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# Defense Organization and Civil–Military Relations in Latin America

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This study examines how defense institutions and personnel are formally organized in Latin America. In a region long plagued by praetorian armies, it is especially important that organizational designs ensure that civilians maintain institutional control over armed forces. For this to occur, it is argued that those designs must incorporate certain principles: (a) enhance the civilian presence in key defense institutions, (b) empower defense ministries, (c) lower the military's vertical authority along the chain of command, and (d) unify civilian power while dividing military power. Based on an examination of legal documents and other data for sixteen Latin American democracies, findings show three general organizational patterns: an ideal–typical defense structure that achieves all four objectives, a second best defense structure that still leaves too much military power unified, and a dual command structure that is least desirable for weakening the defense ministry while coalescing military might high up the ladder of influence.

**Keywords:** *military; defense organization; chain of command; defense ministry; civil–military relations*

This study examines the organization of defense institutions in Latin America and its implications for civil–military relations. If the armed forces are going to serve as the coercive arm of the state, if they are to execute the defense policies of governments, then those governments must have formal rules, channels, and mechanisms by which they convey their policy preferences to their military subordinates. All Latin American countries have defense organizational schemes, but too little is known about them. At a time when scholars are placing so many other aspects of the state under closer scrutiny—management of the economy, electoral engineering, judicial reform, democratic accountability and representation, to name a few—much less attention has been paid to defense.

In a region where the armed forces used to exert a heavy political influence, there has been a concerted effort in recent decades to lower the military's political profile

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and redirect its attention toward security- and defense-related missions that fulfill the policy objectives of democratic governments. Those governments know that if their militaries are to faithfully execute policy, they must be subjected to institutionalized civilian control.<sup>1</sup> That civilian control is needed to restrain the military's political reach and strengthen democratic rule is a claim that is not specific to Latin America, has been widely accepted, and has in fact been built into the very definition of democracy itself. In an influential article, Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl expanded on Robert Dahls's classic democratic procedural conditions to include the provision that elected officials must be able to govern without interference or overrides from military officers. Democracies that fail to fulfill this condition are placed in jeopardy.<sup>2</sup> Other scholars have since reaffirmed these and similar propositions.<sup>3</sup>

It is also recognized that if civilian control is to endure, it must be institutionalized.<sup>4</sup> It is not enough to exert short-term leverage over the military to gain some temporary advantage. Governments need a longer-term, structured relation that induces stable, supportive encounters between political officials and military personnel. For this, they need a set of strong, well-staffed, civilian-led organizations to devise, advise, and manage defense policies as well as to exert oversight on military operations.

If these are the objectives, most countries have fallen short, and yet each has for better or worse designed a set of organizational relations that shape the interactions between politicians and soldiers. Investigating these contact points is important because it gives us a window into a central component of the larger civil-military relation. It is here where we can evaluate how well, if at all, governments have empowered civilian-led defense agencies to subordinate the military to their control while allowing uniformed experts to inform defense-relevant policy decisions.

The challenge is to determine what a beneficial organizational design would look like. Based on a survey of scholarship in this area as well as empirical research into numerous Latin American country cases, this article identifies four guides for constructing a desirable defense sector: enhancing the civilian presence, empowering defense ministries, lowering military vertical authority, and dividing military power. Each of these principles reveals an important dimension to organizational design. Combined, these constitute elements of an ideal-typical defense structure that might serve as a tool for assessing how well Latin American countries have designed their defense sphere with a view toward enhancing civilian supremacy.

The article begins with a justification for studying defense organizations to improve our grasp of civil-military affairs and civilian control. Then, the four guiding principles are explained, and an ideal-typical defense structure is proposed. Alternative defense structures that fall short of the preferred model are also depicted, and throughout references are made to specific countries and how closely their defense sectors approximate the idealized structures.

## **Defense Organization, Civilian–Military Relations, and Civilian Control**

Defense organizations in and around the chain of command and the interactions that occur there constitute the micro foundations for civil–military relations.<sup>5</sup> It is along this organizational ladder of influence that political overseers and soldiers interface on a daily basis. These are the densest points of contact between military and civilian personnel. Nowhere else in or outside of the state do so many actors from the two sides meet and work together (or collide) on a regular basis. Consequently, relations between civilians and soldiers are most frequent and most intense at this location. “Indeed,” writes Martin Edmonds, “within the central organizations of defense of all states is found the very essence of civil–military relations within any society. . . . It is that locus where the armed forces . . . meet and work with the political representatives.”<sup>6</sup> It is that forum within which the design, management, and execution of defense policies take place. Civil–military relations are certainly larger than that, and interactions occur at other sites. But one would be hard pressed to deny the singular importance of the relations that unfold within the defense institutions.

Defense organizations are not just the locus of civil–military activity; they are the instruments by which civilian control over the military can be achieved. Civilian control is about power, but institutions structure power relations. Thomas Bruneau and Richard Goetze, Jr. note that one of the primary purposes of defense ministries is to “structure the power relationships between democratically elected civilian leaders and the armed forces command” and also to rationally allocate duties between civilian and military officers.<sup>7</sup> Defense ministries are not the only organizations in the defense sphere, and the role of others and the relations between them must be considered.

Civilians can always “seize the moment,” acting strategically to gain the upper hand over the military when the opportune context emerges. But they cannot consolidate that gain for the long term unless they can convert influence into a more institutionalized arrangement. Institutions have a tendency to persist, and if they can be arranged to maximize civilian leadership, authority, input, and oversight, then control can be achieved for the long haul. If there is to be a civilian advantage, it is more likely to be institutionalized through defense organizations.

The organizations within defense orbit achieve that goal by creating “procedural advantages and impediments for translating political power into concrete policies.”<sup>8</sup> They direct flows of influence, erect barriers of entry, and impose bureaucratic distance between the military and centers of political power, thus determining who is “in or out of the loop.” Procedures can alter the direction of influence in a manner conducive to civilian control. They determine who will actually deliberate over policy to ensure that the net flow of influence is from the center of a civilian-led agency outward. Some organizational designs can keep harmful military influences at bay while allowing civilian leaders to craft the policies they desire. A certain amount of autonomy from military pressures is desirable, and organizations can achieve that by

reducing points of entry, limiting veto options, and placing bureaucratic distance between political elites and military units. At the same time, policy makers need to keep advisory channels open to allow for military input that is well informed and supportive of civilian goals. In short, civilian leaders want organizational designs that open up avenues of military communication, not political domination.

Of course, reading an organizational chart reveals only the formal state-centered components of the civil–military interaction. In Latin America, and in most regions for that matter, soldiers and civilians have exploited less formal avenues of influence. Gregory Weeks demonstrates for Chile and several other Latin American countries that the defense ministry is often circumvented as a point of contact, with military officers favoring liaisons at unauthorized sites.<sup>9</sup> Civilian leaders themselves may want to circumvent the organizational chart, knowing that sometimes it is easier to skirt the rules and regulations than it is to change them.<sup>10</sup>

Even within the boundaries of the state’s defense sphere, unofficial civil–military interactions can occur. Having said that, there is a relation between formal rules and informal practices, with the key point being that official rules themselves exert influence on unofficial relations. Institutional arrangements can create higher hurdles for informality because they can increase the decision-making distance between civilians and military subordinates.<sup>11</sup> Where that distance is considerable, soldiers would have to contemplate a more drastic breach of protocol to gain access to the central chambers of political power. Likewise, such organizational distance can impose greater difficulties on presidents who would be tempted to circumvent their defense ministers. Naturally, a very determined military organization could catapult over any institutional wall to make its way to the top. Like all deterrents, organizational rules can never *guarantee* protection from incursion but simply make it more *costly*.<sup>12</sup> Hence, it is this author’s contention that defense organization matters and that, notwithstanding informal liaisons between politicians and soldiers, most civil–military interactions are influenced by the formal organization of defense power.

