



**NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE ARGENTINE EXPERIENCE

Foreword by Walter F. Mondale

**THE REPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Santo Domingo
December 16-18, 1988**

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FOREWORD

There is perhaps no greater threat to fragile democratic systems than the inability to integrate the military forces of a nation into the civil society. In recognition of this reality, NDI has begun a series of seminars and related projects that focus on the civil-military relationship. At a three-day seminar in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, NDI launched its civil-military program by addressing the Argentine experience. The December, 1988 seminar contributed to a better understanding of the options available to a society whose democracy is at serious risk because balance in that relationship has not been achieved.

The participants in the Santo Domingo conference are to be congratulated for the contribution they have made to this important subject. They represented academia, the military and the field of politics and demonstrated clearly that constructive dialogue can occur among these professions.

Participants from the Dominican Republic, Spain, Israel, Venezuela, Uruguay and the United States shared their national experiences in a manner that reflected their awareness of the Argentine situation, thus making their advice and counsel highly relevant and constructive. The successful transition from military to civilian government in Spain and Venezuela, was particularly relevant.

We would especially like to thank the 12 representatives from Argentina. They travelled to Santo Domingo in the midst of yet another uprising in their country by dissidents within the ranks of the military. The relevance of this conference was never in question as these scholars, politicians and military officers contributed their thoughts and personal experiences with a keen appreciation for the urgency of the problem.

As Argentina wrestles with extremist forces -- groups stimulated to act by the failure to reconcile the civil-military relationship in a democratic context -- we at NDI believe that the pages of this report contain within them the beginnings of a solution. What is needed now is to expose these lessons to a wider audience, to address the issue directly with the urgency and courage it deserves, and to keep alive the spirit of Santo Domingo by making integration of the military into the democratic society a national goal. We and the community of democratic nations are prepared to work with our friends from Argentina as they strive toward this vital objective.

Walter F. Mondale
Chairman

PREFACE

On December 1, 1988, some 45 members of an elite Coast Guard unit mutinied, abandoning their base less than a mile from President Raul Alfonsin's official residence in the Buenos Aires suburb of Olivos. A day later the rebellion spread to the army. Some 400 army officers under the leadership of Colonel Mohamed Ali Seineldin had gone into action. Together with the Coast Guard rebels, they seized an infantry school at the Campo de Mayo army base 22 miles northwest of the capital.

Surrounded by troops purportedly loyal to the government, there was an inoffensive skirmish between "loyal" artillery and "rebel" mortars. The insurgents were subsequently allowed to flee to the Villa Martelli arsenal on the outskirts of the capital. "Loyal" units surrounded Villa Martelli, but did not fire. Apparently, Army chief of staff Gen. Jose Dante Caridi could not count on enough support within his service to carry out President Alfonsin's order to "suffocate" the rebellion.

After protracted negotiations, the rebels put down their arms. Seineldin was taken into custody.

The rebellious military men had risen in support of fellow officers being prosecuted in civilian courts for human rights abuses. The revolt was the third in less than two years. The trials sought to punish those military leaders responsible for a campaign against leftist guerrillas and other dissidents conducted while a military junta ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. As in the two earlier revolts, mutiny leader Seineldin called for an increase in the military budget and an end to all trials of officers charged with rights abuses.

The people of Argentina reacted strongly to the revolt. They took to the streets to demonstrate in favor of democracy and their constitution. Opposition political parties, busy preparing for national elections in May, put aside their differences with the government and rallied in support of Argentina's five-year-old democracy. Rarely had the chasm between Argentina civilians and political leaders, and its men in uniform seemed so wide.

Two weeks after the revolt began, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Pedro Francisco Bono Foundation of the Dominican Republic convened a previously-scheduled international conference in Santo Domingo on civil-military relations in Argentina. The conference brought together political leaders, military officers and scholars to explore ways to improve civilian-military relations, and promote effective political leadership on issues affecting the armed forces.

Argentines joined with representatives from Spain, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Uruguay to examine successful experiences of those Latin nations in making the transition to democracy. Representatives from Israel and the United States discussed those institutions and practices that have helped prevent the emergence of an anti-democratic military elite.

For three days, the participants talked candidly about the prospects for improving civil-military relations in Argentina. They assessed the relevance of the experiences of other democratic nations, and discussed practical steps that Argentine political and military leaders might take in the future. Following is a report of the deliberations of that conference prepared by rapporteur William Woodward working with Martin Edwin Andersen of NDI. The ideas and sentiments expressed are a reflection of the consensus reached among conference participants on such crucial topics as the role of the military in a civil society; the responsibilities of civilian authorities in a democracy, and the application of differing national experiences to the Argentine situation. While we believe there is a consensus for the conclusions reached herein, NDI assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of the report.

* * *

On January 23 a commando group attacked and momentarily took over the Third Infantry Regiment at La Tablada, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. After 30 hours of fighting between some 50 insurgents and hundreds of police and military personnel more than 30 people had died, dozens were injured and nearly a score of rebels detained. The resurgence of leftist bands ready to do battle with the armed forces even during a period of constitutional rule gives the discussion conducted in Santo Domingo a special timeliness. It also makes it incumbent on the democratic forces in Latin America to renew their efforts to find lasting and equitable solutions to civil-military relations around the continent.

INTRODUCTION

"Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" Who will guard the guards? The answer to yesterday's Latin adage may be the key to tomorrow's Latin America. Today, from Central America to the Southern Cone, a new breed of civilian leaders is struggling to make democracy take root in soil stained by the bloodshed of dictatorship, terrorism and civil war.

Now elected -- or about to be elected -- to public office, these new Latin leaders seek to consolidate their power. Their goal is to move beyond formal democracy. Their task: to build democratic institutions and values that will permeate their societies; to make democracy not an experiment or a phase, but an enduring way of life; and to validate their own belief that democracy, however imperfect, is still the best path to economic and social progress.

