

ARGENTINE

Military Culture

2017





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 academic support to further USSOUTHCOM’s understanding of the political, economic, security, and cultural trends in Latin America and the Caribbean. The current research centers on understanding militaries’ cultures throughout the region.

FIU defines military culture as “the internal and external factors—historical, cultural, social, political, and 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 shapes how the military may interact with other institutions, entities, and governments.” The research team identifies and expounds upon the cultural factors that inform the rationale behind the perceptions and behavior of select militaries by analyzing their historical evolution, sources of identity and sources of pride, and their relationship with various actors, government, society, etc.

To meet the stated goals, FIU hosts academic workshops in Miami that bring together subject matter experts from throughout the U.S. and Latin America and the Caribbean to explore and discuss regional militaries. Additionally, in some instances FIU researchers conduct field research in select countries and examine these factors through in-depth interviews. At the conclusion of each workshop and research trip, FIU publishes a findings report.

The following Military Culture Report, authored by Frank O. Mora, Brian Fonseca, and Pablo Atencio is the product of a research trip to Argentina in February 2017 and months of empirical research. Field research included interviews with academics, active and former senior military personnel, and security and defense professionals in Argentina. Additionally, Fabian Calle, Argentine Council for International Relations (*Consejo Argentino Para Las Relaciones Internacionales*), was instrumental in supporting the production of this Military Culture Report.

The views expressed in this findings report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. government, U.S. Department of Defense, USSOUTHCOM, Florida International University, or the institutional affiliations of the participants.

On behalf of FIU-JGI and FIU-LACC, we wish to acknowledge and thank all those who assisted in the production of this piece including the individuals interviewed in Argentina.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Historical Evolution of the Argentine Armed Forces	6
<i>Formation and Professionalization of the Military</i>	6
<i>Politicization of the Military: 1930-1976</i>	7
<i>The Turning Point in the Military's Role in Politics: 1976-1983</i>	10
<i>Directing the Military Back into the Barracks</i>	11
Identity and Sources of Pride	16
<i>Foreign Military Influence</i>	16
<i>Finding Its Identity After 1983</i>	18
<i>Composition of the Military</i>	20
<i>Sources of Pride</i>	21
The Argentine Armed Forces and Society	24
<i>Perceptions of the U.S. Military</i>	30
Conclusion	32
About the Authors.....	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The four most influential historical inflection points for the Argentine armed forces are the formation and professionalization of the military during the 19th and 20th centuries, the September 6, 1930 military coup, the March 24, 1976 military coup known as the Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*), and the 1982 Malvinas War.¹

- The formation of the Argentine military dates back to 1806 when militia groups were formed to combat British invasions of the Rio de la Plata. General José de San Martín created the Regiment of Mounted Grenadiers (*Regimiento de Granaderos a Caballo*) to defeat the Spanish forces at the Battle of San Lorenzo in 1812, and later led liberation movements in Peru and Chile. He remains among the most revered figures in Argentine military history. Professionalization of the armed forces did not begin until the late 1870s with the establishment of the Military Academy and the Naval Military School.
- The September 6, 1930 coup marked the start of the military in effect as a political party. It was the first in a series of six military coups between 1930 and 1976 that gave the military either interim or more permanent-like control over government.
- The armed forces assumed control of the state and granted political power to a military junta in 1976 leading to a period known as the Process of National Reorganization. The military focused attention on internal security as the prevailing national security threat. As a result, widespread human rights violations and gross mismanagement led to deep divisions between the military institution and society.
- In 1982, the loss of the Malvinas War combined with the subsequent economic crisis ultimately led to the collapse of the military regime and the return to democracy in 1983. This led to decades of alienation of the military in Argentine government and society.
- Since 1983 the military has been systematically and effectively subordinated to civilian elected authorities, now being part rather than separate from the state.

External sources of identity center on the prominent influence of German (1890s-1930s), French (pre-1880s and again in the 1950s) and U.S. (post-1960s) militaries.

- The Argentine military has emulated French, German, and U.S. models, incorporating varying aspects of everything from structure and training to conventional and counter-insurgency doctrine.

The Argentine military draws on several historical legacies as sources of institutional pride: General José de San Martín, Argentina's role in liberating South America, and the valor demonstrated during the Malvinas War.

- General José de San Martín remains the single most important historical figure for the military. This can be seen today in the Argentine Army's vision statement: "A modern Army based on the values *Sanmartinianos*." San Martín is closely associated with basic military ideals such as the concept of comradeship, loyalty, and integrity, among others.
- Despite the military's defeat at the Malvinas, Argentine military view the war through the lens of heroism and national pride, and in remembrance to the nearly 650 killed.

¹ Also known as the Falklands.

- Emerging sources of pride stem from the evolution in military missions, including peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. It also serves as a way to recover its place in society.

Argentine society's view of the military has shifted significantly over time.

- As the military professionalized and became one of the most respected national institutions, political leaders turned to the military to provide the vehicle through which to create a sense of Argentine nationhood and citizenship among the country's new settlers. The compulsory military service established in 1901 did exactly that while helping enhance the institution's prestige and ties with the new and youthful society.
- As the military's political power and intervention increased significantly after 1930, the military viewed itself separate from the state and society, as guardians of the state, protector of Argentina's external security and internal stability. Despite the military's hegemony and propensity to install itself in the *Casa Rosada*, society continued to value and even venerate the military.
- By the end of the military government in 1983 and in the wake of the disastrous Malvinas War, society-military relations had reached its lowest point. The widespread violence associated with the "dirty war" coupled with economic chaos and the defeat during the Malvinas War dramatically shifted how the military and society viewed each other. Estimates range between 7,000 and 30,000 deaths or disappeared during the military government's tenure from 1976-1983. The "isolation of the armed forces, discredited politically, economically, morally and even professionally created minimal conditions" for rehabilitating democracy and dramatically changing civil/society-military relations.
- One very illustrative moment came during the economic and political crisis of 2001-2002. In the past, a political-economic crisis of this magnitude would have led the armed forces, with popular support, to intervene. However, the military showed no propensity to interfere or influence political outcomes. This led to the military's favorability rating reaching its highest level since 1983, at 42 percent, with rural areas above 50 percent.
- By the end of the Kirchner era, even as the military's professionalism and institutional integrity and pride were significantly undermined, society's opinion of the institution, particularly in the interior of the country, improved over time. One of the reasons for the improvement of society-military relations is the change in roles and missions. The military is no longer involved in any internal security mission and therefore not susceptible to accusations of human rights violations as a result of repression, even in a law enforcement capacity, against society. Their missions, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response, have been welcomed by society as a productive use of the military's capacity and have helped enhance the institution's image.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES

To understand the evolution of the Argentine armed forces, it is important to examine the most prominent historical inflection points that have shaped contemporary identity of the military institution, the institution's role in society, and the complex and often tense relationships between the military and civilian government and society. The four most influential historical inflection points for the Argentine armed forces are the formation and professionalization of the military during the 19th and 20th centuries, the September 6, 1930 military coup, the March 24, 1976 military coup/government known as the Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*), and the 1982 Malvinas War.² The following sections examine these four critical junctures and their respective impact on Argentine military identity.

Formation and Professionalization of the Military

The formation of the Argentine armed forces dates back to 1806 when militia groups were formed to combat British invasions of the Rio de la Plata. Following its first victory, militia forces successfully countered a second British invasion in 1807. The subsequent "May Revolution" served as the beginning of the war of independence that led to the development of the First Junta (*Primera Junta*), a group of militia forces charged with governing Buenos Aires. Junta leadership felt that it was necessary to develop an organized military force that could defend the territory, and issued a decree on May 29, 1810 creating a consolidated Argentine military. Despite success in countering British and Spanish armies, the Junta was deeply divided and lacked clear leadership. It was not until 1812 with the arrival of José de San Martín, and other experienced generals of the Peninsular War, that the capacity of the revolutionary forces was strengthened. San Martín created the Regiment of Mounted Grenadiers (*Regimiento de Granaderos a Caballo*) to defeat Spanish forces at the Battle of San Lorenzo in 1812. San Martín also created the Army of the Andes (*Ejército de los Andes*) and led liberation movements in Peru and Chile. Finally, in 1816, the Argentine provinces declared independence from Spain. San Martín remains among the most revered figures in Argentine military history.

² For more, see: Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo, eds., *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); William R. Thompson, "Regime Vulnerability and the Military coup," *Comparative Politics* 7, no. 4 (1975): 459-487; David Pion-Berlin, "The Fall of Military Rule in Argentina: 1976-1983," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1985): pp. 55-76; George Philip, "The Fall of the Argentine Military," *Third World Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1984): pp. 624-637.

