democratic Union (*Union de Centro Democrático*, or UCD), lead by Alvaro Alsogaray and long considered sympathetic to the military, whose support fell from 20 percent in 1973 to 3 percent in 1983 at the presidential level—and the hard left, which fell from 9 percent to 3 percent.¹³¹ Alfonsín attracted most of that change, and he was successful in presenting a credible alternative, even for the right, to more Peronism. The Peronists were hurt by open squabbling, their recent past, and unappealing candidates; their support dropped from 50 percent in 1973 to the 40 percent Luder was able to win. Alfonsín also was rewarded with a Radical majority in the Chamber of Deputies, although not in the Senate, where powerful provincial parties undercut the Radical total. Nonetheless, Alfonsín won a clear victory, giving the impression that he was in a position to execute reforms and demand accountability on the part of the military, things that no civilian president in two generations had been able to do.

The period between Alfonsín's victory and his inauguration was abbreviated; inauguration day was moved up to December 10, 1983. Although Alfonsín's speeches and the UCR platform indicated the general position a Radical administration was going to take concerning the military, they tended to be short on the specifics if not downright vague about the details of policy. Indeed, the best précis of the situation in November and early December 1983 was written years later by the National Committee of the Radical Party in summing up a seminar on defense that took place on October 3–6, 1989:

The situation in 1983: In December of 1983 we came to power aware that defense and military policies had been and would continue to be a major challenge for any constitutional government. In this challenge

were in play the exercise of real power by governments elected by the people, the political stability of democracy and even the survival of the nation. For half a century the Armed Forces had been directed autonomously with respect to civil society and had intervened by force in the highest level of direction of the State. We were dealing with, then, putting in place a different mode of subordination to civil power and the National Constitution, internal restructuring and the proper place of the Armed Forces in Argentine society. This had been broken due to a past highlighted by terrorism, its illegal repression, illegitimate rule of the State and defeat in the Malvinas. Distanced from society, the Armed Forces are found to be divided, without capacity to act together and with diminished capacity to carry out their mission. In 1983, then, we had to begin by resolving matters of the past to take up the present and the future, facing the defense situation with the idea of securing fundamental reforms. Overcoming the conflicts and violence of the past, within a framework of no exemption from blame, truth and justice, was the responsibility of all Argentine society and not only the defense area. Any other way would have been an erroneous simplification. Surely, someone coming from outside could ask: What does the national defense policy have to do with the trials of some military personages for crimes against human rights? Nonetheless, the national defense policy was overshadowed and conditioned by the matter of the trials.¹³²

Clearly, then, no a priori resolution of the *cuestión militar*, no bargain or pact with the military (as had often been the case in the past), was in place before the inauguration of the Alfonsín administration. The stage was set for an unprecedented challenge to *estado militar*.

Military Reform under Alfonsín

The Alfonsín administration, in its efforts to change substantively the civil-military relationship in Argentina and to make it conform to the constitutional order and democratic mandate the administration had achieved in the election of 1983, embarked simultaneously on two broad policy and process endeavors that turned out to be contradictory and to have incompatible goals: *reforma militar* (military reform) and *revisión del pasado* (review of the past). Although these two processes were intended to establish the rule of law (and therefore the legitimacy of civilian authority over the military establishment) in a constitutional, democratic manner, they would have far different effects on both military and civilian perceptions of the nature and extent of *estado militar*. Neither would end the disputes over legitimacy of authority in military matters. However, an examination of the factors relevant to analyzing civil-military relations in the Alfonsín years is needed before conclusions can be drawn about the reform process.

The policies and processes of this administration are divisible into four categories for examining *estado militar*, all of which were virtually unchallenged military prerogatives until the 1982 debacle and Alfonsín's election in 1983. Three of these categories will be used to examine military reform: mission and organization, resources and industry, and education and socialization. The fourth, accountability and discipline, will be the vehicle to examine the review of the past in the next chapter.

Mission and Organization

This section deals with the part of civil-military relations centering on the control of organized force at government disposal and the delineation

of the uses to which it could, or should, be put. Four major elements in the Argentine case will be examined: civilianization, emphasizing the role and functioning of the Ministry of Defense (MOD); the Joint Staff; the military hierarchy, concentrating on the army; and the evolution and promulgation of the *Ley de Defensa* (Defense Law).

Civilianization: The Ministry of Defense

The Argentine Constitution of 1853 stipulated that the President of the Republic was the commander in chief of the armed forces. Even a cursory look at the history of civil-military relations belies that provision in practice up to the election of 1983. Even military presidents were not always in control of the armed forces; Onganía, Videla, and Viola were ousted by their own juntas. But Raúl Alfonsín knew that if the military chain of command effectively stopped at the commanders in chief of the army, navy, and air force, as generally had been the case since 1930, then military institutional autonomy would vitiate any hope of reforming the military system. Consequently, among the first steps of the Alfonsín administration were efforts to revise that chain of command so that the command authority that had belonged to the service commanders in chief would really belong to the President of the Republic and, by his delegation, to the Minister of Defense. Toward this end, a new ministries law was devised even before Alfonsín took office, returning to the limit of eight ministries specified by the Constitution of 1853, and imbuing the Minister of Defense with much broader power than before.¹³³ More directly, on January 31, 1984, Decree 436 was promulgated, which delegated some of the president's authority to the Minister of Defense and to the redesignated military Chiefs of Staff rather than to the commanders in chief of the three armed forces.¹³⁴

These changes were designed to place even operational control of the armed forces in the hands of civilians, with military forces doing their bidding. Moreover, nominations and changes in assignment of all officers of the grade of colonel and above now rested with the Minister of Defense (promotion to general officer still required Senate approval, as provided for in the Constitution). Furthermore, the serving chiefs of staff initially had to be content with the army grade of major general or its navy and air force equivalent, one rank lower than previously (lieutenant general). Fewer officers would be selected for general and admiral; almost all would stay at the initial level of brigadier general or its equivalent. The power and prestige of the flag officers thereby was to be decreased.

As the chain of command was being restructured to assure primacy of the civilians (the president and the Minister of Defense), the scope and domain of the MOD was expanded at the direct expense of the individual services. Within days of taking office, Alfonsín and his new Minister of Defense, Raúl Borrás, appointed a new Chief of the Joint Staff and three Chiefs of Staff of the respective services.¹³⁵ The Chief of the Joint Staff, Army Brigadier General Julio Fernández Torres, was accorded primacy of place in these nominations, even though at the time of his appointment, he was junior to the new Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Brigadier Mayor Teodoro Waldner. That anomaly was corrected later—but by presidential initiative, not by the strict seniority system that prevailed in the armed forces. This action was taken with the clear intent that no other “commanders in chief” should be present in the hierarchy to challenge the president or his duly chosen civilian officials.

With another decree, Alfonsín removed the enormous General Directorate of Military Industries, or *Fabricaciones Militares*, from the exclusive jurisdiction of the army and placed it under Borrás’ purview, thereby significantly increasing the bases for control by the Ministry of Defense over resources.¹³⁶

In July 1984, control of *Gendarmería Nacional* (Border Troops) passed from the army to the Ministry of Defense, and the senior official of that security force became one of their own, not an army general. Similarly, in October 1984, *Prefectura Naval* (Coast Guard) moved to the jurisdiction of the Defense Ministry and away from that of the navy.¹³⁷ Control of these security forces therefore was no longer an armed forces prerogative, and determination of mission and resources for these institutions passed to civilian hands.

These early moves by the Alfonsín administration sought to break longstanding patterns of subordination and control of the MOD to the armed forces. Prerogatives long considered the exclusive province of the military were, at least ostensibly, no longer in its hands. Other longstanding attributes of power, particularly the institutional autonomy of command with respect to the employment and administration of the armed forces, had moved to the hands of the president and the Minister of Defense. Both the Ministry and the Joint Staff organization, which had been marginalized before the Alfonsín years, were being officially and legally placed at the very center of the decisionmaking process.

Completing the organizational framework of the MOD, considerable power and authority were vested in the Secretaries of the Ministry of

Defense, subordinates of the Minister but having considerable jurisdiction in their respective areas, such as military affairs, policy, production, and budget. The official holding the title of Secretary of Defense was effectively the Undersecretary, principal subordinate of the Minister. The Ministry of Defense was, at least in theory, far more powerful than any previous Ministry of Defense in Argentina and had the legal backing and delegation of command authority to be a decisive element in civilian control of the military.

Nonetheless, even though “the increase of participation by civilian functionaries in the substantive exercise of political power in the area of military and defense policy, constituted an outstanding aspect of the process,”¹³⁸ such a dramatic shift of statutory power and responsibility for defense and military matters from military to civilian hands engendered severe problems. Civilians had scant experience in military and defense policy formulation; defense matters had always been viewed as the military’s job (even if governance had not). Horacio Jaunarena, the first Alfonsín Secretary of Defense who later became Minister of Defense, lamented that there were “very few” qualified candidates from the civilian side and that it was difficult to “*armar los cargos*” (fill the jobs).¹³⁹ Far too few knowledgeable civilians were available to man the Ministry, to lead such major dependencies as the *Fabricaciones Militares* and the National Defense College, and to serve as advisors to the legislative commissions that dealt with defense matters. No independent body of civilian knowledge, no “institutional memory” that might provide countervailing opinion in the military’s own terms, existed. There was no discrete body of civilian officials used to dealing with the military when the civilians, at least formally, had the upper hand. As one Argentine scholar on the subject put it, the Ministry had been “emptied through the years due to the political clout and institutional autonomy of the Forces.”¹⁴⁰ In a real sense, no one knew what a reformed or restructured military institution would, or should, look like. Nor was it clear what such reformed, restructured military forces should do; they were “black boxes” to the civilians.¹⁴¹ That void, among other things, meant that a major reform project, which eventually emerged as the *Ley de Defensa*, would be considerably delayed. Hence, political considerations, and indeed partisan ones, guided the formulation of defense policy and the nature of *estado militar* more than disinterested analysis of the defense and security needs of Argentina.

Another major problem the Ministry of Defense had to face was the lack of continuity at the top. Alfonsín would have four Defense Ministers,

starting with Raúl Borrás. He was not particularly optimistic about the chances for a thoroughgoing reform of the military during his tenure, or even during the supposed 6-year run of the administration, stating in March 1984, "It will be difficult to change them thoroughly."¹⁴² He saw his job as reining in the power that the military had exercised as a matter of right, stating that reform would be designed to inhibit the military from remaining what it had been, "the most powerful pressure group of the last 50 years of Argentine history."¹⁴³ Borrás and Alfonsín both wanted to relieve that pressure, inasmuch as it often had manifested itself in the form of coups. Borrás served only from December 1983 until March 1985, when he succumbed to cancer.

Replacing Borrás as Defense Minister was long-time Radical politician Dr. Roque Carranza, who served for less than a year, dying in office in February 1986. Although highly regarded personally, he did not have the job long enough to make a significant mark on the Ministry of Defense or the military.

Carranza's successor, Germán López, moved from the Office of Secretary General to the president to occupy the Defense portfolio. As a result of a scandal involving members of the intelligence services working in his Ministry, López was forced to resign in early June 1986. He, like his predecessors, made little difference in his short tenure.

Alfonsín's fourth and last Defense Minister, Horacio Jaunarena, had been with the Ministry from the beginning of the Alfonsín administration as Secretary of Defense, the number-two man in the Ministry. Jaunarena was in the job when the much heralded, but little advanced, Defense Law finally began to make its way through the legislature to passage. He had to deal with *levantamientos* (uprisings) within the military of Semana Santa, Monte Caseros, and Villa Martelli. And Jaunarena was still present in the wake of La Tablada, the guerrilla attack on an army garrison in January 1989 that many saw as a vindication of the military and that cast serious doubt on the Defense Law.

The Joint Staff

The enhanced scope and power of the Ministry of Defense (as envisioned by the Alfonsín administration) and the authority of the Minister of Defense (as delegated by the president) to formally exercise operational control over the armed forces made it logical that military authority over the mission and direction of the armed forces should rest in that military structure most closely tied to the Ministry of Defense and indeed subordinate to it: the Armed Forces Joint Staff.

The Joint Staff had existed for some years as a dependency of the weak Defense Ministry structure of previous governments, but it never had the control in military matters that it was to receive under the Alfonsín administration. The Argentine armed forces, under the commanders in chief system, had always been autonomous in their organization, training, and doctrine—and in their concepts of what jointness was all about. In fact, they had been effectively compartmentalized, as Horacio Jaunarena suggested in referring to the Malvinas conflict: “Each service fought its own war.”¹⁴⁴ No one had ever paid much attention to the Joint Staff, it had not been in the chain of command, and members of the armed forces mostly regarded it as a dead end in terms of assignment or promotion.

The Alfonsín administration, through the Ministry of Defense, looked to change this, believing that joint planning and concentrating the strategy and doctrine functions in the Joint Staff would reduce the autonomous political power of the army, navy, and air force. These beliefs eventually were enshrined in the Defense Law proposal to Congress.¹⁴⁵ Through these measures, Alfonsín sought to strengthen vertical loyalty; as he made clear in his first public speech after taking office to the *Granaderos*, or Presidential Guard, “I know very well that it is absolutely necessary to understand that our national Constitution, as in all civilized countries on earth, establishes the subordination of the Armed Forces to the powers established by the Constitution.”¹⁴⁶ The Joint Staff, as the uniformed component of the MOD, was seen as a way to forge a major link in this chain of constitutionality. But as one long-time student of the MOD points out, “There did not exist experience or resources accumulated in the core of the democratic forces . . . nor did there exist in the State [Argentina] an institutional tradition or routines established to articulate the relationship between the constitutional power and the Armed Forces.”¹⁴⁷ The Alfonsín administration conceived of the Joint Staff as a major link in establishing such institutional traditions and routines consonant with democratic government and not responsive to the autonomous pretensions of the services and their political past, but defense and military policy had always been left to the armed forces, individually, and they had little incentive for surrendering autonomy.

Several early steps were taken to give the Joint Staff the necessary authority and organization to carry out the new role envisioned for it. The head of the Joint Staff, redesignated the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, became the ranking military officer on active duty in the Argentine military, with the rank of lieutenant general or its equivalent in the navy or air force.

Three departments were created within the Joint Staff to operationalize the concept of jointness: Personnel and Logistics, Operations and Intelligence, and Policy and Strategy, which included doctrine. To staff these departments, the Joint Staff was empowered to draw on the very best that the services had to offer, and service on the Joint Staff would no longer be considered prejudicial to military careers (according to one source, over 80 percent of the Joint Staff was replaced in December 1983). The goal, according to the first head of the Department of Policy and Strategy, was to create a “new axis” for the professional military in Argentina.¹⁴⁸ Or, as a later Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff outlined it, the Joint Staff was supposed to be the authoritative channel between the armed services and the Ministry of Defense, providing the military guidance pursuant to MOD military and defense policy to the now-subordinate armed forces and security force adjuncts of MOD.¹⁴⁹ An integrated staff would lead to an integrated military effort in addressing the defense needs of the country.

Meeting Opposition

Resistance to these measures and the ideas behind them was apparent from the outset. It came from the military services that stood to lose position, influence, and effective control of their own institutions if the joint system were fully implemented. Resistance also came from some elements of the Radical Party, especially those associated with *Coordinadora*, the Party’s youthful elements, who regarded moves that ultimately might enhance military capabilities as a potential threat to their vision of civilian government.

The actual evolution of the Joint Staff under these conditions was troubled from the start. One immediate problem was the lack of a statute defining the responsibilities and relationships of military organizations in the constitutional regime (the applicable law, *Ley de Defensa*, would not be passed until April 26, 1988, over 4 years into the Alfonsín administration).

Another controversy surfaced quickly over the president’s choice to head the Joint Staff. Although he could appoint any serving officer to this highest position, his selection of Army Brigadier General Julio Fernández Torres (26th in seniority among army generals when Alfonsín took office and before the *Proceso* generals were out) occasioned an immediate dispute with the new Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Brigadier Mayor Teodoro Waldner, who held the higher grade at the time of Fernández Torres’ appointment.¹⁵⁰ Fernández Torres was not formally promoted to lieutenant general, resolving the seniority problem, for several months.

This early jockeying for the top spot on the Joint Staff was an indication of service resistance to changing their autonomous instincts and their desire to be treated as equals. For example, although no such provision was made in military regulations, the idea of rotating the top position among the services gained much sympathy. Each service would have an opportunity to gain prestige and further its interests, regardless of doctrinal, operational, or qualifications considerations relevant to the post. The underlying values sustaining such behavior, not only military corporateness and identification but also service institutional “horizontal loyalty,” would undercut any idea of joint doctrine as being more than just the sum of the individual service parts.

General Fernández Torres encountered a series of these problems that would bedevil the Joint Staff during the Alfonsín administration and eventually render it ineffective as a vehicle for establishing a new direction in hierarchy in the civil-military relationship. A primary task of the Joint Staff was to develop a new defense doctrine, which Fernández Torres sought to do through his choice for Chief of the Policy and Strategy Department, Brigadier General Heriberto Auel. Auel wanted to develop doctrine suitable to modern environments in both the conventional and non-conventional senses, replacing what he termed “antiquated von der Goltz [a long-dead German strategist] thinking” that he felt characterized the Argentine military.¹⁵¹ He intended to end “conceptual stagnation,” a condition that had resulted in the failures in both the Dirty War and the Malvinas conflict, and to replace it with a doctrine for “unpredictable war” (as opposed to “total war” in the World War sense). In his view, such doctrine would require strategic thinking, joint (not just coordinated) planning, and operational control by the Joint Staff.¹⁵²

But Auel quickly ran into opposition—particularly from the air force, which had no interest in sharing or giving up any of its longtime interest in air and space, not to mention operational control of air force assets. This dispute bubbled over, leading to the relief of air force Brigadier Simari as air force delegate to the Joint Staff. The air force further showed its displeasure by its last-minute withdrawal from the first joint maneuvers planned by the new Joint Staff in September 1984, “due to differences in doctrine as a consequence of the part assigned to the air force in the exercise.”¹⁵³

Complicating Auel’s doctrine and strategy formulation was the lack of direction from civilian authorities on what exactly they wanted the armed forces of Argentina to address. The armed forces always had unchallenged authority in divining the potential threats to Argentina

(*hipótesis de conflicto*, or scenarios of conflict) and the potential for military responses (*hipótesis de guerra*, or scenarios for war). But Auel's job was to get such defense guidance from civilian authorities and to transform it into Joint Staff doctrine that would prescribe the roles and missions of the military. Auel finally was able to get Alfonsín to approve a joint planning and doctrine concept for external defense but not for any military role in internal security. Some civilian authorities prevailed upon Alfonsín not to define internal conflict as war on both philosophical and practical grounds, arguing that the military was wrong to engage any part of the Argentine population in hostilities, that responsibility for both internal and external security had been a linchpin of military authority for decades, and that the time to redefine these mission responsibilities was now. This argument would go far beyond the Joint Staff arena, would be played out in the debate over the defense law, and would continue beyond the Alfonsín administration.

A Weak Foundation

Adequate doctrine was not the only, perhaps not even the most pressing, problem. Since the comprehensive defense law had not been passed, the Joint Staff had no well-defined legal basis to do much of anything. The command attributes—the real authority to command and control the military, which had been taken away from the former commanders in chief—had been delegated by the president in some measure to the Minister of Defense and to a much lesser extent to the service Chiefs of Staff. In order for the Chief of the Joint Staff to exercise these attributes on behalf of the Defense Minister under whom he served, he needed subordinates with operational control directly in his chain of command—in U.S. terminology, unified commands and commanders (joint units). No such commands existed in Argentina. Territorial responsibilities and peacetime organization had always been divided among the services, which—viewing the idea of joint commands and joint staff control as likely to deliver a mortal blow to service autonomy and their control of resources—were not keen to relinquish a final say in dispositions and force structure. The strong service traditions and customs about a wide range of missions and responsibilities hindered moves toward jointness. Consequently, as one Joint Staff source put it, the best that the Chief of the Joint Staff could achieve would be parity with the service Chiefs of Staff, not superiority.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, the Joint Staff did not control the resources to achieve the goals envisioned for it. Control and distribution of resources were key

factors in defining the civil-military relationship. In the case of the Joint Staff, the reorganization and restructuring necessary to implement an integrated command structure with unified, not service-specific, command at the top would require considerable funds. New commands would have to be created and staffed, a new communications system constructed, and physical locations and equipment changed and modernized to fit with new joint doctrine, training, and logistics. The funds available to achieve this were very limited. The necessary commands and staffs were never created, units were not redeployed, and training exercises were rarely held. A little progress was made in coordinating logistics (common items) and intelligence information, and one army general on the Joint Staff succeeded in establishing a Joint Staff course at the army *Escuela Superior de Guerra*, which later became an independent course for mid-range officers of all the armed forces.

But the Alfonsín administration did not give the military establishment, even the Joint Staff that ostensibly was its instrument of operational control, the resources that would have made possible an effective unified force. Pleading economic hard times, Alfonsín prefaced calls for reform with statements such as “in accordance with our own possibilities,” reflecting pressure to keep a lid on military resources.¹⁵⁵ And consequently the Joint Staff could not muster the clout to deal with the independent-minded services, themselves severely strapped and not wont to surrender anything to an integrated structure if they could help it.

Fernández Torres, then, was frustrated in almost all of his moves to make the Joint Staff viable. In December 1984, at the end of his first year in office, he made a report to the armed forces decrying the “worsening decay in the situation of Argentina’s defense,” and he retired in March 1985.¹⁵⁶ General Ricardo Pianta, who was retiring as Army Chief of Staff, was offered the job but declined it. Alfonsín then appointed air force Brigadier Mayor Teodoro Waldner, Fernández Torres’ early rival and the ranking officer in all three services, to the top position.

Waldner did not succeed in making the Joint Staff any more authoritative than Fernández Torres had. Indeed, many viewed his appointment as a vindication of those who advocated the traditional apportionment of roles, missions, and resources among the services. Coordination, planning, and some training done by a joint organization was all well and good, but the services never accepted the idea of integrated units and unified command and control. Waldner’s own style reinforced this more collegial approach to military policy; he averred that he was not in favor of

the “imposition” of jointness, but rather of an accord among the four general staffs.¹⁵⁷ Others were less sanguine in their assessment of the effectiveness of the Joint Staff under Waldner, who served until the end of the Alfonsín administration. One flag officer who served at the Joint Staff referred to it as a “paper tiger,” and the general consensus among those best informed was that the real influence of the Joint Staff on the services after 1984 was nil.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, the inability of the Ministry of Defense to establish the Joint Staff as the locus of uniformed authority in the Argentine military establishment suited many in the Alfonsín administration. As Borrás had indicated, they regarded reducing the political power of the military to be a short-term goal, and interservice rivalry suited that objective.¹⁵⁹ For some, a small, weak, and underfunded military was more than enough. The Chief of the Joint Staff might be a useful vehicle for reducing the power of the individual service Chiefs of Staff, still perceived by many as the main threat and potential source of coups despite their redesignation.

The resources to back up a fully integrated force with unified commands did not come. Although a verbal and legal commitment was made to jointness, as the defense law eventually showed, the civil-military relationship remained far more defined by service and civilian authorities’ interactions than by regarding the military as subordinated via the joint staff structure.

Military Hierarchy

The military services had always been autonomous in terms of internal organization and disposition of the military assets in Argentina. This independence was reflected in the basic law concerning military personnel at the time of the transition, which formed much of the legal, formal basis for *estado militar* in Argentina.¹⁶⁰ But even before Alfonsín took office, Provisional President Bignone, as part of the transition process, decreed the transfer of the command authority away from the commanders in chief (redesignated as chiefs of staff) to the president himself as sole Supreme Commander. Some powers were conferred upon the Chiefs of Staff as well as the Minister of Defense, but the Chief of Staff was not charged with command and administration of the armed force under him in the measure the former commander in chief had been.¹⁶¹ Of particular importance was Decree 436, which placed all actions regarding superior personnel (colonel or equivalent and above) in MOD hands. This meant that almost no senior officer could be transferred, promoted, or retired without action by the senior civilian in the defense chain and, in the

case of promotions, approval and presentation to Congress by the president himself.

The Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces, thus reduced in power and lacking a defense law to codify a new arrangement in terms of mission and organization (and the resources to carry one out if it existed), were faced with demands to reorganize and restructure their debilitated military organizations. The underlying premise of the demands was: make do with less. The Radicals had made campaign promises to reduce military expenditures to “peacetime” levels. The parlous state of the economy and the compelling needs of the Radical administration to divert funds elsewhere reinforced the Radical premise (especially among its more militant stalwarts) that fewer military resources would translate into fewer military political resources.¹⁶² (Military people often used the term *arrinconar*, “to put in a corner; to slight or neglect,” in describing their perception of the attitude of the administration.)

Challenges for the Army

The army was most directly affected by this transfer of authority. The air force and the navy—smaller and more technically advanced than the large and dispersed army, with its greater territorial responsibilities—were better able to weather the organizational storms. Both suffered some reductions in size, but nowhere near those that befell the army. The air force redistributed its assets into highly mobile forces, with enough aerodromes and squadrons to maintain the integrity of the force. Its equipment, although heavily depleted from Malvinas actions, was serviceable. The navy, relatively untouched by the war (except for loss of the cruiser ARA *Belgrano*, which was not particularly significant in terms of total force), divided its assets into an active and a standby fleet, thereby assuring that limited resources went to sustain the newer vessels and enhanced as much as possible the navy’s capabilities. Major restructuring early on was not as traumatic for the other services as for the army.

The army was faced with the most daunting task to restructure. Numbering slightly more than 96,000 uniformed members (not including cadets and students) in 1983, it sank to a low point in 1987 (for the Alfonsín administration) of just over 53,000, recovering slightly by 1989 to 57,500. But resistance to reorganizing the army, both from within and without, was considerable. The army was spread throughout Argentina in scores of units, tied into the local infrastructure, and long considered to be the symbol of national power, especially in such places as Patagonia, the Andean Cordillera, and Argentine Chaco. But reduced to taking in less

than 40 percent of the usual number of conscripts by 1986 (in the modern era, annual army conscription had been about 65,000), many units were manned at one-quarter of anything the army considered adequate. But other than reduced numbers, such reorganization as would take place was motivated much more by political considerations than military ones.

The political restructuring that the Alfonsín administration sought through Defense Minister Borrás centered on the vast military training and schools complex at Campo de Mayo, just outside the federal capital, and on the First Army Corps Headquarters in Palermo, a neighborhood in the center of Buenos Aires. These two sites traditionally had provided the wherewithal for military takeovers and were regarded as two symbols of the military presence. (A third, Edificio General San Martín, the Army Headquarters, looms large behind the Presidential Palace, Casa Rosada, but in Alfonsín's time in office no one suggested moving or changing it.) Borrás' plans began surfacing in public reports in August 1984: the dissolution or transfer of First Army Corps Headquarters.¹⁶³ Also reported were his desire to move the army training facilities at Campo de Mayo to the interior and to sell 3,500 of the 5,000 hectares of Campo de Mayo.¹⁶⁴

Borrás himself would accomplish only the first goal. First Army Corps Headquarters was dissolved by a decree issued October 20, 1984, along with a number of small units whose dissolution also seemed politically motivated: the Junín and Zárate Advance Intelligence Organizations, and all the military police and electronic operations companies. The standing down of these latter units was part of a general campaign to reduce (or eliminate if possible) the military intelligence services, which many civilians regarded as major sources of the excesses that had occurred in the antisubversive operations.¹⁶⁵ The Corps Headquarters later was resurrected as IV Corps in Santa Rosa, La Pampa Province, at the terminus of the Sarmiento Railroad and far from the center of governmental power. But the massive unit moves that Borrás foresaw did not happen on his watch or on Alfonsín's. The units of I Corps were redistributed but not physically relocated.

The motivation for army reorganization in the Alfonsín years died with Borrás. Although other ostensible moves toward reorganization surfaced, such as the Commission for the Evaluation and Functioning of the Army's Organization report in October 1985 and a study entitled "Modernization of the Armed Forces" in June 1986, no major reorganization ever took place in the army under Alfonsín.¹⁶⁶ (Even in 1990, Argentine Army officers at the highest levels were very much preoccupied with reorganizing

the service, as it still remained to be done under President Menem. The organizational chart of the army in 1990 was virtually unchanged from that of 1983.)¹⁶⁷ The army was a shell, an undermanned version of its old self. No money to organize joint units had been appropriated, and no resources had been made available to restructure and consolidate the army's far-flung forces. The little that had been done, as during Borrás' time, had the opposite effect: disperse the command structure to make the military's might less adaptable to political purposes.

Personnel Changes

In another sense, however, the turnover in the highest levels of personnel (particularly the army) was continually reorganizing the armed forces of Argentina. Because Alfonsín chose mostly junior officers as his first Chiefs of Staff, seniority rules forbidding a senior officer of the same rank to serve under his junior, even at that rank, obliged large numbers of army, navy, and air force generals, admirals, and brigadiers to retire. A number of others also retired rather than serve in the new circumstances. (See table 2.)

This turnover also was evident in the number of Chiefs of Staff each service had. The navy had only one, Admiral Ramón Arosa, former Chief of the Military Household in the Bignone provisional government. A junior admiral, Arosa weathered the entire Alfonsín administration. This meant that the navy's very modest efforts at structural reorganization were accomplished within the service and were relatively successful given the resource constraints at the time.

The air force had two chiefs of staff. The first, Waldner, was very senior, so few *brigadieres* in the air force were obliged to resign. When Waldner became the Chief of the Joint Staff in March 1985, Brigadier Mayor Ernesto Crespo succeeded him as Chief of Staff, where he would remain until the end of the Alfonsín administration.

The situation was quite different in the army. Five chiefs of staff served in the Alfonsín years, three of them for only a matter of months. The first, General Jorge Arguindegui, was ranked 29th on the seniority list when the interim Bignone government relinquished power, and his appointment occasioned the retirement or resignation of 35 of the 53 army generals then on active duty. He served from December 1983 to early July 1984. As the first incumbent of the newly created and relatively weak chief of staff position, Arguindegui felt the full effect of the Alfonsín government's attempts to establish control over the army. He grew increasingly frustrated by his lack of authority, especially over senior officers. Because

Table 2. Retirements and Promotions: Highest-Ranking Officers (December 1983–January 1989)

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Total
In grade when Alfonsín became President	53	25	36	114
Promoted during the constitutional government	69	41	40	150
Total	122	66	76	264
Retirements when Alfonsín became President	35	17	9	61
Retirements during the Alfonsín government	54	25	39	118
Total retirements	89	42	48	179
On active duty (1989)	33	24	28	85

Source: Rosendo Fraga, *La cuestión militar, 1987–1989* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1989), 125.

Arguindegui had no authority over those in the rank of colonel and above, he had to ask the Defense Minister to exercise authority in matters of internal discipline. Borrás apparently was unwilling to follow Arguindegui's lead in the matter, and Arguindegui, frustrated by what he considered political interference in military matters, resigned.

Arguindegui was succeeded by his deputy, General Ricardo Pianta, who served from July 1984 to early March 1985. Faced with the reorganization drive of Borrás, Pianta's role was one mostly of damage control, trying to ensure that the army lost as little ground as possible. When General Fernández Torres quit as Chief of the Joint Staff in March 1985, Pianta was nominated to succeed him, but he retired instead.

Pianta's successor was General Hector Ríos Ereñú, the longest serving of the Army Chiefs of Staff under Alfonsín. His appointment caused a sizeable number of retirements and resignations; 51 of the 53 generals serving at the time of Alfonsín's inauguration were no longer on active duty within 2 years.¹⁶⁸ During his tenure internal divisions, not just individual discontent, became manifest in the army. In trying not to antagonize the civilian authorities at the time of serious civil-military confrontation over the consequences of the antisubversive operations of 1976–1979,

Ríos Ereñú instead alienated considerable numbers within his own force. The *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) uprising ended his tenure in April 1987.

Next to serve as Army Chief of Staff was General José Dante Caridi, from April 1987 to December 1988. He was faced with reestablishing the internal discipline shattered by *Semana Santa*, while at the same time seeing through the *Punto Final* and *Obediencia Debida* laws that would free most of his officers from the specter of the dock. But he had to put down one uprising, Monte Caseros, and deal with another, Villa Martelli, that ended his tenure as Chief of Staff.

The last Army Chief of Staff of the Alfonsín administration was General Francisco Gassino, who served from December 1988 until Alfonsín resigned the Presidency in July 1989. In January 1989, Gassino had to deal with the guerrilla attack on La Tablada, an army garrison near Buenos Aires. His handling of this situation, described in the next section, was revealing of the state and nature of civil-military relations in Argentina by that time.

The changeover rates of the Chiefs of Staff in the respective services trickled through their hierarchies. Table 3 shows the average tenure of top-level military officers in each service. Key units, such as Army Corps, changed hands every few months. Staff positions at the headquarters suffered similar turnover rates, as staff incumbents replaced field commanders. Consequently, serious organizational change within the armed forces of Argentina was severely hampered in the army, where the greatest turbulence occurred.

The Defense Law

The question of mission was perhaps even more difficult in civil-military terms than that of organization. Until the Malvinas war, the armed forces had been almost exclusively involved in what could be termed internal security matters, culminating in the drastic antisubversive campaign of 1976–1979. The consequences of the Dirty War provided fuel for the other aspect of civil-military relations in the Radical administration, the review of the past. But the legacy of the Dirty War, coupled with the ongoing conflict between Argentina and Great Britain over the Malvinas and other South Atlantic territories, also made clear that Alfonsín would have to spell out the concept of national defense and to define the relationship of the military services to defense needs and to civilian institutions if there was to be any real chance of reforming and redirecting the military. No objective definition of the military role in the Argentine society existed. As one Radical observer said, “The Constitution does not define in precise

Table 3. **Average Tenure in Position: Highest-Ranking Officers (December 1983–January 1989)**

Service	Position	Number Serving	Average Tenure (in months)
Interservice:	Chief of the Joint Staff	2	30
	Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff	3	20
Army:	Chief of Staff	5	12
	Deputy Chief of Staff	6	10
	Inspector General	6	10
	Commanding General II Corps	6	10
	Commanding General III Corps	8	7
	Commanding General IV Corps	5	12
	Commanding General V Corps	6	10
	Navy:	Chief of Staff	1
	Deputy Chief of Staff	2	30
	Chief of Naval Operations	3	20
Air Force:	Chief of Staff	2	30
	Deputy Chief of Staff	3	20
	Chief of Air Operations	3	20

Source: Rosendo Fraga, *La cuestión militar, 1987–1989* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1989), 169.

terms the mission of the armed forces.”¹⁶⁹ Article 87 of the 1853 Constitution simply says that the President of the Republic disposes of the armed forces to attend to the needs of the nation. But the general disposition even of previous civilian governments had been to leave military matters in military hands. The laws on the books had been promulgated during military governments without debate and lacking real precedents. These military-sponsored laws embodied a premise that was antithetical to any putative Radical-sponsored defense law: that is, that both internal security and external defense were proper areas for the military derivation of *hipótesis de conflicto* and within the normal purview of the military establishment.

Law 16,970, enacted at the beginning of the Onganía military regime in 1966, evidenced the National Security Doctrine, which, in the Argentine

and other Latin American contexts, came to cover both defense and internal security, based on the idea of protecting vital interests of the nation.¹⁷⁰ This defense law provided the military with the authority to be involved either externally or internally in cases where those interests were substantially threatened or order had broken down. Though a little more explicit in its assignment of responsibilities than the Constitution, the law did nothing to limit the military as an autonomous agent in defense matters.

Its successor, Law 21,264, enacted by the junta that had evicted Mrs. Perón from the Presidency in May 1976, was called the Law of National Security. Basic law of the *Proceso* government, anathema to the Radicals as the root of the repression by that military government, it permitted general military intervention in matters of internal security. It established Special Stable War Councils, which dealt with matters of internal order. The net effect of this law from a Radical point of view was that it gave the military *carte blanche* to carry out the Dirty War with no restraining legalities.

But a type of law that had been easy for the military governments to promulgate was exceedingly difficult for the Radical government to legislate. The Radicals themselves were not of one mind on the matter, and they did not control both houses of Congress. Moreover, the more explicit focus of the early Alfonsín administration was not on what the armed forces should do but on how they should be brought to account for what they had already done. Defense and military policy were lower on the political agenda than bringing the military establishment to justice and marginalizing it politically.¹⁷¹

Consequently, the Alfonsín administration had a much better sense of what it did not want to see happen concerning these roles and missions than of what it did want.¹⁷² The government wanted nothing to do with anything that might smack of the hated National Security Doctrine, the guiding principle of the military governments. Therefore, the military was to have no role in internal matters. The administration did not want anything resembling military autonomy, desiring that the changes already made in subordination, such as the empowering of the Minister of Defense and the elimination of the command authority from the Chiefs of Staff, be codified into law. Moreover, through the defense law proposal, it sought to institutionalize the notion of jointness by giving primacy to the Joint Staff as the locus of doctrine, plans and training, and strategy, and not permitting the services to “fight their own wars” nor to be responsible for *hipótesis de conflicto* or *hipótesis de guerra*. Hence, in spite of its importance in any meaningful reform, the defense law was slow in evolving.

Not until August 21, 1985, more than a year and a half into the Alfonsín administration, did the Chamber of Deputies pass the Defense Law as proposed. This version remained before the Senate for over 2 more years and was debated not only by the legislators but also by the chiefs of staff of the army, navy, and air force in their testimony before the Senate Defense Commission in 1986. Their objections centered on the narrow definition of national defense as repelling external aggression, the exclusion of military intelligence agencies from having a role in the internal sector (the Alfonsín administration had “civilianized” the State Information Service, which was dominated by military personnel), and the lack of designation of each service head as the service commander in chief again.¹⁷³ Others argued over whether the very broad powers the Argentine president had to employ armed force in the nation, to whatever end, should be, or could be, delimited by the defense law. The Alfonsín administration, then, sought a law that would definitively establish the division of labor and authority with respect to the military, a very tall order indeed.

The defense law remained in limbo, as practically all attention directed at the military was about the Dirty War and human rights. Reintroduced in the House in a modified version and passed in December 1987, the law finally passed the Senate on April 26, 1988. Two uprisings in the interim (Semana Santa in April 1987 and Monte Caseros) had brought home the effects of the lack of a definitive statute determining the status of the military. Until then, the Senate had ignored the bill (a member of the Senate Defense Committee reported that it met in plenary session an average of only once a year; Congress was rarely a player in defense matters of any sort, most being done under ministerial authority by executive order).¹⁷⁴

The *Ley de Defensa Nacional*¹⁷⁵ established the primacy of the president, the civilian and military nature of the defense establishment and the components thereof (the Ministry of Defense and a National Defense Council), the tasking of the Joint Staff, and the subordinated nature of the Chiefs of Staff and the services. But it was more notable for what it excluded than for what it included. The difference between national defense and internal security was to be permanent; defense was to be concerned only with external aggression (Article 2). Article 4 stated that “internal security will be ruled by a special law,” which was never promulgated during the Alfonsín administration. Moreover, again reflecting what the administration did not want, Article 15 of the law specifically forbade the military intelligence services from working questions concerned with internal policy. The reputed role of the *servicios*, as military intelligence organizations

were pejoratively called, still haunted the Radical and Peronist legislators. The new law abrogated the old ones, particularly Law 16,970, seeking to lay to rest forever the specter of the National Security Doctrine.

Implementing legislation for many aspects of the law were deliberately left for a later time. The National Defense Council had one year to come up with a series of major legislative proposals outlined in Article 46 of the law: organic laws for the armed forces and for defense production, laws for territorial organization and mobilization, organic laws for the *Gendarmería Nacional* and *Prefectura Naval*, a law defining the national intelligence system, and a law concerning state secrets. In other words, Argentina had a defense law that was a basis for defense policy, but provisions for generating an implementing military policy were delayed. Moreover, no date was established for the presentation of a legislative proposal for the special law governing internal security. The matter of response to “internal aggression” was closed to the military but undefined elsewhere. This article in the law was based on the premise, widely held by the Radicals, that no internal aggression was likely, or even possible, against the democratic government. However, less than a year after the law was passed, the Radicals had a rude awakening.

La Tablada

On January 23, 1989, a ferocious armed attack took place at the barracks of the Third Infantry Regiment at La Tablada, a community and garrison in the province of Buenos Aires near the federal capital. The attackers spread leaflets as they assaulted the garrison, decrying “Marxist subversion within the government” and the ruling Radical Party’s “campaign to destroy the army.”¹⁷⁶ Consequently, many initially believed that another military uprising was in progress, seeking to take over a military garrison and proclaim a “new Argentine Army” in the mold attributed to Colonel Mohamed Ali Seineldin, leader of the Villa Martelli uprising a month and a half earlier. Even military leaders not on the immediate scene of the attack initially were fooled. The government thought it was dealing with yet another protest by dissident officers. But before long it understood that this was something far different from the nearly bloodless confrontations of the military dissidents.

The attackers arrived in a beverage truck and eight private vehicles outside the garrison. Conscript soldiers fighting back against the attackers were killed and wounded, outcomes that had been assiduously avoided in the military confrontations. First the Buenos Aires Provincial Police were called to quell the attack, but the attackers had entrenched

themselves in the regiment's mess hall and put up fierce resistance. This was not just another uprising. It was the first attack in force by armed insurgents against an army garrison since the ERP assault on the Monte Chingolo Ordnance Battalion in December 1975, even before the Dirty War era.¹⁷⁷ And it turned out to be more severe than any of the eight similar attacks that occurred during the 1970s.

The actions of the provincial police were insufficient to dislodge the insurgents. Consequently, General Gassino, then Army Chief of Staff, dispatched units of the 10th Motorized Infantry Brigade, the Patricios Infantry Regiment, Military Institute troops, and Commando Unit 601 (Rangers) to relieve the garrison. Under the redistribution of command authority and the provisions of the new Defense Law, however, the Army Chief of Staff had no authority to move his own troops in a situation affecting internal security, even in defense of his own units. Gassino essentially exceeded his formal authority. In an instance of extreme threat, the corporate military institution reacted as it always had, in defense of its own. Horizontal loyalty superseded vertical loyalty, but the legitimacy of Gassino's action would not be seriously questioned by the administration.¹⁷⁸

The battle lasted about 32 hours, but the police, supported by army tank and artillery fire that practically destroyed the installation, eventually overcame the guerrillas. The casualties were staggering: 2 policemen and 8 soldiers dead (including the deputy commander of the regiment, his tongue cut out by the guerrillas), 58 other government soldiers and police wounded, and 28 guerrillas killed. Some 13 insurgents surrendered, and from documents recovered from them at the scene, the real nature of the attack unfolded.