To succeed, Latin America's democratic leadership faces the most fundamental trial of any democracy. They must prevail upon those who have the arms to accept the authority of those who do not. And they must do so without themselves engaging in violence. In their own way, and at their own speed, civilian leaders from countries as diverse as El Salvador and Brazil must contend with militaries far more used to giving orders than to following them. They must try to integrate armed forces that have historically been separated from their societies by differences in education, training and political philosophy. They must overcome generations of mutual mistrust, and persuade civilian and military officials to work together to make democracy succeed.

The conference in Santo Domingo was a continuing program by NDI to assist Argentine democracy. In September 1985, a three-day seminar co-sponsored by the Arturo Illia Foundation and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation discussed ways of strengthening the legislature's role in building democracy. And in April 1987, NDI joined with Radical and Peronist party leaders in convening a seminar in Buenos Aires on constitutional reform. The meeting, held in the wake of the Easter Week revolt, was seen by many as a timely demonstration of international support for Argentina's beleaguered democrats.

Today, Argentina is approaching an important milestone in its democratic transition -- the peaceful transfer of power from one freely elected Administration to another. It may also involve a transfer of power from one party to another. Presidential elections are scheduled for May. The transfer of power, the first time a freely-elected president will hand over power to an elected successor since the 1920s, is slated for early December 1989.

But, unless dramatic progress is made, it seems certain that the winner of the May election will be compelled to repeat President Alfonsin's balancing act between civilians distrustful of the military and a military dissatisfied with its treatment under the democratic regime. It is a highly appropriate time, therefore, to examine the steps that could be taken to strengthen democracy's hold in Argentina and to broaden the acceptance of democratic thinking inside the armed forces.

Democracy is not an abstract ideal. Rather it is a practical framework for responding to the economic, social and security problems faced by Latin American countries today. As President Alfonsin said in his 1983 inaugural address:

It is through democracy that we will be able to resolve national issues. There is no other way. All else has been tried; all else has been tested; and all else has failed.

Every nation must find its own way to the democratic path. Or, as one Dominican participant in the conference said, "each teacher must work from his own textbook." No outsider, and no outside example, provides a perfect blueprint for another nation's democracy. Obviously, only Argentina can decide what its future should be. But just as the founders of the United States learned democratic principles from classical and Enlightenment thinkers in Europe, so those building democracies today can profit from the lessons of past struggles in other lands. NDI has found that principles, processes and institutions can be adapted by democratic nations to suit their own circumstances and, in so doing, move the democratic process forward one step at a time.

As in sports, momentum in politics is important. Power tends to gravitate toward those forces that are already perceived to be gaining power. In the past decade in Latin America, the forces that have gained power have been largely civilian and largely democratic. The question as we approach the 1990's is whether that trend -- that momentum -- will continue. The importance of the answer is underscored by the knowledge that when Latin American democracies have begun to lose ground in the past, the erosion has rapidly turned into a landslide.

In Argentina, like its neighbors Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay and (now, perhaps) Chile, democracy is still a work in progress. Its final shape -- its very fate -- will be to an enormous extent determined by the skill with which Argentina's civilian leaders manage their relationship with the nation's armed forces. At the Santo Domingo conference, therefore, participants focused on key aspects of the civil-military relationship:

- mechanisms for consolidating civilian executive authority over the Argentine military;
- procedures for improving legislative oversight of military affairs;
- suggestions for re-defining the mission of the armed forces;
- methods for integrating the military into the society; and
- other practical steps that could be taken to maintain democratic momentum in Argentina and throughout the region.

Conference participants from Argentina assessed the progress that has been made since their country began its democratic transition in 1983, while those from other countries analyzed the relevance of their own national experiences to Argentina's future. Those participating in the conference came from different walks of life, spoke different languages and reflected a variety of political ideologies. On many issues, they did not agree. But they all shared a fundamental commitment to the democratic process. They all agreed that the right to determine a nation's destiny cannot be inherited; nor can it come from the force of arms; it must come from the people and from those elected to speak on their behalf.

Participants at the conference agreed, as well, on the central importance of civil-military relations in the transition to democratic rule. "Let's face it," said one Uruguayan participant, "what we are trying to do -- asking civilians and military officers to discuss ways of improving themselves and relations with each other -- has long been taboo in Latin America." It is time then, to break new ground.

In some countries, such a transition is preceded by a period of negotiation between civilian leaders and the armed forces during which the future role of each is defined. In Argentina, this was not the case. Instead, the struggle to define the extent of civilian power is still underway, and is being played out against the backdrop of democracy itself.

This transitional process has been complicated by the dismal inheritance that the Alfonsin government received from its military predecessors: a \$39 billion external debt, galloping inflation, and a society demoralized and divided by years of civil strife at home and the disastrous war in the South Atlantic.

In Argentina, as in other countries where democracies are being built or rebuilt, the first task is to establish the principle that control over the armed forces has passed, in substance as well as form, to elected civilian rulers. It must also build the permanent institutions that will make the democratic process irreversible and ensure the acceptance of democratic values by all sectors. Lastly, economic needs must be met, and the security interests of the nation defended.

Conference participants were united in their belief that, for these tasks to be achieved in Argentina, the traditional role of the military must change. The armed forces must be the defenders, but not the arbiters, of Argentine national policies, interests and values. They must accept civilian control of domestic security and intelligence-gathering; and they must work with civilians to define a role for themselves consistent with their capabilities, the Constitution, and the law.

In short, democracy demands of the Argentine military nothing less than a fundamental reassessment of its purpose and place in the country, and of the status of its members in the national community. But the foundation of true democracy cannot rest on concessions and changes made by the armed forces alone. Civilian leaders must show they can capably perform the tasks they have told the military it must no longer do.

They must learn enough and care enough to speak with authority about defense issues. And they have an obligation to consult with the armed forces on matters of legitimate concern to them, such as military doctrine, force structure, personnel policy and the budget for defense.

