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Latin American Civil-Military Relations in a Historical Perspective: A Literature Review

Elin Skaar with Camila Gianella Malca



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Abstract

Civil-military relations constitute a crucial element in the transition to substantive democracy all over the world. During periods of authoritarianism or civil war, the military in Latin America has been responsible for extensive violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Since the reintroduction of democracy in the region in the 1980s and 1990s, the military has gradually been brought back under civilian rule. The balance of power between military and civil political actors has shifted. How and in which ways have civilian governments curtailed military power? What is the relationship between the military and civilian governments today? And what new roles have been assigned to or taken on by the military in areas such as maintaining national security?

Based on a review of the literature on civil-military relations in Latin America, this paper explores three main themes: (1) the military as a political actor; (2) the military as an economic actor; and (3) changing military self-perceptions and roles in a democratic era.

Aknowledgements

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*“It would be inexcusable not to be prepared.
The raison d’être of any army is to be ready to defend
the country from internal or external threats.”¹*

Introduction

About fifteen years ago, Consuelo Cruz and Rut Diamint optimistically noted that “the tanks that not too long ago roamed the streets have vanished from sight, military uniforms seem passé and coups obsolete, and the era of the generals appears finally to have been consigned to the archives” (Cruz and Diamint 1998). Their conclusion may have been overly optimistic. Although civilian governments dominate the Latin American continent today, the military coups in Venezuela (2002), Honduras (2009) and possibly Paraguay (2012)² along with the failed coup attempts in Bolivia (2009) and in Ecuador (2010) remind us that the military are still a force to be reckoned with in politics.³ The military in Latin America is notorious for its interference with civilian governments. Indeed, the cyclic alternation of civilians and generals in high offices in many countries dates back to the era of independence in the 1860s and 1870s. In more recent times, specifically the period between 1970 and 1990, the Latin American continent was largely dominated by military governments—or experiencing civil war.⁴ According to Brian Loveman, “in 1979, over two-thirds of Latin America's people were living under military rule. By 1993, however, not a single military regime remained in Central or South America or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean” (Loveman 1994).

As authoritarian regimes started to break down in the early 1980s, Latin America embarked on what has been referred to as the “third wave” of democracy (Huntington 1991). Today, most governments in the region are classified as “democratic,” though exactly what this means is open to dispute. One overall trend in the region over the past two decades has been the gradual withdrawal of the military from politics and its shift “back to the barracks.” But how firm is this retreat? To what extent is the military actually under civilian control? Broadening the concept of civil-military relations (or CMR) beyond the political realm: What economic role have the armed forces played in the region? And what is the relationship between the military and civilians today?

Based on a review of selected literature on civil-military relations in Latin America (here restricted to South and Central America, excluding the Caribbean), this paper explores three main themes: (1) the military as a political actor; (2) the military as an economic actor; and (3) changes in military self-perceptions and roles in times of peace and democracy. Before delving into these complex issues, a short note on the selection criteria for the literature reviewed in this paper is in order.

¹ Cited in Loveman (1994:144). Originally cited by Zagorski (1992:136-137).

² Vicky Pelaez, “Coup d’Etat in Paraguay: A Blow to Emerging Democracy,” the Moscow News (July 6, 2012), <http://themoscownews.com/international/20120706/189927018.html> (accessed October 21, 2013). However, other scholars argue that this was not a coup.

³ Note that the incidents referred to in this paragraph have been fiercely contested among scholars as to whether they qualify as “coups” or not. I here follow Leiv Marsteintredet’s interpretation. “Coup” is here defined as illegal power grab. Accordingly, “failed coup” is an unsuccessful illegal power grab. According to Marsteintredet’s definition, the 2009 skirmishes in Bolivia do not qualify as a coup, though the Bolivian president claimed they were. See http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/19/world/americas/19bolivia.html?_r=1& (accessed January 9, 2014). I thank Leiv Marsteintredet for this clarification (email correspondence dated January 9, 2014).

⁴ Democratically governed Costa Rica and the one-party states, Cuba and Mexico, are notable exceptions.

Selection criteria for literature reviewed

In line with the larger research project of which this study is part, the purpose of this paper is to provide a synthesis of how various literatures theorise the militaries' political, economic and social influence in Latin American societies. The literature on the military and civil-military relations in Latin America is huge—and constantly growing. A crude measure for this is to check hits in Google scholar. “Military Latin America” gives 1,230,000 hits; “Latin American military” gives 1,320,000 hits; and “civil-military relations Latin America” 20,900 hits. “Civil-military” in combination with individual country names renders many thousands more hits. Similarly, to capture the non-Anglophone literature in this field, Google searches using key words such as “*relaciones civiles militares en América Latina*” and “*relações civis-militares na América Latina*” revealed a huge amount of texts and articles. Needless to say, it is beyond the scope of this paper to give an exhaustive review of all existing literature on the topic of CMR. The scope must be narrowed down. We have used a combination of three criteria as a point of departure for selecting the titles reviewed in this paper.

i. Prominence in the field

There are some central scholars—considered experts in the field—whose work merits attention. They include, among many others, Samuel P. Huntington, Felipe Agüero, Craig Arceneaux, Arturo Valenzuela, Brian Loveman, Terry Lynn Karl, Philippe C. Schmitter, Guillermo O'Donnell, Alfred Stepan, David Pion-Berlin, Wendy Hunter, Samuel J. Fitch, Alain Rouquié, Jorge Battaglino, Rut Diamint, Marcelo Sain, Jorge Zaverucha, Eliézer Rizzo de Oliveira, and Kristina Mani. Some of these scholars have followed the topic of civil-military relations for decades, and bring into their analyses the history of a long period of democratisation. Other scholars are newer to the field, but have published extensively on the topic, either generally on various aspects of the military or on the military in specific countries. We have selected a combination of seasoned and younger scholars, and used their citation index as criteria for inclusion in the reading list. In brief, the more cited, the more credible we assume the scholars are in the field. To avoid the fallacy of including only articles that are part of the Google scholar citation system, though, we have also gone critically through the bibliography of around 20 widely cited books on the topic of civil-military relations and taken note of those entries that jointly seem to form the crux of this large scholarly field. Note that we have taken care to include texts in Spanish and Portuguese written by Latin American researchers,⁵ but excluded

