

ECUADORIAN

Military Culture

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The FIU-USSOUTHCOM Academic Partnership Military Culture Series

Florida International University's Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy (FIU-JGI) and FIU's Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center (FIU-LACC), in collaboration with the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), formed the FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership. The partnership entails FIU providing research-based knowledge to further USSOUTHCOM's understanding of the political, strategic, and cultural dimensions that shape military behavior in Latin America and the Caribbean. This goal is accomplished by employing a military culture approach. This initial phase of military culture consisted of a yearlong research program that focused on developing a standard analytical framework to identify and assess the military culture of three countries. FIU facilitated professional presentations of two countries (Cuba and Venezuela) and conducted field research for one country (Honduras).

The overarching purpose of the project is two-fold: to generate a rich and dynamic base of knowledge pertaining to political, social, and strategic factors that influence military behavior; and to contribute to USSOUTHCOM's Socio-Cultural Analysis (SCD) Program. Utilizing the notion of military culture, USSOUTHCOM has commissioned FIU-JGI to conduct country-studies in order to explain how Latin American militaries will behave in the context of U.S. military engagement.

The FIU research team defines military culture as "the internal and external factors — historical, cultural, social, political, economic — that shape the dominant values, attitudes, and behaviors of the military institution, that inform how the military views itself and its place and society, and that shape how the military may interact with other institutions, entities, and governments." FIU identifies and expounds upon the cultural factors that inform the rationale behind the perceptions and behavior of select militaries by analyzing historical evolution, sources of identity and pride, and societal roles.

To meet the stated goals, FIU's JGI and LACC hosted academic workshops in Miami and brought subject matter experts together from throughout the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, to explore and discuss militaries in Latin America and the Caribbean. When possible, FIU-JGI researchers conduct field research in select countries to examine these factors through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys. At the conclusion of each workshop and research trip, FIU publishes a findings report, which is presented at USSOUTHCOM.

The following report is part of the Florida International University—United States Southern Command Academic Partnership. United States Southern Command provides funding to support this series as part of its academic outreach efforts. Academic outreach is intended to support United States Southern Command with new ideas, outside perspectives, and spark candid discussions. The views expressed in this findings report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Government, United States Southern Command, Florida International University, or any other affiliated institutions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines Ecuadorian civil-military relations through an analysis of the institutional culture of the Ecuadorian Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas del Ecuador*), composed of the Ecuadorian Air Force (*Fuerza Aérea Ecuatoriana*, FAE), Ecuadorian Army (*Ejército Ecuatoriano*), and the Ecuadorian Navy (*Armada del Ecuador*). The report is divided into three sections, each of them with distinct aims, specifically to:

1. Synthesize the historical evolution of the Ecuadorian armed forces;
2. Identify sources of identity and sources of pride within the Ecuadorian armed forces; and
3. Evaluate the relationship between the Ecuadorian military and society

The Ecuadorian Armed Forces have been instrumental socio-political actors since Ecuador achieved independence from Gran Colombia in 1830.

- Upon independence, the Ecuadorian military was slow to professionalize. *Caudillos* often used the armed forces to suppress political opponents. Coup attempts, regional militia uprisings, and even civil wars lasted for more than 20 years.
- Liberal president and self-proclaimed military hero Eloy Alfaro undertook an ambitious modernization of the military in 1895. Under his leadership, Ecuador invited Chilean military professors to educate Ecuadorian officers in questions of military organization, discipline, and education.
- Military intervention in politics continued into and throughout the twentieth century, although the justification for intervention shifted from support for or defense of a single *caudillo* to state modernization.
- Rather than defending a political project, the armed forces perceived itself as above politics and acting solely in defense of the state and political order. One of the most notable instances was the 1925 coup known as the July Revolution (*Revolución Juliana*) in which an organized group of junior officers with a state-building project overthrew the president.
- The 1941 Ecuadorian-Peruvian War, in which Peruvian troops routed Ecuador and claimed more than 40% of Ecuador's territory, was a turning point in the evolution of the Ecuadorian military. This humiliating defeat and the conditions of the treaty that ended the conflict prompted military leadership to pursue a policy of modernization and professionalization.
- During the Cold War the military governed the country during two "soft" dictatorial periods (so-called *dictablandas*) from 1963-1966 and 1972-1979. These governments pursued several developmental goals and even undertook a limited agrarian reform. A serendipitous boom in petroleum production and rise in global crude prices greatly aided the two military governments that ruled from 1972 to 1979.
- Significant events since democratization in 1979 include external wars with Peru in 1981 and 1995. The victory against Peru in the 1995 Alto Cenepa War represents the military's most significant source of pride.

- The Alto Cenepa victory influenced subsequent civil-military relations including the involvement in civilian political affairs in the removal of three presidents and then a period of reduced autonomy under the presidency of Rafael Correa (2007-2017).
- Three key historical experiences shaped how the military sees itself. First, the military's role in state building and internal development led the institution to identify as the "strong arm and backbone of the state" (*brazo fuerte y columna vertebral del Estado*), responsible for ensuring governability, security, and democracy.
- Second, this perception was reinforced by involvement in the adjudication of political crises, including at least three pseudo-constitutional presidential removals since the return to democracy: Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, Jamil Mahuad in 2000, and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005. Gutiérrez was a perpetrator of the only coup d'état since re-democratization, against Mahuad, but the high command demanded he step down and transfer power back to a civilian government.
- Third, Ecuador's history of inter-state conflict—especially its three twentieth century wars with Peru—has defined its military history and its institutional identity more than campaigns of internal defense. This common external enemy helped unify the military.

The Ecuadorian Armed Forces' identity is formed by the aforementioned historical experiences as a state builder, political conciliator, and fighting force. Yet, it also sees itself as one of the country's moral authorities, a characteristic which allows the institution to transcend politics.

- Individuals influencing the military's source of identity include independence heroes Simón Bolívar and José Antonio de Sucre, nineteenth and early twentieth-century president Eloy Alfaro, naval hero Rafael Morán Valverde, and the Cenepa War heroes, including War Army Commander General Paco Moncayo.
- The military's sources of identity include their performance in external wars with Peru from their humiliating loss in 1941 to their stalemate in 1981 and especially their victory in 1995.
- The institution also draws its identity from its record of governing during the relatively reformist dictatorships of 1963-1966 and 1972-1976/1976-1979.
- The military also views itself as a moral authority. Large-scale scandals have been few and far in between in comparison to their civilian political counterparts.
- One of the military's dominant values is that of internal cohesion. The armed forces seek to maintain unity and avoid fragmentation. As a result, divisions within the military mostly fall along hierarchical lines rather than among service branches.
- Military leadership has avoided aligning the institution with individual politicians or political projects, which they believe divides the force and destroys operational capacity. As such, the military was largely able to resist politicization by ex-President Rafael Correa (2007-2017).
- In the context of a politically unstable Ecuador, the armed forces would likely remain unified while refraining from taking sides in the conflict. The institution's ultimate goal would be to help broker a solution that most closely adheres to constitutional order.
- Indigenous people make up a significant share of the Ecuadorian population and were legally exempted from military service until the early 1900s. The rural conscription law of the 1963-1966 dictatorship helped integrate the military but economic and social divisions between the officer corps and rank-and-file persist.

Since its inception, the armed forces have been, and continue to be, a principal protagonist in society, politics, and the economy, and one of the country's strongest institutions. The public generally agrees with the military's roles.

- The military's responsibility to contribute to social and economic development was codified in the constitutions of 1967, 1979, and 1998.
- The armed forces promoted different degrees of social development while governing. Beyond their role in fostering development through their actions, however, many officers also see the mere existence of the armed forces as a tool of social development for poor Ecuadorians.
- The armed forces remained rooted in political power as *de facto* advisers to civilian politics. In the twentieth century, the armed forces assumed a political leadership role when civilians were unable to find solutions to their problems within the existing institutional framework, either taking power directly or dismissing presidents. This role has evolved since 1979, as the military more often than not has become an arbiter of last resort during times of crisis.
- Dating to 1925, the military has been a powerful economic actor. The 1972-1976 military government promulgated statist development projects and also allowed different branches of the military to control business enterprises. This portfolio grew after the return to democracy. Ex-President Rafael Correa pushed back against this, especially through the 2008 Constitution, which prohibited control of businesses unrelated to national defense.
- Public confidence in the armed forces is high across ideological groups, gender, and other demographic characteristics, and has risen over the past 15 years. The military is the second-most respected institution in the country, after the Catholic Church, and possesses the highest degree of trust of any military in the Americas.