The attackers were identified as belonging to a small Leftist group called *Movimiento Todos por la Patria* (MTP), the All for the Fatherland Movement. Among the attacker dead was Jorge Baños, leader of the movement and former human rights activist. Baños had been a lawyer for Enrique Gorriarán Merlo, a former ERP leader. Some reports linked Gorriarán himself to the attack. Captured documents revealed that the attackers tried to create the impression that the military, in a new uprising, had attacked their own barracks, and that they, the MTP, had acted as a popular resistance to overcome the rebellion. Counting on another groundswell of popular indignation such as had greeted the actual military uprisings, they planned to lead a convoy to the Casa Rosada and call on Alfonsín to put himself at the head of a popular armed movement (the

speculative *tercer movimiento*, following the first under Irigoyen and the second under Perón).

As outlandish as this scenario seems in retrospect, the guerrilla plot and attack were the Alfonsín government's worst nightmare come true. The Alfonsín defense policy implicitly rested on the assumption that a guerrilla attack against any entity of a truly democratic regime was unthinkable. The military had been marginalized *de jure* from involvement in internal matters but had *de facto* been the only force capable of dislodging and defeating the attackers. Worse, it provided the basis for claims by the military to be vindicated in their actions in terms of internal defense in the *Proceso* years. The "special law" indicated in the Defense Law to govern internal security did not yet exist. The legitimacy of the use of military force in the internal environment remained an unsettled question.

The political ramifications were severe. In a nationally televised speech on January 25, 1989, Alfonsín reported that the guerrilla attack was "the most serious and most decisive challenge faced by my administration"—having already experienced three armed military uprisings—and that Argentina faced "armed aggression of irregular ultraleftist forces."¹⁷⁹ He also congratulated the men of the army "who acted with determination and courage to check the action of the criminals."

The fact that the attack occurred only 3 months before the presidential elections in 1989 aroused speculation (Carlos Menem, the Peronist candidate and future president, made statements to the press) that elements in the Alfonsín administration had a hand in the plot in order to short-circuit the election and perpetuate the current Radical administration in power. Several military sources attributed at least tacit support for, and knowledge of, the plot and the consequent attack to Alfonsín administration members who were alumni of *Coordinadora*. In the military view, the leadership of the Radical youth had extreme Leftist leanings and may have seen a resurgence of the armed Leftist movement as the way to follow the Alfonsín regime with some form of revolutionary populism—the *tercer movimiento*.¹⁸⁰

On January 25, Alfonsín issued two decrees to attempt to limit the damage. Decree 82 enjoined the *Procuración General de la Nación* (the Argentine equivalent to the U. S. Attorney General) to conduct an in-depth investigation of the attack.¹⁸¹ Decree 83 acted more directly on defense policy and determination of mission, creating a Security Council composed of the Ministers of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Relations, the Secretary of Intelligence, the Chief of the Joint Staff, and the service

Chiefs of Staff.¹⁸² The Secretary of the Council was to be appointed by the president and would advise him. The stated scope of matters for the Council's consideration included a "strategy for antisubversive action." The Council's inclusion of the top military figures was a specific ratification of military interest and involvement in internal security matters.

A subsequent decree of March 10, 1989, gave substance to the work of the Security Council.¹⁸³ It created a Committee of Internal Security, whose membership included the Minister of Defense and the Chief of the Joint Staff, and it charged the Minister of Defense with maintaining the current situation profile. Although the decree made the police and security forces the first line of defense against internal armed groups, it specifically provided for the intervention of the armed forces when such police and security forces were insufficient, and it allowed the president to designate a military chief of all forces engaged in a specific action. It further provided for intelligence support by all members of the National Intelligence System.

The Alfonsín administration had sought to reform the mission and organization of *estado militar* by changing de jure the legal bases for the relationship of the military institutions to the civilian authorities of government. This effort was consistent with the current of legitimacy upon which the Alfonsín regime's claim to political authority rested: the constitutional current, *Estado de Ley*. But the military organization in reality had changed little. The organizational integrity of the services had not been changed, nor had the joint units that might have created a basis for a truly different structure been formed. The inertia of territorial organization was maintained. The three services still operated basically as three separate entities, reinforcing at least aspirations of autonomy. Although the Ministry of Defense had been accorded a much greater role than previously in establishing defense and military policy, and command authority had been conferred largely on civilians, few understood what that involved in practical terms. The lack of expertise was exacerbated by personnel turbulence, both in the Ministry of Defense and in the armed services, particularly in the army. This impeded translating the de jure provisions of the Alfonsín reform effort concerning mission and organization into de facto guidelines for changing military institutional behavior.

The La Tablada incident illustrated these inconsistencies. The use of military force in an internal political dispute, in circumstances that conformed to the military's beliefs about its proper role in the society, undermined the pretensions of the Alfonsín administration's military and

defense policy. The de facto civil-military relationship remained, in the mission and organization senses, based on competing claims to authority. Civilian control had not been definitively achieved.

Resources and Industry

Although organizational and legal constructs are fundamental to defining *estado militar* and establishing legitimacy of authority, nothing can be guaranteed without resources and a resource base. Control of resources and how and by whom they are used was key to Alfonsín's reform effort.

Money

The ability to exert a claim on the public purse had always been an important attribute of the Argentine military establishment. Because defense is considered an inherent obligation, indeed a duty, of government, the amount of public resources that the military could command has been crucial to its political power. The military claim on resources grew during the 1970s and early 1980s to considerable proportions, hitting an all-time high of 29.2 percent of government expenditures in 1980 for the armed forces and the security forces (Border Troops and Coast Guard) alone, not including the Ministry of Defense itself.¹⁸⁴ This figure represented 4.3 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), which with a similar figure of 4.7 percent in 1981 would set high levels of the total national output devoted to the military. This trend reflected the military's ability to obtain resources both to press the antisubversive campaign of 1976–1979 and to engage in a military buildup in the face of perceived threats from Chile (the Beagle Channel dispute and border problems in the south).

Clearly, then, securing and exercising control over the budget of the military establishment was a major way to change the civil-military relationship. The election of 1983 and the concomitant restoration of Congress imbued the Alfonsín administration with authority under the Constitution to exercise control over public expenditure. No longer could a military president in effect ratify and fund the military's requests, and Alfonsín did not intend to do so.

The calendar year 1984 revealed the Alfonsín administration's plans for controlling military power by severely curtailing military expenditures. Pleading difficult economic times and serious needs elsewhere, Defense Minister Borrás took a budget request to Congress almost 40 percent smaller than that of 1983 in terms of the percentage of GDP.¹⁸⁵ Although numbers varied depending upon what one included as the military's budget, the impact on the services was very severe. Increasing the impact

Figure 2. Relationship between the Armed Forces and Security Forces Budget and the Gross Domestic Product (1970–1988)



Source: Rosendo Fraga, *La cuestión militar, 1987–1989* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1989), 133.

of these reduced funding levels were the effects of high inflation and late adoption of the budget for the year. By the time the money arrived in the military's coffers, its purchasing power had eroded even further.

Figure 2 shows the differences in resource allocation of the military and civilian governments. The amount of money available to the armed forces dropped, reaching a low point of some 2.4 percent of GDP in 1987 and 1988. This amount is not much different from the period 1970–1974, during which the average of GDP was 2.3 percent.¹⁸⁶ But during the years of the *Proceso* government, the military establishment grew considerably larger than the peacetime one of the early 1970s, and it had spent billions, much of it borrowed money, on equipment and other military wants. Debt service, strictly imputed, consumed most of the military budget. Little money was available for salaries and operations, not to mention pensions for an aging, top-heavy military. And it had the consequence of reinforcing inertia in terms of restructuring, the linchpin of reform, especially in the army.

The military most directly felt the budget reductions at all levels of the hierarchy in salaries. The Alfonsín government unlinked the military

pay scale from that of the judiciary, by far the most rewarding of the national pay scales, under which a lieutenant general made the same salary as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The military salaries became the same as the normal civil servant scale, a situation that severely reduced the purchasing power of military members. The subjective comparison was even worse when military salaries in the Alfonsín years were compared with those of the *Proceso*, when a grossly overvalued peso meant that a general was making the nominal equivalent of about U.S. \$4,000 a month (plus numerous perks). In the Alfonsín years, he was fortunate if he earned the nominal equivalent of \$400.

The salary crisis also had severe effects on the operations of the military. Unable to live on what they were paid, many military members, including officers, took second jobs—a circumstance unheard of in Argentine military life. Participants in the 1987 and 1988 uprisings cited the resulting drop in prestige in the minds of military officers as a basis for the revolts.

The effects on operations also were severe. Most of the budget went toward paying the restrained salary schedule and servicing the military's enormous debt. No money was available for training or even day-to-day operations. Hence, flying hours and steaming time were reduced, and training exercises for military units became few and far between. Maintenance, especially in the army, became sporadic. For example, 90 percent of the army's tanks reportedly were out of service at one time due to maintenance deficiencies.¹⁸⁷

Delays in receiving such money as the Congress and administration would eventually make available to the services also caused serious problems and hardships. Final budgets were approved late in the year, and the value of the money had been reduced by inflation. Consequently the army, in particular, fell behind in its payments to suppliers, often by as much as 180 days. This led in at least one instance to a boycott by army suppliers.¹⁸⁸ As time went on, suppliers inflated prices in anticipation of being paid late in devalued currency, a practice that further reduced available funds for the services.¹⁸⁹ By the end of 1984, many units were on a half-day schedule, stopping work before noon because the military could not provide meals. Even the army headquarters went on reduced time to save money.¹⁹⁰ The beleaguered military wound down, almost coming to a standstill and unable to do much of anything except struggle for its own survival. Such a state of affairs provided fertile soil for dissidents who, beset for other reasons, would seek redress through confrontation.

Manpower

Other than money, manpower was the most visible measure of strength for the military. Because of the cadre-conscript organization of the military, most of its purported strength lay in the 1-year conscripts who were inducted under the obligatory service laws then in effect (a lottery each year drew from the year group of all 18-year-old males eligible to serve). Although the navy and air force inducted some conscripts—usually those willing to serve longer terms to avoid the army—it was the army that depended on the conscription to fill out its far-flung units dispersed throughout Argentina.

The normal size of an annual army induction in the latter half of the 20th century had been some 65,000 conscripts. During the *Proceso* government, to counter perceived threats in the south and to create new units in even more remote places, the total rose to some 78,000. In 1983, the year before the Alfonsín regime, 64,640 reportedly were conscripted, near the historical average.¹⁹¹ A comparison of this level of manning and that of the Alfonsín years is provided in table 4. (For the 15 or so years before the *Proceso* period buildup, the Argentine Army was estimated to have 5,000 officers, 15,000 NCOs, and 65,000 conscripts. The navy had about 32,000 in all ranks, and the air force, about 17,000.)

The Alfonsín regime's desire to minimize military presence and influence, coupled with the budget drop in 1984, put heavy pressure on the military to substantially reduce the number of conscripts called to active duty in 1985. Even before that, in 1984, the army was obliged to release many of its conscripts early, both because it could not feed and clothe them and because the president authorized the Army Chief of Staff to let them go, a clear expression of his desires in the matter. Many of the 62,902 inducted in 1984 were thus out of the army in a matter of months.

After 1984, the conscription of young males into the army experienced a nearly 55 percent diminution, hitting a low point of 24,921, then leveling off near 30,000. Hence, the army under Alfonsín was about 60 percent the size of its historical norm but was still dispersed in the same number of units with a deteriorating armament, equipment, supply, and maintenance situation. By 1988, the total size of the armed forces was estimated at 78,000, or some 60 percent of their former normal strength.¹⁹²

Despite the diminished number of active-duty members in the armed forces, the few efforts to change the basis upon which recruiting for the bulk of the manpower was done were unsuccessful. Law 4,031, passed in 1901, remained the legal underpinning of the cadre-conscript system by

Table 4. Total Army Personnel (1983-1989)

Category	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Officers	6,154	5,891	5,804	5,857	5,900	5,895	5,878
Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs)	24,805	23,536	24,182	23,575	22,583	22,510	22,494
Volunteers	457	298	228	262	144	210	290
Civilian Personnel	13,682	13,299	11,847	11,504	10,114	12,100	12,318
Conscripts	64,640	62,902	35,327	24,930	24,921	28,343	29,169
Candidates (NCO)	4,598	4,488	3,470	2,977	2,187	2,051	2,072
Cadets (Officer)	1,529	1,154	1,164	887	781	980	1,156
Military High School Students	3,919	3,726	3,569	3,322	3,037	3,080	3,212
Total	119,784	115,294	85,591	73,314	69,667	75,169	76,589
Difference (-) (1983/other years)		4,490	34,193	46,470	50,177	44,615	43,195
Percent Difference (-)		3.75	28.54	38.79	41.83	37.24	36.06

Source: *Cronista Comercial* and *La Nueva Provincia* newspapers, as found in Rosendo Fraga, *La cuestión militar, 1987-1989* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1989), 173.

which the Argentine armed forces were manned. Although some proposals to move toward a voluntary service system were made periodically during the Alfonsín years, only one real effort was made to do so: a navy pilot program inaugurated in mid-1987 to recruit volunteers for some technical billets. But the program was only a modest one, and it did not meet expectations. Navy Chief of Staff Admiral Arosa, assessing the program a year later, said only 500 of the 700 candidates turned out to be medically qualified. Moreover, their incorporation occurred at the time of the army uprising at Monte Caseros, and another 200 had second thoughts. Only 300 made it to the units of the navy.¹⁹³ So volunteers, outside of the officer and NCO cadres, remained a handful of former conscripts who decided to extend their enlistment (about 1 percent in the army). Voluntary military service would have to await another administration.

Equipment and Armament

The other visible manifestations of military power were armament and equipment. The *Proceso* government had spent several billion dollars on armaments for the Argentine military and contracted for much more. Before Alfonsín took over, the Bignone interim government continued contracting, especially to make up for losses the Argentine armed forces suffered in the Malvinas conflict.

With the advent of the Alfonsín administration, this effort was severely curtailed. Within 2 years, the Ministry of Defense practically halted arms imports, devoting what money it had to fulfilling contracts already in force. Table 5 details Argentina's arms imports from 1973 to 1986.

A comparison of the Alfonsín and *Proceso* years makes clear the precipitous decline in arms importation. In addition to the efforts of the administration, outside actors prevented some contracts from being fulfilled—most notably, British pressure on the U.S. government stalled the Argentine Navy contract with Israel for 12 Skyhawk A4Q navy fighters, a U.S.-designed airplane with U. S. engines. The Argentine military had to rely more on internal means to provide for equipment needs, which would affect the services quite differently. The navy was the most able to sustain a reequipment and modernization effort. Continuing a fairly robust construction program begun in the early 1970s (with the laying down of the Type-42 missile destroyer *Santísima Trinidad*), it sought to incorporate new vessels into the fleet, including submarines and frigates, built in Argentine shipyards under contract with foreign companies for design and machinery. The air force, although not able to build its own fighters and interceptors, was able to maintain what it had acquired and to supplement

Table 5. Arms Imports (1973–1986)

Year	Millions of Dollars (1983 constant value)
1973	98
1974	72
1975	52
1976	82
1977	62
1978	528
1979	660
1980	254
1981	560
1982	303
1983	975
1984	435
1985	140
1986	95

Source: Ernesto López, "Gasto militar en la Argentina: 1970–1986," in *Defensa y democracia, un debate entre civiles y militares*, coord. Gustavo Druetta et al. (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, Editores, 1990), 325.

its fleet with a few locally produced aircraft. Although the army had been least affected by the loss of major end items in the Malvinas conflict, it had a very difficult time even acquiring spare parts for its aging inventory. It was not alone with this problem. The navy sought to sell its two British Type-42 destroyers, one of which had been built in Argentina with British assistance before the Malvinas war. British policy had made the acquisition of spare parts virtually impossible.¹⁹⁴ The air force, cut off from spare parts for many of its planes by British pressure on the United States, also turned inward, and Air Force Chief of Staff Ernesto Crespo bragged that the force had developed a formidable in-house maintenance capability for its foreign-built planes.¹⁹⁵

Things were little better at the Ministry of Defense level. Although the MOD had the power of the purse (within the limits set by the Congress), the lack of civilian manpower with a true appreciation of defense needs was evident. The Minister of Defense could apportion smaller

shares of the total defense budget to the services (the amount of the defense budget retained at the Ministry of Defense level would grow from 24 percent in 1981 to 33 percent in 1988, an increase of over one third).¹⁹⁶ He also could change the ratio of monies among the services (the army's share of the service-designated money, historically the largest, fell from 40 percent in 1981 to 33 percent in 1988; the navy's share rose from 35 percent to 40 percent, and the air force posted a small gain, 25 percent to 27 percent),¹⁹⁷ but the path to accomplishing a major restructuring of the armed forces, essential to reform, remained unclear. The funds reserved for the MOD were consumed by paying for its own personnel and material needs, financing joint activities including the Joint Staff, and servicing the defense-related debt.

The mismatch between operational requirements, as the military services had been used to elaborating them and carrying them out, and the resources available was considerable. Each service had always defined its own mission and then had sought, again on its own authority, the resources necessary to do it. Attempts by the administration to change this state of affairs were important politically, as they tried to subordinate the military services to the Ministry of Defense and to put control of the resources in civilian hands. But there were few knowledgeable civilian hands into which to put such control, and there was no system for reconciling the mission-resources dilemma.

In 1986, the Alfonsín administration finally agreed to accept outside help. In that year, the Ministry of Defense enacted a pilot program of the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System used by the United States military.¹⁹⁸ This system constituted the major contribution of the United States, distrusted for its role in the Malvinas war, to the civil-military relations equation in Argentina during the Alfonsín years.¹⁹⁹ The system stresses jointness, multiyear planning, a systematic approach to defense missions and needs, and clear civilian control from the president down through the chain of command. Although the system was fully implemented by the end of 1989, it would remain for a future administration to assess the fruits, or lack of them, of Ministry-level allocation of resources. The final stage required linking programs and budgets to strategic military planning, and the experience of the Joint Staff and the relationship of the services to it, added to the vagaries of the new Defense Law, left the Argentine military still unable to distinguish between wants and needs.

Industry

On December 23, 1983, 2 weeks after his inauguration, Alfonsín attempted to subordinate yet another valuable resource of the military to direct civilian control. He issued Decree 280, which transferred *Fabricaciones Militares* from the army's jurisdiction to that of the Ministry of Defense. The Ministry already had majority participation in a number of joint ventures with other state entities or private interests, including the naval shipyards *Talleres Navales Dársena Norte* (TANDANOR), *Astilleros y Fábricas Navales del Estado* (AFNE), and *Astilleros Domecq García*; the medium tank factory *Tanque Argentino Mediano Sociedad del Estado* (TAMSE); electronics concerns; and a small forging plant. But *Fabricaciones Militares*, with its 14 subsidiary factories and its majority financial interest in the vast *Sociedad Mixta Siderúrgica Argentina* (SOMISA) steelworks, its iron supplier *Hierro Patagónico Sierra Grande* (HIPASAM), and substantial financial interests in a complex of chemical concerns, was the linchpin of the military-industrial complex.²⁰⁰ General Savio began this enterprise in 1941. The *Escuela Superior Técnica* (Higher Technical School), established in 1930, trained generations of engineers and scientists for the army. These specialists ran the military-industrial complex of the army, and large numbers of retired officers had seats on the boards of the various mixed companies and in the employ of *Fabricaciones Militares* itself.

The *Fabricaciones Militares* complex now fell under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Defense for Production, one of the principal civilian assistants of the Minister of Defense. His task was not only to assure civilian control of the military-industrial complex but also to decide how to reduce the economic effects of this vast organization in Argentina. A civilian was appointed to head *Fabricaciones Militares* (a billet historically filled by an Argentine Army major general), and efforts were made to extend civilian control down to the operating levels. But the army engineers that ran the organization on a day-to-day basis were well entrenched, both organizationally and in terms of their specific knowledge of the operations of the 14 factories. Examples of the tension between the civilians and the military included a Defense Ministry decision that *Fabricaciones Militares* would be externally audited, and a minicrisis occasioned by the reshuffling of the *Fabricaciones Militares* board so that it consisted of four civilians and two military officers (apparently provoking a near revolt among the rank-and-file military officers at the institution).²⁰¹ In the end, the operators, including such key positions as the Division Chiefs for Production and Development and the managers of the factories, remained military.²⁰² This

outcome allayed a major concern among military officers that they would be commanded within a military institution by civilians, which was prohibited by the fundamental military statute (Law 19,101).

Breaking the military hold on the military-industrial complex, which was a major contributor to the gross national product (GNP), was not easy. The complex included *Fabricaciones Militares*, the other Ministry of Defense holdings, and the air force's aircraft production companies in Córdoba, which did not come under MOD in Alfonsín's time. According to a former Secretary of Defense for Technical Planning in the MOD, two approaches were tried, and both would fall short.²⁰³

The first attempt was to set up a holding company to act as an umbrella organization for all military industries. This idea surfaced as a proposal for a bill in April 1985, seeking to establish a "General Savio State Corporation." This law would have repealed Law 12,709 of October 9, 1941, the founding statute of *Fabricaciones Militares*. The holding company was to be able to enter into negotiations for all weapons and equipment purchases and all exports and service contracts.²⁰⁴ This idea was found to be unworkable in 1985. Defense Minister Jaunarena later sought to resurrect the idea as a vehicle for privatizing military holdings. *Fabricaciones Militares* continued to exist as a separate entity—as would the aircraft production facilities, still under the air force—and the various companies in which the MOD had a financial interest went on as before.

The other route considered to diminish direct military control over industries was privatization, particularly for those companies run or controlled by *Fabricaciones Militares* whose production was not military in nature, such as the chemical companies. Nonetheless, the Alfonsín administration was reluctant to tamper with an economic asset, albeit one that lost money (as did almost all state enterprises in Argentina), and one that was so visible in the economy, providing substantial employment and products. Moreover, in a fragile economy, the amount of private sector interest in purchasing state enterprises that might not make sense competitively was not overwhelming. Consequently, when Defense Minister Jaunarena finally organized a series of proposals under the Defense Production Secretariat to sell five of the petrochemical companies, the naval shipyards, and the tank factory, there was no rush of buyers for them. By the end of the Alfonsín administration, only one company, Atanor S.A.M., a petrochemical concern, had been sold.²⁰⁵

The air force arranged the only successful efforts at joint ventures with private interests. It worked closely with such firms as Germany's

Dornier and Brazil's Embraer through an aerospace joint venture firm *Fábrica Argentina de Materiales Aeroespaciales*. This joint venture produced the IA-63 trainer, which sold well abroad, and led to the co-production with Brazil of a small 19-passenger transport (which debuted in 1990, after the Alfonsín government). Not only were aircraft a success economically for Argentina, but also when Defense Minister Jaunarena was resurrecting the idea of *Fabricaciones Militares* as an overall agency under the MOD, he noted that the air force was taking similar (albeit independent) action.²⁰⁶

The efforts of *Fabricaciones Militares* to sell abroad were not very successful; the enterprise offered little that was competitive, and Foreign Minister Dante Caputo blocked most sales anyway. The Ministry of Defense had little more luck with *Tanque Argentino Mediano* (TAM), an Argentine medium tank produced by the wholly owned firm of TAMSE. Once the needs of the Argentine Army were met, efforts were made to sell a number of units. But the eventual price at which the tank and its derivatives were offered abroad was set too high, and that, coupled with other restrictions, meant that there were no takers. An offer from Ecuador, which was considering replacing its dated AMX-13 with TAM, was headed off by Alfonsín himself in conversations with Ecuador's president.²⁰⁷

The Alfonsín administration's efforts at reforming the military production capabilities of the armed forces had minimal results. The major role of the military-industrial complex in the economy mitigated efforts to reduce the military component of its direction, as evidenced by the retention of military personnel in key positions. Moreover, two-thirds of the production of the 14 factories of *Fabricaciones Militares* went to civilian uses anyway, and pressure was considerable to leave well enough alone.²⁰⁸ Successful programs, such as the air force's aircraft construction in Córdoba, continued with a substantial degree of autonomy; marginal programs, such as the tank program, found no buyers for products or facilities, but the capabilities remained intact and remained a part of the military-industrial complex. The navy eventually suffered the same fate; it had invested heavily in expensive submarine and surface vessel facilities and equipment and almost had to suspend building in the 1980s due to lack of funds.

Overall, the attempted reallocation of resources by the Radical government did not significantly further the reform aims of the Alfonsín administration. Such adjustments as did occur seemed the result as much of exogenous factors, such as debt and lack of manpower, as of conscious

policy. Although the armed forces clearly were obliged to “make do with less,” their basic *modus operandi* remained almost unchanged, and little restructuring that would alter the *de facto* patterns of subordination, control, and influence occurred. The military, as its leaders professed many times, recognized the dire economic situation of the country and the need to constrain public expenditures in general. Indeed, they proclaimed themselves supporters of a smaller, but better, force.²⁰⁹

But the draconian nature of the budget cuts—particularly as reflected in salary cuts and substantially reduced standards of living for military personnel, especially junior officers and NCOs—engendered discontent that would result not in a “smaller, better” force but in a “smaller, bitter” one. The armed forces saw lowered funding levels and the reduction of conscription as attacks on their institution and as efforts to reduce their prestige by undermining their standard of living and reducing their capabilities for self-preservation. The services responded by seeking to take care of their own (for example, cadre strength in the army changed little in the Alfonsín period, despite a huge drop in conscript levels, and units continued at skeleton strengths rather than being disbanded). Attitudes toward civilian authority remained confrontational, and the legitimacy of that authority continued to be questioned. The disputes over resources manifested themselves concurrently in the severe confrontations taking place over the military’s past actions. Reducing the military’s resources was seen not as reform, but as retribution.

Education and Socialization

Attempts to reform military missions and structures made apparent the visible manifestations of the civil-military relationship. But less tangible was the reform of mentality, or of the attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments, and the loyalties that they engender, that undergirded the military establishment and informed civil-military relations.

The focus of establishing new patterns of military socialization, from the top of the hierarchy down, was the military education system. This system, which had existed for decades, was responsible for the mentality in the military at the time Alfonsín took office. Understanding this will assist in examining the two major parts of the Radical administration’s attempts to change *estado militar*: altering military socialization patterns and conducting a review of the past.

The military education system in Argentina is one of the most complete in Latin America. It begins with a system of military high schools (of

which there were six army, one air force, and four navy during the Alfonsín era)²¹⁰ and continues with the service academies. The oldest of these, the army's *Colegio Militar de la Nación*, dates to 1869. The academies are the sole source of officers for regular line and staff (excluding doctors, lawyers, and other professionals) in all three services. Throughout an officer's career, more service-run schools educate the lower, middle, and higher grade officers and NCOs. Consequently, ever-higher levels of military schooling continue reinforcing an officer's initial socialization.

The Alfonsín administration realized that instilling a change in military attitudes was essential for the long-term effectiveness of democratic, civilian government. But although the need for considerable changes in the military educational system was evident, the actual changes in the system were relatively few, and those that were made were left almost entirely in the hands of the armed forces (with the exception of the creation by the Ministry of Defense, through the Joint Staff, of the Senior Joint Staff Course for higher level officers). The National Defense School (*Escuela de Defensa Nacional*), with a student body of both military and civilian middle-range government officials, received a civilian director under the Alfonsín administration, and more prestige and consideration were sought for it as the highest level educational institution directly subordinate to the Ministry of Defense.

Efforts to close the military high schools (as one Radical former functionary of the Alfonsín government said, such military training should not begin at 12 years old)²¹¹ or turn them over to the Ministry of Education, allegedly as a budget-saving measure, were unsuccessful. Consequently, a portion of the high-school population of Argentina continued to receive what some Radical politicians considered indoctrination by the military. (Perhaps it was just too hard a sell; Alfonsín himself was a graduate of *Liceo Militar San Martín*.)

But the main focus of the Alfonsín administration's efforts to change the military attitudes was on the service academies. It sought curriculum changes that not only would update the curriculum to be more technologically and scientifically proficient and "professional," but also would imbue the cadets and midshipmen with ideas in consonance with democratic government and the marginalization of the military from politics. However, no corresponding change in structure occurred. Each service maintained control of the details of the curriculum change at the academies. For example, the head of the *Colegio Militar de la Nación* from 1983 to 1987, General Deimundo Piñeiro, tried to redefine the concept of

military authority and command, institute a modern, scientific curriculum similar to a college or university, and imbue the cadets with a sense of realism concerning the changed political circumstances.²¹² His goal was not a democratic army—although many in the Radical administration would have preferred a “citizen-soldier” military, or as some officers phrased it, a “sovietized” military, perhaps even with unions on the European social-democratic model.²¹³ Deimundo Piñeiro wanted “an army that knows how to live in a democratic system.”²¹⁴ But as the sole-source procurement mechanism, the service academies providing all line and staff officers still inculcated the aspiring officers with a value system in which military beliefs had primacy.

The other main initiative was to civilianize some of both form and content, in the education of officers particularly. In 1986, Army Chief of Staff General Ríos Ereñú presented a plan, the Career Plans for Permanent Cadres of the Army, that sought to incorporate features such as degrees and university courses into the army curriculum for officers at all levels.²¹⁵ But no equivalent of the Reserve Officers Training Corps was achieved in Argentina. The army schools continued to be self-contained, the navy and air force arranged to expose their cadets to civilian college-level courses through cooperating universities, and efforts were made to have appointments to the faculty at the academies made by virtue of competitive examination. But no concerted effort was made to move these procedures to the Ministry of Defense.²¹⁶ The furthering of “comprehension” between military and civilian was occurring on terms that the services could sustain without real reform. Consequently, relationships between military and civilian institutions of higher learning remained cozy and inbred, and retired officers continued to dominate the civilian faculties of the military educational establishment, particularly those of the higher level war schools.

Clearly, none of these alterations could affect the socialization of those who had already passed through the military educational system. The changes caused consternation among the faculty and students of the military institutions, and many viewed them as another aspect of civilian attack on these institutions. The attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments inculcated by the military educational and socialization process for generations found their most salient expression not in questions of reform that related to what the military would learn or do in the future, but what it had learned or done in the past.

Review of the Past, Rebellion, and Reconciliation under Alfonsín

President Alfonsín sought to establish new patterns of subordination and control of, and influence over, the military based on the legitimacy of the constitutional, civilian government in matters of defense and military policy. Undertaking such a task was itself daunting enough in a society in which military application of force to establish either external or internal order and governance was accepted as a matter of fact. But in the Argentine case, the new government was obliged to look both forward, toward efforts to establish civilian supremacy, and backward, at history and its own pledges from the election of 1983 to hold the military establishment accountable for the actions of its forces under the *Proceso* government. This contest over primacy in the relationship between the civilian authorities and the military establishment centered on the Dirty War, the antisubversive operations of 1976–1979.

Legacy of the Dirty War

The military and the Radical government had very different perceptions about the conduct and the consequences of these operations. The military saw the antisubversive operations as a real war, waged against guerrilla bands that were ideologically communist and externally supported. The armed forces documented 21,642 terrorist acts from 1969 to 1979 that were said to have resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 civilians and hundreds of soldiers and police officers.²¹⁷ Acting under orders promulgated by the civilian government of María Estela Martínez de Perón, the military had succeeded in annihilating the guerrilla bands that had

plagued the country since the late 1960s, especially the ERP and the *Montoneros*, the extremist youth offshoot of the Peronists. In the military view, this war was necessary, indeed crucial, in turning back the forces of anti-Christian, anti-Western totalitarianism that threatened the Argentine way of life. The armed forces felt that the cause was just and obligatory, the legitimate execution of the mission of the military in Argentina. The law of force had the force of law.²¹⁸

For the new Radical government, which saw the war quite differently, the focus of the antisubversive operation was not the extermination of the guerrilla bands, but the concurrent annihilation of thousands of others caught in the military dragnet. These were the *desaparecidos*, people tagged with the all-inclusive title of *subversivos*. For the Radicals, the military was not out to eliminate subversion, in the narrow sense of overcoming armed aggression by small groups, but to eliminate subversives, who were all those who challenged in any way the *Proceso* government and its military underpinnings. They believed General Ibérico Saint-Jean when he said in 1977, "First we will kill all the subversives; then . . . we will kill their sympathizers; then . . . those who remain indifferent, and finally we will kill the undecided ones."²¹⁹ More than a few members of the Radical government had had relatives (for example, Minister of Interior Enrique Nosiglia's sister) who were caught in the military campaign to break the back of armed resistance.²²⁰ Many civilians regarded the active involvement of the military intelligence services, as well as the then-military-dominated State Information Service, as the activity of right-wing death squads. Unsubstantiated but widely believed estimates of the number of *desaparecidos* reached 30,000 as the administration took office. (Although this was more than three times the number generally accepted later, such figures contributed to the highly charged atmosphere in which accounting for the past occurred.) As a result, the Radical promise to seek justice in the matter of the antisubversive operations was infused with a sense of the need for condemnation, retribution, and punishment.

Consequently, the military was under no illusions as to what might happen once the civilian government was in power. Even before Alfonsín's election, the Bignone government tried to preempt the actions of the successor regime by according amnesty both to persons guilty of terrorism and subversion and to those who tried to suppress such activities.²²¹ This act was, in effect, a self-amnesty for the military, which hoped to get the matter of the consequences of the antisubversive operation off the table before the new government came to power.

Sweeping Changes

That was not to be. Three days after taking office, Alfonsín issued Decree 158, submitting to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the highest military tribunal, the nine members of the three military juntas that had formed the *Proceso* government, not just the first two as he had promised during the campaign.²²² They were to be tried under military jurisdiction for homicide, illegal detention, and torture. In January, a similar decree was issued for General Ramón Camps, who, outside of the juntas, was the number-one target for human rights violations allegedly committed while he was Buenos Aires Provincial Police Chief.²²³

Moreover, Alfonsín declared the Bignone-era law of amnesty null and void. This action had the net effect of returning the cases against alleged terrorists and guerrillas to the normal legal channels. The military, on the other hand, was opened to charges and summary court action in military courts.

But the most far-reaching change that Alfonsín, acting through the Congress, made was Law 23,049 modifying the Code of Military Justice.²²⁴ This law struck at the heart of *estado militar*, seeking to end virtual military autonomy in accountability of military members before the law. Of the new law's many provisions, most germane to the civil-military relationship was Article 10, which provided for ex post facto judgment by the Supreme Council of the actions of military personnel and security personnel under their jurisdiction at the time, provided that such actions occurred between March 24, 1976, and September 26, 1983 (during the *Proceso* regime up to the Bignone-era law granting amnesty) and that these actions were related to alleged crimes committed in the repression of terrorism. Moreover, it provided that the rulings of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces could be appealed, or, if the Council did not act within 6 months, could be referred to the jurisdiction of the Federal Appeals Courts. In addition, it provided that common crimes—those not military in nature under the Code but committed by military personnel—would be handled by civilian courts. The military regarded this provision as devastating, as rank interference in internal discipline, and as an example of setting one level of the military against another.²²⁵

The situation that the Alfonsín government presented with these actions was extremely disturbing to the military. Although Alfonsín had left the actual process in military hands (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), the tone of the documents—especially Decree 158, with its categorical denunciations of the activities of the military under the three juntas—

was that guilt had already been determined and that all that remained was the punishment.²²⁶ And the condemnation was quite political in nature; the accused, at least these nine high-ranking officers, were leaders of the government during the antisubversive operations as well as leaders of the military services. And the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, formerly the final arbiter of military justice, was reduced essentially to a court of first instance, subject to review by the Federal Appeals Courts. In the view of the officers, this assault on military rights and privileges was harsh, vindictive, judgmental, and wrong.²²⁷

The military never admitted that the trials of the nine junta members were anything but illegal and unconstitutional (much later, military members and their sympathizers wrote long articles and gave interviews pointing out the lack of legal grounding and the denial of due process that they believed characterized those trials). Had the matter ended there, as Alfonsín and others had implied that it would with the two decrees naming specific individuals, the imminent civil-military confrontation might have been avoided.²²⁸ But Law 23,049, which modified the Code of Military Justice, opened the door to hundreds of accusers against large numbers of military personnel and security force personnel. The law stated: “It will not be necessary in these cases that an indictment be drawn up, and the trial (before the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) will be initiated by accusation or by the Council *sua sponte*.”²²⁹ This permitted an official commission, the National Commission about the Disappearance of Persons (*Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas*, or CONADEP), to gather evidence to support that the military during the antisubversive operations had carried out a vast program of repression on ideological grounds against innocents, not just a counter guerrilla war as the military contended. The law energized the human rights organizations to begin accusing hundreds of officers of violations that could now be brought before the military bar.

Events reached their nadir for the military within 6 months of the publication of this law. In July 1984, as a portent of things to come, six human rights organizations gave the Senate committee considering armed forces promotions a list of 896 officers whom they accused of having committed human rights violations during the previous decade.²³⁰ But in late September the full effect of the difference in perceptions was made clear by two events and their consequences that would condition civil-military relations until the end of Alfonsín’s term and beyond.

On September 20, 1984, CONADEP submitted its report to the administration. The document was the unapologetic product of those seeking to bring the military to justice for the purpose of condemnation and punishment (CONADEP, led by leftist writer and human rights activist Ernesto Sábato, and including others of similar orientation, made no pretense of impartiality; no military voice was heard in the Commission). The report, entitled *Nunca Más* (Never Again), included the testimony of family and friends of the disappeared and exposition of scores of alleged detention centers. CONADEP estimated that some 9,000 persons, not 30,000, had constituted the disappeared (even that lower figure remains disputed; *desaparecidos* kept turning up, with documented cases in Mexico, France, and Holland), and that 340 detention centers had existed.²³¹ It opened 7,380 files on victims and prepared 1,086 files for use in cases denouncing military personnel for crimes during the antisubversive campaign. The commission excoriated the military for having carried out a program of extreme repression. And by this time, more than 200 cases were already in the hands of the Supreme Council. The military, almost en masse, regarded the whole process conducted by CONADEP as one of extraordinary and wholesale condemnation instead of impartial investigation.²³²

The other signal event of this time was the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces report that it could reach no conclusion about the nine junta members and therefore could not hand down sentences within the time frame prescribed by Law 23,049, even with an extension that had been granted. But beyond that, the Supreme Council made clear what the military position on the antisubversive struggle would be. In its note submitted to the National Federal Criminal Appellate Court, which had jurisdiction in the event of no conclusion, the Council stated that the antisubversive operations had been perfectly legal “from the viewpoint of form and substance” and that the accused (the nine junta members plus Camps) could only be indirectly charged with malfeasance.²³³ Furthermore, it impugned the evidence gathered by the human rights organizations as self-serving and probably collaborative. On this basis, the Supreme Council pleaded insufficient evidence and an inability to arrive at the truth.

The Supreme Council report “fell like a bombshell,” and the effects were immediate.²³⁴ The Federal Appellate Court asked for the documentation on the cases for perusal, anticipating (correctly) that the Supreme Council would not meet the October 11 deadline for a verdict. The Supreme Council in a separate note asked Defense Minister Borrás to stem the tide of complaints that came after its announcement that it would not

convict the military juntas and Camps. But Borrás replied that if the Council had trouble with criticism, including slander, it too had recourse to the courts. An outraged General Tomás Sánchez de Bustamante, the head of the Supreme Council, led the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to resign en masse. The trials of the nine junta members continued in a civilian court, but they did not open until April 22, 1985.

Although these trials and the attendant activities of the human rights organizations (nine separate organizations, plus CONADEP, competed and cooperated for attention in this arena) dominated public attention in the early part of the Alfonsín administration, two other trends discernable in the patterns of civil-military relations proved crucial in their later evolution. One was the increasing incidence of military figures taking issue with what many in the armed forces believed was a deliberate campaign to undermine the military's prestige and position in Argentine society. Initially confined to a few public statements by generals—such as one by General Aguado Benítez in January 1984, which prompted a reprimand and a “gag rule” by the administration—personnel at all levels of the military, active and retired, increasingly took up the counterattack against the human rights organizations and the media's views of things. The core of the counterattack was that the military had fought and won a war against armed internal aggression but that the aggression was continuing against the armed forces in the guise of a human rights campaign. The charges and accusations of the human rights organizations and CONADEP were simply the latest phase of the subversion, intended to win off the battlefield what had not been won on it. Military officers labeled younger members of the Radical Party in government, often tied to *Coordinadora*, as *subversivos vergonzantes* (shameful subversives) bent on destroying the military from within the government.²³⁵ Other public expressions of alarm and resistance to the idea of putting the military institution in the dock along with hundreds of its officers surfaced as early as April 1984, in remarks by Army Chief of Staff Arguindegui and a group of senior army and air force officers.²³⁶

The second trend was embodied in indications by Alfonsín and some of his top advisors, such as Defense Minister Borrás, that the early outpouring of demands to indict the entire military establishment and to punish hundreds of its officers for criminal misconduct eventually would have to be restrained, that reconciliation would have to come. The clear implication of the party platform and early public pronouncements of the president-elect was that justice should be meted out only to the juntas, and

even then just to the first two.²³⁷ But by the time the Code of Military Justice revisions were passed, the call for an accounting clearly had spread far beyond those limits. Nonetheless, as early as March 1984, Alfonsín publicly indicated that “a soldier must discharge his duties by obeying the orders of his commander, the commander must in turn be willing to adequately discharge the mission entrusted to him by law.”²³⁸ He tempered this allusion to what became known as “due obedience” in this and other speeches by referring frequently to the necessity for the rule of law, the establishing of the *Estado de Ley*. He also struck themes of reconciliation and “putting aside divisions,” as in his Flag Day speech of June 1984.²³⁹ In the first of several speeches delivered at the annual Armed Forces Comradeship Day dinner, Alfonsín averred his belief that the men in uniform had committed “errors, serious errors” but that these errors should be recognized “without looking backward in a revanchist spirit.”²⁴⁰

But for many months, the public outcry led by the human rights organizations drowned out any other observations on military actions in the antisubversive campaign. Barely noticed was the circulation in August 1984 of an anonymous flyer in the Campo de Mayo army garrison bearing the name of Major Barreiro (the attempted arrest of whom would touch off the Semana Santa uprising in 1987). Although apocalyptic in tone, the flyer was prophetic in content:

We, the officers and noncommissioned officers of the nation’s Armed Forces, guardians of the nation’s arms, under the sign of the cross, by the will and decision of our Hispanic-American heritage, in keeping with our honorable pledge to our sacred flag, and in view of the blood shed by our predecessors categorically repudiate the government’s procedures against our comrades-in-arms who struggled, in their role as soldiers, against the disruptive power of Marxism now disguised under social democracy. And we warn those who advocate their desire to live in peace and democracy that their attitude is far from the path that will allow them to achieve their objectives. Determined in our decision not to yield to nor to negotiate with the enemy, we extend this warning to all those commanders who may yield to the pressure exerted by the enemy and hand over their subordinates without even putting up resistance to the order to do so.²⁴¹

Although the names typed on this pronouncement attributed it to a small group of junior officers, it reflected fairly faithfully the modal attitude of military officers—particularly the retired military, whose ranks at

the senior level had been swelled by the many retirements, resignations, and dismissals of the Alfonsín administration.

