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**The modern Mexican military: Political influence and  
institutional interests in the 1980s**

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The American University, 1987

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THE MODERN MEXICAN MILITARY:  
POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS  
IN THE 1980s

by

Phyllis Greene Walker

submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Public and International Affairs

of The American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

in

International Affairs

Signatures of Committee:

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1987  
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ABSTRACT

The decade of the 1980s has witnessed dramatic changes in Mexico's political, social, and economic environment. As an integral part of that environment, the military has been affected by these changes. This thesis examines how these changes have affected the military's political influence and institutional needs. It concludes that the changes suggest continuing increases in political influence, expanding institutional interests, and, as a result, an overall improvement in the military's position within the political system.

While the thesis focuses on changes during the De la Madrid and López Portillo administrations, the process of depoliticizing and professionalizing the military, begun in the 1920s, is also examined, as are the military's major institutional interests and activities through the present. Finally, major trends affecting the institution are analyzed and assessed regarding how they may affect civil-military relations and the civilian leadership's ability to maintain its authority over the military institution.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would be incomplete were I not to acknowledge the guidance and support given by my committee members, Dean Louis W. Goodman of the School of International Service and Professor Jack Child of the Department of Language and Foreign Studies. Their comments and observations helped me to focus on many key issues and, as a result, substantively improved the quality of this thesis. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the assistance from the various individuals interviewed in the course of the research, who generously shared with me their insights, opinions, and information.

My gratitude is also expressed to James D. Rudolph, who first piqued my interest in studying the Mexican military; to Dr. Richard E. Hayes, whose ideas on using the levels of analysis greatly improved the study's organization; and to Professor Richard L. Millett, whose support and encouragement since my early undergraduate years helped me get this far in my academic journey. I owe a special acknowledgement to my husband, Harjinder Singh Bawa, whose patience and understanding helped see me through to the end of this effort.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview of the Military's Role in the Political System

The Mexican military's position in the political system is distinct from that of the armed forces in many Latin American countries. The Mexican military often is singled out as one of the most apolitical and professional armed forces in the hemisphere. At the same time, however, it is also considered one of the weakest Latin American armed forces in terms of its defensive capabilities and, in political terms, as being wholly subservient to the ruling civilian elite.

These considerations have contributed to the perception of Mexico as one of the least "militarized" countries in the hemisphere. Indeed, the perception is borne out by comparing the Mexican military with its hemispheric counterparts. No other Latin American government spends a smaller proportion of the budget on its armed forces than does Mexico's. The ratio of Mexico's military manpower to the total population is the lowest in the hemisphere after Jamaica and Haiti. The bulk of its military equipment inventory continues to be made up of World War II-vintage matériel.

The present position of the Mexican military has been determined as much by history as by the country's proximity to the United States. The role of the military in national life has undergone a number of significant changes since independence was gained from Spain in 1810. Most of the changes affecting the development of the modern institution have occurred since the beginning of the Revolution in 1910. These changes have been the product of the political leaders' efforts during the 1920s and 1930s to eliminate the military as an arbiter of national political affairs and to promote the development of a military institution.

Up until the Revolution, the Mexican military's role in national life was not entirely dissimilar to that of the armed forces in most other Latin American nations. Following independence, Mexico's central government remained weak and was dominated by a series of military leaders, or caudillos. Splits between liberals and conservatives paralleled divisions among military men, who often sought to capitalize on the issues to realize their personal ambition.

A major dissimilarity existed, however, in that Mexico repeatedly confronted security challenges not faced by other Latin American countries. During the early nineteenth century, for example, the security of northern Mexico—which then included most of the present-day western United States—was a concern brought about as much by the constant Indian wars as by the United States' intent to realize the "manifest destiny" of extending its dominion to the Pacific. In fact, the historical record suggests that because of its intervention—military as well as political—in Mexican affairs, the

United States has been and continues to be perceived by the Mexican leadership as the principal threat to the country's security and sovereignty.

As a result, during the modern era, Mexico's leaders have been less willing than those of other Latin American countries to accept and support actively the U.S. interpretation of the East-West struggle against international communism. Possibly because of this orientation and resistance to U.S. intervention, the national security doctrines designed by the armed forces of other Latin American countries—in particular, those of the Southern Cone—to deal with perceived communist-inspired internal security threats were not developed in Mexico. Moreover, the absence of such a doctrine may represent a partial explanation for the military's continuing non-intervention in political affairs throughout the post-World War II era. On the contrary, the Mexican leadership has tended to perceive the United States as as great a threat to security and stability, if not a more immediate one, than that of communist subversion.

This threat of foreign military intervention, by the United States or, during the nineteenth century, also by the former colonial European powers, has been a recurrent theme throughout most of the post-independence era. In the first intervention, the 1838 Pastry War, the French troops that landed at Veracruz were successfully repulsed. In one of the U.S.-Mexican War's last battles, Mexico City was attacked and taken by U.S. troops. After Mexico's defeat in the war with the United States, more than half its

national territory was surrendered in the 1848 peace settlement. After the three-year civil war in the late 1850s, the central government was so weakened that it was powerless to resist the 1862 French intervention, in which a Hapsburg archduke was imposed as Mexico's emperor.

During the Revolution, the United States again posed a threat by intervention. In 1910, it clandestinely supplied arms to the revolutionaries. In 1914, the United States occupied Veracruz, demanding that the revolutionary government salute the U.S. flag for an earlier affront to U.S. dignity. In 1916, a U.S. Army expeditionary force entered northern Mexico in pursuit of the revolutionary leader Pancho Villa, who had attacked U.S. citizens in cross-border raids. By the time of the central government's consolidation in the 1920s, these events had led to the development of a distinct set of security concerns and an orientation among military officers that was different from that of most Latin American military men.

These perceptions facilitated the efforts by Mexico's political leadership—then still dominated by military officers—to professionalize the military by building an institutional identity and to help ensure political stability by reducing the military's political role. The efforts were continued during the formative years of the post-revolutionary political system while the predecessor organizations to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—PRI) were cementing the organizational base for an “institutionalized” political party.



Since 1946, the year in which the last military officer to hold the presidency completed his term of office, the principle of civilian supremacy over the armed forces has been maintained. Despite the climate of uncertainty that has often characterized Mexican presidential transitions, a succession of civilian leaders have completed their terms and have received the support of the armed forces in ensuring the peaceful, constitutional assumption of power by their successors. At nearly every juncture, the civilian political leadership has successfully asserted its authority over the military's political ambitions and has prevented the armed forces from taking part in endeavors that might compromise that authority.

The post-World War II dominance of the United States as a superpower lessened Mexico's external security concerns. The extension of the U.S. security umbrella's protection has enabled Mexico to remain free from external threats without having to build up its military. The recognition that Mexico would be unable to halt a U.S. invasion has made irrelevant the need to protect itself militarily from the United States. On the southern border, the Guatemalan military has never posed a threat to Mexico. Despite occasional tensions between the two countries, there have never been open hostilities or unresolved border disputes. Consequently, throughout the post-war era, the Mexican military's activities have been focused almost exclusively on the maintenance of domestic order and national development.

In recent years the military has sought to improve the stature of the institution and, possibly, to broaden its participation

in national policy making. Some analysts point to the cause of the military's new interests as an institutional identity crisis that resulted from its repressive role in the 1968 student demonstrations. Others believe the first indications were not evident until 1980, when Mexico's higher international profile, oil wealth, and the threat of spillover of the Central American conflict prompted a reassessment of the military's role in national security and the efforts to modernize the languishing military institution. What is certain, however, is that national attention has continued to be focused on the military and has led to increasing speculation that resulting developments could presage a change in the military's role in the political system.

#### The Central Research Focus

A consensus exists among most authors of scholarly literature on the Mexican armed forces that the institution has been affected by a number of changes—external and internal—during the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> This thesis addresses the role of the Mexican military in the changing environment of the 1980s.

The research focus is based on the premise that the military, one of the key institutions in Mexican national life, has been affected

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, the views presented by the contributors to The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment, Monograph Series, no. 15, ed. David F. Ronfeldt (La Jolla, California: University of California at San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1984).

by the dramatic changes occurring in the country during the 1980s. These changes include a range of economic, social, and political issues that have been the subject of numerous press reports, books, and articles. As a result of the changes in the Mexican environment, the military institution itself has changed.

The changes may be evident in terms of the military's political influence and in terms of its institutional interests. On the basis of the research presented in this thesis, an assessment is made regarding the extent to which the military's political influence has expanded or contracted during the 1980s. With respect to its institutional interests, the extent to which these interests are changing is considered as well as the impact they may have on the military institution and on the military's position in the political system. Finally, consideration is given to how the changing political influence and institutional interests may affect civil-military relations and the prospects for continuing civilian control over the institution.

The research focus on political influence is similar to the 1985 effort of Professor Edward J. Williams, who investigated the implications of changes in such influence for civil-military relations.<sup>2</sup> This thesis, however, departs from William's study in focusing also

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<sup>2</sup>See Edward J. Williams, "The Evolution of the Mexican Military and Its Implications for Civil-Military Relations," in Mexico's Political Stability: The Next Five Years, ed. Roderic A. Camp (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 143-158. This material was originally presented in an issue paper prepared for a U.S. State Department conference entitled "Mexican Trends: The Next Five Years," December 12, 1985.

on the military's institutional activities and interests that may determine its position in the political system. The analysis includes consideration of as much recent information as possible—in addition to historical materials and data from the early 1980s—in the belief that such evidence may be critical in highlighting otherwise obscured trends.

In his 1985 paper, Williams introduced five definitional categories that can be used to describe the range of possibilities for the military's role in the Mexican political system.<sup>3</sup> These categories include (1) the "interest group" model, wherein the military is one of many competing groups in the Mexican system; (2) the "guardian" model, wherein the military, as the protector of the civilian elite, maintains political order; (3) the "collaborator" model, wherein relative equality exists between the military and civilian elites in some policy making areas; (4) the "moderator" model, wherein the military is a political arbiter, who, on occasion, intervenes to correct the deficiencies of the civilian leadership; and (5) the "intervention" model, wherein the military seizes political

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<sup>3</sup>See Williams, "The Evolution of the Mexican Military," pp. 149-153. Williams does not claim these categories to be original. He credits Michael Dzedzic with the development of the "guardian" concept, although Samuel P. Huntington has written extensively on this role in Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1968). Alfred Stepan, in The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), discusses in detail the "moderator" role. Given Williams's contextual description, it appears that this term is loosely applied in the Mexican case and should not be interpreted in Stepan's strict sense, wherein the military serves as the final arbiter of the political leadership's legitimacy.

power to establish a military dictatorship. Based on the evidence presented, an assessment is made as to which of these definitional categories most appropriately explains the military's present position and relations with the political leadership.

### Organization and Approach

The body of the thesis is divided into two major chapters. The first chapter addresses the modern historical setting, beginning in 1920 and continuing through 1980. It examines the process by which the military was professionalized, removed from active participation in political affairs, and subordinated to the civilian political leadership. It also addresses the armed forces' principal mission-related activities and discusses how these changing activities have related to the interests of the political elite. This chapter includes descriptive historical material and analytical assessments to provide the foundation for understanding the present position of the military in the political system.

The second chapter concentrates on the military's changing policy influence and interests between 1980 and 1987. It is organized around an analytical framework that reflects the four levels of the military's interaction with, or input into, the political system. At the individual level, the position of the individual military officer (limited to the consideration of the commissioned officer corps) in the political system is considered. The organizational level focuses on the military as an institution. It is in this section that the military's institutional interests are examined in the greatest detail.

The national level identifies the military as an actor in the political system. It considers the military's position in the domestic political arena and its activities in relation to national policy objectives and public perceptions of the military. The final section, the international level, examines influences on the military institution that are external to the Mexican environment. It considers the military's perception of the civilian leadership's response to these external factors and, in turn, how this response affects the military's institutional and policy interests.

Chapter IV concludes with an analysis, based on the evidence presented in both the preceding chapters, of the military's present political and institutional interests and of the extent to which these interests have changed since 1980. It considers the applicability of the definitional models in describing the military's role under the present Mexican administration and the character of civil-military relations. Finally, it identifies the factors considered likely to affect the military's changing political influence and institutional interests and assesses the trends that suggest the nature of the military's future role in the political system.

The evidence on which the analysis is based was drawn from various sources, reflecting primary- and secondary-source materials. These included scholarly literature and analyses relating to the role of the military in the political system as well as press reports published in the United States' and Mexican media, including the selected journalistic accounts translated and published in the Daily Report: Latin America of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service

and in the Latin America Report of the Joint Publications Research Service, both U.S. Government publications. Mexican Government publications were also a useful information source and have included speeches, biographical information, and other materials prepared by the Presidency of the Republic (Presidencia de la República) as well as the Secretariat of National Defense (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional). The principal source for descriptive data on the size and organization of the armed forces was The Military Balance, the annual publication of the International Institute of Strategic Studies. Finally, interviews with U.S. Government and academic experts familiar with the Mexican military helped fill some gaps in knowledge and were a source of candid judgments regarding the military's position in the political system.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MODERN HISTORICAL SETTING

The contemporary Mexican military institution has changed considerably since the turn of the century. In many respects, it bears little resemblance to the organization that existed before the inception of the Revolution in 1910.<sup>1</sup> While some of its official traditions may be traced to the pre-colonial era, the military's present institutional identity has been most strongly influenced by events tied to the Revolution. The changing political role and institutional interests of the Mexican armed forces during this period—particularly since the establishment of the central government in 1920—are two of the more significant factors in the development of the modern Mexican military.

Over the past half century, the military has become a unified institution that has an identifiable set of values and traditions. Training has been formalized through the military education system;

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<sup>1</sup>The Revolution is considered by the Mexican Government to be a political process that began in 1910 and has continued through the present. The military phase of the Revolution, the period when the greatest political violence occurred, lasted from 1910 to 1917. For purposes of this study, analysis will focus on the period following the consolidation of political authority in a central government in 1920. See, for example, the characterization offered in James D. Rudolph, ed., Mexico: A Country Study (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office), p. xi.



pay, benefits, and promotions have been regularized; and the missions of the armed forces have been defined. The product of these efforts has been the emergence of the image of the professional military officer who remains aloof from involvement in political affairs. This professionalization of the armed forces has enabled civilian leadership to prevail in the political arena and has contributed to Mexico's political stability and economic growth. The institution now identifies itself as the defender of the popular will embodied in a central government that is loyal to the Revolution and to the ideals articulated in the Constitution of 1917. In the words of one prominent Mexican military leader, the modern military institution has become the "silent and anonymous" guardian that has provided the security necessary for national political and economic development.<sup>2</sup>

Because the Revolution marked a turning point in the military institution's development, changes arising out of this historical setting that affect the military—as a political actor and as an institution—merit scrutiny. This chapter focuses on historical developments since the consolidation of political authority in the early post-Revolutionary years to identify important factors that have contributed to the evolution of the military's political role to date and have shaped the interests of the modern military institution.

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<sup>2</sup>Jesús de León Toral, General de Brigada D.E.M., El Ejército Mexicano (México: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, 1979), pp. 532-533.

### The Early Post-Revolutionary Period (1920-1940)

According to Edwin Lieuwen, the leading scholar in the United States on the historical development of the Mexican military institution, the organization underwent a significant transformation between 1920 and 1940. At the beginning of the period, the Mexican military has been described by Lieuwen as "one of the most political and unprofessional of all Latin America." By 1940, however, it had become "one of the most nonpolitical and professional" in the hemisphere. Credit for this change, Lieuwen asserts, must go to four strong revolutionary generals—Alvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, Joaquín Amaro, and Lázaro Cárdenas—"who together spent an entire generation in accomplishing this extremely difficult task."<sup>3</sup>

Alvaro Obregón's ouster in 1920 of Venustiano Carranza, the first president to serve under the Constitution of 1917, marked the last time that Mexico's leadership has been changed through use of force. Obregón's assumption of national power came on the heels of a heated presidential campaign, in which the most prominent issue was the desirability of having the national leadership in the hands of civilians. The phenomenon of militarismo (militarism) was widely viewed as having been the source of Mexico's political instability over the past century and was roundly condemned. Indeed, the desirability of civilian over military rule had been affirmed by the signers of the Constitution of 1917.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p. 108.

Shortly after he assumed the presidency, Obregón began the first successful efforts to reduce the military's influence in domestic politics by enhancing his leverage over the powerful institution. Not only did the new president enjoy the support of military officers—who were largely responsible for bringing him to power—but the socialist orientation of the new president earned him support from labor and peasant groups, a factor that was an advantage in his efforts to reform the military. In addition, to assuage the influential citizens and conservative businessmen who could form alliances to destabilize the regime, the banks that had been nationalized by Carranza were returned to their former owners.<sup>5</sup>

Obregón also realized that to consolidate his political strength it would be necessary to diminish the power and influence of many revolutionary generals and regional caudillos, who had played a crucial role in effecting the Revolution. Officers known as Carranza loyalists were purged from the armed forces; thousands of others were retired from active duty and placed on reserve. The number of military districts (the predecessor of the present-day military zones) was increased from twenty-five to thirty-five, an action which not only increased the number of commands that could be

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<sup>4</sup>Jorge Alberto Lozoya, El Ejército Mexicano (México: El Colegio de México, 1976), pp. 51-52.