The subsequent professionalization of the armed forces did not begin until the late 1800s. Under President Domingo F. Sarmiento, Argentina opened the National Military Academy (*Colegio Militar de la Nación*) in 1870 and the Naval Military School (*Escuela Naval Militar*) in 1872. These institutions trained cadets to defend Argentina's sovereignty while remaining professional and apolitical. The Argentine military used the French Army as a model to base its strategies, rules, identity, and uniforms. The establishment of the Superior School of War (*Escuela Superior de Guerra*) and the School of Non-Commissioned Officers (*Escuela de Suboficiales*) advanced the evolution of the professional military force in Argentina. New laws required obligatory military service in 1901 as a means of combatting illiteracy and promoting professional trades. Finally, the School of Military Aviation (*Escuela de Aviación Militar*) was created in 1912. These institutions were critical in forming the early culture of the military institution. In addition to technical skills, these institutions emphasized national pride and sense of duty across all three branches of the military.

Politicization of the Military: 1930—1976

Until the 1930s, the military institution remained relatively apolitical with much of the focus centered on institutional development and professionalization. However, on September 6, 1930, military forces led by General José Félix Uriburu overthrew the Hipólito Yrigoyen government in a coup known by supporters as the September Revolution. The 1930 coup marked the beginning of a series of six military coups (1930, 1943, 1955, 1962, 1966, and 1976) in Argentina that gave the military either interim or more permanent-like control over government.³ Only two presidents finished their presidential terms during the 20th century, both rising to office vis-à-vis the military: General Agustín P. Justo (1932-38) and Colonel Juan Domingo Perón (1946-52, 1952-55, 1973-74); Perón would later be ousted in 1955 during his second six-year term.⁴

This period saw frequent transitions between civilian and military governments, leading to the deep politicization of the military and the evolution of new and complex relationships between the military, government, and society.⁵ Argentina witnessed the rise of the military as a prominent

³ For more on this topic, see: Deborah Lee Norden, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation* (Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁴ Robert Potash, *The Army & Politics in Argentina 1928 – 1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p. 35.

⁵ For more on military politics in Argentina, see: Alfred C. Stepan, *Rethinking military politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

political actor, informally referred to by society as the “military party.” The military, often in coalition with civilian political elites, utilized the civic-military coup (*golpe cívico-militar*) as a means of obtaining power. It was common for military officers to openly ascribe to various political ideologies such as liberal (*yrigoyenistas*), conservative, or ultra-nationalistic (*uriburistas*) political orientations that contributed to deepening politicization and factionalism within the institution.⁶ Additionally, society began to view the armed forces and its place in Argentine society differently once the military assumed a more politicized role than the one established during its formation.

Not all military leaders, however, endorsed an expanded political role for the military during this period. According to Robert Potash, the government of General Agustín Pedro Justo desired to restore discipline and professionalism to the institution, isolating the military from politics in order to reassert an apolitical culture in the military.⁷ Despite Justo’s efforts, many military officers sympathized with various political ideologies and saw opportunities for an increased role in government. The Roberto Ortiz (1938-42) and Ramon Castillo (1942-43) administration supported anti-liberal economic policies, adopting an import substitution industrialization development model that sought to protect domestic industries while enhancing the role of the military in the Argentine economy. This led the military to internalize the notion that the scope of the military’s responsibility or duty included socio-economic development.

In 1943, 300 national officers, one of whom was Colonel Juan Domingo Perón, created the Group of United Officials (GOU) with the purpose of opposing the candidacy of the conservative Patrón Costas. After the 1943 coup, Perón, as Minister of War, created an alliance to increase the number of sympathetic GOU military officers and promoted advisors in an effort to create a network of loyal cadres.⁸ Perón quickly became the undisputed leader of the mass movement known as *peronismo* in 1945, and was elected President in 1946.

Perón’s policies were contentious, creating divisions between *peronistas* and anti-*peronistas* within society. Peron’s efforts at transforming the economy and social structure of society (antithetical to the interests of the traditional political and economic elite) while consolidating his grip on power, created divisions that extended into the Argentine military. Perón

⁶ Carlos Alberto Floria and César A. García Belsunce, *La Argentina Política: Una Nación Puesta a Prueba* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: El Ateneo, 2005), p.123

⁷ Potash, *The Army & Politics in Argentina 1928 – 1945*, p. 81.

⁸ Floria and Belsunce, *La Argentina Política*, p.123.

sought to strengthen acceptance by institutionalizing *peronista* sentiment among soldiers. According to David Pion Berlin, Perón “ordered his subordinates to disseminate Justicialist (peronist) doctrine throughout the ranks; he “peronized” the curriculum at the Military Academy and the Superior War School.”⁹ In 1948, Perón established the Law of National Defense (Ley 13.234) in attempt to integrate and subordinate the army, navy, and newly created air force (1945) by establishing a Ministry of Defense (MOD). Until this point, the services maintain a degree of separation from each other and from the central government.¹⁰ However, Perón never transferred sufficient authority to truly empower the MOD.¹¹ In fact, as an illustration of the MOD’s lack of prominence, Perón appointed General Sosa Molina as the first Minister of Defense in 1949; General Molina had fallen out of favor with Peron because of his criticisms of Peron’s wife Evita’s influence in government.¹² The Ministry remained relatively weak and power remained with the service chiefs of the army, navy, and air force. Perón’s leadership style was very much based on a cult of personality that most in the military did not follow. Members of the military were expected to participate in the political acts of the regime, viewed by many in the officer corps as intrusive and ideological. Many soldiers believed that government efforts to insert ideology into the institution limited their autonomy and professionalism. As a result, the military became a divided and unsettled entity.¹³

An anti-*peronista* military coup led to the removal of Perón in 1955 in what became referred to as the *Revolución Libertadora*. Following the pattern that began in the 1930s, civilian and military governments saw the formal power holders (i.e. political parties) share power with the real power players—military, unions, and businesses—until the 1976 military coup. Since the 1960s, the military sympathized with the anti-liberal right in the political and cultural realms, yet still supported the liberal economic policies as demonstrated by the use of liberal-oriented advisors that held sway over the economy.

⁹ David Pion-Berlin, *Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press), p. 118.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ David Pion-Berlin, *Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press), p. 118. Vicente Massot, *La Excepcionalidad Argentina*, (Buenos Aires, AR: Emecé Editores), p. 22.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ It is important to note that despite divisions within the military caused by Peron’s efforts to imbue the institution with justicialismo, Peron always saw himself first as a military officer committed to defending the institution and its norms.

Since the 1960s, the emergence of the East-West¹⁴ conflict in Latin America, especially with the rise to power of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution, raised grave concerns within the Argentine military. The military saw a doctrinal shift from Perón's Doctrine of National Defense (*Doctrina de Defensa Nacional*—DDN) towards the Doctrine of National Security (*Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional*—DSN). The former was based on the classic conception of war against an external enemy, while the latter shifted the focus towards internal enemies in order to prevent revolutionary uprisings. The military in turn, revised its training in order to ensure the capacity to fight external and internal threats.¹⁵ Much of this training was done at the Superior School of War (*Escuela Superior de Guerra*—ESG) where officers with the rank of captain received training based on French counter-insurgency strategies.¹⁶ The French held a strong influence over Argentine military training and doctrine during the 1950s, with French professors incorporated into the Army War College starting in 1956. French professors helped disseminate the DSN among Argentine mid-ranking and senior military officials through courses and publications.¹⁷ Subsequent civilian and military governments approved a number of regulations in its counter-insurgency doctrine. These included: Rule of “conduct for land forces” (RC-2-1); rule of “conduct for the land forces in emergency zones” (RC-2-3); rules of “non-conventional operations” (RC 8-1); and rules of “operations against irregular forces” (RC-8-2).¹⁸ These rules began forming generations of officers in the fight against citizens deemed enemies of the state. In the mid-1960s, the U.S. military supplanted French influence in shaping future counter-insurgency doctrine. As the focus turned inward against internal enemies, preparation and training to confront external acts of aggression were largely ignored, helping to explain military failures during the Malvinas War.

The Turning Point in the Military's Role in Politics: 1976-83

Another critical inflection point for the Argentine armed forces is the March 1976 military coup that ousted Juan Perón's third wife María Estela Martínez de Perón, known simply as Isabel Perón. The armed forces assumed control of the state and granted political power to a military junta

¹⁴ East-West is a reference to the Soviet-U.S. divide that spread throughout Latin America, among other parts of the world.

¹⁵ Ministerio de Defensa de la Nación Argentina, *La Construcción de la Nación Argentina - El rol de las Fuerzas Armadas* (Buenos Aires, AR: Publicación del Ministerio de Defensa - República Argentina, 2010) p. 390.

¹⁶ Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers), p. 198.

¹⁷ Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Proyecto y construcción de una nación: Argentina*, p. 396.

¹⁸ Ramón Genaro Díaz Bessone, *Guerra Revolucionaria en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, AR: Círculo Militar), p. 243.

comprised of Chief of the Army Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera of the Navy, and Brigadier General Orlando Ramón Agosti of the air force. The junta was in charge of electing presidents; a decision that fell to General Videla. The military junta also had the ability to remove presidents and monitor progress against national objectives. The junta's proposed objectives included ensuring political sovereignty, strengthening nationalist tradition, enhancing Argentina's presence on the world stage, changing the economic structure, defining and asserting moral and cultural values considered to be important in Western Christian societies, and emphasizing NSD. The military focused attention on internal security as the prevailing national security threat, and it asserted itself as the moral reserve—a concept that had been utilized by Perón and designed to elevate the value of the armed forces—and the saviors of the country in times of economic, political, and social crisis.