Moreover, the bulk of the allegations fell among the retired and soon-to-be-retired officers who were the senior leaders during the anti-subversive operations. Active-duty officers, working in circumstances changed radically by the Alfonsín administration's reform attempts, tended to be more circumspect. But the consensus of opinion within the military was clear: The antisubversive war had been legal and justified, and if excesses had been committed, the matter could be settled by disciplining a few individuals (which the army had even done to about 30 members, including 2 officers, before the Alfonsín regime came to power).

Military personnel expressed little doubt that they had tradition, virtue, and principle squarely on their side in the matter of the Dirty War. But the determination of significant elements of the military to avoid accountability on the civilians' terms led to severe internal discipline problems. The navy and air force—blessed with continuity at the top, relatively few members accused of misconduct, and no internal problems of the scope that afflicted the army—quickly handled the minor incidents that occurred in their ranks in the late 1980s.²⁴²

But the army was an entirely different story. Hundreds of officers, including junior ones, stood accused and faced losing everything if brought before the courts. They had been the front-line troops in the antisubversive operations, directly engaging the guerrillas and carrying out the orders of their superiors.²⁴³ Increasingly, those who had issued the orders were being retired and had their own problems. Consequently, as the trials and accusations continued in 1985 and 1986, younger officers became distrustful of, and embittered toward, their internal military hierarchy, particularly the Army Chief of Staff. Horizontal loyalties surged against vertical loyalties.²⁴⁴ Demoralizing the army, as the pay cuts, lack of equipment, and perceived campaign of calumny had done, did not depoliticize it. Those who shared the experience and sacrifices of the Dirty War and the Malvinas war—especially those in the army who had ties going back to the *Colegio Militar* and within the army's branches—were dismayed by the assaults they sustained for what they considered honorable, indeed nation-saving, service. The serious questioning of military accountability raised serious questions of military discipline.

The years 1985 and 1986 provided plenty of grist for the confrontational mill of the civil-military relationship. The disputes centered on four main issues, all of which the military perceived as striking directly at the

viability of their institutions and the legitimacy of their past and present conduct. The first was a lack of recognition of what the military considered its praiseworthy role in the antisubversive operations and the Malvinas war. The second were the trials, viewed as an attempt by the government and particularly by elements of the Radical Party allied with the human rights organizations, to condemn the military for its actions in the antisubversive operations and to punish hundreds of officers for doing their duty. The third was the military perception of a public campaign assisted by government-controlled communications media to besmirch the honor and ethics of the military institutions. The fourth was the enforced penury placed on military personnel by the reductions in the military budgets. The cutbacks were viewed both as an attack on the military's prestige in the society and as an undermining of its standard of living, a life free from real want having been regarded as a perquisite of a military officer's career.

The Trials

On April 22, 1985, the trials of the nine members of the three juntas of the *Proceso* government opened in public session in the Federal Appellate Court of Buenos Aires. These trials did nothing to allay the emotions on either side of the battle for right in the consequences of the antisubversive war. But the positions of the two sides on the legitimacy of military actions did not change. General Videla, the president during the first of the three juntas, refused to present a defense, arguing that only the military could be his "natural" judges as required by the Constitution.²⁴⁵ He maintained this stand even in the face of such testimony as that of retired General Alejandro Lanusse, who had been president in the early 1970s. Lanusse testified that members of the first two juntas, plus Generals Camps and Suárez Mason (the latter fled to the United States and was extradited much later), had personally known of and participated in criminal acts in the antisubversive campaign.

The government, but not all of the Radical Party and certainly not all of the populace, clearly hoped that the trials of the juntas and the generals would be sufficient to establish culpability. On July 7, 1985, President Alfonsín gave an extraordinary speech in his second appearance at an Armed Forces Comradeship Day dinner²⁴⁶ in which he deplored the "progressive loss of our state of legality" over the previous 50 years. But he did not blame the military for that, even as the instigator of coups: "The coups have always been civilian-military in character." From this state of illegality, he averred, terrorism emerged, an expression of the "cultural decay" of

Argentina. The state (that is, the military) had fought violence with violence, perpetuating the cultural decay. The solution, he said, was a “gigantic cultural reform” called democracy. The military, a product of the non-democratic culture, had fallen into error.

But he also clearly indicated that revenge was not an acceptable method of cultural reform: “We know perfectly well that there are those who confuse justice with vengeance and that disintegrating forces are still on the move in Argentina’s disorganized society who would like us to believe that those who are seated in the chair of the accused are not individuals but the Armed Forces.” This he deemed an insult to the nation’s institutions. He blamed the latest illegalities of the Armed Forces on leaders who had led it astray, a consequence of authoritarian rule (those leaders were, not coincidentally, on trial). But he also blamed civilians and the fractious groups in Argentine society for seeking to use the military to selfish purposes. He ended the speech with a call for reconciliation.

Other straws were in the wind at about the same time that a solution to the accountability problem was reached. Army Chief of Staff Ríos Ereñú prophesied that the trials under way (which he considered lopsided and lacking a proper accounting for the preexisting situation to the 1976–1979 operations) would have “a final solution that would be a political solution guaranteed by a legal act”²⁴⁷—in other words, leading to an eventual amnesty or pardon.

Although the senior active-duty officers tended to keep quiet about the trials, the retired officers did not. Groups of retired officers stubbornly defended the rightness of the military’s actions in the antsubversive operations. They also rallied around a pro-military organization called Relatives of the Victims of Subversion, organized as a putative counterweight to CONADEP to emphasize the sacrifices of military people and their families who had been killed, imprisoned, or tortured by the guerrillas in the 1970s.

In mid-August 1985, an important poll emerged on public opinion about the military.²⁴⁸ It revealed that 49 percent of the 800 people interviewed in 6 towns and rural areas in the Tucumán and La Pampa Provinces thought the military “contribute to the country’s well-being,” and 50 percent thought it was “harmful,” almost a dead heat. Even more revealing, given the tremendous publicity (most of it prejudicial to the military) surrounding the review of the past, CONADEP, and the trials, only 33 percent thought the military should act “only in case of an external attack,” while 67 percent felt their mandate included dealing with the cases of “terrorist aggression or internal subversion.” Interviewees expressed this appreciation of

the role of the military and its mission in spite of their ranking of the military as last of 12 institutions in prestige value and their 79 percent approval rating of the trials of the junta members.

The prosecution presentation in the trials closed in September 1985. The state prosecutor asked for life in prison for 5 of the 9 and 10 to 15 years each for the other 4. The defense presentation went on for weeks, based on the contention that the military had acted not against innocents but against aggressors in a “revolutionary war.” Meanwhile, hundreds of other accusations and charges piled up, reaching some 1,700 denunciations affecting about 300 officers of the military and security forces, most of them army.

On November 11, 1985, in the midst of the junta trial, the trial by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces of 16 officers charged with political and military misconduct in the South Atlantic War (Malvinas war) began. These charges grew out of an investigation by a military commission headed by retired Lieutenant General Benjamín Rattenbach. Those accused included members of the last of the three juntas, General Galtieri, Admiral Anaya, and air force Brigadier General Lami Dozo, who were also awaiting the outcome of the human rights trials. No civilian or military dissent was raised in this matter of accountability in the Malvinas.

On December 9, 1985, the verdicts in the trials of the three juntas were announced. General Videla and Admiral Massera were given life sentences, General Viola 17 years, Admiral Lambruschini 8 years, and Brigadier General Orlando Agosti 4½ years imprisonment. The other four—air force Brigadier General Omar Graffigna, Galtieri, Anaya, and Lami Dozo—were acquitted, although the latter three remained in confinement while being tried on the Malvinas charges. All guilty sentences were immediately appealed to the Argentine Supreme Court.

More significantly for civil-military relations, the other hundreds of cases that had backed up pending the resolution of the trial of the juntas were remanded to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces for action against area and unit commanders and military officers in charge of operations in which criminal acts allegedly took place.²⁴⁹ But in remanding the cases, the civilian court did not distinguish between those responsible for the excesses and those acting in due obedience, that is, following orders, since Law 23,049 did not permit that discrimination in Dirty War cases. The decision to remand the cases began debate over two notions of signal importance in assessing accountability in terms of civil-military relations: *punto final* (full stop), an end to the time in which military officers could

be investigated and summoned to court to answer for alleged misconduct; and *obediencia debida* (due obedience), distinguishing between those who decided on and planned illegal acts and those who were simply instruments of action. Civil-military relations for the next year and a half were caught up in these two concepts.

The year 1986 was a time of efforts to steadily shrink the scope of accountability except as exercised by the military itself, such as in the case of the trials as a consequence of the Malvinas war. And it marked the beginning of a series of occasions in which the Alfonsín government did not treat the military as a subordinate instrument of policy, which was the focus of the reform efforts, but as essentially a political entity, one with which bargains could be struck. An early example was the April 24, 1986, instruction by Alfonsín to expedite the trials of some 300 officers then charged. But expediting also meant paring the list, throwing out cases deemed to have insufficient evidence (an implicit undermining of the thousands of denunciations of *Nunca Más*) and cases in which the accused were “following orders.” Predictably, Army Chief of Staff Ríos Ereñú hailed this turn of events as a breakthrough, affirming the role of the judicial process; the human rights groups saw it as a “camouflaged amnesty.”²⁵⁰

In May 1986, the sentences in the Malvinas war trial came down: 12 years for Galtieri, 14 for Anaya, and 8 for Lami Dozo. Ríos Ereñú got to the heart of this decision: “The most important thing is the establishment and the fulfillment of the Armed Forces Supreme Council role of studying the case and of administering justice.”²⁵¹ But the Supreme Council did not act with any such dispatch in the 300 or so cases on its hands stemming from the antisubversive operations. Consequently, the 6-month time frame for Council action again expired, and the cases went to the federal courts—awakening expectations in the military that a new round of trials would ensue. Alfonsín had made no assessment of culpability in the antisubversive operations, and he had not followed up his order to expedite trials with how to go about it. He was left with finding a way to conclude the trials without calling for an amnesty. His step toward reconciliation, as he saw it, was the *punto final* law.

In October 1986, another poll revealed that the military was still near the bottom in prestige, but not in perceived power.²⁵² The poll, which sampled 800 people in both the federal capital and metropolitan areas of Buenos Aires, showed the military well down the list on prestige; only 2.2 percent of respondents put it highest. The top two winners were the Catholic Church (22.6 percent) and the political parties (18.7 percent).

But when respondents were asked to rank by power, the political parties got a 23.5 percent ranking, the Church 16.6 percent, and the military was third at 11.5 percent, ahead even of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The pollsters interpreted this as a sign that the military still had a “veto” power in politics. Moreover, the renowned Argentine sociologist Torcuato di Tella, commenting on the disparity between prestige and power, pronounced it “dangerous, not only for them but for a balanced democracy. In the countries of greatest political stability, the military get more respect from the public, and thus they become more closely tied to national consensus.” Polls such as this (published in the mass-circulation daily *Clarín*) probably confirmed the views of many in the military that they were being denied their rightful place and that a campaign to demoralize and discredit them was indeed affecting the public adversely.

On December 24, 1986, just before the summer vacation period when government activity practically ceases, the government promulgated Law 23,492, essentially repealing Article 10 of Law 23,049.²⁵³ This *punto final* law had two main points. Those officers not subjected to a judicial inquiry within 60 days of the sanctioning of the law would be freed from prosecution; and the federal appellate courts were authorized to take over any human rights case being considered regardless of its status.

Although the *punto final* law was intended to assure the military that a certain end would come to the trials, in the short run it had the opposite effect. The federal courts worked through the vacation period, issuing hundreds of new summons for military personnel to appear—indicating that some in the now-independent judiciary were unwilling to close the book on the military’s alleged misconduct without at least calling in as many military personnel as possible for questioning.²⁵⁴

Moreover, in December 1986, the Supreme Court upheld at their original level the convictions of the five junta members found guilty in the trials, and General Camps, the unrepentant and arrogant general who personified the excesses of the antisubversive operations, was sentenced to 25 years in jail. These events set up the coming confrontation between some junior officers, with the support of many retired ones, against the current army hierarchy. In the words of General Ríos Ereñú, “*Punto final* had the effect of presenting me as on the side of the government against the army.”²⁵⁵ Horizontal and vertical loyalty again were at odds with each other.

In addition, the military detractors clearly were unprepared to settle for a legal, juridical denouement that they felt sure would be a condemnation. Secure in their own minds that the antisubversive operations had been

right, proper, and legitimate, they would seek not judgment, but vindication. Many retired officers absolutely opposed any accommodations and accused Ríos Ereñú of being corrupt, a traitor who surrendered the military.²⁵⁶ Nor had other frustrations diminished: the perceived collaboration between elements of the government (particularly the newly prominent members of *Coordinadora*) and the media to tarnish the reputation of the military and to portray military personnel as responsible for all the troubles of the country; and the continued frustration of low pay (particularly acute among junior officers) and no money to conduct operations.²⁵⁷

The *punto final* law focused the trial process, now almost entirely in civilian hands, on real cases involving scores of officers and hundreds of lower ranking members. The requirement in the law for a summons to appear in court to be questioned about the alleged involvements sharpened the conflict. The nominal end date for such citations was February 22, 1987, but jurisdictional battles envisioned in the law effectively extended that deadline in many cases. Military officers who failed to appear when summoned were to be cashiered.

Although thousands of allegations and denunciations had been made against members of the military, the number in which evidence was deemed sufficient to issue a citation to appear was far fewer. The numbers were nonetheless very significant. The total number of human rights trials (resulting from the consequences of the antisubversive operations) processed during the *punto final* period was 450, of which 173 defendants were Armed Forces officers (the other 277 were NCOs, gendarmes, Coast Guard, or police).²⁵⁸ The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces also seemed increasingly less likely to decide the outcome of these cases, since it had been effectively reduced to a court of first instance. The Council was under fire from the federal appellate court for allegedly delaying processing of cases before the *punto final* law and for dismissing charges against a group of admirals accused in trials centered on the Navy Mechanics School (*Escuela Mecánica de la Armada*, or ESMA), which had achieved a reputation as the most vile of the torture centers during the antisubversive operations. The courts, then, were prepared to proceed.

Moreover, members of the junior ranks and many retired officers viewed the army High Command as being equivocal, a perception borne out in an Army General Staff document published in *La Crónica* newspaper of March 24, 1987. The report stated that “if cases stemming from the war on terrorism are brought to trial, one must believe that the truth will emerge in court” and that “the army not only seeks court investigations

but also a full vindication of the war and of the comrades-in-arms who fought it.²⁵⁹ To those committed to the legitimacy of force in the antisubversive war, the two were mutually exclusive. Especially to the junior officers who had been lieutenants in the antisubversive war and in Malvinas and who had taken most of the casualties, it seemed that they would bear the brunt of this fight too.²⁶⁰ For them, vindication consisted of vitiating the role of the courts, and by implication, the rule of law as decided by civilian politics. Since the military had been cast in the role of political adversary, many demanded a political solution—meaning virtual exemption of the military from control by civilians, except in the most nominal sense. Legitimacy of the role of the armed forces would then be *sui generis*, devolving to a political culture in which different bases for legitimate rule compete for primacy. A crisis of authority, with horizontal and vertical loyalties working precisely at cross-purposes to influence the patterns of civil-military relations, was imminent.²⁶¹

The Uprisings

On April 7, 1987, the Supreme Court of Argentina declared rebellion a common crime (one not tried in military courts) in response to a motion by the first junta to have its appeals heard by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. This action was intended to apply to a situation in which the junta members had rebelled in taking over the government from the constitutional authorities in March 1976. They could not know that an uprising that would challenge the chain of command and discipline was about to take place.

Semana Santa

On April 15, 1987, Major Ernesto Guillermo Barreiro took refuge in the garrison of the 14th Infantry Regiment at Córdoba, refusing to obey a summons to appear at Federal Court for a statement in the La Perla human rights case. He was cashiered under the Code of Military Justice. Police were sent to apprehend him for contempt of court, but some members of the Córdoba garrison supported him (or at least would not assist in apprehending him).

President Alfonsín recognized the Barreiro refusal for what it was; the gauntlet had been thrown down on the question of the trials. He tried to preempt the incipient rebellion, telling Congress on April 16 that “this is not just an emotional reaction on the part of an individual but a calculated maneuver by a group of men who seek to do something that would force the government to negotiate its position.”²⁶² He called on all

members of the armed forces to obey the orders of their superiors and their commander in chief (himself).

But Barreiro was not alone in his resistance. Many officers of the 14th Infantry Regiment rallied to his cause and refused to assist in his arrest. The chain of command of the army had been broken; junior officers had compromised the discipline system. General Ríos Ereñú was caught in the middle. From the administration's point of view, the military reforms had the desirable effect of circumscribing the autonomy of the top of the military hierarchy; but they also had severely circumscribed the Chief of Staff's authority over those below him, as the command authority now rested no lower than the Minister of Defense. This put the president in the position of having to exert his constitutionally mandated command authority himself.

On April 17, 1987, a more serious development occurred. Lieutenant Colonel Aldo Rico, identifying himself as the Commander of the 18th Infantry Regiment in San Javier, Misiones Province, announced that he had left that remote post and had taken over the Army Infantry School at Campo de Mayo. This action moved the rebellion much closer to Buenos Aires. From this installation came an outpouring indicative of the severe level of discontent and of fractured discipline in the army. These frustrations were expressed in *Comunicado* Number 1, which Rico issued from Campo de Mayo on April 17. It cited the failure of the current army leadership to stop the injustice and humiliation heaped upon the Armed Forces; decried the fierce and endless media attacks to which the forces had been subjected; asserted that the war against subversion was a political issue demanding a political solution; listed the supposed supporters of the rebellion; and claimed that the military leadership would bear the responsibility for any escalation of the situation or repression by force.²⁶³

General Ríos Ereñú, after meeting with Alfonsín, countered with his own *comunicado*, stating that he would tend to his unspecified duties as Chief of Staff and not participate in the coming confrontation. Plans were enacted to suppress the uprising, and the president would select his own field commander. Ríos Ereñú, effectively sidelined from the crisis, resigned within days, effectively fulfilling a key rebel demand even before any direct confrontation. In the meantime, Barreiro had fled the garrison at Córdoba, and those who had shielded him, including Regimental Commander Luis Polo, surrendered.

The crisis now centered on the Army Infantry School, controlled by Lieutenant Colonel Rico and his colleague, Lieutenant Colonel Venturini. The Infantry School fell under the jurisdiction of the second in command of Campo de Mayo, General Augusto Vidal. Under his auspices and with the assistance of General Auel (in whom Rico had confided by telephone, since Auel was hundreds of miles away at the time), a meeting was arranged between Rico and Venturini and Defense Minister Jaunarena, along with two intermediaries, Lieutenant Colonel Julio Vila Melo and Monsignor Medina, Chief of Military Chaplains.²⁶⁴

Although no written record of any agreement from this meeting exists, and Alfonsín later claimed that he had negotiated nothing with the rebels, some understanding was reached. It encompassed the resignation of Ríos Ereñú; some relief from prosecution of the middle-range officers accused of misconduct in the antiradical operations; an end to what was perceived as a campaign to destroy the prestige and ethics of the military; and no use of force against the rebels.

Alfonsín went to his meeting with the rebel colonels backed by fervent public and Congressional support. As the commander in chief, Alfonsín was obliged to directly confront a dissident faction of the military. And although the rebels did not question his authority and reiterated that their quarrel was with their own leadership, Alfonsín's ability to suppress the rebellion by force if necessary was questionable. Throughout the army, officers were refusing to arrest their rebelling comrades, let alone shoot them. However, General Vidal, on the scene as supervisor of the military training facilities at Campo de Mayo, convinced Rico that armed resistance was neither necessary nor possible.²⁶⁵ Rico surrendered without a fight, and the troops that were mobilized to suppress the rebellion returned to their barracks. This turn of events was fortunate for the army; the commander of these troops, Second Army Corps Commanding General Arturo Alais, later said that he was not in a position to put down the rebellion by force.²⁶⁶

Rico, brought before a civilian judge in the San Isidro Federal Court, acknowledged his "sole responsibility for events at the Infantry School." He explained that the troops' refusal to obey the orders of the army hierarchy by confining themselves to the school (which some observers characterized more as a job action or a strike than a rebellion)²⁶⁷ was an attempt not to overthrow the government but to find a "political solution to the problems created by the consequences of the antiradical war."²⁶⁸ A more revealing look was provided by an anonymous young army

captain, who had accompanied Rico throughout the incident, in remarks to an Italian interviewer:

Did you ever want to attack the existing power system?

There was never any plan on our part against the president's authority. We did what we did because we could not stand still and watch our institution being taken apart, destroyed, and accept our comrades' persecution one after another and their being condemned as criminals. The sacred pact of fraternity and mutual defense is the very foundation of the army. Indeed how can a soldier obey if he sees individual officers being singled out and condemned without any of their comrades standing up to defend them?

Why did you break the chain of command? Why did you rebel against the generals too?

In fact it was the generals who broke the chain of command at the moment they agreed to play along with the political game. For years we were made fools of by a government that did what it wanted with us. First it said that only the generals would be held responsible, then it included all officers, then it talked about pacification, but meanwhile it destroyed the army, cutting its funds and allowing officers' living standards to deteriorate. Moreover, it subjected us to constant moral attacks and isolated us from society.

In this connection are you calling now for a political solution to the plans [sic] for the past?

What we are saying is that the context of the war on subversion is now forgotten. A bomb used to explode every 5 minutes and the Marxists had a comprehensive organization, with weapons, bases, and foreign aid. It was a war in which the country's very existence was at stake. We were ordered to fight it. I was 24 when I was sent into the mountains and I know what it is like to be approached by an armed man ready to kill me. We fought that war for Argentina and now we are being treated like criminals.

Do you therefore want a reassessment of the positive role of that war?

Yes. There is no chance of restoring dignity to our institution unless there is a reassessment of that historic event and of that war's importance for this country.

Do you deny that there were massacres, tortures, and mass disappearances?

There was a fabrication, a total manipulation, created by the very people whom we were fighting. For instance, who manufactured the evidence for the trials: Marxist intellectuals, politicians—all people who stood to benefit politically from these charges.

It is said . . . you told a general that you did not mind dying. Is that true?

Yes, I risked my life, 25 years imprisonment, and my children's future in that revolt; but unless you have that total dedication there is no point in living as a soldier.

It is statements like that which make people say that you are an elite group with a messianic mission.

No. In fact we had the lowliest role in combating subversion. We dealt solely with its armed wing, not its brains, which for that matter still exist and are perpetuating themselves in the universities. We only want to serve the constitution with honor.

What if the president does not satisfy your demands?

I believe that he will satisfy them.²⁶⁹

The Semana Santa uprising was over in 4 days. It involved only about 150 military personnel, caused no casualties, and counted on no open support from other armed forces.²⁷⁰ But it had profound effects on the patterns of subordination, control, and influence in the remaining years of the Alfonsín administration. Although it was not so apparent at the time, Alfonsín had in effect negotiated with a rebel faction of the army that had broken the chain of command and that was supported, actively and passively, by others in the military. The problem of loyalty within the army had not been resolved. The civil-military relationship remained conflictual, a seesaw balance punctuated by rebellion and insubordination.²⁷¹

In the wake of this first uprising, on April 28, 1987, another poll appeared in the newspaper *La Nación* in an article on "The Power and Legitimacy of the Armed Forces." The military profession again scored lowest in the esteem of those polled (farmers, 91 percent favorable; political parties, 71 percent; bishops and priests, 58 percent; and military, 42 percent). Sixty-seven percent of the interviewees blamed the country's problems on the *Proceso* government. But the question about the proper mission for the military elicited the same response division as the 1985 poll: 32 percent said it should have only an external mission, but 68 percent said that the armed forces also should act in case of internal aggression. One Argentine

professor, using this poll to seek to explain public attitudes on the military, declared the populace “schizophrenic.” The Argentine public largely condemned the past military leadership, but a two-to-one margin felt the military institution was still right for resolving internal conflicts.²⁷²

Alfonsín enjoyed a tremendous outpouring of popular support in the plazas and in the Congress and was perceived as having faced down the rebels. However, administration policy and the actions of Congress reflected that the military, and especially the army, was still a political force to be reckoned with, that the apolitical military contemplated by constitutional structure and the rule of law was not yet the force in being, and that the political authority of elected leaders was, despite *de jure* reforms to date, still subject to challenge. The most immediate evidence of this, coming swiftly on the heels of the Semana Santa uprising, was the Alfonsín administration’s proposal of the *obediencia debida* bill to Congress. The original version of this bill would have exempted all military and security personnel at or below the rank of lieutenant colonel during the Dirty War from prosecution for crimes allegedly perpetrated during the antisubversion operations (including kidnapping, torture, and murder—those crimes contemplated in Article 10, Law 23,049) “because it is presumed that these actions were committed under the due obedience principle.”²⁷³ Regardless of contrary evidence, officers in those cases were presumed to have acted under the coercion of a superior. The reformed Code of Military Justice had an *obediencia debida* provision, but Congress had inserted a provision then that opened the door to the human rights charges: that the code would not apply in the case of officers who committed “atrocities or abnormal crimes”—in other words, Dirty War violations.²⁷⁴

On May 7, 1987, Attorney General Juan Octavio Gauna issued a ruling that struck down the “atrocities or abnormal crimes” exemption to the old *obediencia debida* provision of Article 514 of the Code of Military Justice. Declaring the exemption unconstitutional since it was *ex post facto* law under the terms of Law 23,049, this decision paved the way for consideration of the new *obediencia debida* bill that Alfonsín introduced in a speech to Congress on May 13. While excoriating the military for the direct political actions that their leaders had taken in the past 50 years, Alfonsín also denounced terrorism, “a cruel and bloodthirsty form of elitism,” and he attributed the antisubversive war to the most recent triumph of “military messianism in a weak and divided society.” But Alfonsín said that the outpouring of support for him during the Semana Santa crisis showed that that society no longer existed. He thus presented the *obediencia debida*

legislation as a definitive step toward pacification, not as “a sign of weakness and concession” but as “a sign of generosity and justice.” Alfonsín placed responsibility squarely on “those who conceived this vast, inhuman plan” and stated that the rest of the accused acted in a “state of moral, psychological, and material coercion.”²⁷⁵ Gauna, in his brief on *obediencia debida*, pointed out that none of the higher-ranking authorities had ever admitted a plan for murder, torture, and kidnapping. But that did not derail Alfonsín’s plan for extensive exoneration. For him, the responsible parties were the juntas, his original target in the trials, and they had been tried and convicted. His new law stated that in the cases of lieutenant colonels and lower, “it will be *legally presumed* [emphasis added] that these individuals acted under coercion.”²⁷⁶

The Chamber of Deputies passed the bill as presented on May 16, 1987. Representatives of the human rights organizations, seeing what they believed was a massive rejuvenation of military political power in Argentina, shouted slogans at the Radical deputies from the balconies. Majority Leader Jaroslavski ordered them arrested. But although the results in the Chamber of Deputies appalled the activists, they did not go far enough for the new Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General José Dante Caridi. According to a report on a meeting of military commanders, distinctions between lieutenant colonel and colonel and active and retired were not acceptable.²⁷⁷ Caridi averred that discrimination on the basis of rank would reopen, not heal, wounds. His statement echoed a widely held view among military personnel that the trials were an attack on the corporate military institution and that vindication and recognition of military actions as just—not criminal—was the proper course of action, rendering due obedience moot.²⁷⁸

A confirmation of expanded military bargaining power came swiftly after Alfonsín’s move toward *de facto* amnesty for most of the accused. The Argentine Senate passed an amendment to the Chamber of Deputies bill that would “extend the immunity to higher-ranking officers who did not hold posts of commander in chief, Chief of Zone, Chief of Subzone, Chief of the Security or Police Force, or Prison Director, if it is not legally established, within 30 days after the law is sanctioned, that they had decisionmaking power or participated in generating orders.”²⁷⁹ The Chamber of Deputies passed this version on reconsideration, and it was found constitutional by the Supreme Court. The amendment covered many who were colonels and brigadier generals at the time of the antisubversive operations. The net effect of the legislation was to reduce the number being

processed in the courts to 100, the number of officers of the armed forces therein to 62, and the number thereof on active duty to only 6.²⁸⁰

But the attempted rebellion also resulted in considerable change in the army hierarchy. All top generals except for new Chief of Staff Caridi were retired for not controlling their officers. Caridi said that although their sentiments may have been with the younger officers, generals have to use their heads; they should have acted sooner, not just crossed their arms.²⁸¹ Of the rebels, only Barreiro was detained; Rico appeared in a civilian court for attempted rebellion; and the others were either relieved of their posts and placed *a disposición* (a status usually associated with pending disciplinary action), or were set back in their schooling (usually a career destroyer).

Although Caridi and the other Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that they had confronted the administration and widened the legal path to reconciliation and recognition of the military's role in the antisubversive operations, the dissident junior officers were unmollified. They were convinced that the military had done nothing wrong and that the institution was still threatened, even though individuals were less endangered. These perceptions meant that *Semana Santa*, *Operación Dignidad* as Rico termed it, would not be the last rebellious episode.

After the passage of the due obedience law, disaffected elements in and associated with the military appeared to perceive the administration and the top-level military hierarchy as politically weakened. Alfonsín himself warned that this was the case in his Armed Forces Comradeship Day speech of July 1987, stating that the armed forces would be the target of a "major psychological campaign." He enjoined each Chief of Staff to "implement a special program, drawn up by the respective intelligence service" to counteract this perception and ordered that "severe disciplinary sanctions be used on any personnel making political statements."²⁸² Evidence of such a campaign already existed. On June 25, bombs had gone off on 16 premises of the ruling Radical Party in greater Buenos Aires, Mendoza, Rosario, and Tucumán. Extreme right-wing elements believed to be associated with the military (especially with the military intelligence services) were thought to be responsible.²⁸³ And the retired, many of whom had court cases still pending or in process, maintained that the military was subject to a campaign of attack on its honor and ethics, especially in the "means of social communication"—television, radio, and educational institutions.²⁸⁴

Tests of the Chiefs of Staffs' capabilities to keep their forces in line were not long in coming. Ex-Major Barreiro, cashiered but at large, was becoming a hero of the "fundamentalists" (later known as *los carapintada*, referring to the camouflage makeup they wore in subsequent uprisings) and was touring the country showing a video called *Operación Dignidad*. This film called not only for an end to all trials but also for a public vindication of the antisubversive operations, which the dissidents regarded as a war in all respects.²⁸⁵ Caridi ordered the video confiscated if found or shown anywhere in the army, and any officers who allowed it to be shown were to be punished.

Other manifestations of continued tension within the military occurred at the Third Infantry Regiment at La Tablada. Several officers expressed their displeasure at what they considered Caridi's mistaken policies seeking to punish those involved in or supporting the Semana Santa uprising. Even the navy came in for some attention in the wake of the due obedience decision. Navy Lieutenant Alfredo Astiz, charged in some of the most famous allegations coming out of the Dirty War, had not been convicted by a military court and remained on active duty. Four admirals whose final sentences had not been decided but who did not fall under the *obediencia debida* umbrella pressed for lighter punishment. And Lieutenant Colonel Rico continued to receive the homage of supporters, even though he was imprisoned in the NCO Combat Support School at Campo de Mayo.

Monte Caseros

On December 30, 1987, Rico's confinement was changed from the Combat Support School to house arrest at a club. On January 14, 1988, reports began circulating that army officers who supported Rico had begun confining themselves to barracks to protest what they understood to be a coming charge of mutiny, which would subject Rico to prison confinement. Rico decided to resist return to confinement, issued a statement refusing to recognize the authority of the Army Chief of Staff or of a military court "until minimum justice is guaranteed,"²⁸⁶ and left the club where he had been staying. Caridi declared Rico a fugitive and indicated that he would be declared in rebellion, and a request that he be cashiered went to the Minister of Defense. The Minister of Interior was told to instruct all police to apprehend Rico.

But on January 17, the commander of the 4th Infantry Regiment at Monte Caseros, which became the focus of the second uprising, declared

that he adhered to Rico's *Operación Dignidad*. Shortly, Rico's presence there was confirmed, and support began to spread.

The army took a different approach to this uprising, which, unlike the first, was centered far from Buenos Aires. Ríos Ereñú had followed the letter as well as the spirit of the law and did not take charge in any part of the resolution at Campo De Mayo of the first uprising. Caridi was fully in charge (with Alfonsín's tacit support), keeping the Secretary to the Army General Staff, Colonel Chichizola, informed of army actions being taken. He personally took charge of the II Corps troops deployed to confront Rico at Monte Caseros.

This time, the units that reportedly supported Rico showed no cohesion. Officers and NCOs squelched isolated rebellion attempts by their colleagues, and no blood was shed. At Monte Caseros, a mine explosion reportedly wounded two people as the troops under Caridi's direction moved against the garrison. Scores of officers were arrested in various units.

Although Caridi called this rebellion a personal thing for Rico,²⁸⁷ he had publicly and repeatedly, if less brazenly, advocated virtually the same things as Rico (save nonrecognition of his own authority). The main issue remained unresolved: the internecine battle between adherents of horizontal loyalty, championed by the junior officers who had fought, often with distinction, in the antisubversive operations and the Malvinas war, and supporters of vertical loyalty, including the top military hierarchy, whom the rebels and many others viewed as compromised through their dealings with the civilian leadership. The rebels and their sympathizers still believed that the military hierarchy had abandoned the corporate, institutional well-being of the armed forces even as it sought, through Alfonsín's *obediencia debida* legislation, to absolve individuals of culpability. The demands of the disaffected in the military—satisfactory pay, a budget permitting full operations, vindication for the role of the military as a whole, and an end to perceived media attacks—went unsatisfied.

The remarks of Lieutenant Colonel Luis León, a fugitive rebel and a leader of the second uprising, in January 1988, were prophetic: "Because the army internal crisis is not definitively solved, the chapter is not entirely closed, and another one, probably more controversial and politically charged, will start."²⁸⁸ Caridi himself would make the same point about the antimilitary media campaign. In deploring the appearance of *La Noche de los Lápices* ("The Night of the Pencils"), an antimilitary film shown in public schools which Caridi said characterized the military as assassins, he advised the Education and Justice Minister that he had "just

bought *Semana Santa* number three.”²⁸⁹ Alfonsín also concurred that the conflict was unresolved. On January 28, 1988, he stated that “there are still small groups that could carry out this type of action,” but that despite yet another uprising, “from my viewpoint, the result of this event (the second one) has been highly positive because it will allow us to reorganize the army so it can play a leading role in the process of democratization.”²⁹⁰ His words brought into great relief the continuing contradiction between the corporate and constitutional roles of the army.

The chasm in law between accountability and discipline became more apparent in the wake of the second uprising. Increasingly, defendants in cases requiring military or civilian court action or both were those accused of rebellion or insubordination rather than alleged human rights violators. For example, in September 1988, two officers removed from their posts by Caridi appealed the decision to a civilian court, using the accountability-era review system to question acts of breach of discipline. Civilian accountability of the military services did not reinforce military discipline. In this instance, Alfonsín intervened to uphold Caridi’s decision by requesting a higher court to overrule the lower civilian court that had sustained the appeal of the two officers.²⁹¹

The application of due obedience during 1988 also further reduced the scope of accountability for the alleged misdeeds of the antisubversive operations. By the end of 1988, only 20 cases—all of high-ranking military officers who had retired—were being addressed by the courts in some way. No active-duty officers now faced punishment for actions in the 1970s.²⁹²

But the same was not true for the already convicted Malvinas war chiefs, the last junta of Galtieri, Anaya, and Lami Dozo, who had been sentenced by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. In July 1988, the state decided to prosecute the three in federal appeals court for professional negligence. The prosecutor said he would seek stiffer sentences than those imposed by the Supreme Council. The matter of accountability at the highest levels was not yet closed.

And neither was the matter of discipline. As the number of military personnel in the judicial process for the antisubversive war allegations fell, the number (almost all army) being processed for involvement in the uprisings rose, reaching a total after Monte Caseros of 432.²⁹³ Some officers also were disciplined by early retirement or missed promotion for not putting down the rebellions in the various units or for not moving quickly enough. From his jail cell, Rico taunted the hierarchy with bulletins and

communiqués that became regular reading in many army garrisons. The dispute over the matters of right, and rights, continued.

Near the anniversary of the Semana Santa uprising, a series of bombings signaled the reappearance of violent protest, instigated by the right-wing movement *Alerta Nacional* and the terrorist organization known as OAS–MRP. Although the ringleaders were rounded up quickly, the incident did nothing to lower tensions, and it heightened suspicions that Rico and others might have civilian allies. Extralegal challenges competed with legal ones as the runup to the 1989 election for Alfonsín's successor took shape (Alfonsín could not succeed himself, as the 1853 Constitution specified 6-year terms with no consecutive reelection). The candidates of the two major parties were selected in the summer of 1988. Neither candidate, Eduardo Angeloz for the Radicals or Carlos Menem for the Peronists, represented the dominant faction of his party during the Alfonsín administration. Late 1988 found public attention directed at this building electoral campaign and the economic difficulties of the Alfonsín years. But doubts persisted about the effects of military reform and the review of the past, even though Alfonsín in his Independence Day address to the armed forces hierarchy had insisted that the consolidation of democracy was well under way and that the armed forces, under the newly passed Defense Law, were an integral part of it. In the speech, Alfonsín praised the “heroes of the South Atlantic” and stated that “the public must not fail to recognize the efforts made by the Armed Forces in defense of our republican system of government.”²⁹⁴

Villa Martelli

On December 1, 1988, the uncertainties manifested themselves once again. About 45 officers of an elite *Prefectura Naval* unit at Zárate near Buenos Aires took arms and deserted the unit. (This was the second non-army breach of discipline. At the time of the Monte Caseros uprising, a small group of air force personnel tried to take over the metropolitan airport in downtown Buenos Aires, but they garnered no support.) Alfonsín, in Mexico at the time, dismissed the action as a “little problem” and continued his diplomatic activities. But this incident was not an isolated one, despite its apparent origin in a service other than the army. The rebels went straight to the Infantry School at Campo de Mayo, where they joined other commando and special forces contingents, at the seat of the April 1987 Semana Santa uprising. *Los carapintada* were in charge.

The leader of the uprising was Colonel Mohamed Ali Seineldin, a hero of the Malvinas war who had been advising Manuel Noriega's elite

units in the Panama Defense Force. Seineldin was widely regarded as representing the ultranationalist, messianic, fervently Catholic (he was a convert) sentiment in the army, the stronghold of which was the Army Infantry branch.²⁹⁵ Seineldin was not linked to human rights violations. He was a role model for the junior officers, who saw him as incorruptible, heroic, and self-sacrificing.²⁹⁶ Colonel Seineldin quickly made clear that this was again a matter of horizontal versus vertical loyalty, the fault line between corporatism and constitutionalism, describing himself as “an army operations commander who has taken up arms against the army Chiefs” to lead a rebellion that “definitely aims at restoring the honor” of the military.²⁹⁷

Caridi prepared to take on Seineldin in much the same way that he had taken on Rico at Monte Caseros. Acting under orders from Vice-President Victor Martínez, Caridi mobilized troops in the Buenos Aires area and headed them toward Campo de Mayo. He intended to surround Seineldin and forestall any spread.

But Caridi could not isolate the movement. Other units, including ones in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Salta, declared their support for Seineldin. Key among these units was the 10th Logistics Battalion at Villa Martelli, a Buenos Aires suburb on the border of the federal capital. In a surprise move, Seineldin and his loyalists—unimpeded by loyal troops deployed to put down the rebellion—traversed the 20 kilometers from Campo de Mayo to Villa Martelli on December 3. Caridi mobilized troops toward Villa Martelli under the command of General Isidro Cáceres, but he hoped to avoid bloodshed. (The only casualties of the confrontation were three civilians killed in a confused exchange of gunfire near Villa Martelli, where crowds of people turned out in the first direct civilian-military episode of the uprisings.)

On December 4, 1988, the rebels issued their demands. They called for Caridi’s resignation, the extension of *obediencia debida* coverage to all except the junta members, suspension of all trials for violations of human rights, amnesty for the rebels, a better budget, and a promise that only Colonel Seineldin be held accountable and tried in military court for this latest rebellion. The government would not agree to these issues as the points of a negotiated settlement, and both Caridi and Seineldin referred to the outcome of their talks over the matter as “an agreement to prevent bloodshed.”²⁹⁸ Seineldin and his supporters gave themselves up on December 5.

Although the government had not negotiated with the rebels, it had in effect negotiated with the military. The denouement of the third uprising laid bare the status of civil-military relations in Argentina. From the

beginning, the Alfonsín government had dealt with the military as a political adversary, a corporate entity in Argentine society that could be politically overcome (the government took a similar approach to the Church and the unions). Alfonsín judged correctly that the political resources based on force that undergirded the military claim to legitimacy in the exercise of authority were at an all-time low in 1983. But if the vertical loyalty and subordination to the constitutional government and the rule of law had been established *de jure*, the horizontal loyalty that underlay the commitment of the individual officers or NCOs to the military institution continued *de facto*. The rebels clearly were at odds with the former, but for many, perhaps most, of the military, they embodied the latter.

A business information agency run by retired military members conducted an informal poll of 984 military personnel in 123 army and navy units between December 10, 1988, and January 13, 1989 (between the third uprising and the La Tablada attack by the guerrillas).²⁹⁹ Of those polled, 82 percent shared completely the objectives of Colonel Seineldin (vindication of the actions of the Dirty War, better pay, suspension of trials, measures to protect the rebels from punishment, and Caridi's resignation), and another 6.1 percent gave partial support. Only 3.7 percent did not concur with the stated objectives. Most did not agree that rebellion was the way to achieve those objectives, but the military did not question the belief that it had been right all along.