⁵ These are mainly Latin-American scholars outside the army forces. The research on civil-military relationships has been produced by independent researchers, or researchers affiliated to research networks (such as *Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina* - RESDAL, *Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia*-CASEDE), research groups within universities, academic institutions and NGOs that regularly are publishing on issues connected to civil-military relations from different disciplines (at institutions such as Buenos Aires University, DEJUSTICIA, FLACSO, Fundación Arias para la Paz y el desarrollo humano, IDEELE), and sometimes linked to research projects (such as *Democracia e Forças Armadas no Brasil e nos países do Cone Sul* performed by *Fundação Getulio Vargas*, *Relaciones Civiles Militares* performed by *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador*, or the research projects financed by CLACSO, FLACSO). Research has been published in articles in general or periodic specialised academic publications (such as the journal *Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad*, which was published for many years by FLACSO Chile; special issues of academic journals such as *ICONOS*, published by FLACSO Ecuador; or the periodic bulletins published by RESDAL), books, edited volumes, as well as master and doctoral works.

works translated to Spanish or Portuguese from English.⁶

ii. Geographical focus

This paper tries to locate the geographical focus of the literature that has shaped our knowledge on civil-military relations in Latin America. Countries in the region are far from evenly studied. There is much work done on the militaries in Brazil (Hunter 1997; Skidmore 1988; Stepan 1988, 1989); Chile (Nunn 1976; Huneeus 2007); Argentina (Burns 1987; Catterberg 1991; Huser 2002; Pion-Berlin 1997; Rozitchner 1985; Valenzuela 1986); and Peru (Ellsworth and Green 1998). There is also quite a bit of comparative work on two or more of these four countries (Desch 1998; Hunter 1997, 1998; North 1966; Pion-Berlin 1998; Stepan 1988), or the region in general (Remmer 1989). By contrast, the militaries in Uruguay, El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela have received much less scholarly attention, as have the armed forces in Mexico. Notable exceptions include, among others, Isaacs (1993), Trinkunas (2005), Serrano (1995), Walter and Williams (1993). Last on the list of scholarly attention is the military in Paraguay—in spite of having the longest lasting military regime in modern times.

The general pattern seems to be that the militaries in the more institutionally and economically developed Southern Cone (in addition to/including Brazil) have been more prone to academic analysis than the militaries in other parts of Latin America.⁷ This suggests that many of the central debates on the military in democratization are cast in a particular light, namely that of transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic rule—leaving the transitions from armed conflict (El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Colombia), or from one-party statism to multi-partyism (Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico), relatively understudied.⁸ It is worth bearing this potential bias in mind, as the militaries in the Southern Cone and Brazil may have different characteristics from militaries elsewhere in the region and consequently may have played—and continue to play—a different role than the militaries in other kinds of post-transition contexts.

Some limitations of this methodological approach should be highlighted. First, there are some key works (particularly in Spanish and Portuguese) that are not available on the Internet.⁹ Second, since this review is mainly based on internet search in combination with suggestions given by personal contacts with key informants, we may reasonably expect that many important works produced at the national level (especially so-called “grey” literature) have not been included. Nevertheless, the

⁶ Note that we have included scholars invited to write in edited volumes in English or compendiums published in the region. We have also searched for researchers who belong to research networks or research programs on civil-military relations in the region. In order to get an overview of the type of works produced at the local level that an Internet search would not capture, Camila Gianella carried out personal inquiries with scholars at universities in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, México and Peru about scholarly works on civil-military relations in Latin America.

⁷ Part of the explanation for this may be that there is a gap between the research on peace building and security sector reform when dealing with the military. The CMR discussion is usually tied to the discussion of authoritarianism. We thank Ingrid Samset for pointing this out to us. It illustrates well how the same issues may be investigated in different areas of literature that are not necessarily connected to each other.

⁸ For instance, according to Mexico scholar Monica Serrano, “it was only with the uprising in Chiapas in January 1994 that the place of the armed forces in the liberalisation process entered the public debate. Since 1988 not only the debate and analysis of political change, but also the various proposals for political reform had practically ignored the question of the armed forces.” Monica Serrano, “The Armed Branch of the State: Civil-Military Relations in Mexico,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 2 (May 1995), 423.

⁹ These include publications by Eliézer Rizzo de Oliveira, Fernando Argüelles, Kees Koonings, Rut Diamint, and Victor Villanueva among others.

literature reviewed here should provide a reasonably good geographical overview of the trends and debates covered by Latin American scholars.¹⁰

iii. Key debates

The literature search has been further narrowed to principally cover the key debates regarding civil-military relations that are relevant for the larger research project that this study is part of. In the Latin American context, the debates on civil-military relations centre principally on the military as a political and economic actor, and on the role of the military in the transitions to and consolidation of democracy. According to Sotomayor Velásquez (2008) and Sain (2010), academic research on civil-military relations in Latin America has been mainly focused on issues regarding the role of the military in democracy. These studies have explored issues such as the National Security Doctrine, the structure of the military regimes, the role of the military in the transition to democracy, civil control over the military, institutional reforms (such as the reforms of ministries, creation in some countries of a ministry of defence that merges all the army forces under one ministry, and reform of the military justice system), and militarisation of public security. Less attention has been paid to issues concerning the role of civilian governments in strategic affairs and national security.

Debates that are not covered in this paper include the military's role in religion, specifically its link to the Catholic Church, and its role in food production.¹¹ Other potentially interesting topics that we have not explored due to limitations of time and space include scholarly work that focuses on the dynamics within the army, such as military ceremonies/rituals, attitudes of the army towards gender and female leadership, as well as racism and social mobility within the army.

¹⁰ Note that there may also be an ideological bias in some of the research produced by Latin American scholars where research has been donor-funded and mainly produced to respond to donors' interests (such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Ford Foundation or Open Society).

¹¹ The larger research project of which this study is part suggests that the military's role in the Middle East is closely linked to the role and power of religion and religious alliances. Since a cursory reading of the literature on Latin America leaves us with the impression that this appears not to be the case for the Latin American region (which is predominantly Catholic, but with important enclaves of Protestantism/Evangelism), we have chosen to leave this out of the discussion here. Also, the military in the Middle East appears to have a much more prominent role in food production than its Latin American counterpart. See, for example, Dr. Zeinab Abul-Magd, "The Egyptian Military in Politics and the Economy: Recent History and Current Transition Status," CMI INSIGHT, no. 2 (October 2013), 1-5, Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute,

The Military and Politics

The scholarship on the military in politics dates back to Samuel Huntington's 1957 groundbreaking book, *The Soldier and the State*. This was the first attempt to theorise the relationship between the military and society and lay the foundations for the scholarly field that is now referred to as civil-military relations. Huntington's thesis is that "the military institutions of any society are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from threats to the society's security and a social imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies, and institutions dominant within the society," and that "the interaction of these two forces is the nub of the problem of civil-military relations" (Huntington 1957:2) This thesis remained unchallenged for 20 years. Only in the 1980s was there an attempt to push theoretical thinking about the military in new directions. However, much of the more recent CMR scholarship still relies heavily on Huntington's seminal study.