Even more important, civilian leaders must demonstrate again and again their own commitment to democratic principles and values. The history of Argentina is a history not just of military coups, but of military coups carried out in alliance with civilians. Civilians, and especially the political parties, must agree that partisan differences are less important than their shared commitment to the democratic process.

The kind of integration that will assure the survival of democratic institutions and practices cannot occur unless the traditional social isolation of the armed forces is reduced, a legitimate and meaningful new role for the military is defined, and a continually expanding dialogue aimed at developing a new and cooperative relationship between civilians and the military is set in motion.

Since 1983, two major obstacles have slowed progress towards military-civilian reconciliation in Argentina. The first is the lingering preoccupation on all sides with the prosecution and imprisonment of military officers for crimes committed during the so-called "dirty war." The second is the shortage of skilled and respected individuals and institutions working to foster understanding between civilians and the armed forces.

As a result, mistrust remains strong on both sides. Civilians fear a return to repression, or that the military remain a law unto themselves; the armed forces fear the destruction of their institutions and the permanent loss of prestige. There is no shortage of people who suggest not just tough initial bargaining positions in the negotiations about the future, but zero-sum calculations in which only one side can win and the other, inexorably, must lose.

Yet the fact is that, because Argentina has chosen democracy, this is one negotiation that both sides can win. Civilians will benefit from strong, well-equipped and well-trained armed forces. The military will find that respect is a far more enduring and satisfying source of prestige than fear. It is the effort to encourage this kind of understanding that makes conferences such as the one in Santo Domingo so important. As one retired Argentine military officer said as the conference drew to a close:

For the first time in my life, I feel I can speak openly both to my comrades in arms and to representatives of the political parties. We often begin in a very restrained manner in situations like this but, as the discussion proceeds, the tongues become looser. If this type of conference is repeated in Argentina, as it should be, the first meetings will be cold but, over time, warmth will begin.

No one is born with knowledge. When I have ideas different from others, I say let's not confront the disagreement solely by argument. Let us think about how the ideas that we have were developed; let us examine how each of us came to have the views we so strongly hold.

This method of analysis clarifies motives, assists understanding, and helps us move from confrontation to integration; from mutual disagreement to mutual respect.

**THE CONFERENCE:
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY**

A. General Principles

The goal of the Conference was to identify and evaluate the legal, procedural and political options that exist for encouraging civil and military cooperation in support of Argentine democracy.

Most participants accepted the premise that, even if all goes well, the transition to full and secure democracy in Argentina will take many years. The first goal is to safeguard the principle of elected civilian rule; the second to broaden the application of the democratic approach to all sectors of Argentine society, including the armed forces.

In a detailed presentation, one Spanish participant set out a series of general guidelines for managing a transition from military dictatorship to civilian democracy. The first step, he said, is to establish clearly the subordination of the leadership of the armed forces to that of the civilian President. This was most readily accomplished, he suggested, not through legislation, but by making early and full use of the authority a President has as head of state and commander in chief.

For example, a civilian president should strive to:

- make clear from the outset that the military is not to interfere in areas outside its responsibility;
- create a defense ministry headed by strong and capable and well-respected civilians;
- promote military officers who clearly accept civilian authority and penalize those who do not;
- make it illegal for military officers to obey illegal orders, thereby affirming the principle that the primary responsibility of the military is to the law and the Constitution, and not to itself.

This observer said that it was important, throughout the transition process, for civilians to avoid actions that would unnecessarily irritate or provoke the military. He argued that the military could not be expected to be enthusiastic about democracy in an atmosphere of constant recrimination and attacks against military institutions.

He also cautioned against rushing into a comprehensive reform effort that might appear to threaten the armed forces prior to the creation of a general willingness within the military to accept civilian rule. Nor, he said, should comprehensive reforms be initiated until civilians have developed the defense expertise needed to earn the professional respect of military officers.

He urged civilian leaders to characterize their own efforts not as attempts to "reform" the armed forces, but instead as a plan to improve their operational capabilities. As symbolism is an important part of military life, he suggested that the issue be examined in the context of making armed forces symbols consistent with democratic practices. He said civilians ought to work with the military to develop a doctrine that would establish clear and important areas of military responsibility within the framework of democracy. He warned that the military will want to continue to have police functions, as such a role allows them to continue to have intelligence from inside the country. "Political crimes", he added, ought to be removed entirely from the jurisdiction of military courts.

Finally, he stressed the importance of a united front among civilian political parties in proposing and carrying out efforts at military reform. A successful transition to democracy is completed, he added, when the opponents of a military regime are allowed to take power, and when a coup is no longer possible.

B. Argentine Progress

Under the leadership of President Alfonsin, and with the support of the political parties, a series of steps have been taken since 1983 to carry out the principles listed above and to strengthen civilian control over the military. These include:

- President Alfonsin's declaration on the day he took office that "there will be no more coups de etat or military demands in the Argentina of the future;
- removal of many top Army officers, and the prosecution of some, for human rights violations and for professional errors committed during the Malvinas/Falklands war;
- reestablishment of civilian control of the Ministry of Defense;
- assignment of responsibility for joint military planning of the three armed

forces under the leadership of a civilian Defense Ministry;

- appointment of a civilian director of the National Defense School;
- placement of the National Intelligence Agency (SIDE) in civilian hands;
- reduction of the defense budget in response to other national needs;
- passage of an amendment to the military code to allow prosecutors to appeal decisions reached by military judges to civilian courts;
- passage of a defense law creating a Council of National Defense, including representatives from the legislature, to advise the President on national defense affairs; and
- promote policies and legislation on internal security that will be exercised through specific non-military organisms.

At the conference, a researcher from Argentina's Arturo Illia Foundation said that progress is being made in establishing civilian control over defense planning. This, he added, was being done despite the initial lack of adequate data, and the continuing desire of the armed forces to retain independent control of the planning process.