By the end of 1988, the government was not prepared to confront the military directly. Alfonsín continued to equate civilian complicity with military complicity in past illegal behavior. In his last important speech on military issues to Congress on December 21, 1988, he reiterated earlier statements that “regardless of the responsibility that the military may have had over the operational aspect of the coups, we should not forget that civilians are to blame for providing the ideological inspirations of the coups.”³⁰⁰ Although excoriating “state terrorism” and the “authoritarian frameworks, organizations or behavior” that had brought it about, Alfonsín again called for a “cultural reform,” implying that the democratic alternative to that lawless culture had not then been available.

Reinforcing this attitude in a speech, Defense Minister Jaunarena approached the military line, stating that “the republican democracy has neither defined nor designed a self-preservation mechanism for times of crisis,” and that “the Armed Forces were compelled to militarily [*sic*] confrontation . . . without the necessary training for this emergency,” in view of the politicians’ lack of reaction “toward the scourge that hit Argentina as of the

end of the 1960s.” While he maintained that most of the struggle was waged outside the framework of constitutional governments, the political legitimacy and legality of a necessary struggle had been questioned; “the situation was overcome, but reproach could not be prevented.”³⁰¹

Paradoxically, the revolts strengthened the corporate military’s political hand. In an interview on December 16, 1988, Caridi made explicit why that was true. He stated that these reactions “will continue to occur within the Armed Forces, particularly within the army,” if the demands of the armed forces were not met. The military’s main demand was the “end of the attacks of which they have been a target for a long time.” He made clear what that was about: “The consequences of the antisubversive war, in which there are still pending matters, which must be given a favorable solution in the shortest possible time.” His disagreement with Colonel Seineldin was not about the demands; it was about “the path chosen for posing the demands.”³⁰² That was the difference between the rebels and the loyal troops.

One more event played a major part in the civil-military relationship during the Alfonsín years: the guerrilla attack at La Tablada in January 1989 (dealt with in detail in chapter 4). The government viewed this attack as a last-ditch effort by the extreme left to, in Alfonsín’s words, “unleash a confrontation between the people and the armed forces and subsequently take power through a ‘Putsch.’”³⁰³ Interrogation of guerrilla survivors, inspection of documents at the scene, and the identities and political roles of the guerrilla dead bore out this view. The military could thus claim the mantle of defender of democratic institutions, including themselves, from bloody attacks by armed, illegal bands reminiscent of the leftist guerrillas of the 1970s, against whom the military had insisted it had fought a justifiable war. Vindication was seen to be at hand.

The guerrilla attack at La Tablada was the final blow to the Alfonsín administration’s reform of the military and review of the past initiatives to establish a different civil-military relationship under a democratic government. The Alfonsín government’s efforts to hold the military accountable for its decisions and actions in the antisubversive operations did little to reduce the political weight of the military. Although the Security Council and the Committee of Internal Security established in the wake of the La Tablada incident gave a *de jure* cover for it, the military was reintroduced into the internal security arena. The apparent vitiation of Alfonsín’s defense policy led to the apparent vitiation of his military policy as well.

In April 1989, between the La Tablada incident in January and the May election for president, the *Centro de Estudios Unión Para la Nueva Mayoría* sought to determine the “image of the Armed Forces.”³⁰⁴ It polled an unknown number of citizens living in the federal capital, Greater Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fé, and Mendoza. Although responses from these locations varied considerably, the poll registered a predominance of positive opinions about the military in all places, ranging from an evenly split opinion in the federal capital to a 2.6:1 ratio of positive opinions in Mendoza. Moreover, the image of the institution had survived the Seineldin uprising, as opinions of him and his actions were overwhelmingly negative. And this poll reaffirmed previous studies showing that the public considered internal missions within the military’s purview; positive opinions of the military’s actions in the La Tablada incident ranged from 4–6.5 positive to 1 negative.

Indeed, military policy would again focus on internal dynamics in the armed forces—particularly in the army, and specifically on those who were involved in the uprisings. They were the avatars of a military unrestrained by civilian authority, responsive to their own hierarchy only insofar as it reflected the horizontal loyalties of the military corporate institutions rather than the vertical loyalties to civilian hierarchy, which the military had no voice in selecting. The rebels, even though they were still facing disciplinary action from the military, sought to change that. Both Rico and Seineldin openly supported Peronist candidate Menem in the presidential race, and military sentiment encouraged a Peronist victory, rejecting the Radical candidate even though he was not of the same political wing within the Radical Party as Alfonsín.

The Alfonsín regime did not resolve the military question. In the wake of the La Tablada attack, public opinion generally was favorable toward the army’s actions in suppressing an attack on one of its own garrisons.³⁰⁵ And the military question was of low priority, as other problems of the Alfonsín administration, especially the economic situation, were much more important in the electoral campaign.³⁰⁶ On May 14, 1989, Carlos Menem won the presidential race, effectively ending the Alfonsín regime. Indeed, Alfonsín, plagued by food riots in May as well as hyperinflation, decided to leave office several months before his term expired. On July 8, 1989, Carlos Menem was inaugurated as President of the Argentine Republic.

The Alfonsín Legacy

The election of 1983 and the transition to civilian rule under the Alfonsín administration were evidence of the establishment of a constitutional regime. But that transition did not settle the question of legitimacy of authority, even though it marked a major change in the military's political fortunes. The Alfonsín administration set in motion two political processes—military reform and the review of the past—that were the arenas of competition for legitimate authority reflected in *estado militar*. The evolution and results of these two processes provide a useful framework to examine the civil-military relationship in that administration.

Military reform, as envisioned by the Alfonsín administration, had as its goal an apolitical military removed as a contestant for authority. The basic thrust of reform was to restructure the mission, organization, resources, and education of military institutions to bring them in line with a constitutional regime. The measures taken to try to effect this result relied on *de jure* change, a legal structure that assured the definitive subordination of the military to civilian authority. The reform efforts were directed at replacing the adversarial, competitive nature of the civil-military relationship with a noncompetitive one in which both civilians and military members accepted civilian supremacy in military and defense matters.

But the implementation of the reforms did less to depoliticize the military than it did to reduce its political effectiveness by shrinking its political resources. Large reductions in money, manpower, and operational equipment reduced the level of military activity but did little to change its nature or motivations. Moreover, reducing levels of resources did not change the military's attitudes on its proper role; it only reinforced perceptions that the military was being punished.

The long delay in the Defense Law left the administration bereft of a basic set of rules from which a new pattern of civil-military relations might actually have been realized. The delay in a coherent, constitutional plan for defining the mission and organization of the military vitiated much of the other reform, such as redistributing the command authorities and seeking a unified, jointly directed military establishment. The Ministry of Defense and the Joint Staff more often were arenas for competition between civilians and military than manifestations of a regime of civilian supremacy. The turbulence at the top of the Ministry of Defense and at the highest levels of the military services, especially the army, exacerbated this state of affairs. Coupled with inexperience on all sides in elaborating a

civil-military relationship in a constitutional regime, the turbulence paradoxically reinforced inertia, undermining reform.

When the reforms as they had evolved were tested at La Tablada, the military's traditional patterns of loyalty and obedience—although severely challenged by the constitutional, legal constructs of the Alfonsín administration—prevailed. In the end, the reform efforts did little to change attitudes on either side. But the major confrontation for Alfonsín came not over differing views of legitimacy of authority in the future but over differing views of legitimacy of authority in the past.

The review of the past directly challenged military perceptions of proper authority in the pre-Alfonsín era. It disputed the legitimacy of using force in establishing authority and in political action. As such, the military perceived the review of the past as an assault on the values that undergirded its role in society and its involvement in politics during the *Proceso* military government, the antsubversive operations, and the Malvinas war. But the confrontation centered on the conduct (or misconduct) of the military in the Dirty War. The review of the past struck at perhaps the most salient element of *estado militar*: individual and institutional accountability of the military. The question of final authority in military accountability was central to the contest over legitimacy.

The review of the past highlighted the adversarial, conflictive nature of the Argentine civil-military relationship. It pitted the civilian political authorities against the military establishment in the contentious process of the trials to judge the conduct of military personnel up to the highest level, and by extension to judge the armed forces as an institution. It called the political resources of both civilians and military into play in a contest over legitimacy of political authority. That competition reflected very clearly that the civilian and military actors appealed to different currents in the Argentine political stream and viewed their institutional roles and the relationship between them from varied perspectives.

The Alfonsín administration sought to bracket the confrontation in legal terms, with the courts as the constitutional embodiment of legitimacy in seeking accountability. But employing the legal structure to deal with the political past, especially one that had responded to a different notion of the basis for legitimacy, was much more difficult than using the legal structure to deal with the future nature of civil-military relations. The military perceived the changes in the Code of Military Justice and the calls for the trials of the junta members and hundreds of others as *ex post facto* law and as striking at the heart of military accountability for its own,

and at military discipline in general. For the military, the marginalization of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces highlighted the attempt to overpower military law with civilian law.

Moreover, although Alfonsín had hoped to keep the culpability judgments regarding the military focused on the juntas, as they had been the expressly political actors during the *Proceso*, he was unable to contain the proceedings to those trials. The reform of the Code of Military Justice and the establishment of CONADEP opened the floodgates of accusations and calls for a comprehensive effort at calling the military to account. As the scope of the review increased and as the prospect of trials spread beyond the juntas to hundreds of other military and security personnel, the military—particularly army officers—perceived the Alfonsín administration as directly attacking the military institutions themselves. The review of the past overwhelmed reform, and in so doing undercut any chance for cooperative, apolitical efforts that might have worked in other circumstances. The review of the past pitted the horizontal loyalty of officers to each other and to the institution against the vertical loyalty to hierarchy, which had grown to include the constitutional civilian hierarchy as well as the legally subordinated military hierarchy, especially the Chiefs of Staff of the services. The dimension of horizontal loyalty was reinforced by the prospect of legal judgment that might convict hundreds of officers and by emergent (rather than appointed) leadership, especially in the persons of Rico and Seineldin.

Convinced that the trials presented a threat to the military institution and that their actions in the antiradical operations had been legitimate, just, and correct, several hundred officers and other ranks rebelled on three separate occasions. Their aim was to force not only the civilians but also the top-level military hierarchy to stop the trials and seek a political solution. The rebels reflected the attitudes of most military members, many of whom regretted rebel means but had little quarrel with their goals. Although the military hierarchy and the Alfonsín administration denied striking any bargains with the rebels themselves, the uprisings had the effect of reinforcing the political position of the military. The military still was seen not as an instrument of the government but as a political actor capable of resorting to the use or threat of force in political action. The political demands of the military could not be ignored. The due obedience law considerably reduced the exposure of military personnel to possible trials and punishment. The civil-military relationship remained a reflection of actors exercising political roles based on different notions of the legitimacy of political authority.

Alfonsín himself may have made the case best for examining the civil-military relationship based on differently derived conceptions of legitimate authority. He said in 1985 that only a gigantic cultural reform, democracy, could bring the rule of law to Argentina. His comment was an implicit recognition that Argentine political culture had evolved in a way that would provide more than one basis for claims to legitimacy of political authority. In Argentina, the level of political activity by the military had varied considerably over time, reflecting the fortunes of the two sides of the civil-military relationship. But even in the Alfonsín administration, when the military's political resources had been severely reduced, the civil-military relationship remained one in which political behavior was conditioned by differing sets of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments. *Estado militar*, in its various aspects, continued to reflect the contests over legitimacy, not the definitive acceptance by all of a common belief in the appropriateness of authority.

The First Menem Administration: Reconciliation Continued

Carlos Menem found himself occupying the office of President of Argentina sooner than he expected. Raúl Alfonsín resigned in July 1989, leaving Menem with an economic shambles characterized by hyperinflation and stagnation. Consequently, the new administration's relationship with the military was not the first priority. But Menem knew that he could not simply ignore the military, especially since the outgoing administration left the Dirty War trials unfinished and the status of those involved in the uprisings unresolved. Nonetheless, Menem had a freer hand than Alfonsín in seeking the reconciliation that Alfonsín had promised. Clearly the unofficial military favorite in the 1989 elections because he was not regarded as antimilitary as Alfonsín had been, Menem had some breathing room in terms of civil-military relations. However, he faced a military establishment that still contained significant elements seeking vindication and one that was strengthened in that regard by the La Tablada attack in January 1989. He also had to resolve several cases against military officials charged with human rights abuses related to the antisubversive operations.

"I hate to see even birds in cages," Menem reportedly said on his inauguration, giving the first indication that he would seek either an amnesty or a pardon for all military members sanctioned for the antisubversive operations, the Malvinas war, or the three uprisings.³⁰⁷ But Menem balanced this largesse with a clear message to those still seeking confrontation within the military, especially the army, and between the military and civilian authority. He named General Isidro Cáceres, who had been instrumental in

quelling the third uprising led by Seineldin, as Chief of Staff of the Army, the service in which the divisions between horizontal and vertical loyalties were the most apparent. Although they temporarily had no leaders, *los carapintada* remained unreconciled to anything less than vindication.

Pressing Issues

The economy required Menem's attention from the outset, and he indicated early on that the role of the state sector in the economy would have to be reduced. The term *privatization* began to circulate, and Menem moved to make peace with international lenders. This meant that the state sector, including the military, took a back seat to efforts to energize the economy and reduce internal and external debt—a move that later had significant repercussions for military reform. But Menem decided to grant pardons to defuse the issue of the review of the past and its consequences for military discipline.

As Menem came into office, Seineldin was roiling the waters with declarations about the alleged pact between himself and ex-Chief of Staff of the Army Caridi at the time of the third uprising in December 1988. From his confinement in the Palermo barracks, Seineldin excoriated the high command for nonfulfillment of the pact. A flurry of communiqués ensued, with denials of the existence of any such pact and further attempts by Seineldin to influence the civil-military relationship of the incoming administration.

Menem did not admit that pardons were being considered and that they would apply to ex-guerrillas as well as the military until mid-August.³⁰⁸ Pressure from the military for pardons had mounted, and speculation was rife as to when they would be granted and who would be covered. Presumably not wishing to be seen as pressured by either the military hierarchy or by Seineldin, Rico, and their followers, Menem waited a decent interval before acting. But even as he did, the resolution of this aspect of the *cuestión militar* was not complete.

Action came on October 8, 1989—3 months after Menem's inauguration. He pardoned 280 people, including 39 ranking military officers who fought against subversion in the 1970s, the 3 ex-junta members who led the 1982 Malvinas war, all members of the armed and security forces who took part in the Semana Santa, Monte Caseros, and Villa Martelli uprisings (as well as the attempted takeover of the Aeroparque airport), and 57 former leftist guerrillas, many of whom were still fugitives from justice.³⁰⁹ But the pardon excluded the top incarcerated figures: former de

facto presidents army Generals Jorge Videla and Robert Viola, their fellow navy junta members Admirals Emilio Massera and Armando Lambruschini, former Buenos Aires police chiefs Ramón Camps and Pablo Ricchieri, former First Army Corps Commander General Guillermo Suárez Mason, and Montoneros terrorist leader Mario Firmenich. Decrees 1002–1005 granted the pardons to the various categories of recipients, among whom were Seineldin and Rico, and (with the exceptions cited plus a few civilians) were clearly intended to clean out all the categories of people who had somehow been sanctioned during the Alfonsín administration. It did not preclude the armed forces from taking disciplinary action within their respective services for breaches of military discipline, which led to the forced retirement of several officers, including Seineldin and Rico. Seineldin continued to berate Army Chief of Staff Cáceres and organized an open “physical training” demonstration that attracted some 500 of his followers. The pardons mitigated conflict between the civilians and the military, but not between military and military.³¹⁰

Furthermore, pardon was not vindication. Most service members still felt that their institutions had done nothing wrong and that neither persecution nor forgiveness was right. Seineldin and Rico, although out of active service and with their channels of access more restricted, remained a thorn in the side of the Menem administration. Rico chose an explicitly political path for his new career, raising the banner of “nationalist Peronism”—a decidedly different and more orthodox brand than Menemist Peronism and one that had appeal beyond the military, since many saw Menem as having forsaken his Peronist heritage.³¹¹

As 1990 began, Rico and Seineldin remained in the public eye, calling for a “national people’s revolution against dollarization” and resistance to a “sellout” to foreign interests.³¹² On March 21, General Cáceres died of a heart attack, thus inadvertently fulfilling a desire of *los carapintada*. His successor, General Martín Bonnet, shared Cáceres’ antipathy for Seineldin or Rico and arrested Seineldin again in early April when he questioned the military’s disciplinary actions against rebels in the wake of the amnesty.

Looming Unrest

In August, reports surfaced of another *levantamiento* plot; a State Information Service report alleged a “direct action” campaign not only to settle military internal differences, especially in the army, but also to take political power.³¹³ Although nothing materialized in the next few months, the potential for disruption clearly still existed, and messianic

military ultranationalists would try again to settle differences by confrontation and violence.

Seineldin continued to bait the military and the president, writing letters and getting arrested as often as he was released. He and Rico, who had become a full-fledged politician with his own party, the Movement for Dignity and Independence (*Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Independencia*, or MODIN), warned of unrest in the military and possible open internal strife in the army. Reports continued of another military uprising, but as December approached, the struggle remained a battle of words. But Seineldin's appeal to junior officers and NCOs remained high. Many of them had seen nothing in their careers but unrelieved crisis, both within the military and in the society, and they could not comprehend what a "normal" military career might be.³¹⁴ Seineldin and Rico also represented the "fighting man" and role model, especially for Malvinas war veterans. Their appeal posed significant danger to military discipline and even constitutional government.

Seineldin began another 60-day period of arrest in a remote army garrison in Neuquén Province on October 12. In early November, after several weeks of calm, Menem baited Seineldin about becoming a politician (as Rico had already become).³¹⁵ Seineldin's response probably was not what Menem had anticipated: in the early morning hours of December 3, 1990, Seineldin instigated a revolt against Menem, who was preparing to receive U.S. President George H.W. Bush on December 5.

The revolt struck at the very heart of command and control in the army, the Edificio Libertador San Martín, seat of the Army General Staff and a short walk from the Presidential Palace. Earlier uprisings had been directed mainly at the army hierarchy with the intention of forcing military demands to the forefront and establishing a bargaining position with the civilian authorities. But this rebellion had all the earmarks of a coup attempt, including a list of civilian politicians with Menem's name at the top. Seineldin supporters hoped to take over key communications and military control facilities, including the army headquarters, the Patricios Regiment's Palermo barracks in Buenos Aires, other barracks in metropolitan Buenos Aires, and even the Coast Guard headquarters in the port area. And the assault was launched without regard to avoiding casualties among the military defenders of the installations. The rebels achieved surprise and a temporary advantage, raising the dispute to a full-fledged crisis.

Menem declared a state of siege and, thus imbued with extraordinary but constitutional powers, moved against the rebels, who had achieved

partial success in their objectives by inflicting several officer and NCO casualties on the regular forces. The rebels occupied part of the army headquarters and the Palermo barracks, took over the 601st Quartermaster Battalion at El Palomar, and for a time captured the Tank Factory TAMSE in the Buenos Aires suburb of Boulogne. Menem ordered Army Chief of Staff Bonnet to “completely extinguish” the rebels.³¹⁶

Bonnet deployed overwhelming force to face down the rebels, ordering into action a reinforced mechanized brigade gathered from loyal Buenos Aires Province army units and garnering support from the navy and air force as well. The business of establishing normal military control over the affected garrisons and headquarters consumed the day of December 3. This revolt did not drag on as the earlier ones had done. No reinforcements reached the Buenos Aires rebels, although a column of tanks commandeered by rebel supporters in Entre Ríos Province tried to break through. But regular army units controlled the bridge and tunnel choke-points to the island province. Loyal units mopped up rebels in Buenos Aires and closed in on sympathizers elsewhere. The last resisters were soldiers in the Entre Ríos garrisons of Concordia and Gualeguaychú, and three rebel tank crews at Olavarría, a garrison on the pampa in Buenos Aires Province.

In less than 24 hours the revolt was over. Menem lifted the state of siege only 2 days after imposing it, and life in Buenos Aires returned to normal. But despite its short duration, this was the bloodiest of the four uprisings. Reports attributed 14 dead (including 4 loyal army members and 3 army rebels) and 55 wounded to the rebellion. Unlike earlier rebellions, this uprising had not avoided armed combat between loyalists and rebels. The firefights, although few, were real, and no thought was given to negotiating with the rebels. At least 427 rebels were involved, including 355 army, 47 coast guard, and 25 civilians.³¹⁷

Within a day of the uprising, Defense Minister Humberto Romero confirmed the existence of a letter in which Colonel Seineldin, under arrest since October, claimed “absolute responsibility” for the latest incident. If Seineldin’s proclamation was an effort to shield the rebel participants, it was not successful. Menem had given no promises, and his subordinates, civilian and military, had rebuffed any efforts to discuss terms. The humiliation of the rebels was complete, and the sympathetic associations between loyal and rebel officers that had characterized the earlier rebellions were not in evidence this time. Moreover, this uprising had involved hundreds of noncommissioned officers rather than being

top-heavy with officers. Their grievances concentrated more on pragmatic issues such as low pay, demeaning duties, and lack of troops than on political issues as such. The economic crisis that still besieged Argentina had seriously degraded their livelihood. If their attitude of desperation was widespread, it could portend trouble in the future.

In any event, President Menem was seen as having exercised his responsibilities as commander in chief, and loyal troops showed no reluctance to carry out his orders as they had with former President Alfonsín. Loyal generals left their offices and personally directed several of the operations to put down the mutiny. Even the scheduled visit of President Bush 2 days after this fourth uprising went off flawlessly, also enhancing Menem's reputation as a civilian president who could deal with his own military in matters of accountability and discipline. Menem had not hesitated to act once blood was shed, although some wondered why the repeated warnings that such a revolt was imminent did not prompt preventive measures to be taken.

Although the fallout from the uprising—particularly the workings of the military justice system, the trials of the rebels, and the fate of Colonel Seineldin—continued for months, at year's end attention shifted to unfinished business regarding members of the military juntas still incarcerated and others who had completed their sentences: two former Buenos Aires Province police chiefs convicted of human rights violations; a fugitive former Army Corps commander facing trial; the jailed former leader of the Montoneros; the *Proceso* former Economy Minister; and two former officials who had served sentences for appropriating government funds. On December 29, 1990, President Menem issued pardons for all. According to Menem, this act closed a chapter and cleared the way for “national reconciliation.”³¹⁸ He defended this decision throughout his first administration as being “fair to the armed institution,” including at the Annual Armed Forces Comradeship dinner in July 1994.³¹⁹

Menem did not receive political acquiescence on this decision. Opposition parties (except the pro-military UCD Party) backed “day of mourning” rallies called by human rights organizations, and tens of thousands turned out on December 30 to protest. Those pardoned were glad to be out of jail or out from under the cloud of their convictions if they had served out their sentences or were facing trial. However, the former military among them (all but Suárez Mason, not yet tried, had been stripped of their military status and rank) were still demanding the vindication of the armed forces in their actions during the *Proceso* government. Even the

Chief of Staff of the Army, General Bonnet, hailed the pardons as being in the army's interest, because "many of their present members fought, and did so, at the time, in fulfillment of express orders."³²⁰ But he left the call for vindication to the civilian backers of the military, the UCD Party. Jorge Videla, a former president and junta member in the *Proceso* government, was unrepentant, also calling for "full institutional vindication," recognition that the military had "defended the nation against subversive aggression."³²¹ That resulted in a call from the left for repeal of the pardons and other acts to protest them. Charges and countercharges were the order of the day, but Menem remained unmoved; no pardons were rescinded, and no vindication sentiments were officially codified.

Menem did not bypass the military in dealing with the rebels involved in the uprising of December 3, 1990. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was the tribunal for dealing with the rebels. The charge was mutiny, for which the death penalty could be assessed. The Council was quick to act; on January 8, 1991, it sentenced three principals charged in the uprising, Colonel Mohamed Ali Seineldin, Colonel Luis Baraldini, and Colonel Oscar Ricardo Vega, to indefinite imprisonment and discharged them from the army. Seineldin and the others thus lost their military status, retirement, and privileges. Ten other army officers were sentenced to lesser terms for being in rebellion. Menem did not consider pardons for these officers, and they were thus cashiered.

Seineldin used his trial testimony and magazine and newspaper interviews to voice his opinion that disloyalty lay on the side of the army hierarchy, which had broken promises made to rebels. But his protests did not affect the continuing arraignment and prosecution of those involved in the fourth rebellion. On April 15, the appeals trials for the initial group of rebels sentenced by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces began in federal appeals court, as provided for under Alfonsín-era modifications to the Code of Military Justice. Again portraying himself as the defender of military honor against a corrupt hierarchy, Seineldin stated that "more blood will flow" if the army's "grave problems" were not solved and that the rebels had to choose between "the duty of obedience and the duty of conscience."³²² He and others insisted that written agreements had been made to satisfy rebel demands in earlier rebellions, and they excoriated former President Alfonsín for denying it in court. In an open letter to the Argentine people in a new magazine, *Conciencia Nacional*, Seineldin characterized himself as the "circumstantial" leader of the "national army," by which he meant *los carapintada* and their allies who had their origins in

the defenders of the Malvinas. He glorified horizontal loyalty and denigrated vertical loyalty, making polemics against the military and civilian hierarchy and their purported sellout to foreigners and special interests.

But Menem had the final say. The appellate process was not disrupted, and in mid-August 1991, Menem responded to Seineldin by branding him “totally impotent” and suggesting that he had “failed in his life and as a member of the military. . . . The only thing he has done is kill his companions in arms.”³²³ By this time, 386 military personnel had been brought before the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and 58 had received sentences for participation in the fourth uprising. Another 12 officers and 289 NCOs still awaited trial, incarcerated in Magdalena Prison, at that time the army’s principal correctional facility. On September 2, the federal appeals court handed down its decision on the initial group of ringleaders, reaffirming the earlier Supreme Council verdict on aggravated and bloody revolt and aggravated rebellion or mutiny (since the defendants were military men at the time of the uprising). The Appellate Court even meted out short sentences to two officers not found guilty by the Council. Seineldin, who received the heaviest punishment, is serving an indefinite prison sentence. Twenty-three other army officers were sentenced to 4- to 20-year terms for their participation in this episode.³²⁴

Menem basically prevailed on the two salient issues of the review of the past. He had wiped the slate clean in terms of the Dirty War, pardoning all the remaining *Proceso*-era actors still serving sentences. Also pardoned were those who had completed their terms but who remained convicted felons, military, guerrilla, and civilian alike, including the archetypes in each category: Jorge Videla, Mario Firmenich, and José Martínez de Hoz. Menem had put down the last and bloodiest rebellion, which generally was considered both a confrontation between *los carapintada* and the regular military hierarchy and an attempted coup against the Menem government. The rebels’ fate was decided in accordance with the regular and appellate procedures instituted by the previous administration, and Menem subsequently indicated that he would never pardon them. No one (except Seineldin and his confederates) questioned the legitimacy of action within either the military or civilian processes.

The two principal military rebel leaders turned out quite differently: Former Lieutenant Colonel Aldo Rico, cashiered but free, became a nationalist Peronist politician with his own party, the MODIN. He unsuccessfully contested the governorship of Buenos Aires Province, and he was a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic in 1995. Former Colonel Mohamed

Ali Seineldin is unlikely ever to walk out of prison, and although *los carapintada* organized as the Movement for Ibero-American Integration and National Identity (*Movimiento de Identidad Nacional e Integración Ibero-Americana*, or MINEII), its influence within the military structure, principally the army, appears over. For the 1995 elections, Seineldin, from his prison cell, led the organization of a political party called the *Movimiento Restaurador* as a “nationalist alternative to the majority parties,” but it sought legal status in only a few provinces.³²⁵ The nationalist, irredentist aspirations that led to the Malvinas war, and the antisubversive operations of the Dirty War that had dominated the military experience of the rebels and their open and covert supporters in the military, had been resolved—if not to everyone’s satisfaction. A faction-distressed military was no longer a political actor to the extent that elements were openly challenging the constitutional arrangements or the extant military hierarchy. But if the conflictive elements of the civil-military relationship abated, serious constitutional and institutional questions remained.

Defense Policy

The Menem administration’s consideration of the roles and missions of the armed forces was informed by a discredited military legacy and an inconclusive Alfonsín legacy. Consequently, Menem was faced with an Argentine defense policy in considerable disarray and a set of armed governmental institutions whose main mission at the time he took office was easily interpretable as their own corporate integrity and survival.

The military’s legacy to Menem concerning defense policy was steeped in the Argentine military tradition. Until the Alfonsín administration, the military establishment was in charge of defense policy—both the policymaker and the executive agent.³²⁶ A self-defined, autonomous defense policy reflected the historical involvement of the military in policy matters. Furthermore, the individual services had led separate existences, defining their roles and missions according to their own land, sea, and air capabilities.

This military legacy offered no effective check on the military and no real accountability, especially since the civil-military relationship revolved not around the establishment of an instrumental military force at the service of the regime but around the legitimacy of political authority on the part of civilians and military. The military’s threat perceptions, *hipótesis de conflicto*, had centered on regional geopolitics and the Cold War, especially anticommunism. These concerns shaped the military institutions’ beliefs

concerning the use of force. In the last manifestation of military institutional rule, the *Proceso* government (1976–1982), military roles and political roles became indistinguishable, leading to the Dirty War (anticommunism) internally and the Malvinas war (geopolitics) externally. The military lost both, the first a Pyrrhic victory and a political disaster, and the second an unmitigated military disaster. The armed forces were seen as unreliable “trustees of the national essence” and no longer viable as the sole source of defense policy.³²⁷

Raúl Alfonsín and his administration members were much better at deciding what type of defense policy they did not want than at elaborating what they did want. They did not perceive Argentina to be internally or externally threatened in any way that would require the use of military force. And they did not want the military involved in the foreign or domestic conflict resolution. The administration’s entire review of the past was predicated on the illegitimacy of military action in internal security matters. In external matters, the administration sought resolution of Argentina’s more intractable differences with others, especially the Malvinas claims and disputes with Chile over borders and the Beagle Channel islands, through diplomatic channels.

Consequently, the Alfonsín administration did not predicate defense policy on military capacity. No *hipótesis de guerra* came from the civilians, only the rejection of military ones: no threats, no enemies.³²⁸ Administration efforts were designed to reduce military resources since the regime did not want the military to regain its power to intrude politically. The civilian politicians greatly resented the military and sought a state of affairs in which it would not be tolerated as a political factor. The politicians, deep down, did not believe that the military, certainly as Argentina had known it in the modern era, was necessary anymore.³²⁹

The Alfonsín administration’s preoccupation with what the military had done preempted any consideration of what the military should do. The long delay in promulgating the Defense Law reflected the regime’s predisposition that the military should do nothing or as little as possible. The Defense Law provided a legal basis for defense policy, placing it in the constitutional framework and proscribing the scope and domain of military activity. It also abrogated the old directives of the military governments based on the National Security Doctrine, which Alfonsín abhorred, but it did not provide enabling legislation to operationalize the defense establishment, civilian or military. The La Tablada incident in early 1989 vividly revealed the law’s shortcomings, but by then it was too late for the

Radical incumbents to act. Although consultative mechanisms were created by emergency measures, the electoral battle and the military's use of the La Tablada incident to pressure civilian authorities for vindication of past roles and missions preempted the use of those mechanisms to consider future roles and missions. Defense guidance, as it would be referred to in the United States, was nowhere to be found.

Changed Roles and Missions under Menem

Defense policy did not top Menem's agenda; he had to face the deteriorating economic situation that had forced Alfonsín from office early. Menem's first task concerning the military was to defuse the review of the past issues, a task that had two consequences for civil-military relations. First, it put to rest the immediate confrontation between military and civilian authorities, even though a bitter faction of the military would again try to disrupt the military hierarchy and the Presidency. Second, by creating a better atmosphere for civil-military interaction, it permitted Menem to postpone definitive action about military roles and missions, particularly concerning the allocation of resources to the defense establishment. The civilians seemed intent on two things: that the military cost as little as possible and that it not cause political problems.³³⁰

Therefore, whereas Alfonsín had been unable to avoid confrontation with the military, Menem could and did elude it. Civil-military relations in the Menem years were characterized by cordiality, but this goodwill did not translate into concrete defense guidance in the first Menem administration. No defense planning in the broad sense occurred; although directives for Menem's consideration were prepared, they always seemed to be "in the works."³³¹ The question of what the military should do was addressed internally by military authorities. They pondered the changing strategic environment that the year 1989 would usher in worldwide. They addressed the *hipótesis de conflicto* of old: the concerns about Chile and "territorial integrity"; the possibilities and prospects of internal subversion; and defense of sovereignty and the national interest. But as one high-level MOD civilian put it, international bilateral conflicts no longer were considered viable.³³² Absent a real threat (or a created one) that required a military solution, the services were in danger of looking to civilian political authorities like an expensive ornament, and a tarnished one at that. In the Menem administration, threats to national security and national interest were seen in economic terms, and Menem saw the solution to those problems as resting in the reduction of the role of the state.

Moreover, the administration saw new international economic arrangements—especially MERCOSUR, in effect from January 1, 1995—as abolishing the possibility of regional armed conflict with Argentina’s neighbors, save perhaps Chile (not then a MERCOSUR participant). Minister of Defense Camilión emphasized these views in an interview in late 1994, citing especially the “total intimacy” with Brazil.³³³

This national strategy of reorienting the national economy away from the state-centered focus that it had since the first Perón administration in the late 1940s resulted in the deprioritizing of state activities that were not amenable to privatization, particularly education, health, and defense. These sectors were among the *postergados*—the postponed.³³⁴ This shift did not mean that these sectors were ignored entirely; all these sectors represented, in the Argentine context, functions in which the governmental interest was inherent and profound. But it did mean that the central government contribution to these tasks was minimized. The reorientation of the economy was another indicator of the divorce of national strategy from military strategy, of national interest from military interest. Expenditures were reduced to the point that the military forces became almost nonoperational, and many military assets, especially most of the *Fabricaciones Militares* industrial complex, were sold or privatized.

Defense policy remained moribund; even national security issues yielded to economic and foreign policy. Military roles and missions in the first Menem administration responded to these policy guidelines and their operationalization rather than to defense or military policy. This subsumption resulted in some interesting roles for Argentine military forces, and it enhanced two exogenous actors in the defense policy mix: the United States and the United Nations (UN).

For most of the contemporary era, both external and internal security had been the province of the military. The national security forces other than the police, such as the National Gendarmerie and the Naval Prefecture, also were subordinated to the military hierarchy. The military establishment had been an autonomous, self-defining arbiter of the use of force. The Dirty War, the Malvinas war, and the Alfonsín administration formally ended that situation but had put little in its place.

During the first Menem administration, that did not change much. No one seemed to know how the military should behave with respect to defense. Consequently, many military officers summarized the defense posture as deterrence, a sufficient capability to ward off any threats to Argentina. But civilian preoccupation with economic and foreign policy

appropriated military assets to further their own policies rather than providing defense guidance upon which force structure and a national security posture could be predicated that would make deterrence meaningful. The paucity of traditional functions led to the creation of at least two new roles to support nondefense missions: international peacekeeping support, under the auspices of the United Nations, and combatting the international drug trade, with considerable influence from the United States.

Argentine foreign and economic policy both reflected Menem's apostasy toward orthodox Peronism. Contrary to traditional standards of Argentine nationalism, statism, and protectionism, Menem was highly internationalist in his foreign policy. He deemed it in Argentina's interest to be on the "right side" of both the United States and the United Nations in the post-Cold War era. And he planned to use military assets to further these ends.

Menem committed two Argentine Navy destroyers to Persian Gulf duty in support of the forces sanctioned by the United Nations and led by the United States in Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*. This action was unprecedented in a venue outside the Western Hemisphere, and it indicated that Argentina would support international efforts with more than rhetoric. The only Latin American country to commit forces in the Gulf War, Argentina was immediately a high-profile, if largely symbolic, actor in that arena.

Argentina again was a player in a multinational context outside the Western Hemisphere when Menem committed significant military forces, this time from the army, to support UN peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia. Argentina agreed to commit a reinforced battalion in Croatia as part of a multinational force. This commitment of some 800 to 900 army personnel to duty in Croatia at any one time had significant consequences for military policy. In the context of security and military relationships with the United States, Argentina's military under the first Menem administration adopted one nontraditional mission, a support role in combating the illegal drug trade, and eschewed two others, the continuation of the Condor missile program and the development of nuclear weapons. All of these moves were controversial because significant elements in Argentine government and society saw them as diminutions of sovereignty. But Menem needed the confidence of the U.S. Government to pursue his nondefense objectives in the international arena, and all these defense-related roles were designed to achieve them.

Tasking military assets to combat the international drug trade raised several issues: using the military in an internal security mission; involving

military personnel in nonmilitary roles that were the purview of the National Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard; and diverting military assets to nonmilitary uses. The military services' high commands and their counterparts in the security forces discussed these matters, concluding that the military should not take the lead in this program and that any military involvement was controversial.

Nonetheless, Menem adopted the fight against the illegal narcotics trade as his own, and in 1991 he created the Federal Narcotics Control Service to combat the trade in Argentina. This civilian agency was the focal point of Argentine efforts against illegal substances. Most operations in this regard fell to security forces and to the justice system, but the air force was significantly involved. Along with the National Gendarmerie, it was charged with mapping the country to discover clandestine airfields being used for drug trafficking and with providing radar and aircraft intercept capability. Hence, one of the armed services was directly involved, and the other two were charged with providing logistical support.

The Argentine military made several decisions that constituted important confidence-building measures with regard to the United States. The most controversial was the discontinuation and dismantling of the Condor II missile project. Conceived in the 1970s, this project had gone on even under the Alfonsín regime without public knowledge. Designed to be Argentina's entry into the high-technology world of missile development, the Condor program created a web of secret financing and distribution arrangements, especially with countries in the Middle East. Menem's election to the Presidency and subsequent developments in the Persian Gulf region highlighted this project, and the United States began pressing for its discontinuation if not its dismemberment. The Argentine Air Force, for which the project was major and separately funded, was loath to give it up and especially to be seen as bending to U.S. pressure. But Menem knew that U.S. support for other efforts, including other military programs, probably would turn on this issue. The Condor program was closed, but not without some considerable strains.

Although Alfonsín constricted the role of the military in the development of nuclear materials, no clear statement of the Argentine position was made until the Menem administration. On November 28, 1990, the presidents of Argentina and Brazil signed a "Declaration on the Common Nuclear Policy of Brazil and Argentina," establishing a common system of accounting and control for nuclear materials and an independent agency, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and

Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), for the application of safeguards to both countries. This led to Brazilian and Argentine ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty, which created a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Latin America. The quadripartite agreement among Argentina, Brazil, the ABACC, and the International Atomic Energy Agency has greatly reduced international concern about the nuclear programs of both Brazil and Argentina and has effectively ended a dangerous aspect of the old rivalry between Brazil and Argentina.³³⁵

President Menem set his international house in order, in some respects by choosing whether to utilize defense assets in pursuit of foreign policy objectives. But this finessed the matter of the internal Argentine civil-military relationship.

Institutional Relationships

Defense and military issues were not high priorities for Carlos Menem. He engaged the military mostly at a symbolic level, pardoning its offenses but eschewing its desire for vindication of past actions. He did not want to confront the military, but more importantly, he did not want the military to confront him. Hence, as long as he was able to avoid its demands, he shunted the military aside or used it selectively to further his other plans in the economic and foreign affairs arenas.

The Ministry of Defense, then, was not a primary focus for policy for the Menem administration. The MOD had the two essential tasks of restraining the military budget and privatizing military industries, both measures designed to further Menem's overall economic plan. Indeed, when Domingo Cavallo became Economy Minister in early 1991, he became by far the most powerful of Menem's subordinates in the Executive. The MOD was of secondary interest, a position reflected in the selection of its leadership.

In just over 4 years in the early 1990s, President Menem had five defense ministers. None had much of a background in defense matters, and most had interests elsewhere. The first, Italo Luder, had been Raúl Alfonsín's Peronist opponent in the 1983 presidential election. He stayed only a few months until the beginning of 1990, and despite efforts by this Peronist stalwart to raise the profile of the Ministry of Defense and seek better prioritization of assets and needs, not much of consequence occurred during his brief tenure (except for the pardons, with which he had nothing to do).³³⁶ His successor was Humberto Romero, who remained only a year. The fourth uprising and the final pardons came late in his tenure, and he resigned after them. Guido di Tella, whose ambition was the Foreign Office,

took the Defense portfolio for just 15 days before moving to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, yielding Defense to Antonio Erman González, a Peronist politician who came in at the same time as Cavallo. He stayed for 2 years essentially to match Defense with Menem's and Cavallo's economic plans and ambitions, resigning in March 1993 to seek elective office. His successor was Oscar Camilión, a career diplomat of long standing but with little knowledge of defense matters or priorities. Despite his impeccable reputation at the time of his appointment, a major arms sale scandal erupted during his tenure.

Menem did not involve himself in the institutional relationships in the defense sector. He was cordial to the military but kept it at arm's length, not involving it in any significant way in the policy process. He followed Alfonsín's lead in using the forum of the Armed Forces Comradeship dinner to set forth his thinking about the military. Speaking on July 7, 1990, at his first such opportunity, he asserted what he expected the civil-military relationship to be. He averred that the military had "finally inserted themselves in the Argentine and world democratic institutions" and that there were no longer "different objectives for the Armed Forces, politicians and each sector of society."³³⁷ In other words, no political role existed for the military. Furthermore, as a "pillar in the reconstruction of the Argentine state," the military, like all other institutions, would be called "in the direction of self-sacrifice and good judgment. I call on you to put moderation before the lack of satisfaction." Hence, the military could not expect particular consideration in terms of resources, let alone preferential treatment, in the Menem administration.

The Alfonsín administration's Defense Law remained in effect, with most of its provisions still not legislatively implemented. The National Security Council established by Alfonsín remained in existence but was not convened.³³⁸ The use of the armed forces in internal matters was the major defense question, one that increasingly came under the purview, if not the jurisdiction, of the Minister of Interior. In early 1990, Interior Minister Julio Mera Figueroa emphasized that the Menem administration would use the military to support local law enforcement if necessary.³³⁹ This use was made possible by Menem Decree 392, which dismantled the National Security Council and transferred its functions to the National Defense Council established by the Alfonsín-era Defense Law. Many saw this as an end-run on using the military forces internally, contravening the intent of the Defense Law.³⁴⁰ But despite some unrest in the country at that time because of the parlous state of the economy, no such use was made.

However, the precedent was set and was codified 2 years later in the Domestic Security Law of the Menem administration. This law states, "The Armed Forces will be used to re-establish order within national territory (including the country's airspace and sea shelf) in exceptional cases in which the president deems that the domestic security system established by this law is insufficient to carry out the stipulated aims."³⁴¹ The Minister of Interior, not the Minister of Defense, was to coordinate any such effort.