### **Designing Institutional Arrangements for Civilian Control: Some Guiding Principles**

Figuring out the best way to organize defense institutions is essential to managing military affairs. Just as political scientists have long studied the design of democratic institutions to induce greater competition, participation, representation, and accountability, so too civil–military experts must devote equal attention to the design of defense organizations if there is to be enhanced civilian control.<sup>13</sup> But what would make for a more desirable defense organization? What principles of design should be followed?

There are some clues that derive from the U.S. experience. Samuel Huntington devoted a chapter to this theme in his book, *The Soldier and the State*.<sup>14</sup> His formulation paid attention to key aspects of organizational design that should pertain to most civil–military relations: lowering the level of and reducing the scope of the

military's authority; placing vital strategic policy matters in the hands of the top civilian; creating institutional strength, unity of purpose, and perspective within the office; and ensuring that the secretary of defense continues to receive a blend of well-informed military and civilian advice. Other more comparative volumes that include chapters on Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Israel, and Canada have evoked similar themes while revealing variations in institutional designs across countries.<sup>15</sup> Felipe Agüero's study of post-Franco Spain nicely details the series of reforms undertaken in that nation that heeded similar principles of civil–military organizational design: downgrading the status and prerogatives of the military chiefs, putting command and control in the hands of civilians, transferring powers to formulate defense strategies and policies from the military to the defense minister, and centralizing and unifying the major defense agencies—in short, creating a “potent ministry and a powerful minister.”<sup>16</sup>

Undoubtedly, caution must be taken in exporting first-world examples wholesale to other regions. Christopher Jones and Natalie Mychajlyszyn have noted the difficulties in applying standards from the democratic West to transitional states in Eastern Europe that lack developed cultures of democratic civil–military relations.<sup>17</sup> A similar observation must be made for Latin America, where there are weaker traditions of democracy, a dearth of career opportunities in defense for civilian personnel, very limited resources, and more politically minded armies. Many of these countries are still coping with what Cottey, Edmunds, and Forster refer to as first-generational civil–military reforms: strengthening executive institutions to politically subordinate the military.<sup>18</sup> Yet if there is a tie that binds these systems together from different regions it is the challenge to consolidate beneficial, asymmetric power relations between governments and militaries. In a region historically plagued by politically ambitious militaries that have all too frequently usurped power, governments need institutional arrangements that establish their authority over their armed services even as they encourage their expert advice and strive to enhance their effectiveness.

With this in mind, let us consider some guiding principles on which the defense sphere would be constructed. I have derived these principles based on a review of scholarly analysis (including those mentioned above) and empirical cases principally from Latin America and Spain, with occasional references to the United States. The Spanish case is important because Latin American defense officials absorbed some valuable lessons from watching successful reform efforts unfold there. The U.S. example is referenced to emphasize that these principles have currency even in the most advanced democratic defense system in the world. With that in mind, the following principles are suggested, substantiated by scholarship and empirical evidence.

### **Enhancing the Civilian Presence**

Any organizational scheme that does not enhance the position and control of democratically elected officials and their civilian appointees has failed at one of its principal tasks.<sup>19</sup> This concretely means having a civilian elected president and

nonuniformed personnel in key leadership positions along the chain of command and within advisory and oversight relations as well. The purpose of defense institutions is to prepare the armed forces to serve the policy goals of government, and not the other way around. Should military officers, either active duty or retired, occupy top positions within the defense sector, they inevitably exhibit divided loyalties. While they are sworn to serve the constitutionally elected government, they are too easily tempted to betray that oath by obliging the institution they had been a part of for so many years. Civilianized institutions and leaders must be in place to ensure that policy preferences get translated into defense actions and to stand vigilant against military efforts to evade their duties.<sup>20</sup> All this implies having a critical mass of well-trained civilian personnel within defense institutions.

Huntington observed long ago that the hiring of a civilian secretary of defense and staff—equipped to set overall policy and strategy—was key to civilian control in the United States. To this day, there is concern among U.S. scholars that civilians increasingly come to their defense posts without sufficient depth of experience.<sup>21</sup> Latin American scholars are unanimous in their view that a greater number of civilians must be appointed as defense ministers, support staff, and advisors.<sup>22</sup> The “civilianization” of the defense sector has proven critical in a number of successful reform efforts still underway in Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Brazil. The increased proportion of civilians occupying key posts within the defense ministry during the reform period in Spain was vital to establishing civilian supremacy there.<sup>23</sup>

### **Empowering the Defense Ministry**

The ministry of defense (MOD) is, according to Bruneau and Goetze, “perhaps the most indispensable mechanism for establishing [civilian control].”<sup>24</sup> Many scholars would concur with this.<sup>25</sup> The MOD is the organizational link between the democratic government and the military that allows politicians to translate policy preferences into military commands. It is important that the ministry assumes key defense-related powers in defense and not relegate these to the military commanders. These include major responsibility for organizing defense forces and preparing defense objectives, plans, strategies, and even doctrines. This has not always been true in Latin America, where many countries consign the MOD to administrative tasks, leaving key strategic and operational decisions in the hands of the president and the military brass.<sup>26</sup> In sidestepping the defense ministry in this way, countries excessively defer to military judgments on politically decisive issues.

J. Samuel Fitch has written that institutionalizing democratic civilian control in Latin America requires a framework that must include the proper organization and staffing of a civilian-led defense ministry.<sup>27</sup> Analysts of Brazil concur that the founding of that nation’s first defense ministry in 1999 was critical to more rationally distributing resources and power between the three services.<sup>28</sup> In Argentina, the historic 1988 Law of National Defense empowered the defense ministry to assume all

defense functions not already reserved for the president.<sup>29</sup> That was widely considered to have been instrumental in fortifying civilian control there. The strengthening of the defense ministry was also important for the tremendous success of the Spanish defense reforms in the early 1980s.<sup>30</sup> Still, most Latin American countries have a ways to go before their defense ministries can perform competently. In a recent major multinational study on the Latin American security sector, the Social Science Faculty of Latin America (FLACSO) points out that too many MODs act solely as bureaucratic-administrative units, bereft of powers to define, plan, and coordinate defense policies. The study says it is essential that the MOD be authorized to plan strategically since that is a crucial step before ordering the military out on missions.<sup>31</sup>

### **Lowering Military Vertical Command Authority**

It is important to create organizational distance between military personnel and civilians who are at the pinnacles of political power.<sup>32</sup> That means ensuring that the military units in the line of authority be placed on lower rungs of the ladder, separated from the president by civilian-run defense organizations. The farther up the chain the military is situated, the more likely it will weigh in on key national policy matters when it should instead be more appropriately relegated to operational tasks. If its vertical position is second only to the sovereign head of state, it will have privileged access and therefore tremendous political power. It may crowd out the civilian point of view, pressuring presidential decisions in a direction that is all too self-serving for the military institution. A military unit with high vertical authority can more easily deprive the president of feedback from below needed to properly gauge military compliance with his or her policies.