In the international realm, the military administration confronted several problems: deepening external debt, growing criticism at home and abroad of human rights violations, the possibility of war with Chile (1978), and conflict with Great Britain. As a result, the military government felt increasingly isolated and under assault from its previous allies like the U.S. While Papal mediation resolved the possibility of conflict with Chile, society had strong anti-Chilean sentiments until 1982 when General Augusto Pinochet secretly helped Argentina in the Malvinas War. At the same time, Argentine society's anti-Americanism, which dates to an earlier part of the century, was exacerbated as a result of United States' assistance to Great Britain. In 1982, the military junta made the decision to invade the Malvinas islands under the miscalculation that the British would not respond and that the U.S. would support Argentina or remain neutral. The military suffered a violent defeat as a result of various errors in judgment, strategy, and military operations.

Directing the Military Back into the Barracks

The military's defeat at the hands of the British in the Malvinas War left the country in crisis. Argentina held \$36 billion in external debt—one of the highest in the world, while high levels of inflation ravaged the country. The military regime was discredited in the eyes of civil society with much of the population critical of the individual senior military officers responsible for the war.¹⁹

¹⁹ Floria and Belsunce, *La Argentina Política*, p. 261.

The battlefield was where the military was expected to perform well. The loss of the war “left the military demoralized, divided, and without a shared mission.”²⁰ The loss of the Malvinas combined with economic crisis ultimately led to the collapse of the military regime and the return to democratic elections in 1983. The return to democracy marked the end of the military party that dominated Argentine politics since 1930.

Newly elected President Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) sought to reassert civilian control over the military. The new democratic government immediately reorganized the military hierarchy, placing top military leaders under the authority of the defense ministry.²¹ Further separation was placed between the president and military leadership, with the military losing its autonomy to newly elected or appointed civilian authorities. The military saw a dramatic drop in defense budget from over four percent to two percent of GDP.²² The military also saw the reduction of troops, starting with the forced retirement of 35 generals, 17 admirals, and nine brigadiers.²³ This profound restructuring sought to eliminate the relation with the previous de facto military government, while reinserting the armed forces into society in its more traditional role. Legal frameworks adopted in 1988 outlined this role clearly delineating the military’s new role: defense of external sovereignty. The armed forces were strictly prohibited from engaging in any internal security operations.²⁴

Justicialist Party (*Partido Peronista*) candidate Carlos Menem succeeded Alfonsín as president from 1989-1999. Menem faced a military uprising that sought to halt what some sectors in the military perceived as the dismantling of the institution; ultimately, the rebellion failed as the strength and numbers of loyal units and officers pushed back the rebels. Paradoxically, Menem ordered a series of pardons for soldiers arrested for different causes (e.g. state terrorism, uprisings, and the Malvinas conflict) with the objective of reinserting the military into society as an effort at reconciliation. This included all members of what was known as the *Carapintatas*, a group of military soldiers that sought to remove both Alfonsín and Menem from office through rebellions in 1987, 1988, and 1990. Despite the strong budgetary constraints, the military continued to demonstrate its willingness to adjust to challenging conditions. Military leadership emphasized

²⁰ David Pion Berlin and Craig Arceneaux, “Tipping the civil-military balance: institutions and human rights policy in democratic Argentina and Chile,” *Comparative Political Studies* 31, No. 5 (1998): pp. 633-661.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² David Pion-Berlin, *Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press), p. 118.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ National Constitution and the National Defense Law (23.554).

capacity building of its human resources and maintained the belief that the armed forces held a critical role within the state. Menem eliminated obligatory military service in 1994 strengthening the belief that the military was a professional institution made up of volunteers from society.

The Menem administration increased bilateral defense cooperation with the United States and emphasized an international focus to military operations. The U.S. and Argentina held its first bilateral defense working group in 1995 to establish regular consulting mechanisms regarding defense-related issues to promote cooperation and exchanges between both countries.²⁵ The working group met once per year to discuss defense cooperation, security assistance, peace keeping and humanitarian operations, civilian defense programs, science, technology, and environmental cooperation. Menem also created a new mission for the military: peacekeeping. The military was attracted to peacekeeping operations as it provided them a level of job security (salary increase opportunities) and allowed them to work with better-equipped and better-trained military units globally.

The election of Néstor Kirchner in 2003 saw Argentina shift away from Menem's international focus and reconciliation of civil-military relations. There was a sharp decreased, albeit not completely distant, in relations with the United States. Kirchner led a series of measures intended to highlight direct opposition to the U.S. Namely, his refusal to grant diplomatic immunity to American troops for joint exercises in Mendoza (2003), the abstention vote in the United Nations with respect to the condemnation of Cuba for human rights abuses (2004), and the refusal to approve of the United States' intervention in Iraq.

Compared to the presidency of her husband Néstor, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner adopted a more hardline position against the United States, actively seeking to distance Argentina's military from working with the United States and its allies. U.S.-Argentina bilateral defense engagements were de-emphasized, using the new Defense Law as justification. The new Defense Law prohibited the military from participating in combatting drug trafficking, terrorism, and organized crime—a policy in clear opposition to that of the U.S. Moreover, in a symbolic gesture aimed at showing its displeasure, the U.S. Military Group was asked to vacate its offices within the Defense Ministry. A crisis ensued when the Argentine government detained and inspected the C-17 Globemaster III aircraft carrying U.S. Special Forces scheduled for

²⁵ For more, see: Deborah Lee Norden and Roberto Russell, *The United States and Argentina: Changing Relations in a Changing World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

joint exercises. President Fernández de Kirchner falsely accused the U.S. of attempting to enter the country with “material camouflaged inside an official cargo of the United States.”²⁶ The Argentine government alleged the airplane had arms and drugs. Furthermore, Argentine authorities contended that the aircraft had GPS systems designed to intercept communications. As a result of this incident, bilateral defense/military engagements came to a near standstill. Meanwhile, Chinese and Russian military engagements, albeit in modest forms, began to grow. For example, according to interviews with active and retired military officers Argentina began sending officers to Russian and Chinese military educational institutions.

Both Presidents Kirchner and Fernández de Kirchner held negative attitudes towards the armed forces. The anti-military attitudes during their administrations appeared to reflect late 1970s/early 1980s sentiments; however, this attitude surprised many as the Kirchner’s maintained a very positive relationship with military units stationed in their home state of Santa Cruz. This strong anti-military campaign, seemingly an instrumental political move, led to continued reduction of military budgets to the lowest levels in the region in terms of percent of GDP (0.9 percent) during Fernández de Kirchner’s first term.²⁷ Fernández’s first government (2007-2011) can be characterized by an overwhelming emphasis on the defense and promotion of human rights with very little attention given to training and operational matters.²⁸ The Kirchners needed to demonstrate their authority and sought to seek revenge through symbolic acts and attitudes of contempt for the institution by reigniting emotional resentment among the public for the abuses committed during the military dictatorship. Rosendo Fraga contends that there existed, particularly during the government of Nestor Kirchner, a “political-ideological” agenda in terms of the military, which focused on emphasizing violations of human rights as the “axis of defense policy.”²⁹ Consistent with this approach, President Néstor Kirchner, during Army day May 30, 2006, turned to members of the armed forces attending the event and said in a defiant tone, “I am not afraid nor do I fear you.” This event marked the point at which the government declared a

²⁶ “Choque con EE.UU. por el avión demorado en Ezeiza,” *La Nación*, 2011.

²⁷ Rosendo Fraga, “El Rol de los Militares en Argentina: Chavismo y Kirchnerismo,” *Nueva Mayoría*, 2014.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Rosendo Fraga, “Kirchner y las Fuerzas Armadas,” May 30, 2006, <http://www.nuevamayoria.com/ES/INVESTIGACIONES/defensa/060530.html>.

political war against the armed forces. As a result of this statement, some officials stopped partaking in this symbolic act—something unheard of in terms of military discipline.

Mutual distrust between the armed forces and the government meant a limited role in the decision-making process by military leadership. Military officials often learned about new regulations and changes in defense law through newspapers and other media sources. Symbolic actions also occurred that insulted the military and produced profound levels of malaise. An example is when President Kirchner personally gave the order to the chief of the army to take down the photo of General Videla and General Bignone (the last de facto president) from the wall of the *Colegio Militar*.³⁰

The Kirchner period was one of polarization and demoralization of the armed forces. Military officers had to invest part of their time cultivating political contacts that permitted them to ascend within the ranks or maintain their senior positions. These practices created internal divisions within the armed forces—those who aligned themselves to the Kirchners against those who viewed themselves as institutionalists. The lack of meritocracy in promotion meant that officers could be promoted on the basis of their loyalty to the Kirchner political project rather than on their experiences and abilities. This had detrimental effects on the esprit de corps of the armed forces.