<sup>5</sup>Gloria Fuentes, El Ejército Mexicano (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1983, pp. 282-283.

distributed as rewards for loyal service, but also reduced the concentration of troops under any single commander.<sup>6</sup>

The ranks of the armed forces, which were then estimated at 100,000, were reduced by half.<sup>7</sup> New policies were implemented to ensure the loyalty of the remaining officers and troops. Key officers were encouraged "to exchange their political independence for material gain," an effort in line with Obregón's belief that "there is no general able to resist a cañonazo (cannon shot) of fifty thousand pesos."<sup>8</sup> As a result of these policies, military spending fell from 66 to 36 percent of the national budget between 1919 and 1924, the final year of the Obregón administration.<sup>9</sup>

According to Mexican scholar Jorge Alberto Lozoya, the military policies of all Mexican administrations since Obregón have been designed to achieve "the elimination of the generals and chiefs [who are] opposed to the government and the education and

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<sup>6</sup>Edwin Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910-1940 (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), p. 69, citing Gobierno de México, Diario Oficial, February 23, 1923.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67. Official estimates of military manpower during this period were apparently inflated. In another section of Lieuwen's book, he notes that "there were 125,000 troops in the table of organization in 1918, but there were probably no more than fifty to sixty thousand in actual service [p. 48]. These figures were believed to apply to army personnel. The navy was not a significant military or political force during this period; estimates of its size were not presented in the research materials consulted.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 48, 68.

indoctrination of the young officers.”<sup>10</sup> This pattern was established in December 1924, when General Plutarco Elías Calles—the minister of war and navy under Obregón—assumed the presidency and the period known in Mexican history as the Maximato began.<sup>11</sup> Calles continued and expanded upon many of Obregón’s efforts to depoliticize and professionalize the military institution. Like his predecessor, Calles recognized that his tenure in office would be determined by his ability to maintain the military’s support and that factionalism, which would undermine that support, could be minimized by reducing the military’s role and interest in political affairs.

Calles continued Obregón’s initial efforts at wresting political control from the military. Only two military officers held cabinet posts between 1924 and 1928—those of War and Navy and of Foreign Relations—as compared to five in the Obregón government.<sup>12</sup> Many of the remaining revolutionary generals—those who had not been purged or retired by Obregón—were put on the government payroll. Disloyal generals continued to be retired, those of questionable loyalty were shifted away from their regional power bases, and the

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<sup>10</sup>Lozoya, El Ejército Mexicano, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup>Although Calles served as constitutional president for only four years, he succeeded in continuing de facto rule for six additional years through the selection and subsequent election of the three following presidents.

<sup>12</sup>Guillermo Boils, Los militares y la política en México, 1915-1974 (México: Ediciones El Caballito, 1975), p. 176.

practice of regularly rotating the command of the country's military zones was established. While federal government expenditures on the armed forces were further cut, ample opportunities for self-enrichment were provided.<sup>13</sup> According to Lieuwen, who acknowledges that a number of military fortunes were made during the Obregón administration, the self-enrichment that took place under Calles was "notorious."<sup>14</sup>

General Joaquín Amaro, Calles' secretary of war and navy, contributed the most toward the transformation of the Mexican military during this period. In his efforts to promote the development of a military institution, a series of laws were enacted that established the legal basis for the armed forces and regularized military practices. The 1926 Organic Law of the National Army and Navy delineated the military's relationship with the state and general society and defined its principal missions as being "to defend the integrity and independence of the nation, to maintain the constitution, and to preserve internal order."<sup>15</sup>

Other new measures included the Law of Promotions and Compensation and the Law of Pensions and Retirement, which regularized the rewards that military men could expect in return for faithful service. The Law of Discipline of the National Army and

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<sup>13</sup>Daniel Levy and Gabriel Székely, Mexico: Paradoxes of Stability and Change (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 40.

<sup>14</sup>Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 90.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

Navy reinforced the notion of loyalty to the country's political leaders by requiring that each soldier "in fulfillment of his duties, sacrifice all personal interests to the sovereignty of the nation, to loyalty toward its institutions, and to the honor of the National Army;"<sup>16</sup> the Code of Military Justice set out the provisions to enforce the new discipline.

Amaro also was instrumental in the development of the military education system and emphasized the importance of technical training for military personnel. The curriculum of the military academy, the Heroic Military College (Heróico Colegio Militar), was completely revised to provide more modern training for the cadets. The creation of the Military Medical School and the Military Engineering School lent Mexico's military the distinction of being one of the few in the world that had the capability to train its medical and engineering personnel at schools under the control of the armed forces.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the officers sent abroad for professional training in the United States and Western Europe, military attachés were assigned to Mexico's embassies throughout the world in an effort to expand contacts.<sup>18</sup> Finally, a new second tier of military education was created in 1932 with the opening of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Lozoya, El Ejército Mexicano, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup>Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 92.

the Superior War College (Escuela Superior de Guerra), the command and general staff school for promising young officers.

Some analysts of this era in Mexican politics have found it significant to point out that members of the military elite were responsible for the founding in 1929 of the predecessor organization to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—PRI), the ruling political party in present-day Mexico.<sup>19</sup> While the National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario—PNR), as the government's party was then known, was created by Calles, it was organized in order to limit the military's ability to be a decisive political actor and to serve as a vehicle for Calles to continue his personal influence over the national leadership after the end of his presidency. According to Mexican scholar Lozoya, Calles created the PNR "as a popular front that would try to eliminate the military from any political function by means of the coordinated forces of the workers, peasants, and bureaucrats."<sup>20</sup> Lozoya emphasizes that the military was intentionally not represented as a separate interest group in the new political organization.<sup>21</sup>

General Lázaro Cárdenas, also a hand-picked candidate by Calles, chose to pursue his own independent policies upon assuming

<sup>19</sup>See, for example, the citation of Professor Alfred Stepan's work in Stephen J. Wager, The Latin American Military Institution, ed. Robert Wesson (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), p. 74.

<sup>20</sup>Lozoya, El Ejército Mexicano, p. 58.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 60.



the presidency in 1934, but continued efforts to professionalize the military and reduce its political influence. The Secretariat of War and Navy (Secretaría de Guerra y Marina) was divided into two autonomous defense ministries—the Secretariat of National Defense (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional), which controls the army and air force, and the Secretariat of the Navy (Secretaría de Marina), which controls the navy, naval aviation, the marines, and the coast guard. While the new military organizational structure somewhat improved the navy's status, the army remained by far Mexico's dominant military force.

In a highly controversial step in 1938, Cárdenas created a separate sector for the military within the ruling Party of the Mexican Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana—PRM), the successor to the PNR. Cárdenas, who dominated the party bureaucracy, believed that by bringing the military into the PRM and placing it under party control, “the military could be kept in check.”<sup>22</sup> In Cárdenas' words: “We did not put the army in politics. It was already there. In fact it had been dominating the situation, and we did well to reduce its influence to one out of four [party sectors].”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Dale Story, The Mexican Ruling Party: Stability and Authority (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), p. 99.

<sup>23</sup>Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 125. The other three party sectors pertained to labor, the peasantry, and the “popular” sector, composed mainly of government workers.

As the possibility of Mexican involvement in World War II increased in 1940, Cárdenas drafted the National Military Service Law, which established compulsory basic military service for Mexican youth. During the final months of his administration, he also set under way plans to eliminate the military sector from the PRM and incorporate its members into the "popular" sector. The enactment of the National Military Service Law and the dissolution of the military sector were both carried out under Cárdenas' successor, General Manuel Avila Camacho, who assumed the presidency in December 1940.<sup>24</sup>

#### World War II and the Transition to Modernity (1940-1946)

Avila Camacho was the last military officer elected President of Mexico. Civilian control of the political process was consolidated as the military became preoccupied with World War II and preparing for the possible defense of the nation. According to Lieuwen, Avila Camacho used the pretext of the war "to insist that the army devote itself exclusively to military functions."<sup>25</sup> By mid-1941, plans were completed for the establishment of a general staff. The first draftees were called for military service in 1942.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Boils, Los militares v la política, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup>Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup>Virginia Prewett, "The Mexican Army," Foreign Affairs 19 (April 1941): 615.

The sinking of two Mexican commercial vessels by German submarines in the Gulf of Mexico provoked Avila Camacho to declare war on the Axis powers in June 1942. By early 1944, the Mexican Air Force (Fuerza Aérea Mexicana—FAM) was formally established, and plans were under way for a Mexican air squadron to be sent to the Pacific theater. After a year's training in the United States, Squadron 201 of the FAM arrived in the Philippines in spring 1945. With uniforms, supplies, and aircraft provided under the U.S. Lend-Lease Program, thirty-two Mexican pilots participated in fifty combat missions between June and mid-July. Almost all of the operations were bombing and strafing runs made in support of ground forces, but several long-range reconnaissance missions were undertaken during the squadron's final phase of activities. Seven pilots died in action, five of whom were lost during the reconnaissance missions.<sup>27</sup>

During this period, U.S.-Mexican military relations were the closest they have ever been until recently. Mexico was one of two key Latin American countries with which the United States sought to establish bilateral defense cooperation during the war years.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>A detailed official account of Squadron 201's activities is presented in Luis Garfías Magaña, Teniente Coronel de Artillería D.E.M., "México y la Segunda Guerra Mundial," Revista del Ejército y Fuerza Aérea 11 (mayo de 1973): 13-17.

<sup>28</sup>The other country was Brazil, which signed the first formal cooperation agreement in October 1940. See John Child, The Inter-American Military System (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 7822609, 1978), p. 139.

Although captured documents have subsequently proved that the Axis powers never had concrete plans to invade the Western Hemisphere, concerns were rife among U.S. military planners that Mexican territory would be used by the Germans and Japanese to launch attacks on the United States.<sup>29</sup> The Joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission was constituted in February 1942, and was assigned official responsibility "to study the problems relating to the common defense of the United States and Mexico, to study broad plans for the defense of Mexico and adjacent areas of the United States, and to propose to the respective governments measures which . . . should be adopted."<sup>30</sup> Although the commission—which still meets several times each year—failed to function as originally envisioned, it brought together for the first time U.S. and Mexican military officers and established a channel of communication between the two countries' armed forces.

There were already indications before the end of the war, however, that U.S.-Mexican defense cooperation would not reach the heights first anticipated by the U.S. military planners. Although, for example, the United States built airfields at Tehuantepec and Cozumel with the Mexican Government's permission, U.S. requests to station bombers at the isthmus for protection of the Panama

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<sup>29</sup>Prewett, "The Mexican Army," pp. 610-611.

<sup>30</sup>As cited in an informal talk on joint U.S.-Mexican military cooperation during World War II, presented by Major General Guy V. Henry, U.S. Army, before a gathering of the Office of the Coordinator of Interamerican Affairs, U.S. War Department, January 3, 1945, Record Group 218, National Archives.

Canal and fighters on the Gulf for antisubmarine work were resisted. Major General Guy Henry, the senior U.S. Army member on JMUSDC during the war years, believed that the reason was "political." According to Henry's assessment in 1945: "To date Mexico apparently desires United States materiel, and to take advantage, to a limited extent, of United States training facilities; but then to handle her own affairs in her own way in Mexico without the presence of United States personnel."<sup>31</sup>

#### The Post-World War II Era (1946-1968)

Despite the Mexican armed forces' prominence and activities during World War II, the military did not assume a greater political role in the post-war era. After the war, the military's political influence was minimal in comparison with earlier years and its interests were focused primarily on the military institution. When Miguel Alemán assumed the presidency in 1946, military spending had fallen to 15 percent of the national budget, down by 6 percent from its level at the beginning of Avila Camacho's term—a surprising decrease given the armed forces' role during the war.<sup>32</sup> By the end of Aleman's tenure in 1952, the military budget had been slashed to less than 10 percent of government spending.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup>Meyer and Sherman, The Course of Mexican History, p. 639.

During the final years of the Avila Camacho administration, considerable attention was dedicated to the development of the military institution, a focus at least in part influenced by contacts with the U.S. armed forces. Among the changes implemented was the restructuring of the military's organization, using the U.S. armed forces as a model, as well as the incorporation of U.S. Army field manuals into the military training program. In addition, the last major equipment acquisitions prior to the recent modernization program were completed when Mexico purchased surplus matériel under the 1949 Mutual Defense Assistance Pact.

In spite of the U.S. influence on the military institution over the preceding decade, U.S.-Mexican political relations became more distant shortly after the beginning of the Korean War. This estrangement was in large part due to serious political schisms that developed within the Mexican Government, in which political leaders representing popular interests—most prominent among them former President Cárdenas—pitted themselves against the conservative, pro-business (and notoriously corrupt) politics of President Alemán. The result was probably the most serious internal crisis that the Mexican Government had faced since its consolidation in the 1920s and one which threatened to tear apart the consensus, based on the ideals of the Revolution, that had fostered political stability over the preceding three decades.

The Alemán administration's military policies generated considerable resentment among the institution's established leaders and, in effect, failed to maintain the balance that had ensured the

gradual depoliticization of the institution. In bypassing the aging revolutionary generals, effectively forcing the retirement of many, and promoting and appointing professionally trained young officers to key military posts, including the presidential chief of staff, Alemán alienated many of the key military leaders who had been critical in professionalization efforts. Because of the allegedly arbitrary process in selecting the new military leaders, the newly promoted young officers who occupied many top command and administrative posts were disparagingly called los generales de dedo.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, by the early 1950s, the product of Aleman's policies was the threat of the renewed politicization of the military institution.

Toward the end of Alemán's tenure, official concern over the open political schisms, in turn, stalled prospects for the development of closer bilateral military ties. In early 1952—only months before the July presidential elections—the Mexican Government declined to sign a bilateral assistance agreement with the United States, which offered U.S. military assistance in exchange for Mexico's willingness to accept hemispheric defense obligations.<sup>35</sup> The political leaders reportedly feared that such an agreement could oblige Mexico to

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<sup>34</sup>This idiomatic expression may be roughly translated as "the fingered generals," suggesting the arbitrariness of the president, who supposedly selected the men to become generals simply by pointing at them. See Lozoya, El Ejército Mexicano, p. 84.

<sup>35</sup>J. Lloyd Mecham, The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 335-336.

send its troops abroad to fight for a policy it did not support. Moreover, the leaders of Mexico's foreign policy establishment, who tended to be more liberal than the president, had already publicly voiced their unwillingness to commit Mexico's support to the U.S.-sponsored cold war against international communism.

The effect on the military institution of the decision not to enter the bilateral pact was that it became relatively isolated not only from the U.S. armed forces, but also from its counterparts in most other major Latin American countries, whose governments had signed the assistance agreements and who maintained close U.S. ties. While Mexican officers continued to receive military training at U.S. schools, the closer relations that the United States may have anticipated based on wartime cooperation were never realized.

The decision not to sign the bilateral pact appeared unusual given the decidedly pro-United States bent of most of Alemán's sexenio and was likely to have been an effort to appease the populists of the PRI's left wing to ensure that Alemán's selected presidential candidate, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, would emerge the unchallenged victor in July. Some evidence suggests that it may also have had an additional, less recognized impact on civil-military relations—apart from limiting U.S. ties—which long outlasted the Alemán era. A phenomenon known as “Henriquismo” had its origins in this period when, in early 1951, General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán—a millionaire contractor who was expelled from the PRI for



his premature campaigning for president<sup>35</sup>—declared his candidacy for the presidency at the head of his own party, the populist-oriented Federation of Mexican People's Parties (Federación de los Partidos del Pueblo Mexicano—FPPM).

One Mexican author has summarily interpreted Henriquismo as "an attempt on the part of a military officer to retake power."<sup>36</sup> Edwin Lieuwen has described the general's candidacy as "the final political defeat of the generals."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the fragmentary evidence presented in various accounts suggests that the phenomenon—even though spurred by the personal interests of Henríquez Guzmán, who was angered at not being considered among Alemán's possible successors—was a reaction to Alemán's military policies, and represented an effort on the part of the military's older leaders to ensure the ascendance of the ideals of the Revolution and their own longevity within the military institution. As a result of the apparent bargain struck between the political and military leadership, the military's support for Alemán's chosen successor (and the military's continuing non-involvement in political affairs) was ensured if subsequent leaders of the institution continued to be selected for its top posts based on their revolutionary credentials and were not bypassed in favor of younger officers. In fact, according

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<sup>35</sup>See Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, pp. 145-146, and Roderic A. Camp, Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1981, 2d ed. (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1982), p. 147.

