

PEACE AND WAR IN LATIN AMERICA:
Changing Perspectives on Military-Civilian Relations

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- CONFLICT IN THE SOUTHERN CONE: THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AND THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE WITH CHILE, 1870–1902.* By George V. Rauch (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999. Pp. 229. \$69.50 cloth.)
- THE GRAND ILLUSION: THE PRUSSIANIZATION OF THE CHILEAN ARMY.* By William F. Sater and Holger H. Herwig (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Pp. 247. \$50 cloth.)
- A WAR BETWIXT ENGLISHMEN: BRAZIL AGAINST ARGENTINA ON THE RIVER PLATE, 1825–1830.* By Brian Vale (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000. Pp. 275. \$59.50 cloth.)
- THE TEN CENTS WAR: CHILE, PERU, AND BOLIVIA IN THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC, 1879–1884.* By Bruce W. Farcau (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000. Pp. 214. \$62.50 cloth.)
- LA INFLUENCIA DEL EJÉRCITO DE CHILE EN AMÉRICA LATINA, 1900–1950.* By Roberto Arancibia Clavel (Santiago de Chile: Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Militares, 2002. Pp. 537.)
- BLOOD AND DEBT: WAR AND THE NATION-STATE IN LATIN AMERICA.* By Miguel Angel Centeno (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002. Pp. 329. \$45.00 cloth.)
- FEAR AND MEMORY IN THE BRAZILIAN ARMY AND SOCIETY, 1889–1954.* By Shawn C. Smallman (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. Pp. 265. \$19.95 paper, \$49.95 cloth.)
- THE PARAGUAYAN WAR: VOLUME I, CAUSES AND EARLY CONDUCT.* By Thomas L. Whigham (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Pp. 520. \$75.00 cloth.)
- PREPARADO PARA LA GUERRA: PENSAMIENTO MILITAR CHILENO BAJO INFLUENCIA ALEMANA, 1885–1930.* By Enrique Brahm García (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2003. Pp. 157.)

Because relations between the state and the military are affected by contemporary global change, rules that determined both *civil-military*

and *military-civilian* relations since the middle of the seventeenth century may no longer prevail. In what some in the field refer to as the post-modern era of civil-military relations, distinctions between war and peace, and between domestic and international military responsibilities have become increasingly subject to politicization. As a result, opinions of those who once portrayed war in the region as a creator of national identity are subject to revision—perhaps with greater urgency than ever before—in the works discussed herein. As a corpus these works are significant because they raise questions for future students of military-civilian relations.

When it comes to international war, Latin America has had a history more like that of post-colonial Africa than Europe or North America. International peace has been the rule from the Rio Grande south. With the exception of a few conflicts in the nineteenth century and one in the twentieth, wars between Latin American countries have been short-lived and rare. The Platine conflicts involving Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay; two wars pitting Chile against Bolivia and Peru; and Mexico's disastrous struggle with its northern neighbor—all in the 1800s—and the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay in the 1930s are the only international wars that can seriously be compared to those experienced by Europeans and North Americans over the same span of time.

Conversely, over the past two centuries only the United States and Spain in the Atlantic world have had civil wars comparable in scope and consequence to those endured by Mexicans, Central Americans, and South Americans (and to those that still torment Africans). Such contrasts and comparisons make this body of work historiographically noteworthy as well.

National identities nurtured on battlefields abound in history. Nowhere has this been more superficially evident than in Latin America. Independence heroes in uniform are common from Mexico to the Southern Cone and are still synonymous with foundational patriotism and national identity. Historians have pointed out their manifest flaws, particularly in recent times, and while they are luminaries, they and their followers did not create many successful post-colonial regimes. Values and priorities of our own times have induced authors to take a hard multi-disciplinary look at peace, war, and relations between leaders of both civilian and military institutions.