The Kirchner period was also characterized by declining morale of the armed forces. Service members received more than half of their salaries by moonlighting in non-military economic activities and saw their pensions cut as a result of defense funding reductions. Still, the majority of the defense budget went towards paying salaries, meaning few resources were available for operations and re-equipping; about 15 percent of the defense budget was appropriated to operational readiness. Service members' low morale and lack of confidence in the institution is reflected by the number of service members that asked to be transferred to other institutions, such as the metropolitan police of Buenos Aires and civil aviation in order to receive better compensation packages.

³⁰ Rut Diamint, “La historia sin fin: el control civil de los militares en Argentina”, *Nueva Sociedad* N. 213, enero-febrero de 2008, http://www.fes-seguridadregional.org/images/stories/docs/4119-001_g.pdf.

IDENTITY AND SOURCES OF PRIDE

In the absence of interstate threats from its historical rivals Brazil and Chile, the mission of the Argentine armed forces has varied and been historically based on the directive of those in political leadership. Today's military has embraced non-traditional roles, from supporting humanitarian assistance, disaster response and engaging in international peacekeeping operations, to the more recent efforts to support in protecting the country from growing cyber threats. An increase in crime has prompted a debate as to whether or not Argentina should follow others in the region and employ the military in traditional domestic law enforcement roles. Still, some insist that the appropriate role of Argentina's conventional military should remain centered on deterring external states from threatening the nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty.³¹ Nonetheless, the military continues to seek prominence, and more importantly, utility in Argentina today.

Foreign Military Influence

French, German, and the U.S. militaries have all contributed to the contemporary identity of the Argentine military. Prior to the 1880s, the French loosely served as a model in the initial intellectual and doctrinal formation of the Argentine military institution.³² However, from the 1890s to the 1930s, the Germans became the primary influencer over Argentine military doctrine.³³ In response to growing tensions with Chile, the Argentine government sought German support in modernizing its military institution. General Rafael Aguirre, Minister of War in 1912 under President José Figueroa Alcorta, argued that "the German Army represents the mightiest military organism that exists. As a result of its integrity, level of training, its practical experience, and its historical tradition, the German Army is the best example that we could have chosen to imitate."³⁴

Argentina sought German support in establishing the Argentine War College (*Escuela Superior de Guerra*) which centered military education on the Prussian military system.³⁵ From 1905 to 1914, nearly 175 Argentine military officers travelled to Germany for training and

³¹ Based on in-country interviews by the authors in 2017.

³² Joao Resende-Santos, *Neoliberalism, States, and the Modern Mass Army* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 192-193.

³³ George Pope Atkins and Larry V. Thompson, "German Military Influence in Argentina, 1921-1940," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 4, No. 2 (1972): pp. 257-274. Frederick M. Nunn, "Effects of European Military Training in Latin America: The Origins and Nature of Professional Militarism in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru, 1890-1940," *Military Affairs* 39, No. 1 (1975): pp. 1-7. Warren Schiff, "The Influence of the German Armed Forces and War Industry on Argentina, 1880-1914," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 52, No. 3 (1972): pp. 436-455.

³⁴ Elizabeth B. White, *The German Influence in the Argentine Army, 1900-1945*, (New York: Garland, 1991), p. 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

education and it was common for German officers to serve as instructors in Argentine military courses.³⁶ German influence on Argentine military professionalization included obligatory military service laws, compensation structures, merit-based promotion schedules, and systematic and specialized training courses.³⁷ Argentine consensus during this period was that “German experts and weaponry helped to create a modern army which, at the least, would provide protection against both foreign neighbors and domestic radical revolutionaries. At best, such an army could gradually evolve into an instrument of genuine national consolidation and development.”³⁸ The navy, on the other hand, since the start of the 20th century was much more influenced by British doctrine, which, in part, explains some of the historical doctrine and ideological tensions between the Argentine army and navy.

During the 1950s and into the 1960s, the French again became a source of inspiration in changes in Argentine intellectual and doctrinal development of the military. In 1957, the French sent its first mission to Argentina in an effort to aid the development of Argentina’s counterinsurgency doctrine.³⁹ According to Eric Carlson, “a number of historians have recognized the influence of the French Mission, attributing to it varying degrees of significance in shaping Argentine military tactics and strategy.”⁴⁰

Since the 1960s, the U.S. military has been the dominant influence shaping Argentina military doctrine. Starting in 1963, the U.S. began to provide millions in military assistance programming, including \$7.5 million in 1964 and \$10 million in 1965.⁴¹ Between 1950 and 1979, the U.S. provided an estimated \$247 million in military aid and provided training in the U.S. for 4,017 Argentine military personnel. The Argentine military sought U.S. training and education opportunities, technical assistance, and support in institutional professionalization and military doctrine. In fact, many current senior army officers in Argentina had previously trained at the U.S. Army Command and Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. However, despite the period of increased military-to-military engagement, the U.S. and Argentina clashed on several issues,

³⁶ George Pope Atkins and Larry V. Thompson, “German Military Influence in Argentina, 1921-1940,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 4, No. 2 (1972): pp. 257-274.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Warren Schiff, “The Influence of the German Armed Forces and War Industry on Argentina, 1880-1914,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 52, No. 3 (1972): pp. 436-455.

³⁹ Eric Stener Carlon, “The Influence of French “Revolutionary War” Ideology and the Use of Torture in Argentina’s Dirty War,” *Human Rights Review*, July-September 2000.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ David Sheinin, “The Sixties: Military Ties, Economic Uncertainties,” in *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained* (University of Georgia Press, 2006), p. 126.

including human rights in the late 1970s and early 1980s. U.S.-Argentine military-to-military cooperation decreased gradually during the Kirchner years, ending in near termination after the C-17 aircraft incident in 2011. During this period, China and Russian engagement increased, although there is little evidence as to the degree or transformative effect of Chinese and Russian engagement.

Finding Its Identity After 1983

Since the return to democracy in 1983, the executive and legislative branches have slowly chipped away at the influence of the military.⁴² During the Raúl Alfonsín administration (1983-1989), military leadership remained divided and focused on avoiding prosecution following the “dirty war.” For many in the military, the “dirty war” was a just war in which they were fulfilling their obligations to the state.⁴³ The idea that soldiers were being prosecuted went against their belief that they were restoring political order following the threat of subversive terrorism.⁴⁴ Many in the military—especially the army’s junior officers—felt that they should be recognized for their contributions in protecting the state. Instead, they were alienated by the military high command who were negotiating with Alfonsín.⁴⁵ This led to divisions between the army and the *Carapintadas*.⁴⁶ At first, military leadership was not responsive to the Alfonsín administration’s calls to put down the uprisings as military officers were actively being prosecuted for human rights violations. This forced Alfonsín to strike a deal with senior military leaders and provide pardons for convicted officers in exchange for military support against the *Carapintadas*.

⁴² David Pion Berlin, “Civil Military Circumvention: How Argentine State Institutions Compensate for a Weakened Chain of Command,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Pion-Berlin (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001): pp. 135-160.

⁴³ David Pion-Berlin, “Between Confrontation and Accommodation: Military and Government Policy in Democratic Argentina,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, No. 3 (1991): pp. 543-571.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Harold A. Trinkunas, “Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Pion-Berlin (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001): pp. 161-193.

⁴⁶ The *Carapintadas* were a group of extreme right wing military officers dissatisfied with military leadership and attempted numerous uprising during the Alfonsín and Menem administrations. For more on the Carapintadas, see Ernesto Lopez and David Pion-Berlin, *Democracia y Cuestion Militar* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1996); Deborah L. Norden, “The Rise of the Lieutenant Colonels: Rebellion in Argentina and Venezuela,” *Latin American Perspectives* 23, No. 3 (1996): pp. 74-86; Pion-Berlin, *Through the Corridors of Power*; and Leigh A. Payne, *Uncivil Movements: The Armed Right Wing and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

The Carlos Menem administration (1989-1999) was more successful in negotiating with both senior military leadership and junior military officers to assert civilian control over the armed forces, despite divisions created by the *Carapintadas*. Under Menem, the military took on an outward-oriented mission, seeking to align itself more closely with the U.S. Menem believed that such an alignment would be the means by which Argentina returned to its sense of greatness.⁴⁷ Menem eliminated compulsory enlistment in the armed forces, reduced operational readiness and severely decreased the funds directed towards military modernization. The military doctrine was transformed from “national security” focused, to “multilateral participation in regional and extra-hemispheric operations”—namely, peacekeeping operations.⁴⁸ These actions, while directly downsizing the military, also served to re-professionalize the armed forces into a more contemporary military institution.