Historical Evolution

The Ecuadorian Armed Forces have been instrumental actors in ensuring Ecuador's political and social development since the country's independence from Gran Colombia in 1830. The nature of conflict in the time since independence has helped dictate the institution's evolution. The country was involved in numerous border skirmishes with both Peru and Colombia in the nineteenth century, and it engaged in three wars with Peru in the twentieth century. Unlike most other countries in the region, inter-state conflict has defined Ecuador's military history and its institutional identity more than campaigns of internal defense. Moreover, since 1925, the armed forces have occasionally intervened in civilian affairs in moments of constitutional crisis or political stalemate, with the stated purpose of preserving constitutional order or to promote state modernization. This has led the institution to identify as the "strong arm and backbone of the state" (*brazo fuerte y columna vertebral del Estado*), responsible for ensuring governability, security, and even democracy.

The Long Road to Modernization

Under Spanish colonial rule, the Royal Audience of Quito exercised jurisdiction over most of modern Ecuador, the Peruvian Amazon, and Jaén, Tumbes, and Popayán provinces. A number of citizen militias (*milicias ciudadanas*) acted as armed forces during this period, especially in urban areas and coastal regions like Guayaquil.¹ Dependence on these fragmented, hired groups continued throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and even into the post-independence period. Ecuador's War of Independence began in 1820 when Ecuadorian forces assembled in Guayaquil, forming contingents with revolutionary soldiers from Colombia commanded by Antonio José de Sucre, a close collaborator of Simón Bolívar.

The military was slow to professionalize. At the dissolution of Gran Colombia—modern day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador—in 1830, Venezuelan-born Juan José Flores became the country's first president. Although Article 52 of the 1830 Constitution formally established the post-independence armed forces, most of the new country's senior army officers and many of its troops were foreign-born (especially Venezuelan) veterans of Bolívar's army. However, the new country's military lacked operational, mobilization, or troop concentration plans, and the army was largely unprepared to face foreign invaders. Worse, the force was often used as a tool of the governing party to suppress opponents.² Unsurprising in this context, the military frequently intervened in civilian politics and civil-military relations were rocky. Coup attempts, regional uprisings (*levantamientos*) pitting different militias against each other and even civil wars were common, lasting almost without intermission for more than 20 years.³

Subsequent leaders sought to modernize the military and professionalize the officer corps. One of the first to attempt this was conservative Gabriel García Moreno, president for two periods between 1861 and 1875, in part as a means of ensuring his own survival. Among other measures, he reopened the military academy, reduced the army in size, and depoliticized it.⁴ The Liberal Revolution of 1895 and the ascension of Eloy Alfaro to power brought about further change. Under Alfaro's leadership, Ecuador was the first Latin American country to request military instructors to Chile to reorganize the army through a contract system.⁵ The work of the Chilean professors was

¹ David Andrade Aguirre. 2014. *Herencia de gloria. Historia del arma de infantería en el Ecuador*. Sangolquí, Ecuador: Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas.

² Patricio Lloret Orellana. 2012. "El período garciano y el progresismo." In *Historia Militar del Ecuador*, ed. D. Andrade Aguirre. Quito: Academia Nacional de Historia Militar.

³ These include the War of the Chihuahuas (1833), the Battle of Miñarica (1835), rebellions against President Rocafuerte (1837), a near border war with Perú (1842), and others.

⁴ David Andrade Aguirre. 2014. *Herencia de gloria. Historia del arma de infantería en el Ecuador*. Sangolquí, Ecuador: Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas.

⁵ Following the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), Chile's political and military leaders pursued army modernization by importing Prussian military know-how, and the institution eventually adopted a Prussian model of military service. By the end of the nineteenth century, Chile's army was the most modern in Latin America and its military leadership had begun to disseminate

decisive in the professionalization and modernization of the army, and in 1900 the army was able to repel an attack from Colombia organized by Ecuadorian political opponents of the government in power.⁶

Military intervention in politics continued into and throughout the twentieth century, although the justification for intervention shifted from support for or defense of a single *caudillo* to state modernization. In other words, rather than defending a political project, the armed forces started to perceive itself as above politics and acting in defense of the state and political order. One of the most notable instances is the 1925 coup known as the July Revolution (*Revolución Juliana*) in which an organized group of junior officers with a state building project overthrew the president. This marked the first institutional intervention of the military in order to introduce economic changes and a wide variety of social reforms to the country, and end the Liberal-Conservative hegemony (marking the origin of the modern Ecuadorian political party system).⁷ In part due to its increased professionalism, especially vis-à-vis civilian politicians, the armed forces assumed a leadership role in the economic and political transformation of the country, filling the political vacuum created during times of oligarchic crisis.⁸ Civilian governments were remarkably weak and short-lived, with 27 governments in the 20 years between 1925 and 1944.

Inter-State War and the Military in Power

Beginning in the 1940s, the evolution of the Ecuadorian military was marked by wars that grew out of the long lasting and unresolved border conflicts with southern neighbor, Peru. The first of these was the aptly named 1941 Ecuadorian-Peruvian War, in which Peruvian troops routed Ecuador and forced a settlement under the Protocol of Rio de Janeiro (Rio Protocol) on January 29, 1942. This agreement committed both parties to a cessation of hostilities and defined a common border, but also awarded 77,000 square miles of disputed territory in the Amazonian basin to Peru. However, the treaty failed to settle the border dispute and occasional clashes occurred in a then still non-demarcated border area between the states. In 1960, President José María Velasco Ibarra even renounced the protocol. Clashes flared into another outbreak of serious fighting in January 1981 called the Paquisha War; similar incidents occurred in 1983 and again in 1984.

Beyond external conflict, the armed forces also continued to play a role in civilian political affairs. Like other Latin American countries during the Cold War, the military governed the country in two dictatorial periods from 1963-1966 and 1972-1979. In the first of these, a reformist and

their organizational model (Frederick M. Nunn. 1970. "Emil Körner and the Prussianization of the Chilean Army: Origins, Process, and Consequences, 1885-1920." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 50(2): 300-322).

⁶ Ferenc Fischer. 2008. "La expansión (1885-1918) del modelo militar alemán y su pervivencia (1919-1933) en América Latina." *Revista del CESLA* 11:135-60.

⁷ Enrique Ayala Mora. 2008 [1993]. *Resumen de Historia del Ecuador*. Third ed. Quito: Corporación Editoria Nacional (p.69).

⁸ Bertha García Gallegos. 1991. "El estado y las F.F.A.A.," *Ecuador Debate*, No. 24 (diciembre): 69

anticommunist military junta governed for three years with the support of the United States.⁹ After two civilian governments, General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara and his developmentalist *Gobierno Revolucionario y Nacionalista* rode the international oil boom to pursue state-led development. These governments, often referred to colloquially as *dictablandas*, or soft dictatorships, were less repressive than their Southern Cone counterparts and were more progressive on social issues than previous civilian governments had been.

The Return to Democracy

Since the transition to democracy in 1979, the role of the armed forces has continued to evolve. Significant events since re-democratization include external wars with Peru in 1981 and 1995, involvement in the removal of three presidents (and the kidnapping of a fourth), and then a period of reduced autonomy under the presidency of Rafael Correa (2007-2017).

The Paquisha War was a continuation of the border conflict between Ecuador and Peru that took place in January and February 1981. After an Ecuadorian Army detachment took control of three watch posts in the non-demarcated zone of the eastern Condor Range (*Cordillera del Cóndor*), Peru charged that consistent with the Rio Protocol, the soldiers were violating Peruvian sovereignty.¹⁰ The conflict ceased with the Ecuadorians being driven back to the summit of the Cordillera del Cóndor. In the aftermath, both countries increased their military presence along the Cordillera del Cóndor area and Cenepa Valley, starting an escalating spiral of tension and provocation—one that ultimately resulted in another military confrontation in 1995.

After Paquisha, Ecuador established a number of permanent military bases, trenches, and land mines along the Cenepa River in the Cordillera del Cóndor. Peruvian authorities discovered these settlements in early January 1995, and a growing stalemate led to the 34-day Cenepa War between the two countries on January 16. The Ecuadorian Army and Air Force were ultimately victorious against much larger Peruvian forces, retaining control of the embattled outpost of Tiwintza and wresting local air superiority from the hands of the Peruvian Air Force. While Ecuador suffered three-dozen casualties, Peru lost almost one thousand soldiers.¹¹ The two countries signed a cease-fire in Brazil on February 17, 1995, supervised by a multinational mission of military observers from the Rio Protocol guarantor countries.¹²

In addition to protecting sovereignty and combating external threats, the armed forces have also intervened in democratic politics a number of times since 1979. After the Cold War, the

⁹ John D. Martz. 1988. "The Military in Ecuador: Policies and Politics of Authoritarian Rule." In Occasional Paper Series. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico (p.19).

¹⁰ Fernando Bustamante. 1992-1993. "Putting an End to Ghosts of the Past?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 34(4): 195-224.