In South America, where continental European-style power rivalries (and European powers themselves) influenced the foreign policies of fledgling governments (such as they were), the post-independence century was punctuated by wars fought to define national boundaries. As Brian Vale (a former British Council representative), Thomas Whigham (a historian), and Bruce Farcau (a foreign service veteran) argue, these wars did enhance identities gained by independence. The

nagging Platine controversies meticulously portrayed by Vale would eventually lead to both the crushing of Paraguay by Argentina and Brazil, and the establishment of Uruguay as a classic buffer state. Vale's study demonstrates how British ambitions, diplomatic strategies, and military expertise, as much or more than the patriotic zeal of South American post-colonial leaders, were initially intrinsic to international conflict. It was in the 1820s when Argentina and Brazil became geopolitical contenders in the South Atlantic, and also when Uruguay's internal turmoil, Argentina's precipitous fall into personalism, and Brazil's brief regency experience all began.

Both Thomas Whigham and Bruce Farcau reinforce long-standing convictions that ill-defined boundaries led to the only two protracted South American wars of the nineteenth century. The War of the Triple Alliance (or Paraguayan War, 1864–70) and the War of the Pacific (1879–84), both pitted poorly prepared allies against stronger single countries. In the former, a militarized, already Mediterranean Paraguay lost territorial claims to Argentina and Brazil, and was reduced ultimately to the status of an economic satellite of both. In the latter, Bolivia and Peru lost vast tracts of mineral-laden desert to Chile, and Bolivia joined Paraguay in land-locked status. Power relationships were fixed for much of the future. National identities were sharpened, histories and political cultures were shaped, and the lessons of war were learned with great human suffering. In no case, though, would such conflict encourage the creation of national institutions capable of the same sorts of activities that characterized the state in Europe or North America.

Six South American countries have based their identity partially on wars that altered borders but that could not be prosecuted to their full extent, owing to the lack of state machinery necessary for mobilization of national resources—not all that great a source of national pride. Farcau's and Whigham's works (the latter's will be even more valuable when the concluding volume appears) make this abundantly clear. Each is a refreshing corrective to national versions that extolled the virtues of things martial, made nationalistic claims, and doted on the technicalities of military history, all the while ignoring the ugly side of war and its aftermath.

War's aftermath often brings military reform, the effects of which can alter both civil-military and military-civilian relations. Conclusions reached by Brian Vale, Whigham, and Farcau corroborate this claim. There was a flurry of reform in late nineteenth-century South America. By the 1870s Brazil's army had eclipsed its navy as a political pressure group and led both the establishment and collapse of the Old Republic (1889–1930). Prior to World War I German instructors revamped training and organization in Argentina and Bolivia, and introduced to the Southern Cone more modern armaments. French instructors did their

best to revive Peru's moribund army—and later attempted to modernize Brazil's. As a result of the national collapse of 1870, Paraguayans began a long history of intense military-political collaboration. Such was the aftermath of both military failure and success.

It was the Chileans, cognizant of having won two wars as much by good fortune as military expertise, who had initiated the race for military reform. The Prussianization program already begun in 1885 resulted in formal excellence, all the while highlighting structural weaknesses of both the profession of arms and the political system. But it is a stretch to link the professional frustrations of the pre-World War I decades to political action in 1973, as Farcau does. More appropriate would have been a link to the debacle of 1924–25, but his is an intriguing speculation on causality, all the same.

Alterations of civil-military relations, theoretically based in the modern era on military subordination to civil authority stemming from post-war reform programs were the double-edged swords for South Americans. Preparedness for the future and the playing of peacetime roles meant different things to generals and admirals than they would to politicians and cabinet ministers in during most of the past century. But do they still?