Reorganization at the Ministry of Defense reflected Menem's desire that it play a supporting role to his economic aims and policies. The only major reorganization occurred in September 1991 under Defense Minister Antonio Erman González.³⁴² Two new secretariats and five undersecretariats were created. The military affairs secretariat, with its policy and strategy and scientific and technology research undersecretariats, was to handle the military side of defense policy; the planning and reorganization secretariat, with its administration and budget, restructuring and investment (privatization), and patrimonial assets (such as real estate) undersecretariats, would address the economic side. The Menem-Cavallo priorities in the defense sector were clearly recognizable in this arrangement.

The Ministry of Defense, then, functioned as a staging area for other policy initiatives within the Menem administration, but little in the way of concrete military and defense policy was forthcoming. And the Ministry of Defense continued to rely on its military subsystems to provide defense guidance. The process was circular: policy did not flow from the highest civilian authorities to the lower levels and then to the military services as the operating agencies. The civilians wanted the military to tell them what should be done; the military wanted the civilians to tell them what they should do. Although the recruitment and training of civilian defense officials improved somewhat, many still viewed the civilian defense hierarchy as being more a conduit for than a director of military ideas.³⁴³ The Armed Forces Joint Staff, clearly subordinate to the MOD, should have been the principal military source for policy.

The Armed Forces Joint Staff continued to provide the forms of jointness but not the substance. Although Alfonsín had sought through legislation to vest the Joint Staff with considerable authority, its power never approached operational control of military assets. Neither the MOD nor the services were willing to part with the resources that might have made the Joint Staff a significant policy body, able to propose or execute policy. Consequently, the Joint Staff remained the excluded middle, in theory the linchpin between the civilians of the Ministry of Defense and the

Armed Forces, but in practice unable to affect much, or effect much, either up the command chain or down it.

This impotence was not for lack of effort on the part of the Joint Staff. Admiral Emilio Osses, Menem's first Chief of the Joint Staff, sought to move the Joint Staff to the forefront of military planning. However, the basis for the role he envisioned for the Joint Staff, as a senior advisory group to a Joint Chief of Staff, did not exist.³⁴⁴ Osses therefore created the Committee of the Chiefs of Staff, designed to bring the top officers of the army, navy, and air force and the Chief of the Joint Staff into some recognized body.

This was no easy task. The individual services remained wary of jointness as a standard operating procedure and were not amenable to the idea of ceding operational control. Consequently, the Joint Staff acted as a coordinating body, providing input for the proposals for directive action by the civilian authorities of the Ministry of Defense and synchronizing the efforts of the three armed services to pursue their tasks. But the main efforts of the MOD were directed toward reducing military costs, and the main efforts of the services were focused on surviving. The Joint Staff had no resources that it could use to enhance joint military capability or to enforce its judgments among recalcitrant armed services. Entrenchment of the notion of service autonomy, however much proscribed or bounded, was exacerbated by economic hard times and a lack of direction from the civilian authorities entrusted with promulgating defense guidance. Without budgetary or operational control, the Joint Staff, and especially its Chief, was largely ignored.

Further undermining the authority of the Chief of the Joint Staff was the problem of seniority. Although the president formally vested the position as the senior military member on active duty, this was not necessarily the case in practice. For example, General Mario Cándido Díaz was not the senior serving army officer when he was Chief of the Joint Staff; Army Chief of Staff General Martín Balza was. Given the predispositions of the armed forces to act autonomously and the military personnel system's rigid prescriptions about seniority and authority, having a lower-ranking officer serve in a position theoretically charged with directive responsibilities lessened its impact. The result was, as one observer put it, "no one listened to Díaz."³⁴⁵ This absence of authority, combined with the operational and budgetary restraints, had the effect of marginalizing the Joint Staff. The chiefs of staff of the army, navy, and air force remained masters of their domains (as small and pinched as it may have

been), and they retained more power and prestige than the Joint Staff and its chiefs among military circles. Despite the best efforts of Admiral Osses and others, the Joint Staff was still regarded as auxiliary, and ensuring that top officers served there remained a struggle, as the armed forces were reluctant to part with them.

Resources

Defense Budget

The evolution of the defense budget during the Menem administration clearly showed the effects of political economy. Menem inherited an economic shambles from Alfonsín. In his first year in office, inflation was a staggering 5,648 percent.³⁴⁶ The calendar year figure for 1990 improved but was still 1,343 percent through November.³⁴⁷ Such numbers render almost meaningless any statistical comparison of the defense budget with GDP or GNP, or with total government expenditures, in the early years of the administration. However, with the arrival of Economy Minister Cavallo in early 1991, the Menem economic plan began stabilizing, in part by keeping down expenditures for sectors other than social insurance or the economy totally or heavily dependent on the state. Defense was the clearest example of this, with no offsetting provincial or private components, as in the case of health and education. Hence, practically no investment occurred in the defense sector (the privatization programs and the sale of defense assets actually decreased defense capital).

One of Cavallo's first actions was to "dollarize" the economy, pegging the austral (in March 1991 the Argentine unit of currency) at 10,000 to the dollar, fully convertible. Soon after, conversion to the peso lopped four zeros from the value of the austral, and for practical purposes one Argentine peso equaled one U.S. dollar. Although this rate overvalued the peso considerably, it had dramatic effects on inflation. The calendar year 1991 rate was 84 percent, with the monthly rate in November of that year at 0.4 percent, the lowest such rate not artificially induced in 20 years. The rate in 1992 fell to 18 percent and annualized at 8 percent in 1993. In 1994, the inflation rate for the year was slightly less than 4 percent.³⁴⁸ These changes radically altered the statistical bases for GDP, government expenditures, and defense budgets, certainly on a nominal basis, so by 1992 comparisons were possible.

In 1992, the central government budget was 33.77 billion pesos.³⁴⁹ Given a nominal GDP of 226 billion pesos in revised, dollarized figures, central government expenditures represented 14.9 percent of GDP.³⁵⁰ The

Ministry of Defense budget, including the armed forces and security forces and related dependencies and programs, was 4,037 billion pesos, or 11.9 percent of the national budget. This amount represented 1.78 percent of GDP.

In 1993, the budget increased to 39.65 billion pesos, 16.3 percent of the estimated nominal GDP of 244 billion pesos. The defense budget was 3,994 billion pesos, 10.1 percent of the national budget, and represented 1.64 percent of GDP.³⁵¹ Contrasting these numbers with the comparable data for earlier periods, in the first Menem administration the defense budget went from 2.5 percent of GDP to 1.64 percent. This budget placed the armed forces in such a tight position for operational funds that on at least one occasion, the military hierarchy was forced to appeal to the president for supplemental funds to finish a fiscal year.

Focusing on only the military component of the budget shows figures more reflective of the civil-military relationship. The army, navy, and air force received only about \$2 billion of the approximately \$4 billion destined for Defense; army figures put the total for the forces even lower, at \$1.88 billion.³⁵² Either way, the amount spent by the military (not including the Gendarmerie or coast guard, nor Defense dependencies such as the defense factories and companies, the Joint Staff, and the National Antarctic Directorate, plus the enormous accumulated liabilities and debts in the defense sector), was less than 1 percent of GDP and only 5 percent of the national budget as a whole. This included all personnel funds for active and retired members, operational expenses, and capital funds. The personnel funds just for pay, allowances, and social welfare costs totaled \$1.4 billion of the \$1.88 billion, or some 75 percent of the total, and the costs were rising. The rest went for operations, with only 2.5 percent designated for capital expenditures. The effects of these low amounts and their skewed distribution were substantial; the connection between resources and restructuring and manpower is examined below in the context of military policy along with the effects on roles and missions.

The state of the defense budget reflected the low priority of the defense establishment to the Menem administration. In the second administration, only enough funding was provided for the continued existence of military forces; the most salient employments of the military by Menem, the combined peacekeeping operations under UN auspices, relied on at least the promise of external funding for their support. Capital improvements and readiness adjustments for the Argentine Armed Forces

had to await the outcome of the privatization of defense production establishments and the sale of military assets.

Privatization and Defense

The path Menem chose to reinvigorate the economic health of Argentina was privatization, starting with such huge state enterprises as the telephone company (ENTEL) and the state airline (Aerolíneas Argentinas). These and scores of other state-owned or -controlled companies, especially the railroads and the state oil company, had been losing money and piling up debt for years. Among the major state-owned conglomerations was the military-industrial complex, over 30 establishments employing tens of thousands of people and involved in everything from armaments and explosives to iron and steel, electrical products, and chemicals. These enterprises included not only the former army complex, *Fabricaciones Militares*, but also the TANDANOR, AFNE, and Domecq García naval shipyards, the TAMSE tank factory, and the airplane factory at Córdoba.

Alfonsín had made a desultory attempt to privatize some of these defense assets, but only one had been sold by the end of his term. The Ministry of Defense still controlled or had a major financial interest in the rest when Menem took office. The MOD also had the major liabilities incurred by the massive debts these industries generated. The military-industrial complex—increasingly obsolescent, constrained in the market by foreign policy considerations during the Alfonsín years, and servicing a military with no money for purchases—represented an unacceptable fiscal drain on the Argentine state and presented Menem with an inviting target for privatization.

The year 1991 saw the elaboration of a comprehensive privatization strategy for all remaining state enterprises, a plan that came to fruition on November 12 with the issuance of a decree by President Menem.³⁵³ The government was to sell a 30 percent stake in all remaining state companies, with the bid winners taking control of the enterprises. Later, the remaining state shares in the enterprises were to be sold on the local and international financial markets, presumably of companies that in the meantime under private management had become more viable and valuable. Menem planned to complete many of these controlling share sales by the end of 1992.

The military-industrial complex was not excluded from this massive transfer of economic assets to private control. On December 4, 1991, the Senate authorized the privatization of the more than 30 enterprises under the Ministry of Defense, including *Fabricaciones Militares* and the Córdoba

Air Material (AMC) facility that was still under air force auspices.³⁵⁴ In 1992 and 1993, the military establishment's involuntary shedding of its once massive and powerful economic component proceeded. By mid-1993, at least the initial stage had been accomplished for most of the factories.

The military was alarmed by the scope and magnitude of this privatization drive but had little influence over its direction. Having no money for procurement, modernization, construction, or restructuring, the military's only hope lay in seeking a provision that would return to it the money generated by the privatization of these companies and the sale of other military assets such as real estate. Defense Minister González, on taking office, had indicated that such would be the case.³⁵⁵ Later, when officials were finalizing plans to privatize the military sector, MOD Planning Secretary Jorge Pereyra de Olazábal confirmed that intention: "Each enterprise will be privatized following the most advantageous method, for which reason it is necessary to study them case by case, considering the equipment that they produce."³⁵⁶

By June 1993, privatization was in full swing in the military industrial sector. Only the five military production factories of *Fabricaciones Militares* (Domingo Mattheu, Fray Luis Beltrán, Villa María, Fanazul, and Río Tercero, which manufactured arms, ammunition, and explosives) remained, where the army sought to retain some semblance of operational control. The Menem plan was for these plants to be civilian-owned and -operated. The army hoped the five could be government-owned but civilian-operated, that is, with controlling shares remaining with the state, to form a residual defense industry to service the much reduced armed forces. This effort reflected the continuing military desire not to be completely dependent on the private sector for the barest of military essentials. But by May 1994, the state and the military already were reduced to minor players even in the armaments and explosives industries, as feasibility studies and preparation of offers for privatization or sale were being finalized for these and similar facilities that were not yet divested.³⁵⁷

Matériel

In the first Menem administration, both procurement and production decisions regarding military equipment focused on combat aircraft and naval combat vessels. The most telling losses in the War in the South Atlantic had been aircraft, 95 in all from the 3 services (even though the biggest single loss was the navy cruiser ARA *Belgrano*—formerly the USS *Phoenix*). And much of the inventory that remained, especially in the air force, was nearing the end of its service life. The losses of 61 air force aircraft in the

Malvinas and of 29 more since that time practically eliminated the Argentine Air Force as a tactical military instrument.³⁵⁸ (A U.S. Government source indicated that the total number of tactical combat aircraft in 1993 was 18 A-4s and 30 Mirage IIIs, of which only about half in each category were flyable.) New, or at least replacement, modernized fighters and helicopters for all services were the highest priorities.

On the production side, Argentine military hopes rested on the IA-63 Pampa trainer (also known as the Pampa 2000), to be built jointly with LTV Aerospace at the Córdoba facility. Argentina, and especially the air force as a major beneficiary, competed for a contract by the United States for 711 air force and navy trainers that was opened for bids in 1994.³⁵⁹ The Argentine plane was expected from early tests to be very competitive. But it was not to be. On December 6, 1994, the U.S. commission reviewing the contenders' bids at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, disqualified the Argentine plane. The Argentine Minister of Defense explained the finding that the hydraulic control system in the Pampa 2000 required "extremely accurate" handling and declared it "useless as a primary pilot trainer."³⁶⁰ Menem vowed to seek some redress, but none was forthcoming.

The military services had almost no money in their respective budgets for acquisitions. What little there was went primarily to maintain existing stocks of equipment. Some spare parts were acquired, mostly for airplanes, helicopters, and vehicles, and some equipment was received from excess U.S. stocks, most notably two C-130 aircraft, the standard transport plane in the Argentine Air Force. And whereas the army and navy were able to make do temporarily with existing matériel, the air force could not. Antiquated or irreparable equipment effectively grounded the force by 1995.

By late 1992, the Menem administration had decided to purchase 36 A4M Skyhawks, a modern version of the A4B and A4C aircraft already in the Argentine inventory, to replace the lost or disabled aircraft. However, this choice was not universally popular. Chief of the Joint Staff Antonietti, an air force brigadier general, loudly opposed the purchase of an airplane he regarded as obsolete.³⁶¹ He and many others would much have preferred the F-16 or F-18 top-of-the-line aircraft, but these were not available. (Antonietti lost not only the argument, viewed as the latest episode in his long feud with Air Force Chief of Staff Brigadier General Raúl Julia, but also his job; he was replaced by Lieutenant General Díaz shortly thereafter.)

This landmark acquisition, the first major sale to Argentina by external powers since the Malvinas conflict, was not without controversy. Cost

was a consideration, but the privatization proceeds from the sale of excess military assets such as real estate and buildings were available. The other problem was a residual of the War in the South Atlantic: the continued opposition of the United Kingdom to any sale of major weapons systems to Argentina that might be employable in the Malvinas theater.

The original deal for the A4Ms called for an overhauled and updated airplane but not one with advanced electronics. The Argentines insisted that a viable avionics suite, including state-of-the-art radar, be part of the package. However, this equipment would drive up the cost from an original estimate of \$100 million to \$125 million for 36 planes to about \$230 million. In addition, the British, according to Defense Minister Oscar Camilión, would try to impede the sale if the sophisticated electronics and weapons systems were included.³⁶²

On February 1, 1994, Foreign Minister Guido di Tella announced that the United States, exhibiting a “level of trust” in Argentina, had closed the deal for 36 aircraft with the radars desired.³⁶³ In December 1994, President Menem signed a contract giving Lockheed Aircraft a 25-year concession on the AMC with an option for two 10-year extensions. Lockheed was to refit 18 of the 36 A4Ms there, retaining over 2,000 AMC workers (the other 18 were to be done in the United States). This move effectively privatized AMC, a Menem objective, and gave Argentina a major stake in this aircraft refit, with the possibility of establishing AMC as a major maintenance and repair center for all of Latin America.³⁶⁴

The navy continued its refit and construction programs as best it could. The aged aircraft carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo* languished, as lack of costly upgrades and of suitable modern aircraft rendered it unusable. Periodically, the navy sought to get the refit going, but on December 19, 1996, navy Chief of Staff Admiral Carlos Marrón would decide to terminate the program.³⁶⁵

By 1989, as Menem took office, navy construction had stabilized at two MEKO 140 frigates (four were built and commissioned) at AFNE, and two TR 1700 submarines at Domecq García (two were already in the fleet). Because of labor conflicts with the builders and the financial woes of the navy and the Ministry of Defense, it appeared by the end of the first Menem administration that even if completed, all these assets would have to be sold. The frigates later escaped that fate, and the second Menem administration directed the commissioning of two 140 Class ships, ARA *Robinson* and ARA *Gómez Roca*.³⁶⁶ The submarines being built—two lots under construction and two lots from the German supplier/coproducer Thyssen

Nordseewerke that were never unpacked—were never completed, and efforts to sell them were unsuccessful. Finally, the government decided to sell all four lots as “spare parts and scrap iron” to a Dutch naval enterprise.³⁶⁷

Military Policy

In Argentina, military policy has often played a major, sometimes definitive, role in the civil-military relationship, given the salience of military views and the importance of *estado militar*. This section will deal with the relationship from the service and unit level, seeking both to differentiate defense and military policy and to analyze the civil-military relationship from the latter perspective.

Manpower

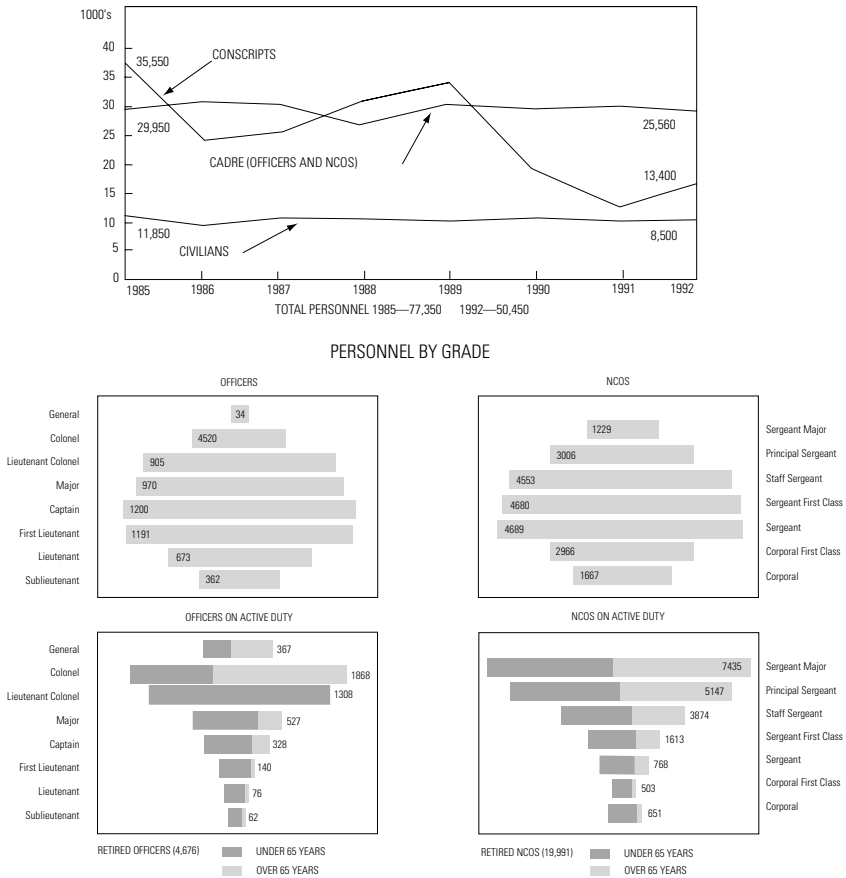
By the second half of the Alfonsín administration, the overall manning levels in the military forces had stabilized. The cadre numbers varied little throughout the Alfonsín period, staying at levels quite high for the total force numbers (see table 4 for the army; the other two services always maintained their officer and NCO ranks at high levels). The number of conscripts, however, had been halved, so that total uniformed force levels were only about half of even their pre-Malvinas high. Because little restructuring other than simple downsizing had occurred, units were significantly undermanned, particularly in the army, which depended more heavily on the conscripted soldier than either the air force or navy. Budgetary restrictions were so severe that conscripts sometimes were released early, as the army could not afford to feed, clothe, house, or arm them (conscripts were paid next to nothing in cash).

In the Menem administration, the overall manning situation worsened. Figure 3 details the situation for the army, in which the effects of low overall manning levels were most significant. Cadre strength remained virtually unchanged, indicating that retirements were being matched by acquisitions, and that cadre levels were being maintained at all costs.

But the number of conscripts plummeted further, reaching its nadir in 1991, with a mere 9,000 or so incorporated into the army. Table 6 details conscript acquisition in the uniformed services from 1973 to 1994, which turned out to be the last year of conscription. The number of civilians also was reduced by approximately 25 percent by 1992.

The result of this further significant reduction in manpower was that the Argentine armed forces became essentially a cadre force, skilled and developed through the military schooling system but having little in the way of troops or functioning equipment. The cadre constituted some 65

Figure 3. End Strengths of Active-Duty Army Personnel (1985–1992)



Source: *Verde Oliva*, no. 3 (August 1992), 3.

percent of the force in the army, and more in the navy and air force, contrasting with a historical level before the Malvinas war of 20 to 25 percent in the army and 50 to 60 percent in the navy and air force.

This manning imbalance had effects far beyond the filling of the ranks. Retiree costs, part of the military portion of the defense budget, were increased by the high number of cadre, and the imbalance was worsened by the fact that both officer and NCO retirees were generally at higher grades, causing a corresponding drain on the personnel accounts.

Table 6. Two Decades of Military Conscription (1973–1994)

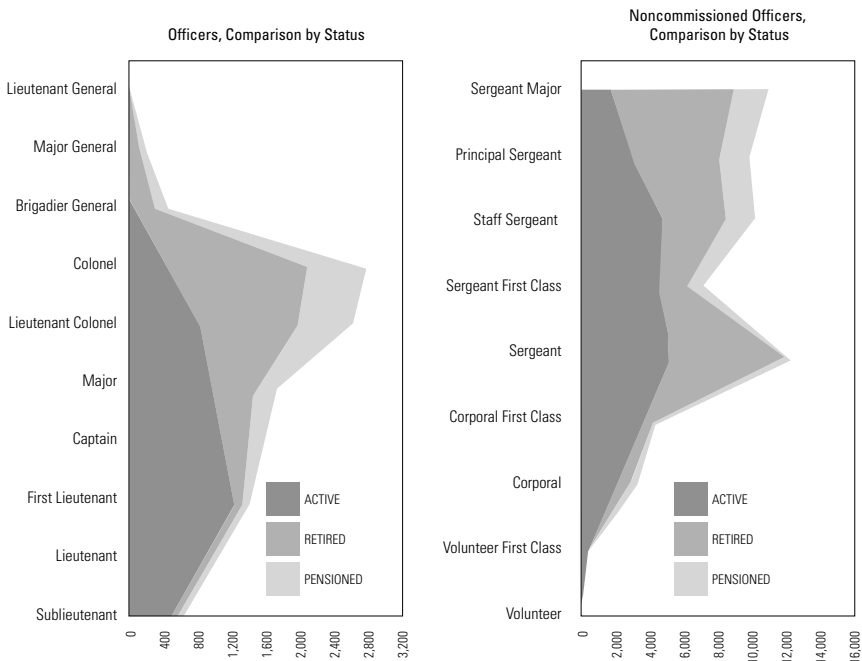
Year	Army	Navy	Air Force	Total
1973	59,664	17,300	7,300	84,264
1974	64,327	18,500	7,320	90,147
1975	68,205	18,684	9,533	96,422
1976	66,949	19,751	9,645	96,345
1977	68,216	20,332	9,212	97,760
1978	71,831	20,350	9,000	101,181
1979	71,033	17,000	12,300	100,333
1980	73,108	17,000	11,000	101,108
1981	73,863	18,500	11,060	103,423
1982	72,643	15,300	11,200	99,143
1983	63,000	15,000	10,500	88,500
1984	63,941	16,500	9,000	89,441
1985	34,185	7,510	6,865	48,560
1986	24,967	5,725	7,000	37,692
1987	28,320	6,600	5,901	40,821
1988	29,090	7,250	5,950	42,290
1989	31,606	9,030	6,119	46,755
1990	16,185	8,500	5,000	29,685
1991	9,789	4,034	1,585	15,408
1992	13,000	5,000	1,800	19,800
1993	15,000	4,000	2,000	21,000
1994	20,000	4,000	2,000	26,000

Source: Argentine Army General Staff, as reported in *La Nación*.

Note: 1994 is the last year in which conscripts were inducted.

(A significant number of widows and dependents also were paid from military funds.) Hence, the army, and the navy and air force as well, were paying approximately an equal number of active and retired cadre. Consequently, active-duty pay, gutted by the hyperinflation of the early Menem years, remained low. The military budget had no money to increase pay,

Figure 4. Comparisons of Personnel Status: Active, Retired, and Pensioned



Source: Working Paper, Army General Staff, Undated. English Translations by author.

and the Menem administration never compensated for all inflation losses and dollarized prices. (See figure 4.)

This budget shortfall had another notable and generally deleterious effect. “The [phenomenon of] double employment was born in the last part of the Radical government and deepened with that of Carlos Menem because of the vertical fall of military salaries,” opined one analyst in April 1992.³⁶⁸ His observation underscored a problem that manifested itself in both the officer and NCO ranks: for some 50 percent of the cadre, particularly among those with assignments in urban areas and unsupported by the self-contained garrisons of the interior, working two jobs had become the norm. Sanctioned for the sergeants and tolerated for the officers, this phenomenon resulted in the “part-time military.” A headquarters or even a garrison often was almost deserted by the early afternoon. Others operated with even more of a skeleton crew than normal, and other military

personnel worked nonmilitary jobs at night. Everything from selling insurance to providing private security to driving taxis was included.

This development was troubling for the military in that it often resulted in the officer or NCO regarding his military profession as just another job, a career civil service position like any other. Indeed, the “other” job often became the primary financial support of the member.³⁶⁹ This phenomenon had significant effects on readiness and availability. And a part-time military was an even more egregious drain on resources, military and societal, than a full-time professional force would have been.

For example, in April 1992, even after a pay differential to restore full-time status for at least some members, the lowest professional enlisted rank, a corporal, earned 476 pesos monthly. The highest, a sergeant major, earned 1,481 pesos. In the officer ranks, a sublieutenant earned 581 pesos, and a lieutenant general 3,037. In the middle ranks, a staff sergeant earned 996 pesos, and a major 1,375. According to the figure accepted by the army, the typical family budget consumed 1,266 pesos monthly. To have a reasonable standard of living, let alone one allowing freedom from financial worry, compensations had to be made for items in the family budget—a task almost impossible to achieve in the urban areas. Consequently, double employment continued.³⁷⁰

These top-heavy yet hollow armed forces—available only part of the time in any meaningful sense and at least nominally underpaid—did not bode well for a professional, disciplined military force in being. Privatization of assets was considered the only hope for providing additional relief to those areas for which the state is primarily responsible, including defense. But merely compensating for a cumbersome military establishment did not enhance Argentine security or satisfy either Menem’s or the armed forces’ visions for the Argentine military. Consequently, force composition and manpower goals came under serious scrutiny by the middle of Menem’s first administration.

In the cases of the navy and the air force, the cadre force was accepted as a given. Conscripts were not an essential part of the ready force, although each of these services required a small number for ancillary duties. The main concern was retaining the highly specialized and highly trained individuals that formed the backbone of a sailing or flying force. For the navy, highly trained ships’ crews and officers could not be replaced if a hemorrhage occurred because of low pay or unacceptable working conditions.³⁷¹ The same was true for the air force, especially in terms of pilots

and mechanics. These two services probably were about as small as they could get while retaining viability.

The situation was much different in the army, where conscripts were key to preserving unit integrity and providing fighting strength. Downsizing by reducing conscription while maintaining cadre strengths would have created a top-heavy, unwieldy, and expensive force. Therefore, a plan was necessary to permit a rebalancing of the force.

The army, in the June 1992 issue of *Verde Oliva* (a house organ first published in April 1992 and later replaced by the publication *Soldados*), put forth such a rebalancing plan.³⁷² The proposal was to reduce the over 29,000-member army cadre by approximately one-third, to about 21,000, by 1995, leaving the post-1995 army with 4,280 officers and 16,795 NCOs. Another source agreed with the approximate total of 20,000 but indicated that the "ideal" would be 2,500 officers and 17,500 NCOs.³⁷³ In either case, this reduction was to be accompanied by a doubling of the number of conscripts to 30,000 from the 1993 numbers. A decrease in cadre and an increase in conscripts eventually would have resulted in a less expensive force in terms of manpower direct costs, since conscripts were paid next to nothing, trained in units rather than in schools, and did not draw retirement benefits. But cadre reductions of a third of the force also would have resulted in some severe dislocations, including the very real possibility of a reduction in force, in which some members would have been forcibly retired or dismissed with few, if any, benefits.

Advent of Voluntary Military Service

By the end of 1993, the general size and grade levels of the forces to accompany restructuring had emerged. But in 1994, a far-reaching change in the doctrine of manning the armed forces occurred. From April 1994 to March 1995, the Argentine armed forces moved from a cadre-conscript force to the professional military services (PMS) system.

The decision to undertake this transformation (the most significant manpower decision since 1901, when conscription was introduced by Minister of War Ricchieri) was precipitated by the killing of conscript Omar Carrasco at the 161st Artillery Group at Zapala.³⁷⁴ Forced service in the military was highlighted in an unflattering way, and speculation began that an all-volunteer force, or "a professional army" as the Interior Minister put it in the wake of the conscript incident, was being contemplated.³⁷⁵

By late June, the details of PMS and *Servicio Militar Voluntario* (SMV), the replacement for conscription, began to emerge. Articles in *La Nación* newspaper indicated that the services would need some 29,000

volunteers (20,000 for the army, 4,000 for the navy, and 5,000 for the air force). Each volunteer would cost about 10,000 pesos per year (salary and allowances plus other personnel and operational costs), much more than the 2,500 pesos per year for a conscript. If pension contributions were included, the Joint Staff estimated a cost of 12,500 pesos per year.³⁷⁶ Pay for the new volunteer was to be 350 pesos per month, rising to 450 pesos depending on various allowances—over twice the minimum legal wage and about half of the average worker’s wage in Argentina.³⁷⁷

By July, the steps to enact this plan were under way. Menem provided the kickoff for recruiting the volunteers in his Independence Day speech in Tucumán.³⁷⁸ The recruiting goal was set at 26,500 by March 1995, and Menem expressed hopes that as many as 25 percent of the current conscripts would sign up.

By August, the Ministry of Defense and the Joint Staff had estimated the annual additional cost of PMS, mostly due to the necessity of going to SMV: 250 million pesos in new allocations, plus 67 million already considered as the cost of maintaining conscripts, for a total of 317 million pesos.³⁷⁹

But implicitly, conversion to a full-time PMS with SMV meant that the military, especially the army, could not operate on a part-time basis. The cadre had to devote its full attention to the new recruits, both to make them operationally fit, including qualified for such missions as the demanding UN peacekeeping operations, and to encourage them to continue a military career. The conscript could simply be warehoused or sent home. The volunteer apprentice in the all-professional military could not.

The ability to sustain a full-time military rested on an old but critical issue: pay. An early, optimistic estimate by the Ministry of Defense was a pay increase of 800 million pesos. Economy Minister Cavallo’s reaction was predictable: “From where do you want me to get 1.1 billion pesos?!”³⁸⁰ An earlier study attributed to the Joint Staff had given a figure of 100 million pesos. Neither figure prevailed; the 1995 governmental general budget showed no salary increase for the military in its total government expenditures of 43 billion pesos.³⁸¹ Although the military hierarchy grumbled that this would seriously affect the operations and motivation of cadre, they did not force the issue with Menem. Civilians and military alike recognized the need to regularize military salaries, but the money was not there in 1994.

In the second half of 1994, the legal framework for SMV fell into place. On September 1, Menem signed a decree abolishing compulsory military service, in effect since 1901, and establishing a voluntary system.

The legislation included an escape clause: there would be a draft only if there were not enough volunteers.³⁸² The decree exempted the 18-year-olds of the Class of 1976 and sustained other exemptions and deferments then in effect, thus removing the specter of conscription from some 300,000 Argentine males. Those picked by the lottery from the Class of 1976 continued the process, such as physicals, but were unlikely to be called.³⁸³ And on December 15, the Senate approved the Voluntary Military Service Law. It codified the requirements for volunteers already established by Menem's decree: single, physically fit men and women between 18 and 24, born in Argentina, and with a primary school education (through 7th grade) would enter into a 2-year contract, to be completed by age 26. If the number of volunteers did not fill service requirements, the Executive could draft men to meet them, the conscripts to receive the same pay and allowances as if they were volunteers. The conscription law also made provisions for substitute social service for conscientious objectors and those opposed to weapons.³⁸⁴

The change to volunteers and a professional military service changed the civil-military calculus as well. No longer would the armed forces, especially the army, be composed of a politicized cadre and a conscripted, involuntary troop cohort. This major reform—creating an instrumental force and vitiating the politicized one that had bedeviled both the Alfonsín and Menem administrations—was a large step toward an Argentine military institution more attuned to new mission realities, although it initially was not accompanied by prudent adjustments in pay and equipment. It was a move toward giving the more flexible, responsive structure an operational capability in consonance with national interests as determined by civilian authority. Menem made clear that he set the priorities, and while in important respects the *postergados* continued to be postponed, this change was designed to align more closely the civilian and military aspirations for the armed forces of Argentina.

Education and Training

Despite some efforts by the Alfonsín administration to civilianize the military educational system or to imbue the military establishment with the ideal of the citizen-soldier, the military educational system survived that administration almost intact. But some efforts to equate the military and civilian educational systems began to bear fruit in the Menem administration.

The civilian elements of the curriculum that outside institutions, especially private universities, initially provided for some officers were

institutionalized into the services' school systems. For example, in 1990, the Army Higher Education Institute (*Instituto de Enseñanza Superior del Ejército*, or IESE)—the army umbrella organization including the National Military College (*Colegio Militar de la Nación*, or CMN), the Superior War School (*Escuela Superior de Guerra*, or ESG), and the Superior Technical School (*Escuela Superior Técnica*, or EST)—was brought within the purview of Law 17,778 concerning universities. This gave it the character of a provincial university and permitted it to grant degrees in selected areas, such as international relations, engineering, and accounting.³⁸⁵ Hence, a sublieutenant graduate of the CMN could earn a *Bachiller Universitario* or *Bachiller Técnico* (roughly equivalent to an Associate of Science degree), and students in the superior level schools could earn more advanced degrees.³⁸⁶ The Sargento Cabral NCO School and the General Lemos Combat Service Support School aimed to provide a high-school-equivalent education for every graduate, either in the school or through external courses for those already on active duty.

The impact of these changes and of their equivalent alterations in the navy and air force was long range. But the removal of barriers in ideas and institutions was designed to narrow the distance between civilian and military ideals and motivations. No effort was made to challenge the institutional integrity of the military educational system or to engage in alternative officer procurement (such as an ROTC system) for the *Cuerpo de Comando*. The *Cuerpo Profesional*, including such specialists as medical personnel, veterinarians, lawyers, physical education specialists, and musicians, received military training through the General Lemos Combat Service Support School for men and in the newly established School for the Professional Women's Corps for women.

Moreover, and perhaps equally important in the long run, a substantial effort began to incorporate civilian students into the military educational program. The Superior Technical School opened its doors to those wishing to matriculate in its 5-year engineering programs, and by May 1993, some 41 civilians were enrolled.³⁸⁷ The Superior War School offered a course on defense and strategy in which civilian university students were enrolled, and it conducted joint war games or crisis scenarios with students at the National Foreign Service Institute. The National Defense School (*Escuela de Defensa Nacional*, or EDN), long having had a joint civilian-military student body and now under civilian administration, worked to fill gaps in expertise of would-be policymakers in the defense arena.

The changes occasioned by the reductions in budget and manpower also affected the formal schooling arena. Fewer positions in the academies were available, whether officer or NCO, as the needs of the services were fewer. But the most immediate effect of the budget and manpower decisions was in the area of training, which directly affected mission accomplishment and force readiness.

The dual squeeze on money and manpower that began with Alfonsín continued under Menem. The schooling system continued to provide the inputs for the cadre force with adequate, if spare, professional formation. But in the units and in the field, the opportunities to exercise professional functions diminished. For example, in May 1993, Defense Minister Camilión stated that flying time for air force pilots had been reduced 50 percent.³⁸⁸ An earlier newspaper report on a national intelligence conference revealed that the Argentine Navy was spending only 30 days a year at sea (by contrast, the Chilean Navy was said to spend 260 days at sea).³⁸⁹ A senior air force officer said that in 1980 (at the high tide of military spending), 70 percent of the air force budget was spent on operations, including training, and 30 percent on personnel. By 1993, the proportions were reversed, and the amount in real terms available was perhaps one-tenth that of the earlier period.³⁹⁰ This dire assessment was corroborated for the army in an article by Army Chief of Staff General Martín Balza, which indicated that operational money had gone from the equivalent of 1,600 million pesos in 1980 to a low of 105 million in 1991 (and which army sources said was at 177 million for 1993).³⁹¹

The training problem in the army was considerably aggravated by the fact that, unlike the navy and air force, its fighting strength had depended on conscripts, who were available for a limited time and in very limited numbers. Consequently, army line officers were not commanding or staffing units that corresponded to the command levels at which they should be operating. A captain company commander may have had a platoon-sized unit, a lieutenant colonel battalion commander a company-sized one. An infantry regiment commanded by a colonel would have been fortunate to have 300 men, in contrast to its authorized strength of 800.

The diminished status of training, as of maintenance and readiness, led to charges that Argentina was “defenseless.”³⁹² Many military and some civilian observers viewed the country as falling behind its neighbors—especially Chile—in terms of military capability. Chile was often held up as an example of a country that made the democratic transition with its forces intact—and indeed stronger and more numerous than those of Argentina.³⁹³

These sorts of declarations caused ripples in the civil-military relationship. The services, still left largely to their own devices because of the lack of resources and the low priority at the Ministry of Defense, remained severely challenged in their ability to meet what were seen as the legitimate defense needs of Argentina and to address the military force priorities of the Menem administration, which lay largely outside defense parameters. The evolution of the armed forces' restructuring and force posture in the first Menem administration illustrated this situation.

Restructuring

The composition and disposition of Argentina's armed forces had long reflected political as much as military considerations. The concentration of armed might in and around Buenos Aires, the preponderance of military headquarters in major metropolitan areas, and the distribution of units (especially the army) as a territorial, constabulary force to "show the flag" and provide an armed presence throughout the country supported the idea that the Argentine military was organized as much to enhance its political power as to provide responsive military formations for defense of the national patrimony.

Alfonsín recognized this important fact and made at least some symbolic efforts to deal with it while pursuing his goal of minimizing military political power and assets. The Alfonsín government was not at all convinced that it wanted an effective fighting force in its midst, and consequently its version of restructuring consisted largely of downsizing and budget restraints.

The Menem administration also had other immediate priorities, but the continued resource and manpower squeeze made the traditional force structure (including scattered units and bases) unsustainable. The administration's objectives in foreign policy and the attendant utilization of military assets made that force structure unwieldy and incoherent. But despite the lack of any systematic attention to force posture, the military was expected to respond somehow to executive initiatives in the foreign and economic policy arenas. The impulse for real reform in terms of restructuring was present, but the means to carry it out were still lacking. To cobble together effective, flexible, modern military forces from existing assets stretched credibility; but to persist in the existing dispositions and compositions of forces risked the accomplishment of even derivative military missions, principally a credible deterrent to attack on vital national interests.

The “smaller, bitter” forces had been the Alfonsín legacy; the “smaller, better” ones remained an unrealized goal in Menem’s first administration.

The spartan nature of military circumstances was an established fact; the preferential economic treatment of military wants and needs was long gone. But military holdings of real estate and other fixed assets were extensive. Freeing up these assets and their sale or lease seemed the only hope for acquiring the necessary funding to make meaningful changes in the force structure.

On December 10, 1990, President Menem formally announced the restructuring of the Argentine Armed Forces.³⁹⁴ His speech included a long list of measures, but the watchword for most of them was consolidation of units and sale or disposition of properties. Without this agreed-upon first step, any hope of modernization and enhanced capabilities was vain. And although lip service was paid to these objectives at that time, belt-tightening remained the order of the day. No other source of capital improvement, acquisition, or even operational funding could bridge the gap between perceived service needs and the budget allocations. Restructuring funds had to come from service resources, and the armed forces had to accede to the preferences of the civilian authorities even in the disposition of their own assets. By September 1991, the sale notices were going up.³⁹⁵

A wide gap separated the goals of restructuring from reality. The aim, as enunciated by Menem and expressed by the Chiefs of the Joint Staff, was to create effective, fully equipped units in a joint, rapid deployment mode.³⁹⁶ But higher authorities gave no definitive directions or resources to sustain that notion, however desirable it might be in theory. The reality was that the services were tasked to perform their own restructuring, and the different priorities in their undertakings reflected this independence of action.

The navy was far more concerned about training, maintenance, and operations than about unit composition and disposition.³⁹⁷ The nature of its assets, mostly ships and planes, made redeployment a relatively straightforward activity as the changes in missions and particular tasking required. But flexibility in force composition and disposition was a long way from jointness. The navy was more disposed to engage in deployment in a combined format, such as the Western Hemisphere naval exercise UNITAS or the deployment of ships to the Persian Gulf or off Haitian shores than to redeploy to accommodate joint task force organization with its sister services. Navy desires for an integrated sea-air-land force within its own institution, including an aircraft carrier, destroyers,

corvettes, submarines, naval aviation, and marines reflected its interest in service integrity and global orientation (the latter supported for the first time by Menem administration foreign policy initiatives) as well as interdiction and maritime protection responsibilities.³⁹⁸ This global orientation demanded a concentration and consolidation of resources in the southern part of the country along its coastline, and consequently significant assets were available for disposal, including the naval arsenal at Buenos Aires, the submarine building shops (Domecq García), and the explosives factory. But if navy restructuring reflected an assent to consolidation, it also reflected a continued commitment to as much autonomy in reconfiguration as possible.

The air force priorities in many ways resembled those of the navy. Highly mobile assets allowed task organization to be changed fairly easily. But the air force could not sustain its widespread dispositions, let alone maintain a satisfactory level of operational effectiveness in widely scattered units. Consequently, consolidation was a major focus for the air force. The number of air brigades was reduced from nine to five, and maintenance, training, and operational functions also were consolidated and managed from three centers: at the centrally located city of Córdoba, the Buenos Aires suburb of Ezeiza, and the southern city of Rio Gallegos.