The establishment of appropriate legislative authority over the armed forces has been hampered by the shortage of professional staff trained in defense matters. A Uruguayan researcher noted that parliaments in Latin America have no history of legislating on military affairs, except for occasional, superficial reviews of armed forces' budget requests. Even today, he said, congressmen do not want to deal in depth with military issues. Without much support staff, they confine their interests to a few great issues, or none at all. He added:

Until you have civilians with an ability to understand military reasoning and practices, and are able to discuss them in some detail, officers will think it is a waste of time to listen to them. The last thing military officers want to do in most countries is listen to the rhetoric of politicians.

This difficulty reflects the historic lack of legislative control over the executive branch, and especially the armed forces, in Argentina. Nevertheless, the parliament now has an expanding role in shaping the defense budget, and numerous proposals for military reform have been introduced and adopted by the legislative branch.

In addition, legislators have been increasingly assertive in seeking information about defense-related matters from the executive branch.

A specific legislative request for information was made concerning the deliberations of the hemispheric conference of American armies held at Mar de Plata in November, 1987. At that conference, the host Argentine army delegation warned about a possible resurgence in leftist guerrilla warfare. It alleged that leftist "solidarity" organizations were receiving assistance from abroad from such bodies as Amnesty International, the Ford Foundation and the World Council of Churches.

Taking note of the document signed by the military participants attending the Mar del Plata conference -- which claimed democracy promoted the designs of "communist subversion" -- a Peronist military advisor asked that democratic countries such as the United States exercise more control over their own armies. This control was necessary, he said, so that future conferences such as the one in Argentina are not used to contradict the policy of support for democracy promoted by the U.S. Administration and its embassies.

Much remains to be done. A Peronist researcher complained that parliament was still much too slow in initiating and carrying out innovative proposals on defense. He cited 12 initiatives offered by Radical deputy Guillermo Sarquis, which, he said, disappeared into the "Bermuda Triangle" of the defense commission of the Chamber of Deputies. Any reform of the Constitution, he said, must strengthen the parliament's role in setting military policy, he added.

Argentine participants at the conference differed, generally along party lines, in evaluating the adequacy of the policies and actions carried out by the government headed by President Alfonsin.

Supporters of the president emphasized the difficulty of dealing with a powerful and unrepentant military, especially in the midst of a national economic crisis. Opponents argued that Alfonsin has been too willing to make concessions to the military in order to resolve the mini-rebellions that have occurred during the past two years, and too slow in implementing the provisions of the new defense law.

C. Strengthening Democracy

1. The Importance of Civilian Unity.

Conference participants from outside Argentina were united in their desire to see democracy in Argentina succeed. And they were unanimous in their belief that it would succeed only if Argentine civilians -- especially the political parties -- are able to maintain a united front in support of civilian democratic rule.

Several participants cited the example of Venezuela, where a public pact (Punto Fijo) among the political parties paved the way for a democratic transition in 1958.

A retired general from the Dominican Republic congratulated both the Peronists and the Radicals for their past contributions to democracy, and joined others in urging the Argentine parties to formulate an agreement -- prior to the presidential elections in May -- in which they jointly spell out a series of principles and policies aimed at ensuring continued democratic progress.

The question of civilian responsibility for democracy was also raised by an Argentine parliamentarian who said that it was not sufficient to view the struggle for democracy purely in civilian versus military terms. He said that, historically, military coups in Argentina have never taken place without civilian support. The challenge to democracy, he suggested, consisted in persuading all civilian sectors, left and right, business and labor, to seek their objectives only through democratic means.

To this end, leaders must concentrate not simply on issues of military reform, but also on the economic and social issues that have produced pressure for coups in the past. Any issue that is a source of tension in Argentina, he said, is a potential lever for slowing, and ultimately destroying, the democratic experiment.

A member of the Peronist defense commission agreed with those who suggested that it would be a mistake for civilians to provoke or irritate the armed forces. But he said that the most provocative attitude any civilian could take towards the military would be to exhibit fear. Fear, he said, is the great provocation; for when people are afraid, like animals, they secrete a smell that prompts others to attack. If civilians yield on basic principles in the name of compromise, they lose power that cannot be regained. We can't show fear, he said, because if we do, we will not be able to stay in Argentina.

2. Reconciling the Past

Nearly 20 years after it began, and five years after the election of Raul Alfonsin, the "dirty war" remains the most important issue in civilian-military relations in Argentina, and the single most divisive and emotional issue in the society as a whole.

Other nations, such as Guatemala and Uruguay, granted amnesty to the military for past human rights crimes at the very outset of civilian rule. In Argentina, however, an effort in 1983 by the outgoing military government to declare such an amnesty was opposed by then presidential candidate Alfonsin. The measure was quickly overturned -- on a unanimous vote -- by the legislature.

At the conference, one Radical party member spoke proudly of the "unprecedented" decision by President Alfonsin to prosecute the generals who had presided over the clandestine repression. He argued that amnesty would have undermined the whole value structure of Argentine society. Further concessions to the military, he added, could not be made as long as they were demanded "with a gun to the head."

An Argentine political researcher said that the core problem is that the military wants vindication for its role in the battle against subversives; and the civilian population doesn't want to give it.

A former Argentine congressman, who had voted to repeal the amnesty, conceded that restoring military prestige is important. He said that civilians must share responsibility for the violence and the coups of the past. He noted that until Argentina resolves the past, it will be unable to resolve the future. "We Argentines believe in justice," he said. He continued:

We believe in sanctions for those who have been guilty. And if pardons are to come, they must come as a result of a change in the public will, not as the result of military pressure.

A high-ranking retired air force officer who served while the military repression was being planned, however, said that many of his colleagues had not wanted to participate in the war. They were ordered to do so. They were taught that the clandestine repression was the only way a "war" against subversives could be won.

He said that today, a decade later, the morale of younger officers who had nothing to do with the war is being damaged by the constant media attention focused on the past. He continued:

We must put this dispute behind us, or we may light a spark and start a fire that could destroy democracy. After all, coups aren't planned; they just happen.