The South American case of military modernization most consistently studied and vividly portrayed is Chile, as several of these works show. Having putatively settled with her perennial foes all but the Tacna-Arica sovereignty matter, Chilean civilian and military leaders turned to on-going boundary disputes with Argentina. As the works of George Rauch (an editor and writer), William Sater and Holger Herwig (historians both), and Enrique Brahm (a lawyer and historian) show, this probably became more complicated owing to military reforms than to foreign policy formulation. Argentina's successes in the southern desert campaigns of the 1870s and continued military build-up stoked the Buenos Aires government's ambitions for control of territory formerly populated by indigenes or Chileans. And this led to heightened disputes over the boundary in the cordillera and at the tip of the continent. Until Chile began importing German instructors in 1885, Argentina had a military edge.

Chile's importation of the German military system—part of a fascinating military-cultural interchange phenomenon being carried out contemporaneously in Japan and Turkey—has always been controversial. Like most foreign scholars before them, Sater and Herwig acknowledge the limitations of Prussianization. Rauch and Brahm, though, show another side to what may ensue in peacetime: partisan debates over preparedness for possible conflict with a limitrophe country, always with limitations imposed by resources, demographics, topography, technology, and politics in mind. Rauch's and Brahm's works, like Farcau's,

focus on specific issues. Whatever the realities of Prussianization and war planning in Chile, of foreign policy formulation and military build-up in Argentina, perceptions of threat on both sides of the Andes did result in action. Buenos Aires did develop policies, Santiago did formulate war plans well into the twentieth century, and differences of opinion between military and civilian leaders became sharper.

Would things have been different in South America without the professionalization process or with states capable of sustaining protracted international conflict? Neither Argentina nor Chile, contemporary evidence makes it pretty clear, could have prosecuted an extended war between, say, 1890 and 1914. Both countries were racked by internal disorder or civil war in the 1890s. Labor movements were gathering steam, and political realignment was a prominent feature of national and local government as the new century began. Both Brazil and Peru underwent systemic changes in the 1890s. But nowhere in South America did war lead to the creation of a nation-state *à la* Europe or North America. Nowhere could the State sustain for long an international campaign. Why was this?

Classical theorists argue that the machinery or institutions of the state result from the need to sustain and legitimize standing armies for the purpose of national preservation and expansion. Notwithstanding, beyond Europe and North America there are very few functional nation-states. Miguel Centeno (a sociologist) has taken a hard and detailed look at relationships between war, the military, and the state in Latin America in a most incisive work.

Centeno argues forcefully that Latin America endures a historically violent internal peace more than it suffers from wars between countries. Civil conflict, which hindered civil institution development, has prohibited individual countries from developing or accomplishing what they might have had if total war had been possible, a troubling conclusion. With few exceptions (Argentina, Brazil, Chile), South Americans have forged nation-states neither on the anvil of war nor by maintaining internal order. Centeno's argument is germane to serious study of international relations, not only in South America but also for the entire region. An intriguing theory of circular causality that would elate Giambattista Vico pervades *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America*. It is a theory applicable to arguments made throughout the corpus and, one hopes, to be further developed in future scholarship.

Ideal for providing a link between Centeno's theoretical treatise and the focused monographs already mentioned, are works by Roberto Arancibia (a serving officer) and Shawn Smallman (a historian). Arancibia's is the first comprehensive study of the exportation(s) of a non-European military system to non-European client states: Chile's to Colombia, Ecuador, and El Salvador. Early in the twentieth century,

these client countries looked to Chile for assistance in officer preparation, applied education, and organizational models in the same way the Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (ABC) countries (Peru, and Bolivia and Paraguay as well) looked to France and Germany for military tutelage.

Arancibia brings out both the patron and the client sides of these South American relationships. Sending military missions to Peru's northern rivals and to Central America served the regional ambitions of the Santiago government. Chilean military influence extended Germany's (especially in terms of armaments exports) and lent support to positive visions of Prussianization in Santiago. Arancibia validates much of Centeno's circular causality argumentation, especially with regard to military and foreign policy linkages. The state's and the military's interests, given the best of conditions, he shows, can indeed be synonymous. Whether or not Prussianization per se was superficial, relative success in the creation of a nation-state and a military to serve the national interest gave Chile a status in the region it still enjoys.