¹¹ Allen Gerlach. 2003. *Indians, Oil, and Politics. A Recent History of Ecuador*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc. (p.126)

¹² Glenn R. Weidner. 1996. "Operation Safe Border: The Ecuador-Peru Crisis." *Joint Force Quarterly* 11:5 2-8.

military high command adopted a role as arbiter in the removals of presidents Abdalá Bucram (1997), Jamil Mahuad Witt (2000), and Lucio Gutiérrez (2005). In other cases, elements of the armed forces acted independently of the institution and as protagonists in the removal or direct defiance of civilian leaders. Infamously, in 1986, President León Febres Cordero jailed Air Force General Frank Vargas Pazzos for insubordination, eventually leading to paratroopers kidnapping the president, the minister of defense, and others, and threatening to kill them if they did not release Vargas.¹³ Similarly, it was in 2000 that a junior officer, Lucio Gutiérrez, collaborated with civilian actors to remove President Mahuad.

The Correa presidency marked a radical break from the past for the armed forces. Cognizant of the country's political history and anxious to centralize power, the leftist president gradually moved to impose limits to the military's autonomy and influence.¹⁴ First, as Table 1 shows, he ended to the tradition of appointing a member of the military as minister of defense. Of ten different ministers of defense, all were civilians. Second, his 2008 constitution established that the military could only own companies specifically involving national defense (Article 162), a direct threat to their vast corporate interests described below.¹⁵ Finally, he severed the historical relationship between the Ecuadorian and American militaries by ordering the expulsion of all U.S. forces from the joint base of Manta, which the United States had used as a Forward Operation Location from 1999 to 2009.

¹³ Catherine M. Conaghan and James M. Malloy. 1994. *Unsettling Statecraft: Democracy and Neoliberalism in the Central Andes*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press (pp.169-171).

¹⁴ Michael Shifter. 2016 (March 6). "Civil-Military Relations Sour as Correa Amasses Power in Ecuador" in *World Politics Review* (<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/18103/civil-military-relations-sour-as-correa-amasses-power-in-ecuador>)

¹⁵ Significantly, the constitution also constitution eliminated obligatory military service (Article 161)

Table 1. Ecuadorian Ministers of Defense (1979-2019)

Title	Name	Start	End	Branch
General	Rafael Rodríguez Palacios	10 Aug 1979	19 Aug 1979	Army
General	Marco Subia Martínez	20 Nov 1979	24 May 1981	Army
Admiral	Raúl Sorroza Encalada	24 May 1981	27 Jan 1982	Navy
General	Jorge Maldonado Miño	27 Jan 1982	3 Aug 1983	Army
General	Jorge Arciniegas Salazar	3 Aug 1983	10 Aug 1984	Army
General	Luis Piñeiros Rivera	10 Aug 1984	13 Mar 1986	Army
General	Medardo Salazar Navas	20 Apr 1986	10 Aug 1988	Army
General	Jorge Felix Mena	10 Aug 1988	10 Aug 1992	Army
General	Jose Walter Gallardo Román	10 Aug 1992	30 Jun 1995	Army
General	Alfonso Alarcón Santillán	30 Jun 1995	10 Aug 1996	Army
General	Victor Hugo Bayas García	10 Aug 1996	6 Feb 1997	Army
General	Ramiro Ricaurte Yáñez	14 Feb 1997	10 Aug 1998	Army
General	Jose Walter Gallardo Román	10 Aug 1998	9 Jan 2000	Army
Admiral	Hugo Unda Aguirre	25 Jan 2000	15 Jan 2003	Navy
General	Nelson Herrera Nieto	15 Jan 2003	20 Apr 2005	Army
General	Aníbal Solón Espinosa Ayala	21 Apr 2005	19 Aug 2005	Army
General	Raúl Oswaldo Jarrín Román	19 Aug 2005	28 Aug 2006	Army
General	Marcelo Delgado Alvear	28 Aug 2006	15 Jan 2007	Army
(civilian)	Teresa Guadalupe Larriva González	15 Jan 2007	24 Jan 2007	n/a
(civilian)	Lorena Escudero Duran	2 Feb 2007	31 Aug 2007	n/a
(civilian)	Wellington Sandoval Cordova	31 Aug 2007	9 Apr 2008	n/a
(civilian)	Antonio Javier Ponce Cevallos	9 Apr 2008	23 Apr 2012	n/a
(civilian)	Miguel Angel Carvajal Aguirre	23 Apr 2012	9 Nov 2012	n/a
(civilian)	Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces	28 Nov 2012	23 Sep 2014	n/a
(civilian)	Fernando Cordero Cueva	26 Sep 2014	3 Mar 2017	n/a
(civilian)	Ricardo Armando Patiño Aroca	3 Mar 2017	24 May 2017	n/a
(civilian)	Miguel Angel Carvajal Aguirre	24 May 2017	15 Sep 2017	n/a
(civilian)	Patricio Zambrano Restrepo	15 Sep 2017	27 Apr 2018	n/a
General	Raúl Oswaldo Jarrín Román	27 Apr 2018		Army

Source: Author's Data

After winning re-election in 2009 and then 2013, Correa intensified attempts to limit the armed forces' economic and political influence. Nonetheless, under pressure to get rid of its nondefense companies, the military high command in 2012 circumvented the limitation by transferring about 150 nondefense military corporations to the Social Security Institute of the Armed Forces (ISSFA), which produces revenue for the military. Civilian-military relations

became more strained during this time, culminating in Correa's removal of the entire military high command on February 5, 2016.

President Lenín Moreno (2017-present) has taken a more conciliatory approach than his predecessor, improving civil-military relations and signing a cooperation agreement with the United States that re-entrenches U.S.-Ecuadorian bilateral defense relations.

History's Impact on the Ecuadorian Armed Forces View of Itself

The military views itself—or possibly, has mythologized itself—as the “backbone of the state” and the “creator of the nation”, a tool of social development and national integration responsible for ensuring governability, security, and democracy. This self-perception is undoubtedly a consequence of the transformation of the armed forces into a professional hierarchical corps while civilian politics suffered from low institutionalization, weak professionalism, and recurring bouts of instability. However, it is also a function of the role the military assumed as a state builder, its leadership during times of political crisis, and its numerous conflicts with Peru.

State Builder

Armed men have played a leadership role in Ecuadorian politics and a modernizing role in society since the nineteenth century. This role is a product of the perceived failures of civilian governments and the country's chronic political instability. Military scholar Betha García notes that the Ecuadorian Armed Forces have assumed a leadership role in the economic and political transformations of the country since their professionalization in the 1920s and 1930s, especially during oligarchic crises.¹⁶ This pattern continued throughout the mid-twentieth century and reached a head during the military governments of the 1960s and 1970s.

The first of these Cold War reformist governments ruled from 1963-1966. This junta pursued a series of moderate reform laws that dealt primarily with agrarian structure, taxation, and administration—relatively progressive measures that rankled both the coastal and highland elite.¹⁷ During this time, the armed forces legitimized their role in politics, economy, and society through the National Security Law, which provided legal protections for the military's political actions and a justification for defending the country's internal security.¹⁸ General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara's developmentalist *Gobierno Revolucionario y Nacionalista* (1972-1976) had

¹⁶ Bertha García Gallegos. 1991. "El Estado y las F.F.A.A." *Ecuador Debate* 24: 65-77.

¹⁷ John D. Martz. 1988. "The Military in Ecuador: Policies and Politics of Authoritarian Rule." In Occasional Paper Series. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico (p.19).

¹⁸ J. Samuel Fitch. 1977. *The Military Coup D'Etat as a Political Process: Ecuador, 1948-1966*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (pp.69-71).

similar ambitions of socioeconomic reform.¹⁹ During its four years in power it was able to modernize the state and alleviate poverty as a result of the serendipitous boom in petroleum production and tripling of international crude prices. In the tradition of the *Revolución Juliana*, the dictatorship adhered to a policy of state-led development, emphasizing administrative honesty and bureaucratic technification.

One result of these experiences is that Ecuadorian society still associates the Armed Forces with an imaginary of “order, stability and equilibrium, maintaining a higher level of credibility and legitimacy over other public institutions.”²⁰ Due mainly to its role as a driver of modernization of the institutions and economic insertion of the state, the Ecuadorian Armed Forces achieved a credibility that granted them a certain informal power in the political sphere of the subsequent civil governments.