Non-Argentine participants did not presume to prescribe a "solution" to the question of the military trials. A Spaniard observed that it was very difficult to sort out the social and ethical issues involved; but that the trials had the harmful side-effect of appearing to the military to be an assault not just on the individuals involved, but on the institution of the Army itself.

This feeling, in turn, causes the armed forces to fear that acceptance of the trials would be equivalent to the acceptance of surrender, and would destroy the very military institutions they have been trained throughout their lives to serve, honor, defend and obey.

A retired Argentine admiral sought to place the amnesty issue in the larger context of past military involvement in domestic political affairs. He cited four reasons for this history of involvement:

- Political power in Argentina traditionally has been corporate and the armed forces, in fact, were one of the corporations. These did not act as isolated entities, but were supported in various ways in their rise to power. The armed forces never came to rule by force of arms alone. They were supported by other political forces and, sometimes, by the Argentine people.
- The proscription of the Peronist party for nearly two decades delegitimized election results, so that constitutional governments were born weak, with serious difficulties in governing, which paved the way for subsequent military interventions in politics.
- While professional military education in Argentina traditionally has been good, a planning ideology (planificismo) in the War Colleges, and the quantity of superficial general studies, bestowed on the armed forces the feeling that they had an enormous capacity to solve the nation's problems.
- The military's erroneous belief that it had a legal responsibility to act as insurer of the corporate state.

He said that, in recent years, the armed forces have changed. Their confidence was shaken badly by the failure of the most recent military governments either to manage the economy successfully, or to win the Malvinas/Falklands war. Moreover, democracy is opening the eyes of the military to the complexities of society and government. "As a result," he said, "today, no one, except a madman, could even think about a military government." He continued:

There is no alternative to strict subordination to civilian power. The armed forces have no competence or responsibility to solve the economic problems of Argentina. The armed forces should never fit like a wedge between society and the state. Rather the state must be formed by society.

With some exceptions, the armed forces of today are essentially democratic. The problem of salaries and wages is serious, but it is unthinkable that people would risk their lives for a pay raise. On the other hand, civilians have a serious responsibility to deal with non-military security threats if you don't want us to be involved.

The armed forces believe, he said, that we acted correctly in the war against subversion. The cellular nature of the guerrilla organizations made it inevitable there would be excesses. The admiral complained that military feel wounded by a campaign of attacks by the mass media. With respect to the amnesty, he said that the military trials have to end; progress towards professionalizing the military and clarifying its mission could not be made as long as the media and the public are obsessed with the problems of the past.

The armed forces are generally willing to condemn the acts of revenge committed during the "dirty war", he concluded, but will never admit that the war itself could have been avoided.

3. The Role of the Military

a. Internal security

There was widespread agreement among the conference participants that, if democracy is to succeed, the Argentine armed forces must accept a far different role in the future than they demanded in the past.

When the military took power most recently, in 1976, it did so with what it believed to be a strong public mandate to end the political violence and instability of the preceding several years. It did so through state-sponsored terror, torture and brutal force.

The attitude of the military during this period was most chillingly expressed by General Iberico St. Jean, who said publicly that "First, we must kill all the subversives; then, their sympathizers; then, those who are indifferent; and finally, we must kill all those who are timid."

The military doctrine adopted by the Argentines during this period found its roots in French counter-insurgency tactics used during the Algerian and Indo-Chinese wars. It was a doctrine of "total war" against an enemy existing -- or thought to exist -- within the civilian population; an enemy thought to be dedicated to seizing power as part of a worldwide conspiracy, supported by external Communist powers, and operating through a network of agents that had infiltrated every sector of Argentine society.

To win such a "war," the military believed it was necessary to put aside Constitutional and legal norms; to severely restrict civilian political activity; to intercept communications; to conduct searches and seizures; and to terrorize suspected subversives into confessing not only their own involvement -- real or imagined -- in illegal activities, but that of friends, relatives and acquaintances, as well.

During this period, the military felt it was performing a task of vital importance not only to Argentina, but to the western world. It was on the front lines of a battle against a powerful enemy over whom victory was essential if the "Christian and moral values" of their country were to be preserved.

The debate over amnesty in Argentina today is, in many respects, a debate over the validity of the military doctrine adopted by the armed forces during the "dirty war". Democracy has a stake in the outcome of that debate, for the tactics then used by the armed forces were fundamentally at odds with democratic principles, premises and values. And they cannot be vindicated without weakening the foundation of democracy in Argentina for years to come.

Democracy requires that individual rights be protected; that judicial and legal processes be observed; and that operational control of the military reside, not in the hands of the military, but rather in the hands of a

constitutionally-elected civilian commander in chief. It is the task of Argentine leaders today to consolidate that civilian authority, and to define a new role for the armed forces consistent with democratic principles.

Conference participants were united in endorsing the current Argentine government policy of excluding the armed forces from responsibility for internal security matters. One Argentine supported this position by pointing out that the armed forces lack the training required to carry out police functions; and that they do not have an accurate perspective on what is occurring inside the country. Thus, they equate political activism with subversion, and fail to understand that vigorous political debate can occur without threatening either the armed forces, or the society.

An Israeli army general said that military leaders must understand that military prestige comes from winning on the battlefield, not from policing the nation. Officers who try to play politics will not be good officers, because the demands of good political leadership and good military leadership are quite different. The armed forces only damage their prestige when they seek to fill a role for which they are neither well-equipped nor well-trained.

b. The military and the war against drugs

The question arose as to whether an exception to the bar on military involvement in internal security should be made with respect to the war on drug abuse and drug trafficking inside Argentina.

The strong consensus view of the Argentines speaking at the conference was "no."

They argued that the armed forces would use a mandate to investigate drug trafficking as an excuse for seeking to exercise broad control over Argentine society -- to conduct searches, seize mail, intercept telecommunications and carry out extra-judicial interrogations.

Argentines are committed to fighting drug abuse, said one Peronist leader, and are willing to cooperate with other governments in doing so -- but internally drugs must be treated as a police and not a military matter.