If it is true that spiked helmets and goose-stepping did not turn Chileans into Germans (comments by foreigners on Chilean affectations and traditions were as entertaining as they were revealing), it was equally true that looking like a Chilean did not make a Colombian, Ecuadorian, or Salvadoran a Chilean. Professionalization there and elsewhere in South America, we know, did not lead to satisfactory long-term civil-military relations. Stamped on social science theories of civil-military relations since the early stages of the Cold War, the subordination of the military to civilian authority was historically as much an exception to the rule as was capability for protracted war the exception in Latin America. Without strong state machinery under institutionalized control of civilian leaders, the military profession would repeatedly play deliberative roles. Historians might argue that this is still the case, even in the post-modern era.

A dark side to the history of all institutions exists. In the case of the military it can be far from received history. Smallman's *Fear and Memory in the Brazilian Army and Society, 1889–1954* provides a detailed, sober analysis of just how a high command can seek to conceal the way it operates when officers have political as well as institutional goals. It goes far deeper than other studies of the topic, providing readers with a model for future single-country studies. Not since E. Bradford Burns' *Nationalism in Brazil* (1968) and Alfred Stepan's *Rethinking Military Politics* (1988) have Brazilian nationalism and military politics been dealt with so cogently. *Fear and Memory* is more than just a milestone in the study of civil-military relations, it is an important contribution to the study of military-civilian relations.

Military-civilian relations—paradigmatic for the profession's dealings with all civilian institutions and sectors—rest formally on four

pillars: (1) the profession's relations with the state and the latter's various roles, (2) the constant need of preparedness for international conflict, (3) the profession's mandated or assumed peacetime roles, and (4) the prevailing leadership praxis. Informal pillars exist as well: corruption, factionalism, sociocultural influences, and coalition activity with civilian interest groups. Alluded to in other works, the latter are revealed by Smallman in vivid (not lurid, as the topic might beg) detail.

Bearing in mind its historic weaknesses in the region, the diminution of state-level machinery appears to be rendering nation-states into market-states. This is another reason these books need to be looked at in light of the questions they adumbrate re military-civilian relations. Why did the Platine and Andean-Pacific wars of the nineteenth century forge identities, but fail to create functional nation-states? Did military reform undertaken by winners and losers alike create professional organizations that, however weak, were superior to state institutions? Do identities nurtured in conflict and propounded by nationalists, their texts, and official military views of institutional and national history bode ill or well for harmonious military-civilian relations? May lack of protracted international war threats render armies into defenders of states that are increasingly irrelevant? These complex (perhaps circumlocutory) questions still need addressing.

In Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, as the corpus indicates, sub-regional conflict has encouraged armies to see themselves in essential domestic roles from independence onward. Territorial claims, fluvial and oceanic access, internal frontiers, and sovereignty in the reaches of republic and empire all depended on armed might. Owing to the lack of state-level machinery and resources, armed might became increasingly a chief determinant of internal stability. Frustration marked relations with the civilian sectors, so military-civilian relations came to rest, perhaps more securely, on both formal and informal pillars.

Armed might failed historically to create nation-states à la France and Germany, but it did help establish Latin American variants. Armies did become constitutional guarantors of nationhood. Such official status was then augmented with adaptation of European models by the *germanófilos* of Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia; the *afrancesados* of Peru, Brazil, and Paraguay; and the *chilenófilos* of Colombia, Ecuador, and El Salvador. Nation-states and armed forces in Latin America thus developed differently.

Once armies took on European airs, extra-hemispheric influence expanded from the civil to the military sector. Military-civilian relations superficially resembled, but did not replicate, those in Europe or North America. Professionalization thrust the military into politics for, without international conflict, what do national armies do? Throughout the Atlantic world civilian and military leaders ask this question today as often as they did a century ago.