There is ample evidence that too much vertical authority has been detrimental to civil-military relations and that lowering that authority has been beneficial. Douglas Porch has commented on the dangers of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's preference for directly summoning his top commanders. In doing so, he has bypassed and thus weakened the defense ministry, undermined the chain of command, and hindered efforts to strengthen the institutional relations of defense.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the Colombian president's view on the conduct of the counterinsurgency war has almost entirely been molded by his top generals, not by civilian advisors. By contrast, Brazil benefited from its 1999 reforms that stripped generals of their ministerial ranks, downgraded them to chiefs of staff, and shifted power over to a civilian-run defense ministry. In Argentina, President Alfonsín (1983-1989) downgraded the heads of each service from commanders to chiefs of staff, forcing them to answer to the Defense Ministry and relegating them to mainly administrative functions within their services. This was a key to reasserting civilian control.<sup>34</sup> In Chile, the Pinochet constitution of 1980 granted the military the power to unilaterally convene the National Security Council (NSC)—on which it held half the seats—and use that power to directly challenge the president's policies at the highest level. Thus, in



November 2004, The Chilean congress turned the NSC into a purely advisory body, permitting only the president to call it into session and helping to alter the balance of power in favor of civilians. In Spain, senior military officers held ministerial status as heads of their respective branches before the founding of the Defense Ministry in 1977. But the Chiefs of Staff initially benefited from the dismantling of separate service ministries because they resided just below the president in the line of authority, with direct command over all military forces. Democratic defense reformers understood the potential hazard and in 1984 downgraded the chiefs to advisors of the defense minister—not the premier.<sup>35</sup>

### **Keeping Military Power Divided**

An age-old principle of political control is for the leader to concentrate his or her own power and divide all that power he or she does not enjoy himself or herself. That principle has meaning within executive civil–military relations as well. The president and his or her civilian defense minister and staff need to be of one mind regarding defense policy and be able to convey ideas, principles, and policy guidance in unison. But it is also in their interests to limit the ability of the military to coalesce within the chain of command. Dividing military power generates leverage for civilians by deterring military intervention and inducing the service branches to balance and monitor each other as they compete for resources and attention. Once so divided, each service is motivated to cut a better deal for itself through enhanced cooperation with the civilian government.

By contrast, too centralized a military power structure often suppresses dissenting views within the staff, depriving the president and his or her defense minister of a richer menu of options.<sup>36</sup> While civilian policy makers could arguably profit from the receipt of unified military advice that rises above service parochialism, such counsel is best received from the sidelines, not along the chain of command. The problem in situating these units within the chain is that, while in theory they should faithfully comply with presidential wishes, they may not always. A persuasive general staff is in a position to shape the very orders it receives.<sup>37</sup> In this way it is projecting its own self-serving power both upward and downward. At its worst, it can defy presidential will and then command subordinates along the chain to embrace that defiance.<sup>38</sup> For a third-world nation in particular, one struggling to subordinate the military and earn its respect, a unified military presence is intimidating. A civilian president or defense minister who has doubts about the wisdom of a military argument may be more reluctant to counter it if he or she faced a unified, top-level agency whose members were firmly aligned on most issues. Democracies of this sort are better off keeping military power divided until they are sufficiently equipped to confidently relate to a unified military institution.<sup>39</sup>

In his study of Venezuela, Harold Trinkunas notes that divided military power afforded civilians a key opportunity to increase their leverage, beginning with the

first postauthoritarian administration of Rómulo Betancourt (1959–1964).<sup>40</sup> The Venezuelan services were prone to conflicts over resources, roles, and missions. In the absence of a general staff, it fell on the president to act as arbiter to resolve these disputes. President Betancourt and his successors were only too happy to fill that role because it made the rival services dependent on them, which in turn dissuaded military conspiracies. Peter Feaver argues in the U.S. case that interservice rivalry deters potential coups and plays into the hands of a Congress wishing to assert its control via information asymmetries.<sup>41</sup> Defense reorganization under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 did strengthen the Joint Chief of Staff Chair's advisory status but deprived the chair and the Joint Staff of operational command.<sup>42</sup>

Conversely, the dangers of unified military power within the chain of command have been regularly apparent in Ecuador, where the Military Joint Command has often deliberated in secret to take measures against the constitutional president, with the rank and file falling in line. That occurred prior to the civil–military coup against President Jaime Mahuad in January 2000 and again in April 2005, where in the face of massive street protests the military top brass refused to enforce President Lucio Gutierrez' state of emergency decree. That fatally undermined his power, facilitating a congressional vote to remove him from office.<sup>43</sup>

## **Ideal Typical Defense Organization**

Table 1 summarizes the conceptual stage of the research. The guiding principles are listed in column 2, and scholarly references for each of the principles that were mentioned or cited in the text above are listed in column 3. The principles are operationalized with the use of empirical indicators as mentioned in column 4, with research methods listed in column 5.

These principles could quite naturally suggest any number of actual organizational features and designs. Because the components of a defense sector are quite varied, so too could be the bureaucratic relations between them. Within a presidential political system, a typical defense sector would include the president, a national security or defense council, a defense ministry, a military joint staff or general staff, a joint chiefs of staff, service chiefs and their service branches, and so forth.<sup>44</sup> Then there would be several potential kinds of relations among these, including operational commands, administrative commands, and advisory relations. Theoretically, one could design several kinds of defense structures that would tie these units together in a way that would fulfill the guiding principles.

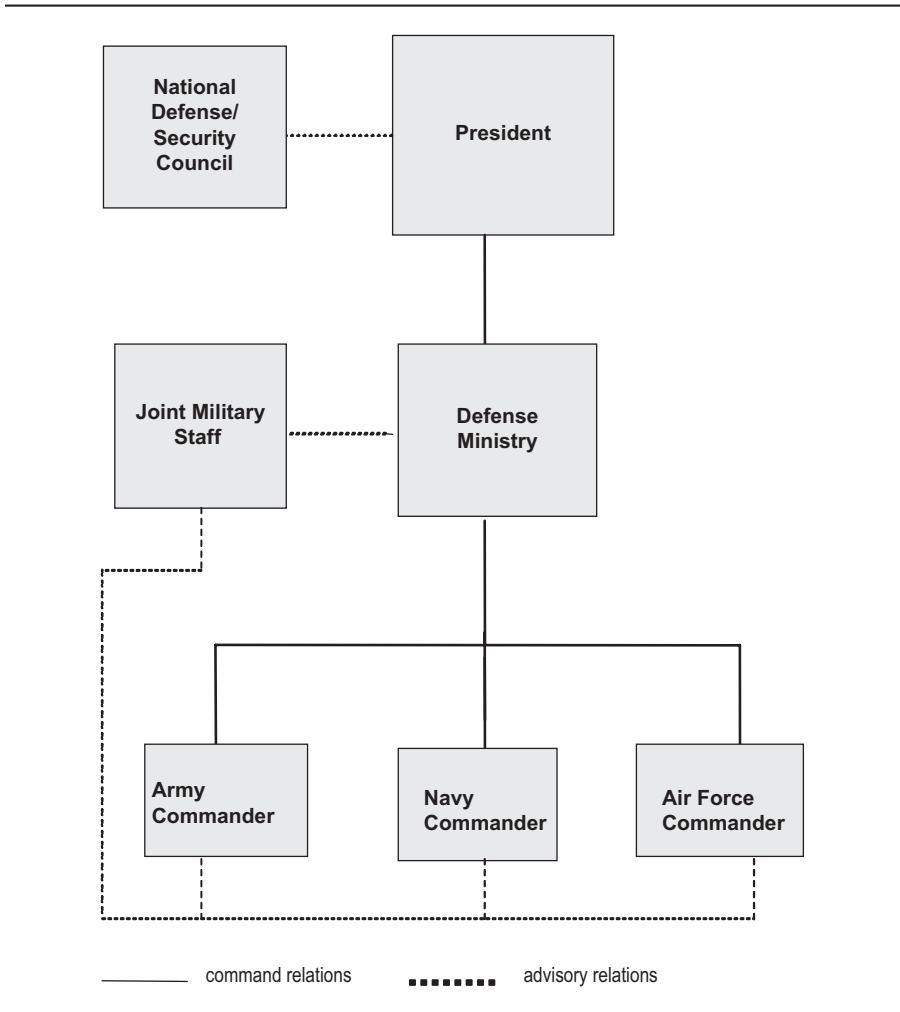
Thus, I am *not* advocating a universal, “one-size-fits-all” defense schema but rather suggesting a structure that might have relevance for Latin America, based on principles, scholarship, and an extensive documentary analysis of states from that region. These principles serve as dimensions within an ideal-typical defense construct I have named a “preferred defense organization” (Table 1). Such an ideal type