Political Arbiter

The military’s self-perception as the backbone of the state also grows out of its role as de facto arbiter during times of political crisis. Since the return to democracy, the armed forces have sought to preserve constitutional order and acted as a go-between among feuding political and social actors. Amidst massive social protest in February 1997 and widespread opposition to embattled president Abdalá Bucaram’s government, the military supported an impeachment procedure rather than a coup. When this was deemed unviable because congress could not reach the necessary two-thirds vote threshold, the armed forces then supported the rules of constitutional succession, choosing Vice President Rosalía Arteaga over the extra-constitutional choice of Congressional President Fabián Alarcón.²¹ When politicians viewed this as unviable, General Paco Moncayo issued a statement from the armed forces calling for national dialogue.²²

Similarly, in 2000, a small group of officers conspired to remove the democratically elected government of Jamil Mahuad, while the institution stepped in to once again broker dialogue among different institutional actors. In the midst of social, economic, and political crisis in January 2000, a military-indigenous alliance led in part by Lieutenant Colonel (and future president) Lucio Gutiérrez took the presidential palace and demanded Mahuad’s resignation. The military high command, however, called on Gutiérrez to step aside, and a large faction of the

¹⁹ Agustín Cueva. 1982. *The Process of Political Domination in Ecuador*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction (pp.52-53); Anita Isaacs. 1993. *Military Rule and Transition in Ecuador, 1972-92*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press (p.11); John D. Martz. 1988. "The Military in Ecuador: Policies and Politics of Authoritarian Rule." In Occasional Paper Series. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico (p.20).

²⁰ Catalina Pazmiño. 2005. “La frágil legitimidad del príncipe democrático.” *Íconos*, 23 (septiembre): 32

²¹ Rosalía Arteaga Serrano. 1997. *La presidenta. El secuestro de una protesta*. Quito: Edino.

²² Allen Gerlach. 2003. *Indians, Oil, and Politics. A Recent History of Ecuador*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc.

armed forces vocally opposed his intervention.²³ The Joint Command then formally disavowed the junta and negotiated a transfer of power to Vice President Gustavo Noboa.

The military's participation in politics did not end there. Gutiérrez won the 2002 presidential elections, but after less than two years in office he faced fierce legislative opposition and an impeachment attempt. The president removed and replaced Supreme Court and Constitutional Court judges in exchange for congressional backing from important parties. While he survived the impeachment, these constitutional violations angered a broad social segment including urban middle-class protesters. The Armed Forces Joint Command publicly declared its withdrawal of support to the president in April 2005 and the National Congress voted a short while later to remove the president for abandonment of charge.²⁴ In all three cases, social protest and political opposition precipitated the high command's decision-making and pronouncements.

Defender of Sovereignty

The presence of external threats and relative absence of internal threats also influenced the way the institution views itself. In the twentieth century, this meant a period of self-reflection after losing the 1941 war with Peru and fighting to a standstill in 1981, and then the pride of winning the 1995 war. Moreover, as the form of external threat changed from states to non-actors in the 2000s, the military's understanding of its role has also transformed.

One of the most impactful events in modern military history was Peru's route of Ecuador in the 1941 Ecuadorian-Peruvian War. After Peru alleged that Ecuadorian troops had staged incursions and even occupations of Peruvian territory in the disputed coastal zone of Zarumilla in July 1941, a much larger and better-equipped Peruvian force of 13,000 men overwhelmed the approximately 1,800 Ecuadorian forces. The Peruvian military then invaded the Ecuadorian province of El Oro, forcing a settlement under the Rio Protocol on January 29, 1942. This agreement committed both parties to a cessation of conflict and defined a common border, but also awarded 77,000 square miles of disputed territory in the Amazonian basin to Peru—more than 40% of Ecuador's total size at the time.²⁵ The loss and conditions of defeat impacted the Ecuadorian military and encouraged the institution to rethink its organization, role, and effectiveness.

²³ John Polga-Hecimovich. 2010. *Políticos, militares y ciudadanos Un análisis de las caídas presidenciales en Ecuador (1997-2005)*. Vol. 94. Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional-Abya Yala.

²⁴ Bertha García Gallegos. 2005. "El 20 de abril: presente y pasado de un proyecto militar corporativo." *Íconos: Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 23 (Septiembre): 95-102; Simón Pachano. 2005. "Ecuador: Cuando la inestabilidad se vuelve estable." *Íconos: Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 23 (Septiembre): 39-46.

²⁵ However, the treaty failed to settle the border dispute and occasional clashes occurred in a then still non-demarcated border area between the nations. In 1960, President José María Velasco Ibarra even renounced the protocol. Clashes flared into another outbreak of serious fighting in January 1981 called the Paquisha War; similar incidents occurred in 1983 and again in 1984.

Until the 1990s, the military's troop deployment with emphasis on the southern area and personnel strength reflected a large-scale force ready to fend off an invasion. In fact, fear over armed conflict with Peru caused Ecuador to maintain half of its brigades in the southern part of the country.²⁶ The relative lack of internal security threats facilitated this decision. Unlike Peru, Colombia, or even Venezuela, insurgency groups were rare in Ecuador during the Cold War. The small urban guerrilla group known as "Alfaro Vive ¡Carajo!", for instance, was only briefly active from 1982 to 1988. As a result, the Ecuadorian Armed Forces was not typically oriented towards internal policing to the degree it was in those other countries. Brigade deployment and training reflected this pattern.

Given all of this, Ecuador's victory in the Alto Cenepa War in 1995, marked a high point in the institution's history. Unlike previous conflicts between the two countries, Ecuador displayed air superiority, suffered fewer combat casualties than Peru, and ultimately retained control of the—albeit small—disputed territory. In doing so, the armed forces demonstrated how much their combat effectiveness had grown from 1981, a time when they did not even possess anti-aircraft missiles, and demonstrated to Ecuadorians citizens that the military was capable of not just contributing to state building, ruling, or arbitrating political conflict, but could also fulfill the key function of defending the country's sovereignty from external threats.

Since the end of conflict with Peru, the military has been searching for a new identity. One area that has become increasingly important to the FAE is internal defense—although this time in the form of internal policing rather than anti-insurgency. In fact, Maiah Jaskoski argues that since 2000, Ecuador's army has consciously neglected its professional mission of external defense on its northern border with Colombia to instead focus on internal defense.²⁷ She advances the idea that the Ecuadorian Army, fearing the uncertainty of border defense against insurgent encroachment in the north, has instead opted to carry out policing functions such as combating the drug trafficking. Infamously, on March 1, 2008, the Colombian military violated Ecuadorian sovereignty, crossing the countries' porous border and attacking a Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) camp in the Ecuadorian province of Sucumbíos. This led to the deaths of over twenty FARC militants, including Raúl Reyes, and led to a diplomatic crisis among Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela.

²⁶ 1973. "Ecuador". Langley, VA: National Intelligence Survey, Central Intelligence Agency [released June 16, 2009; CIA-RDP01-00707R0002001100256] (p.2).

²⁷ Maiah Jaskoski. 2012. "The Ecuadorian Army: Neglecting a Porous Border While Policing the Interior." *Latin American Politics and Society* 54(1): 127-57; Maiah Jaskoski. 2013. *Military Politics and Democracy in the Andes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

SOURCES OF MILITARY IDENTITY

The Ecuadorian Armed Forces' identity is formed by these aforementioned historical experiences as a state builder, political conciliator, and fighting force, as well as the relative stability of the institution compared to other institutional actors. To some degree, they see themselves as an extension of Antonio José de Sucre and Simón Bolívar's Independence Army (*Ejército Libertador*) that defeated Spain. Ecuador commemorates the 1822 Battle of Pichincha, during which Sucre led troops in the last battle against the Spaniards and brought about the liberation of Quito, each May 24. An even more resonant figure, however, is Eloy Alfaro, who helped professionalize the institution as president in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite his mixed record as a commander of troops, Alfaro signed an agreement with Chile to improve military education in Ecuador, and his name adorns the military college, the navy's flagship frigate, and an air base in the coastal city of Manta.

The more than century-long conflict with Peru was also a significant source of military identity for Ecuador, in both its early defeats and its 1995 victory. The rout the country suffered in 1941 was a particular point of embarrassment. The event showed the armed forces' lack of resources and modern equipment, poor organization, and weak combat preparation. There were also few instances of military heroism. In fact, until 1995, Ecuador's chief source of combat glory came in the course of 1941's crushing defeat, when an Ecuadorian gunboat fought and crippled a much larger Peruvian destroyer. The captain of that gunboat, Commander Rafael Morán Valverde, remains the navy's foremost hero.