<sup>36</sup>Fuentes, El Ejército Mexicano, p. 294.

<sup>37</sup>Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 145.

to one individual interviewed, there was considerable consternation on the part of the political elite in deciding on the institution's leaders for the López Portillo administration, since by the mid-1970s all remaining generals with ties to Henriquismo had retired or died.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, because of various versions and interpretations of events surrounding Henríquez Guzmán's candidacy and the military's position upon his electoral defeat, this period in civil-military relations clearly merits further investigation.

In fact, in contrast to the available literature on the depoliticization and professionalization of the Mexican armed forces through the 1940s, comparatively little research has been published on the Mexican armed forces' political and institutional interests during the period between World War II and the beginning of the modernization program in the 1980s. The extant historical record suggests that since World War II the armed forces have been concerned primarily with carrying out their domestic mission of maintaining public order—usually as interpreted by the requirements of the political leadership—and participating in developmentally oriented civic action programs. Except for a brief incident during the López Mateos administration (1958-1964)—when Mexico almost went to war over an attack by the Guatemalan military on several Mexican vessels fishing in that country's territorial waters—no conflicts arose that threatened to draw the

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<sup>38</sup>Interview "G," August 1987.

military into international involvement.<sup>39</sup> Despite its diminished activities in the political arena, the military continued to wield some political influence between 1946, the year the PRM became the PRI, and 1964, while senior military officers were repeatedly appointed to the party's presidency.

During this period, the various challenges to public order that have required military intervention have, according to material presented by David Ronfeldt, fallen into five categories—university strikes and protests; industrial and labor disputes; rural political disturbances; electoral disturbances; and, during the 1960s, outbreaks of guerrilla insurgency and urban terrorism. In nearly all instances, the military moved swiftly to put down the challenge to political authority posed by the disruptive actions and loyally supported the interests of the political leadership. While the military no longer dominated the political scene, Ronfeldt notes, the political overtones of the military's activities in support of the political leadership reflect what he calls the "residual political role" of the armed forces.<sup>40</sup>

With the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s, the United States began promoting civic action in Latin America as a means to head

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<sup>34</sup>Phyllis Greene Walker, "National Security," Mexico: A Country Study, ed. James D. Rudolph (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 328.

<sup>35</sup>David F. Ronfeldt, "The Mexican Army and Political Order since 1940," in Armies and Politics in Latin America, ed. Abraham F. Lowenthal (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1976), pp. 292-294.

off the possibility that a rural-based, Cuban-style insurgency might be successful elsewhere in the hemisphere. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it was not the U.S. impetus that led to the Mexican military's civic action efforts. According to one U.S. army officer writing in the mid-1960s, in the civic action field as in many other areas, "Mexico has followed a 'solo camino'."<sup>41</sup> The first civic action efforts were initiated under Obregón and were later intensified under Calles when roads were built and other public works projects completed. Mexico's economic growth during the post-war period provided the financial resources necessary for basic rural development programs while the military provided the manpower. In contrast to the internal security focus of the civic action programs implemented in many Latin American countries during the 1960s, Mexico's efforts continued to focus on internal development. In 1965, for example, the military's literacy training program was given special emphasis in response to a presidential call to eliminate illiteracy.<sup>42</sup>

Other civic action efforts have included such activities as reforestation, cultural integration, public works projects, the

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<sup>41</sup>Norman Maynard Smith, "The Civic-Action Role of the Mexican Army," U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1966, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>Lyle N. McAlister, "Mexico," in The Military in Latin American Sociopolitical Evolution: Four Case Studies, eds. Lyle N. McAlister, Anthony P. Maingot, and Robert A. Potash (Washington, D.C.: Center for Research in Social Systems, 1970), p. 211.

provision of potable water, campaigns against diseases and insect infestations, and participation in the narcotics eradication program, among others. The relatively well known Plan DN-III-E, which provides the framework for the military's role in disaster and emergency relief efforts, was first announced in 1966.<sup>43</sup> At that time, approximately 60 percent of the defense budget was reportedly spent on civic action.<sup>44</sup>

### The Contemporary Setting (1968-1980)

Several authors of recent works on civil-military relations in Mexico maintain that the events of 1968 marked a turning point. As Professor Edward J. Williams observes: "The military's resurgence in the polity [during the early 1980s] evolved from serious economic problems during the late 1960s leading to sharpened sociopolitical tensions."<sup>45</sup> These tensions reached their climax in October 1968 when the military—in response to mounting protests against the extravagance of hosting the Olympic Games in the midst of an economic crisis—moved in with tanks and opened fire on demonstrators at Tlatelolco in Mexico City, leaving thousands

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<sup>43</sup>Smith, "The Civic-Action Role," p. 9.

<sup>44</sup>"La Patria es primero," Tiempo, February 22, 1966, pp. 10-11, as cited in Smith, "The Civic-Action Role," p. 6.

<sup>45</sup>Edward J. Williams, "The Evolution of the Mexican Military and Its Implications for Civil-Military Relations," in Mexico's Political Stability: The Next Five Years, ed. Roderic A. Camp (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), p. 144.

of people injured and, according to some estimates, several hundred dead.

In terms of its implications for the military, Williams observes that "...Tlatelolco signaled the first massive intervention in the political system since the 1920s and evoked an agonizing reappraisal of [the military's] role in internal security and its relationship to civilian decision makers."<sup>46</sup> Recently completed research by another scholar has suggested that the military's intervention at Tlatelolco resulted not from responding to the behest of the civilian leadership, but from the institution's independent recognition of the need to establish public order and its unilateral efforts to attain it.<sup>47</sup> If the latter proves to have been the case, then events surrounding the actions at Tlatelolco attain new significance in terms of the institution's development and execution of autonomous initiatives to maintain internal security—a departure from the pattern of dutiful responsiveness to the civilian leadership's initiative described by Ronfeldt.

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, the military's political influence appears to have been directed toward ensuring that the institution received sufficient resources to carry out its missions. During the late 1960s a rural-based guerrilla organization became

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<sup>41</sup>ibid., p. 145.

<sup>42</sup>See the account presented in Michael Joseph Dziedzic, The Essence of Decision in a Hegemonic Regime: The Case of Mexico's Acquisition of a Supersonic Fighter (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 8618455, 1986), pp. 111-114.

active in the state of Guerrero, where a new military zone was established in 1967; by the 1970s, unrest had spread to include urban terrorism. In June 1971, an incident similar to Tlatelolco occurred when a "paramilitary group" attacked student marchers, who were protesting the continued imprisonment of many demonstrators arrested at Tlatelolco in 1968. According to one account, President Luis Echeverría knew of the Falcons (Halcones), as the group was called, "and approved of them even though he insisted otherwise."<sup>48</sup> Another account noted that the Falcons had been brought to the march in gray army buses; after the battle, they reboarded and were driven away. Reportedly, fifty persons died in the incident.<sup>49</sup> While the direct tie between the group and the military institution appears to have been somewhat tenuous, the incident was a blow against the perceived ability of the president to maintain domestic peace. Writing in 1972, Martin Needler said that this was "the sort of confrontation that had occurred in the 1920s and the 1930s, but had not been seen in Mexico in over thirty years."<sup>50</sup> Needler also maintained that Echeverría was saved only "when he received the unanimous backing of an emergency meeting of senior army

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<sup>48</sup>Kenneth F. Johnson, Mexican Democracy: A Critical View, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), p. 51-52.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 97-98.

<sup>50</sup>Martin Needler, "A Critical Time for Mexico," Current History (February 1972): p. 83, cited by Williams, "The Evolution of the Mexican Military," p. 145.

commanders" after a conservative faction within the PRI challenged his authority.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from anecdotal accounts—pointing to incidents of violence, unrest, and rumors of coups—insufficient attention has apparently been directed toward determining the nature of the military's political and institutional interests and how Echeverría sought to cope with what, in retrospect, appears to have been a challenge to his leadership. Even among observers of the Mexican scene during the early 1970s, there was considerable uncertainty as to what the events of the past years meant in terms of the military's political role. One assessment characterized "the formerly dominant political role of the army" as having become an "inconspicuous one." Other observers believed that "a pronounced increase in internal disorder since the late 1960s had been accompanied by a resurgence in political activity by the military." At the same time, however, from another perspective the military was seen to have "remained unswervingly loyal to the government and that it was more in the public eye simply because the rise in unrest gave it more to do."<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, given the limited

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.; see also Roderic A. Camp, "Mexican Military Leadership in Statistical Perspective since the 1930s," in Statistical Abstract of Latin America, Vol. 20, eds. James W. Wilkie and Peter Reich (Los Angeles, California: University of California at Los Angeles, Latin American Center Publications, 1980), p. 597

<sup>52</sup>Thomas E. Weil et al., Area Handbook for Mexico, 2d ed., (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 362-363.



anecdotal accounts available, it would appear that civil-military relations during the early 1970s were in a serious state of disarray.

Coup rumors, though publicly discounted even by Echeverría, continued to appear in the press in the months preceding the 1976 presidential succession, but the transition was peaceful. Upon assuming the presidency, José López Portillo—who was hailed as a technocrat (técnico) and not a populist-style politician (político)—quickly restored a semblance of order to civil-military ties. When 1977 promotion lists was announced, the number of colonels and generals promoted, which had averaged over eighty annually during the Echeverría years, had dropped back to the normal level of close to fifty per year.<sup>53</sup> During the first half of the López Portillo sexenio, the military's official activities were focused mainly on defeating the small insurgent movement in Guerrero and Oaxaca and on carrying out civic action efforts, including the army's role in the narcotics eradication program. Troubling reports began to surface after 1977 that a paramilitary group known as the White Brigade (Brigada Blanca) was operating out of Military Camp Number 1, the principal army base, and was responsible for politically related intimidation, threats, torture, murder, and "disappearances." The López Portillo administration, however, consistently denied the existence of such a group.

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<sup>53</sup>Roderic A. Camp, "Generals and Politicians in Mexico: A Preliminary Comparison," in The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment, Monograph Series, no. 15, ed. David F. Ronfeldt (La Jolla, California: University of California at San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1984), p. 139.

The recognition of Mexico's potential as a world oil power prompted widespread expectations that its economic problems would soon be over. In addition, because of Mexico's fifty-year record of political stability, its developed industrial base, and the prospects for future oil-based economic growth, Mexico achieved the status during the late 1970s of a middle-level world power. As a result of this newly acquired international prestige, the political leadership obligingly directed its attention to developing the armed forces—which could no longer afford to be seen as one of the most lowest paid and poorly equipped in Latin America. Under the guidance of López Portillo's secretary of national defense, Gen. Félix Galván López, the most ambitious military modernization program in Mexican history was undertaken. By 1980, the beginning of the second half of the administration, the modernization program was being implemented and the military's new political and institutional interests were expected soon to be realized.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MILITARY'S CHANGING POLICY INFLUENCE AND INTERESTS

#### The Individual Level

##### Officers in the Government

In the study of civil-military relations, a basic approach to determining the military's influence in the political is examining the role of the individual officer (usually, the members of the commissioned officer corps) in the government. Given the past prominent role of the military in Mexican government and politics, it would appear that as their prominence has waned since the 1940s, so too has their ability to wield political influence. Based on the military officers identified as holding public office under the administration of President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-1988), their pattern of representation did not reflect a departure from the established trend of gradually declining influence.

While military officers continue to hold positions in the government that are not directly related to the military institution, their political role has been gradually circumscribed over the past forty years. The types of government positions in which military officers have traditionally been found include cabinet and sub-cabinet posts, state governorships, ambassadorial appointments, legislative seats, and the top posts of major police forces. Since the

early 1960s, the expansion of public sector employment has led to a decline in the military's proportional representation in positions outside the military institution.<sup>1</sup> Under the De la Madrid administration, military officers continue to fill government positions, yet their responsibilities denote areas of possible policy influence that appear limited to security concerns.

The only military officers of cabinet rank are the heads of the Secretariat of National Defense (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional—SDN) and of the Secretariat of the Navy (Secretaría de Marina—SM), Gen. Juan Arévalo Gardoqui and Adm. Miguel Angel Gómez Ortega, respectively. The defense secretaries were appointed by De la Madrid based on two fundamental criteria: their professional distinction as career officers and their personal loyalty to the president, the commander-in-chief of the nation's armed forces. Since the administration of Miguel Alemán (1946–1952), the two defense secretariats have been the only cabinet posts held by military officers. Given the subsequent efforts to remove military officers from prominent government positions, it is worth noting that a civilian defense secretary has not been interposed between the president and his top military officers, suggesting that the civilian leader has found it useful to keep open a direct line of communication with the military.

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<sup>1</sup>Roderic A. Camp, "Generals and Politicians in Mexico: A Preliminary Comparison," in The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment, Monograph Series, no. 15, ed. David F. Ronfeldt (La Jolla, California: University of California at San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1984), p. 148.

As noted by David Ronfeldt, as late as the mid-1970s there continued to be "moderate recruitment of officers to fill senior and subordinate bureaucratic positions in . . . federal ministries."<sup>2</sup> Under the De la Madrid administration, however, only one officer was identified as holding an important sub-cabinet level position. As the undersecretary for national security in the Secretariat of Government (Secretaría de Gobernación)—one of three undersecretaries reporting directly to the cabinet secretary—Col. Jorge Carrillo Olea was responsible for administering federal services in southern Mexico and for developing policies affecting Mexican police forces.<sup>3</sup> He was said to have drafted the 1985 National Public Safety Plan, the much publicized federal program designed to reduce crime by improving the effectiveness of the nation's police.<sup>4</sup>

Other Mexican officers presently in non-military posts who have responsibilities specifically related to the maintenance of internal security include the recently named heads of Mexico City's two most important police forces: Gen. José Domingo Ramírez Garrido Abreu, the head of the Secretariat of Safety and Roadways

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<sup>2</sup>David F. Ronfeldt, "The Mexican Army and Political Order since 1940," in Armies and Politics in Latin America, ed. Abraham F. Lowenthal (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1976), p. 296.

<sup>3</sup>Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: Latin America (hereafter cited as FBIS), September 17, 1985, p. M1; Mexico City News, August 2, 1984, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Joint Publications Research Service, Latin America Report (hereafter cited as JPRS), May 8, 1985, pp. 85-87; Mexico City News, August 2, 1984, p. 6.

(Secretaría de Protección y Vialidad—SPV), and Capt. Jesús Miyazawa Alvarez, the head of the Federal District Judicial Police (Policía Judicial del Distrito Federal).<sup>5</sup> In an unusual arrangement with the SDN, the recently appointed SPV chief agreed to have the police officers under his command—including a newly formed group of police paratroopers—trained by the Army as an attempt, according to the general, to “protect the interests of the society” because of the rising crime rate in Mexico City.<sup>6</sup>

In early 1983 two state governors and two ambassadors—all four having been selected for their posts by former President José López Portillo (1976-1982)—were military officers. At least two of these men—a governor and an ambassador—have since been replaced by civilians. Captain Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, the newly installed governor of Veracruz and a graduate of the Heróico Colegio Militar (Heroic Military College—HCM, Mexico's military academy)<sup>7</sup> was the only individual with a military background who had been selected for a gubernatorial post under De la Madrid. The absence of new military governors under the present administration provides slight evidence that the military's ability to hold—or interest in holding—these state-level positions has declined.

The proportion of military officers serving as state governor in 1983 was not a departure from previously established trends. The

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<sup>5</sup>Excélsior (México), April 19, 1987, p. 21-A; JPRS, March 17, 1986, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup>JPRS, March 5, 1987, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup>Camp, “Generals and Politicians,” p. 149.

two governors holding office represented a proportion comparable to that in 1965, when three out of the twenty-nine state governors were military men. Significantly, it was a marked reduction from 1948, when fifteen of the twenty-nine governors were officers.<sup>8</sup>

One pattern that was distinguishable was that military officers appeared likely to serve as governors in states where internal security was a concern. The sole remaining military governor under De la Madrid—Chiapas governor, Gen. Absalón Castellanos Domínguez—is in charge of a state that has a range of problems caused by poverty, bitter land tenure disputes, the influx of Central American refugees since the early 1980s, and international tensions over charges that Guatemalan guerrillas use Mexican territory for launching their attacks. Since the 1983 creation of the Thirty-Sixth Military Zone at Tapachula—the state's second zone—Chiapas has been under the control of three military officers—the state governor and the two zone commanders.<sup>9</sup> In a similar response to internal security problems in the mid-1970s, López Portillo nominated Gen. Eliseo Jiménez Ruiz for the governorship of Oaxaca, a state where insurgents were then active. Consequently, it was possible that security concerns in Veracruz,

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<sup>8</sup>Franklin D. Margiotta, "The Mexican Military: A Case Study in Nonintervention," (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 1968), p. 122.