Following the election of Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007), the president removed nearly half of the military’s high command. Kirchner felt that these officers were too close to President Menem and unjustly spared punishment for human rights abuses of the past.⁴⁹ His first target was General Ricardo Brinzoni who had been close to Menem and had voiced political opposition to the new president.⁵⁰ Following the ousting of Brinzoni and the placement with Kirchner loyalist General Roberto Bendini as Chief of the National Army, the remaining officers walked away without resisting.⁵¹ This was intended to bring military leadership closer to the Kirchner administration, while removing perceived politicized factions of the armed forces that could challenge the president’s authority. Kirchner’s wife Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner succeeded her husband as president (2007-2015) and reinforced the idea of “institutional punishment.”⁵² This meant that pensions, salaries, and other core components of the military budget were cut essentially gutting the armed forces capabilities. Military education curriculum, mainly for officers, was reformed; it focused on advancing respect for human rights, revived strategic and critical thinking skills, and prepared military officers for benign military roles such as humanitarian assistance,

⁴⁷ Felix, E. Martin, “Argentina: National Security of In-security Policy?” in *Culture and National Security in the Americas*, eds. Brian Fonseca and Eduardo A. Gamarra (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), pp. 137-162.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ David S. Pion-Berlin, “Political Management of the Military in Latin America,” *Military Review* (2015): pp. 19-31.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Martin, “Argentina.”

disaster response, peacekeeping operations, and more recently protecting Argentina from cyber threats.⁵³

Since 1983, especially after the defeat of the *Carapintadas Rebellion* in 1990, the military was systematically and effectively subordinated and marginalized within the Argentine government. Although the Ministry of Defense (MOD) has greater authority over the respective military branches, especially compared to the decades following the MOD's formation in 1948, the MOD remains among the least politically influential governing institution in Argentina. In fact, the current Minister of Defense Julio Martínez was among the few ministerial level positions afforded to the Radical Civic Union (*Unión Cívica Radical—UCR*); a political party aligned with the current governing coalition Change (*Cambiamos*). Change is led by current President Mauricio Macri of the Republican Proposal (*Propuesta Republicana*) party. Macri does not appear to be changing the level of the military's influence, despite some noticeable efforts to elevate, if not restore, a prominent image of the Argentina military.

Composition of the Military

The army is made up of 48,367 forces (40 percent enlisted, 47 percent NCOs, 13 percent officers); women make up 14 percent of all army personnel.⁵⁴ Its role is to contribute to national defense and protect the nation's vital interests; namely its independence and sovereignty. Citizens interested in being officers in the army must be between the ages of 18-22 and must attend the *Colegio Militar de la Nación*. Over the course of four years, cadets are trained to exercise command and understand the basic functions of their weapons, specialty, and service. Students interested in the Officer of Weapons and Specialties track must pass exams on mathematics, Argentine history, Argentine and MERCOSUR geography, and language competency. Those interested in the Nursing Officer track must pass exams on basic elements of exact sciences, history, language competency, and functional anatomy. Upon graduation, students achieve the rank of Second Lieutenant. There are also four month training courses for Professional Corps officers based on level of education and/or rank. These include law, medicine, systems analysis, strategic thinking, among other areas of focus.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ RESDAL, *A Comparative Atlas of Defence in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016 Edition* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: REDAL, 2016).

The navy is made up of 17,957 forces (7 percent enlisted, 79 percent NCOs, 14 percent officers); 18 percent of all personnel are women.⁵⁵ The navy's role is to prepare, train, and sustain the nation's naval powers, as well as conduct peace operations, maritime security, support activities in Antarctica, and provide humanitarian assistance, among others. Citizens interested in being a naval officer must be between the ages of 18-22 and must attend the *Escuela Naval Militar*. Over the course of four years, cadets are "ethically, militarily, academically, professionally and physically" formed into future naval officers. Potential enrollees must pass exams on math, trigonometry, chemistry, physics, and writing comprehension. The Argentine Navy has job opportunities in medicine, pharmacy, biochemistry, kinesiology, psychology, physical education, architecture, mechanical engineering, systems analysis, and naval mechanic.

The air force is made up of 13,521 forces (14 percent enlisted, 67 percent NCOs, 19 percent officers); women make up 26.7 percent of all personnel.⁵⁶ The air force's mission is to contribute to the national defense, acting effectively and in a deterrent manner in Argentine air space to safeguard and protect the nation's vital interests. Citizens interested in becoming air force aviators must attend the *Escuela de Aviacion Militar*. They recruit and train senior military personnel in order to contribute to institutional goals; namely, protecting Argentine air space.

Sources of Pride

Despite its tainted history of involvement in domestic political affairs, the widespread human rights violations stemming from the "dirty war," the devastating military defeat in the Malvinas, and the decades of deprivation at the hands of civilian political leaders, the Argentine military remains prideful and draws on three prominent legacies as sources of overall institutional pride: San Martín, Argentina's role in liberating South America, and the valor demonstrated during the Malvinas War. Certainly, there are others, but these three are among the most enduring and persistent sources and transcend rank and military branch.

General José de San Martín emerged as a regional leader following the creation of the Regiment of Mounted Grenadiers in the fight for independence against the Spanish in Argentina, Chile, and Peru. For generations of military personnel, he has served as a model, and today, remains the single most important historical figure for the military. San Martín is closely associated

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

with basic military ideals such as the concept of comradeship, loyalty, solidarity, dignity, integrity, chivalry and respect for women and the weak.⁵⁷ Also embodied in San Martín is Argentina's larger role in helping liberate South America from colonial rule. San Martín led the charge to liberate Argentina, Chile, and Peru from the Spanish, and is revered as a founding father of Latin American independence, alongside other notable historical figures like Simon Bolivar. Argentina's role in helping liberate South America is a source of pride for the military institution today, and San Martín's influence continues to serve as a source of inspiration across the military and society. In 1948, after Perón nationalized British and French owned railways, he named the six newly founded Argentine railways after celebrated national heroes, starting with San Martín, in an attempt to reinforce a sense of nationalism and garner support for his policies. Statues of San Martín can be found in most cities throughout Argentina, and his portrait hangs in virtually every military and government office, including in Argentine embassies across the world. There is also tremendous pride in his influence outside of Argentina.⁵⁸ Statues of San Martín can be found in Chile and Peru, in recognition of his important role in liberating those countries, as well as in Armenia, Colombia, France, Germany, Philippines, and the U.S. (in New York and Washington D.C.). Today's Argentine Army defines its vision as "a modern Army based on the values Sanmartinianos..." (*Un Ejército moderno sustentado en los valores sanmartinianos...*).⁵⁹

Although San Martín is the most influential, it is important to highlight other prominent historical military figures that serve as contemporary sources of inspiration and reference for military personnel. General Manuel Belgrano, Lieutenant General Julio Roca, Lieutenant General Bartolomé Mitre, and General Justo José de Urquiza; all of whom served as influential founding and transitional military leaders and presidents in Argentina's early history. Admiral Guillermo Brown serves as a reference point for the navy. Contemporary references note that Admiral Brown "symbolizes the naval glories of the Argentine Republic."⁶⁰ To illustrate Brown's prominence and impact in shaping the contemporary navy, six naval ships have been named in his honor. More recent symbols include heroes produced from the 1982 Malvinas War. Among them, Captain

⁵⁷ Ulises Mario Muschietti, (Cnl RE), "El Legado del Pasado," *Revista Informativa de Caballería*, n° 2, 1980, p. 36.

⁵⁸ "Jose de San Marin: Argentine soldier, American hero," *The Economist*, April 23, 2009, accessed on April 1, 2017 from <http://www.economist.com/node/13525888>.

⁵⁹ "Vision del Ejército Argentino," *Ejército Argentino* N.d., accessed April 1, 2017, from <http://www.ejercito.mil.ar/sitio/2015/ejercito/vision.asp>.

⁶⁰ "Almirante Guillermo Brown," *Armada Argentina*, N.d., accessed April 1, 2017, from <http://www.ara.mil.ar/pag.asp?idItem=44>.

Pedro Gianchino who was the first to die during the conflict. Gianchino was posthumously awarded the highest Argentine decoration for bravery, *Cruz “La Nación Argentina Al Heroico Valor En Combate”* and promoted to Captain in the Navy. However, human rights advocates have criticized Gianchino for alleged human rights violation during his tenure as a junior military officer posted in Buenos Aires. The Kirchners used accusations against Gianchino to not only discredit him but the armed forces in general.