**Table 1**  
**Defense Organization as a Practical Ideal Type**

Practical Ideal Type	Ideal Type Dimension	Sources	Indicators	Method
Preferred defense organization	Civilian presence enhanced	Huntington, <i>The Soldier and the State</i> ; Agüero, <i>Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy</i> ; Bruneau and Goetze, "Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control"; Weeks, <i>The Military and Politics</i> ; Gibson and Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations"	Civilian defense ministers and staff; National Security Council or National Defense Council civilian membership	Document analysis
	Defense ministry empowered	Trinkunas, <i>Crafting Civilian Control</i> ; Pion-Berlin, <i>Through Corridors of Power</i> ; Agüero, <i>Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy</i> ; Weeks, <i>The Military and Politics</i> ; Rial and Barrachina, "Los Ministerios de Defensa"	Ministry of defense in chain of operational command; charged with key defense planning, strategizing	Document analysis
	Military vertical authority lowered	Huntington, <i>The Soldier and the State</i> ; Agüero, <i>Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy</i> ; Porch, "Preserving Autonomy in Conflict"	Downgrade military stature; military units placed at lower end of chain	Document analysis
	Military power divided	Trinkunas, <i>Crafting Civilian Control</i> ; Lederman, <i>Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff</i> ; Feaver, <i>Armed Servants</i>	Civilian commands sent directly to separate service branches	Document analysis

is, like any, an abstraction, but it is also a synthesis of many individual phenomena that goes beyond them and does not correspond to any one of them. It is, as Max Weber put it, a "unified analytical construct" against which specific phenomenon

**Figure 1**  
**Preferred Defense Structure**



can be observed, analyzed, and assessed.<sup>45</sup> As a practical tool, the defense organization ideal type is used as a model to evaluate how well Latin American countries have designed their defense sphere with a view toward enhancing civilian control.<sup>46</sup> The ideal-typical schema is graphically depicted in Figure 1 and is explained below.

My first task was to review all of the defense sector arrangements in Latin America, keeping the four principles front and center as instruments for assessing

the defense structures we encountered. The method chosen was one of documentary analysis. Here, I examined constitutions, military-, ministry-, and security-related laws, and available “White Books on Defense”<sup>47</sup> for each of the sixteen Latin American democracies that have military forces.<sup>48</sup> I asked, what Latin American defense arrangements seem to best fulfill the principles enumerated above? What arrangements fall short?

There are two components to this analysis. The first is a personnel assessment that relates to the first guiding principle. It asks, what is the civilian presence within relevant defense organizations? The second is an institutional design component. It asks, what are the relations between the various defense-related actors and agencies, and are these conducive to fulfilling the remaining three principles of sound defense organization? The personnel and institutional design dimensions combined constitute the essential elements of the preferred defense organizational schema.

Turning to the issue of personnel, I wanted to know whether the defense ministries in Latin America have been headed by a civilian or military officer (active duty or retired) during the period of democratic rule. As shown in Table 2, on average, 59 percent of the ministers heading up the MOD from 1990 to 2006 were civilian. However, there were more military commanders serving as head of MOD during the latter three years (2004–2006) than during the previous three (2001–2003). And for seven of these countries, military officers occupied the top ministerial post more than half of the time. Clearly, there have been and continue to be enough military officers heading up defense ministries in Latin America to be cause for concern. Without a steady presence of politically appointed civilian defense ministers, it is hard for governments to claim they are adequately exerting civilian control over the defense sector. Nonetheless, and as shown in Table 2, four Latin American countries civilianized the top post of the ministry during this time period: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Nicaragua. In addition, Brazil has done so since the creation of its MOD in 1999. Other countries with long and unbroken records of MOD civilian leadership are Colombia (since 1992) and Paraguay (since 1994).

Civilian defense ministers are handicapped if they do not have a well-trained civilian advisory staff at their disposal. Defense ministers are usually political appointees who often come to the job without academic or on-the-job training in defense. Hence, they must rely on staff who can assist them in devising and implementing defense policies. Moreover, if they are to be effective, civilian staffs must be built-in features of the ministry, not make-shift teams assembled for the benefit of one minister but not the next. Permanence allows for institutional memory and the accumulation of defense wisdom over the long term. Based on an exhaustive study prepared by FLACSO of fourteen of our sixteen countries shown in Table 3 (minus Venezuela and Paraguay), the data show that nine of the fourteen countries (57 percent) have a permanent advisory staff, but only 43 percent have a permanent *civilian* advisory staff, while 5 nations (36 percent) have no staff support at all. Countries with a permanent civilian staff are Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru.

**Table 2**  
**Latin American Ministers of Defense: Military (M) or Civilian (C), 1990–2006**

Country	Year																	Percentage of Civilians for Each Country	
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006		
Argentina	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	17	100
Brazil	M/M/M	M/M/M	M/M/M	M/M/M	M/M/M	C/C	C/C	C/C	C/C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	12	71
Chile	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	17	100
Dominican Republic	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	M	M	4	24
Peru	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	7	41
Uruguay	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	17	100
Venezuela	M	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	M	C	C	C	M	M	M	9	53
Mexico	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	M/M	0	0
Bolivia	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	M	M	C	M	C	C	14	82
Columbia	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	15	88
Ecuador	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	M	M	M	7	41
Honduras	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	8	47
Nicaragua	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	17	100
Paraguay	M	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	13	76
El Salvador	C	M	M	C	C	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	3	18
Guatemala	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	M	M	M	1	6
Number of Civilians Each Year	6	5	6	7	9	9	9	10	11	11	10	12	12	14	10	10	10	161	
Percentage of Civilians Each Year	38	31	38	44	56	56	63	63	69	69	63	75	75	88	63	63	63	59	

Source: The Statesman's Yearbook, volumes 129-143, 1991-2007.

Note: Mexico is split between Defense and Naval Affairs. In Nicaragua, the president was also Minister of Defense until 1996. In Brazil, there were three cabinet-level positions between 1990 and 1994 (Air Force, Navy, Armed Forces); between 1995 and 1998, there were two (Navy and Army).