This section gives a historical overview of the military in politics in Latin America, which constitutes the biggest chunk of literature on CMR for this region according to our findings. Most scholarly discussion about the military in Latin America is intrinsically linked to discussions of democracy, democratic breakdown, democratisation, and democratic consolidation. A fact that is perhaps not surprising, as most of the continent was governed by military governments in the 1970s and 1980s, giving way to civilian governments in the 1980s and 1990s. In spite of the recent democratic setbacks in the region, briefly mentioned in the introduction, this overall, though greatly simplified, picture suggests that the military is "back in the barracks." A great deal of scholarship on the Latin American military has focused on the transition from military to democratic rule (O'Donnell 1986; O'Donnell and Schmitter (eds.) 1986; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (eds.) 1986), and in the wake of this, on the process widely referred to as "democratic consolidation" (Becker 1999; Boeninger 1997; Diamond 1999; Linz and Stepan 1996a; Linz and Stepan 1996b; Mainwaring 1992; Valenzuela 1992).

Although the main focus here is on current civil-military relations, we need to go back in history in order to appreciate the dynamics that legitimised the intervention of the armed forces in internal affairs (including national security) in order to guarantee each Latin American nation's economic and social development. These dynamics provided the foundation for the many military governments that prevailed in the region in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

This part is therefore divided into four sub-sections: (1) the scholarship on the history of CMR in Latin America; (2) the military dictatorship period of the 1970s and 1980s; (3) the (re)introduction of civil rule in the 1980s and 1990s; and (4) the consolidation of civilian control over the military.

A brief historical background of civil-military relations in Latin America

As highlighted by several prominent scholars, Latin American political history has been deeply influenced by the tenuous relationship between the civilian and the military (O'Donnell 1983; Sotomayor Velásquez 2010). The independence wars contributed to create a heroic image of the military, which was closely linked to the emerging identities of the new nations (Morner 1960). Interestingly, Latin American armed forces have not been characterized by intervening in major international wars. On the contrary, with few exceptions, Latin American armed forces have not been involved in major long lasting international wars (Morner 1960; Kruijtit and Koonings 2002; Russell and Tokatlian 2009). During the nineteenth century there were some wars between neighbouring countries, such as the war between Mexico and the United States of America (1846–48), the War of the Triple Alliance, where Paraguay fought the combined powers of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (1865–70), and the War of the Pacific (or the Saltpeter War) between Chile, Peru and Bolivia (1879–83). During the twentieth century these types of conflicts were scarce. Apart from some short-term border conflicts (such as armed conflicts between Colombia and Peru in 1932–33, Ecuador and Peru in 1941, 1981 and 1995, and the Football War between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969), only the

Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia (1932–35) and the Malvinas War between Argentina and England in 1982 can be categorised as interstate wars.¹²

In the absence of international wars, one of the main characteristics of Latin America's armed forces has been its belief in its right to intervene in internal affairs (Morner 1960; Kruijtt and Koonings 2002; O'Donnell 1972). Morner highlighted that in contrast to Europe, where the principal role of the armed forces has been to develop an aggressive foreign policy and guarantee international security, the traditional and main role of the armed forces in Latin America has been to keep the internal order. This is due to the interplay of different factors. The participation in the wars of independence made the military believe they had the right to occupy a prominent place in society.¹³ This sentiment is still present today, as well as the certainty of being responsible for maintaining the national identity through the assertion of basic values (Badaró 2008; Bombelli, et al. 2013). The importance given to the role of the armed forces in the construction of the new national identities was not restricted to the armed forces' self-perception. Politicians and intellectuals too stressed the role of the armed forces in creating the feeling of national unity and building a new common history (Toche Medrano 2008).

Another important factor frequently mentioned in the literature is the professionalisation of the armed forces. The military self-identified as the guards of the common good. Consequently—and ironically—the professionalisation provided them with the required knowledge to assess the performance of the civilian governments and to intervene when the civilian governments were not protecting the national common good. This challenges Huntington's (1957) thesis that the professionalisation of the armed forces and an objective civil control reduce the tendency of the armed forces to intervene in politics.

The intervention of the armed forces in internal affairs has not always been detached from the interest of civilian groups. Back in the 1960s, Amos Perlmutter defined the crux of the matter as follows: "Many civil-military combinations are possible: the army can take over the government with or without the consent of civilian politicians, on their behalf or against them, in order to eliminate one civilian group and establish another, or to eliminate rivals in the military" (Perlmutter 1969:382). In many cases, Latin American armed forces have been used by the political elites to restore public order in name of the so-called common good. These elite groups have turned to the armed forces requesting their intervention to solve the problems that the democratic regimes were unable to solve, or to save the societal values and power structures that democratic regimes were putting at risk (Toche Medrano 2008; Velásquez Rivera 2002; North 2006).

However, the professionalisation of the armed forces reinforced their self-perception as being capable to judge the performance of civilian authorities, and to intervene when they were not performing in line with the "common good." Armed forces in Latin America progressively started during the twentieth century to introduce into their discourses the idea that their role was also to guarantee the social and economic development of the nation (O'Donnell 1972). This is a major change described in the literature, because it opened the space for the long-term dictatorships that seized power and took over the governments in the vast majority of Latin American countries during the 1960s and 1970s.

¹² This does not imply that the region is exempt from tensions between countries (i.e., the ongoing border conflicts between Colombia and Nicaragua; Costa Rica and Nicaragua; Chile and Peru; the diplomatic crisis between Colombia and Venezuela in 2010; the dispute between Argentina and Uruguay). However, these are portrayed as diplomatic conflicts, where the ministers of foreign affairs and politicians are the main actors.

¹³ For a future version of this paper it could be interesting to explore academic work on military monuments (including those at the battle camp in Quinua, Ayacucho in Peru), national holidays, and discourses regarding the celebrations of the bicentenary of the independence in Latin American countries. In many countries the celebrations have included civil-military parades.

Long-term military intervention in domestic politics in the 1970s and 1980s

The literature analysing this historic period highlights the crucial role played by the National Security Doctrine (NSD), which promoted and defended the direct involvement of the armed forces in national development. There is no common understanding of when the NSD was first adopted. Different scholars point to the establishment of the Inter-American Defence Board (1942) and the signing of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) in 1948 as milestones (Morner 1960; Kruijtt and Koonings 2002; Leal Buitrago 2003; Velásquez Rivera 2002; Heller 1973).