Another major source of institutional pride rests, ironically, in the Malvinas military defeat. In 1982, military junta leader Lieutenant General Leopoldo Galtieri broke negotiations with Great Britain over possession of the Malvinas and launched a gravely miscalculated invasion of the islands. The Argentine government ignored clear signals that Great Britain would indeed cross the Atlantic and fight to retain the Malvinas. The miscalculation was devastating for the Argentine military. After a little more than two months of fighting (April 2-June 14, 1982), the Argentine military lost about 650 military personnel. Just under half of the casualties stemmed from a British nuclear-powered submarine’s sinking of Argentine Brooklyn-class light cruiser ARA General Belgrano on May 2, 1982.⁶¹ The junta’s decision to invade was largely seen as an attempt to overcome public frustrations with the military government’s economic mismanagement and widespread human rights abuses. Despite the loss, today many senior military officers and enlisted junior service members at the time, view the war through the lens of heroism and national pride and in remembrance to all those that lost their lives.⁶²

Peacekeeping in specific became a point of pride for the military during the Menem period who saw these missions as justification for its existence and a means in which it can regain favor with society. Additionally, it served as an opportunity to show the Argentine’s “greatness” in the international arena. These activities provided both training and an operational focus that had been lost during the Alfonsín administration. It also allowed the military, especially the navy, to work with other military forces with advanced technologies and experiences. As argued by Katherine Worboys, the increase in peacekeeping missions created a new identity for the armed forces and directed their attention away from domestic politics.⁶³ Menem created the Argentine Joint Peace

⁶¹ “Heroes Nacionales,” *Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos*, N.d., accessed on April 1, 2017, from <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/50000-54999/50278/norma.htm>.

⁶² “Memory haunts ‘Malvinas’ veterans,” *Al Jazeera*, April 25, 2008, accessed on April 1, 2017, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2008/04/2008615165650267118.html>.

⁶³ Katherine J. Worboys, “The Traumatic Journey from Dictatorship to Democracy: Peacekeeping Operations and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina, 1989-1999,” *Armed Forces & Society* 33, No. 2 (2007): pp. 149-168.

Keeping Operations Training Center (CAECOPAZ) in 1995 leading many in Argentina to incorrectly believe that they would wind up with two armies: “one highly trained and supplemented by outside resources, the other a residual shell of the obsolescent territorial force.”⁶⁴ Argentine military personnel deployed in UN peacekeeping operations would peak at 1,471 during the Menem years with most operations in Croatia, Haiti, and Central America.⁶⁵

THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY

On July 9-10, 2016, Argentina celebrated its Bicentennial with a series of festivals, ceremonies, and cultural events commemorating the declaration of independence. Part of the festivities included a large military parade, the first in 12 years, in which the armed forces and its senior leadership expended significant time and resources preparing in the hope of showing that despite twelve years of constant harassment, budget cuts, and other demoralizing measures implemented by the Kirchner governments, the military was still able to display institutional pride and ties to Argentine history and society. Additionally, in 2016 a sense of optimism began to spread through the ranks as a new, friendlier occupant in the *Casa Rosada* seemed to want an end to the “dark” period of civil-military relations. Nevertheless, many in the military and political class thought that Argentine society would not attend or perhaps even reject having the army play such an important role in the country’s celebrations. In fact, President Macri planned not to be present at the military procession believing that few Argentines would attend an event featuring the “discredited” armed forces.

As the parade began, the military and the political class were pleasantly surprised to see more than 650,000 Argentines lined up along *Avenida Libertador* to observe and seemingly honor the rank and file of the armed forces as they marched for miles on one of Buenos Aires’ principal thoroughfares. As soon as President Macri was informed of the masses congregated for the parade, he ran to join Defense Minister Julio Martínez and a cross section of Argentine society to cheer on the military. Some described the event more as a manifestation of nationalism with strong emotional undercurrents than an expression of enthusiastic support for the military. Nevertheless, many Argentines stood for hours at a military parade applauding military bands and soldiers as

⁶⁴ Herbert C. Huser “Democratic Argentina's ‘global reach’: The Argentine military in peacekeeping operations.” *Naval War College Review* 51, no. 3 (1998): p. 55.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

they proudly marched through Buenos Aires. What explains this spontaneous expression of support for the armed forces when the perception of the institution was thought to be of suspicion, irrelevance, and even contempt?

The purpose here is not to assess why so many Argentines came out for the military parade but to identify drivers and trends in societal attitudes toward the military. The bicentennial could mark a turning point but since at least 1983 the population's attitudes toward the military have been tense or, at times, even punitive against individual senior officers and, under the Kirchners, the institution itself. This section attempts to explain the evolution of society-military relations, particularly since the post-*Proceso*/Malvinas inflection point.

In the late 19th century, immigration to Argentina was considerable; it altered both the demographic composition and overall size of Argentine society. Most estimates indicate that by the turn of the century nearly two-thirds of society was immigrants or children of immigrants. As the military professionalized and became one of the most respected national institutions, political leaders turned to the army to provide the vehicle through which to create a sense of Argentine nationhood and citizenship among the country's new settlers. The compulsory military service established in 1901 did exactly that while helping enhance the institution's prestige and ties with the new, diverse and youthful society.

As the military's political power and intervention increased significantly after 1930, the army viewed itself separate from the state and society, as guardians of the state, protector of Argentina's external security and internal stability. Despite the military's hegemony and propensity to install itself in *Casa Rosada*, society continued to value and even venerate the army. Society did not necessarily reject intervention but did often grow weary of the stagnation and corruption of military governments, as with the very unpopular military regime of 1966-1973. Nonetheless, it was not uncommon to see civilian leaders and civil society organizations call on the military to intervene in periods of intense mobilization and political instability. For instance, the "vacuum of power, the decay of official Peronism and economic chaos in a context of deepening violence" during the Peronist government (1973-1976) led much of society to beseech the military's return only three years after it had been condemned and pressured to leave power.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Alain Rouquié, *The military and the state in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 246.

By the mid-1950s, attitudes within the military grew more suspicious and fearful of a “radicalized and menacing society” blamed on Peronism and rising revolutionary violence. The military had a relative diverse social class having incorporated members of the middle class, its ties were strongest, however, to the political and economic elite of the country and therefore identified with the more conservative values of the ruling elite. By the mid-1970s, this relationship deepened helping to influence an outlook of politics and society that represented a narrow segment of society. When the *Proceso* military government came to power in March 1976, the military viewed society as the enemy, viewing itself as “the avatar of messianic idealism, the Western Christian military knights protecting the Argentine way of life...marginalizing Argentine populace from politics: no participation, no roles.” It envisioned society as a real body, “diagnosed as fearfully ill from cancer, a social pathology that required surgery and extirpation of the diseased tissues.”⁶⁷ This sentiment is best exemplified when General Iberico Saint-Jean asserted in 1977, “First, we kill all the subversives; then...we will kill their sympathizers; then...those who remain indifferent, and finally we will kill the undecideds.”⁶⁸

By the end of the military government and in the wake of the disastrous Malvinas War, society-military relations had reached its lowest point. The widespread violence associated with the “dirty war” coupled with economic chaos and the defeat during the Malvinas dramatically shifted how the military and society viewed each other.⁶⁹ Estimates range between 7,000 and 30,000 deaths or disappeared during the military government’s tenure from 1976-1983. The “isolation of the armed forces, discredited politically, economically, morally and even professionally created minimal conditions” for rehabilitating democracy and dramatically changing civil/society-military relations.⁷⁰ Regional differences existed in how the military was viewed by society with rural areas having a more favorable opinion of the military’s role than in the federal capital and metropolitan areas of Buenos Aires but suspicion and resentment was generalized and deeper than at any time in history. In a 1985 poll conducted in rural areas of Tucuman and La Pampa provinces, nearly half thought the military contributed to the well-being

⁶⁷ Herbert C. Huser, *Argentine Civil-Military Relations: From Alfonsín to Menem* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2002), pp. 40-41.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 92.

⁶⁹ For more on the “dirty war”, see: David Pion-Berlin, “The National Security Doctrine, Military Threat Perception, and the ‘Dirty War’ in Argentina,” *Comparative Political Studies* 21, no. 3 (1988): pp. 382-407; Iain Guest, *Behind the disappearances: Argentina's dirty war against human rights and the United Nations* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

⁷⁰ Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America*, p. 396.

of the country, while in a 1986 poll of Greater Buenos Aires, only 22 percent believed that the military made positive contributions to society. This regional difference continues to this day.⁷¹

In the course of the Alfonsín and Menem administrations, the military's budget and personnel decreased dramatically along with its political influence and relevance to society. The four failed military uprisings and the trials against senior military regime leaders for human rights violations did much to further discredit the institution and increase resentment against the armed forces. Military officers and non-commissioned officers even refrained from wearing their uniform in public for fear of being harassed by the public. Both administrations implemented a series of political, legal and policy measures, such as the Defense Law of 1988, the Armed Forces Reorganization Act of 1998, and the Defense White Paper that institutionalized civil-military relations and the role of the military in a democratic society. As a result, the military was no longer separate from society and the state, as in the past, but became very much a part of it and in support of the goals and policies of the democratically elected authorities. In the 1990s, once the armed forces no longer represented a threat to democracy and efforts at professionalization deepened, the Menem administration sought to advance military-society reconciliation by utilizing the armed forces in non-traditional activities, such as peace-keeping operations and natural disaster responses that helped improve the institution's prestige within society but only slightly.⁷² Menem had at least stopped the bleeding.