**Table 3**  
**Civilian Staff in Defense Ministries, 2006**

Country	Permanent Staff	Civilian Staff	Military Staff
Argentina	√	√	
Bolivia	√	√	√
Brazil	√	√	√
Chile		√	√
Colombia			
Dominican Republic	√		√
Ecuador	√	√	√
El Salvador	√		√
Guatemala			
Honduras			
Mexico			
Nicaragua			
Peru	√	√	√
Uruguay	√		√
Column totals (%)	57	43	57

Source: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), *Reporte del Sector Seguridad en America Latina y el Caribe* (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO, 2007), 44.

Note: Unchecked spaces mean no staff present.

With the exception of Argentina, these countries also have permanent military MOD staffs as well.

National Security and Defense Councils tend to have a better representation of civilians composed of cabinet officials and defense committee presidents from the legislative branch.<sup>49</sup> Civilians outnumber officers, and Bolivia and Chile are the only countries I have been able to identify where military representation on a security council has been equal to that of civilians. In no case do officers outnumber civilian personnel. But it is generally true that civilians who serve are not well informed. With the exception of defense and the interior, most cabinet members do not have security knowledge, nor do they come to meetings with specially trained security staff at their disposal. For these reasons, many presidents underutilize such councils, but more empirical research would be needed to establish the frequency with which these advisory organs are actually convened.

Turning to organizational design in the defense sphere in and around the chains of command, the ideal-typical defense structure is shown in Figure 1. It embodies a straight, vertical line of authority from the president, to a civilian defense minister, to the heads of each service branch.<sup>50</sup> There are national defense or security councils to advise the president and usually some kind of military general staff that services the defense ministry and is not in the line of authority.

It legally empowers the MOD to assume the full slate of defense-related responsibilities: strategic, operational, administrative, fiscal, and so on and to issue commands

of a strategic and operational nature to military subordinates. This design also creates organizational distance between military units and the elected head of state, forcing service chiefs to route their appeals through the civilian-led MOD; and it divides military power by making each separate service branch directly dependent on the MOD.

Countries that *approximate* this ideal type are Chile, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Peru. Several caveats should be expressed. Chile is a work in progress, with pending legislation that could alter its defense structure. For now, it departs slightly from the ideal type by having two different security councils, and in addition to the more common defense general staff which advises the defense ministry, it also has a junta of military commanders that does the same.<sup>51</sup> The Dominican Republic has this relational structure, but three fourths of its defense ministers have been military officers, thus defeating one of the principles of civilian control (see Table 2). Uruguay meanwhile exhibits optimal relational features, but its ministry has no civilian support staff, and ministerial personnel are officers “on loan” from the services.<sup>52</sup> And finally, a variation on this structure is represented in Peru, which has all its features, except that an NSC is lodged between the president and the MOD. That NSC is composed of nine members, eight of whom are civilians.<sup>53</sup> Thus, this design maintains a unified civilian presence at the top of the chain.

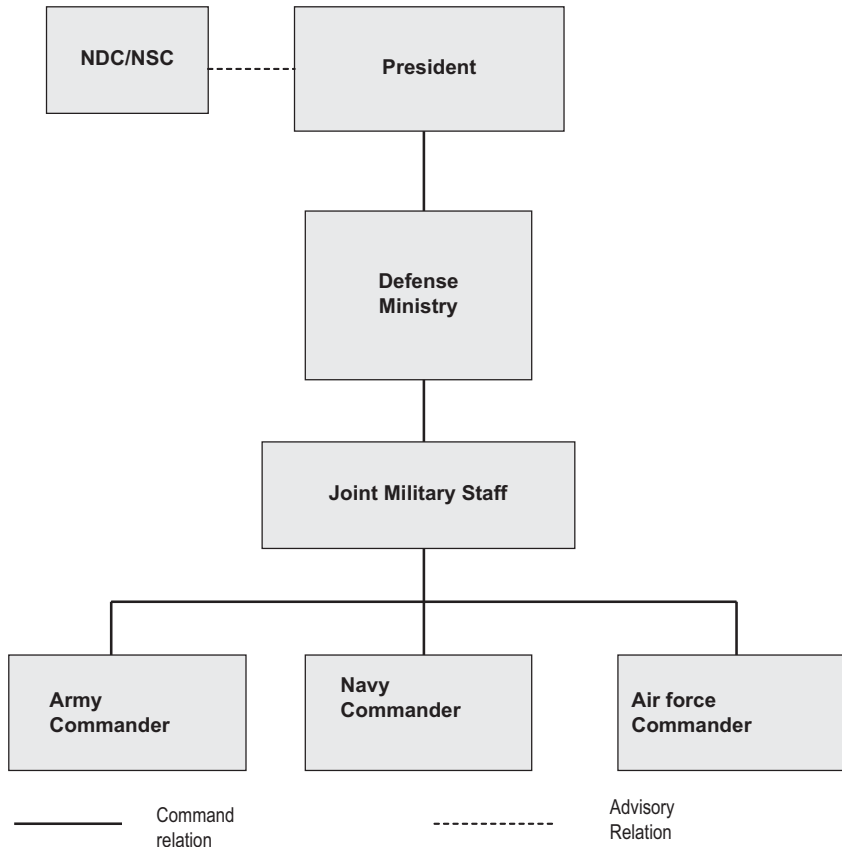
## Other Defense Structures

The ideal type defense structure depicted above can then be contrasted with two other defense structures found in Latin America (see below). These too are abstractions and composites but ones that demonstrate organizational flaws based on the guiding principles. A second best defense structure shown in Figure 2 reveals an additional layer of unified military power spliced between the defense ministry and the separate service forces. While this military organization is situated on a lower rung of the ladder and may very well assist in engineering interforce cooperation and combat, it also violates the rule of divided military power.<sup>54</sup> In other respects, however, this organizational design is commendable for the reasons given above. Countries estimated by this model are Argentina, El Salvador, and Guatemala, though only Argentina’s defense ministry has been consistently headed up by civilians and supported by a civilian staff. This is an important difference since the Argentine government has the assurance that political directives handed down from the president are translated into defense plans by a civilian dominant team at MOD before being sent down the line to the chief of the Joint Military Staff. By contrast, El Salvador and particularly Guatemala have defense ministries overrun by military personnel from the top down.

The third model is what I conceptualize as a dual command structure (Figure 3). There is one line of authority between the president and the MOD, where the president delegates only administrative duties to his or her defense minister and staff.



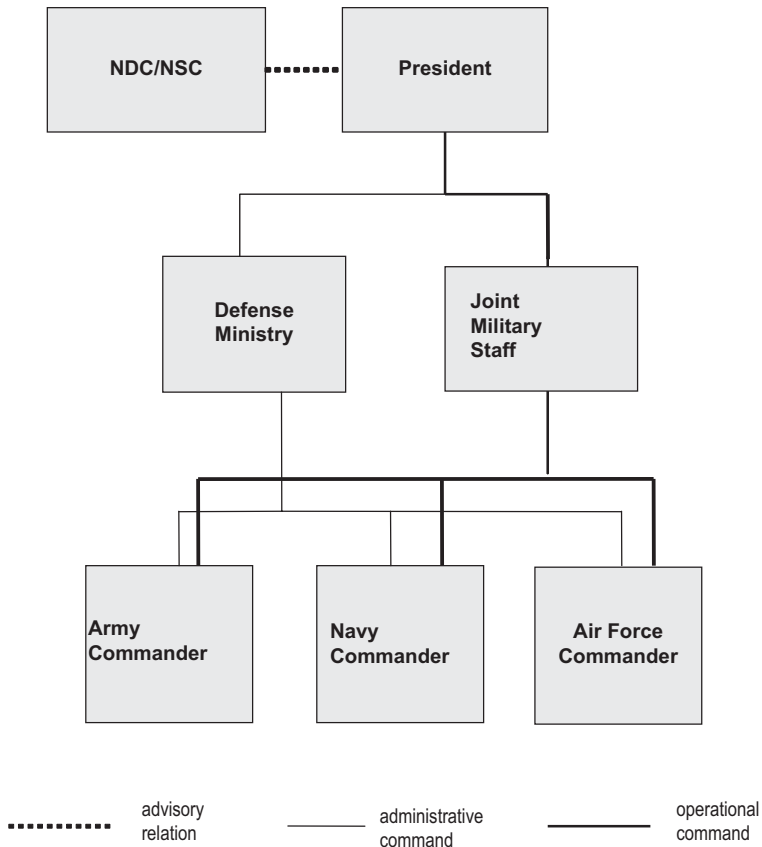
**Figure 2**  
**Second Best Defense Structure**



Note: NDC = National Defense Council; NSC = National Security Council.