Restructuring in the composition and disposition of the army was the most significant and reflective of changed civil-military realities. Argentina no longer required a preponderance of force near the seat of government or a military presence scattered throughout the country as a symbol of authority and internal mission. The reduced size of the force and its modest operational resources and equipment prohibited the continuance of such a constabulary army in any event. And the requirements of the civil authorities for substantial commitment of army resources to external missions, a new consideration in its force posture, demanded that the army seriously address its composition and dispositions. Army leaders, intent on avoiding any potential confrontations with civilians over changes in army dispositions and determined to retain as much autonomy as possible over internal affairs, made sure that the changes they embarked on reflected those concerns.

Although army planning efforts to restructure had been in the works since 1986, substantive work did not begin until 1990 with Menem's decree. Even then, the process moved slowly. The Argentine Army intended to convert itself from a territorial military establishment into a flexible, responsive ground combat asset, one that could satisfy rapidly changing national

and international obligations. Only later did the army realize that its reach exceeded its grasp in this regard, given the state of the institution and the assignment of priorities in the Menem administration. (See figure 5.)

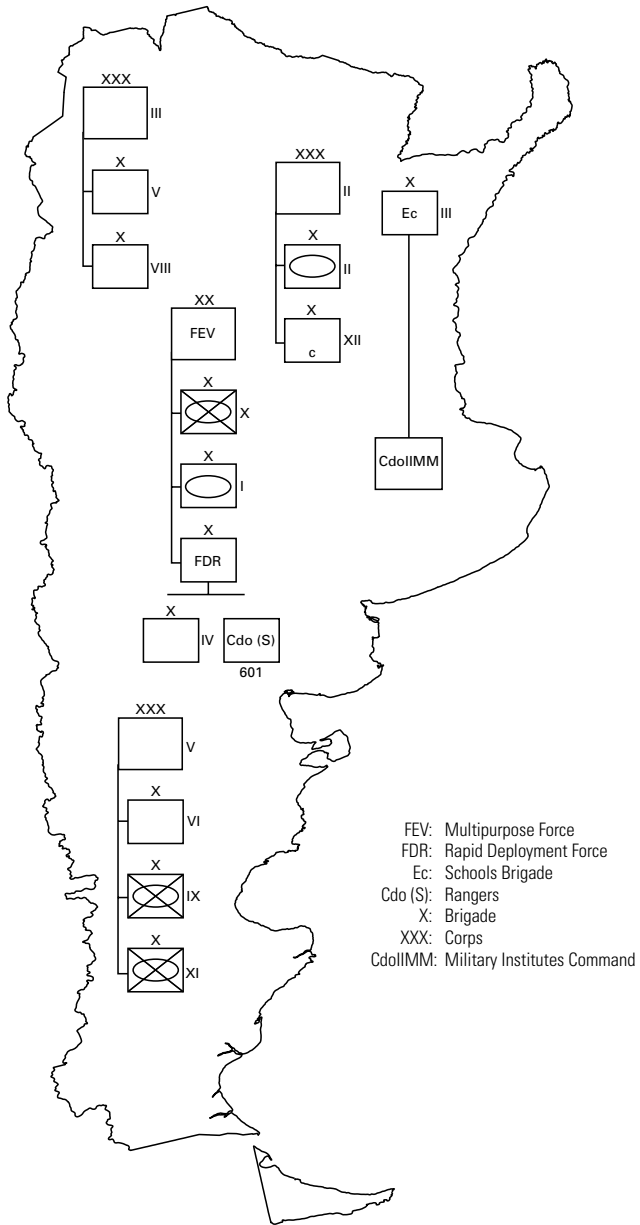
The two most significant changes made in the first Menem administration altered both the disposition and the composition of the service. The army branch schools of the combat arms were placed in a schools brigade and physically relocated to Argentine Mesopotamia. The infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineering, and communications schools were transferred from the huge and politically significant army installation at Campo de Mayo, near Buenos Aires, to various army units, where training in more realistic circumstances was possible. In addition, these epicenters for the army's combat arms were no longer positioned to serve as nuclei for politically oriented activities, as had been the case in the past (for example, *los carapintada* at the Infantry School when it was located in Campo de Mayo).

The move of the Tenth Mechanized Brigade, a major combat formation, to Santa Rosa, La Pampa Province, was another example of this desire for a combat-oriented and apolitical environment, as well as distance from the capital. The old I Corps, of which the Tenth had once been a part, and the IV Corps, once located at Santa Rosa, no longer existed as intermediate headquarters. The Tenth Brigade relocation was the first step toward creating the Variable Employment Force (*Fuerza de Empleo Variable*, or FEV).

The FEV was configured with armored and mechanized brigades, and it included the Rapid Deployment Force composed of the Fourth Air-transportable Brigade and the 601st Ranger Company. The Regionally Deployed Forces, consolidated from the old territorial garrisons, continued to provide ground combat elements in border areas to insure territorial integrity and support such ancillary tasks as drug interdiction, community action, and natural disaster relief.

The most immediate and unprecedented influence on army restructuring, and one with the greatest potential impact on the evolving civil-military relationship, was the announcement by President Menem on February 15, 1992, that Argentina would make a major unit contribution to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) being deployed to the former Yugoslavia. Involvement of Argentine military personnel in UN observer missions around the world in the previous 25 years had amounted to a few score personnel. This commitment called for what in the traditional Argentine order of battle and nomenclature was a regiment (but which in most armies worldwide is designated a battalion), a unit of

Figure 5. Projected Army Organization and Deployment (1995)



approximately 850 personnel at full strength, with its own staff and support personnel. But the unit required—basically a separate combined arms team at battalion strength—did not exist anywhere in the Argentine Army. Regiments were at half-strength or less and were not adequately equipped. This new role, emanating from civil authorities in support of Argentine foreign policy objectives, was essentially an internal security mission in a location outside of Argentina. And it was expected to be in place in 2 months or less.

The Argentine Army had no experience in deploying major combat units overseas (the Malvinas force projection and occupation were not considered a foreign deployment and in any event provided few useful lessons for this mission). Because no existing unit was remotely prepared, and the FEV units in the restructuring plan that might have been so deployed were years from realization, the Argentine Army Battalion (*Batallón Ejército Argentino*, or BEA) had to be created from the ground up as a full-strength cadre unit; there was little possibility of preparing conscripts for participation.

Within days, the search for the proper personnel began. In addition to technical proficiency, skills in a foreign language (particularly English) were a fundamental concern. A UN-imposed condition of selection that the personnel be volunteers did not hamper the battalion's formation; two to three times as many personnel reportedly volunteered as there were positions in the 865-man unit. Preparation of the personnel was effected first at corps level, and then the unit was formed up at Campo de Mayo. In May 1992, the BEA joined 11 battalions from other countries in what had once been part of Yugoslavia. The Argentines were deployed in Western Slavonia, in the northern part of Croatia.

Argentina deployed seven such battalions to Croatia on approximately 6-month rotations until late 1995, when UNPROFOR stood down. The preparation and deployment of these peacekeeping units became a major focus of army activity. The military accrued prestige as a result of this and other peacekeeping missions, including a 350-man unit composed of army and marine elements deployed to Cyprus in early September 1993.³⁹⁹ But serious concerns also were expressed. The concentration of training and assets in the rotating international forces, even though they had external financial support, seriously cut into the available stocks of operational equipment. Furthermore, there were worries that Argentina had two armies: one equipped and trained for peacekeeping and well nourished by external funds and activities, and the “old constabulary,”

spread thin and doing without. The army was too ill equipped with money and assets to be split in this fashion.⁴⁰⁰

The first Menem administration was characterized by significant changes in military policy. Whether dealing with manpower, resources, readiness, or restructuring, the wellsprings of military power that could be used in political ways—to compete with or confront the civilian leadership as claimants to legitimate authority—were significantly altered. The political priority of defense and of the armed forces that sustained it was subordinated first to economic and then to foreign policy aspirations and goals. But the first Menem administration was not the last one. The civil-military relationships engendered in the early 1990s continued to evolve in the late 1990s with Menem at the helm.

The Second Menem Administration: Roles, Resources, and Restructuring

On May 14, 1995, Carlos Menem was reelected President of the Argentine Republic. Although other presidents had served more than one term (or part of a second), only Juan Perón had been reelected to a second consecutive term. However, to allow this, Perón had to abrogate the 1853 Constitution and replace it with his own. Menem had to do the same, enjoining the Congress to create a new constitution (which the legislature passed in December 1994), allowing a president to run for a second term but limiting each term to 4 years.⁴⁰¹

Menem enjoyed considerable political success during his first term, consolidating most effective political power in the presidency. His Justicialista (Peronist) Party maintained control of the legislative bodies, and Menem acted effectively to bring the judiciary under his political control as well.⁴⁰² The first administration harkened back to the model of *movimiento*—characterized by a president accountable to the people through election but not much bounded by the mitigating effects of shared powers, checks, and balances, or the “controls that state agencies (other branches) exercise over other state agencies.”⁴⁰³ Hence, the Menem era has been described as one of delegative democracy in that “[T]oday, political power in Argentina is not so much exercised in a representative fashion as it is wholly delegated to the president, to be wielded as he deems most appropriate.”⁴⁰⁴ Evidence of this trend was Menem’s wholesale use—244 times in his first 3 years—of Decrees of Necessity and Urgency, 8 times the use of this type of decree by all other elected, constitutional presidents combined.

Consequently, Menem entered his second term with highly concentrated political power and a significant mandate, 49.5 percent of the vote, more than the 45 percent required under the 1994 constitution to avoid a runoff and 20 percent more than his nearest competitor. Although most observers conceded that Menem achieved very significant economic and political stability in his second term, it was marked by considerable controversy and an agglutination of the opposition, largely ineffective in his first administration, that raised serious issues and challenges to his “delegative democracy” style. A number of these issues and controversies involved the military and affected the civil–military relationships. An examination and analysis of these matters—political controversies, including human rights and scandals; roles and missions of the armed forces and the MOD; resources for defense and security; and restructuring of the defense establishment—offer a better understanding of the military question in the contemporary milieu.

Civil–Military Relationship Issues

Human Rights

President Menem’s defeat of the fourth *carapintada* uprising and his amnesty and pardons of those involved in the antsubversive operations of the late 1970s had effectively marginalized the human rights violations issues during most of his first administration. The Internal Security Law of early 1992, fulfilling a provision of the Alfonsín-era National Defense Law, had set the military outside the realm, except in extreme cases, of matters involving internal security.⁴⁰⁵ But in July 1994, after the bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Menem created a new security agency, led by former Chief of the Joint Staff Andrés Antonietti, to direct the efforts of all armed forces in emergencies such as response to international terrorism.⁴⁰⁶ This action raised concerns in the human rights organizations in Argentina that the military really had not abandoned its concern with and involvement in internal security.

But the real reopening of the human rights issue, agitating the human rights activists and the military, occurred in the runup to Menem’s reelection as president of Argentina. In early March 1995, retired navy Commander Adolfo Francisco Scilingo recounted his involvement in disposing of hundreds of kidnapping and torture victims by dropping them from airplanes into the ocean.⁴⁰⁷ His revelations ignited a storm of protest and rekindled old animosities between the military and human rights groups, splitting Argentine civil society between those who continued to

seek redress against the military and those who felt such demonstrations were divisive and ultimately futile. Menem, who apparently felt that his reconciliation moves had closed the matter, opposed “rub[bing] salt into old wounds,” and counseled private confession, not public repentance.⁴⁰⁸

But public confession continued, and it next came from a very unexpected source: the serving Chief of Staff of the Army. On April 25, 1995, Lieutenant General Martín Balza stated that the army “employed illegitimate methods, including the suppression of life, to obtain information,” and that the army “did not know how to take on terrorists by legal means.”⁴⁰⁹ Although these startling revelations by the head of the major military institution in Argentina did not reveal anything not already documented, they were the first acknowledgment of error by a serving officer, indeed one with great responsibility. Even though some felt these remarks were politically inspired and designed to undercut Menem in the election campaign, most found them to be sincere, if unlikely to change the state of affairs concerning ultimate accountability. In any event, the topic of the human rights responsibility of the armed forces was reopened.

Nor was the matter of accountability for the excesses and deaths of the Dirty War confined to the military alone. On October 28, 1995, Mexican authorities arrested and extradited to Argentina Enrique Gorriarán Merlo, a founder of the ERP—the most radical and vicious of the guerrilla groups operating in Argentina in the 1970s—and later leader of the MTP. Gorriarán Merlo had led the most well-known attacks against army units, including the 1974 attack on an armored regiment at Azul, Buenos Aires Province, and later the last guerrilla attack at La Tablada in 1989. (He was also a leader of the group that gunned down former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza in Paraguay.)⁴¹⁰ Gorriarán Merlo was the last surviving guerrilla leader who had not been pardoned. He had tried from abroad to rally the remnants of the violent left and had even considered reviving insurgency in Argentina, but nothing had come of it. His capture and incarceration was a victory for the Menem government, but it did little to resolve the human rights issues between aggrieved elements of the civilian populace and the military.

In 1996, the focus of antimilitary demonstrators seeking justice shifted from the army to the police, whom the militants saw as having inherited the mantle of repression. Demonstrations and their breakup by police became something of a *cause célèbre* among the longtime foes of the armed forces, such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group of relatives of the disappeared, and its leader, Hebe de Bonafini. The clashes

dramatized the longtime antagonism between human rights groups and uniformed authorities, even though the military was practically a spectator this time.⁴¹¹

In March 1997 a Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, sought an international arrest warrant for former General Leopoldo Galtieri, long since absolved by Argentine courts of involvement in the human rights violations of the Dirty War. Garzón based his demand on the alleged disappearance of 600 Spaniards during the 1976–1979 operations of the Argentine Army. The practical effect of the demand at the time was minor, but this issue resurfaced spectacularly in 1999 with the arrest in Great Britain of General Augusto Pinochet, former military president of Chile, on a warrant issued at the behest of the same Spanish lawyer. This issue arose again about other Argentine military officials accused of crimes against foreigners in the campaigns against insurgency.

Two major developments in the human rights arena characterized 1998. The first was a government effort to find symbolic closure to the continuing fissures between the more militant human rights activists and the military over the killings and disappearances during the antisubversive operations. The second consisted of efforts to circumvent Menem's pardons of two leaders of the first junta of the *Proceso* period and charge the men with crimes punishable under current Argentine law.

Two initiatives stand out among the efforts to heal the militant-military rupture: the closing of ESMA (the Navy Mechanics School) in Buenos Aires, generally considered the principal institution used as cover for torture and killings in the Dirty War, and the effort to repeal, if only symbolically, the Full Stop and Due Obedience laws of the Alfonsín era that had exonerated most of the military from charges of human rights abuses.

On January 7, 1998, President Menem announced that ESMA was to be transferred from the Núñez neighborhood of the federal capital to the navy's principal base at Puerto Belgrano in Bahía Blanca. Menem proposed razing the place and turning it into a monument or park, a symbolic reconciliation of the horrors of the past.⁴¹² This suggestion provoked protest from the human rights organizations, which countered with a proposal to turn it into a "museum of horrors" as a permanent reminder of the *Proceso* era. The buildings still stand, but the institution has left. The Naval War College, which was adjacent to ESMA, took over a small portion of the campus for its own needs.

The other major symbolic action was the repeal of the Full Stop and Due Obedience laws. Enacted in late 1986 and mid-1987 respectively, these

Alfonsín-era laws ended the judicial processing of cases filed against military and security force personnel for human rights abuses and excessive violence in the *Proceso* period (1976–1983). The repeal of these laws had no practical effect, because juridically a repeal did not nullify the laws or their effects.⁴¹³ But the special session of Congress called to consider this and other matters important to the military sought to make a clear statement through the repeal: in the new democratic era there would be no support for military involvement in politics, even though several congressmen stated during the debate that the laws had been necessary at the time to preserve the fledgling democracy of the post-*Proceso* period.

In June 1998, human rights activists opened another front in their campaign to bring justice for the victims of the Dirty War by holding the top leaders of *Proceso* accountable for some activity on their watch. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo filed suit to have General Jorge Rafael Videla arrested for complicity in removing from their mothers children born in captivity and putting them up for adoption, alleging that the orders to do so had come from the highest level.⁴¹⁴ Videla was arrested, but after a month of legal wrangling and a statement by Menem that he would not intervene in the proceedings, Videla was confined to his home in Buenos Aires under a provision of the law permitting such for persons above age 70.⁴¹⁵

Although Videla's accusers thought him culpable, he was by no means considered the vilest of the former members of the first *Proceso* junta. That status was reserved for Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera. On November 24, 1998, he was arrested and confined by order of a federal judge. Unlike the broad charges against Videla, who was accused of systematically planning the adoption of hundreds of children, Massera was arrested on the basis of specific cases that occurred at ESMA under his jurisdiction.⁴¹⁶ The human rights organizations alleged that these crimes had nothing to do with fighting subversion and hence fell outside Menem's earlier pardons of such actions. Demands for Massera's extradition to Spain, at the behest of the same Spanish prosecutor that earlier had sought similar action against Argentine military officials of the *Proceso* period, generated yet more denunciations against long-retired Argentine general and flag officers, including such well-known figures as Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, Argentine commander in the Malvinas war, and Antonio Domingo Bussi, Governor of Tucumán Province, who had led the Dirty War operations in the rural areas.

Army Chief of Staff Balza spearheaded the move toward introspection, which sought to clarify the duty of the military to eschew illegal and immoral behavior in any endeavor. This movement distressed many former military and high-ranking retired officers, who were anxious over the arrests of Videla and Massera. In January 1999, these anxieties were heightened by the arrest and charging of six more high-ranking military officers, including former military president Reynaldo Bignone and former Army Chief of Staff Cristino Nicolaidis. Beset from within by Argentine federal judges acting on demands of human rights groups, and from without by a Spanish prosecutor seeking redress for alleged crimes against Spanish citizens in the antisubversive operations, the military institutions continued to feel besieged by organizations seeking justice (or revenge) for actions the military considered legitimate and already settled by previous court actions and presidential pardons or amnesties. Although the present-day military institutions have little in common with those of *Proceso*, and those responsible for the excesses of the antisubversive operations are long retired, the contemporary military officer is tired of having to bear the burden of defending the services against charges leveled at leaders now grown old. They agree with President Menem that no useful purpose is served by reopening old wounds, but others in Argentine society continue to assail the military leaders of the *Proceso* period, seeking redress of grievances. The new millennium will not close this chapter in Argentine civil-military relations.

Illegal Arms Sales, Corruption, and Civil-Military Relations

Both Menem administrations were characterized by a freewheeling, deal-making approach to governance. Menem's populism and his relative freedom from restraint by the other branches of government permitted such phenomena as privatization, delegative democracy, and lack of party discipline to flourish. Consequently, some enterprising souls in Argentina figured that the government, at least in part, was "up for sale."

Although corruption, real and perceived, and the resulting scandals were widespread in the Menem years, the cases that most affected the armed forces and their relationship with civil authority were those involving illegal arms deals with Croatia, Bosnia, and Ecuador. These transactions were accomplished through a process called *triangulation*: a supplier, nominally acting on behalf of the Argentine government or some dependency thereof, sends arms illegally to another country while making the transaction appear to be going to a third country.

The vehicle for these sorts of transactions was the Directorate General of Military Factories (*Dirección General Fabricaciones Militares*, or DGFM), before the Alfonsín and Menem administrations the powerful conglomerate that constituted the bulk of the military-industrial complex in Argentina. By Menem's time, its economic and political power was substantially reduced, and it was ripe for disaggregation, privatization, or sale. Nonetheless, the mechanisms for producing and distributing some arms, ammunition, powder and explosives, and military supplies still existed. Unscrupulous intermediaries, civilian and military, used these mechanisms to effect significant transactions to other parties with the imprimatur of the Menem government. During Menem's time, these transactions involved sales ostensibly to Panama and Venezuela, but the actual recipients were Croatia and Bosnia (1991) and Ecuador (1995).

The two triangulated arms deals had consequences reaching to the highest levels of the Menem administrations. These scandals exposed the military, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and other top figures of the Menem years to enormous criticism and, as the revelations continued, to various federal-level charges of official misconduct. A long list of those involved and what they were charged with and investigated for appeared on October 8, 1998, in the Internet version of *La Nación* newspaper.

The Croatia-Bosnia Transaction

The first illegal arms transaction got under way in 1991 under retired army Lieutenant Colonel Diego Palleros. Well connected at the DGFM, Palleros "piggybacked" on a legitimate plan concocted by Defense Minister Erman González to sell Argentine arms abroad, which had set in motion a mechanism to obtain weapons for sale abroad from existing inventories, including those of the army, and replace them with DGFM production. Classified decrees 1697 and 2283 permitted the sale of weapons abroad to legitimate buyers.⁴¹⁷ The differences between this and the illegal arms transaction were that the arms and other military items did not go to the ostensible recipient, but to an illicit customer, and that the proceeds from the sale went mostly to the dealmakers and other participants in the scheme rather than to the state coffers.

In a variety of shipments, 6.5 tons of material valued at almost \$29 million and ostensibly destined for Panama instead went through a dummy corporation to Croatia.⁴¹⁸ These shipments occurred even as Argentine forces were deploying to Croatia as a part of the UN peacekeeping force. Consequently, Argentine Army forces could have been shot at

with weapons from their own military factories. Croatia was under a UN arms embargo, as were all of the fledgling states emerging from the former Yugoslavia, many of which were engaged in serious armed combat with each other. Bosnia, another such state, also would wind up with some Argentine arms.

In 1992, Decree 1633 authorized the sale of \$51 million in military matériel to a Bolivian government entity that was not part of the country's Ministry of Defense. Another principal in the arms scandals, a Menem crony and impresario named Luis Sarlenga, managed the putative deal. Although the Bolivian government did not have that kind of money to spend on Argentine arms, only a presidential transition in Bolivia apparently aborted the scheme. Where the money would have come from and to whom the weapons and other items might have gone remained a mystery.

Reports later surfaced that as early as 1992, Argentine officials at the highest levels had evidence of Argentine arms finding their way to Croatia and Bosnia. An Argentine officer who had served in Croatia confirmed that during a visit to Croatia, then-Minister of Defense Erman González, Army Chief of Staff Balza, and President Menem, among others, were shown Argentine-made weapons confiscated from Croats. Another officer indicated that Lieutenant General Carlos Zabala, at the time head of the Argentine contingent in Croatia, knew of confiscations of Argentine-made weapons.⁴¹⁹ But these revelations did not become public until 1995 as a result of another illegal arms transaction, this one to Ecuador at the time of the Ecuador-Perú border conflict.

The Ecuador Transaction

The triangulated arms deal to Ecuador involved arms trafficker Jean Lasnaud. He, Palleros, and Sarlenga took advantage of a secret omnibus decree that gave DGFM and its intermediaries a free hand in international arms transactions.⁴²⁰ False papers were arranged to show that Venezuela, the country of ostensible destination, had purchased about \$33 million worth of mostly small arms and ammunition. According to one source, the amount was enough to arm 50,000 soldiers for 10 years in normal-use circumstances (Ecuador allegedly planned to use the materials to arm some 6,000 reservists in anticipation of a conflict with Perú).

The final go-ahead for this deal occurred on January 24, 1995, and the conspirators moved quickly, using dummy corporations to arrange air transportation to ship to Ecuador the arms and ammunition obtained from the army under the guise of being turned in for repair or replacement by DGFM. Considerable evidence indicates that Peruvian authorities knew

of the shipments and informed the Argentines through the Argentine embassy attachés, but neither the Argentine civilian nor military hierarchy stopped it, despite traditionally close ties between Perú and Argentina as a counterbalance to Chile and Brazil. Either the authorities did not believe that Argentina would permit publicly owned arms and munitions to be supplied to an ally's putative enemy, or they did not want to take on Menem cronies such as Sarlenga.⁴²¹

But this furtive transfer of Argentine war matériel did not remain secret for long. Concurrent with the Perú-Ecuador border conflict and the election campaign came newspaper accounts of the transaction. Since Argentina was a guarantor of the 1942 treaty that had ended a previous conflict between Perú and Ecuador, and it had declared an arms embargo on February 10, the fact that Argentine arms had made their way to one of the combatants was particularly galling. Furthermore, Ecuador had not received all of the shipment, and part of what it did receive was unusable (Balza later protested that the army thought the transaction with DGFM was routine and turned in its least usable arms for repair or exchange). Palleros made up for this deficiency in part with arms from Iran, but the damage on all sides was done. Perú was scandalized, Ecuador was enraged, and Argentina was decidedly embarrassed. In addition, uncovering the Ecuadorian transaction also led to revelations about the Croatian and Bosnian ones. Menem, reelected president in May 1995, disposed of Sarlenga.

But that did not end the matter. By October 1995, charges began to flow. The principal agent of the state in pursuing the investigations and charges in the arms transactions was Federal Judge Jorge Urso. He began with Sarlenga, charging abuse of office and falsification of documents, charges that also would fall on many others. Palleros, original architect of these machinations, fled the country, warned of what was coming by a separate charge against him of dealing in contraband. Charges reached the ministerial level; Oscar Camilión, Minister of Defense at the time of the Ecuador transaction, was forced to resign or lose his immunity by congressional action. Foreign Minister Guido di Tella also was tainted by the scandal, but he was not subject to charge unless he resigned or was fired. Former Defense Minister and Labor Minister Erman González later came under fire as well.

Accusations flew among those under investigation or charged in the illegal arms deals. Balza pointed the finger at DGFM, saying that the army played by the rules and was unaware of the illicit use to which turned-in

or exchanged equipment was put. DGFM blamed the relevant ministers as having agreed to the underlying confidential decrees that, superficially at least, legitimized arms transactions abroad. Camilión sought to shift the attention to Foreign Minister di Tella, who, in his view, “should have known” about the shipments to Croatia.⁴²² More indictments followed in the next few years, most dealing with hapless DGFM officials, many of them retired officers who were willing or unwitting confederates of the DGFM involvement as the vehicle of the illegal arms transactions.

From mid-1995 to mid-1998, the arms scandal and its effects moved out of the spotlight. Notable changes during this time included the transfer of DGFM from the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Economy. The once-mighty military-industrial complex had fallen on hard times. Many of its remaining assets were broken up, sold off, or privatized, dooming the prospects of significant legal arms transactions (for example, a potential \$1.27 billion deal involving 6 submarines from the Domecq García shipyard disappeared when the shipyard was closed by Decree 40 in 1996).⁴²³

In July 1998, the arms scandals returned with a vengeance. Palleros was arrested in South Africa and jailed pending extradition proceedings. The 72-year-old Palleros revealed a little of what had transpired in the early 1990s and threatened to tell a lot more. However, South Africa refused to extradite Palleros. Menem again proclaimed his adherence to the legal niceties and claimed no knowledge of triangulation, and Interior Minister Carlos Corach disputed as “ridiculous and offensive” Palleros’s allegations of presidential involvement in the schemes.⁴²⁴

General Balza, rightly or wrongly the focal point for the loss of control and subsequent illegal shipments of arms to Croatia and Ecuador, defended himself before the Defense Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, and army spokespersons continued to blame the DGFM for all the troubles. At the same time, Captain Estrada, accused of heavy involvement in the transactions with Ecuador, died “in suspicious circumstances” at his home in Buenos Aires.⁴²⁵ He had been questioned a few days earlier by Judge Urso and a federal prosecutor. Some saw his death as a warning to Palleros and others to keep quiet about who was bribed or otherwise cajoled into cooperating in the arms transfer schemes.⁴²⁶ Moreover, the former Argentine ambassador to Perú at the time of the Perú-Ecuador conflict, Arturo Ossorio Araña, revealed that not only Camilión but also the higher echelons of the armed forces leadership knew of the transactions before they occurred. All these revelations led to a war of words among di Tella, Camilión, Balza, and Paulik over who should have stopped it all.⁴²⁷

In September and October 1998, federal authorities conducted several searches (called “raids” in the Argentine press) for documents relating to the scandal that had surfaced in some of the news organs.⁴²⁸ Although little came of their efforts, the number of people being investigated and charged—particularly former DGFM officials—continued to grow. The “conspiracy of silence,” as the newspapers put it, began to break down.⁴²⁹ Retired General Antonio Vicario, former munitions production chief at DGFM, was detained after being a fugitive for several days and was accused specifically of smuggling gunpowder to Croatia. Another officer, retired Colonel Edberto González de la Vega, also was charged in this matter. With the arrest of Vicario, federal authorities began to search for the tens of millions of dollars that were unaccounted for. Former Argentine ambassador to Yugoslavia Federico Bartfeld testified to Judge Urso that 30 coded cables sent in 1992 to the Argentine Foreign Ministry indicated the presence of Argentine rifles in Croatia, in violation of the arms embargo against that country. Bartfeld said the Foreign Ministry had queried the Defense Ministry, then headed by Erman González, about that, and was told no arms had been sold. (González had established the original, legal regime for arms sales abroad, but none had been transferred in that manner.)⁴³⁰

These arms scandals probably were the final nail in the coffin of the Directorate General of Military Factories. The military-industrial complex created by General Savio—a major factor in the Argentine economy and a bulwark of the military establishment that at one time formed a “mine-to-munition” vertically-integrated arms industry—was a shadow of its former self. The major elements of military industries in Argentina—the SOMISA steel complex, the TAMSE tank factory, the Domecq García submarine building yard, and the multielement Military Factories conglomerate—were either gone altogether or no longer under effective military control. DGFM itself is now under the Minister of Economy and is no longer an element that could enhance military autonomy or enable a greater say in defense planning and resources.

But the demise of DGFM did nothing to help the position of the Menem government. The downgrading and dismantling of military industries in Argentina opened them to civilian and military entrepreneurs, which led to the corruption of numerous officials and the destruction of the reputations of others. Unscrupulous operators took advantage of the apparent need of DGFM and the Ministry of Defense to be relevant and to enjoy some presence in the world arms trade. The highest military and

civilian authorities at the time were reduced to covering their tracks in hopes of avoiding personal culpability for the fiasco.

Contemporary Roles and Missions

Legal Bases

In his first term, Menem made several fundamental changes that considerably impacted military roles and missions in his second term.⁴³¹ First among these was the Internal Security Law, which codified the separation of the *Gendarmería Nacional* and the *Prefectura Naval* from the military armed forces. The law also evolved the principle of subsidiarity—the armed forces would not be employed in internal security missions—and the principle of complementarity—the armed forces may provide logistical support (a major consideration in counternarcotics efforts, among others). The armed forces combat elements could be deployed only under a state of siege or to defend their own garrisons. The other major legal change of the first administration was the Voluntary Service Law of 1994, which did away with (but retained the possibility of) conscription as the regular basis for citizen military service and led to an all-volunteer professional military.

These two laws began the disaggregation of security and defense as twin pillars of military roles and missions, a process completed in Menem's second term. In the *Proceso* government, the conjoining of security and defense roles reached its zenith, with security forces, even national police, effectively subordinated to the military without any mediating Ministry of Defense or Ministry of Interior influences. The Internal Security Law put the military out of the law and order business; the Voluntary Service Law reduced the military presence in socialization and civic action.

Menem expanded on this in the second term. By executive decree Number 464/96, he transferred the DGFM to the Ministry of Economy and Public Works and Services, ending the military's direct connection with military production. This act terminated the armed forces' economic role within the state enterprise framework, which itself had been reduced enormously.

On October 2, 1996, Menem promulgated Decree 1,116/96, which permitted the Ministry of Defense to address military planning, in response to general policies and strategies for defense, at the joint staff level, in order to address external threats and to protect vital interests. Coupled with a joint staff reorganization formalized in 1997, this decree returned responsibility for *hipótesis de conflicto* to the armed forces.⁴³²

In November 1996, Menem reorganized the Ministry of Defense into its present form. Decree 1,277/96 streamlined the ministry, consolidated its functions, and, coupled with a physical move of ministry offices to the Army Headquarters building across the street, permitted a reduction of personnel and space costs. The armed forces were increasingly integrated, even physically, into a civilian-led defense organization. They continued to exercise their professional functions, but the strong influence of civilian subordination and evolution toward jointness was manifest. This permitted, finally, the formal restructuring of the armed forces to accommodate their changed situation and changed circumstances, which would be accomplished through the Restructuring Law of March 1998.

The Joint Staff and Joint and Combined Roles and Missions

The Joint Staff was established as an element of the presidency on September 9, 1948, and it became part of the MOD in 1958. Designed as an advisory group on military policy to the Minister of Defense, the Joint Staff for many years languished as an almost ceremonial body, lacking authority as the Ministry itself lacked authority. President Alfonsín tried to make it the link between civilian and military defense officials, but it was not given the authority or the resources to exercise much influence.

Nonetheless, the 1982 Malvinas debacle demonstrated the need to avoid having each service fight its own war. However, serious efforts to empower and organize the Joint Staff to participate in designing and assigning roles and missions were not made until Menem's second term. A considerable increase in joint exercises and training internally, and in combined exercises and operations internationally, reflected these efforts. The most notable moves toward joint exercises came in 1997 and 1998. In September 1997, an exercise involving 3,000 personnel—32 units from all three services—simulating a UN peacekeeping operation took place in Patagonia.⁴³³ And in 1998, an exercise in Córdoba Province involving 4,646 personnel brought together elements of all three services.⁴³⁴ Hence, jointness as a concept not only had legal backing but also was being expressed increasingly in planning and exercises by the Argentine armed forces.

Predating these joint exercises among Argentine military units was a push toward combined military agreements and exercises. For many years, the only multinational exercise Argentina participated in with any regularity was UNITAS, a combined exercise with U.S. and Latin American navies.⁴³⁵ In the early 1990s, peacekeeping provided an even more intensive venue for the army, and to a lesser extent the Marines, under UN auspices.

But since 1993, the Argentine armed forces have engaged in an expanding number of combined exercises and operations. Figure 6 shows the increase in the number of exercises in which Argentina has participated (excluding peacekeeping operations). The navy has been the most active participant.

The nature of these exercises and maneuvers started reflecting Menem's goal of a broader cooperative agenda with Chile. This effort began with an agreement in July 1997 to hold combined military maneuvers.⁴³⁶ In 1998, command and staff talks took place, and a formal agreement by naval commanders for a combined exercise was reached.⁴³⁷ In June 1998, the army and air force joined the navy, seeking combined exercises and other measures often described as confidence-building or "Measures for Mutual Trust."⁴³⁸ In August 1998, the Argentine and Chilean Navies conducted a "Control Exercise of Maritime Traffic and Search and Rescue Operations," designed in part to "break the logic of mistrust and antagonism" between Chile and Argentina.⁴³⁹ A 4-month exercise in the Antarctic from November 1998 to March 1999 was the most comprehensive of these bilateral operations.⁴⁴⁰

Except for relatively benign peacekeeping exercises, Argentine efforts to promote more formal multilateral ties have met with only modest success. Two initiatives have come to the fore. The first, the ATLASUR combined exercise series, started in 1993, with the most recent iteration ATLASUR IV in May 1999.⁴⁴¹ These exercises, which include Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and South Africa, are designed to enhance the capability to form a joint naval force to counteract threats of plundering of fish and natural resources, to prevent pollution, and to preserve the ecosystem.

The second, and more controversial, initiative was an effort to form a regional defense entity centered on MERCOSUR. The major proponent of this in the second Menem administration was Joint Staff Chief Lieutenant General Carlos Zabala. At a bilateral general staff meeting in Brazil, he cited the evolution of MERCOSUR from a trade bloc toward a political bloc. General Zabala has called for a collective organization to consider eventual risks, his model being post-Cold War NATO.⁴⁴² In June 1998 in Chile, General Zabala reiterated his call for a "joint (combined) defense system in the region."⁴⁴³ The Navy Subsecretary for Chile, Pablo Cabrera, reinforced Zabala's remarks at a meeting of the Permanent Committee of Chilean-Argentine Security in July 1998, saying that "these matters [defense of stability and economic development] should be dealt with in the MERCOSUR arena."⁴⁴⁴

Resources for the “Smaller, Better” Force

The Argentine economy in the second Menem administration reflected the goals of the first: near-zero inflation, a fixed 1:1 peso-to-dollar exchange rate, privatization, and continuing international integration, highlighted by MERCOSUR. Consequently, the country also experienced a continuing relative reduction in the state role in the economy, and those sectors dependent on central government finances for resources (most notably defense) faced continued austerity in addressing such challenges as a complete change in recruitment and education, realignment of forces, and modernization. These conditions were reflected in policies concerning the twin pillars of the defense resource base, manpower and money, and in how the armed forces addressed the necessities of restructuring, the final challenge to the defense sector of the Menem years.

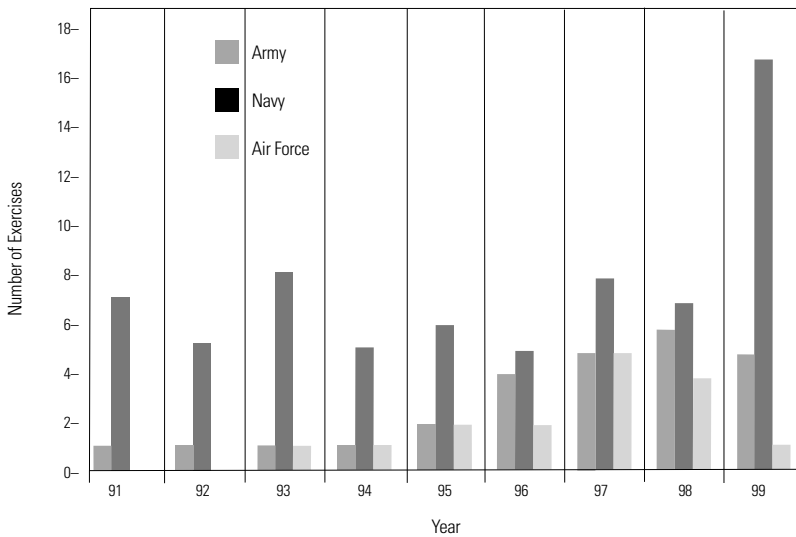
Manpower

In the democratic period since 1983, the number of uniformed personnel (mostly army conscripts) was reduced by at least 50 percent.⁴⁴⁵ In 1994, the last full year of the first Menem administration, conscription ended, and the *Servicio Militar Voluntario* system for accessions to the ranks took effect in 1995. The result was a leveling out of uniformed personnel strength at just under 72,000. In the army, a redimensioning of the service born of necessity was also reflected in an almost 50 percent drop in the number of units. (See table 7.)

The number of civilians employed by the three services also dropped about 25 percent (based on army data at figure 3). Almost 26,000 civilians worked for the armed forces, in almost equal numbers for each (army 8,500, navy 8,800, air force 8,600).⁴⁴⁶ Adding a few hundred civilians for the Ministry of Defense at all levels (no active-duty military were assigned to the Ministry, and retired officers and NCOs working there were classified as civilians) brought the total personnel in the modern-day defense sector to about 99,000 (excluding *Gendarmería Nacional*, *Prefectura Naval*, *Defensa Civil*, and DGFM organizations, which are no longer under MOD).

These numerical reductions also mirrored changes in the roles of the armed forces. The army is no longer the constabulary force it once was, with a large physical presence in the federal capital and its environs and scores of garrisons around the country. The complement of personnel to provide such a presence no longer exists. Conversely, the volunteer system of accession permitted more development of task-oriented units with better-trained personnel. For example, lower levels of training and limited availability made conscripts unsuitable for use in highly visible

Figure 6. Participation in Combined Exercises (1991–1999)



Source: Briefing by Argentine Armed Forces Joint Staff to United States Joint Staff, September 1999 (Bilateral Working Group, Argentine MOD, U.S. DOD).

peace operations contingents. However, longer-term volunteers could be so employed. Consequently the army, navy, and air force have a lower “internal profile” and visibility and a higher “external profile.” This affects civil-military relations because such changes in force posture caused by recruitment realignments have made the military more instrumental in foreign policy roles and multilateral defense and security initiatives.

Education

While the change in recruitment had immediate and profound effects on the Argentine military, an equally important change in the education of the military officer corps also was inaugurated. For nearly a century, the Argentine military maintained a system of higher military education acknowledged to be among the best in Latin America. Until the most recent democratic era, this system (except for the School of National Defense, which was established in 1950 and is now under the Ministry of Defense) contributed little to the education of civilians and military officers together in defense-related curricula. But that changed dramatically in the Menem administrations, and nowhere more clearly than in the army.

In the early 1990s, the army established the IESE, placing under a single directorate its degree-granting military schools (even military secondary schools).⁴⁴⁷ Two of the army schools under IESE—the ESG, the army’s premier staff college, and the EST, the ESG equivalent for specialized engineering and scientific career fields—have opened their doors to civilian students. Both offer graduate-level programs in addition to their military ones; from 1994 to 1998, the ESG graduated 362 civilians and 251 military personnel, and the EST 283 civilians and 108 military.⁴⁴⁸

In addition, an increasing number of career officers began acquiring university degrees in cooperative programs with private and public higher education institutions. The philosophical and academic divide that once prompted separate education and educational institutions for civilians and military officers has been modified considerably. The contemporary military hierarchy still is dominated by those educated in the former system, but resistance to cooperative education arrangements and the integration of military and civilian students has almost disappeared.

Money

The austerity of the first Menem administration carried through to the second, although funds provided to institute the SMV gave the defense budget an initial boost. Figure 7 shows defense expenditures from 1992 to 1998. The second Menem administration presented an almost static budget for the MOD and armed forces, despite a growing GDP in most of those years. By 1998, the portion of GDP devoted to defense had fallen to 1.1 percent, well below the average of 1.8 percent for Latin Caribbean, Central American, and South American countries—itsself the lowest percentage for any region in the world.⁴⁴⁹ Even as austere as the totals were in both net and comparative terms, an examination of two aspects of personnel-related financing—the distribution of funds among categories of expenditure and the disparity of pay between uniformed military officers and other comparable public servants—made the effects on civil-military relations even more striking.

The distribution of funds among categories of expenditure continued a pattern that began even before the Menem years. The 1999 Argentine White Book on National Defense listed the final 1998 defense budget as 3,746,739,723 pesos, 7.44 percent of the government’s central budget and 1.07 percent of GDP.⁴⁵⁰ Of that amount, more than four-fifths of all available funds for all services plus the MOD itself—81.80 percent—went toward personnel expenses (49.97 percent) and retirement, pension, and other social security expenses (31.83 percent). Less than one-fifth of the

Table 7. **Military and Civilian Personnel Strength (March 1999)**

Army	
Officers	5,300
Noncommissioned Officers	20,600
Volunteers	15,500
Total	41,400
Navy	
Officers	2,300
Petty Officers	13,400
Volunteers	1,500
Total	17,200
Air Force	
Officers	2,300
Noncommissioned Officers	9,300
Volunteers	1,500
Total	13,100
Civilians	
Army	8,300
Navy	8,800
Air Force	8,600
Total	25,900
Total Military	71,700
Total Civilian	25,900
Grand Total*	98,900

* Adding 1,300 for Ministry of Defense and Agencies (Estimated Numbers).

Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

budget—682 million pesos—remained to cover operations, investment (purchase and construction), and debt service.

The armed forces thus had very limited financial support to conduct operations, maintain matériel, and attempt modernization. Provisions in the Restructuring Act designed to alleviate these conditions have not yet been implemented. The United States gave Argentina considerable help through Excess Defense Articles and International Military Education and Training programs, and the United Nations paid for much of the cost of peacekeeping missions, but this assistance was inadequate to allow Argentina to sustain the force posture required to accomplish the roles and

missions specified in the White Book. Such a defense establishment—fully professionalized, well-led, and educated but unable to engage adequately in the full range of its national and international responsibilities—was frustrated in its attempts to be the instrumental military necessary to continue the foreign and domestic policy initiatives of the Menem administration.

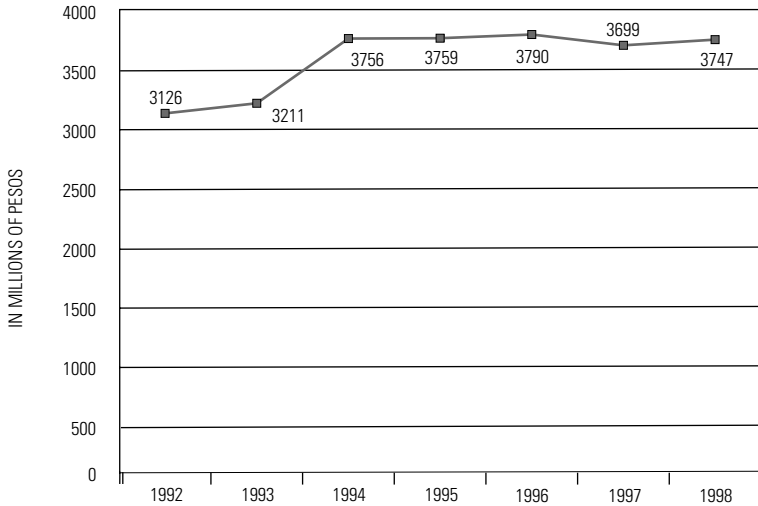
The Alfonsín administration had delinked the military pay scale from the judicial pay scale, the highest in the government. By the second Menem administration, the disparity between the two was enormous. For example, a service chief of staff (commander in chief before 1984) had been paid the same as a Supreme Court judge. By 1995, he was earning about one-third as much per month (3,863 pesos versus 11,151 pesos). Other senior government officials were making twice that of a chief of staff, and compensation for lower grades was not remotely comparable to that of their nominal counterparts.⁴⁵¹ Pay comparability was not contemplated; it would have taken an even larger bite out of the sector already accounting for the preponderant part of the budget. Military compensation was static, and officers and NCOs continued to leave the services early if other, more remunerative, opportunities presented themselves. This exodus was not the case in the lower ranks, where volunteer pay was attractive to younger, less experienced people in an economy with an unemployment rate around 15 percent. Nonetheless, the huge portion of the military budget devoted to personnel-related expenditures yielded a relatively modest return from the perspective of the individual officer and the armed forces' leadership. Complaints about individual pay were coupled with frustrations concerning lack of operational funds and capability. Although these concerns surfaced only occasionally, they reflected the military's continued exasperation over its marginalization and lack of political direction.

Restructuring: Codifying Civil-Military Relations

In March 1998, the Argentine Congress passed the Armed Forces Restructuring Law.⁴⁵² This legislation represented the culmination of efforts in the democratic era to consolidate reforms that had occurred in the 1990s and to outline steps, embedded in the law and later amplified in the MOD White Book on Defense, to align the military instrument and provide for its direction and support. It sought to provide a blueprint for the future construct of civil-military relations.

Although the Restructuring Law reflected many of the initiatives and policies of the democratic administrations, it did not originate in the Executive Branch. The initiator of the project was Dr. Horacio Jaunarena, the

Figure 7. Defense Budgets (1992–1998)



Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

longest serving Minister of Defense under former President Alfonsín, who was a Radical (UCR) deputy in the Argentine legislature. He and a group of colleagues drafted a restructuring proposal for the Congress that reached the Defense Committee in 1996.⁴⁵³ The bill failed in its first submission to the Congress, but Menem adopted it as his own (Jaunarena left the Congress at the end of 1997) and pushed it to passage by a large consensus in the House and Senate, with final approval by the Senate on March 19, 1998.

Several preceding laws put the Restructuring Law into context. The first legal framework that sought to sort out civilian and military responsibilities in defense and security and provide authoritative guidance was the Defense Law of 1988, but many of its provisions remained unimplemented even 10 years later. Meanwhile, several other laws and decrees came into force, including the Internal Security Law, the Voluntary Military Service Law, and a new Constitution. Also promulgated were decrees on joint military planning and on the structure of the Ministry of Defense. The Menem administration also generated important state reform laws

that dealt with such matters as public administration and privatization that affected the defense sector significantly.

All of these acts were important in defining, even operationalizing, aspects of civil-military relationships, but they largely responded to specific situations or were driven by high-profile political necessity. Therefore, they neither formed a coherent set of guidelines for the armed forces or the MOD nor established the relationships between them. Hence, the Restructuring Law, as the name implies, dealt with a number of realignment questions, but its scope and provisions went further.

The Restructuring Law was set forth in six titles. Title I specified a deterrent strategy that included maintenance of international and inter-American peace. It reemphasized the framework within which the missions (roles) of the armed forces would be established (the Defense Law and the Internal Security Law). And it began the emphasis on joint and combined forces and skills that characterized the restructuring efforts.

Title II envisioned restructured forces deployable in four operational contexts: in conventional defense, in a UN framework, in support of security forces, and in support of Argentine society or friendly countries. It specified regional joint commands to carry out these missions and simultaneously reduced service commands and “administrative and bureaucratic structures” in favor of fewer people and more technology.

Title III also emphasized jointness, stressing that joint military planning would determine the mix of active, temporarily activated, and reserve personnel. Education and training of personnel were to rely more on the civilian system, especially for professional personnel that the system produces. Simultaneously, higher educational standards were set for officers and NCOs to be promoted. The president set ceilings for the numbers of military and civilian personnel in the defense sector, but the armed forces were encouraged to substitute civilian administrative personnel for military personnel.

Title IV put equipment procurement solidly in the joint arena and directly under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense. Joint military planning was to play a crucial role in what equipment would be sought and what ends it would serve. Restoring or modernizing existing inventories was a priority, and procurement was to emphasize deterrent capabilities and transfer of appropriate technology and training with purchased equipment. Private industry, dual technologies, and continued state-controlled production only of items deemed indispensable in times of crisis characterized the matériel provisions.

Title V laid out the program budget categories and prescribed the use of the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System for MOD, army, navy, air force, and Joint Staff in separate subjurisdictions of the budget. Funds for peace missions and community support were excluded; requestors were required to come up with those resources. Steps were taken toward retirement and pension reforms to make the military system compatible with the civilian one.

This title also specified that beginning in 1999, the defense budget would be increased 15 percent over 5 years, using 1996 as the base year (3,504,392,000 pesos). Budget savings made by the services were to be used for salary increases. Moreover, the act authorized the executive to provide 1 billion pesos over 5 years (1999–2003) for equipment procurement and modernization, using sale proceeds plus public credits if sales did not produce the approximately 200 million pesos needed.

Title VI established a Parliamentary Commission for the Pursuit of Military Restructuring, setting forth its responsibilities to assure the implementation of the provisions of the restructuring law. This title in reality provided for those steps necessary by the Executive, the legislature, the MOD, and the armed forces to implement the law. Time lines resembling those used in the Defense Law were established for each.

Despite being called the Restructuring Law, this act essentially sought to codify and assure the transformation of the defense sector. Ministerial Resolution Number 440/98 promulgated an organization to implement the act within the MOD.⁴⁵⁴ Subordinate organizations would make a concerted effort to come up with the necessary inputs to implement the law. Inasmuch as the law was seen as long-delayed action to lay out the fundamental bases for the armed forces, the military regarded it as a highly important and essential step to clarify the roles of civilian and military authorities in defense, including those of the executive, legislative, ministerial, and service institutions. (See figure 8.)

The Restructuring Law was much more ambitious than its predecessor, the Defense Law of 1988, had been, but the lack of implementation of that previous law had set a negative precedent. And soon the timetable delineated in Title VI of the law began to slip. This slippage continued through all of 1998 and into 1999. Supporters' hopes that the Restructuring Law would bear fruit, especially since it had been approved by resounding margins of all parties in the Congress, began to fade. The Achilles' heel of the Restructuring Law, as with previous efforts at reform, was the

lack of financial resources to implement it. Resource augmentations were not forthcoming in 1998 or 1999, nor would they later be.

This state of affairs was particularly disconcerting to the armed forces, as their work groups under the military restructuring system had made the necessary proposals to the civilian authorities on time.⁴⁵⁵ And not only the Executive but also the Congress had delayed in exercising their policy and oversight responsibilities.

Consequently, the MOD White Book on National Defense of March 1999, which was the most comprehensive review and exposition of the Argentine defense establishment ever made, still had the measures of the Restructuring Law cast in the future, without executive sanction of the regulatory proposals. Many observers felt the Restructuring Law, like the Defense Law before it, had not fulfilled its promise.

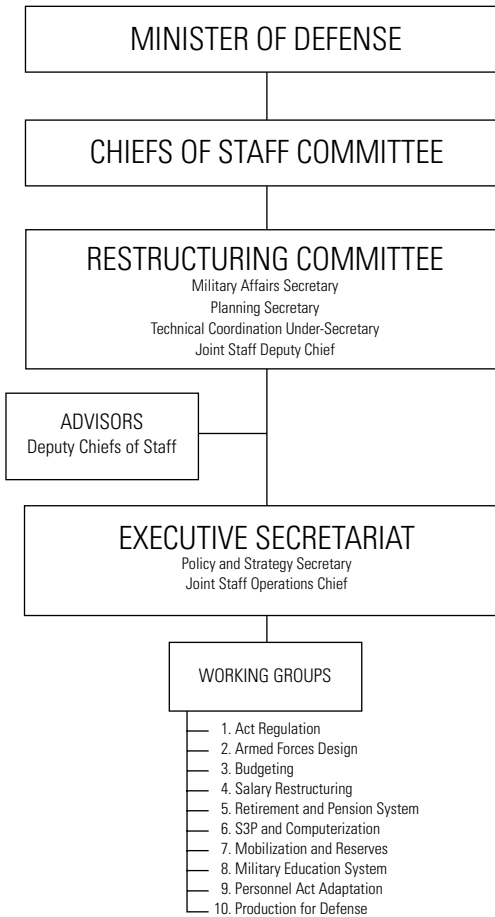
Nonetheless, the law continued to figure prominently in declaratory defense policy. Minister of Defense Jorge Domínguez, in an article on armed forces transformation in *Clarín* newspaper in January 1999, praised Congress for its unanimity in passing the Restructuring Law. But having said that, he moved on to other matters, including military justice reform and peace operations, not the status of implementation of the law.⁴⁵⁶

However, in March 1999, he began addressing the matter of funds for acquisition and upgrading by announcing the prospective sale in 1999 of military real estate worth 110 million pesos, more than the 76 million realized from such sales during the years 1990–1998, apparently hoping thereby to redeem the pledge of the Restructuring Law to provide one billion pesos during the 1999–2003 time frame.⁴⁵⁷ But at the same time, the 15 percent increase in the overall defense budget (approximating 3 percent per year) that the Restructuring Law also mandated was not forthcoming.⁴⁵⁸ Congress could not overcome executive branch constraints, some imposed by outside monitors such as the International Monetary Fund, on government spending in general. Hence, funds for implementing the Restructuring Law turned out to be speculative.

Mixed signals on defense finances continued in June 1999, when Minister Domínguez indicated that “all that remains is to launch the program that starts in the year 2000 [sic], which will require an investment of 200 million pesos per year to re-outfit the force.”⁴⁵⁹ Clearly, the 1999 deadlines for implementation of provisions of the Restructuring Law had been missed.

Moreover, the enabling document for joint staff planning, the Strategic Military Directive, which had last been issued in 1989, was still being

Figure 8. Military Restructuring System



Source: Briefing by Argentina Armed Forces Joint Staff to United States Joint Staff, 1999.

staffed to be sent by MOD for executive approval.⁴⁶⁰ Because this document presumably would align perceptions of threat and roles and missions of the armed forces with the Restructuring Law, it is a critical component also in implementing the law and providing the civilian political strategic guidance that defines the duties of the armed forces. Hence, as the Menem era closed, the real closure to the “military question,” long sought by most in the Argentine body politic and in the armed forces, remained elusive.

The Menem Legacy

In his first administration, Carlos Menem, first-hand student of the experience of Raúl Alfonsín with the Argentine military, knew that continued confrontation with the military would be highly prejudicial to the aspirations of his incoming administration. Inheriting a presidency and an economy in a shambles, he also knew that there would be little to offer the military or any state sector. His plans for a complete reorientation of the economy, and the rewards that might flow from it for distribution later, would take time; and he would have to call for even greater short-term sacrifice and a significant contribution from the military itself. He therefore sought not compromise with the military, but instead granted it absolution for past actions, clearing the slate without abjuring civilian presidential authority. In fact, Menem would seek to aggregate political power much more in the executive than had been the case during the Alfonsín administration. The sweeping nature of his first pardons cleared both sides of the equation. Consequently, when the test of military rebellion came for him—in the form of a final lunge at the centers of power by disaffected officers and NCOs loyal to *los carapintada* leader Colonel Seineldin—Menem could be commander in chief with the full compliance of the military establishment, and the locus of legitimate political authority was firmly established.

These events, in conjunction with the pardoning within days after this last uprising of the remaining prisoners of the *Proceso* era, paved the way for what Menem hoped would be the more enduring accomplishments of his administration, the reestablishment of Argentina as a significant economic and foreign policy power. He sought to do this through free-market economics and a reorientation of foreign policy into a much closer relationship with the United States. In the case of the defense sector, this meant reducing its once-significant role almost to the vanishing point and transforming significant portions of the armed forces into task forces in support of United Nations peacekeeping roles. These actions reduced remaining military autonomy and enhanced the operational, instrumental nature of the armed forces. The externally oriented roles and missions of the armed forces were further reinforced by the passage of the Internal Security Law, beginning a series of significant legal and policy steps that would, by the end of Menem's time in office, transform the law that was the underlying basis for *estado militar*. The legacy of the first administration, then, was the reduction of the armed forces' autonomy and the enhancement of their role

as an instrumental military force, one that was recognized in positive ways at home and abroad.

However, it would remain for the second Menem administration to consolidate the reorientation of the armed forces and provide the basis for continuing transformation of the defense sector, the institutionalization of the defense establishment, and the integration of the armed forces within it. The executive continued trying to stabilize the size and scope of the central government, with the concomitant relative reduction of resources available to defense and other state sectors. Nonetheless, in conjunction with Congress, the Menem administration would undertake the most ambitious effort to date to delineate the scope and nature of *estado militar* and the civil-military relationships that undergirded it.

The second Menem government effectively ended conscription, replacing obligatory military service by lottery with voluntary service designed to have those serving in the much-reduced armed forces contribute more effectively to the defense effort. This change would have far-reaching effects in terms of enhancing the quality of recruits, encouraging the service of women, and increasing personnel readiness. It turned out to be a necessary precursor to the ambitious program of defense sector transformation that the Congress initiated and Menem adopted: the Restructuring Law and its companion volume, the White Book on National Defense, which with unprecedented transparency detailed the actual state of the Argentine defense sector and the implications of the Restructuring Law for its continued evolution and posture. Menem bequeathed to his successor the blueprint for consolidation of the Ministry of Defense and the armed forces under objective civilian control.

However, even before the Menem administration left office, other events and circumstances within the administration and society at large seriously compromised the effective implementation of the restructuring program. Factors such as the illegal arms sales revealed corruption that tarnished both the administration and the armed forces. Human rights questions continued to bedevil the relationship between the armed forces and society. Most significantly, in the last 2 years of Menem's second administration (1998–1999), the economy began suffering serious dislocations due to downturns in the global economy, weakening markets, and an overvalued currency still maintained at one peso to the dollar (convertibility ended inflation, but it made Argentine goods difficult to sell against cheaper competition). Hence, once again, the resources needed to implement the plans were not there. Menem's legacy, at least in part, was one of unfulfilled

promises. Civilian leadership remained wanting in terms of direction and allocation; and storms were brewing, especially in the global economy, that would severely test Menem's successors sooner rather than later.

Reflections

The experience of Argentina in transitioning from a military-authoritarian to a civilian-democratic regime, and the evolving patterns of civil-military relationships manifested in this transition, have provided an unusually rich and vivid example of this trend in most of Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s. Argentina's progress along the path to elected, representative rule has not been easy in a place in which civilian rule, let alone civilian authority over the military, was considered problematic. But Argentina has come a great distance politically from the time when military involvement was the norm. The change of the focus of civil-military relationships from one end of the spectrum of potential military political roles—praetorian, institutional military rule—to the other—a professional, instrumental military—is unprecedented. And it seemed to require a traumatic experience—the defeat of the armed forces in the South Atlantic war, the end of autonomous military government, and the continued controversy over the military role in the Dirty War—to open the way for a new relationship based on democratic rule and civilian supremacy in political matters, including the role of Argentina's military and defense establishment.

Carlos Menem was succeeded on December 10, 1999, by Fernando de la Rúa, a Radical running as a coalition (*Alianza*) candidate, marking another election that occasioned the transfer of political power from one party to another. The major concern for the new administration was the economy, although it initially enjoyed somewhat of an economic (and political) honeymoon. State spending, especially by the provinces, had increased substantially, and the foreign debt had been rising dramatically. The de la Rúa administration entered into what would become a long series of agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in an effort to stabilize the economic situation. But the IMF demanded balanced budgets and reduced state spending.

The major consequence of these IMF demands for the military (aside from the continued unfulfilled promises of the Restructuring Act) was an average reduction of 13 percent in government salaries and pensions that applied to military as well as civilian officials. The military, although clearly unhappy at the prospect of a reduced standard of living, continued following the lead of the civilian administration, as they had

before (during a jurisdictional dispute involving the Supreme Court of the Armed Forces and the commutation of sentences of participants in the La Tablada attack of 1989).

Argentina began 2001 without a vice president, the incumbent “Chaco” Alvarez having resigned in a political dispute with the administration the previous October. The economic crisis deepened, with the country’s economy falling behind in the global market and the renegotiation of its debt, punctuated by a series of general strikes. Unemployment rose at unprecedented levels. Domingo Cavallo was called back into service as Minister of the Economy, but the slide continued. Beset by these problems, the Alianza government steadily lost support among the general populace. The resurfacing of corruption scandals, including the detention of Menem and General Balza on unresolved charges in the arms sale scandals of the mid-1990s, contributed to the general unease.

Then September 11 witnessed the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives. Suddenly, security everywhere, internal and external, was back on page one. This highlighted already existing concerns in Argentina about terrorist infiltration into border areas, especially the “Triple Frontier,” the nexus of Argentine, Brazilian, and Paraguayan territory that was considered a potential source of fundamentalist Islamic-inspired terrorism in Latin America. President de la Rúa, apparently accepting the argument that this new wave of terrorism should be considered external aggression, called for the army to take part in frontier patrols—a mission belonging to the *Gendarmeria Nacional*, which had already increased its presence in the area. This development led to renewed concern and debate about the proper role of the armed forces in matters having an internal as well as external component—especially with regard to intelligence control and oversight, a sensitive subject in Argentina since even before the Dirty War. The military thus began to have a somewhat higher profile than had been the case until this point in the de la Rúa administration.

On October 14, midterm elections were held for the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and the Senate—the first direct election of Senate members by the voters. The Judicialist Party enjoyed significant gains at the expense of the Alianza. Foot and mouth disease among the Argentine cattle herds and severe flooding added natural disasters to the already-full plate of the de la Rúa administration. The continuing efforts to restructure debt and stabilize the economy were not successful.

In December, events came to a head. Bank deposit freezes designed to limit the public's access to cash and halt the hemorrhaging of reserves had led to major protests that escalated into riots, including clashes with police that led to 28 deaths. Large sectors of the populace demanded the resignation of Carvallo and de la Rúa, who triggered an unprecedented succession crisis after resigning on December 20. Senate president Ramón Puerta convened a legislative assembly that appointed San Luis Province governor Adolfo Rodríguez Saa as interim president for 3 months, pending new elections. He announced more stringent measures, which were met with more protests. On December 30, Rodríguez Saa resigned, as did Puerta. Now Eduardo Camano, president of the Chamber of Deputies, convened the legislative assembly, which on January 2, 2002, chose newly elected senator Eduardo Duhalde, former governor of Buenos Aires Province and a Peronist presidential frontrunner in 2003, to fill the rest of de la Rúa's term. Hence, in the span of 2 weeks, the presidency changed hands five times. And the new president still faced all of the challenges of his elected and appointed successors.

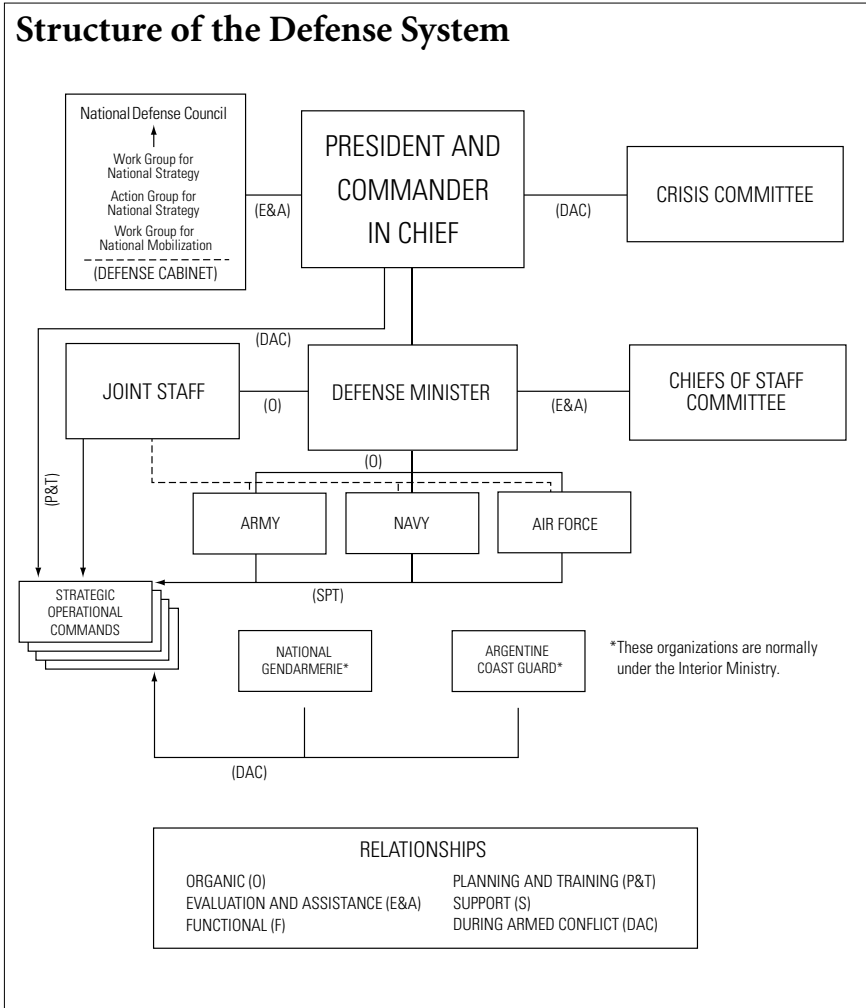
Where was the military during all this? In the past, a political crisis of this magnitude might have provided an opportunity for the armed forces to exercise autonomous political power, either directly or indirectly, and again engage in a contest for legitimate political authority. Such a crisis would have inspired calls for the military to restore order, and during this crisis, such calls were reported from some sectors of the population. Although the tense, violent political atmosphere may have presented an opportunity, the military—which historically had used violence or the threat thereof to impose its political will—showed no propensity to act on it. The long process of the past 20 years had done its work to transform the military political culture and the institutional relationships with respect to defense and security of both civilian and military authorities. The military was responsive to the needs of society, especially in alleviating somewhat the economic plight of the poorest sectors of Argentine society through food distribution, medical services, and other aid. But this response occurred within the civilian-led structures responsible for such activities, including the Ministry of Defense.

Chief of the Joint Staff Lieutenant General Juan Carlos Mugnolo perhaps made the best statement concerning these activities: "The armed forces possess the necessary structure and resources, and they could not remain on the sidelines of this effort being expended by all Argentines. Taking an active part of the community's current problemsolving is an

unwaivable obligation.” Responding to rumors of alleged conspiracies, he stated: “The armed forces will defend the effectiveness of the constitutional order. Each and every one of their members has sworn to defend the National Constitution, and that is what they will do.” He then alluded to “the efforts expended” during the past few years to “change a culture of the military’s intervention in political affairs” and reiterated that the armed forces have “for years, with conviction, been subordinate to the Constitution, and have refrained from intervening in anything associated with domestic political events.”⁴⁶¹

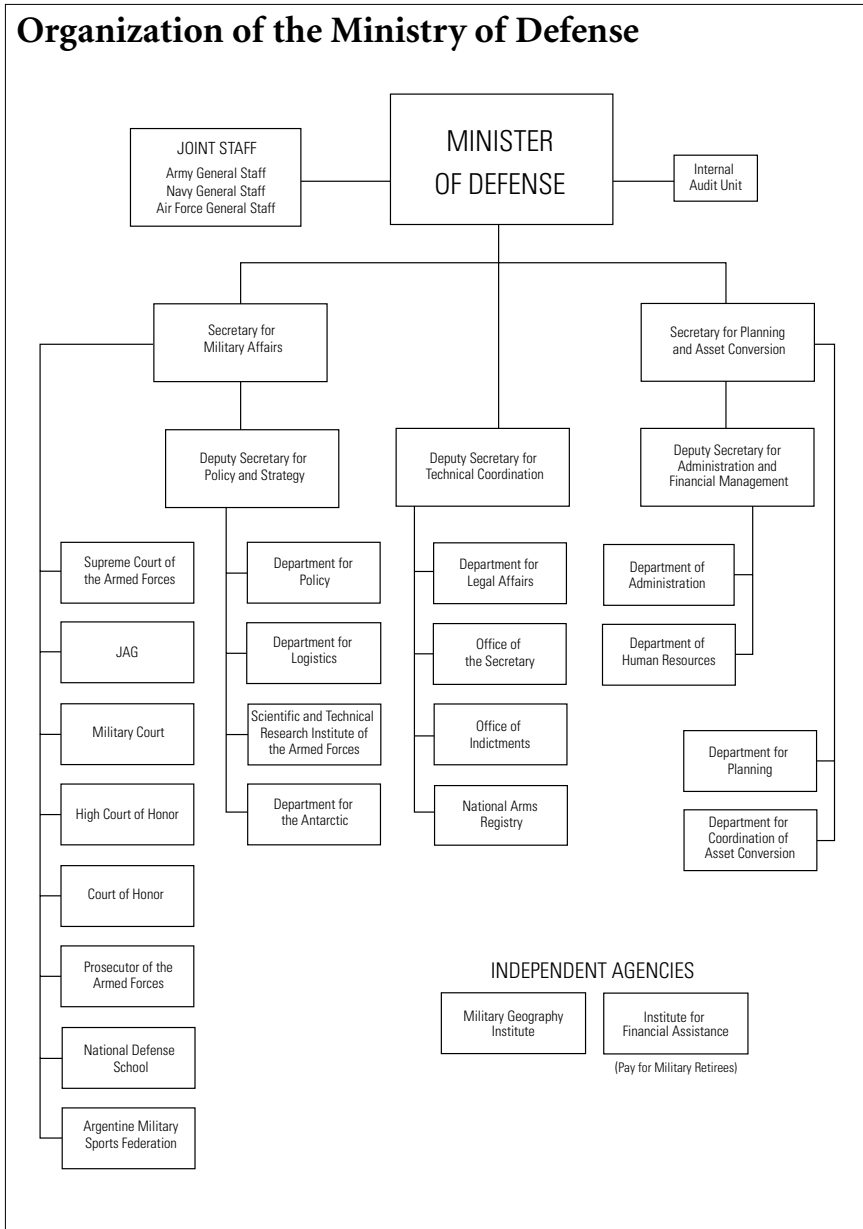
The new century, then, marked significant accomplishments for Argentina and its civilian and military institutions. An important reorientation of the relationship of the country’s armed forces to the government and society has occurred. The historical role of the military as an autonomous political contender appears to have run its course, as have the contests between the military and the civilian government for legitimate political authority. The ongoing evolution of Argentine democracy in times of economic and social hardship and the possibility of further political crisis will no doubt again test many of the fundamental relationships between government and society, including the civil-military relationships. But military intervention in the exercise of political authority is much less likely to be sought, or tolerated, by either the military or civilians. That is a profound—and a profoundly good—change.

Appendix: Defense Organization



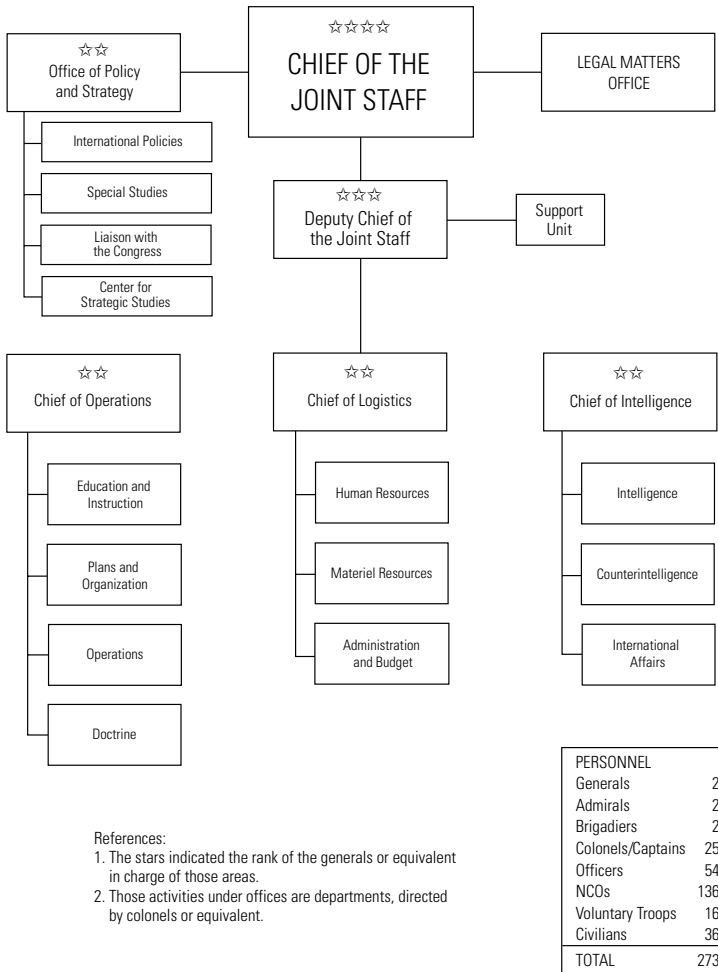
Source: Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

Organization of the Ministry of Defense



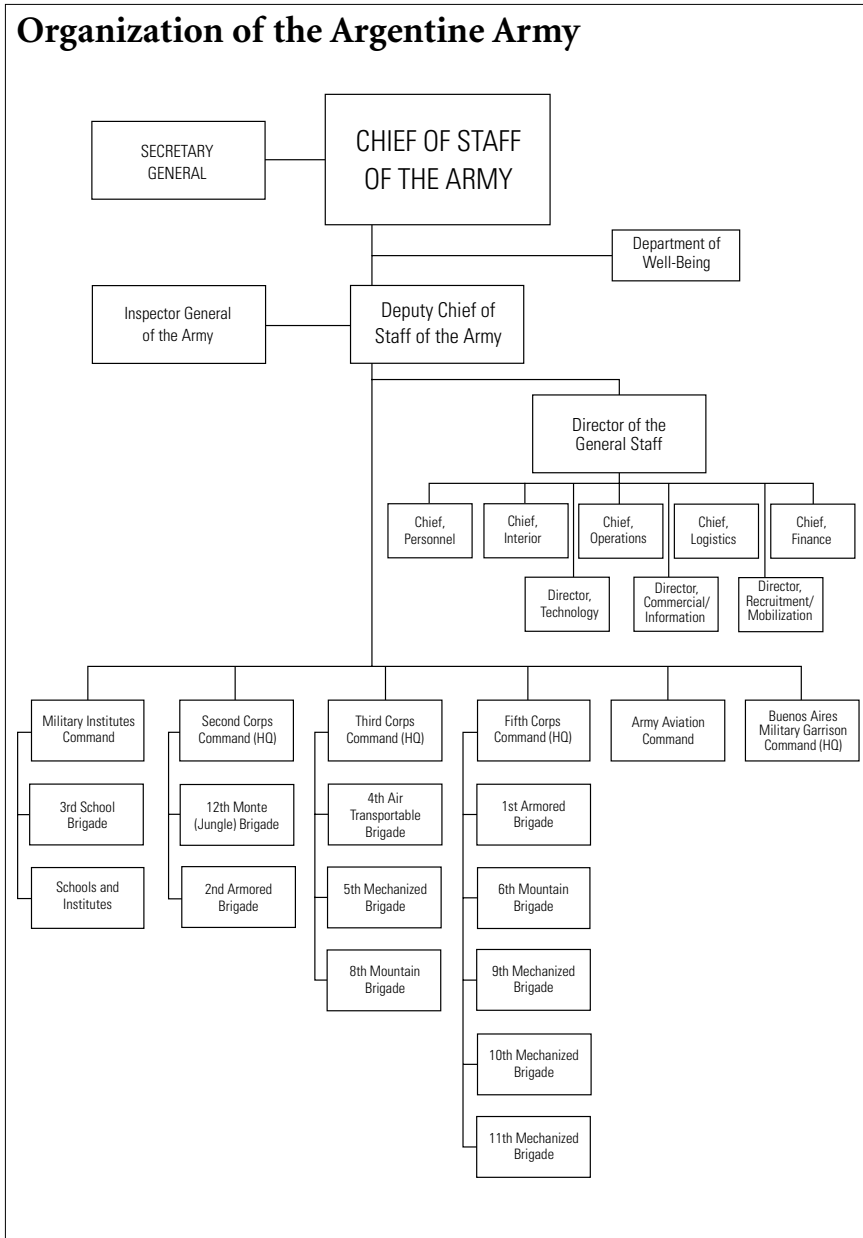
Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

Organization of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces



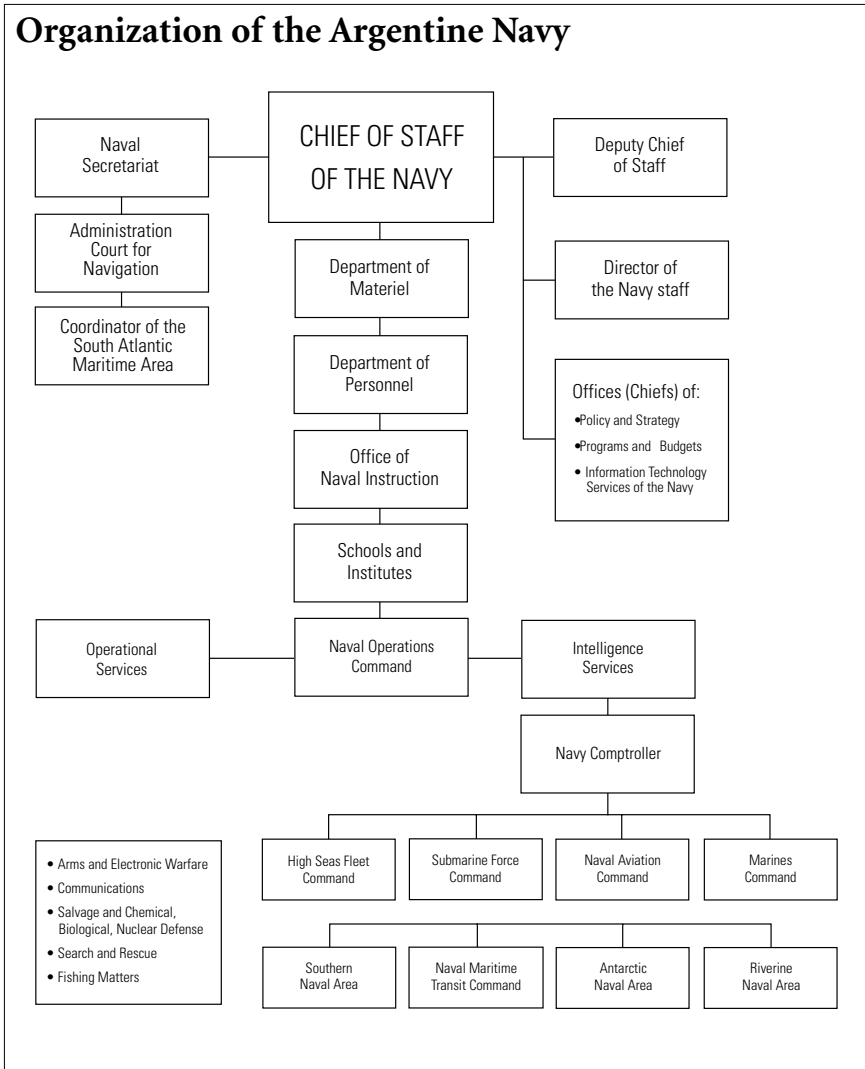
Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

Organization of the Argentine Army



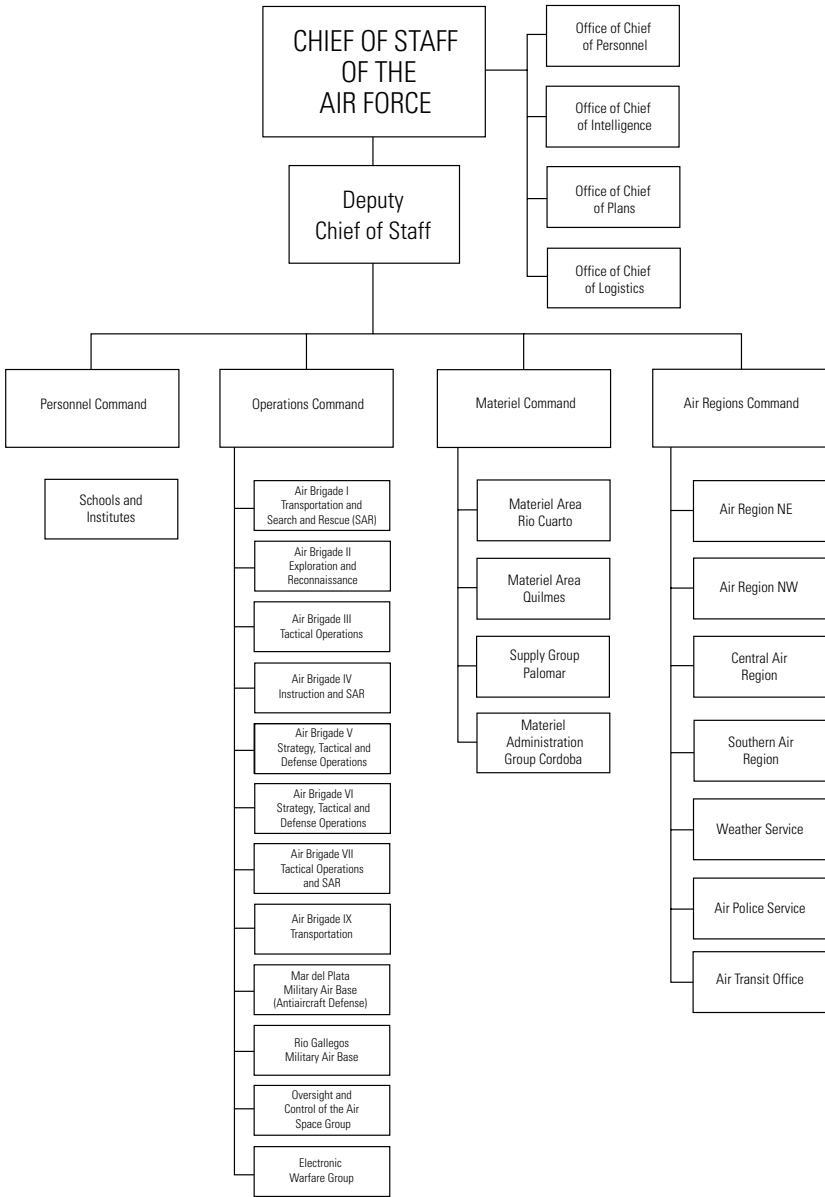
Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

Organization of the Argentine Navy



Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

Organization of the Argentine Air Force



Source: *Libro Blanco de la Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministry of Defense, 1999).

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¹ Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 97.

² David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), 30.

³ Lucien Pye, "Political Culture," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 218.

⁴ Howard J. Wiarda, *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: The Distinct Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 18.

⁵ Although Latin America, as many think of it today, encompasses countries and traditions other than those derived from the Spanish dominions, it is Spanish America, in terms of political culture, that is significant in historical and contemporary Argentina.

⁶ Wiarda, 12.

⁷ Martin Edmonds, *Armed Forces and Society* (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1988), 50.

⁸ Howard J. Wiarda, *Critical Elections and Critical Coups* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1979), 1.

⁹ David Rock, "Political Movement in Argentina: A Sketch from Past to Present," in *From Military Rule to Liberal Democracy in Argentina*, ed. Mónica Peralta-Ramos (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 9.

¹⁰ John J. Johnson contends that in Latin America, "militarism is a cultural residue" and that force in Latin American politics "was elevated to a political principle." See John J. Johnson, *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 93.

¹¹ David Scott Palmer, "The Military in Latin America" (unpublished monograph, 1984), 3.

¹² Wiarda, *Critical Elections and Critical Coups*, 32–33.

¹³ Lawrence E. Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 119.

¹⁴ Daniel Poneman, *Argentina: Democracy on Trial* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987), chap. 1.

¹⁵ José Luis de Imaz, *Los que mandan* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1964), 50.

¹⁶ Antonio José Deimundo Pineiro, “Las relaciones entre la sociedad (civil y política) y las Instituciones Militares,” VIII jornadas sobre la situación estratégica mundial (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos, Universidad de Belgrano, 1980), 7.