One very illustrative moment came during the economic and political crisis of 2001-2002. In the past, a political-economic crisis of this magnitude would have led the armed forces, with popular support, to intervene. However, the military showed no propensity to interfere or influence political outcomes. In fact, the armed forces responded, "to the needs of society, especially alleviating somewhat the economic plight of the poorest sectors of Argentine society through food distribution, medical services, and other aid... [all] within the civilian-led structures responsible for such activities."⁷³ It seems that in the course of the previous ten years this transformation in the role of the military led not only to this response but to an increasingly more positive view of the military on the part of society. According to a poll taken just before Nestor Kirchner assumed

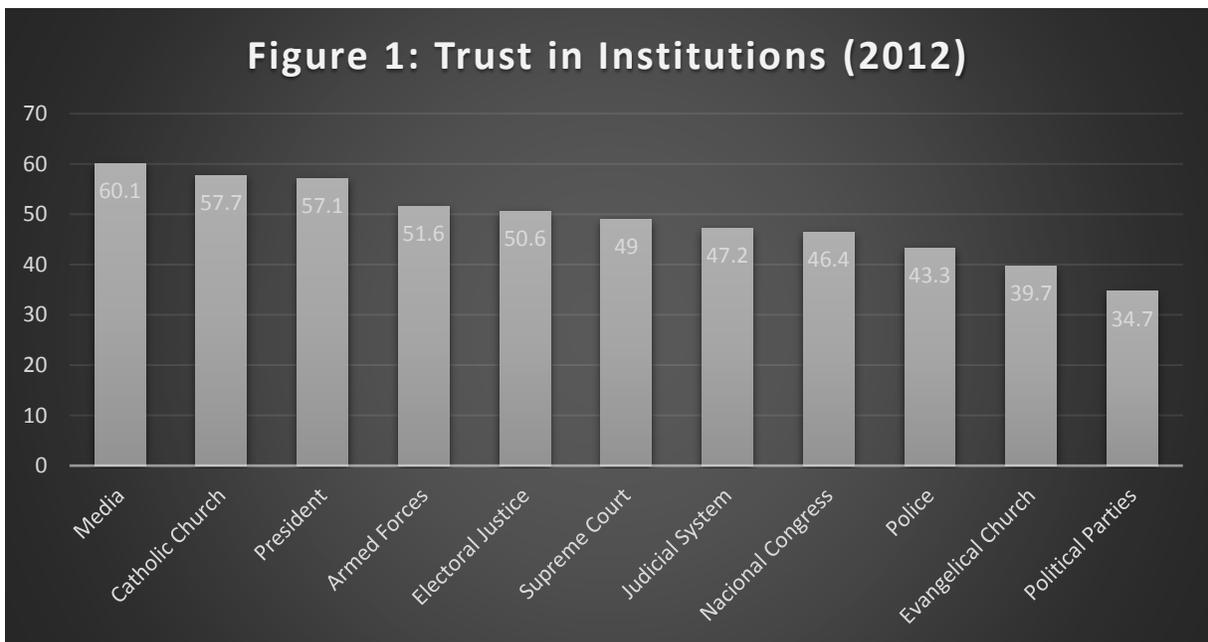
⁷¹ Herbert C. Huser, *Argentine Civil-Military Relations: From Alfonsin to Menem*, p. 92.

⁷² Kristina Mani, *Democratization and Military Transformation in Argentina and Chile: Rethinking Rivalry* (Boulder, CO: FirstForumPress, 2011).

⁷³ Huser, *Argentine Civil-Military Relations*, p. 195.

office as president in 2003, the military’s favorability rating reached its highest level since 1983, at 42 percent, with rural areas above 50 percent.⁷⁴

As discussed above, civil-military relations during the Kirchner era (2003-2015) focused on weakening and discrediting the armed forces in the court of public opinion but, in the end, it did not have the desired impact. Nonetheless, the constant harassment and blaming of the military for all the country’s ills and accusations of human rights violations against retired officers impacted perceptions about the military. According to AmericasBarometer, in 2008 only 36 percent (mean score) of the population trusted the institution, while 40 percent believed the armed forces respected human rights.



Source: Created by authors with data from LAPOP.

However, despite what one officer described as “Cristina’s constant barrage of false accusations and demonization of the military,” trust levels in the military increased over time reaching more than 51 percent (mean score) in 2012 (one of the highest increases in the region). Regarding the question of whether the armed forces respected human rights the figure rose to 55 percent. Since 2012 the military has ranked third or fourth most trusted institution in Argentina. In other words, by the end of the Kirchner era, even as the military’s professionalism and

⁷⁴ Mani, *Democratization and Military Transformation in Argentina and Chile*, p. 122.

institutional integrity and pride were significantly undermined, society's opinion of the institution, particularly in the interior of the country, improved over time. Why?

One of the reasons for the improvement of society-military relations is the change in roles and missions. The military is no longer involved in any internal security mission and therefore not susceptible to accusations of human rights violations as a result of repression against society. Their missions, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response, have been welcomed by society as a productive use of the military's capacity helping to enhance the institution's image. In a March 2016 poll by the Center for National Defense Studies of the University of Belgrano, 73 percent of those interviewed believed the armed forces should actively participate in responding to natural disasters. The same poll highlighted that more than 55 percent are satisfied with the role of the military in society.⁷⁵ Since most disasters in recent years have occurred in the interior of the country, this likely explains the military's better favorability ratings in the rural areas. Defense Minister Martínez recently noted in an interview, that “Jujuy Governor Gerardo Morales consistently thanks support provided by the armed forces for its help in mitigating the damage from flooding... and many other governors have expressed similar expression of appreciation.”⁷⁶ This data show a significant shift in public opinion over the last few years despite the previous government's efforts to drive a wedge between the military and society.

It will be interesting to see these positive trends continue if the military assumes a greater role in counter-narcotics efforts beyond its current mission of monitoring Argentine air space against drug planes. The Macri administration might be responding to society's demands that the government do more to combat public insecurity and violence associated with drug trafficking. The University of Belgrano's poll showed that nearly half of respondents want the military to participate actively in combating drug trafficking.

There is also evidence that its participation in peacekeeping operations—68 percent of society supports this mission—has improved the military's image. This international mission is viewed as an opportunity for Argentina to play a positive role in providing for global security through the United Nations. Anecdotally, one is struck to observe at the Ezeiza International

⁷⁵ Centro de Estudios para la Defensa Nacional-Universidad del Belgrano, Sondeo de Opinion: Imagen de las Fuerzas Armadas (March 2016).

⁷⁶ (Infobae, 2016).

Airport in Buenos Aires the public applauding military forces in uniform waiting to be deployed on peacekeeping operations.

Another interesting development is the change in demographic and class structure of the force. One senior military officer noted how the “darkening” of the troops, including cadets and junior officers, is having an impact on “both the political and social views of the force and societal perceptions of the military.” In several interviews, it was noted that nearly two-thirds of the force below the rank of major are mestizos emanating from lower classes of Argentine society and increasingly from rural areas. Prior to 1983, the social and racial make-up of the force was the opposite. This may also explain why trust and favorability ratings are higher in the rural areas than in Greater Buenos Aires.

Defense and military issues are not top concerns or topics of discussion among the Argentine public, as they once were. In fact, as several active and retired military officers noted, overall society views the military as irrelevant and not influential in terms of politics. Paradoxically perhaps, the levels of trust and prestige may in part be due to the military’s lower profile. Yet, as already mentioned, much has to do with changes in the institution’s missions and roles as well as in its demographic and social make up of its ranks. When given the opportunity, the military is perceived to be doing a good job in delivering on what matters most to society. In the 2012 AmericasBarometer poll, when asked “to what extent do you think the military is doing a good job,” 55 percent (mean score) responded positively. In the end, the military continues to be viewed as organized, capable, efficient and non-political.