Another key element in the development of the NSD was the involvement of the United States, rooted in the Monroe Doctrine. In the new geopolitical context after Second World War II, the resulting weakness of most European nations, and the Cold War, the United States made major efforts to have a direct influence over Latin American armed forces through the deployment of special missions, “humanitarian/medical” missions, and the direct training of officials at institutions such as the US Army School of the Americas (USARSA). The school had by 1975 graduated 33,147 students. In 1973, 170 former students from the USARSA were chiefs of government, ministers, commanders, or chiefs of intelligence departments in many Latin American countries. Some of the military coups were performed by former (and outstanding) USARSA students (Velásquez Rivera 2002).

In the context of the Cold War, the United States recognised and gave its support to *de facto* governments in Latin America without any consideration of the legal order. The only required conditions were to maintain US influence in Latin America and the anti-communist *status quo* (Heller 1973). However, the literature also highlights the heterogeneity of the NSD. Scholars differentiate between a hard and a soft line (Pion-Berlin 1989; Leal Buitrago 2003). These differences were rooted in ideologies within the armed forces regarding the understanding of development, resource distribution, and influence of the tolerance of military governments on political opposition, human rights violations perpetrated by the military, as well as the policies implemented by the military governments.

The end of military rule and (re)introduction of civilian government

One of the crucial questions facing civilian governments upon the demise of military rule in the region, starting with Brazil in the 1960s, was how to establish control over the military in the new context of democratic rule. According to David Pion-Berlin, a veteran in the scholarly field of civil-military relations, the question of the conditions under which civilian leaders can or cannot establish effective control over their armed forces has been the main theme of the research field from the origins of modern civil-military studies in comparative politics to the present (Pion-Berlin 2011:222). In this section, we deal with an issue that has been of particular concern to scholars working on the military in politics in a post-transition setting,¹⁴ specifically, how the “modes of transition” affect and define military power. In the ensuing section we turn our attention to how the process of democratic

¹⁴ By post-transition we here mean the period following a transition from military government to elected civilian government.

consolidation¹⁵ has been challenged by at least three contentious issues: (i) accountability for human rights violations; (ii) civilian attacks on military prerogatives; and (iii) civilian control over defence issues.

Modes of transition and types of democracy

Inspired by the breakdown of authoritarian regimes that started in the Latin American region in the 1970s, scholars concerned with democracy were forced to rethink the definition of democracy itself. The Schumpeterian definition of political democracy as one in which citizens could freely choose between elites in regular and competitive elections turned out to be inadequate in the Latin American context. Terry Lynn Karl proposed to settle for a middle-range specification of democracy defined as “a set of institutions that permits the entire adult population to act as citizens by choosing their leading decision makers in competitive, fair and regularly scheduled elections which are held in the context of the rule of law, guarantees of political freedom, and *limited military prerogatives*” (Karl 1990:2; italics mine).¹⁶

Latin American scholars, when studying the withdrawal of the military from politics and the echelons of power, referred to changes of government as “modes of transition.” It was believed that the type, or “mode,” of transition would determine the relative power of the military in the new democracy, and hence the type and quality of democracy that was established. Karl operates with four main types of transition, where transition by rupture (like the defeat of the Argentine military in the Malvinas war against Great Britain in 1982) would wield the least power to the military, while so-called “pacted” transitions (where the military negotiates its way out of power, like in the case of Chile in 1990, where Pinochet lost free and fair elections and was forced to step down) would leave the military with the most power vis-à-vis the democratic government after the transition (Karl 1990). Pacted transitions dominated the continent, though the outcomes of these pacted transitions have turned out to be very diverse. According to Loveman, “with the partial exception of Argentina during the early years of the Alfonsín regime, the birth of new democracies was made possible only (1) by conceding via ‘pacts of transfer,’ formal or informal impunity for crimes committed in the name of national

¹⁵ The concept of “democratic consolidation” has been the subject of much scholarly debate, focusing in essence on when the transition ends and when consolidation begins—and ends. For different points of view, see for example Felipe Agüero, “Conflicting Assessments of Democratization: Exploring Fault Lines,” in *Fault Lines of Democracy in Post-Transitional Latin America*, Felipe Agüero and Jeffrey Stark, eds. (Miami: North-South Center Press of the University of Miami, 1998); David G. Becker, “Latin America: Beyond ‘Democratic Consolidation,’” *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 2 (1999); Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Hung-mao Tien, eds., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Larry Diamond, Jonathan Hartlyn, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America*, second ed. (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999); Juan J. Linz, and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); ———, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996); Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O’Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds. *Issues in Democratic Consolidation. The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Andreas Schedler, “What is Democratic Consolidation?” *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 2 (1998); Arturo Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” in *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America*, Larry Diamond, Jonathan Hartlyn, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999); J. Samuel Valenzuela, “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings,” in *Issues in Democratic Consolidation. The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O’Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

¹⁶ Alfred Stepan coined the term “military prerogatives” in 1988. It has since featured prominently in the literature on CMR.

security, (2) by accepting military-imposed limitations on candidates, parties, and procedures in the transition elections, and (3) by observing significant constraints to the authority of the incoming governments. Nowhere in Latin America did transition to elected civilian government eliminate the principal constitutional, juridical, and political impediments to consolidating civilian-controlled constitutional democracy” (Loveman 1994:116).

Like Karl, many scholars writing at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s saw the balance between civilian and military forces as relatively static—and used this balance of power argument to speculate on democratic stability and the risk of democratic breakdown (O'Donnell 1986; O'Donnell and Schmitter (eds.) 1986; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (eds.) 1986). But as observed by other scholars, this civil-military balance was all but stable (Hunter 1997; Pion-Berlin 1998). Changes in the balance of power brought new opportunities with respect to how the democratic government could challenge the military—for example in the field of human rights, without risking democratic breakdown (Skaar 1999).

Reigning in the military: The process of democratic consolidation (1980s–1990s)

A central question of concern to scholars of Latin American democratisation processes has from the onset of democratic transition to the present been to what extent the military is reigned in under civilian rule (Schedler 1998; Desch 1999; Pion-Berlin and Arceneaux 2000; Trinkunas 2005). Different scholars use different terms here, such as “civilian control,” “civilian supremacy,” “civilian direction” (Bland 1999). Irrespective of vocabulary, the crux of the matter is whether the military is willing to submit control and authority in areas where they feel that their interests, power, or integrity are at stake. Scholars understand civilian control in two main ways: (i) through institutional changes; and (ii) through society’s understanding of military issues (Sotomayor Velásquez 2008). These two approaches do not contrast each other. Rather, they emphasise different aspects of civil-military relations.