<sup>9</sup>While a governor does not command the military forces in his state, he does control the state judicial police, the principal state-level law enforcement organization. As a result, the armed forces have virtually total authority over the security apparatus in states with military governors.

such as the spread of narcotics traffickers to the region, had prompted the nomination of Gutiérrez Barrios.

A pattern apparent in the military officers appointed to ambassadorial posts during López Portillo's tenure was their selection for service in countries where the military was prominent in the national leadership. No military officers were found to have been selected for ambassadorial appointments during the present administration. This apparent decision may reflect the personal preference of the head of the Secretariat of Foreign Relations (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores—SRE), Bernardo Sepúlveda Amor, to minimize the military's political prominence, an orientation that has influenced his actions in other areas relating to the armed forces.

In terms of congressional representation, it is believed that a number of legislative seats are routinely allocated for military officers. One of the key officers in the legislature, Gen. Alonso Aguirre Ramos, served as the chairman of the Chamber of Deputies' National Defense Committee. Despite the impression left by most accounts regarding the routine distribution of congressional seats,<sup>10</sup> the number of military men in the legislature was fewer than expected. According to a Mexican Government directory published in 1984, only four people—less than 1 percent of the individuals listed

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<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Roderic A. Camp, "Mexican Military Leadership in Statistical Perspective since the 1930s," in Statistical Abstract of Latin America, Vol. 20, eds. James W. Wilkie and Peter Reich (Los Angeles, California: University of California at Los Angeles, Latin American Center Publications, 1980) p. 603.



as holding the 451 congressional seats—listed their profession as “military.”<sup>11</sup>

### Officers on Policy Issues

Over the past decade military officers have tended to speak out publicly with greater frequency and on a broader range of topics than they have since the 1940s. Most of the policy issues addressed have dealt with the military’s role in carrying out mission-related responsibilities. Despite this trend toward outspokenness, military officers have remained extremely circumspect when discussing issues involving even the slightest political controversy and have generally refrained from discussing matters involving internal military affairs. On only rare occasions have military officers publicly addressed such sensitive issues as the military’s role in political decision making.<sup>12</sup>

Because of the implications of the rare instances in which military officers have addressed sensitive subjects, it is important to distinguish when officers are voicing their individual interests and when they are expressing the policy interests of the military institution. As with all armed forces, Mexican officers who make controversial public statements are subject to reprimand by their

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<sup>11</sup>Gobierno de México, Presidencia de la República, Diccionario biográfico del Gobierno Mexicano (México: Presidencia de la República, Dirección General de Comunicación Social, 1984), p. 862.

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, the statements made by Brigade General Vinicio Santoyo Feria, former SDN chief of staff, in JPRS, April 21, 1983, pp. 90-91.

superiors. According to one individual familiar with civil-military relations in Mexico, "if an officer criticizes the civilian government, he is immediately removed from his position and either cashiered from the service . . . or sent to the most unpleasant assignment possible."<sup>13</sup> Presumably, then, the public statements made at military ceremonies—especially by other than general officers—are not expressions of individual interest, but reflect the policy stance of the institution. With the exception of the secretary of national defense and the secretary of the navy, practically no military officers make public statements on other than official occasions.

At the same time, the present secretary of national defense has maintained an unusually high public profile during this sexenio. On several occasions, he has addressed groups only marginally linked with his official duties. Among these have been his remarks to a group of Mexican female journalists (who are not often assigned to report on the military) and to a delegation of Belizean legislators.<sup>14</sup> These appearances may reflect Arévalo's personal interests, particularly in highlighting the military's role in the anti-narcotics campaign, as well as the institutional trend toward greater public visibility that may continue into the next administration.

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<sup>13</sup>William S. Ackroyd. "The Military in Mexican Politics: The Impact of Professionalization, Civilian Behavior, and the Revolution," paper presented at the Twenty-eighth Meeting of the Pacific Coast Council of Latin Americanists, October 1982, p. 14, cited by Camp, "Generals and Presidents," p. 153.

<sup>14</sup>JPRS, March 23, 1984, p. 27; FBIS, May 16, 1986, p. M2.

### Ties with the Political Elite

One factor that has constrained the ability of the individual military officer to gain political influence is the traditional linkage between the military's officer corps and the country's political leadership. As noted above, each president, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, appoints a military officer as his secretary of national defense and secretary of the navy. These officers, in turn, appoint their own top administrative staffs plus the commanders of the military and naval regions and zones and other key commands. Personal loyalty is a major factor in these appointments.

Most analysts of the Mexican military have observed that this pattern of personalistic hierarchical control has helped ensure the continuing loyalty of the individual military officers to their patrons, military or civilian, and their continuing allegiance to the political system as a whole. According to one assessment, this attitude of officers toward authority, which has been reinforced by the military education system, reflects "one of the highest levels of military discipline in Latin America or the Third World."<sup>15</sup>

As shown in table 1, there has been a recent trend away from the presidents' selection of military leaders with political backgrounds and, presumably, who have close, well known ties to groups within the political elite. This may be seen mainly as a result of the narrowing of the political positions available to military officers, but also may be viewed as a function of increased

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<sup>15</sup>Ackroyd, "The Military in Mexican Politics," p. 13, cited by Camp, "Generals and Presidents," p. 152.

TABLE 1

**MEXICAN SECRETARIES OF NATIONAL DEFENSE  
AND THEIR POSTS PRECEDING SELECTION, 1946-1988**

<u>Administration</u>	<u>Secretary of Natl. Defense</u>	<u>Post/Position</u>
1982-1988 Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (b. 1934)	Juan Arévalo Gardoqui (b. 1921)	Commander 1st Military Zone Mexico City
1976-1982 José López Portillo (b. 1920)	Félix Galván López (b. 1913)	Commander 5th Military Zone Chihuahua
1970-1976 Luis Echeverría Alvarez (b. 1922)	Hermenegildo Cuenca Díaz (b. 1902)	Senator Baja California del Norte
1964-1970 Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (b. 1911)	Marcelino García Barragan (b. 1895)	Commander Military Zone
1958-1964 Adolfo López Mateos (b. 1910)	Agustín Olachea Aviles (b. 1892)	President PRI
1952-1958 Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (b. 1890)	Matías Ramos Santos (b. 1891)	Commander 9th Military Zone Monterrey
1946-1952 Miguel Alemán Valdes (b.1900)	Gilberto R. Limón Marques (b. 1895)	Undersecretary Secretariat of National Defense

**SOURCE:** Based on material published in Roderic A. Camp, Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1981, 2d ed. (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1982) and unpublished information obtained during author's conversation with Roderic Camp, August 1987.

professionalization, wherein military officers have tended to focus their interests almost exclusively on the military institution. In addition, it is significant to note that the Secretaries of National Defense, especially in recent years, have tended to be older than the their command-in-chief. The widest age gap was twenty years' difference under Echeverría, when practically a generation separated the president and the chief military officer; the narrowest was only one year's difference under Ruiz Cortines.

Given these considerations, it is possible that the appointments reflect problems associated with maintaining the tradition of Henriquismo, discussed above. Cuenca Díaz, Echeverría's national defense secretary, for example, had already retired from active duty, but returned to lead the military. Perhaps it was in the absence of acceptable military leaders with established political reputations that the national defense secretaries under López Portillo and De la Madrid were selected from among military zone commanders and not from among the officers in political posts.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, given the recency of this appointment pattern—over only the past two administrations—clearly additional selections would be necessary as evidence before a more categorical judgment could be made. Yet for the sake of speculation, it may

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<sup>16</sup>According to Rod Camp, even the post of zone commander requires an officer to have good political skills since he must maintain good relations both with the state governor and with the civilian population. See Camp's discussion of the political skills of military officers in "Mexican Military Leadership in Statistical Perspective," pp. 596-606.

be considered possible that a new political agreement has been reached with the military leadership and that future national defense secretaries may tend to be selected from among the officers holding key command, rather than political, posts.

### The Organizational Level

#### Issues Addressed

The organizational level of analysis focuses on the military as an institution. At this level, the institutional interests of the military can be identified and examined to determine how they may translate into policy influence. Since these interests are often reflected in the speeches of the military at public fora, the topics addressed as well as the responses of civilian policy makers provide a basis for assessing the military's ability to exercise political influence in matters that affect the military institution.

### The Modernization Program

The military modernization program begun during the López Portillo administration has consisted of three major components: improving military education and training programs; acquiring new military equipment; and expanding military manpower. Each of these components, including the necessary allocation of increased budget resources for carrying out the program, is discussed below.

## Professional Education

The attention given to revising and expanding the curricula at the professional military schools has been a key feature of the modernization program. Similar efforts that were carried out during the 1930s and 1940s corresponded with periods marking changes in the professional orientation and visibility of the military. In addition to efforts to expand the scope of the professional schools' curricula, particularly that of the command and general staff school, the Superior War College (Escuela Superior de Guerra—ESG), a new National Defense College (Colegio de Defensa Nacional—CDN) was opened in 1981.

This new third tier of formal military education offered a program of study similar to that available at the U.S. Army War College or, in Latin America, at Peru's Center of Advanced Military Studies (Centro de Altos Estudios Militares) or at Brazil's Superior War College (Escola Superior de Guerra). The CDN's program, which is open to colonels and generals, was designed to provide the officers with the background necessary for formulating national security policies as well as with training in such non-traditional areas of military training as economics and international affairs. When the school opened, between 70 and 75 percent of its faculty had civilian backgrounds.<sup>17</sup> Plans were reported underway in 1983 for

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<sup>17</sup>Phyllis Greene Walker, "National Security," in Mexico: A Country Study, ed. James D. Rudolph (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 353.

civilians in national security-related positions to be granted admission.<sup>18</sup>

The introduction of new curricula and the opening of the CDN reflected the military's expanded outlook, in terms of its awareness of the international environment as well as with respect to its preparation for assuming increased domestic responsibilities and greater involvement in national life. By 1983 the issues of the Revista del Ejército y Fuerza Aérea, the SDN's official journal, had begun to include articles on the Israeli Defense Forces, who were portrayed as an exemplary military force. While the journal continued to stress such traditional themes as loyalty, service, and obedience to civilian authority, the appearance of internationally oriented subjects suggested that the military institution was beginning to look beyond Mexico's borders for new models.

During the De la Madrid administration, there has been little evidence that the military has sought to implement this new outlook in its institutional policies. There has been a shift away from use of civilian instructors at the CDN—reportedly because the quality of the civilians selected by the government to teach at the school was so poor that the military decided to use its own personnel.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, in spite of initial signs during the early 1980s that the new consciousness would translate into expanded foreign contacts by the military, these efforts appear also to have died out.

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<sup>18</sup>Gloria Fuentes, El Ejército Mexicano (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1983), p. 158.

<sup>19</sup>Interview "D," August 1986.



### The Acquisition of New Matériel

Due to the economic crisis, the military has had only limited success in acquiring new equipment since 1982. Clearly the highlight of the new acquisitions under the modernization program was the 1981 purchase of 10 F-5E supersonic fighters and 2 F-5F fighter trainers. The money for this purchase, estimated at approximately \$130 million, was believed to have come from special discretionary funds controlled by the Mexican president and were not reflected in the military's annual budget.<sup>20</sup> Despite the Mexican armed forces' interest in acquiring U.S.-built Sidewinder (AIM-9) missiles for the aircraft, the fighters were believed not to be armed with the state-of-the-art weapon.<sup>21</sup> While their presence in Mexican hangars has considerably enhanced the air force's prestige, the fighters have not necessarily enhanced Mexico's military capabilities. Their principal use has been in pilot training and—more important in terms of public visibility and, hence, possible policy influence—for overflights at ceremonial occasions and on national holidays.

During the first months of the De la Madrid administration, the military's leadership appeared to have accepted economic austerity and had scaled back expectations regarding new matériel. Public statements were made by National Defense Secretary Arévalo on several occasions that no new equipment purchases would be made during 1983, and that "full advantage" would be taken of

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<sup>20</sup>Walker, "National Security," p. 340.

<sup>21</sup>Interview "A," June 1984.

existing resources.<sup>22</sup> Since then, few significant new equipment purchases have, in fact, been made. The most notable of these acquisitions was a 1984 order for some forty light armored cars from the French manufacturer Panhard. Ten C-212 patrol aircraft manufactured by Construcciones Aeronáuticas, S.A. (CASA) of Spain were also reportedly on order in 1985.<sup>23</sup> No recent public statements indicated that Arévalo was interested in buying, or planned to buy, any other specific types of equipment. However, a representative of a military equipment manufacturer who was interviewed during the research said that Arévalo had expressed an interest in acquiring more helicopters for use in army drug eradication efforts.<sup>24</sup>

While the Secretariat of National Defense may have reduced its expectations for major new acquisitions, the Secretariat of the Navy—the veritable stepchild of Mexico’s defense establishment—continued to get new equipment in spite of the economic crisis. This was due in part to the Mexican Government’s desire to improve its ability to patrol (and thereby exert control over) Mexico’s territorial waters, an area that includes the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends two hundred nautical miles out from Mexico’s ten thousand kilometers of coastline.

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<sup>22</sup>Excelsior, March 13, 1983, p. 27-A.

<sup>23</sup>International Institute of Strategic Studies (hereafter cited as IISS), The Military Balance, 1985-86 (London: IISS, 1985), pp. 151-152.

<sup>24</sup>Interview “C,” September 1985.

Among the Navy's new acquisitions are a number of vessels built at Mexican shipyards, including Aguila-class corvettes, Azteca-class large patrol boats, and Olmeca-class river patrol boats. Mexico's domestic shipbuilding capability has enabled the Navy to expand its fleet without depleting the government's foreign currency reserves. Recent foreign purchases have included the 1983 completion of an order for Spanish Halcón-class corvettes (similar in design to the domestically built Aguila-class vessels) and, in 1985, an order for ten Spanish turbojet aircraft, bringing to forty-five the number of planes in the Navy's air wing.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Expansion of Military Manpower

Plans to expand military manpower under the modernization program have continued, but have not been vigorously pursued as a result of the 1982 economic crisis. Shortly before the onset of the crisis, projected increases had called for the military to grow from a force of 120,000 to some 220,000 personnel by the end of the De la Madrid sexenio.<sup>26</sup> In 1986 the total armed forces were composed of only some 140,000 personnel.<sup>27</sup>

As shown in table 2, Mexico's armed forces, compared with those of the rest of Latin America, are the third largest after

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<sup>25</sup>FBIS, November 25, 1985, pp. M2-3.

<sup>26</sup>Financial Times (London), March 22, 1986, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup>IISS, The Military Balance, 1986-87 (London: IISS, 1986), p. 190.

TABLE 2

COMPARATIVE SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF  
SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN ARMED FORCES, 1986

Country	Population (000)	Regular Armed Forces (000)	Regular Armed Forces as % of Population	Regular Army Troops as % of Armed Forces
Argentina	31,328	73.0	.23	54.8
Bolivia	6,524	27.6	.42	72.5
Brazil	139,443	283.4	.20	64.5
Chile	12,308	101.0	.82	56.4
Colombia	20,547	66.2	.32	80.1
Costa Rica	2,617	9.5 <sup>a</sup>	.36 <sup>a</sup>	100.0 <sup>a</sup>
Cuba	10,211	162.0	1.59	80.3
Dominican Rep.	6,275	21.3	.34	61.0
Ecuador	10,408	42.0	.40	83.3
El Salvador	5,622	42.6	.76	90.6
Guatemala	8,616	32.0	.37	94.7
Guyana	853	5.5	.65	91.7
Haiti	5,543	6.9	.12	92.8
Honduras	4,507	19.2	.43	88.5
Jamaica	2,349	2.1	.09	84.8
Mexico	81,162	139.5	.17	75.3
Nicaragua	3,317	72.0	1.00	90.9
Panama	2,147	12.0	.56	95.8
Paraguay	3,487	16.0	.46	78.3
Peru	20,342	127.0	.62	66.9
Suriname	360	2.5	.66	92.7
Trinidad & Tobago	1,191	2.1	.18	70.4
Uruguay	2,922	31.9	1.09	69.9
Venezuela	18,911	71.0	.38	47.9

SOURCE: Based on data presented in The International Institute of Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1986-1987 (London: The International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1986), pp. 177-197.

<sup>a</sup>The data represented are for paramilitary security forces.

Brazil's and Cuba's. However, as a percentage of the country's total population, Mexico's military ranks among the lowest in the hemisphere. Only the comparatively small Caribbean nations of Haiti and Jamaica have a smaller percentage of their population in military service. While the expansion of military manpower in Mexico appears not to have kept pace with the country's rapid population growth, the composition of the Mexico's armed forces parallels the pattern found in most Latin American countries, where army troops make up about three-fourths of total manpower.