By contrast, the 1995 Cenepa War represents the institution's greatest source of pride and influenced subsequent civil-military relations and perception in society. After previous failures, Cenepa is a source of combat glory and proof that the armed forces could successfully defend state borders. It also marked the culmination and resolution of a long-running external conflict reduced Ecuadorian territory and national pride, and at least in the eyes of the institution, justified its budget and resources. One "Hero of the Cenepa," retired General Moncayo, was Commander in Chief of the Army during the war and later enjoyed success as a legislative deputy and mayor of Quito. Ecuador's victory also reflected an abiding institutional belief in the seriousness and preparation of its officers, many of whom with lower pay and fewer resources than counterparts in other Latin American countries. A declassified U.S. National Intelligence Survey report on the Ecuadorian military from 1973, for instance, notes that even then, despite

lackluster funding and small force, officers and enlisted personnel were well trained.²⁸

The military also takes great pride in its role as state builder. Military leaders are quick to note that military governments were responsible for some of the country's most progressive social and economic reforms. In this role as the guardian of the state's interest, the military sees itself as duty bound to intercede in civilian affairs if it deems intervention necessary to preserve the constitution—or the common good. The institution's stability is a source of pride, especially when contrasted to high political turnover and weak civilian institutions (three elected presidents failed to complete their constitutional mandates between 1996 and 2006, and until 2011 no Ecuadorian president in history had ever served more than five consecutive years in office).

Dominant Norms and Values

The military high command espouses a number of institutional values consistent with those of militaries the world over, including: subordination to the national interest; allegiance to defend sovereignty; institutional loyalty; military spirit; discipline; hierarchical respect; cohesion; democratic culture; morality; honor; honesty; and military ethics.²⁹ Three prevailing norms or values stand out that help shape the institution's behavior. First, it sees itself as one of the country's moral authority. Second, the military sees itself not necessarily as subordinate to but above civilian politics. Third, consistent with the high command's list, there is a strong preference for institutional cohesion. As a consequence of these values, the armed forces not only accept but actively seek out its role as a state builder as well as a political broker.

Amidst a history of political corruption scandals and indecorous behavior by some civilian presidents, the military saw itself as the country's moral authority. Senior military leaders have acted with caution, at least since the return to democracy in 1979, and there have been relatively few cases of military corruption. This is especially true in comparative context. Pooled data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) from 2004 to 2016-2017 show that members of the Ecuadorian soldiers rarely solicited bribes from citizens (2.9%), especially in comparison to police officers (10.6%) or government employees (10.3%). Large-scale scandals have also been few and far in between in comparison to their civilian counterparts in politics.

²⁸ 1973. "Ecuador". Langley, VA: National Intelligence Survey, Central Intelligence Agency [released June 16, 2009; CIA-RDP01-00707R0002001100256] (p.2).

²⁹ 2016. "Misión, Visión, Valores Institucionales", Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas del Ecuador, Quito (<https://www.cccfaa.mil.ec/2016/08/16/mision-vision-valores-institucionales/>)

This moral component also contributes to the armed forces' belief that they are not merely unaffiliated with civilian politicians or political projects but that they *transcend* politics. As General (retired) Carlos Moncayo said in an interview, "We are an institution bound to the motherland (*patria*) and not to any government."³⁰ That is to say, the armed forces sees itself as beholden to the state and social development, but not the ideology or political project of any given politician or political party. Officers believe that aligning themselves with politicians destroys operational capacity, so they try to avoid it. These values were important in permitting the military to resist efforts of political politicization by ex-President Rafael Correa and maintain its neutrality. Retaining its neutrality also helps the military maintain internal unity and avoid debilitating fragmentation.

These values suggest that in times of political crisis, the armed forces would likely assume the role of arbiter, as it did throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, rather than one of protagonist, as during the Cold War. Facing political or countrywide instability, the military would be apt to remain unified—or at least strive for institutional cohesion—while refraining from taking sides in the political or social dispute at the heart of the conflict. The institution's ultimate goal would be to help broker a solution that most closely adheres to constitutional order. Paradoxically, this might involve taking power for a brief period of time with the goal of returning power to civilians who they deem responsible. Lastly, despite a preference for order, the military would try to avoid violence against political protestors.

Internal Divisions

Despite the armed forces' focus on cohesion and unity, some rank, class, and ideological divisions persist. There is a healthy inter-branch rivalry among the three service branches of the Ecuadorian Armed Forces: the Ecuadorian Air Force (*Fuerza Aérea Ecuatoriana*, FAE), Ecuadorian Army (*Ejército Ecuatoriano*), and the Ecuadorian Navy (*Armada del Ecuador*). Nonetheless, due to their relatively small sizes, the branches try to complement each other. The army enjoys the largest budget and has accounted for all but two non-civilian defense ministers since 1979, but it is also the largest and most active force. Until President José María Velasco Ibarra's Executive Decree 63 in 1971, there was no Joint Command of the Armed Forces. However, this is more reflective of slow modernization than inter-branch divisions.

As in any hierarchical organization, there are differences among ranks, especially between the officer corps and enlisted personnel. This division falls along class lines, as it does in most countries, while also overlapping with ethnicity. Commissioned officers usually come

³⁰ Personal interview, May 13, 2019.

from the middle and upper classes from the highlands (specifically Pichincha and Azuay provinces), are whiter, and graduate from Ecuadorian service academies. Further, many of these high-ranking officers claim a long military lineage—including some dating back to the 1830s. By contrast, while non-commissioned officers and enlisted ranks are usually less educated, more indigenous, and come from the working class or peasantry. In many cases, the military devotes considerable energy to elementary technical instruction for these personnel. However, this class division has become less pronounced since the 1970s, as more mestizo and indigenous Ecuadorians have joined the officer ranks. Furthermore, a recent high school training system has helped recruit cadets from the coast, especially in the once-highland dominant navy.

Generationally, the military can be divided into retired officers or those nearing retirement who participated in the Alto Cenepa War in 1995 and younger officers without that combat experience. This latter cohort came of age at a time when the military's focus was on internal policing narco-trafficking.

In recent history, there have been some signs of ideological divisions, often centered on the armed forces' role vis-à-vis the state. In the 1960s and 1970s, the significant ideological divide was between soft- and hardline dictatorial factions. Since the return to democracy, this has morphed into a cleavage between small groups willing to subvert the democratic order for noble or ignoble reasons—for example, Frank Vargas Pazzos in 1986 and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2000—and the larger institutional block eschewing intervention in civilian affairs except to broker exits from institutional crises.

The officer corps largely resisted the Rafael Correa administration's efforts to politicize the institution and meddle in military management. As under five-time President José María Velasco Ibarra, some officers serving during the Correa government were selected for command positions or promotions on the basis of perceived political loyalty rather than their talent or experience. At the same time, the institution generally sought to protect itself from the government's efforts to politicize it for its own ends. As described above, this led to some instances of confrontation during Correa's final years in office as the military aimed to guard its prerogatives.

The Impact of Demographics on Identity

The changing demographics of the force have helped shape its identity. As with the United States, the Ecuadorian Armed Forces gradually became an institutional source of racial/ethnic integration over the twentieth century. The same cannot yet be said, however, for the incorporation of women, as all three branches remain overwhelmingly masculine.

Ethnic integration has been relatively recent. Historically, the military was mostly a white or mestizo force from the highlands. Indeed, prior to the early twentieth century, indigenous Ecuadorians were legally exempted from military service.³¹ In 1900, Chilean advisors helped Ecuador draft a European-style conscription law that nonetheless exempted indigenous citizens from service. This provision was finally revoked in 1920 and by the 1930s the military began to “indigenize”.³² However, the same did not apply to the officer corps. Ethnically exclusionary criteria for admission to the Military College meant that educated officers continued to be wealthier and whiter, effectively reproducing society’s dominant overlapping ethnic and class cleavages in the military.

This began to change in the 1960s and early 1970s. The military junta that ruled from 1963-1966 included among their many policies a conscription law that actively sought rural conscription (*conscripción agraria militar*), including a large number of indigenous as well as non-indigenous peasants. Under the law, all were referred to as peasants (*campesinos*). Brian Selmeski argues that in contrast to the relationship between the military and indigenous in Bolivia, there has been relatively peaceful accommodation between the two groups in Ecuador.³³ Still, as noted above, military rank-and-file is largely mestizo and indigenous, while the officer corps remains whiter and wealthier.

The armed forces also see themselves as a masculine force. Women were only allowed to join the military beginning in the late 1950s and the first women officers were only admitted in 1977 (to the Navy). Remarkably, the Eloy Alfaro Military High School in Quito graduated its first group of women even later, in 1999. Consequently, the gender imbalance is high. According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Defense, in 2019 the total percentage of female personnel in the Armed Forces is 2.9% (462 in the Army, 429 in the Navy, and 282 in the Air Force).³⁴

³¹ To serve in the armed forces in 1830, for instance, it was necessary to be a citizen. But indigenous people did not gain equality before the law then until 1857, and therefore could not serve.

³² Brian R. Selmeski. 2007. "Indigenous integration into the Bolivian and Ecuadorian armed forces." In *Cultural Diversity in the Armed Forces: An International Comparison*, ed. J. L. Soeters and J. Van der Meulen. London and New York: Routledge (pp.48-63).