There is heterogeneity in the role and institutional design of defence ministries in Latin America. Some countries, like Argentina, have undertaken major reforms of this central institution. However, in general the literature highlights that the task of bringing the armed forces of Latin America under the control of democratic, civilian authority in the context of stable institutions and rules remains unfinished (Diamint 2008; Basombrío 2006; Pion-Berlin 2008; Vela Castañeda 2004).

Scholars have also been concerned with the legislative control of civil society over the military. This includes analysis of the parliamentary powers (such as the capacity to audit military expenditure), and the involvement of the parliament in the process of defining national security policies.¹⁷ Scholars have found that despite developments, and formal power of the elected authorities, parliaments face major challenges in controlling the military. Some of these problems are rooted in the historical alliances of the armed forces with dominant sectors of society, which have allowed the army to continue to wield significant power in the face of civilian lack of knowhow on defence issues. This is partly due to the lack of democratic routines and broader debates on defence issues (Follietti 2005; Basombrío 2006; Diamint 2012, 2002).

¹⁷ “The aim of national security policy is to enhance the safety of the nation’s social, economic, and political institutions against threats arising from other independent states,” Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (1957; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995 edition):1.

The military and the civilian spheres have been quite separated in many Latin American societies. There is little knowledge and a general lack of interest in military matters and defence issues on the part of civil society. Some issues, such as the role of the military in human rights violations and military justice, have attracted more interest from civil society (Sotomayor Velásquez 2008).¹⁸ This trend can be explained by a general perception that these are the issues that have a direct relation to civil society (i.e., how to access truth and justice for human rights violations perpetrated by the armed forces).

Alfred Stepan identified three potential areas of conflict between the armed forces and democratic governments in the early period of transition: (i) accountability for human rights abuses committed against citizens under military rule; (ii) the policy-making processes whereby democratic political actors exert control over the military; and (iii) the policy-making processes whereby democratic political actors establish criteria for the structuring of defence budgets and their post-allocation supervision (Stepan 1988). Wendy Hunter echoes these ideas in her work. According to her, authority over the military has been established in different ways: by holding the military accountable for the human rights violations committed during the authoritarian period; determining the type and extent of institutional military prerogatives that will be maintained under democracy; and deciding which priority defence spending should have in the national budget (Hunter 1998).

Each of these three contentious areas listed by Stepan and Hunter have received extensive scholarly attention, either separately or jointly, and will be discussed below.

i. Human rights violations

One of the most contentious issues in the transition from military rule to democratic rule in the region was how to deal with gross and systematic human rights violations committed by the military forces during periods of authoritarianism (Correa Sutil 1997; De Brito 1997; Loveman 1994; Roniger 1999; Zalaquett 1989; Panizza 1995; Pion-Berlin 1994, 1998; Walsh 1996; Zalaquett 1992)—with the possible exception of Brazil.¹⁹ The argument that dominated the literature at the time of transition was that prosecuting the military for human rights violations would potentially provoke a new military coup and hence place democracy at risk (Correa Sutil 1997). Indeed, only Argentina successfully prosecuted its army right after the transition to democracy, though this did provoke a series of unsuccessful military revolts and forced the president to first issue laws that limited the prosecutions, and then pardon the high-level officials that had actually been convicted to serving sentences in jail. The legacy of human rights abuses committed by the military is still a hot topic today, several decades into democratic rule, though prosecuting the military is no longer perceived to be a threat to democratic governments (Skaar, et al.; forthcoming 2015).²⁰ Important court cases like the trial of former President Fujimori in Peru, that of former Commander-in-Chief Pinochet in Chile, that of former Foreign Minister (under the military dictatorship) Blanco in Uruguay, and the halted trial against sitting President General Rios Montt in Guatemala illustrate that it has been possible for courts in the region to prosecute even (former) heads of state for gross human rights violations without the

¹⁸ See also Juan Rial, *La Justicia Militar. Entre la Reforma y la Permanencia* (Buenos Aires: RESDAL, 2010); Luz María Sánchez Luque and Rodrigo Uprimny, "Comentarios Dejusticia a la Reforma Constitucional al fuero penal militar," (2012).

¹⁹ In Brazil the issue of justice for past human rights violations (so called transitional justice) was left untouched for many years after the transition. An amnesty law has to date precluded prosecution of the military responsible for human rights violations. A truth commission has recently been set up to document and clarify the pattern of past state human rights violations committed by state agents under authoritarian rule. Its work is still ongoing. See chapter on Brazil by Glenda Mezarobba in

²⁰ Note that a separate paper on transitional justice in Latin America is planned for 2014 as part of a larger project from which this paper also stems. We have therefore decided to shorten this section.

armed forces staging a coup against the democratic government. This, we think, is solid “evidence” that the balance of power in the region has tilted favourably in the direction of civilian government.

ii. Civilian control over the military: Military prerogatives

Building on Stepan’s seminal work (Stepan 1988), scholars of CMR seem to agree that the issue of military prerogatives is central for our understanding of to what extent, and in which ways, the military is subject to civilian control (Desch 1999; Karl 1990; Hunter 1998). Reigning in on military autonomy is an important case in point for democracies. According to Cruz and Diamint, “democratic states, like all others, depend on organized coercive power. Hence the unavoidable need for armed forces endowed with sufficient institutional autonomy to perform their duties well. At the same time, democracies are democracies in part because their armed forces remain both functionally integrated with the state and subordinated to legitimate authority. Put another way, civilian authorities bar soldiers from making independent forays into civil and political society, or even into the international arena, and subject the military to the state’s internal rules of accountability”(Cruz and Diamint 1998).

Based on the Spanish experience, Serra argues that institutional reform of the military is imperative to ensure military subordination (Serra 2010). Yet, according to Hunter, institutional preservation is first among military concerns. This includes protecting the military from prosecution for human rights violations and resisting civilian efforts to transform the military into a qualitatively different institution, such as a regional defence force. Other central military concerns include retaining autonomy over areas considered to fall within the military’s own corporate domain (such as education, socialisation, and career advancement of officers); maintaining or improving their professional standing (reflected in salaries, budgets, equipment, training, and organisation); *and retaining institutional prerogatives* that enhance their leverage over broader political, societal and economic matters (Hunter 1998; italics mine). All these areas have, according to Hunter, served as sources of conflict between the military and civilian governments in a post-transitional setting.