Many participants drew a distinction between the situation in Argentina and that prevailing in countries like Colombia and Peru, where huge drug cartels pose a threat not only to civilian authority inside the country, but to the entire region. As one Venezuelan said, "How can we not demand that those countries use the military to gain control within their own borders -- because these are issues that are central for all of Latin America."

This sentiment was echoed by another Venezuelan who warned of the links between drug traffickers and guerrillas (narco-terrorism); a Panamanian, who warned of the links between drug kingpins and generals (narco-militarism); a Dominican, who expressed concern about the links between drug peddlers and politicians (narco-politics); and another Dominican who expressed anger at the corrupting effect that drugs are having on Dominican youth.

Conference discussion yielded a consensus that:

- drug trafficking is a serious threat to democracy and to the security of nations throughout the hemisphere;
- a coordinated effort is required to respond to this threat -- both in the producing and the consuming countries; and
- each nation must choose the resources it believes are appropriate to fight the drug war.

No general principle with respect to military involvement is possible. In Colombia, the depth of the drug problem requires full involvement of the military. In the Dominican Republic, it requires military operation of air surveillance radar and coastal patrol boats. In Argentina, however, the need is for a well-trained and well-equipped police, gendarmarie and coast guard, with military involvement limited to operations required outside the borders of the country.

c. The armed forces and the gathering of intelligence

Historically, the domestic intelligence operations of the Argentine Army have been used to spy on rival military services, to carry out actions either for or against the government in power, and to identify alleged subversives. None of these uses are consistent with the role of the military in a democratic state.

Under President Alfonsin, oversight of Argentine intelligence has -- for the first time -- been vested in a civilian. It is Alfonsin's clear intention that the intelligence services work to consolidate -- not undermine -- democracy.

To this end, his government has:

- sought to define specific areas of competence both for military intelligence under the Defense Ministry and domestic intelligence under Presidency;

- begun a badly-needed program to train civilians in intelligence operations and techniques;
- begun to develop procedures for more efficiently integrating intelligence information for use by top government officials; and
- begun to design mechanisms for imposing legislative control, including budgetary control, over the intelligence structure.

Despite these steps, several conference participants suggested that real civilian control over intelligence operations is incomplete. Training civilians, creating a new intelligence planning and information-processing system, and drawing a clear line between areas of military and civilian responsibility in a way acceptable to both sides all take time. Convincing the armed forces that they will not ultimately be called upon to reassume responsibility for internal security will take the most time of all.

One participant at the conference said that he had recently asked an Argentine general when the armed forces would stop wanting to be involved in internal intelligence. The general replied: "When we are certain that we will never again be asked to act on internal security. For it is our job to be prepared to do whatever we may be asked to do."

It is therefore essential, this participant argued, for Argentine civilians to monitor continually military intelligence operations to prevent the ban on domestic activities from being violated.

d. Defining a mission

If the armed forces are not to be responsible for internal security, for domestic intelligence-gathering, or for confronting the drug war, what is their future role to be?

As one participant observed, the nations of Latin America are expected to live in peace with each other. The Beagle channel dispute has been resolved; and the United States will certainly oppose any effort to seek a military solution to the question of sovereignty over the Malvinas/Falklands. Aside from the 1982 war, Argentina has not been directly involved in a foreign military conflict during this century.

A retired Argentine admiral argued that the lack of an internal mission does not mean that the armed forces have

become irrelevant or obsolete. Argentina is strategically located, he said, with long borders, complicated ocean passageways, vast natural resources and a potential area of conflict in the Malvinas/Falklands.

Our mission, he continued, is simple: to prepare for war in time of peace. We cannot think of ourselves as totally independent. We must be aware of the threats stemming from the U.S.-Soviet rivalry and from other conflicts around the world. It is not possible to improvise a Navy or other needed military capabilities at a moment's notice.

If we have to respond to a crisis and we are not prepared, he warned, we will pay a high price.

Several participants stressed the importance of training civilian defense experts capable of devising a new military doctrine to guide the armed forces in planning for the future.

An Argentine air force officer warned that any effort to restructure, streamline or re-deploy the armed forces in accordance with new perceptions of the military's role must reflect the need to keep military units active. Idle units, he said, are a danger. He also said that civilians have a responsibility to work with the military to develop an efficient system for the purchase, storage and replacement of military equipment in order to carry out any agreed upon operational plan.

A Peronist member of the Defense Commission of the Chamber of Deputies suggested that the military -- and the nation -- could be strengthened by improving Argentina's ability to build an internationally competitive defense industry. He charged that the current system is grossly inefficient, characterized by large investments, low productivity and little, if any, success in the world arms market. He argued that greater civilian-military cooperation in defense production could strengthen the military, increase armed forces prestige, and help the nation reduce its vast foreign debt.

He cited opportunities for joint production agreements with Germany and with other Latin American countries to develop fighter aircraft and an anti-guerilla airplane suitable for short-range missions. And he called for the use of professional civilian marketing techniques to stimulate purchases of Argentine arms abroad.

Other participants, from Argentina and elsewhere, said that any decision to bolster the Argentine defense industry must take into account the other economic needs of the country, the glut in arms supplies worldwide, and the kind of image Argentina wants to project both at home and abroad.

An Israeli military officer suggested it was not necessary for a nation to be faced with an imminent foreign military crisis to need and to have prestigious, well-trained and well-motivated military forces. What, he asked, are the goals of the Swiss and the Belgian and the French armed forces? Every army can be given goals to meet -- whether the ability to meet those goals is tested on the battle field or on the training ground.

4. Integrating the Military into Civilian Society

A truly democratic society cannot, for long, be protected by -- or protected from -- a military that does not share its values. Thus, the growth of Argentine democracy, if it is to continue and to extend its roots, must be reflected in the growth of democratic values and attitudes within the armed forces.

It is an illusion to believe that this will happen as the result of laws and proclamations alone. It is one thing to create the juridical basis for civilian control. It will prove quite another to enforce those laws should the still-tentative trend towards military acceptance of civilian authority suddenly reverse course.