South Americans were certainly capable of planning and policy formulation, but probably not of policy execution. Political shenanigans in the immediate post World War I years pretty much convinced Argentine, Bolivian, Brazilian, Chilean, Paraguayan, and Peruvian *uniformados* that the state was poorly served by its leaders and the military poorly served by some of its leaders as well. The superficiality of reforms and outright incapacity to wage war did nothing to deter officers throughout the region from the conviction that they, and hence the *patria*, were being held back. Military literature makes it pretty clear that civilian failures strengthened the formal pillars of military-civilian relations throughout South America as much as did military achievements, and that military failures strengthened the informal pillars as much as did civilian achievements.

The two contemporary Latin American phenomena most comparable to the long-term failure of institutional development are (1) the intensity of current diminution of the state's role of protagonist in economic and social development, and (2) the centripetal intensity of political competition to control the state. The failure of national legal and administrative machinery to accomplish in most of Latin America what it has in Western Europe, North Atlantic, and in parts of East Asia does not bode well for countries where military organizations cling tenaciously to historical roles, however subjectively they may define them. Centeno's *Blood and Debt* effectively shows that formal relations between armed forces and civilian sectors throughout the region have been based on a suspect theoretical base. Smallman's *Fear and Memory* confirms this on a case-study level. Centeno's and Smallman's works complement each other neatly, as do Vale's, Whigham's, and Farcau's; and Brahm's, Rauch's, Arancibia's, and Sater's and Herwig's.

What is it about Mexico and the circum-Caribbean that still renders them peripheral to similar conclusions? There have been fewer international wars (none of notable duration) in the circum-Caribbean than in South America, and civil conflict has abated, at least for the most part. Archetypal Caribbean military personalists, most of them anyway, have gone the way of South America's professional militarists—but for how long? The Mexican and Cuban revolutions produced unique and evolving military-civilian relations. These all distinguish the sub-region from South America. So do the geopolitical proximity and military influence of the United States, of course.

These books all generate further questions, and thus help to frame perspectives that should be useful to the study of both the circum-Caribbean region and military-civilian relations worldwide. Arancibia and Centeno expand on the attractions of multi-national studies by using Latin America judiciously as an analytical and structural framework. Arancibia's thorough discussion of Chilean influence in the Andes and

the Isthmus of Central America draws out sub-regional political issues and intertwines them with regional interests of a South American power. His argument also places in proper perspective the professional results of military modernization. Brahm does much the same; the very existence of planning for conflict with Argentina shows that, at least in theoretical terms, Chileans were striving to be, as it were, all they could be.

Centeno's sweeping multi-disciplinary treatment of war and the nation-state transcends disciplinary paradigms and evinces a grasp, comparable to that of Edwin Lieuwen, John J. Johnson, or Brian Loveman, of just what Latin American military-civilian relations have been all about for the better part of two centuries, especially in comparison with those of Europe and North America. Smallman further distinguishes the study of institutional history by exposing informal military-civilian relations and an army's past in ways never fully employed in a single-country study.

What do such works augur for the study of both civil-military and military-civilian relations in both times of war and peace? They suggest that national, sub-regional, and regional treatment will be best made using multi-disciplinary approaches even more than in the recent past. Sophisticated national studies will perforce cast official versions in new light, illumine us more as to their historicity and, one trusts, lead to even more constructive revisionism by scholars. Studies of the military in peacetime will certainly be the better for this.

So will those of the military in international conflict. Military history and studies of war should mean much more to all. The methodologies employed in these works could well be applied to Bolivia and Paraguay, and the 1932–35 Chaco War, its origins, conduct, and aftermath. Studies of institutional reform and modernization will be better able to juxtapose theory and practice, illusion and reality, based on what we now know about Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru. It bears iteration that future study of the northern Andes, Central America and the Caribbean will reflect these influences.

Because the future of the state's role is very much in question, relations between it and the only profession devoted entirely to its preservation merit continued attention. Peace and war have become increasingly indistinguishable, and definitional roles of the military more complex, thus, military-civilians merit further scrutiny.