There are still big variations between different Latin American countries’ capacity to control the armed forces and national defence issues. Scholars such as Eliezer Rizzo de Oliveira, Marcelo Sain, and Felipe Agüero have written seminal works on the negotiations between the army and elected authorities regarding sensitive issues such as military reform, describing the resistances of the military to institutional changes that implied more civil control (Rizzo de Oliveira 1998; Agüero 2003; Sain 1999). These works provide rich descriptions of the political negotiations between the civil authorities and armed forces, and a historical perspective to the so-called military prerogatives.

Loveman’s list of military prerogatives remaining after the transitions from military to democratic rule is probably the most comprehensive in the literature on Latin American CMR. These prerogatives include: “(1) regimes of exception as basic elements in Latin American constitutions; (2) prohibition of judicial protection of civil liberties and rights during regimes of exception and/or in applying national security laws; (3) explicit constitutional definition of the internal security and political roles of the armed forces, making the armed forces a virtual fourth branch of government guardians of the nation; (4) organic laws (‘constitutive laws’) further embedding the political role and relative autonomy of the armed forces in the legal foundations of the nation; (5) security legislation (laws pertaining to internal security, anti-terrorism, and maintenance of public order) that criminalizes certain types of political opposition (for example: ‘Marxists,’ ‘undemocratic elements,’ and ‘totalitarians’) and expands military functions and jurisdiction even further (frequently including ample, autonomous internal intelligence roles for the armed forces); (6) restrictions on the mass media justified by ‘national security’ concerns; (7) criminal codes with special provisions for political crimes and ‘crimes against the state,’ or against ‘the constituted government’; (8) military jurisdiction (trial by courts-martial or military courts) over civilians for ‘crimes against internal security,’ ‘terrorism,’ or even ‘insulting’ officers; (9) restriction (or full exclusion) of the jurisdiction of civilian courts over military personnel (as, for example, in the case of allegations of kidnapping, torture, and murder

‘while in service’); (10) formal corporate representation for the armed forces in policymaking (for example, in congress, the judiciary, executive agencies, public administration, and public enterprises); (11) partial autonomy of the armed forces over its budget (for example, constitutionally fixed minimum budgets in real terms, percentages of export revenues, or revenues from particular public enterprises or taxes, unsupervised [by the legislature] off-the-books enterprises used to support intelligence services or special military functions); and (12) broad constitutional and statutory autonomy for the military from oversight by the legislature and/or the president over ‘professional’ and ‘internal’ matters, such as military education, promotions, retirements, reassignments, and tenure of service commanders. Together, these special rights and prerogatives interwoven into the political fabric of protected democracies seriously impair civil authority, constrain civil liberties and rights and, to a greater or lesser extent, impede democratization throughout the region, from Guatemala to Chile” (Loveman 1994:123-125).

iii. Military defence budgets

Establishing criteria for the structuring of defence budgets and their post-allocation supervision is one of the areas through which civilian governments can exercise power over the military. One of the central ways of curbing military power after the return to democracy was therefore to make severe cuts in the defence budgets of many countries in the region. This, naturally, reduced the military’s potential to carry out their missions. But what do we mean by defence? According to Jorge Battaglini, defence issues are defined as “the set of actions taken by a state to ensure its survival against perceived threats ... defence policy has normative and material dimensions. While the first is related to the establishment of a strategy or defence doctrine; the second is concerned with the material consequences of the first, for instance in terms of the deployment of new military units or the acquisition of weapons” (Battaglini 2013:13; note 1).

Although defence is the primary function of the military, comparative literature on the politics of defence in Latin America seems to be very scarce, though there seems to be a fair amount of literature on single cases, such as Brazil (de Almeida 2010; Cano 2006; de Carvalho 2005, 2011; D’Araujo 2010; Fucille 2007; Nóbrega Júnior 2010; Soares 2007; Zaverucha 2005; Zaverucha and Rezende 2009).²¹ According to Battaglini (2013), comparative literature is in fact limited to one single article by Trinkunas and Pion-Berlin. They argue that “interest in defence issues among Latin American politicians has faded with the advent of widespread democratization in the region and the retreat of the armed forces to their barracks” and that this lack of civilian politicians’ inattention can be explained by three factors: “A historical path that has produced armed forces with limited capabilities that are more often a threat to their own governments than their neighbors; a relatively benign international threat environment in Latin America that makes neglect of defence policy a lowrisk proposition; and the low importance that voters assign to the provision of the national defence as either a public or a private good. Under these circumstances, it is rational for most civilian politicians to ignore defence policy and focus their attention instead on coup avoidance” (Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2007:76). Whether or not this scenario will be generally true five years down the road remains subject to empirical scrutiny.

In the case of Argentina, Battaglini argues that there has been a marked shift towards increased concern with defence spending and defence policy in the last few years. This has resulted in a marked increase in the military budget, the reconstruction of the defence industry, and the establishment of a new military doctrine. Battaglini argues that this in many ways surprising development is due to some factors that have been traditionally neglected in the scholarship on CMR: political commitment

²¹ We are thankful to Ingrid Samset for making this point, and for providing all the relevant references on Brazil.

to a neo-developmental strategy and the pursuit of a new type of civilian control by the Argentine government (Battaglini 2013).

To summarise, a large part of the scholarly literature on democratic consolidation in Latin America focuses on the normalisation in civil-military relations and the extent to which civilian governments have succeeded in establishing greater authority over the armed forces. The key question that scholars have raised for quite a while is whether Latin American democracies (now) are stable (i.e., consolidated), or whether the period of democratic governance witnessed over the past two or three decades is just a democratic interlude in historical cycles of alternations in civilian and military governments. The issue is whether “many of the changes experienced are close to being just facades, behind which authoritarian structures remain well entrenched, albeit in disguise, or ready to resurface at any sign of crisis” (Agüero 1998). An important point made by Agüero is that whether one considers the glass half empty or half full depends on which dimensions of democracy one looks at: “Studies focusing on civil-military relations ... are likely to yield different evaluations than those resulting from studies of electoral politics ...” (Agüero 1998). Although scholars disagree widely on the meaningfulness of “democratic consolidation,” there seems to be general agreement that the identification of legacies and enclaves from the authoritarian past is at least one important measure of how far different countries have come on their road to becoming (full) democracies.

The Military and the Economy

Political power is not the only kind of power historically wielded by the military in Latin America. The military has also been a prominent economic actor in many societies. Indeed, some scholars are prepared to argue that while the political power of the military has been declining in recent years, its economic power has remained constant or even increased in some countries (Mani 2011a:183). According to Kristina Mani, despite the recent shift to democratic regimes and market-based economies, the military retain important economic roles as owners, managers, and stakeholders in a variety of economic enterprises (Mani 2011b:25). She argues that military entrepreneurship, which she defines as “the military’s ownership, management or stakeholding of economic enterprises,” “is a potentially powerful means to enhance its autonomy from civilian control and even to exert influence within the state and society”—yet, according to her, the military’s involvement in economic activities has received scant scholarly attention—and comparative studies remain particularly scarce (Mani 2011a:184).