Administration normally includes functions necessary to raise and support but not conduct a military operation: recruitment, conscription, personnel issues, budgets, procurement, and so on. These ministries are usually divested of authority to plan strategically or design, mandate, or supervise military operations. Then there is a second chain that is operational, one where the president issues orders directly to a high-level military unit—be it a general staff, joint command, or individual such as a commanding general who in turn assigns tasks to military subordinates. This mandate covers the design of defense strategies and the execution of operational plans.

**Figure 3**  
**Dual Command Structure**



Note: NDC = National Defense Council; NSC = National Security Council.

This schema has three drawbacks. First, it reduces the power of the defense ministry by assigning it less vital tasks. Second, it violates the principle of lowering military vertical authority by positioning a military commander or staff at a level equal to the defense minister and only one step below the president. And third, it fails to divide all that military power that does not belong to the president and his or her civilian delegates. Countries that approximate this format are Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Venezuela. Ecuador represents a variation on this theme, with an NSC situated between the president and the MOD.<sup>55</sup>

Mexico is the odd man out. It too has a dual chain of command, but one that is quite different. It separates the service branches (army and air force vs. navy) rather than ministries and military staffs. The president is the supreme commander who exercises authority through two national defense secretaries—both of whom *must* by law be military officers. One secretary serves the army and air force, the other the navy. Those secretaries in turn delegate to their own national defense general staffs, who in turn pass on orders to regional, joint, logistical, and administrative commanders.<sup>56</sup>

## Data Evaluation

Several comparisons between these designs can be noted. First, the most common organizational design is the dual command structure, accounting for 44 percent of the cases, with the preferred and second best defense structures accounting for 31 and 19 percent, respectively, and Mexico the remainder (see Table 4). On one hand, half of the countries of the region have some form of defense structure that gives greater vertical authority to the defense ministry over military organizations. On the other hand, three of those countries, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Guatemala, have had defense ministries run by military officers (active and retired) 76, 82, and 94 percent of the time, respectively, between 1990 and 2006 (see Table 2). That weakens civilian control for reasons already given. If we remove those three countries from consideration, then only 31 percent of the countries in the region have sufficiently civilianized preferred or second best defense structures. On balance, then, the majority of Latin American countries have substantial deficiencies in the organization of their defense agencies.

Countries in the best shape are those whose ministries have been consistently led by civilians and whose singular chains of command empower those very ministries. This is true for Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Conversely, countries with dual chains of command and a weaker civilian presence are Mexico (no civilians), Ecuador (41 percent of its ministers have been civilian), and Honduras (47 percent). It might be said that, for countries with a heavy preponderance of military ministers, it is better that those agencies have reduced powers. Agreed. The problem is that those same countries also have dual chains of command *and* the presence of a general staff or top commander along the second chain. That is so for Honduras, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. Thus, in these situations, the rungs along the ladders of influence below the president are completely occupied by military personnel.

The organizational charts also highlight the different relations that military staffs have with civilians. Ideally, defense ministers should count on a military staff as an advisory body answerable to them. Military advisors of this sort can provide the minister with a broader, less parochial, service-oriented military perspective and can collaborate with him or her on the design and implementation of defense missions. While that often occurs with the single chain of command, in dual chains the military staff—where it exists—*serves a military commander*, not the ministry of defense.

**Table 4**  
**Defense Organization in Latin America: Empirical Results**

Country	Civilian Ministers of Defense <sup>a</sup>	Civilian Ministry of Defense Permanent Staff (2006)	Preferred Defense Structure	Second Best Defense Structure	Dual Command Structure
Argentina	√	√		√	
Bolivia		√			√
Brazil	√	√	√		
Chile	√		√		
Colombia	√				√
Dominican Republic			√		
Ecuador		√			√
El Salvador				√	
Guatemala				√	
Honduras					√
Mexico					
Nicaragua	√				√
Paraguay	√	— <sup>b</sup>			√
Peru		√	√		
Uruguay	√		√		
Venezuela		—			√
Column totals (%)	44	36	31	19	44

a. Those nations with perennial civilian defense ministers.

b. Data not available.

That design just highlights how marginalized the defense ministry has become from vital assignments that demand the benefit of organized military input.

Half of all countries have a general staff, joint staff, or high-ranking officer along the chain of command, with defense ministries restricted to mostly administrative and technical functions.<sup>57</sup> For reasons already given, unified military structures should not be in positions of command and control. In theory, the worst formulation is to have a dual chain of command that diminishes the MOD while enlarging institutional military power in the form of a general staff or military command. Ecuador, Honduras, and Nicaragua fit that model. Almost as undesirable is having an individual supreme commander high up in the second chain. Bolivia, Colombia, and Paraguay fit that model.

Finally, there are elements of informality and ambiguity that must be noted within the dual chain of command design. In a few countries, such as Bolivia and Colombia, presidents choose to sometimes switch between their dual chains of command. At times they find it politically convenient to rely on their defense ministers for operational as well as administrative duties.<sup>58</sup> The minister temporarily takes on powers and responsibilities that seem consistent with the single chain of command.<sup>59</sup>

But just as easily, these presidents can and do revert back to their direct reliance on their military brass, bypassing the MOD. The important point is that there is a relation between formal and informal power. The dual chain of command design makes it easier for presidents to justify discretionary changes of this sort because their military commanders are on the higher rungs of the ladder, as is their defense minister. The president need not hurdle over the defense ministry to get to the top commanders because they reside just below the president in the chain of command. There are also ambiguities built within the law that allow for greater presidential discretion. For example, Honduras' Secretariat of State for National Defense is defined as the "administrative organ of the military."<sup>60</sup> Yet it is also more broadly charged with setting the direction, coordination, execution, supervision, and evaluation of all policies related to national defense. This allows the president to switch on the ministry's higher functions when he or she deems fit or switch them back off.

In sum, 63 percent of the countries of Latin America have organizational schema that do not approximate the ideal-typical structure. Defense ministries that are either directed by military personnel or demoted to administrative functions and centralized military units (commands, staffs) that are situated high up in the chain of command and vested with key strategic planning and operational duties are the worrisome features of these designs. The full empirical results are displayed in Table 4.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to convey a method to analyzing defense organizations in Latin America. I have been able to identify a logic to the construction of a defense sector based on the goal of maximizing civilian control. The guiding principles—ones that numerous scholars agree are important—have helped to generate an ideal-typical defense model against which the Latin American cases have been compared. As shown, most countries of the region have not achieved the ideal-typical model, though some come close. The benefit of this exercise is to give scholars some benchmarks for evaluating how well Latin American elites have done to induce greater military cooperation and subordination via institutional engineering.