³³ Brian R. Selmeski. 2007. "Indigenous integration into the Bolivian and Ecuadorian armed forces." In *Cultural Diversity in the Armed Forces: An International Comparison*, ed. J. L. Soeters and J. Van der Meulen. London and New York: Routledge (p.54).

³⁴ 2019. “Mujeres en FFAA: Pilares en los procesos de inclusión,” Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Quito (<https://www.defensa.gob.ec/mujeres-en-ffaa-pilares-en-los-procesos-de-inclusion/>)

THE ECUADORIAN ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY

Since its inception, the armed forces have been, and continue to be, a principal protagonist in society, politics, and the economy, and one of the country's strongest institutions. The military sees itself responsible for protecting the constitution and ensuring governability, security, and democracy.³⁵ The military's role in the country's social, economic, and political affairs has been enshrined in the constitution itself. The 1967 Constitution (Article 248), 1979 Constitution (Article 162), and 1998 Constitution (Article 183) all stipulated that the military must not only protect Ecuador's sovereignty and defend its constitutional order, but also contribute to the country's economic and social development. So, while the post-third wave armed forces fall under civilian control, the armed forces enjoy a great deal of autonomy and sometimes intervene in civilian affairs.³⁶ Public confidence in the armed forces, meanwhile, is high across ideological groups, gender, and other demographic characteristics, and has risen since 2004.

Role in Society

The armed forces play a widely recognized, century-long role in promoting pro-reform policies and state modernization dating at least to the July Revolution. So while they selectively adopted aspects of the national security doctrine and ignored others, one thing the armed forces recognize is their role in social development.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, between the two types of military entrepreneurs that Kristina Mani observes in Latin America—industrializers, determined to build national defense capabilities and compete for international prestige, and nation builders, who seek to promote economic development that can foster social development—she unequivocally classifies Ecuador in the latter category.³⁸

As part of its contribution to national development, the armed forces have devoted a great deal of time and personnel to civic action. As early as the mid-twentieth century the army's engineering battalions built roads in rural areas, the navy used its repair shop to help make repairs in small coastal towns, and the air force operated and staffed until 2011 a domestic commercial airline, *Transportes Aéreos Militares Ecuatorianos* (TAME), that provided service to remote areas not profitable or served by other airlines.³⁹ This has held in a post-transition

³⁵ Although some critics have called this more of a myth than a reality (See: Simón Pachano. 2009. "Militares y política en Ecuador." In *Influencias y resistencias. Militares y poder en América Latina*, ed. F. Agüero and C. Fuentes. Santiago, Chile: Catalonia (pp. 145-165).)

³⁶ Maiah Jaskoski. 2013. *Military Politics and Democracy in the Andes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

³⁷ Fredy Rivera Vélez and Katalina Barreiro Santana. 2014. "Political Intelligence and National Security in Ecuador: A Retrospective Reading." *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance* 2(3 & 4): 115-33.

³⁸ Kristina Mani. 2011. "Military Entrepreneurs: Patterns in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53(3): 25-55.

³⁹ TAME has since become a commercial entity; 1973. "Ecuador". Langley, VA: National Intelligence Survey, Central Intelligence Agency [released June 16, 2009; CIA-RDP01-00707R0002001100256] (p.2).

context. For instance, the armed forces were a key actor in carrying out President Rodrigo Borja's ambitious Monsignor Leonidas Proaño National Literacy Campaign in 1988, especially organization and transportation.⁴⁰ This program was ultimately successful, benefiting 155,000 people and reducing illiteracy from around 13.9% to 9.6%.⁴¹ More recently, the army and navy helped respond to the 2016 earthquake that killed more than 600 people and devastated the Ecuadorian coast.⁴²

The military assumes social development, domestic task implementation, and emergency response as part of its mandate. As David Pion-Berlin and Craig Arceneaux argue in general about Latin American militaries in the post-Cold War era, "Governments know they cannot do without military assistance in the realm of development—there are just too many tasks that need to be completed and not enough civilian capacity and know-how. When push comes to shove, the armed forces may be better than civilians to call upon a well-trained team of engineers and foot soldiers to get the jobs done."⁴³ In many cases, like Ecuador's, the military possesses higher organizational capacity and a clearer mandate than civilian agencies and thus represents the only organization capable of responding nationally to crisis situations or urgent tasks.⁴⁴

Beyond their role in fostering development through their actions, many officers see the mere existence of the armed forces as a tool of social development for poor Ecuadorians. One interviewee highlighted how conscription provided opportunities for peasants who may not have had access to indoor bathrooms, beds, showers, and other modern amenities. As such, some officers expressed concern that eliminating obligatory military service would take away opportunities for social mobility for many of these people.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Anita Isaacs. 1993. *Military Rule and Transition in Ecuador, 1972-92*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

⁴¹ Rosa María Torres. 2004. "Educación, movilización social y formación de opinión pública. La experiencia de la Campaña Nacional de Alfabetización 'Monseñor Leonidas Proaño' del Ecuador (1988-1990)." São Paulo: CEDI.

⁴² Holgar Alava. 2016 (April 19). "Las Fuerzas Armadas de Ecuador despliegan a 10.000 soldados para ayudar a las víctimas del terremoto", *Diálogo: Revista Militar Digital* (<https://dialogo-americanas.com/es/articulos/las-fuerzas-armadas-de-ecuador-despliegan-10000-soldados-para-ayudar-las-victimas-del-terremoto>).

⁴³ David Pion-Berlin and Craig Arceneaux. 2000. "Decision-Makers or Decision-Takers? Military Missions and Civilian Control in Democratic South America." *Armed Forces & Society* 26(3): 425;

⁴⁴ Latin American militaries boast the ability to quickly mobilize and respond to domestic or international crisis with manpower and operational support, such as food distribution or emergency medical services (Francisco Rey Marcos. 2009. "Military participation in humanitarian action: reflections on the Colombia case." London: Humanitarian Exchange Magazine: 45 (<http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-45/military-participation-in-humanitarian-action-reflections-on-the-colombia-case>)). That is, militaries may be more able to carry out policies more quickly and effectively than civilian bureaucracies (Consuelo Cruz and Rut Diamint. 1998. "The New Military Autonomy." *Journal of Democracy* 9(4): 115-127; Kristina Mani. 2011. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.). Crisis situations or urgent developmental tasks need to be met immediately, and under many circumstances, the military represents the only organization capable of meeting those needs—especially missions that require large amounts of human capital or mobilization. At the same time, political elites may also turn to the armed forces for developmental tasks to curry favor with them (Consuelo Cruz and Rut Diamint. 1998. "The New Military Autonomy." *Journal of Democracy* 9(4): 115-127; Kristina Mani. 2011. "Military Entrepreneurs: Patterns in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53(3): 25-55; David Pion-Berlin and Harold Trinkunas. 2005. "Democratization, Social Crises, and the Impact of Military Domestic Roles in Latin America." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 33(1): 5-24.).

⁴⁵ Personal interview, May 15, 2019.

Role in Politics

As with state development, it is impossible to discuss politics and political instability in Ecuador throughout the country's history without recognizing the vital role of the military. Political scientist Simón Pachano highlights three patterns of military intervention in Ecuadorian politics.⁴⁶ First, in the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century it acted as a politicized, repressive tool wielded by one political group against another. Second, as placeholders who ruled when civilians were unable to find solutions to their political problems within the existing institutional framework, but who returned power to civilians—particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Since 1979 the armed forces have become arbiters of last resort who stepped in to resolve political conflict and impede the dissolution of the state, legally justified by the National Security Law of 1979. As a result of this law, the armed forces remained rooted in political power as permanent advisers to the executive.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, although often involved in resolving political disputes, the post-transition Ecuadorian Armed Forces have not intervened at an organizational level in politics and have been careful to avoid politicization. Officers pointedly note that the 1986 kidnapping of President Febres Cordero and 2000 coup against President Jamil Mahuad were not led by the armed forces as an institution but by insubordinate individuals (Frank Vargas Pazzos and Lucio Gutiérrez, respectively). At the same time, the military became the ultimate arbiter in the turbulent Ecuadorian democracy of the 1990s and early 2000s. When confronted by scandal, social protest, and a loss of legislative support, the military high command would issue a public statement removing support of the president or even involve itself directly in negotiations. At least part of the political elite supported this: the 1998 Constitution went so far as to establish the armed forces as the “guarantors of democracy.”⁴⁸ Given these antecedents, it is likely that the military would again play a similar role in the event of political crisis.