This section focuses on how this emerging literature has analysed the role of the military as an economic actor across time, with emphasis on the post-dictatorship era and the implications for civil-military relationships. A brief comment on the larger historical role of the military in the economy is in order to appreciate the more recent scholarly debates.

The systematic studies of the military as an economic actor can be dated to the aforementioned classic by Samuel Huntington (Huntington 1957), which has inspired scholars to think of modern militaries as “state-based institutional actors with collective interests and professional standards” whose “interests are fundamentally corporate rather than individual” (Mani 2011b:27). Since in much of the Latin American region, from the 1870s onwards, the armed forces developed ahead of state institutions, “this evolution made Latin American militaries not only defenders of the nation but also agents of the state- and nation-building processes” (Mani 2011b:32). Partly to compensate for weak state capacities or a weak private sector (Brömmelhörster and Paes 2003), in the twentieth century, militaries were involved in developing corporations, welfare foundations, and unit-level commercial operations to generate resources that benefited them (Mani 2011b:28). In the period between the 1930s and 1980s, the military ruled in many countries, frequently with military ownership, management or stakeholding of economic enterprises.

Although the military has in many countries managed the national defence industry, their economic reach has often been much broader. As Mani demonstrates, the military in Latin America has been involved in a diverse range of economic activities: development of national oil and steel companies (in Brazil and Argentina); business enterprises (Ecuador); key economic sectors like tourism and agriculture (Cuba); public companies and national infrastructure (Honduras); and construction and finance (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua). These diverse examples demonstrate one commonality; “their economic activities allow the military to secure for itself significant resources of revenue that depend on appropriation by elected officials, but rather on dynamics in domestic and international economic markets and on interests and initiatives within the military itself” (Mani 2011a:184). Studying the military’s role as an economic actor can therefore offer important insights into civil-military relations. Mani’s important theoretical contribution in this field is a three-pronged analytical framework for how to undertake a comparative analysis of the military; the rational, structural and cultural approaches, as detailed in Mani (2011b).

While central scholars in the CMR field in the 1970s and 1980s were concerned with the institutional, historical and sociological interpretations of the military’s economic behaviour, and with factors explaining *la industria militar* (Rouquié 1987), the question that many scholars have posed during the period of democratic consolidation is to what extent this military power in the economic sphere has interfered with, or been detrimental to, civilian control over the military. Many scholars have perceived military economic power as an important challenge to strengthening and deepening

democracy in the region. Based on the Brazilian experience, Alfred Stepan was one of the first scholars of civil-military relations to suggest that the military's role in the economy could be difficult to curtail after the return to democracy, and thus present a challenge to the establishment of civilian control of the military (Stepan 1988:97). The core claim from theorists of civil-military relations and of international relations is that the armed forces pursue economic ventures to secure resources for institutional benefit (Brömmelhörster and Paes 2003:13).²² The same scepticism is present in other scholars' work (Goodman 1996; Rial 1996). Cruz and Diamint went as far as saying that military entrepreneurship was unequivocally detrimental for the establishment of democratic civilian control over the military (Cruz and Diamint 1998). Mani cautions against perceiving military activity in the economy as negative at the outset and calls for a more nuanced approach. The question posed by Mani is why militaries become entrepreneurial in the first place, and why it matters. Is it positive or detrimental to democracy? Mani usefully distinguishes between two major types of military entrepreneurs in Latin America: industrialisers, determined to build national defence capabilities and compete for international prestige; and nation builders, seeking to promote economic development that can foster social development and cohesion (Mani 2011b:25).

²² Cited in Kristina Mani, "Military Entrepreneurs: Patterns in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, no. 3 (2011): 28. Note that in this section we have shamelessly drawn on Kristina Mani's excellent review of the scholarly literature conceptualising military entrepreneurship.

Changing Military Self-Perceptions, Changing Military Roles²³

With the end of the Cold War and the demise of military dictatorships in Latin America, the scholarly literature in the CMR field has centred around a few crucial questions: (1) What should be the role of the military in “ordinary” times, when there are no external threats? And (2) what role should the military play in providing security within the country?

Fifteen years ago, Agüero and Stark contended that “while civil-military relations have clearly improved in recent years, difficult questions remain concerning the proper role and function of the military in the context of what are obviously major changes in the international system and the political scenarios of Latin America” (Agüero 1998:ii). This is still a question of high political importance, as well as academic concern. A number of scholars have engaged with the appropriate and actual role of the military in politics. Although “defending *la patria* (the nation, or fatherland) against internal and external threats is the historical mission claimed by Latin American armed forces” (Loveman 1999:xi), it is also clear that the military’s self-perception and their perceived mission in society have undergone substantial transformation over time (Fitch 1998). Historically, civilian governments have frequently given the armed forces explicit responsibility for functions that go well beyond national defence, “including maintaining internal order and security, defending the constitution and the republican form of government, preventing usurpation of authority by presidents or other government officials, and even supervising elections. Over 80 per cent of nineteenth century Spanish-American constitutions assigned a constitutional mission to the armed forces, thus turning them, in some sense, into an almost fourth branch of government” (Loveman 1994: 131).

During the era of authoritarianism, the military was concerned with protecting national security and defending the nation, *la patria*. The introduction of the National Security Doctrine and cross-national military networks of cooperation and exchange of intelligence (like that of Operación Condor in the Southern Cone) were established to fight the threat of Communism. Human rights violations were carried out on a large scale under the pretext that the military was defending the nation from Communism and the “threat of the left”—which legitimized the killing, torturing and disappearance of tens of thousands of people across the continent.

The (re)introduction of democracy in Latin America since the 1980s has forced the military to reorient themselves professionally and redefine their roles as protectors of *la patria*. Fernando Bustamante makes the important point that historically, from the time of the Conquista to the present, Latin American militaries have defined themselves by defending Christianity and fighting “the other.” As long as the Cold War continued, “the other” was Communism and the threat of the Left. Not all scholars agree on this point, though. For instance, Michael D. Desch argues the opposite; that in the case of Latin America “it was the real or perceived internal threat from indigenous leftist groups – not always closely aligned with the Soviet Union – that led to military interventions and other manifestations of bad civil-military relations during the Cold War” (Desch 1998:323).