In 1986, the Mexican Army was composed of 105,000 troops, an increase of only five thousand men over its force strength the previous year. Together, the Mexican Army and Air Force—the latter of which was estimated in 1986 at 6,500 (a one thousand-man increase over its size in 1985)—represented 111,500 troops under the command of the SDN.<sup>28</sup> In 1986 Mexico's naval forces were composed of some thirty thousand personnel, including 6,500 marines (infantería de marina).<sup>29</sup> Despite the gradual increase in personnel, one military analyst estimated that the armed forces would not reach 220,000 personnel before the early 1990s.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>IISS, The Military Balance, 1985-86, pp. 151-152; IISS, The Military Balance, 1986-87, pp. 190-191.

<sup>29</sup>Proceso (México), March 10, 1986, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup>Stephen J. Wager, "Basic Characteristics of the Modern Mexican Military," in The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment, Monograph Series, no. 15, ed. David Ronfeldt (La Jolla, California: University of California at San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1984), p. 104.

While the expansion in manpower represented scaled-back ambitions, the military was spared from a hiring freeze forced on other government agencies in 1985. A report published early that year quoted Programming and Budget Secretary Carlos Salinas de Gortari as saying that the military would be permitted to increase its forces, but no higher than the manpower level that was "commonly contracted every year." The reason cited by the budget secretary for the hiring authorization, which was also extended to the police, was to help "strengthen the country's public security."<sup>31</sup>

The government's position appears to represent a policy of appeasement for the armed forces in that they would be spared from certain budget cuts as long as was fiscally possible. It was likely that official support for the increases had been obtained as a means to maintain military morale. Nevertheless, even these marginal increases are significant since manpower represents the most costly component of any armed service.

#### The Allocation of Budget Resources

The Mexican armed forces have secured large budget increases for each year since the onset of the economic crisis and have fared better than other groups in terms of federal appropriations, yet the institution has not managed to keep abreast with inflation. For 1987 the SDN requested a budget increase of close to 70 percent, bringing

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<sup>31</sup>Unomásuno (México), February 13, 1985, pp. 1,9.

its total requested allocation to 485.1 billion pesos.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, the official inflation rate over the same period had risen by 105 percent.<sup>33</sup> Of the requested funds, the SDN designated its largest spending increase for military industry, a spectacular rise from the level of 470 million pesos in 1986 to over 2.1 billion for 1987, a nearly five-fold increase.<sup>34</sup>

The amount of the increase was somewhat surprising given the only modest overall increase in the military budget whereby the military did not even manage to keep up with inflation. Preceding officials references to spending for military industry gave little indication of the plans for higher spending. In his September 1986 State of the Nation address, De la Madrid did make reference to plans to manufacture two prototype armored vehicles—the Lince, a light vehicle, and the Ocelotl, a medium.<sup>35</sup> However, given the past production of similar armored vehicles by the parastatal industry Diesel Nacional (DINA), the announcement of the new production effort at the time did not seem highly unusual. In his 1983 National Development Plan, De la Madrid also referred to the development of military industry—a means to “gradually reduce the supply [of equipment] from abroad”—as one of his administration’s military

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<sup>32</sup>JPRS, March 5, 1987, p. 69.

<sup>33</sup>FBIS, April 2, 1987, p. M5.

<sup>34</sup>JPRS, March 5, 1987, p. 70.

<sup>35</sup>Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, “Informe de Gobierno, 1986,” El Día (México), Suplemento No. 82, September 2, 1986, p. 6.

policy objectives,<sup>36</sup> but the expressed interest appeared to have fallen by the wayside during the ensuing years. Likewise, none of the identified public speeches by Arévalo Gardoqui suggested the military's plans to develop this area. It appears that, as with the modernization program under the second half of López Portillo's sexenio, the development of military industry may offer the armed forces an new opportunity to expand the institution's political influence before De la Madrid leaves office.

The emphasis on enhancing military production capabilities will likely accomplish several objectives. It will enable the SDN to pursue modernization while avoiding the depletion of foreign currency reserves and offsetting the costs of necessary foreign acquisitions. Of greater significance in terms of the military's potential policy influence, it could enable Mexico—under the impetus of the SDN—to become an exporter of military equipment. Such a capability would not only favorably affect Mexico's overall trade balance, but would represent the realization of a long-held interest by the SDN.

As shown in table 3, the Mexican Government's planned defense expenditures, unadjusted for inflation, have increased steadily between 1973 and 1983. As noted, in addition to the allocations for the SDN and for the SM, military industry expenditures were counted under a separate budget category

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<sup>36</sup>Gobierno de México, Presidencia de la República, Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, 1983-1988 (México: Presidencia de la República, Dirección General de Comunicación Social, 1984), p. 63.



TABLE 3

PLANNED DEFENSE EXPENDITURES BY THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, 1973-1983  
(Money Amounts in Millions of Mexican Pesos)

	1973		1974		1975		1976	
	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending
Secretariat of Natl. Defense	2,674	1.6	3,121	1.4	4,229	1.2	5,877	1.4
Secretariat of the Navy	1,489	0.9	2,019	0.9	2,857	0.8	3,045	0.7
Military Industry	135	0.1	152	0.1	193	0.1	244	0.1
Total	4,298	2.6	5,292	2.4	7,279	2.1	9,166	2.1
	1977		1978		1979		1980	
	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending
Secretariat of Natl. Defense	8,261	1.3	9,514	1.1	11,815	1.1	13,912	1.0
Secretariat of the Navy	2,801	0.4	3,142	0.4	4,003	0.3	4,903	0.3
Total	11,062	1.7	12,656	1.5	15,818	1.5	18,815	1.3

TABLE 3--Continued

	1981		1982		1983	
	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending	Amount	Percent of Total Spending
Secretariat of Natl. Defense	25,856	1.1	32,764	1.0	37,874	0.6
Secretariat of the Navy	7,791	0.3	10,942	0.3	14,436	0.2
Total	33,647	1.4	43,706	1.3	52,310	0.8

SOURCE: Based on figures presented in Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, Primer Informe de Gobierno, 1983: Sector Gobierno (México: Presidencia de la República, 1983), pp. 225, 227.

NOTE: Between 1973 and 1976, funds spent for military industry were treated as a separate budget item. After 1976, funds for military industry were no longer broken out in the budget and were believed to have been included in the allocations for the respective defense secretariats.

between 1973 and 1976. Nevertheless, military industry accounted for a very small proportion of the total defense budget during this four-year period. After 1976, these expenditures were no longer broken out and were believed included under each defense secretariat's budget.

As reflected by the data, planned expenditures for the defense secretariats have declined in relation to total government spending. During the period considered, military expenditures were at their peak at 2.6 percent of federal spending in the Echeverría administration (1970-1976), but experienced a gradual decline, which continued throughout López Portillo's sexenio (1976-1982). Before the end of De la Madrid's first year in office, defense expenditures had fallen to under 1 percent of the national budget, a decline of more than half from their level a decade earlier, which was accentuated by the 1982 economic crisis.

In absolute terms, however, military expenditures grew throughout the period, even between 1982 and 1983, the years most affected by the decline in oil revenues. This increase was as much attributable to growth in the economy from international oil sales as to inflation and the continuing decline in the Mexican peso's value on international exchange markets. During the entire period in question, defense spending increased by 1,257 percent in comparison with a 4,225 percent increase in total public sector expenditures. The spending gains for the SDN consistently outpaced those for the SM, representing a total increase of 1,416 to 970 percent, respectively.

The most notable increase occurred between 1980 and 1981, when planned expenditures jumped by close to 100 percent, an increase brought on by domestic economic factors as well as by military modernization efforts. Again in this instance, the SDN, whose budget nearly doubled, received the greater proportion of the increased expenditures. In terms of the two secretariats' abilities to lobby for budget increases, the SDN has been more successful than the SM over the entire period studied. If these figures are considered to reflect the military's relative influence in the political system, then its declining proportion of total federal spending suggests it may not have been as influential as other sectors in obtaining increases.

Based on the 1987 budget request submitted by the SDN, it appears that Mexico's economic difficulties are recognized, and that the institution does not expect to receive allocations that enable it to keep pace with inflation. At the same time, the availability of discretionary funds for the military—such as the millions of dollars provided by López Portillo in the purchase of the F-5s—are not reflected in the official budget allocations. Other sources of military income—such as the income from commissaries, estimated at between 700 and 800 million pesos in 1984<sup>37</sup>—constitute a relatively significant source of additional funds. The availability of discretionary funding, off-line expenditures, and additional income represent an important yet little understood aspect of the military's

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<sup>37</sup>Interview "A," June 1984.

ability to exercise political influence, which cannot be as easily quantified as measures in annual budget increases.

### Compensation and Benefits

A number of scholars have suggested that the levels of personal compensation, benefits, and other service-related perquisites serve are a prime concern of the military and may affect their political involvement.<sup>38</sup> By extension, changes in military compensation and benefits may provide an indicator of the costs perceived by civilian authorities as necessary for maintaining the military's willing abstention from political affairs. Consequently, the provision of adequate pay and benefits may represent a means at the disposal of the civilian leadership to minimize military grievances by apportioning due rewards for loyal service and to keep military morale high.

Raises for military personnel, which are approved by the president, are reported on occasion in the Mexican press. A June 1983 account cited the second round of raises granted that year (the earlier ones were announced in January, one month after De la Madrid assumed the presidency). According to the report, lieutenant colonels benefited the most from the increase, receiving a 93 percent raise over the January level, which brought them close

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<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Louis Goodman, "Civil-Military Relations," Harvard International Review 8 (May/June 1986): 13, and Camp, "Generals and Politicians," p. 126.

to the base pay previously earned by division generals.<sup>39</sup> Full colonels, majors, and first captains also benefited significantly from the increase, receiving raises of approximately 86, 82, and 80 percent, respectively.<sup>40</sup> In comparing the June pay raises—which included raises for non-commissioned personnel—with the January salary levels, it was apparent that the new administration had sought to boost the salaries of the commissioned officer corps, particularly its middle-ranking officers.<sup>41</sup> While the pay increases were significant—particularly given their timing at the height of the economic crisis—most military personnel appeared to be just keeping abreast with or falling slightly behind inflation, which was officially calculated for 1983 at 80 percent.<sup>42</sup>

Military personnel costs were believed to account for as much as 60 percent of the annual defense budget. These included administrative costs, salaries, pensions, as well as other benefits. For example, supplemental pay in addition to the base salary was

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<sup>39</sup>The rank of division general—a three-star general—is the highest possible for most military men. The secretary of national defense is also a division general, yet he wears four stars in his insignia of rank. See, for example, the insignia of officers' ranks published in Walker, "National Security," p. 361.

<sup>40</sup>JPRS, July 29, 1983, p. 99.

<sup>41</sup>According to law, all military personnel—whether under the Secretariat of National Defense or under the Secretariat of the Navy—receive uniform pay and benefits for equivalent rank and years of service. Consequently, the corresponding ranks of personnel under the Secretariat of the Navy, from sailor to admiral, received commensurate raises.

<sup>42</sup>FBIS, April 2, 1987, p. M5.

provided for officers assigned to key command or administrative posts.<sup>43</sup> Both defense secretaries were believed to receive the salary of cabinet members, which in 1983 was estimated at US\$65,000.<sup>44</sup>

Representational allowances for officers—in effect, “walking-around-money”—augmented base salary and compensation for key commands and administrative posts. Monthly stipends also were granted for educational achievements, such as for graduates of the Superior War College, which could increase an officer’s monthly salary by between 10 and 25 percent for the remainder of his active duty service.<sup>45</sup> Other benefits included supplemental pay for personnel engaged in hazardous service—which presumably could include extra pay for the nearly 30,000 army troops involved in the anti-narcotics campaign, given the several hundred casualties in the effort.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Lyle N. McAlister, “Mexico,” in The Military in Latin American Sociopolitical Evolution: Four Case Studies, eds. Lyle N. McAlister, Anthony P. Maingot, and Robert A. Potash (Washington, D.C.: Center for Research in Social Systems, 1970), p. 22.

<sup>44</sup>Walker, “National Security,” p. 357. Based on the averaged controlled exchange rate of 110.25 Mexican pesos per U.S. dollar in 1983, this represented an annual salary of approximately 7.2 million pesos. The base pay for division generals (after the June raise) was 1.3 million pesos, or just under US\$12,000, based on the above exchange rate. It was unclear whether the defense secretaries also draw base pay in addition to their salaries as cabinet members.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>46</sup>According to the SDN, at least 27 percent of the army’s 105,000 troops in 1986 were involved in the anti-narcotics campaign. See the Washington Post, August 4, 1987, p. A11.

In addition to the officially provided compensation, military men often received compensation from their employment in after-hours civilian jobs, a practice—though proscribed by the Constitution—that was becoming increasingly common and accepted.<sup>47</sup> Another important benefit to which some military officers are entitled are the living allowances provided for personnel assigned to posts abroad or enrolled in foreign military training programs. Although difficult to believe—given the amount of money involved—one individual said that prior to the economic crisis (and the spiraling inflation it set off), officers assigned to duty in the United States received 80 percent of their base salary remunerated on a one-to-one exchange in U.S. dollars. In 1984 the remuneration formula was said to have fallen to 50 percent of the base salary.<sup>48</sup>

While the level of reported compensation pushes credibility, it is possibly provided to ensure that an officer's loyalty to Mexico remains uncompromised by foreign interests. However, this concern does not appear to be uniformly manifested. Another individual interviewed said that during the currency freeze in 1982—when the government forbade all foreign exchange transactions during the final quarter of that year—officers posted abroad (in a country other than the United States) were left without any income. This apparent neglect of the legitimate needs

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<sup>47</sup>Camp, "Generals and Politicians," p. 151.

<sup>48</sup>Interview "D," June 1984. As explained, this formula meant that an officer whose monthly base salary was 80 thousand pesos—comparable to a colonel's pay in 1983—would be paid US\$40,000 per month during his time in service in the United States.



of military personnel by the civilian authorities was said to have generated considerable bitterness.<sup>49</sup>

In 1983 an effort was made to ensure that military retirees were able to keep up with the spiraling cost of living. While retirement pension benefits, regulated by law, have traditionally been tied to rank and years of service, increases in benefits were subsequently tied to the raises granted active duty personnel as a result of the pension reform approved by the president. The maximum retirement benefit, after thirty years of service, was a pension equal to 100 percent of base pay. Compulsory retirement, based on maximum age in grade, ranged from forty-five years of age for a second lieutenant to sixty-five years for a division general.<sup>50</sup> Defense secretaries are exempt from retirement regulations and can remain on active duty all their lives.

Two additional institutional benefits available for members of the Mexican armed forces and their families reflect the autonomy of the military institution. This autonomy, according to some analysts of the Mexican military, has provided the armed forces with an incentive to stay out of the political arena.<sup>51</sup> The Mexican Armed Forces Social Security Institute (Instituto de Seguro Social para las Fuerzas Armadas Mexicanas—ISSFAM) provides health care for

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<sup>49</sup>Interview "E," February 1987.

<sup>50</sup>McAlister, "Mexico," p. 225; Fuentes, El Ejército Mexicano, p. 223.

<sup>51</sup>See, for example, the thesis presented in Camp, "Generals and Politicians," p. 149.

military personnel and their dependents, ranging from local dispensaries and regional military hospitals to the military's leading health care institution, the Central Military Hospital in Mexico City. It was believed that the quality of military health care is better than that provided under the government-subsidized civilian health care program of the Mexican Social Security Institute (Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social--IMSS).<sup>52</sup>

The National Bank of the Army, Air Force, and Navy (Banco Nacional del Ejército, Fuerza Aérea y Armada, S.A. de C.V.—BANJERCITO), established by Congress in December 1946, functions as a credit union to provide low-interest loans for active duty and retired personnel as well as financing for the construction of dependent housing at military installations. Although the general directorate of BANJERCITO is located at the Secretariat of National Defense in Mexico, it is considered a national credit institution and, as such, is formally administered under the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit (Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público—SHCP). Its top officials, however, are military officers.<sup>53</sup>

#### Inter-Service Competition for Resources

If economic conditions eventually force the government to make significant cuts in the defense budget, rivalries between the

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<sup>52</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

<sup>53</sup>Gobierno de México, Diccionario biográfico, p. 721.