Unlike, the Venezuelan FANB, the Ecuadorian Armed Forces has been careful to avoid aligning itself with any political ideology, political projects (neo-liberalism, post-neoliberalism, etc.), or political leaders. One retired officer declared that, “we are not apolitical—we are defenders of development and security. Politicians are just passengers with defined interests.”⁴⁹ So while it may occasionally involve itself in politics, it sees itself as a protector of political order rather than beholden to any single leader or dogma. All of this was on display in the

⁴⁶ Simón Pachano. 2009. "Militares y política en Ecuador." In *Influencias y resistencias. Militares y poder en América Latina*, ed. F. Agüero and C. Fuentes. Santiago, Chile: Catalonia (pp. 145-165.)

⁴⁷ Iván Romero. 2010. *Cambios en la política de defensa nacional. Del libro blanco hacia la nueva agenda de seguridad interna y externa*. MA Thesis, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Quito.

⁴⁸ Article 158 of the 2008 Constitution considers them an institution aimed at protecting citizen rights, liberties, and guarantees, with the fundamental mission to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

⁴⁹ Anonymous interview with the autor. May 16, 2019.

September 2010 police kidnapping of President Rafael Correa: the high command did not take sides for or against the president until called upon to rescue him.⁵⁰

Role in Economics

Dating to 1925, the military has also been one of the country's most powerful economic actors. With their role enshrined in the 1967 Constitution, the 1972-1976 military government promulgated a statist development projects and also allowed different branches of the military to gain control of business enterprises. This portfolio of business grew even after the return to democracy. The 2008 Constitution prohibited control of businesses unrelated to national defense, but the military has still managed to maintain indirect control over many of them.

Until 1973, the armed forces controlled only limited enterprises dedicated to supplying troops with basic necessities like food, uniforms, and light manufactured goods. However, the discovery of petroleum and the resulting oil boom under the military government established a much larger and lasting role for the military in the economy.⁵¹ The Rodríguez Lara government considered the military an essential actor in the economic development that was necessary for political stability and national security. His administration financed its ambitious agenda of economic and social reforms through state control of petroleum refining, which also funded new state enterprises in a range of industrial and consumer industries. In 1973, the army created the Directorate of Army Industries (*Dirección de Industrias de Ejército*, DINE), a holding company for dozens of army-managed enterprises, while the navy created its own commercial fleet, and the air force expanded TAME.⁵² The institution established strategic firms in metallurgy, oil production, and transportation as well as mining, automobiles, telecommunications, fisheries and even hotels (e.g. the Quito Marriott).

The return to democracy did not diminish the armed forces' economic power. After the transition, the military secured lasting privileges, including representation in key administrative positions in the state, petroleum royalties, and a business portfolio valued at more than \$100 million—as well as the purchase of land for non-defense purposes.⁵³ It was not until 2008 that the Correa government weakened the economic power of the institution, as described above. Correa also promoted legislation to audit military holdings through the defense ministry. Nonetheless, the president also transferred management of the state-owned Petroecuador to the navy, ostensibly to root out corruption.

⁵⁰ 2011 (July 20). "Informe militar dice que Correa dispuso su 'rescate' en el 30-S", *El Universo*, Guayaquil (<https://www.eluniverso.com/2011/07/30/1/1355/informe-militar-dice-correa-dispuso-rescate-30-s.html>).

⁵¹ Catherine M. Conaghan. 1988. *Restructuring Domination. Industrialists and the State in Ecuador*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh.

⁵² Kristina Mani. 2011. "Military Entrepreneurs: Patterns in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53(3): 25-55.

⁵³ Kristina Mani. 2011. "Military Entrepreneurs: Patterns in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53(3): 25-55.

Society's Attitudes towards the Ecuadorian Armed Forces

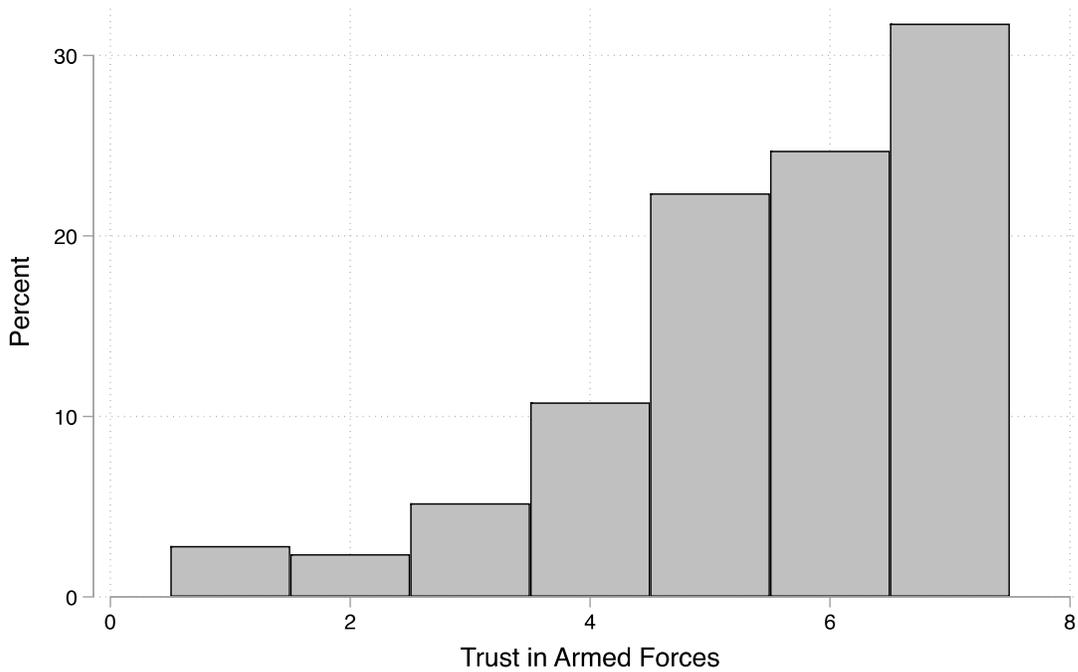
For its part, the Ecuadorian public is favorably disposed to the military and views it as a professional, trustworthy institution. The armed forces is the second-most respected institution in their country, after the Catholic Church, while in comparative context it possesses the highest degree of trust of any military in the Americas.⁵⁴ Indeed, Ecuadorian public opinion toward the military is generally positive, and consistent with a regional trend, improved between 2004 and 2016. One consequence of popular legitimation is that it contributes to the military's *de facto* autonomy from civilian control.

There are at least three factors that shape this perception. First, as discussed at length, the armed forces have been an engine of state development and nation building, of relative social progressivism, and as a source of institutional stability in a country where that is sorely lacking. Second, the military has never really been a repressive force in Ecuador the way so many militaries were in other Latin American countries. Even the military governments of the 1960s and 1970s are referred to as "soft dictatorships" since they were generally free of the types of human rights abuses that characterized the repressive dictatorships of the Southern Cone during that same period. Third, the armed forces enjoy popular legitimacy as a consequence of their victory over Peru in the Alto Cenepa War and their economically generated social support activities.

The numbers bear out these perceptions. Using biannual public opinion survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion (LAPOP) project, I plot trust in the armed forces (1=low, 7=high) in Figure 1. Over 30% of the public rates the armed forces at the highest confidence level, and nearly 80% of respondents answered in the affirmative (5, 6, or 7).

Figure 1. Trust in the Ecuadorian Armed Forces, 2016-2017 (1=low, 7=high)

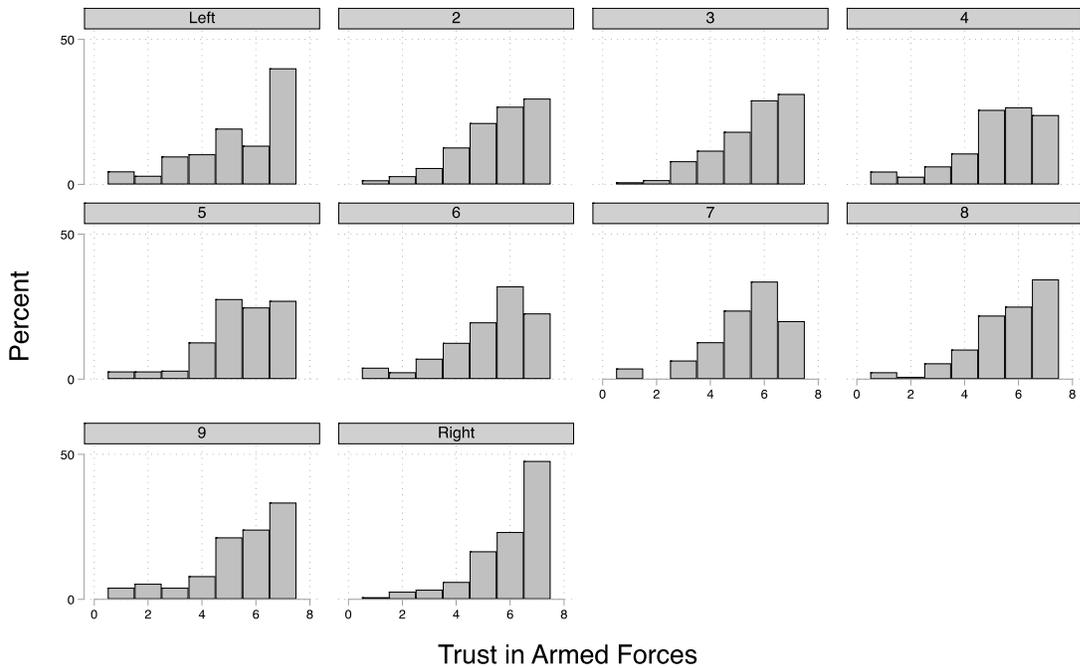
⁵⁴ Orlando J. Pérez. 2014. "Trust in the Armed Forces: Evidence from AmericasBarometer." In *2014 AmericasBarometer Regional Release*. Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC), Florida International University.