The Argentine armed forces developed in accordance with the Spanish model of a highly professional, self-recruited military, substantially isolated, both economically and socially, from the civilian society they are theoretically in existence to defend.

In Argentina, as in many other Latin American nations, the choice of a military career extends for generations through the same families. Military officers marry the daughters of other military officers. These children go to school with those of other military families. Their neighbors are military. They travel in military buses; they study in military libraries; they attend military church services; and they are buried in military cemeteries.

Given this system, it isn't hard to see how differences of opinion -- and fundamental differences in values -- could arise between military and civilian sectors.

An Israeli army officer said that Argentina must find a way to make the armed forces feel a part of civilian society; while making civilians understand that they have a stake in strong and professional military forces. Mutual isolation he said, breeds mutual distrust, which breeds fear, which breeds trouble. He cited the example of Israel, where virtually every citizen is called upon to

participate in national defense; where the armed forces are recruited directly from the civilian population; where every new recruit has the opportunity, based on merit, to rise to the top of the armed forces; and where democratic principles and processes are reflected not only in the way the military relates to society, but in the way military personnel relate to each other.

He also stressed the importance of educating military personnel in the values of the society, and using educational institutions as a forum for bringing the military and civilians together to learn with -- and from -- each other.

Other participants argued that the training of the military must inevitably differ from civilian education because of the vast disparity between the responsibilities of democratic citizenship and the duty that a military officer not question, but rather obey, his superiors.

An Argentine suggested that it is difficult for military personnel to love democracy if they are barred from participating actively in the political life of the country. They do not vote; they cannot openly speak their minds; and -- in Argentina -- they remain subject to military discipline even after they have retired.

In summarizing the issue, participants suggested that it was up to civilian leaders to decide the kind of military, and the kind of society, they want to have. It is up to them to create opportunities for the military to study in civilian universities and to devise appropriate ways for the military to feel a part of democratic life: by allowing them to vote, perhaps; or by freeing retired officers from restrictions on political participation.

It is the responsibility of both military and civilian leaders to assess the options that exist for creating a military that more closely reflects the society as a whole; by instructing the military in the complexities of democratic society; by considering changes in recruitment policies, training, promotion and terms of service in order to reduce the caste-like nature of the military's status in national life.

Above all, it is necessary to develop in Argentina a cadre of people, respected by all sides, who are dedicated to creating an atmosphere in which differences of viewpoint may be openly expressed and conflicts resolved before they become a threat to democracy.

This process of integration has begun in Argentina, but it has barely begun. Enormous barriers of mistrust persist. Moreover, the number of skilled individuals working in a serious way to bring these barriers down remains small.

5. Making Democracy Work

Building cooperation between the military and civilians would be difficult in the best of times. The task is far more difficult in the midst of economic crisis.

Like much of the rest of Latin America, Argentina has been plagued throughout this decade by high interest payments, high inflation, plunging prices for traditional export commodities and a declining standard of living (a 20 percent drop since 1980).

Its foreign debt, now \$60 billion, is the third largest in the world. Although it was incurred by the military, it was inherited by democrats; and it is democracy's job to get Argentina on sound economic footing once again.

Global and Argentine economic policies are beyond the scope of this report. But as a representative of the Radical party said in Santo Domingo, without the resolution of economic problems, the resolution of civil-military relations will be far more difficult and the fate of democracy uncertain. It is difficult to maintain democratic institutions in the midst of anguish and despair.

This analysis was echoed by a participant from the United States who pointed out that there is a growing tendency throughout the world -- superpowers included -- to define national strength and national security in economic, as well as military, terms.

The two cannot be divorced. The ability of the Argentine government to finance military modernization, to train their armed forces and to compensate their military personnel will necessarily be limited, as it is in the United States, by the overall health of their economy and by their ability to meet other pressing social needs.

D. Help From Abroad

How can other nations, including the United States, help Argentine democracy succeed?

The conference in Santo Domingo brought together representatives from democracies in many Latin American nations, as well as from the United States, Spain and Israel. Their objective was not to prescribe solutions for Argentina, but rather to describe experiences and policies that might successfully be adapted to the unique conditions prevailing in that country.

From Venezuela comes the lesson of civilian unity -- a pact among the political parties to place democratic processes and institutions above partisan concerns.

From Israel comes the example of a military that fully reflects the democratic values and character of the Israeli people; an armed forces recruited, trained, educated, led and motivated in accordance with democratic principles and with the defense of democracy foremost in mind.

From the United States comes the tradition of a military subordinate to civilian authority, and the most striking demonstration possible that democratic values and military strength go hand in hand.

From Spain comes the knowledge that not even decades of dictatorship can obliterate the seeds from which democracy may grow; and the sight of a highly traditional military being modernized in accordance with democratic principles and in proportion to other national needs.

From the Dominican Republic comes the picture of a military whose prestige has never been higher -- not despite, but because of its acceptance of democracy and civilian rule; a military that now serves as the defender of national sovereignty, not as the arbiter of national power.

In these and other countries, Argentines can see a variety of legal, institutional and political approaches aimed at enlisting civilian-military cooperation in support of national goals and democratic values.

Conferences such as the one in Santo Domingo can help Argentina to profit from the successes -- and the mistakes -- of other democratic states. The learning, however, goes both ways.

Those exposed to the range of Argentine viewpoints expressed in Santo Domingo could not help but come away from the conference with both a deeper commitment to democracy and a deeper respect for the Argentine people.

Their struggle to bind up the wounds of civil violence; to establish standards of justice, without yielding to the darker emotions of revenge; to construct out of the ruins of economic and social chaos a framework for national development consistent with democratic principles -- is dramatic testimony to the resilience of their spirit, and the strength of their character.

As President Alfonsin reminded the world at the United Nations in December 1988, the time to express solidarity with democratic governments is now -- while they are still democratic -- not after they have fallen victim anew to enemies from without or from within. Speeches at the funerals of democracy, he said, no matter how eloquent or how moving they may be, are no substitute for actions taken to sustain a democracy in its effort to survive.