It must be acknowledged that those countries that have fallen short—in some cases way short—have not all failed necessarily for want of trying. In some countries, organizational designs such as dual command structures may be vestiges from an authoritarian past devised by juntas and then secured by powerful militaries in the democratic period. Hence, it was underlying military power that drove the institutional design and not the other way around. While this may or may not be true, two points bear worth mentioning. First, it is not an argument to abandon institutional inquiry. Both civilians and soldiers are still interacting largely within the confines of a legally mandated, rule-based environment, even if that environment in some instances was crafted with a heavy dose of military supervision.

Second, with the passage of time and shifting balances of power, defense organizations can be revised yet again, this time in favor of civilians. In fact, they already have. One need not look any further than Chile to see the great strides that have been made despite the dire terms of the democratic transition that left everyone believing that Pinochet's military would forever have the upper hand.<sup>61</sup> In fact, very few institutional designs have been left untouched since the end of military rule and the beginning of the democratic transition throughout Latin America. Defense organizational schemes have been reworked, and soldiers and civilians alike have had their fingerprints on these changes. Once these changes have been made, both sides have abided by them most of the time. For these reasons, the organization of defense remains relevant to an understanding of civil–military relations in Latin America. But just how relevant?

One way of assessing this is to examine the incentives the military has for channeling its demands through the very institutional corridors I have analyzed. In the contemporary period, Latin American militaries need to be, perhaps, more strategically cautious about how they wield their power. As Wendy Hunter and others have argued, the costs to military praetorianism have risen. The military cannot so easily thumb its nose at democracies without incurring losses measured in pesos and reputation.<sup>62</sup> To a large degree, the armed forces are still on the “defensive” so to speak. With the cold war over, leftist insurgents outside of Colombia defeated, and interstate war a rarity, militaries must now justify not only their budget allowances but also, at times, their very existence. Why should democratic politicians, mindful of their electoral fortunes, care about the military? Defense? Indeed, recent research suggests they do not.<sup>63</sup> Other more pressing priorities have taken over, and governments have pried resources away from defense. Meanwhile, military human rights offenders continue to be investigated and prosecuted in Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, and Chile, proof that militaries can and will be held accountable for their behavior.

All of this is to say that the democratic process itself has had a sobering affect on the once persistently aggressive military. Now the armed forces cannot afford to ride roughshod over legitimately elected politicians or the institutions they serve less they bite off their nose to spite their face. Most militaries understand that it is to their advantage to exert influence within official channels so that they can earn some measure of respect for following the “rules of the game,” just as others are expected to. To the extent that soldiers are convinced they must pursue their interests within the corridors of state, then the rules and institutionalized relations governing conduct there should have greater explanatory power. As those rules and relations vary, so too should the balance of power between civilians and soldiers.

By the same token, it must be readily acknowledged that the civil–military relation, in all its myriad dimensions, extends well beyond the confines of state-centered defense organizations. There are other sites where, as noted earlier, politicians and soldiers interact, and the results of those encounters can alter the power equation. And then there is the larger political environment that has an influence, however intangible,

on those relations. What relative causal weight would one assign to defense organization? How do we know if and when organizational design has a decisive impact on civil—military outcomes? While these are important questions, finding persuasive answers to these is a huge task and necessarily lies beyond the scope of this article.

For now, we can only anecdotally note that overall civil—military relations in countries such as Chile, Brazil, and Argentina have immeasurably improved in recent years and that these are also states with civilianized staff and revised beneficial defense structures.<sup>64</sup> Conversely, countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Paraguay have defense structures of dubious merit and have had their share of troubles. Ecuador has been periodically plagued by military defiance of presidential will, not to mention a civil—military coup in January of 2000. Venezuela was victim to a coup attempt in 2002, as was Paraguay in 1996. And Bolivia has experienced civil—military tensions arising out of explosive encounters between indigenous protesters and military personnel sent to subdue them. Whether these patterns are an outgrowth of defense organization or not is pure speculation at this point. Detailed research, including fieldwork, would have to be done to unearth the dynamics of these relations. Interviews with key military and political personnel would probably be necessary to sort out which influences were critical and which were less so. In the interim, it is hoped that scholars will increasingly take up Latin American defense organization as a subject worthy of serious reflection and research.

## Notes

1. The importance of achieving institutionalized civilian control has been argued persuasively by Felipe Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); J. Samuel Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Harold Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela: A Comparative Perspective* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

2. See Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry L. Karl, "What Democracy Is . . . And Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Summer 1991): 75-88.

3. For example, James Burk acknowledges that it is now a normative assumption that, for democratic values to be sustained, civilians must have control over their armed forces. See his "Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 29 (Fall 2002): 7-29. Michael Desch says that "the bottom line for developed democracies is civilian control." See his *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 4.

4. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*, 20-24.

5. Martin Edmonds, *Central Organizations of Defense* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985).

6. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

7. Thomas C. Bruneau and Richard B. Goetze, Jr., "Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control," in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 78.

8. James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," *American Political Science Review* 78 (September 1984): 738.

9. Gregory Weeks, *The Military and Politics in Postauthoritarian Chile* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003); Gregory Weeks, "Is the Mold Being Broken? Defense Ministries and Democracy in Latin America," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 31 (Summer 2003): 23-37.

10. Presidents may want to speak directly to their military commanders, bypassing the defense minister. Or conversely, they may put more stock in their defense ministers and rely on them despite restrictions in the law.

11. See David Pion-Berlin, "Civil-Military Circumvention: How Argentine State Institutions Compensate for a Weakened Chain of Command," in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Pion-Berlin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 135-60.

12. In today's democratic environment, the armed forces most assuredly need to assess the serious costs to themselves of unauthorized action.

13. Bruneau and Tollefson, *Who Guards the Guardians and How*, 264.

14. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

15. Edmonds, *Central Organizations of Defense*; Robert J. Art, Vincent Davis, and Samuel P. Huntington, *Reorganizing America's Defense: Leadership in War and Peace* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey, 1985).

16. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy*.

17. Christopher D. Jones and Natalie Mychajlyszyn, "Overview: Civil-Military Relations in Central and Eastern Europe in Former Communist Societies," *Armed Forces & Society* 28 (Spring 2002): 375-84.

18. Andrew Cottey, Timothy Edmunds, and Anthony Forster, "The Second Generation Problematic: Rethinking Democracy and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 29 (Fall 2002): 31-56.

19. Among the many who concur are Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy*; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*; Bruneau and Tollefson, *Who Guards the Guardians and How*; Weeks, *Military and Politics*; and Christopher P. Gibson and Don M. Snider, "Civil-Military Relations and the Potential to Influence: A Look at the National Security Decision-Making Process," *Armed Forces & Society*, 25 (Winter 1999): 193-218.

20. Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 84-85.

21. Gibson and Snider, "Civil-Military Relations."

22. On the need for civilians to take leadership on defense, see Rut Diamint, "Crisis, Democracy and the Military in Argentina," in *Broken Promises? The Argentine Crisis and Argentine Democracy*, ed. Edward Epstein and David Pion-Berlin (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2006), 163-79; Gregory Weeks, "Is the Mold Being Broken?" Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*.

23. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy*, 194-96.