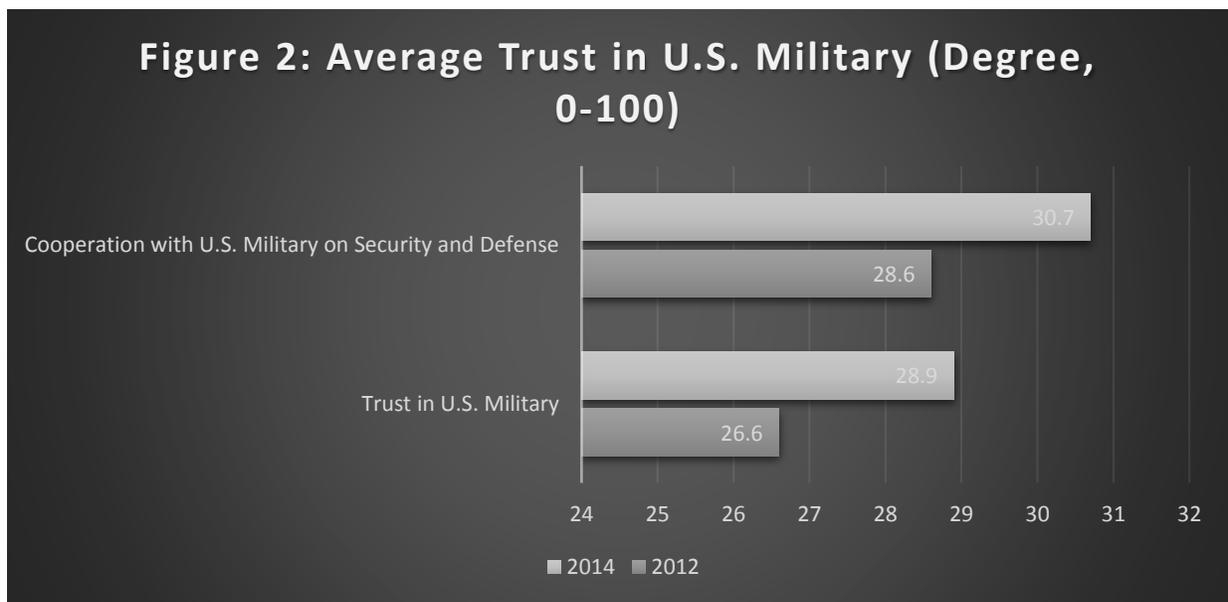
One thing appears clear: the Kirchner administrations could not sever ties between society and the military by attempting to sustain and deepen anger and resentment against the institution. The evidence seems to confirm that the Kirchners came up short. Military officers and non-commissioned officers are once again wearing their uniform in public without fear of harassment. The massive public attendance at the bicentennial military parade may very well not be an anomaly.

Perceptions of the U.S. Military

The public’s view of the U.S. military and cooperation with Argentina’s armed forces is not in the same upward trend as society’s view of its military. Notwithstanding society’s negative views, in all the interviews conducted for this study, there was not a single active or retired military officer

that was not enthusiastically looking forward to working with the U.S. military after years of Cristina Kirchner’s concerted efforts to limit or sever military/defense ties with Washington. Nonetheless, the public’s negative views of the U.S. military mirrors that of society’s perception of the United States in general. Trust in the United States is the lowest in the region, according to the 2014 AmericasBarometer poll, with a mean score of about 31 percent. This number is consistent across years and polling studies, such as Latinobarometro. Negative views of the U.S. in Argentina is not a recent phenomenon; in fact, it traces back to the beginning of the 20th century.⁷⁷

Public opinion does not support engagement with the U.S. military which might slow down efforts on the part of the Macri administration to enhance cooperation. AmericasBarometer indicates in its 2014 findings that only 28.9 percent (mean score) trust the U.S. military and 30.7 percent are supportive of greater Argentine military cooperation with the U.S. (see Figure 2).⁷⁸



Source: created by authors with data from LAPOP.

It is not clear if a more collaborative bilateral relationship under President Macri’s government will improve the public’s perception and willingness to work with the U.S., including defense issues. History indicates the problem to be more structural. Nonetheless, the Macri administration

⁷⁷ Harold F. Peterson, *Argentina and the United States 1810-1960: 1810-1960* (Ablany, NY: SUNY Press, 1964); Joseph S. Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States: A Conflicted Relationship* (New York, NY: Macmillan Reference, 1990).

⁷⁸ Facundo E. Salles Kobilanski and Cory Weaver, *AmericasBarometer: Topical Brief* (Nashville, TN: LAPOP), 2016.

does not seem to be concerned with the public's view as it has recently demonstrated a strong commitment to improving bilateral defense ties. Moreover, the public's very negative views of the U.S. military and cooperation is not a sufficiently important variable in domestic politics to make the government reverse course in re-engaging the U.S. military.

CONCLUSION

The dominant institutional culture of Argentina's military can be drawn from four critical inflection points that profoundly impact its historical evolution, its sources of identity and pride, and its relations within the state. These historical inflection points produced heroes such as General José de San Martín, Admiral Guillermo Brown, and Captain Pedro Gianchino, led to the military's rise and fall as a quasi-political party that felt obligated to drive the country's political, economic, and social development in the 20th century, and shaped its contemporary relations with governing administrations and society in general. The first inflection point began in the 19th century when a modern and professional institution emerged from the militias and disorganized armies that dominated the country prior to 1870. The second inflection point started with the 1930 military coup that marked the period in which the institution became a powerful political actor that often assumed power itself much like a political party. It was, however, the third and fourth inflection points, the 1976 *Proceso* coup and the 1982 Malvinas War, that led to profound uncertainties in its role, a decline in resources and capabilities, and a weakening of its credibility and legitimacy as a modern Latin American military. No other South American military experienced the profound decline that the Argentine military experienced in its transition to democracy in the late 20th century.

These inflection points culminated in a post-1983 democratic transition in which the military became demoralized, discredited and vulnerable to political ostracism and deep budgetary cuts. In the first two decades after leaving power, the military had to reinvent itself while trying to resist or adapt to concerted efforts to incarcerate military officers, dramatic cuts to funding, personnel and training and the narrowing or constraining of its roles and missions. When the Kirchners arrived at the *Casa Rosada*, civil-military relations and society's perception of the military was improving but the new administration changed course, deciding to reignite anti-military attitudes in society while further weakening the professionalism and morale of the institution. During the 12 years of Nestor and Cristina Kirchner's governments, the military had

reached its historic low point. At no time in Argentine history had the military become so irrelevant and disrespected as it did during the Kirchner governments. Nonetheless, despite aggressive efforts to emasculate, discredit and weaken its identity, the military adapted and maintained its commitment to its historic values and the sources of pride that have defined its identity since the 19th century. Moreover, surveys show that levels of trust and prestige among the public, particularly in rural areas, remains relatively positive. Much has to do with changes in the institution's missions and roles, its efforts to reconcile past human rights violations, and the changing demographic and social composition of its ranks. The military institution today remains deprived yet prideful and still committed to defending the nation despite the lack of strategic influence in government, its evolving missions, and uncertain place in Argentine society.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Frank O. Mora, Director of the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center, FIU

Frank O. Mora is Director of the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC) and Professor of Politics and International Relations at Florida International University. Prior to arriving at FIU, Dr. Mora served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Western Hemisphere from 2009-2013. He has held several teaching positions, including Professor of National Security Strategy and Latin American Studies at the National War College, National Defense University (2004-2009) and Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of International Studies, Rhodes College (2000-2004). During the last 25 years, Dr. Mora worked as a consultant to the Library of Congress, the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), the National Democratic Institute, U.S. State Department, the Organization of American States, and U.S. Southern Command. He has spoken at numerous conferences in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. Dr. Mora is the author or editor of four books, including *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), *Paraguay and the United States: Distant Allies* (University of Georgia Press, 2008) and *Neighborly Adversaries: U.S. Latin American Relations* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2015); and over thirty academic and policy articles, book chapters and monographs on hemispheric security, U.S.-Latin American relations, civil-military relations, Cuban politics and military and Latin American political economy and integration. Dr. Mora graduated with a B.A. in International Affairs from The George Washington University in 1986. He received his M.A. in Inter-American Studies and a Ph.D. in International Affairs from the University of Miami. He also completed studies at universities in Peru and Costa Rica. He is a recipient of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Public Service, Department of Defense (2012).

Brian Fonseca, Director, Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy, FIU

Brian Fonseca is Director of the Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy at FIU's Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs. Mr. Fonseca serves as the Institute's technical expert for national security and foreign policy. Mr. Fonseca joined the Gordon Institute in 2015 after serving as Director of Operations at FIU's Applied Research Center (ARC) where he led the center's expansion into national security and Cybersecurity initiatives. He joined FIU after serving as the senior research manager for socio-cultural analysis at United States Southern Command. His recent publications include: Brian Fonseca and Eduardo A. Gamarra, eds., *Culture and National Security in the Americas* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, January 2017); Brian Fonseca and Jonathan D. Rosen, *The New Security Agenda: Trends and Emerging Threats* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, February 2017); Frank O. Mora, Brian Fonseca, and Brian Latell, "Cuban Military Culture;" and Brian Fonseca, John Polga-Hecimovich, and Harold Trinkunas, "Venezuelan Military Culture." Mr. Fonseca holds degrees in International Business and International Relations from Florida International University in Miami, Florida, and he has attended Sichuan University in Chengdu, China and National Defense University in Washington D.C. From 1997 to 2004, he served in the United States Marine Corps and facilitated the training of foreign military forces in both hostile theaters and during peacetime operations.

Pablo Atencio, Visiting Professor, Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy

Pablo Atencio is a Consultant in Security and Defense and Visiting Professor of the Department of Political Science at the Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He graduated in Political Science from the Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA) with a Specialization in International Relations. He is a graduate of the Curso Superior de Defensa (Escuela de Defensa Nacional—Argentina). While in Argentina, he worked for 16 years as a political analyst in defense and security issues at the Division of Politics of the Ministry of Defense (Argentina). He was also designated Liaison at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Argentina) during 2005. His research and areas of expertise include strategic planning and defense, China-Latin American relations, Latin American politics, and military cooperation.