¹⁷ Charles W. Anderson, “Toward a Theory of Latin American Politics,” in *Politics and Social Change in Latin America*, 250.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁹ Wiarda, *Critical Elections and Critical Coups*, 2.

²⁰ Edmonds, 52.

²¹ David Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), 101.

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²³ S.E. Finer, *Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Hammondsouth, 1976), 30.

²⁴ Wayne S. Smith, “The Argentine Elections of 1973: Demilitarization and the Struggle for Consensus” (PhD diss., The George Washington University, 1980).

²⁵ Imaz, 71.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁷ Humberto J.R. Lobaiza, “Las relaciones civicos-militares en la Argentina,” *Revista de la Escuela Superior de Guerra* 506 (June–September 1992): 114.

²⁸ Jorge Ochoa de Eguileor and Virgilio Beltrán, *Las fuerzas armadas hablan* (Buenos Aires: Editorial PAIDOS, 1968), 74.

²⁹ See David Pion-Berlin, “Latin American National Security Doctrines: Hard and Soft-Line Themes,” *Armed Forces and Society* 15 (Spring 1989): 411–429.

³⁰ Brian Loveman and Thomas V. Davies, Jr., *The Politics of Antipolitics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 3–13, *passim*.

³¹ Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 104.

³² Juan Carlos Onganía, “Message of the revolutionary *junta* to the Argentine people,” *La Nación*, June 28, 1966, 1.

³³ Carlos H. Waisman, “The Legitimation of Democracy Under Adverse Conditions: The Case of Argentina,” in *From Military Rule to Liberal Democracy in Argentina*, ed. Peralta-Ramos, 97.

³⁴ See Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), for in-depth treatments of these concepts.

³⁵ Huntington, 5.

³⁶ Rouquié, 35.

³⁷ Finer, 24.

³⁸ R.A. Humphreys, "Latin America: The Caudillo Tradition," in *Soldiers and Governments: Nine Studies in Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Michael E. Howard (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957), 156.

³⁹ "[Argentine officers] are long accustomed to obeying only each other," and "the bonds of honor and loyalty instilled in every cadet still run far more strongly among soldiers than between soldiers and their civilian superiors." Poneman, 88, 90.

⁴⁰ Lyle N. McAlister, Anthony P. Maingot, and Robert A. Potash, *The Military in Latin American Socio-Political Evolution: Four Case Studies* (Washington, DC: Center for Research in Social Systems, 1970), 10–11.

⁴¹ Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times: On Professionals, Praetorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 175.

⁴² Marcelo Montserrat, "Democracia y fuerzas en la Argentina," paper presented at the International Seminar on Democracy and the Armed Forces (Quito: Corporación de Estudios para el Desarrollo-CORDES, 1988), 28.

⁴³ Imaz, 52.

⁴⁴ Major General Leopoldo Flores, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, July 12, 1990.

⁴⁵ Deimundo Pineiro, 20.

⁴⁶ Rouquié, 73.

⁴⁷ Peter H. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict Among Political Elites* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 14.

⁴⁸ Rouquié, 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Loveman, *passim*.

⁵¹ Kalman H. Silvert, *The Conflict Society: Reaction and Revolution in Latin America*, rev. ed. (New York: American University Field Staff, Inc., 1966), 218–219.

⁵² Abraham Lowenthal and Samuel Fitch, eds., *Armies and Politics in Latin America* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), 12.

⁵³ Robert Seidel, review of *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case*, by Lawrence Harrison, in *American Historical Review* 82 (September 1988): 499.

⁵⁴ Rouquié, 85.

⁵⁵ Stepan, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ See also Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the States Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), *passim*.

⁵⁸ G. Pope Atkins, "The Armed Forces in Latin American Politics," in *Civil-Military Relations: Changing Concepts in the 1970s*, ed. Charles L. Cochran (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 223.

⁵⁹ A.R. Luckham, "A Comparative Typology of Civil-Military Relations," *Government and Opposition* 6 (Winter 1971): 10.

⁶⁰ Huntington, 83.

⁶¹ Poneman, 17.

⁶² Rock, 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6–11.

⁶⁴ Perlmutter, 281.

⁶⁵ Aldo Vacs, “Authoritarian Breakdown and Redemocratization in Argentina,” in *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America*, ed. James M. Malloy and Mitchell Seligson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 36ff.

⁶⁶ Luckham, 22.

⁶⁷ Rouquié, 10.

⁶⁸ Atkins, 252.

⁶⁹ Martin C. Needler, “Political Development and Military Intervention in Latin America,” in *The Military and Modernization*, ed. Henry Bienen (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1981), 79.

⁷⁰ See Alfred Stepan, “The New Professionalism of Internal Warfare and Military Role Expansion,” in *Authoritarian Brazil*, ed. Alfred Stepan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 47–65; and Pion-Berlin, “Latin American National Security Doctrines,” 411–429.

⁷¹ Guillermo O’Donnell, “State and Alliances in Argentina, 1956–1976,” in *The Journal of Development Studies* 15 (October 1978): 3–33.

⁷² Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror*, 6–9.

⁷³ See Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy*, and Donald C. Hodges, *Argentina: The National Revolution and Resistance* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), for in-depth treatments of these phenomena.

⁷⁴ Rouquié, 4.

⁷⁵ Gary W. Wynia, *Argentina: Illusions and Realities* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), 93.

⁷⁶ Anderson, 252.

⁷⁷ Montserrat, 28.

⁷⁸ Eguileor and Beltrán, 73.

⁷⁹ Paraphrasing Michael E. Howard in *Soldiers and Governments*, 11.

⁸⁰ Paul W. Zagorski, “Civil-Military Relations and Argentine Democracy,” in *Armed Forces and Society* 14 (Spring 1988): 407.

⁸¹ McAlister, 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸³ Other authors have used the terms *stream* and *current* with respect to political culture. The most germane use in terms of Argentina is by Susan Milbank, who divides the Argentine stream of political culture into Iberian and Western European currents. See Susan Milbank, “Domestic Causes of Military Involvement in Political Succession in Argentina,” in *The Process of Political Succession*, ed. Peter Calvert (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 254.

⁸⁴ Hodges, 298.

- ⁸⁵ Paraphrasing McAlister in Wiarda, *Critical Elections and Critical Coups*, 6.
- ⁸⁶ Humphreys, 156.
- ⁸⁷ Lobaiza, 106–108.
- ⁸⁸ The term is used in *La ley de defensa en el marco de la reforma militar*, no. 6 (Buenos Aires: Fundación Arturo Illia para la Democracia y la Paz, n.d.).
- ⁸⁹ Humphreys, 156.
- ⁹⁰ Poneman, 133.
- ⁹¹ Argentine Republic, Constitution of 1853, Articles 67 and 68, in *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, ed. Albert P. Blaustein and Gilbert H. Flanz (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1990).
- ⁹² Milbank, 185.
- ⁹³ Lobaiza, 110.
- ⁹⁴ Wiarda, *Critical Elections and Critical Coups*, 6.
- ⁹⁵ O'Donnell, 5.
- ⁹⁶ Juan Rial, "The Armed Forces and the Question of Democracy in Latin America," in *The Military and Democracy: The Future of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. Louis W. Goodman, Johanna S. R. Mendelson, and Juan Rial (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 10.
- ⁹⁷ Herbert C. Huser, "The Role of the Military in Argentina, 1930–1968" (MA report, University of Texas, 1969), 1.
- ⁹⁸ *La ley de defensa en el marco de la reforma militar*.
- ⁹⁹ Frederick M. Nunn, "The Origins and Nature of Professional Militarism in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru, 1890–1940," *Military Affairs* 39 (February 1975): 1.
- ¹⁰⁰ Robert A. Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1928–1945* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 11–12.
- ¹⁰¹ Marvin Goldwert, "The Argentine Revolution of 1930: The Rise of Modern Militarism and Ultrnationalism in Argentina" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1962).
- ¹⁰² Loveman, 169ff.
- ¹⁰³ Deimundo Pineiro, 7.
- ¹⁰⁴ Peter G. Snow, *Political Forces in Argentina*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1979), 66.
- ¹⁰⁵ Peter H. Smith, "Argentina, the Uncertain Warriors," *Current History* 78 (February 1980): 62.
- ¹⁰⁶ Jorge Grecco and Gustavo González, *El ejercito que tenemos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1990), 10.
- ¹⁰⁷ Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil*, passim.
- ¹⁰⁸ Loveman, 174–175.
- ¹⁰⁹ Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror*, 171.
- ¹¹⁰ Dennis R. Gordon, "Withdrawal in Disgrace: Decline of the Argentine Military, 1976–1983," in *The Decline of Military Regimes: The Civilian Influence*, ed. Constantine Danopoulos (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 216.

¹¹¹ Poneman, 35.

¹¹² Grecco, 132.

¹¹³ Juan Corradi, *The Fitful Republic* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 117.

¹¹⁴ Virgilio Beltrán, “Political Transition in Argentina: 1982 to 1985,” *Armed Forces and Society* 13 (Winter 1987): 216.

¹¹⁵ Andrés Fontana, *Fuerzas armadas, partidos políticos, y transición a la democracia en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad [CEDES], 1984), 6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹⁷ Waisman, 98.

¹¹⁸ Beltrán, 216.

¹¹⁹ Walter Little, “Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary Argentina,” *Government and Opposition* 19 (Spring 1984): 209.

¹²⁰ Gordon, 217.

¹²¹ Waisman, 101.

¹²² Little, 209.

¹²³ Lieutenant General Francisco Gassino, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview, July 26, 1990.

¹²⁴ Poneman, 209.

¹²⁵ For a complete and timely accounting of the influence of *Coordinadora* in the Alfonsín administration, see Alfredo Leuco and José Antonio Díaz, *Los herederos de Alfonsín* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana-Planeta, 1987).

¹²⁶ Edward Schumacher, “Argentina Battles the Political Powers,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 1983, A3.

¹²⁷ *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), October 22, 1983, 4.

¹²⁸ Poneman, 46.

¹²⁹ *La Prensa*, September 20, 1983, 3.

¹³⁰ *La Prensa*, October 3, 1983, 5.

¹³¹ Torcuato Di Tella, “The October 1983 Elections in Argentina,” *Government and Opposition* 19 (Spring 1984): 188.

¹³² *Seminario de Defensa Nacional, Comité Nacional UCR (Unión Cívica Radical)*, 3–6 octubre 1989, 1–2.

¹³³ Law 23.023, *Ministerios—Modificación de la ley 22,520*. 8 diciembre 1983, 43D Anales de legislación argentina (ADLA), 4025.

¹³⁴ Decree 436, *Delegación de facultades en el Ministro de Defensa y en los Jefes de los Estados Mayores Generales*, 13 enero 1984, 44A ADLA 196.

¹³⁵ Defense Ministry communique reported in *Noticias Argentinas*, December 15, 1983 (Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS] VI, December 15, 1983, B9).

¹³⁶ Decree 280, *Sociedades cuya titularidad, posesión o tenencia invistan las Fuerzas Armadas u organismos en jurisdicción del Ministerio de Defensa, COVIARA (Construcción de Viviendas para la Armada) y Fabricaciones Militares—Transfer-*

encia del capital accionario al ministerio mencionado, 23 diciembre 1983, 44A ADLA 153.

¹³⁷ Decree 2259, *Gendarmería Nacional—Dependencia del Ministerio de Defensa* 23 julio 1984, 44C ADLA 2586, and Decree 3399, *Prefectura Naval Argentina—Dependencia directa del Ministerio de Defensa*, 19 octubre 1984, 44C ADLA 3911.

¹³⁸ Andrés Fontana, “La política militar en un contexto de transición: Argentina 1983–1989,” working paper 34 (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad, 1990), 24, 25.

¹³⁹ Horacio Jaunarena, interview with author, July 20, 1990.

¹⁴⁰ Fontana, 21.

¹⁴¹ Virgilio Beltrán, interview with author, August 9, 1990.

¹⁴² Raúl Borrás, remarks, reported in *Noticias Argentinas*, March 2, 1984 (FBIS VI, March 5, 1984, B2).

¹⁴³ *Buenos Aires Herald*, March 3, 1984, 9.

¹⁴⁴ Horacio Jaunarena, interview with author, July 20, 1990.

¹⁴⁵ Although it took 4 years to become law, the *Ley de Defensa Nacional* was drafted early in the Alfonsín administration. The president’s thinking on jointness is best reflected in that law, which says in Article 17: “The Joint Staff of the Armed Forces will assist and counsel the Minister of Defense in matters of military strategy. It will deal with: a) the formulation of joint military doctrine; b) the elaboration of joint military planning; c) the direction of joint military training; d) the control of operational strategic planning and the effectiveness of joint military action.” Law 23,554, *Ley de Defensa Nacional*, 26 abril 1988, 48B ADLA 1424-1425. The law also provides for joint commands, subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, but never created.

¹⁴⁶ Raúl Alfonsín, speech on the 172^d anniversary of the creation of the General San Martín Grenadier Regiment, *Buenos Aires Domestic Service*, March 16, 1984 (FBIS VI, March 19, 1984, B1).

¹⁴⁷ Fontana, 24.

¹⁴⁸ Brigadier General Heriberto Auel, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, August 2, 1990.

¹⁴⁹ Vice Admiral Barry Hussey, Argentine Navy (Ret.), interview with author, July 31, 1990.

¹⁵⁰ The equivalent grade for flag officers in the Argentine military services are:

<i>United States</i>	<i>Argentine Army</i>	<i>Argentine Navy</i>	<i>Argentine Air Force</i>
Brigadier General	General de Brigada	Contraalmirante	Brigadier
Major General	General de División	Vicealmirante	Brigadier Mayor
Lieutenant General	Teniente General	Almirante	Brigadier General

Under Carlos Menem, the new grade of Colonel Mayor was inserted between Colonel and General de Brigada. This became the equivalent of a one-star rank, but without palms it was not part of the flag officer grades. The army grades then

had two stars (General de Brigada), three stars (General de División), and four stars (Teniente General). The additional star brought the Argentine top grades to the same number of devices as was common for chiefs of services in most countries, but the pay grades did not change.

¹⁵¹ Auel, interview.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Air Force Command statement, reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, September 5, 1984 (FBIS VI, September 6, 1984, B3).

¹⁵⁴ Confidential interview, Buenos Aires, July 1990.

¹⁵⁵ Raúl Alfonsín, speech made in his capacity as commander in chief of the armed forces, at the armed forces banquet held at army headquarters in Buenos Aires. *Buenos Aires Domestic Service*, July 6, 1985 (FBIS VI, July 8, 1985, B1).

¹⁵⁶ General Julio Fernández Torres, “Conclusiones de la exposición del Señor Jefe del Estado Mayor Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas Teniente General D. Julio Alfredo Fernández Torres con motivo de la finalización del año militar 1984,” unpublished manuscript, December 11, 1984.

¹⁵⁷ Brigadier General Teodoro Waldner, Argentine Air Force (Ret.), interview with author, August 10, 1990.

¹⁵⁸ Confidential interview.

¹⁵⁹ John Bushnell, former Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy at Buenos Aires, interview with author, May 16, 1990.

¹⁶⁰ Law 19,101, *Ley para el personal militar—Sustitución de la ley 14,177*, 30 junio 1971, 31B ADLA 1343.

¹⁶¹ Major General Jorge Arguindegui, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, July 16, 1990.

¹⁶² Many of these are discussed during the Alfonsín administration in the publications of the Fundación Arturo Illia para la Democracia y la Paz.

¹⁶³ *Clarín* (Buenos Aires), August 27, 1984, 2–3.

¹⁶⁴ *Latin America Weekly Report*, WR 84-32, August 17, 1984.

¹⁶⁵ Brigadier General Raúl Schirmer, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, August 6, 1990.

¹⁶⁶ Details are given in commentary of Carlos Fernández, reported by *Noticias Argentina*, September 29, 1985 (FBIS VI, October 2, 1985, B2).

¹⁶⁷ Information provided by an interviewee who requested anonymity.

¹⁶⁸ Robert A. Potash, “Alfonsín and the Argentine Military,” a paper prepared for the XV International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Miami, FL, 1989.

¹⁶⁹ Dante Giadone, “La reforma de la Constitución y la reforma militar,” Fundación Arturo Illia publication no. 4 (Buenos Aires: Fundación Arturo Illia para la Democracia y la Paz, 1987), 10.

¹⁷⁰ The gist of this law, on which the paragraph is based, and of Law 21,264 following, is summarized with comments in *Defensa y seguridad*, Fundación Arturo

Illia publication no. 7 (Buenos Aires: Fundación Arturo Illia para la Democracia y la Paz, 1985), 6–8.

¹⁷¹ Andrés Fontana makes the essential point clearly in his previously cited work on the topic, “La política militar en un contexto de transición: Argentine 1983–1989.” In it, he states, “The review of the past became the principal focus of the civil-military conflict, and over time, took on a politically unmanageable dynamic.” In his view, defense policy and military reform received short shrift as a result. He reinforces this with the view that “The main factor that affected the military policy and civil-military relations in all its aspects was the nature that the review of the past took on.” Military reform could not be carried out in the atmosphere sustained by the trials and their effects.

¹⁷² Auel, interview.

¹⁷³ The navy testimony was summarized by *Noticias Argentinas*, August 14, 1986 (FBIS VI, August 20, 1986, B1), and the air force testimony was in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, August 22, 1986, 11.

¹⁷⁴ Tomás Sánchez de Bustamante, interview with author, July 11, 1990.

¹⁷⁵ Law 23,554, *Ley de Defensa Nacional*, 26 abril 1988, 48B ADLA 1424.

¹⁷⁶ As quoted in *Latin America Regional Report, Southern Cone*, RS-890-02, March 9, 1989, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Rosendo Fraga, *La cuestión militar, 1987–1989* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1989), 83.

¹⁷⁸ Gassino, interview.

¹⁷⁹ Raúl Alfonsín, speech, January 25, 1989, *Buenos Aires Domestic Service* (FBIS-LAT-89-015, January 25, 1989, 29).

¹⁸⁰ Lieutenant General José Dante Caridi, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, August 10, 1990; also interviews with Generals Gassino and Auel. The evidence was circumstantial and no investigation was made, but it was widely believed.

¹⁸¹ Decree 82, *Procuración General de la Nación—Se solicita la intervención de su titular para investigar el intento de copamiento del Regimiento 3 de Infantería “General Manuel Belgrano” del Ejército Argentino*, 25 enero 1989, 49A ADLA 95.

¹⁸² Decree 83, *Consejo de Seguridad—Creación, funciones*, 25 enero 1989, 49A ADLA 95.

¹⁸³ Decree 327, *Seguridad interior—Bases orgánicas y funcionales para la preparación, ejecución y control de medidas tendientes a prevenir y conjurar la formación o actividad de grupos armados*, 7 marzo 1989, 49B ADLA 1424.

¹⁸⁴ Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini, *Las Fuerzas Armadas y el uso de los recursos económicos*, undated monograph, Anexo 4.

¹⁸⁵ As quoted in *Latin American Weekly Report*, WR-34-82, August 17, 1984. These figures apparently include Ministry of Defense money as well as armed forces. Rodríguez Giavarini has a drop from 4.2 percent to 2.8 percent of gross domestic product for Armed Forces and Security Troops.

¹⁸⁶ Rodríguez Giavarini, 3.

¹⁸⁷ Fraga, 175.

¹⁸⁸ *Buenos Aires Herald*, May 22, 1984, 11.

¹⁸⁹ Flores, interview.

¹⁹⁰ As related in interviews with several officers who served there at the time.

¹⁹¹ Fraga, 173.

¹⁹² Grecco, 116.

¹⁹³ *Buenos Aires Herald*, July 6, 1988, 9.

¹⁹⁴ *Buenos Aires Herald*, October 10, 1986, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Brigadier Mayor Ernesto Crespo, Air Force Chief of Staff, interview in *Observer* magazine, as reported by Spanish Radio Service, June 7, 1988 (FBIS-LAT-88-111, June 9, 1988, 22).

¹⁹⁶ Fraga, 166.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁹⁸ Rodríguez Giavarini, 13.

¹⁹⁹ Bushnell, interview.

²⁰⁰ For a detailed exposition of the array of military companies and the extent of Fabricaciones Militares participation, see Dr. Roberto Oscar Tafani, "Producción para la defensa," in *Defensa y democracia*, ed. Gustavo Druetta, et al. (Buenos Aires: Puntosaur Editores, 1990), 368–374.

²⁰¹ Commentary by Oscar Raúl Cardos, *Noticias Argentinas*, June 13, 1984 (FBIS VI, June 19, 1984, B3).

²⁰² Poneman, 105.

²⁰³ Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini, interview with author, August 1, 1990.

²⁰⁴ *Buenos Aires Herald*, April 20, 1985, 9.

²⁰⁵ *Latin America Regional Report*, RS-88-05, 8.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Latin America Regional Report*, RS-87-03.

²⁰⁸ Tafani, 357.

²⁰⁹ Lieutenant General Julio Fernández Torres, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, July 18, 1990; Arguindegui, interview with author.

²¹⁰ *Noticias Argentinas*, August 15, 1984 (FBIS VI, August 20, 1984, B5).

²¹¹ Dante Giadoni, interview with author, July 12, 1990.

²¹² Brigadier General Antonio José Deimundo Pineiro, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, June 28, 1990.

²¹³ Publications of the Fundación Arturo Illia para la Democracia y la Paz, passim, reflecting the thinking of German General Wolf von Baudissin.

²¹⁴ Deimundo Pineiro, interview.

²¹⁵ Grecco, 69–70.

²¹⁶ Seminario de Defensa Nacional, UCR, 4, and a critique of UCR policy on educational reform by Dante Giadoni in *Fundación Arturo Illia* magazine, undated, 34–35.

²¹⁷ "Final Document of the Military Junta Regarding the War Against Terrorism: The Fundamental Concepts," in Loveman, 205–211.

²¹⁸ Deborah L. Norden, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 58ff.

²¹⁹ As quoted by Jerry Knudson in *The Times of the Americas* (Washington, DC), October 17, 1990, 3.

²²⁰ Leuco, 179.

²²¹ Law 22,924, *Amnistia de delitos cometidos con motivación o finalidad terrorista o subversiva, desde el 25/5/73 hasta el 17/6/82*, 22 setiembre 1983, 43D ADLA 3830.

²²² Decree 158, *Juicio sumario ante el Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas al Tnte. Gral. Jorge R. Videla, Brig. Gral. Orlando R. Agosti, Alnte. Emilio E. Massera, Tnte. Gral. Roberto E. Viola, Brig. Gral. Omar D. R. Graffigna, Alnte. Armando R. Lambruschini, Tnte. Gra. Leopoldo F. Galtieri, Brig. Gral. Basilio Lami Dozo y Alnte. Jorge I. Anaya por los delitos de homicidio, privación ilegal de la libertad y aplicación de tormentos a detenidos con apelación ante la Cámara Federal*, 13 diciembre 1983, 44A ADLA 132.

²²³ Decree 280, *Se Somete a juicio sumario ante el Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas al Gral. (R) Ramón J. Camps* 18 enero 1984, 44A ADLA 189.

²²⁴ Law 23,049, *Código de Justicia Militar—Modificación*, 13 febrero 1984, 44A ADLA 8-11. See also Horacio Goett, “El Fuero militar en el marco jurídico-constitucional,” in Druetta.

²²⁵ Flores, interview.

²²⁶ Decree 158, in explaining the bases for the trials of the juntas, contains such phraseology as: “Considering that the Military Junta that usurped the government of the Nation on 24 March 1976, and the commands of the Armed Forces that were in being at that time conceived and carried out a plan of operations against subversive and terrorist activity based in methods and procedures [that were] totally illegal,” and “That all the inhabitants of the country . . . were exposed to an intense and prolonged campaign of psychological action designed to establish the belief that agents . . . of subversion, a diffuse category that encompassed the true terrorists [but also] mere dissidents and even those that limited themselves to criticizing the methods employed, [all] were deserving of being placed outside the society and even deprived of their human condition, and therefore reduced to objects lacking legal protection.”

²²⁷ Brigadier General Carlos Horacio Cerdá, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, July 17, 1990. As legal spokesman for the military, he reflected the general view. Very few in the armed forces disagreed with his assessments.

²²⁸ *Revista Militar* 721 (January/July 1989): passim, and General Cerdá in *El Cronista* (Buenos Aires), October 4, 1988, 8.

²²⁹ Law 23,049, Article 10.

²³⁰ *Diarios y Noticias (DYN)*, editorial report, August 2, 1984 (FBIS VI, August 6, 1984, B5).

²³¹ *Nunca Más*, Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1984), 481.

²³² Cerdá, interview.

²³³ Report of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, as reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, September 25, 1984 (FBIS VI, September 26, 1984, B5).

²³⁴ Poneman, 94.

²³⁵ Auel, interview.

²³⁶ *Buenos Aires Herald*, April 12, 1984, 11, and April 14, 1984, 9.

²³⁷ Cerdá, interview.

²³⁸ Raúl Alfonsín, speech on the 172^d anniversary of the creation of the General San Martín Grenadier Regiment.

²³⁹ Raúl Alfonsín, speech during Flag Day ceremony in Rosario, Argentina, reported in *Buenos Aires Domestic Service*, June 20, 1984 (FBIS VI, June 21, 1984, B1).

²⁴⁰ Raúl Alfonsín, speech at the Armed Forces Comradeship Day dinner, Condor Building, Air Force Headquarters in Buenos Aires, reported in *Telam*, July 7, 1984 (FBIS VI, July 9, 1984, B2).

²⁴¹ Anonymous pamphlet, quoted in *Noticias Argentinas*, August 10, 1984 (FBIS VI, August 14, 1984, B2).

²⁴² Captain Carlos Raimondi, Argentine Navy (Ret.), interview with author, July 17, 1990.

²⁴³ Juan Carlos Corbetta, interview with author, July 5, 1990.

²⁴⁴ Grecco, 38.

²⁴⁵ Poneman, 95.

²⁴⁶ Raúl Alfonsín, speech on Armed Forces Comradeship Day, July 7, 1985.

²⁴⁷ General Hector Ríos Ereñú, interview in *Gente* magazine as reported by DYN, June 28, 1985 (FBIS VI, June 28, 1985, B2).

²⁴⁸ Poll by Aftalión-Mora and Araujo Noguera, the most frequently quoted polls in Argentina. As reported in *Latin America Weekly Report*, August 16, 1985, 10.

²⁴⁹ *Latin America Weekly Report*, WR-85-49, December 13, 1985, 1.

²⁵⁰ *Latin America Weekly Report*, WR-86-17, April 24, 1986.

²⁵¹ Ríos Ereñú, remarks made on Radio Mitre (Buenos Aires), as reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, May 20, 1986 (FBIS VI, May 22, 1986, B4).

²⁵² Poll by Multimedia Marketing and Aresco, commissioned by *Clarín*, as reported in *Latin America Regional Report, Southern Cone*, RS-87-01, January 1987.

²⁵³ Law 23,492, *Extinción de la acción penal por presunta participación en cualquier grado en los delitos del art. 10 de la ley 23,049 y por aquellos vinculados a la instauración de formas violentas de acción política hasta el 10/12/83—Condiciones—Excepciones*. 23 diciembre 1986, 47A ADLA 192-3.

²⁵⁴ Ríos Ereñú, interview.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Corbetta, interview.

²⁵⁸ Fraga, 118. Other sources give the number of officers as 153 and 191, but some latitude is needed for varying endpoints of the *punto final* period due to jurisdictional disputes.

²⁵⁹ *La Crónica* (Buenos Aires), March 24, 1987.

²⁶⁰ Corbetta, interview.

²⁶¹ Norden, 108. In table 4, Norden explicates these fault lines in the Argentine army in terms of cleavages, a different way of looking at the divisions than loyalties. Norden uses the terms *vertical* and *horizontal* differently than I do, but the sense of the lines along which confrontations form and factions appear is the same.

²⁶² Raúl Alfonsín, speech, *Argentina Televisora Color Network*, April 16, 1987 (FBIS VI, April 20, 1987, B4).

²⁶³ Communiqué of Argentine Army Lieutenant Colonel Rico as reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, April 17, 1987 (FBIS VI, April 20, 1987, B4).

²⁶⁴ Brigadier General Augusto Vidal, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, August 10, 1990.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ General Arturo Alais, II Corps Commander at the time of the Semana Santa uprising, in remarks at a news conference, reported by *Telam*, April 21, 1987 (FBIS VI, April 23, 1987, B5).

²⁶⁷ Corbetta, interview.

²⁶⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Rico, remarks in court as reported in *DYN*, April 25, 1987 (FBIS VI, April 27, 1987, B1).

²⁶⁹ Interview of an anonymous Argentine Army captain by Lucia Annunziata, "A Rebel Confesses in the Campo de Mayo," *La Repubblica* (Rome), April 29, 1987, 12 (FBIS VI, May 12, 1987, B2).

²⁷⁰ Fraga, 119.

²⁷¹ David Pion-Berlin, "Between Confrontation and Accommodation: Military and Government Policy in Democratic Argentina," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23 (October 1991): 568.

²⁷² Norberto Rodríguez Bustamente, "Comentario a la ponencia de José E. Miguens," in *Defensa y democracia*, Gustavo Druetta, ed., 117.

²⁷³ Law 23,521, *Ley de obediencia debida*, 8 junio 1987, 47B ADLA 548-9.

²⁷⁴ Law 23,049, Article 11.

²⁷⁵ Raúl Alfonsín, speech to Congress, *Buenos Aires Domestic Service*, May 14, 1987 (FBIS VI, May 14, 1987, B1).

²⁷⁶ Law 23,521, Article 1.

²⁷⁷ *La Nueva Provincia* (Bahía Blanca, Argentina), as reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, May 15, 1987 (FBIS VI, May 18, 1987, B2).

²⁷⁸ Pion-Berlin, "Between Confrontation and Accommodation," 561.

²⁷⁹ Law 23,521 as amended.

²⁸⁰ Fraga, 118.

²⁸¹ Caridi, interview.

²⁸² Alfonsín, speech at Armed Forces Day Comradeship dinner, reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, July 8, 1987 (FBIS-LAT-87-131, July 9, 1987, K1).

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²⁸⁴ Brigadier Federico Alsogaray, Argentine Air Force (Ret.), speech at the *Círculo Militar*.

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²⁸⁶ Statement by Lieutenant Colonel Aldo Rico, as reported by Spanish News Service, January 15, 1988 (FBIS-LAT-88-010, January 15, 1988, 25).

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²⁸⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Luis León, Argentine Army, remarks to *La Gaceta* (San Miguel de Tucumán), January 26, 1988, as reported by *Noticias Argentinas*, January 26, 1988 (FBIS-LAT-88-017, January 27, 1988, 23).

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²⁹¹ *Buenos Aires Herald*, September 3, 1988, 11.

²⁹² Fraga, 118.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

²⁹⁴ Alfonsín, Independence Day address, July 9, 1988.

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²⁹⁶ Grecco, 43–45.

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²⁹⁹ Hugo Chumbita, *Los carapintada: historia de un malentendido argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, SAIC, 1990), 155–156.

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³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

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³⁰⁸ *Buenos Aires Herald*, August 13, 1989, 13.

³⁰⁹ *Buenos Aires Herald*, October 8, 1989, 1, 13.

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³¹¹ Grecco, 47.

³¹² *Latin America Regional Report—Southern Cone*, RS-90-01, February 8, 1990, 1.

³¹³ *Latin America Regional Report—Southern Cone*, RS-90-07, September 13, 1990, 1.

³¹⁴ Fraga, 127.

³¹⁵ Remarks of Vice President Eduardo Duhalde, as reported by *Buenos Aires Domestic Service*, October 13, 1990 (FBIS-LAT-90-206, October 24, 1990, 27).

³¹⁶ *Noticias Argentinas*, December 3, 1990 (FBIS-LAT-90-232, December 3, 1990, 43).

³¹⁷ Fraga, 133–135.

³¹⁸ *Latin America Weekly Report*, WR-91-01, January 10, 1991, 1 (FBIS-LAT-90-251, December 31, 1990, 49). Those pardoned were former junta members Jorge Videla, Eduardo Massera, Roberto Eduardo Viola, Orlando Ramón Agosti, and Armando Lambruschini; former Buenos Aires police chiefs Generals Ramón Camps and Ovidio Riccheri; former Montoneros leader Mario Firmenich; former General Carlos Suárez Mason; former Economy Minister José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz; and two civilian functionaries, Norma Kennedy and Duilio Brunello.

³¹⁹ President Carlos Menem, remarks at Armed Forces Comradeship dinner, July 6, 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-130, July 7, 1994, 29).

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Latin America Regional Report—Southern Cone*, RS-91-01, February 7, 1991, 1.

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³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Latin America Regional Report—Southern Cone*, RS-95-08, October 19, 1995, 3.

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³²⁶ Paul W. Zagorski, *Democracy vs. National Security: Civil-Military Relations in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992).

³²⁷ Felipe Aguero, “The Military and the Limits to Democratization in South America,” in *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Scott Mainwaring, J. Samuel Valenzuela, and Guillermo A. O’Donnell (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 166.

³²⁸ Pion-Berlin, “Between Confrontation and Accommodation,” 555.

³²⁹ Luis Garasino, interview with author, June 18, 1993.

³³⁰ Deimundo Piñeiro, interview with author, June 8, 1993.

³³¹ Beltrán, interview with author, June 4, 1993.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Defense Minister Oscar Camilión, remarks reported by *Buenos Aires TELAM* (FBIS-LAT-94-241, December 15, 1994, 39).

³³⁴ Rosendo Fraga, interview with author, June 18, 1993.

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³³⁶ Colonel Federico Landaburu, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, November 24, 1998.

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³⁴¹ Law 24,049 (domestic security law of the Menem administration), as reported in FBIS-LAT-92-144, July 27, 1992, 15.

³⁴² Defense Minister Antonio Erman González, *Noticias Argentinas*, September 27, 1991 (FBIS-LAT-91-189, September 30, 1991, 25).

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³⁴⁴ Lieutenant General Mario Cándido Díaz, Argentine Army (Ret.), interview with author, June 2, 1993.

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⁴⁰⁰ Deimundo Piñeiro, interview with author.

⁴⁰¹ The result of this constitutional change was that Menem served two unequal terms—one 6 years and one 4 years. In 1999, Menem expended considerable effort in seeking a second 4-year term under the new constitution. He was not able to do so.

⁴⁰² Christopher Larkins, “The Judiciary and Delegative Democracy in Argentina,” *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 4 (July 1998): 423.

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⁴⁰⁵ Law 24.059, *Ley de Seguridad Interior. Derogación del art. 13 de la ley 23.554*, January 6, 1992, 45A ADLA 71.

⁴⁰⁶ Calvin Sims, "In Argentina, a New Security Apparatus Resurrects Old Fears," *The New York Times*, International Edition, September 11, 1994, 13.

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⁴¹⁵ "Court Ruling Enables Videla To Be Under House Arrest," *Página 12*, July 17, 1998, 13 (FBIS Web site, July 17, 1998).

⁴¹⁶ "Massera, detenido en Campo de Mayo," *La Nación*, November 15, 1998, 9.

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⁴¹⁸ Daniel Santoro, *Venta de armas, hombres del gobierno* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1998), 150.

⁴¹⁹ "Further Reports on Argentine Arms in Croatia," *Clarín*, September 30, 1998 (FBIS Web site, October 10, 1998).

⁴²⁰ Santoro, 223.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 232–233.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 291.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 311–312.

⁴²⁴ "Rodríguez, Corach Refute Arms Smuggling Charges," *Buenos Aires TELAM*, July 29, 1998 (FBIS Web site, August 6, 1998).

⁴²⁵ "Death of Illegal Arms Sales Key Figure," *La Nación*, August 26, 1998 (FBIS Web site, August 27, 1998).

⁴²⁶ Santoro, 346.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁴²⁸ "Prosecutor Raids Military Quarters for Arms Sale Document," *Clarín* Web site, October 16, 1998 (FBIS Web site, October 21, 1998).

⁴²⁹ "Arrest of General in Arms Scandal Seen," *Buenos Aires Herald*, October 21, 1998, 12 (FBIS Web site, October 21, 1998).

⁴³⁰ “DiTella Position in Arms Sales Case Viewed,” *Clarín* Web site, December 29, 1998 (FBIS Web site, December 31, 1998).

⁴³¹ The terms *roles*, *missions*, and *functions* are used somewhat differently in the Argentine military than they are in the U.S. military. *Role* generally indicates the purpose of an institution in the United States, whereas in Argentina, this is commonly identified as *mission*. *Function* in the United States is what a service or unit does based on *role* or *roles*, and *mission* is a specific tasking. Both *role* and *mission* are subsumed by *function* in Argentina.

⁴³² Felix Roberto Aguiar and Carlos Jorge Maria Martínez, “Normas constitucionales y legales de la defensa nacional,” in *Primeras jornadas sobre defensa nacional* (Buenos Aires: Circulo Militar, 1997), 134.

⁴³³ *Soldados*, November 1997, 2.

⁴³⁴ *Soldados*, October 1998, 3.

⁴³⁵ Institute for National Strategic Studies, *Strategic Assessment 1998: Engaging Power for Peace* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1998), 114.

⁴³⁶ *Latin America Regional Report—Southern Cone*, RS-97-06, June 29, 1997, 1.

⁴³⁷ Barbara Starr, “Argentine, Chilean Navies Hope to Build Trust Through Joint Naval Exercises,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, May 13, 1998, 6.

⁴³⁸ FBIS-LAT-98-154, June 3, 1998, Web site.

⁴³⁹ FBIS-LAT-98-222, August 10, 1998, Web site.

⁴⁴⁰ “Argentine-Chilean Joint Exercises Held,” FBIS Web site, March 15, 1999.

⁴⁴¹ “South Atlantic Joint Exercises Held,” *La Nación*, May 8, 1999 (FBIS Web site, May 9, 1999).

⁴⁴² Ariel Palacias, “Argentine General Proposes Unified MERCOSUR Defense System,” *O Estado do Sao Paulo*, April 15, 1998 (FBIS-LAT-98-111, April 21, 1998).

⁴⁴³ “Zabala Promotes Joint Defense System in Southern Cone,” *Buenos Aires TELAM* (FBIS-LAT-98-154, June 3, 1998).

⁴⁴⁴ “Enfoque Común Mercosur para Defensa y Seguridad,” *El Mercurio* (Chile) Web site, July 16, 1998.

⁴⁴⁵ Fraga, 262.

⁴⁴⁶ República Argentina, Ministerio de Defensa, *Libro Blanco de la Defense Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Servicio de Hidrografia Naval de la Armada Argentina, 1999), 22–206.

⁴⁴⁷ Mauro, interview with author.

⁴⁴⁸ Bossi, interview with author.

⁴⁴⁹ *Libro Blanco*, 24–220. The only country lower in South America is Guyana. Venezuela is slightly higher (1.2). Chile is shown as 3.5, Brazil as 2.1.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 24–217, 8.

⁴⁵¹ Circulo Militar, Biblioteca de Oficial, no. 770, *Primeras Jornadas sobre Defensa Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Circulo Militar, 1997).

⁴⁵² Law 24.848, ADLA 53-B, 1557.

⁴⁵³ José C. d’Ororico, “Argentina’s Military Reorganization,” *Armed Forces Journal International* 135, no. 12 (July 1998): 18–19.

⁴⁵⁴ *Libro Blanco*, 8–70.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ “Defense Minister on Armed Forces Transformation,” *Clarín*, January 19, 1999 (FBIS Web site, January 20, 1999).

⁴⁵⁷ Juan Castro Olvera, “Military Property Sales Discussed,” *La Nación*, March 20, 1999 (FBIS Web site, March 21, 1999).

⁴⁵⁸ Senator Antonio Berhongaray, Argentine National Legislature, interview with author, March 1999.

⁴⁵⁹ “Defense Minister on Armed Forces Restructuring,” *Buenos Aires TELAM*, June 29, 1999 (FBIS Web site, June 29, 1999).

⁴⁶⁰ “New Defense Strategy, Priorities on the Stocks,” *La Nación*, September 3, 1999 (FBIS Web site, September 3, 1999).

⁴⁶¹ “Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Vows to Defend Argentina’s Democratic Rule,” *Buenos Aires TELAM*, March 12, 2002 (FBIS Web site, March 13, 2002).

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- Bossi, Ernesto Juan. Brigadier general, Argentine Army. Secretary General of the Argentine Army.
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- Deimundo Piñeiro, Antonio José. Brigadier general, Argentine Army (Ret.). Chief of the Argentine Army Strategic Institute (1990). President, Infantry Commission, Argentine Army (1993).
- Díaz, Mario Cándido. Lieutenant general, Argentine Army. Chief of the Armed Forces Joint Staff.

Note: Descriptions reflect status at time of interview, unless otherwise noted.

- Estévez, Diego. Director General of International Financial Relations and Secretary of Housing and Finance, Municipality of the City of Buenos Aires. Former Secretary of Planning, Ministry of Defense.
- Fernández Torres, Julio. Lieutenant general, Argentine Army (Ret.). Former Chief of the Armed Forces Joint Staff.
- Flores, Leopoldo. Major general, Argentine Army (Ret.). Former Chief of Army Operations and Former Commander, III Corps, Argentine Army.
- Fontana, Andrés. Fellow, Center for the Study of State and Society, and Defense Matters advisor to Radical Party (1990). Fellow of the Simón Rodríguez Institute and Special Assistant to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for National Security Affairs (1993).
- Fraga, Rosendo. Executive Director, Center of Studies “Union for the New Majority” (1998).
- Garasino, Luis. Editor, *Clarín* newspaper. Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, University of Buenos Aires.
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- García, Jorge Fernando. Rear admiral, Argentine Navy. Secretary General of the Navy General Staff.
- Gassino, Francisco. Major general, Argentine Army (Ret.). Former Army Chief of Staff.
- Giadone, Dante. President, Arturo Illia Foundation for Democracy and Peace. Aide to former President Raúl Alfonsín.
- Hakopian, Andre. Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army. Assistant Army Attaché, United States Embassy, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
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From the Foreword to

Argentine Civil-Military Relations: From Alfonsín to Menem

This book is an important contribution to the much-needed institutional analysis of the evolution of democratic governance in Argentina. Huser uses the constructs of political culture, organization of the state, and political economy as the pillars of his analytical framework, especially emphasizing political culture to explain Argentina's difficulty in coming to grips with the civil-military problematique. Further analyses of the workings of the institutional underpinnings of successful governance and functional civil-military relations are needed in Argentina and many other countries of Latin America, where, after more than a decade of reforms, civilian leadership is often the absent element in the civil-military equation.

—Margaret Daly Hayes
Director, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies

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