24. Bruneau and Goetze, "Ministries of Defense," 78.

25. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy*; Weeks, *Military and Politics*; Juan Rial and Carlos Barrachina, "Los Ministerios de Defensa en América Latina y Las Consecuencias de la Multidimensionalidad de las Amenazas," *América Latina Hoy*, 42 (2006): 131-59.

26. Rial and Barrachina, "Los Ministerios de Defensa," 146

27. Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy*, 41.

28. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Programa Seguridad y Ciudadanía, *Reformas del Sector Seguridad en América Latina y El Caribe* (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO, 2007), 61. <http://www.flacso.cl/flacso/biblos.php?code=2124>.

29. See República Argentina, Ley de Defensa Nacional, no. 23554, art. 1. *Boletín Oficial*, April 26, 1988, 2992; David Pion-Berlin, *Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997), 159.

30. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy*, 190-97.

31. FLACSO, *Reformas del Sector*.

32. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 86-87.

33. See Douglas Porch, "Preserving Autonomy in Conflict—Civil-Military Relations in Colombia," in *Global Politics of Defense Reform*, ed. Thomas Bruneau and Harold Trinkunas (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 136.

34. Pion-Berlin, *Through Corridors of Power*, 158.

35. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy*, 195.



36. Gordon N. Lederman, *Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 61.

37. A military general staff is a “group of officers and enlisted personnel that provides a bi-directional flow of information between a commander and subordinate units.” Its purpose is to provide useful and timely reports to line officers charged with commanding military units. Wikipedia, *The General Staff*, <http://www.answers.com/topic/general-staff-2>.

38. An infamous example—one that serves the quintessential warning about general staffs—was that of the German Third Supreme Command of General Erich Friedrich Wilhelm Ludendorff and Paul von Hindenburg during World War I. This staff soon seized authority from Kaiser Wilhelm, meddled in politics, forced cabinet ministers and three chancellors to resign, and held veto power over state appointments. It proved disastrous for civilian control. See John Lee, *The Warlords: Hindenburg and Ludendorff* (London: Orion Books, 2005).

39. Naturally, this may not be necessary in more advanced democracies, which is why this dimension is particularly sensitive to context.

40. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*, 11.

41. Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 82.

42. Lederman, *Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 60.

43. Craig Arceneaux and David Pion-Berlin, “Issues, Threats and Institutions: Explaining OAS Responses to Democratic Dilemmas in Latin America,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 49 (Summer 2007): 1-32.

44. As far as participants go, a caveat is in order. Normally, the legislative and judicial branches also play a defense role. Legislators devise or approve defense budgets and exert oversight powers. Courts render verdicts on the military’s permissible jurisdiction over legal cases, among other matters. These are important functions, by lie beyond the confines of this study, which restricts itself to executive branch relations only since those are exceedingly elaborate and complex as is.

45. Max Weber, “The Ideal Type,” in *Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Kenneth Thompson and Jeremy Tunstall (London: Penguin, 1971), 63-67.

46. The author acknowledges that countries will, when designing defense institutions, take into consideration not just general guiding principles but domestic realities as well. In fact, the local contexts are already reflected and embedded within the specific national laws that have been inventoried in this article and that constitute the building blocks for the aggregate institutional designs that have been proposed. Hence, local solutions to universal problems will constitute variations on a common theme.

47. The referenced laws were too numerous in number to mention. Defense White Books are explanations of a country’s main defense characteristics, strategies, and relations. First initiated in Chile, they were devised to create greater transparency among nations of the region.

48. Cuba has been excluded because we are interested in comparisons among democratic countries. Panama, Costa Rica, and Haiti have no militaries. In addition to the sources listed, I also consulted an atlas compiled by a Latin American defense-related research outfit called Red de Seguridad y Defensa de America Latina (RESDAL). The volume is titled *Atlas Comparativo de la Defensa en América Latina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: RESDAL, 2007).

49. I assessed the composition of national security and defense councils for these Latin American countries through Web-based searches.

50. These chains of command are not modeled after the United States. The United States has a single chain of command, but, unlike countries in Latin America, its military subordinates are not the heads of each service branch but rather are commanders of multiservice, regional units spread throughout the globe. Each is composed of army, air force, navy, and marine personnel, has its own theater of operations, and takes orders directly from the Secretary of Defense.

51. RESDAL, *Atlas Comparativo*, 72.

52. Rial and Barrachina, “Los Ministerios de Defensa,” 147.

53. Peru also has a joint military command within the chain, but it is part of the defense ministry itself. Because that command has no autonomy, it does not pose the same hazard as an independent unified

military staff within the chain of command. See FLACSO, *Informe Nacional Perú* (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO, 2007), 5-8. <http://www.flacso.cl/flacso/biblos.php?code=2131>.

54. There is a potential for abuse in this model because it makes it more difficult for civilians on top to play off one force against the other when the Estado Mayor Conjunto chief uses the position to present one unified military point of view to the civilian overseers.

55. The National Security Council, which is composed of the president, eight civilian cabinet officials, and four military officers, is responsible for conceptualizing a security strategy and overseeing the fulfillment of defense plans by the joint military command. "Aprueban Ley Orgánica de Defensa Nacional," *El Diario*, December 22, 2006.

56. See República de México, "Ley Orgánica del Ejército y Fuerza Aerea Mexicanos," *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, December 26, 1986, [http://www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Federal/PE/PR/Leyes/26121986\(1\).pdf](http://www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Federal/PE/PR/Leyes/26121986(1).pdf).

57. In the cases of Nicaragua and Paraguay, functions are more broadly defined but stop short of command authority over military operations.

58. The Colombian Web site defines the ministry of defense's task as one of participating in the development of defense policies. But then it goes on to emphasize that its main objective is to formulate policies for the *administrative* defense sector. See República de Colombia, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, "Funciones del Ministerio," <http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/index.php?page=186>.

59. The Bolivian Defense Minister, Walter San Miguel, claims President Evo Morales relies entirely on him to deliver operational as well as administrative orders. He suggested that his powers are bestowed at the president's discretion and that this situation did not exist in the previous administration. San Miguel, interview with author, La Paz, Bolivia, July 4, 2007.

60. República de Honduras, *Ley Constitutiva de las Fuerzas Armadas*, Decreto no. 39, 200.

61. In November 2004, constitutional reforms pending since 1990 finally passed that granted the Chilean president the power to remove his military commanders in chief and, as previously mentioned, stripped the once military-dominated National Security Council of its decision-making powers while bolstering the civilian presence there. The Chilean armed forces have themselves acknowledged that while they may have opinions on revisions such as these, they no longer enjoy a veto power and must accept the outcomes. See Marcos Robledo, "Democratic Consolidation in Chilean Civil-Military Relations, 1990–2005," in *Global Politics of Defense Reform*, ed. Thomas Bruneau and Harold Trinkunas (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 108-9.

62. Wendy Hunter, "Reason, Culture, or Structure? Assessing Civil-Military Dynamics in Brazil," in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David Pion-Berlin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 36-58.

63. Defense is not a priority in the region for historical, structural, and rational choice reasons. See David Pion-Berlin and Harold Trinkunas, "Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Ignore Defense Policy in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 42 (Fall 2007): 76-100.

64. No attempt is being made here to comparatively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of democratic systems. Naturally, to the extent that elected officials and their civilian staffs can exert greater authority over the armed forces, democracies are the beneficiaries. But any evaluation of democracies must rely on a whole host of factors, with civil-military affairs composing just one dimension. Such an evaluation well exceeds the limits of this article.

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