Source: Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) 2016-2017

The public’s attitude toward the armed forces is also consistent across demographic groups, region, and ideology. Figure 2 plots trust in the armed forces as a function of political ideology, from far left (=1) to far right (=10). Remarkably, the distribution of preferences is nearly identical in the ideological extremes, and most of the plots show a monotonic rise from “distrust” to “trust”. The same goes for gender. Although women tend to have a lower opinion of the armed forces than men globally, the two plots (not shown) are quite similar, suggesting that both men and women in Ecuador have a favorable opinion of their military.

Figure 2. Trust in the Ecuadorian Armed Forces by ideology (1=left, 7=right)

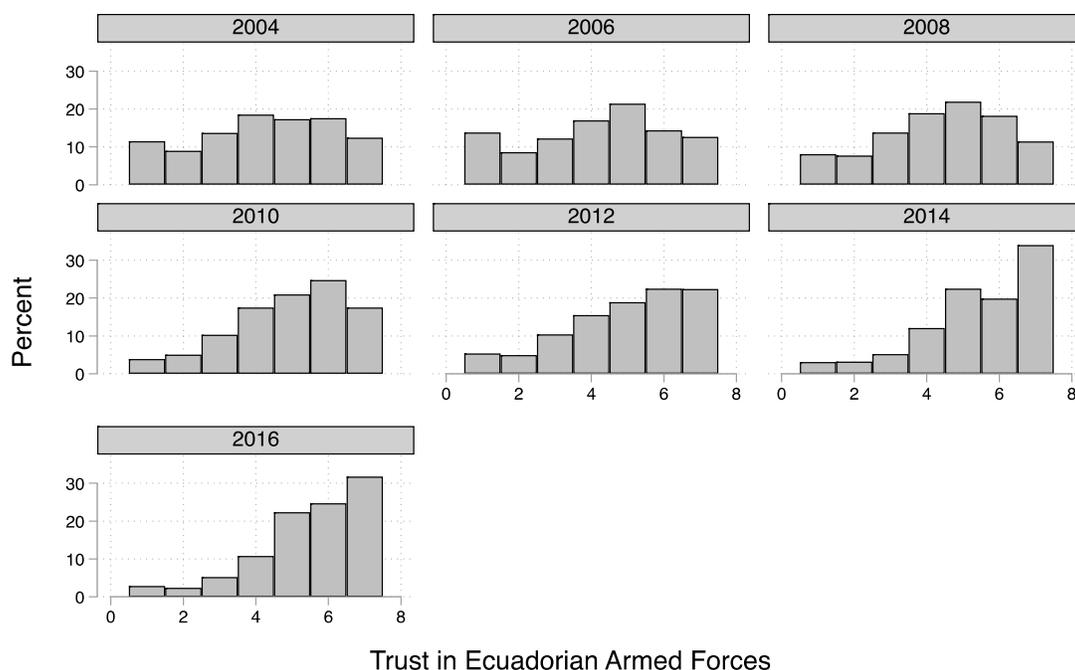


Source: Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) 2016-2017

Notably, public confidence in the armed forces has increased since LAPOP first conducted its first systematic survey in the country in 2004.⁵⁵ As Figure 4 shows, in 2004, the distribution of responses approximated a normal curve centered on the mean, whereas by 2010 and certainly by 2014, that numbers increase monotonically from lowest level of trust to highest. One possible explanation for this finding is to consider the political context and the military's role: in 2005, the armed forces adjudicated the removal of Lucio Gutiérrez as president, representing the third time in eight years that it had participated in dismissing a popularly elected president. As time went on and this event faded from the popular consciousness, trust increased.

⁵⁵ Data sourced from the AmericasBarometer produced by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), May 24, 2019, <http://www.lapopsurveys.org>.

Figure 3. Evolution of Trust in the Ecuadorian Armed Forces, 2004-2016 (1=low, 7=high)



Source: Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)

CONCLUSIONS

The Ecuadorian Armed Forces view themselves as the “strong arm and backbone of the state”, a characterization that reflects their unique development and place in the Ecuadorian state. The mission of the military, as stated in the 2008 Constitution, is to defend Ecuadorian sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁵⁶ However, its role has traditionally exceeded this scope to include social and economic development, the provision of assistance in the maintenance of internal order, and a direct or indirect role in political life. There are many reasons for this, but one is the military’s professionalism with respect to chaotic civilian politics and irregular economic growth in the twentieth century.

The military’s role in state building and internal development are major sources of institutional pride and help inform military identity. Since the early twentieth century, the armed forces have tasked themselves with ensuring governability, internal security, and even democracy—all responsibilities codified in three different constitutions between 1967 and 2008. Since the return to democracy, the military has been involved in the adjudication of political crises, including at three presidential removals between 1997 and 2005. Perhaps paradoxically,

⁵⁶ *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*. 2014 [2008]. National Government of the Republic of Ecuador 2008. Quito. Article 158.

the military takes action under these circumstances believing it acts in defense of the state and political order. The other major structuring factor in military identity was the series of inter-state conflicts with Peru. This conflict was a source of institutional (and national) unity and helped distinguish Ecuador's military from others in the region that may have been more focused on internal threats than external ones. Peru's defeat of Ecuador in 1941 remains an ignominious event, while the success of 1995 is probably the military's greatest source of institutional pride.

Ex-President Rafael Correa took measures to weaken military autonomy and power from 2007 to 2017. Among other things, he ended the tradition of appointing military officers as minister of defense, enfeebled the armed forces' non-defense business enterprises, and severed the longstanding bilateral defense relationship between Ecuador and the United States. However, unlike Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, Correa was not able to politicize the military or significantly divide it, despite appointing loyalists to positions of power. One reason for the armed forces was able to resist this was the value they place on maintaining institutional cohesion. Another is that officers understand that aligning their institution with politicians erodes their institutional capacity.

Despite or perhaps as a consequence of the Ecuadorian Armed Forces' role in social, political, and economic life, as well as its resistance to politicization under the Correa government (which tends to divide public opinion), Ecuadorian citizens express a high degree of trust and confidence in the military. In fact, not only is the military one of the respected institutions in the country, it also possesses the highest degree of trust of any military in the Americas. This is a function of its victory in the 1995 Alto Cenepa War, its successes during two periods of military rule, and reflects the popular perception of the armed forces as a well-trained, professional institution. It bears repeating that in comparison to other Latin American military dictatorships, Ecuador's *dictablandas* allowed more civil liberties and engaged in far less repression. Lastly, public opinion of the military has actually improved since 2004, perhaps indicative of the public's unease with the role of the armed forces in the removals of three straight democratically elected presidents. Still, in the context of a politically unstable Ecuador, the armed forces would still be likely to be limited intervention: remaining unified and refraining from taking sides, while brokering a solution that most closely adheres to constitutional order.

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John's research is broadly focused on the effects of political institutions on democratic stability, policymaking, and governance, especially in Latin America. He is also interested in the application of formal modeling and quantitative methodology to answering research questions in these areas. His current book project that examines how lawmakers in countries with low capacity bureaucracies assure the effective implementation of given public policies, and how their choice of bureaucratic agents affects the likelihood of policy success. To show how agency ideology and agency capacity influence chief executives' decision-making calculus, he evaluates patterns of policy delegation from an original database of over 50,000 executive decrees from across Latin America. He then evaluates the policy success of selected projects. He finds that although presidents may circumvent low capacity bureaucracies to implement policy, this is a costlier long-term strategy than investing in improving agency capacity. In addition to this, he is interested in presidential (in)stability, specifically in patterns of coups d'état and presidential impeachment, coalition dynamics under presidentialism, and the design of electoral institutions. He has published peer-reviewed scholarship in *The Journal of Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Democratization*, and *Electoral Studies*, among others.