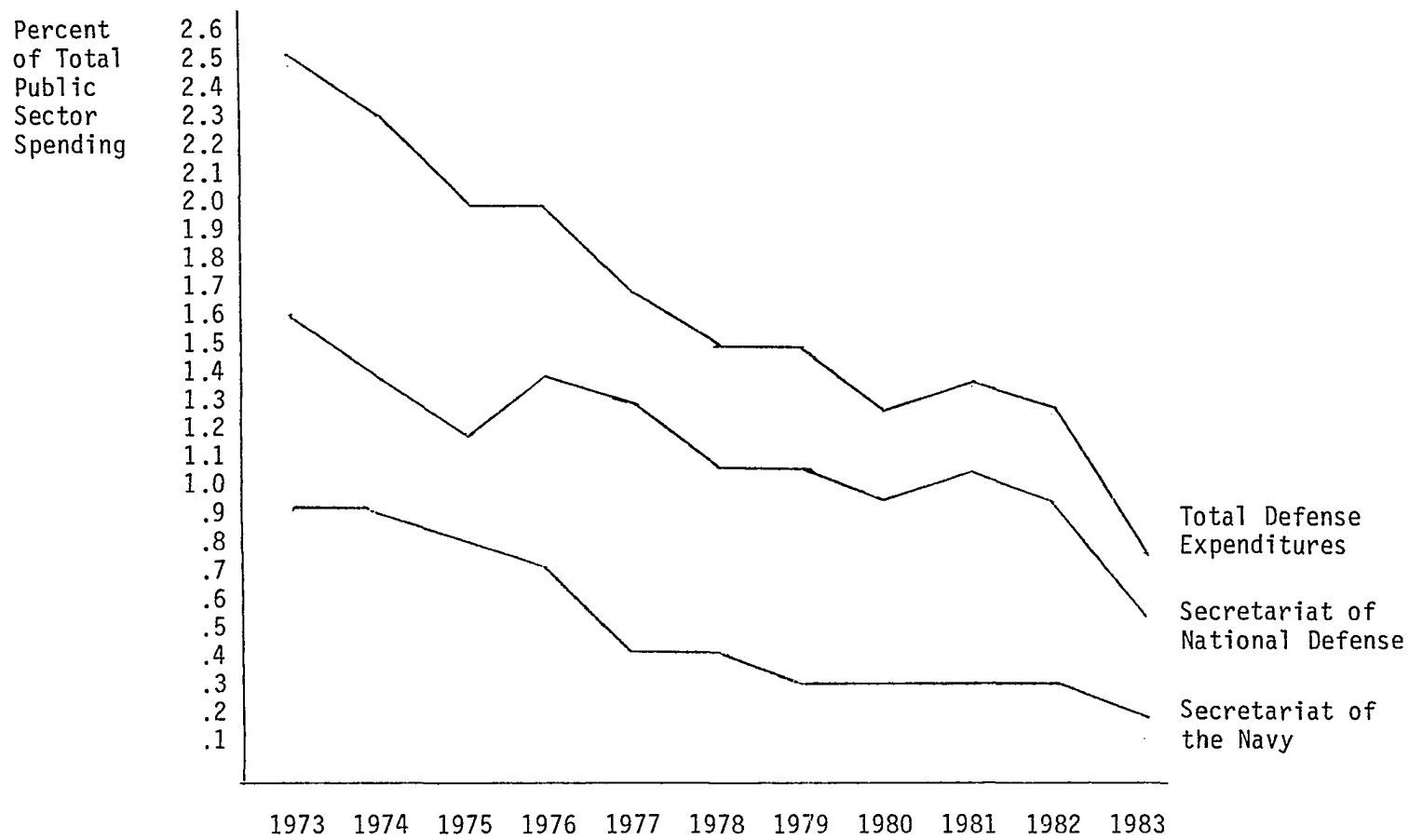
two defense secretariats may be expected intensify as each service competes more actively for its share of reduced public sector spending. Factors determining the allocation of the government's scarce resources would include not only legitimate security requirements, but also the political skill of each defense secretary in maneuvering for influence and the civilian elite's evaluation of the relative political costs of imposing budget cuts.

Despite the effort to treat each of the secretariats equally in terms of compensation and benefits, overall spending trends between 1973 and 1983 indicate that the SDN has fared better than the SM in appropriations, particularly at the beginning of the modernization program when available funds might have indicated better compensation for the Navy. At the height of defense spending during the López Portillo administration, the SDN's share of the budget outpaced the SM's by a three-to-one margin, a nearly 100 percent increase over the SM's record of allocations during the economically tight years of the Echeverría administration. One interpretation suggested by the data might be that when government resources are abundant—as they were thought to be during the López Portillo sexenio—the SDN is capable of exercising its more weighty political influence to obtain an increased proportion of defense allocations.

As reflected in figure 1, each secretariat's proportion of total public sector spending declined significantly between 1973 and 1983. As indicated, while the SDN has achieved greater budgetary "success" than the SM in obtaining spending increases, the

FIGURE 1

COMPARATIVE CHANGE IN  
PLANNED DEFENSE EXPENDITURES BY THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, 1973-1983



SOURCE: Based on data presented in table 3, as derived from figures published in Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, Primer Informe de Gobierno, 1983: Sector Gobierno (México: Presidencia de la República, 1983), pp. 225, 227.

proportion of public sector funds allocated for the SDN has experienced greater volatility over the ten-year period. Given the SDN's budgetary planning requirements, the volatility in allocations may have caused greater reliance on the government for special off-line appropriations. As well, the uncertainty in the SDN's share of increases from year to year may generate greater dependence on the civilian leadership for the apportioning of extra-budgetary funds.

The existence of rivalries between the two defense secretariats is commonly acknowledged, yet little information is available that indicates either the nature of the rivalries or which issues tend to generate the greatest competition. Presumably, budget allocations would represent an area of active competition, particularly should austerity force further reductions in overall public sector spending. Based on past spending patterns, there can be little argument that the SDN is not the more influential of the two secretariats. Nevertheless, the SM has not fared as poorly as might be expected given its ability to maintain relatively stable budget allocations from year to year. While these data are not sufficient for conclusions, they raise interesting questions concerning inter-service competition for resources and how each defense secretariat's relative ability to exercise political influence is reflected in defense spending patterns.

#### Relations with Other Government Bodies

There was no discussion in the academic literature nor indications in the media reports reviewed of anything less than

cordial relations existing between the defense secretariats and other cabinet agencies. Yet based on what is known concerning inter-service rivalries, the existence of conflicts between the defense secretariats and other government offices seems likely. In this respect, areas of overlapping responsibilities and conflicting bureaucratic interests were judged most likely to reflect competition for influence between the military and other governmental bodies.

In terms of domestic activities, the military was often obligated to coordinate its operations with the Secretariat of Government in matters involving internal security and with the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (Oficina del Procurador General de la República—PGR) in the anti-narcotics campaign. Since 1984, as concern over the security of southern Mexico has diminished, the causes of possible conflict between the military and the Secretariat of Government have subsided. The presence of a military officer in the post of undersecretary for national security probably has helped smooth over relations between the two principal government bodies responsible for domestic security. Nevertheless, the creation in December 1985 of a new office within the Secretariat of Government, the General Directorate of Investigation and National Security (Dirección General de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional—DGISN), has most likely given rise to new tensions.

The DGISN's mandate gives it the responsibility to "oversee and report national security developments,"<sup>54</sup> thus placing the civilian-run office in open competition with the military in affairs

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<sup>54</sup>FBIS, December 3, 1985, pp. M1-2.

involving national security. Because the DGISN will be responsible for providing political intelligence<sup>55</sup>—a function also carried out by the military—the directorate could represent a civilian check on the reports submitted by military zone commanders concerning the political situation in the states. It might also seek to counterbalance the activities carried out by civilian volunteers of the Rural Defense Corps, who are relied on by the zone commanders to relay intelligence regarding political conditions in the countryside and are used to as as means to maintain grass roots control over rural dissidents. Given the zero-sum game that governs political life in Mexico, the DGISN's creation and the appointment of a veteran politician, former Oaxaca governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, as its head signal that the military has not managed to translate its influence into a more active role in national security policy making.

Competition is also believed to exist between the military and the PGR, the office in charge of the primary federal law enforcement body, the Federal Judicial Police (Policía Judicial Federal—PJF), as a result of their responsibilities in the narcotics eradication and interdiction program. While the military has participated in drug eradication efforts since the late 1940s, the approach to narcotics control shifted in the late 1970s from manual eradication carried out by army troops to aerial spraying and interdiction efforts supervised by the PGR. In carrying out what is known as “the permanent

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<sup>55</sup>Accounts conflicted as to whether the Federal Security Directorate (Dirección Federal de Seguridad—DFS), the government's principal intelligence agency, was now under the DGISN or whether the DFS had been dissolved and was replaced by the DGISN.



campaign" (la campaña permanente), the PGR has built up a sizeable air fleet—used in spraying as well as in detection—and, as early as 1983, was spending close to half its budget in the anti-drug effort. During 1985 it appeared that the military was seeking to use its role in the permanent campaign as a platform for greater political influence and as a rationale for increased budget allocations. In addition to assigning one-fourth of the army's troops to the anti-drug effort, Arévalo was also speaking out regularly in the media in underscoring the SDN's important contribution in the program.

While both defense secretariats have been active in the anti-narcotics program, the nature of the public relations effort carried out by both the SDN and the PGR appeared to reflect a bureaucratic turf battle. In terms of increased visibility, the SDN has made definitive gains under Arévalo's leadership in comparison with the status of SDN-PGR ties while his predecessor, Gen. Galván López, headed the secretariat. De la Madrid's citation of Arévalo's statistics on the military's anti-drug activities suggest he has been successful in gaining the president's ear,<sup>56</sup> a factor that is important given the nature of political decision making. At the same time, the SDN's seeming success may be attributable to the comparatively low public profile maintained by Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez

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<sup>56</sup>Compare, for example, President de la Madrid's remarks before the National Press Club on August 14, 1986, with statements made by Arévalo at a June press conference, reported in FBIS, June 16, 1985, p. M2.

and to the PGR's discrediting based on charges of drug-related corruption within the PJF. Most recently, the two secretariats were believed to have reached a tacit agreement, whereby the PGR would have dominance in the air and the SDN, on the ground.<sup>57</sup>

In comparison, the SDN appears to have been less successful in competing with the Secretariat of Government. While the SDN succeeded in establishing a new military zone at Tapachula, Chiapas, in 1983,<sup>58</sup> policy decisions concerning southern Mexico have been influenced more by real security concerns than by the military's successful jockeying for position. Finally, the creation of the civilian-directed DGISN suggests that the SDN has been unable to establish greater influence in national security policy making.

### The National Level

#### Formal and Informal Consultation

During the early 1980s, it was widely anticipated that the military's role in national security policy formulation would be expanding as a result of concerns over a spillover of the Central American conflict and the security of the southern oil fields. As the immediacy of the security requirements has faded, however, so too

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<sup>57</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

<sup>58</sup>The last new military zone was created at Chilpancingo, Guerrero, in 1967 in response to guerrilla activities in the state.

has the attention lent by civilian leaders to establishing a formal consultative role for the military in national security planning.

The diminished civilian interest in expanding the military's role in national security policy reflects a significant change over the past three years. As late as 1984 speculation was rife that the government would soon create a national security council to give the military a formal role in security policy formulation.<sup>59</sup> By 1987, such plans had been abandoned, at least for this sexenio.<sup>60</sup>

Some gestures have continued to be made to give the military at least a nominal role in national security policy formulation. As late as last year, De la Madrid was still requesting the preparation of policy papers on national security issues by officers at the Colegio de Defensa Nacional.<sup>61</sup> While the president's requests were said to amount to offering the military only token participation in decision making, his interest indicated a desire for the military at least to perceive itself as having input into security policy. Nevertheless, even the top officers attending the National Defense College were said to have only a "marginal interest" in national issues and, as a result of their lack of preparation and interest, they were judged as having

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<sup>59</sup>See, for example, Alden M. Cunningham, "Mexico's National Security in the 1980s-1990s," in The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment, Monograph Series, no. 15, ed. David F. Ronfeldt (La Jolla, California: University of California at San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1984), p. 176.

<sup>60</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

<sup>61</sup>Interview "D," August 1986.

“no real competence” for advising the president on national security issues.<sup>62</sup>

Precisely because the military’s formal consultative role is minimal, the informal consultation process assumes greater significance in delineating the military’s political influence and interests. Informal consultation has been an important feature of civil-military relations in Mexico for at least the last twenty years. Before carrying out controversial policies that could affect the interests of the military, civilian leaders have made a practice of consulting the institutional hierarchy—specifically, the secretary of national defense.<sup>63</sup> In 1982, Gen. Galván López was one of the few individuals in the government who knew in advance of López Portillo’s plans to nationalize the banks and provided the personnel to guard the banks on the day of the nationalization. In the aftermath of the 1985 earthquakes, it is likely that Arévalo was privately consulted by De la Madrid for his willingness to allow the inter-secretarial commission to take over the military’s designated role in directing the disaster relief efforts.

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<sup>62</sup>ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Events surrounding the military’s activities in quashing the 1968 demonstrations at Tlatelolco, however, merit special scrutiny and may indicate that the consultation process is not unilateral, as is widely believed. According to one account, the decision to halt the demonstrations was carried out after the secretary of national defense advised the president of the planned action and the president offered no objection. For details, see Michael Joseph Dziedzic, The Essence of Decision in a Hegemonic Regime: The Case of Mexico’s Acquisition of a Supersonic Fighter (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1986, No. 8618455), pp. 112-113.

It appears that when consulted by the civilian leadership the military has consistently supported the executive's policy decisions. This support underscores the military's perception of its obligation to offer institutional loyalty to the civilian leadership.<sup>64</sup> Such support also is founded on the personal relationship that traditionally exists between the secretary of national defense and the president who appoints him, a tie that is likely to have inhibited open schisms over policy decisions. Moreover, the act of consultation, albeit informal, is as much a sign of the civilian leadership's recognition of the importance of military support for its policies as it is an effort to treat the military with respect. It is unclear, however, what the reaction of the civilian leadership might be should the military's presumed support of policy decisions not be forthcoming.

#### Changes in the Military's Missions

The two broad responsibilities of the military—guaranteeing domestic order and providing for external defense—have remained essentially unchanged since the early 1920s. In contrast, the specific mission-related tasks carried out by the armed forces have changed somewhat over the years as a result of the shifting priorities of each presidential administration and the varying interests of the military institution's leaders.

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<sup>64</sup>See, for example, the editorial on "institutional loyalty" published in the February 1983 issue of the Revista del Ejército y Fuerza Aérea 21.

Under the De la Madrid administration, the activities of troops under the SDN that have received the most public attention have included their participating in narcotics eradication and interdiction efforts; providing a "presence" and guarding the ballot boxes at elections; relocating Guatemalan refugees in southern Mexico; and, preceding the World Cup soccer matches, developing and implementing anti-terrorism plans. The military has remained responsible for execution of Plan DN-III-E—the SDN's formal plan for the coordination and administration of disaster relief efforts—despite the usurpation of its authority by the civilian-led inter-secretarial commission that was quickly organized after the 1985 earthquakes.<sup>65</sup> The SDN's role in other civic action programs—such as participation in rural health and literacy campaigns and the construction of rural housing and roads—have continued, but have been the focus of less media attention.

While the scope of the SDN's activities has remained essentially unchanged over the past decade, the activities carried out by personnel under Secretariat of the Navy have expanded. In large part, this role expansion has resulted from the 1976 recognition of Mexico's Exclusive Economic Zone and the subsequent realization that the naval fleet lacked the capability to enforce sovereign control over this territory. The Mexican Government's need to enhance the navy's capabilities may have

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<sup>65</sup>JPRS, December 12, 1985, pp. 73-81.

helped the secretariat to hold its ground in terms of budget allocations since 1980.<sup>63</sup>

During the 1980s, the navy's responsibilities have included enforcing sovereignty over resources within the EEZ; ensuring the security of offshore oil facilities; transporting Guatemalan refugees via inland waterways to the camps in Campeche; interdicting illegal narcotics shipped through Mexican waters; and apprehending illegal aliens aboard vessels in Mexican waters. Drug interdiction and the apprehension of illegal aliens, which were believed to be new activities under the De la Madrid administration, appeared likely to become increasingly important responsibilities in the coming years. ~~The plans to improve patrol and surveillance capabilities were often~~ cited by Navy Secretary Gómez Ortega in his interviews with the Mexican press, most likely in an effort to establish a rationale for

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<sup>63</sup>In 1980 the López Portillo administration attempted to assert control over fishing rights within Mexico's EEZ—a decision that led to the so-called "tuna war" when the Mexican Navy seized several U.S. commercial fishing boats and the U.S. imposed an embargo on Mexican tuna imports. The recognition that the navy lacked the capability to patrol the expansive maritime territory within Mexico's EEZ may have prompted the acquisition of new vessels for the fleet and the upgrading of domestic shipbuilding capabilities. The "tuna war" was resolved during De la Madrid's 1986 visit to the United States, when the United States agreed to lift the embargo and Mexico agreed to limit its tuna exports to the United States. The issue that led to the war—the U.S. refusal to recognize tuna, a migratory fish, as a natural resource within Mexico's EEZ—was unresolved. See Phyllis Greene Walker, "Tuna Wars Reprise: An Overview of the U.S.-Mexican Fisheries Dispute," paper presented at the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies, Villanova, Pennsylvania, 1984.

increasing the SM's budget allocations. In addition, a growing government interest in oceanographic research—an area requiring considerable technical expertise and which was among the navy's responsibilities—could be expected to add to the navy's importance and help improve the SM's position relative to the SDN. As a result, the navy's ability to obtain and wield political influence derived from its mission-related activities has grown as its activities have expanded. Finally, it should be noted that the civilian leadership may be willing to allow the navy to enjoy greater prominence precisely because of its relative weakness. The possible costs of increased navy influence—based on the secretariat's fewer personnel, its limited visibility, and limited control over territory—appear less threatening to the civilian leadership than those posed by the visage of a more active and influential SDN.