CONCLUSION

Alone among political systems, democracy has the ability to unify, not by exiling dissidents, but by including them in the political life of the nation; and democracy alone has the power to heal social wounds, not by killing the wounded, but by curing the disease.

In Venezuela, former guerillas now serve in the parliament alongside retired military officers. As a Venezuelan said in Santo Domingo, this could never have happened if Venezuelans on any side had adopted inflexible positions. We are not the Soviets, he said, where one side always wins at the expense of another. We are democrats; our challenge is to reach agreements where both sides win.

The fate of Argentine democracy will be determined by the quality of its leaders -- civilian and military. For the survival of democracy cannot be assured by conferences -- or by the example of other countries -- or even by laws alone. In the Argentina of the 1990's, as elsewhere down through history, from Jefferson to Ben-Gurion; from Bolivar to De Gaulle; freedom is a product of leadership; and democracy a sculpture molded by skilled human hands.

In Argentina, as in other democracies, the challenge of leadership is to reconcile differences between parts of the nation in a way that benefits the entire nation. The question for the future is whether Argentine civilian and military leaders will understand their shared interest in protecting the nation's security, restoring economic growth and binding the wounds of past conflict.

Clearly, they will disagree in the future, as they have in the past, about how to reach these goals. Democracy is not a system for fostering total agreement; it is a system of checks and balances intended to give every citizen and every sector a voice in national decisions. But the great advantage of freedom is that it allows a nation to face up to its problems; to debate them; to consider alternatives; and to move towards solutions as one society.

Inevitably, there will be setbacks. Deeply ingrained patterns of behavior cannot be altered overnight. Some projects that appear to hold promise will fail. Both civilians and the military must be realistic in the demands they place on each other; they must be patient; and they must strive not only to advocate their own views, but to understand and synthesize the views of others.

In October 1988, the Arturo Illia Foundation sponsored an initial forum between civilian and military leaders in Argentina. The December conference in Santo Domingo was another step along the same path. Future meetings should be held as a supplement to other efforts to enhance civil-military cooperation in Argentina.

These efforts, combined with a steady and united commitment to democracy by the political parties; the enlightened support and encouragement of other democratic nations, and a will on the part of Argentine leaders from all sectors to make the democratic experiment succeed can surely -- albeit slowly -- ensure the victory of freedom in Argentina for years and, hopefully, for generations to come.

CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS: THE ARGENTINE EXPERIENCE

December 16 - 18, 1988
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Conference Agenda

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

CONFERENCE SITE: Madre y Maestra Catholic Pontifical
University

THE INTEGRATION OF THE ARMED FORCES IN A DEMOCRACY

Part 1: The Role of the Executive Branch

- What has been done since the return to civilian rule to empower the executive branch in its dealings with the armed forces?
- What different, or additional, attributes should a president have in his role as commander-in-chief during a time of war? In peacetime?
- How are effective civilian-run defense ministries constructed during a transition to democracy?
- What specific steps can be taken to fortify the role of a civilian defense minister?
- What is the role of the executive branch in the control and oversight of the military intelligence system?
- What institutions and legislation, if any, need to be fortified to ensure more effective civilian control?
- What specific education or training is needed to make civilian employees of the defense ministry more effective?
- What is the role of the general staff in elaborating plans and strategies, and implementing orders, in a democracy?

- Is Argentina's new defense law a good one? Should "war and conflict hypotheses" include a role for the military in matters of internal security?
- What has been done, or needs to be done, in order to reduce the gap between the military's perceptions of security threats and those of civil society?
- Should the Military have a role in combating "narcoterrorism"? Or is this strictly a police function?
- What have been the effects of the hemispheric treaties and defense pacts in Argentina's military policies during constitutional rule?

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

Part 2: The Armed Forces and Parliament

- What are the legislature's responsibilities in defining military rules and regulations? Should new institutional relationships be created or old ones changed to improve their functioning?
- What has the legislature done since 1983 to empower itself on defense issues?
- What is the legislature's role in decisions concerning the promotion and retirement of officers? Can and should the system be improved?
- Does, and should, the legislature have powers or functions that differ in times of war and in times of peace?
- Does parliament effectively legislate and oversee defense expenditures? If not, what improvements might be made?

- What reform proposals have been passed or initiated since Argentina returned to democracy in 1983?

Part 3: The Defense Budget and the Military's Role in the Economy

- How effective is the collaboration between the executive branch (the defense ministry) and the legislature in deciding the limits to, and types of involvement by, the military in Argentina's economy?
- What special difficulties are posed in trying to effect an efficacious transition to civilian rule during times of economic austerity?
- Does the relation of defense expenditures to other government spending reflect the appropriate balance between military security and the economic development?
- What is the impact of Argentina's military-industrial complex and, in particular, Fabricaciones Militares on the country's economy?

Is it a state-subsidized drag on the economy, or does it protect vital national interests?

- Are Argentina's armed forces cost-effective? What civilian institutions have been created or need to be created and strengthened to provide credible direction and oversight to that end?

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

Part 4: The Integration of the Military into Society.

- What changes are needed in a democratic transition concerning the military's professional self-perception?
- What are the rights and obligations of active duty and retired military personnel concerning their participation in politics? Are they

appropriate for the current situation?

- What has been done since 1983 to reform and democratize the curriculum in military schools?
- What can be done at the university level to promote dialogue between civilians and the military?
- What institutions can be established to give civilians expertise in military affairs and defense policy?
- What can be done to break down the perception and/or reality of officers as a non-democratic caste?
- Are there structural changes, such as educational sabbaticals for officers, early retirement options, etc., which could help to promote military integration into society?
- What programs of civic education have been or could be initiated within the armed forces to promote subordination to civilian rule and a more complete integration within civil society?
- What has been the effect of the war in the Malvinas on Argentina's defense doctrine and on military education?

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE ARGENTINE EXPERIENCE

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