With the Cold War over, who “the other” is has become increasingly unclear, and the military has been forced to reorient itself. Bustamante points out that Latin American armies “seem much more consistent in their preparation and deployment for peacetime tasks rather than those of conventional border defense.... Latin American armies are organized, trained, deployed and equipped in ways that reveal a notorious lack of actual concentration on conventional warfare” (Bustamante 1998:349-50).

²³ This section is rather unfinished. We have not had time to dig properly into these different strands of scholarship. The purpose of this section is therefore simply to highlight a few thematic areas that may be worth exploring in more depth and detail at a later stage.

This suggests that the military in many countries have perceived that they have an important role to play in internal affairs, not only in defending their countries against external aggression.²⁴ This may be partly because, historically, the armies in Latin America have been much more often involved in internal wars and in guaranteeing “security” for their citizens than involved in cross-border skirmishes (Bustamente 1998). Since the military perceive themselves as political, not only military, actors, it would be dangerous, argues Bustamente, to alienate them completely from politics and thereby make them feel useless.

While most scholars have assumed that periods of high international threat—such as the Cold War— increase the influence of the military and therefore make it harder for civilians to control it, Desch, taking on an international relations position, makes the opposite point: “A challenging *external* threat environment leads to relatively good civil-military relations – defined ... primarily in terms of civilian control over the military – while a challenging internal threat environment undermines civil-military relations” (Desch 1998).

According to Wendy Hunter, the relationship between civilian government and the military are subject to constant negotiations after the return to democratic rule, and “military role beliefs and attitudes shape the extent to which the officer corps remains an important political actor” (Hunter 1998). In her opinion, there are three questions that are central to examining the attitudes of the military. For instance, “deeply rooted attitudes among officers about their own immunity are unlikely to change auguring poorly for democratic norms” (Hunter 1998). Yet, we know that there have been important changes in the military over time, partly because of generational change, but also because of education and changing self-perceptions of the military’s role in a democratic setting. Some of these changes are reflected in recent works (Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2010, 2011).

What role should the military play and what role has the military actually played in different Latin American societies since the reintroduction of democracy in the 1980s? These questions have been explored in recent comprehensive cross-regional comparative studies (Barany 2012). Scholars seem to have honed in on a few issues: the role of the armed forces in national security; the role of Latin American militaries in peacekeeping forces; the role of the armed forces in internal security and combating societal violence; the interaction between the military and civilians/ordinary citizens.

An important current issue in CMR is how the military in different countries deal with different forms of societal violence (such as drug related crime, gang violence, violent street demonstrations, prisoners uprisings, terrorism, etc.) and how they interact with ordinary citizens in a democratic setting. In many Latin American countries, especially in Central America, there has been a continuation of violence against ordinary civilians from times of authoritarianism and civil war to the present. Some of this violence is perpetrated by the police, some by the military, some by guerrillas, and some by ordinary criminals. Homicide rates are soaring in many countries (such as Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela) due in part to the drug trade and gang related violence.

Despite negative experiences with violations committed by the armed forces in the name of preserving internal security during the dictatorship era, countries like Brazil, Colombia and Mexico now regularly use their armed forces to keep public order, when there is a perception that other state institutions (such as the police) have failed in their duties (Junta Interamericana de Defensa 2012). There is a growing literature on the military and public security, mainly focusing on Mexico (Palacios 2000; Moloeznik 2012) and Brazil (Zaverucha 2005, 2008), but also some literature on Colombia and some comparative work (RESDAL 2012). Studies in Brazil and Mexico show that as a result of

²⁴ Obviously, the military has played very different roles in different countries and different roles over time. Some countries (like Costa Rica, Panama and Haiti) do not even have conventional armed forces and are therefore technically and institutionally not prepared for external aggression. We thank Ingrid for pointing this out to us.

an unclear institutional status of the military and the large political influence exerted by the army in these countries, the national defence role is dangerously combined with the maintenance of internal order (so-called militarization of public security) (Zaverucha 2008; Sandoval 2000). Some scholars even wonder if the war against “Communism” has been replaced by the war against terrorism, the gangs, and the drug cartels (Kruijtt and Koonings 2002).

However, armed forces do not only participate in military actions to preserve public security. In many Latin American countries the armed forces have been invited to participate in the reform and control of jails, in providing humanitarian assistance after natural disasters, in community work, and in the protection of natural resources (RESDAL 2012). This illustrates how the political space provided in times of peace has been widened, inviting the armed forces to intervene in internal affairs, and even to represent the state internationally.

There are also more local meeting points between the civil and the military sphere. Beyond what Pion-Berlin refers to as “the micro world of civil-military relations, the key points of contact between political and military elites and their staffs” lie other arenas “where civilians and soldiers may interface,” such as congressional hearings and parliamentary defence commissions and courts (where civilian judges and lawyers prosecute defendants accused of human rights offences) (Pion-Berlin 2011:223). More empirically based knowledge on how this non-violent contact between the military and civilian unfolds is needed.

Conclusion

Loveman put it this way: “It is impossible to teach Latin American politics without focusing on the armed forces” (Loveman 1999:Acknowledgements). It also seems impossible to write about the armed forces without writing about politics. As the literature review on CMR provided in this paper has clearly demonstrated, the vast bulk of (Anglophone as well as Spanish and Portuguese) scholarly literature has focused on the *military in politics*. The scholarly discussions are intrinsically linked to the study of the breakdown of civilian rule, military authoritarianism, democratisation, democratic consolidation, and civilian control over the armed forces. A much newer (and therefore much smaller) strand of literature demonstrates that the military has also been an important *economic actor* in Latin America, both in the past and in the present. Finally, the current focus of the scholarly literature explores new roles for the armed forces in democratic Latin America. Due to a changing international and regional political environment, the concern with fighting external and internal wars has largely been replaced with national security concerns and new internal and cross-country “wars” on drugs, crime, and terrorism. Civil control of the military remains a potent concern among civilian governments as well as academic scholars.

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INDEXING TERMS

Literature review

Civil Military relations

Latin America

Civil-military relations constitute a crucial element in the transition to substantive democracy all over the world. During periods of authoritarianism or civil war, the military in Latin America has been responsible for extensive violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Since the reintroduction of democracy in the region in the 1980s and 1990s, the military has gradually been brought back under civilian rule. The balance of power between military and civil political actors has shifted. How and in which ways have civilian governments curtailed military power? What is the relationship between the military and civilian governments today? And what new roles have been assigned to or taken on by the military in areas such as maintaining national security?

Based on a review of the literature on civil-military relations in Latin America, this paper explores three main themes: (1) the military as a political actor; (2) the military as an economic actor; and (3) changing military self-perceptions and roles in a democratic era.