#### Changes in the Visibility of Key Officers

The level of public visibility maintained by each of the defense secretaries has increased markedly since the period before the initiation of modernization efforts. This increased visibility has included not only more frequent media interviews and reports on the armed forces, but also has included the discussion of a broader range of topics in the media by a wider group of military officials. Given the timing of this change, the defense secretaries have apparently successfully used the modernization program as a



platform for increasing visibility and for publicly articulating their respective services' interests and perspectives as well as their own.

Many analysts cite the 1980 publication of an interview with National Defense Secretary Galván López in the Mexican news magazine Proceso as the watershed event that marked the beginning of the trend toward greater public assertiveness and a higher public profile for the armed forces. In response to a request for his definition of national security, National Defense Secretary Galván López carefully yet directly broached the previously forbidden subject by stating that he understood it as "the maintenance of social, economic, and political equilibrium, guaranteed by the armed forces."<sup>67</sup> Although the statement appeared innocuous, the fact that the secretary of national defense had spoken publicly about Mexican national security became the focus of considerable attention. Mexican scholar Olga Pellicer interpreted the secretary's statement as reflecting "the slight participation of the military sector both in the definition of the concept of national security itself and in the decision as to the most appropriate means of confronting the dangers that threaten it."<sup>68</sup> In effect, Galván's definition was indicative of the extent to which the military had become divorced from real participation in the decision making process.

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<sup>67</sup>As cited in Olga Pellicer de Brody, "National Security in Mexico: Traditional Notions and New Preoccupations," in *U.S.-Mexico Relations: Economic and Social Aspects*, eds. Clark W. Reynolds and Carlos Tello (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 187-188.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 187.

Public statements have been made by the defense secretaries on numerous occasions since 1980 and have not generated the level of public comment as did Arévalo's remarks. During the De la Madrid administration, the statements by the defense secretaries have included addressing a variety of institution-related subjects, such as the military budget, the acquisition of new equipment, the new military facilities under construction, and the status of the National Military Service program for conscripts. They also have occasionally addressed topics with political overtones.

Based on a survey of press reports since 1983, the various topics discussed have included the absence of a threat to stability in southern Mexico; the denial of divisions among members of the officer corps; the importance of the military as a pillar of Mexican "institutional life;" the denial that the economic crisis could lead to the emergence of guerrilla groups; the assurance of "calm" prevailing throughout Mexico; and the obligation of the Mexican press to "print the truth." Over the past two years, the progress reports submitted every several months by National Defense Secretary Arévalo to De la Madrid on the SDN's activities in the anti-narcotics campaign have been routinely reported in the media.

In terms of the topics not addressed, the defense secretaries tend not to discuss problems within the military institution nor do they in any way criticize the Mexican Government, including the policies implemented by its executive agencies, their cabinet rivals. What is telling about the secretaries' statements, however, is that their denials or admonitions sometimes point indirectly to the

existence of unpublicized problems within the military or issues related to the institution. Such issues—though previously unreported or under-reported in the media—usually have become the subject of official attention as a result of allegations circulating within the semi-official rumor mill (the process through which many signals are sent to and trial balloons raised by the Mexican Government). One recent example of this phenomenon was the national defense secretary's 1986 denial of corruption within the military.<sup>69</sup>

The absence of criticism of the defense secretaries' statements suggests either that they have addressed noncontroversial subjects—which has not been the case—or that their vocality has become publicly acceptable. While military officers do hold opinions on controversial subjects and are critical of some government policies, they do not talk about these issues outside of a small circle of confidants.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, unspoken boundaries appear to exist regarding what military officers themselves consider to be acceptable topics for public discourse. These boundaries will likely remain ill defined until they have been crossed, and public or, as the case may be, institutional reaction (including abrupt personnel changes) follows.

As indicated above, on only rare occasions have military officers publicly addressed political issues. When addressed, the

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<sup>69</sup>FBIIS, June 16, 1986, p. M2.

<sup>70</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

defense secretaries have usually been the officers making the statements. One exception, however, was found in the research that is significant to point out in that it provides an interesting reflection of the character of a professional Mexican military officer and also signals the presence of some debate within the institution regarding its appropriate role in policy making. In early 1983 Brigade General (General de Brigada) Vinicio Santoyo Feria, then in the important post of chief of staff of national defense, chose an official occasion to criticize those within the institution who felt the military should assume a greater role in political decision making. According to Santoyo, the official speaker at the annual Army Day ceremony, "[i]n the army there is no place for anyone giving advice on national decisions because we are not and have no wish to be judges."<sup>71</sup>

Santoyo's remarks were particularly significant given that he represented one of the best educated and most professional officers in the armed forces yet also one, by virtue of his competence, who would be likely to desire a greater decision making role. In 1980 Santoyo chaired the military committee that established the National Defense College, graduated from its first class, and served as the school's first director until 1982.<sup>72</sup> In 1985, he was transferred from the SDN to command the fifth military region and fifteenth

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<sup>71</sup>JPRS, April 21, 1983, p. 90.

<sup>72</sup>Gobierno de México, Diccionario biográfico, p. 392.

military zone with headquarters at Guadalajara, Jalisco—what may be considered an important command given the heightened activities of narcotics traffickers in the area. Upon taking his new assignment, he denied that “the change [was] related to conflicts experienced by the institution.” The press report on his transfer noted that Santoyo was “one of the army’s foremost experts on national security and defense.”<sup>73</sup>

Although the heads of other government secretariats receive comparatively greater press coverage, the military’s leaders are clearly being quoted more frequently by the Mexican media and are discussing a broader range of topics than they were prior to 1980. This higher level of visibility may indicate a trend toward a more prominent public profile for the military in the future. Should this develop, it may be expected that the issues addressed by the officer corps will become more diverse and controversial as the frequency of reporting increases.

#### Public Criticism of and Appeals to the Military

As noted above, public statements by military officers over recent years have not been countered by strong civilian criticism or condemnation. Nevertheless, there remains a strong anti-military bias on the part of the general public—a characteristic that distinguishes Mexican political culture from that of many other Latin

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<sup>73</sup>Excélsior, March 19, 1985, p. 2 (Estados).

American countries and, as a trait dominant since the Revolution, has likely served to inhibit greater military participation in the political arena. Given this anti-military bias, the absence of criticism suggests that the military's greater public visibility has not yet reached the point that would trigger public resistance and become a topic for debate. At the level of the general public, the military's higher profile does not appear as yet to have translated into greater political influence for the institution. There are, however, tentative signs that the military's prominence in carrying out its mission-related responsibilities—particularly in the area of public security—is becoming an issue that is subject to criticism.

Criticism of the military involvement—both official and unofficial—in human rights abuses was relatively frequent during the 1970s. Various reports, including those of Amnesty International, singled out the principal army base, Military Camp No. 1 in Mexico City, as the operational headquarters for Mexico's own "dirty war" against subversives. Since the early 1980s, occasional reports of human rights abuses by military personnel have continued to surface, although such charges now tend to be directed against the police. One widely publicized incident was the reported July 1984 murder of several Guatemalans in southern Mexico by troops who had been responsible for the refugees' relocation.<sup>74</sup> In early 1986, six Chihuahua peasants were reportedly beaten and tortured (resulting in the subsequent death of one individual) after their

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<sup>74</sup>New York Times, July 13, 1984, p. A4.

arrests by army personnel involved in the anti-narcotics campaign.<sup>75</sup> These relatively isolated reports suggest that the military's role in human rights violations has not of late been a cause for public criticism of the institution.

There has, however, been concern expressed regarding the military's role in maintaining public order. One recent media account published in Proceso pointed to the continuing economic crisis and growing social discontent as having necessitated the "militarization" of the country. While the criticism was somewhat unfocused and nonspecific, the impression left with the reader was that problems arising from the military's more active role in public security were imminent.<sup>76</sup> The recency of the criticism makes it unclear whether the concern over "militarization" may be based on fact, on journalistic rhetoric, or attributable to the general climate of uncertainty that often precedes a presidential succession.

There was no indication that any public officials had joined in criticizing the military's role. Such a development, however, could have serious implications if the criticism were leveled by politicians affiliated with the PRI. If widespread, the criticism could lead to the politicization of the armed forces, brought on by politically grounded divisions within the institution as officers aligned themselves with civilian interest groups who saw the military's role

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<sup>75</sup>El Sol de Sinaloa (México), March 30, 1986, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup>See, for example, Ignacio Ramírez, "Tropas y policías con mandos castrenses se extienden por el país," Proceso, March 30, 1987, pp. 18-27.

either as justified or reprehensible. A similar development reportedly occurred during the Echeverría administration when “symptoms of polarization and instability” developed after conservative PRI politicians sought to coopt military leaders.<sup>77</sup> While this remains a topic for speculation, the military’s politicization might generate further criticism by public officials regarding its lack of professionalism, which could, in turn, prompt open military criticism of those sectors within the government who attacked the institution.

In contrast, criticism by members of the political opposition would be more apt to unite the institution than to divide it. Given the generally conservative political orientation of most Mexican military officers, criticism originating from the opposition on the left of the political spectrum would be less divisive than criticism by the right. The impact of criticism by the political right would be determined by the specific issues or activities that are criticized. Low-level criticism, which might include charges of military corruption or participation in electoral fraud, would be likely to have little effect on the institution. However, should military personnel be obliged to use force against members of the political right—such as during an election—such a situation could elicit strong criticism that would have an extremely divisive effect on the politically conservative armed forces.

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<sup>77</sup>Camp, “Generals and Politicians,” p. 150.



Again, although speculation, the development of a schism within the institution over the use of force may be expected to enhance the political influence of the faction supporting the Mexican Government (that is, supporting the need for use of force). Their increased influence would likely be obtained as a political trade-off for continuing military support of the political status quo, which could be made contingent on obtaining a greater role in decision making. Nevertheless, in spite of the enticement of increased influence, even this support might falter were the military to perceive its institutional integrity as being compromised by the interests of a civilian leadership that lacked popular support.

Since the late 1970s, public criticism of the military appears to have been minimal, rather than unreported. In contrast, the incidence of public appeals to the military appear to be a relatively common phenomenon. Roderic Camp notes that these appeals are often made at the level of the military zone commander, who serves as an alternative to the state governor for groups wishing to convey their views to the central government.<sup>78</sup> David Ronfeldt has noted that "citizen groups sometimes address their public petitions. . . to the local zone commander or even the secretary of national defense, urging him, as well as the political authorities, to correct some serious abuse or restore order in some conflict situation."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>79</sup>Ronfeldt, "Mexican Army and Political Order," pp. 295-296.

The renewed influence of the conservative PAN in northern Mexico has also led to the emergence of what appears to be a new type of appeal in the party's efforts to obtain the military's support and respect for fair elections. Two such appeals—one by the president of the PAN and the other by a PAN gubernatorial candidate—were found to have been made in the months preceding the critical 1985 midterm elections, in which the PRI faced a strong electoral challenge by the conservative party.

As observed by David Ronfeldt, the Mexican military has long carried out a "residual political role" in supporting the PRI at elections.<sup>80</sup> Two related plans under the SDN officially regulate the military's role in elections: the Plan de Apoyo al Padrón y Comisión Federal Electoral, which provides for the transport and distribution of election materials, and the Plan Comicios, which is believed to entail guarding the ballot boxes and maintaining public order during elections. Each of the plans assigns the military a presumably impartial role in the elections, which does not suggest that the military's activities would favor one political party over another. Since the 1950s, the military has supported the ruling party and been critical in subduing post-electoral disturbances resulting from protests over the voting outcome. During the 1985 and 1986 elections, many reports said the military was involved in the allegedly extensive vote fraud that helped ensure the PRI's victory.

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 292; 294-299.

A scene filmed by a U.S. television crew, for example, showed army personnel emptying and burning the contents of ballot boxes before angry crowds.<sup>81</sup>

In terms of the military's response to the PAN's appeals for fair elections, one person said that under Arévalo the military has tried to limit its politicized, pro-PRI electoral role and avoid charges of participation in vote fraud. According to the individual, "Whenever there has been some insinuation that the military supports the PRI, it has been resisted." While it was noted that all military officers "kowitz to the PRI line,"<sup>82</sup> it was also acknowledged that some support for the PAN exists, but was "only expressed in a recondite manner." Nevertheless, it was believed that the military would like to see a more open political system, but "was not at that point of political diversification within itself" to support another political party openly.<sup>83</sup> Given this disposition, the PAN's appeals to the institution may not have been wholly in vain.

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<sup>81</sup>M. Delal Baer, "The 1986 Mexican Elections: The Case of Chihuahua," (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1986), p. 23.

<sup>82</sup>Surprisingly, of the 54 officers in the SDN's top administrative posts who were listed in the 1984 Diccionario Biográfico, only one-fourth were PRI members. Comparable data on the proportion of PRI members in the military institution were not found.

<sup>83</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

### The International Level

#### Foreign Influences on the Institution

Foreign influences on the Mexican military institution have remained minimal in comparison with the impact of foreign military doctrine on the traditions of the armed forces in many other Latin American countries. Without question, the United States has been the single most important foreign influence on the Mexican military. As discussed in chapter II, this influence grew significantly during World War II when Mexico became one of the two Latin American countries that sent combat troops abroad. Following the allied victory, the Mexican military incorporated U.S. Army field manuals into its training programs and purchased surplus U.S. military equipment, but resisted signing a bilateral military assistance pact.

At present, U.S. military matériel continues to dominate Mexico's equipment inventory, but the influence of other countries' technological influence is apparent. This foreign influence carries beyond simply the mere provision of military equipment. Training and spare parts are also provided by the supplier country and, as a result of the purchase, a relationship has been established for future possible acquisitions as well as other forms of cooperation. France, Great Britain, West Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Israel, and Brazil all have sold equipment to the Mexican armed forces. In the early 1980s, Mexico began producing its G-3 automatic rifles under a co-production agreement with West Germany. There was also speculation at that time, generated by the modernization program,

that Mexico would soon enter into a co-production agreement with Argentina to build the TAM (Tanque Argentino Mediano—Argentine Medium Tank) and possibly other armored vehicles.

Possibly the most interesting aspect of foreign influence is the impact of political as well as economic considerations on foreign ties. Prior to the 1982 acquisition of the twelve F-5 fighters from the United States, Secretary of Defense Galván López had established contacts with Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) for the purchase of as many as twenty-four Kfirs.<sup>84</sup> Although the decision to purchase the F-5s was purportedly based on cost, the Kfir is reportedly “the cheapest aircraft of its kind in the world;”<sup>85</sup> it was thus suggested that domestic as well as international political considerations had led to the rejection of the Israeli deal. Politics were also reportedly a factor in the failure of Mexico and Israel to reach an agreement for the establishment of a joint aircraft industry in the state of Yucatán when the six-year-long negotiations finally broke down in 1979.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Apparently these contacts dated from 1977 when Israel began pursuing an aggressive military sales policy toward Mexico. The account consulted describes an Israeli-sponsored military equipment exhibition, inaugurated by López Portillo, that was held in Mexico City. Items at the show ranged from planes to sophisticated electronic equipment, and special demonstrations of the various products were conducted for Mexico’s military leaders. See Bishara Bahbah, Israel and Latin America: The Military Connection (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), pp. 103-104.

<sup>85</sup>Jerusalem Post (Israel), January 26, 1981, as cited by Bahbah, Israel and Latin America, p. 105.

<sup>86</sup>Bahbah, Israel and Latin America, p. 105.

### Contacts with Foreign Armed Forces

The interest in establishing increased foreign contacts and cooperation with foreign armed forces that was displayed by the military's leaders during the López Portillo administration has not continued under the present leadership. This decline in interest on the part of the armed forces' leadership may be attributed in part to Mexico's overall international retrenchment after the financial shocks of 1982 as well as to the personal inclinations of the present defense secretaries.

As noted above, Mexico does maintain contacts with military suppliers in Western Europe and elsewhere, but there is no evidence that Mexican officers have established cooperative relationships with the armed forces of those countries. Mexico's foreign military cooperation remains almost exclusively limited to cooperation with the U.S. armed forces. Since the initiation of the modernization program, U.S.-Mexican military relations have improved considerably.

In fact, according to one individual, "they are at their highest point today," and the prospects for continuing improvements in these relations have been reinforced as a result of Defense Secretary Arévalo's April 1987 visit to the United States. During his U.S. visit, Arévalo was reportedly given the "royal treatment" by his hosts—treatment which was intended to convey respect for the defense secretary and his responsibilities. In turn, Arévalo took the opportunity to present in-depth briefings, including slides, in which he detailed the Mexican military's role in the anti-narcotics effort.

The questions that followed the briefings, which were personally presented by Arévalo, were met with "direct answers." This "open and direct way of doing business," it was noted, represents a change in U.S.-Mexican military relations that has taken place even since the early 1980s.<sup>87</sup> Given the nature of Mexican politics, it is interesting to note that the basis of these relations remains largely informal.

The sole formal, bilateral mechanism for U.S.-Mexican military relations—the Joint Mexican-U.S. Defense Commission (JMUSDC), formed in 1942—continues to exist, but its purpose has diminished, in part a result of Mexico's decision to pursue a policy of non-alignment in its foreign relations. In the absence of dramatic changes in the international environment, JMUSDC is not expected to become a more active organization. Nevertheless, it continues to function—sponsoring briefings as well as family picnics—and provides a forum to further communications and understanding between U.S. and Mexican officers.

The Mexican armed forces receive no formal foreign military assistance from the United States or any other country. In 1952, the Mexican Government refused to sign a bilateral military assistance agreement with the United States on the grounds that the pact could obligate Mexico to send its military personnel abroad. This decision was predicated as much on the political exigencies of the 1952 presidential elections as it was on Mexico's incipient policy of

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<sup>87</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

nonalignment that was reflected in the foreign policy establishment's refusal to support the U.S.-led war against international communism.<sup>88</sup>

Although Mexico has accepted some funds under the U.S. Military Assistance Program, the benefits it has received have been minimal. As one military analyst described the Mexican attitude toward foreign military assistance, "They don't want to buy anything they can't pay for in cash."<sup>89</sup> As table 4 shows, between 1946 and 1986, Mexico's total military aid from the United States, less repayments and interest, was just over \$11 million, the bulk of which consisted of grants made between 1962 and 1982. While most other Latin American countries had accepted at least credit financing for their equipment purchases, the \$4.3 million that Mexico had accepted—even less than that provided Costa Rica—had been paid back with interest.

In terms of total loans and grants provided by the United States to Latin America during the post-World War II era, only Guyana, Haiti, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago had received less assistance than Mexico. During the 1980s the only funds Mexico received from the United States were the \$100,000 to \$200,000 designated annually under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program that provided for Mexican officers to

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<sup>88</sup>J. Lloyd Mechem, The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 335-336; 435-436.

<sup>89</sup>Interview "B," June 1984.



TABLE 4

UNITED STATES FOREIGN MILITARY ASSISTANCE  
TO SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 1946-1986  
(Money Amounts in Millions of United States Dollars)

Country	Military Assistance Program Grants	Credit Financing	Intl. Military Educ. & Training	Transfer of Excess Stock	Other Grants	Total Loans and Grants	Repayments and Interest <sup>a</sup>	Total Less Re-payments & Interest
Argentina	34.0	175.9	12.8	4.4	36.5	263.6	190.0	73.6
Bolivia	38.0	23.0	14.9	10.1	--	86.0	19.5	66.5
Brazil	207.2	264.6	16.5	83.1	68.6	640.0	327.0	313.0
Chile	80.5	62.5	16.9	24.0	33.1	217.0	39.8	177.2
Colombia	86.5	139.8	19.7	17.9	19.2	283.1	145.8	137.3
Costa Rica	29.8	5.0	1.7	0.1	0.1	36.7	6.3	30.4
Cuba	8.6	--	2.0	5.5	--	16.1	--	16.1
Dominican Rep.	35.7	23.7	14.4	3.9	3.8	81.5	13.5	68.0
Ecuador	34.0	65.0	16.4	10.4	16.8	142.6	59.6	83.0
El Salvador	548.8	110.6	14.1	2.5	0.1	676.1	48.5	627.6
Guatemala	21.3	10.7	8.3	6.7	0.3	47.3	13.3	34.0
Guyana	--	--	0.1	--	--	0.1	--	0.1
Haiti	4.7	2.1	3.6	0.2	0.8	11.4	2.0	9.4
Honduras	258.0	52.4	14.6	2.0	0.1	327.1	37.9	289.2
Jamaica	24.3	2.6	1.1	-- <sup>b</sup>	--	28.0	1.8	26.2
Mexico	-- <sup>b</sup>	4.3	3.7	0.1	7.7	15.8	4.6	11.2
Nicaragua	7.7	8.0	11.5	5.2	--	32.4	4.5	27.9
Panama	26.4	22.3	8.0	1.7	--	58.4	11.4	47.0
Paraguay	9.5	0.7	7.0	11.2	2.2	30.6	0.5	30.1
Peru	75.0	131.5	23.2	20.3	26.9	276.9	133.8	143.1
Suriname	--	--	0.2	--	--	0.2	--	0.2
Trinidad & Tob.	--	--	0.1	--	--	0.1	--	0.1
Uruguay	41.0	18.3	7.0	20.4	2.9	89.6	23.1	66.5
Venezuela	-- <sup>b</sup>	124.6	14.3	0.3	13.4	152.6	139.1	13.5

SOURCE: United States Government, Agency for International Development (AID), U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Organizations (Washington, D.C.: AID, Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, Office of Planning and Budgeting, 1987, CONG-R-0105), pp. 36-64.

<sup>a</sup>All repayments and interest were for monies provided under credit financing.

<sup>b</sup>The amount provided was less than \$50,000.

receive training at U.S. military schools. Mexico was believed only to have agreed to participate in the IMET Program on a reciprocal basis, whereby U.S. military officers would also attend Mexico's professional training institutions.<sup>90</sup>

Mexican officers were believed to attend the professional schools of the armed forces in other Latin American countries and, possibly, also in France and Britain. Corroborating reports on the number of students participating in the training programs, or even the Latin American countries where they attended, were not available. A review of the officers listed in the 1984 Diccionario biográfico indicated that only one of the men occupying the military's top administrative posts had received military training in a country other than the United States. This officer had attended security-related training courses in France, England, Belgium, and Panama. Two officers had been educated abroad in non-military programs. One had studied public administration in France and the United States; the other studied environmental law in Venezuela. All three men were navy officers. By comparison, of all the officers listed in the directory, close to one-third had received military training in the United States, and most of these were navy officers.

No evidence was found to suggest that Mexican officers have sought to expand or increase their contact with foreign armed forces. There was, however, a recent indication that the Cuban military hoped to establish closer ties with its Mexican counterpart.

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<sup>90</sup>Interview "B," June 1984.

This was based on a report published in early 1987 that the Cuban Government had decorated the two defense secretaries with the Thirtieth Anniversary Medal of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, a special commemorative decoration.<sup>91</sup> Contact between the Mexican armed forces and those of socialist countries should not be seen as unusual or extraordinary—particularly given Mexico's nonaligned foreign policy stance. It was interesting, however, that the medals were presented during ceremonies at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico and that the two military officers did not travel to Cuba to receive their decorations.

While secretary of national defense, Galván López visited the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Romania, and Cuba, reportedly at the "express invitation of military authorities".<sup>92</sup> Although Arévalo has not traveled as much as Galván, there is no reason to believe friendly relations have not been maintained with the military establishments in these socialist countries. In late 1985 the Soviet Navy's plans to make a port call at Veracruz during its annual maneuvers in the Caribbean, announced by the Mexican Secretariat of the Navy, were believed to have been canceled only after the United States intervened to oppose the visit. Based on this record, the awarding of the medals by Cuba was most likely not a departure from established friendly relations, which

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<sup>91</sup>FBIS, February 19, 1987, p. M1.

<sup>92</sup>Revista del Ejército y Fuerza Aérea 20 (octubre-noviembre de 1982): 5.

would be hoped to be the case given Mexico's proximity to the island nation and their overlapping maritime boundaries.

### The Military's Perspective on National Security and Foreign Policy

In spite of the publicity and expectations that followed the modernization program's initiation, the military's leaders have not achieved a more active role in decision making related to Mexican national security. Consequently, the military has not been able to influence the formulation of Mexican foreign policy. On the contrary, the military has proved unable to sustain even the minimal influence it enjoyed in this area during the early 1980s. As a result, the military presently has all but token participation in decision making on issues that are not directly related to the military institution. Even in the area of internal security, the military has had to share its mandate with the Secretariat of Government as well as the Office of the Attorney General. This relative loss of influence may be seen as the product of the political strength and competence of other government actors in security policy formulation and the military's continuing lack of preparation in areas not related directly to military science and administration.

Speculation regarding the creation of a national security council that would have given the military a greater role in security policy formulation have come to naught. Similarly, the plans at the beginning of the modernization program to improve the

professional education program have fallen victim to lack of funds and to a loss of interest on the part of the military as well as of the civilian leaders. Nevertheless, should an officer with a professional background like that of Santoyo Feria emerge as a future secretary of national defense, it would auger well for the expansion of professional military education as well as for the military's potential influence in national security policy making. As better educated officers, who have broader international perspectives, move into key positions within the institution, it would likely lead to a gradual yet substantial increase in the military's influence in national security. It would also, however, suggest the likelihood of the armed forces' developing a reformist orientation, which could in turn lead to its efforts to participate more actively in the political arena.

The military's few references to Central America found in the literature reviewed suggested that their concerns were focused on the southern border's security. While the military leadership has categorized the regional situation as "very serious,"<sup>93</sup> it has been reluctant to criticize Mexican foreign policy. Since the early 1980s, the shift in the political focus of the Central American conflict to an East-West perspective and Mexico's adoption of a relatively more conservative foreign policy have not provided the military sufficient incentive to seek greater influence in decisions in this area.

The initial decrease in guerrilla activities in Guatemala with return of civilian government appears to have defused some concern

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<sup>93</sup>Interview "F," July 1987.

over the security of Mexico's southern border. The concern has also been assuaged by the new military zone, the deployment of more personnel to the area, and the transfer of refugees to camps farther from the border. These policies suggest that the military leadership has coped with the problems administratively, before they became major issues within the armed forces over the pursuit of a foreign policy that is consonant with Mexico's domestic security interests.

The government's authorization of resources to facilitate the military's response in southern Mexico indicates political support for an administrative solution. It also may have minimized the prospect that Secretary of Foreign Relations Bernardo Sepúlveda's conciliatory foreign policy approach might cause divisions within the armed forces or be a source of greater friction between the armed forces and the foreign policy elite. However, should the activities of the Guatemalan guerrillas again increase—as appears to have been happening since spring 1987—it may be expected that the military's security concerns and the potential for conflict over Mexico's foreign policy stance would be renewed.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>To understand better the nature of the military's concern over the southern border, it may be recalled that it was the members of the Mexican army who killed Guatemalan guerrilla leaders Marco Antonio Yon Sosa in 1970, and not the Guatemalan army. During the early 1980s, the Guatemalan government maintained its country's guerrillas used southern Mexico as a base for launching attacks on northern Guatemala. In 1984 it was reported that Guatemalan troops had violated Mexican territory in hot pursuit of fleeing guerrillas, a charge that gave rise to heightened tensions between the two countries, resulting in the refugee relocation program and a higher profile for the Mexican military in the area.

In sum, the willingness of the civilian leadership to recognize and address problems related to Mexican national security has helped prevent the development of possible schisms within the armed forces over foreign policy issues. While the military's role in formulating security policies has been nominal, its institutional needs relative to Mexico's security requirements are acknowledged, and the military has consequently continued to remain relatively disinterested in the conduct of Mexican foreign affairs. It may be expected that the military will continue to support the civilian leadership's foreign policy approach so long as it does not pursue policies that have a direct, negative impact on domestic security or that deviate from Mexico's longstanding foreign policy principles of self-determination and non-intervention in the affairs of other states.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

#### Present Influence, Interests, and Trends

The evidence clearly indicates that the military's political influence and institutional interests have changed during the 1980s. Nevertheless, these changes do not appear to have altered substantially the military's position in the political system. The military has not achieved a significantly expanded political role nor has it assumed responsibility for duties falling outside its previously assigned mission areas or traditionally under civilian domain. At the same time, however, the continuing pressures for change in the Mexican environment make it extremely unlikely that the position of the military in national life will not continue to become more pronounced. Indeed, the changes that have taken place between 1980 and 1987 point in a direction that indicates continuing increases in the military's political influence, expanding institutional interests, and, as a result, an overall improvement in its standing within the system. It is precisely these changes that, over time, will influence the course of civil-military relations and determine whether the military establishes an enhanced political role.

The military's overall gains in influence since 1980 have been limited by two principal factors: the perception of a reduced threat

on Mexico's southern border and the De la Madrid administration's deemphasis of military modernization—a program that was highly promoted under the López Portillo administration. The threat to security has been reduced by the establishment of a new military zone in the region, the relocation of refugees away from the border area, and the decreased activities of the Guatemalan guerrillas. Contrary to expectations at the beginning of De la Madrid's presidency, the military has not managed to convey the threat of the spillover of the Central American conflict into a rationale for establishing a formal role in national security policy making. It was unclear, however, whether the military's inability to do so was attributable to its being outmaneuvered by civilian decision makers or, given the reduced security concern, to a lack of institutional interest. Most analysts concede that such an achievement would significantly expand the military's political influence.

The deemphasis of the military's modernization is officially attributed to Mexico's continuing economic problems, which have been successfully presented by the De la Madrid administration as a justification for slowing modernization efforts. It is also likely due to the political leadership's recognition that had the program continued at its original pace, it would have led to significant gains in the military's political influence. This tension between institutional pressures for modernization and civilian efforts to ensure the military's subordination—as has been noted by Louis Goodman—represents a major theme in civil-military relations that is especially applicable to the dilemma confronting Mexico's civilian leaders.

The present administration has been fortunate in that a number of factors have limited the military's ability to find a rationale for revitalizing the program. The government's decision not to pursue an active international posture, for example, has undercut the rationale that Mexico's growing global role required the armed forces' modernization. Similarly, the absence of imminent external or domestic threats to political stability has not provided the foundation for the military to increase leverage derived from mission-related responsibilities. Even the military's role in the anti-narcotics effort—which, in effect, is labor intensive—has not provided a credible reason for revitalizing the program. Consequently, in the absence of pressing objective conditions necessitating modernization, the civilian leadership has been successful in slowing the program without generating resentment within the institution at its decision.

The areas in which the military presently has had success in exercising political influence appear circumscribed to responsibilities linked with the military institution. Two mission-related activities stand out in terms of the military's present national role. These include the military's responsibilities in the anti-narcotics program and, more recently, in the development of domestic military industry.

The increased activity in the anti-narcotics effort since 1985 has served as a means for the institution to protect against the erosion of its existing influence. The military's success in this area has enabled it to maintain its present influence, if not establish a

basis for expanding influence and obtaining greater resources in coming years. Of perhaps greater long-term significance is that the military leadership, in particular Secretary of National Defense Arévalo Gardoqui, has successfully used its role in the anti-narcotics program to increase the military's level of public visibility by increasing the institution's media coverage—a development that has met little or no public resistance and that is likely to enhance gradually its political influence.

Given the timing of the military's special, vigorous interest in the anti-narcotics effort, which corresponds with the second half of the De la Madrid sexenio, the priority assigned to the military's role in this endeavor may represent an administration-linked initiative that is comparable to the emphasis on the modernization program under López Portillo. This possibility makes it likely that attention to the military's role in this area could fade within the first few years after the new presidential administration takes office in 1988 as a new high priority issue takes its place. In the absence of strong motivating factors related to the institution's wellbeing, it is unlikely that the military would seriously resist a decline in official attention, and even less likely to do so were a new "priority" program offered in its stead.

Military industry reflects a comparatively new area of institutional interest, which received special emphasis in the 1987 defense budget allocations. Conceivably, the development of military industry could represent such a new "priority" program area for the next administration. It offers the opportunity for the military to

promote its influence and enhance its prestige in a manner that does not overtly threaten civilian control. The most immediate and obvious effect of the development of military industry is the reduced demand for some types of foreign equipment acquisitions and the associated reduced budgeting costs for military's acquisition of domestically produced items. Consequently, the exploitation of military's productive potential could enable the institution to modernize itself, a development that might serve to undermine civilian control by promoting the institution's economic independence.

Nevertheless, as with any industrial endeavor, the start-up costs are high and are recovered only slowly after production begins. In addition, short production runs—such as those for only the domestic market or for an uncertain export market, which is likely to be the longer term objective of the program—are most expensive. Clearly, the development of military industry to the point that it could compete with other international producers will require a major commitment of capital and, by necessity, will result in the diversion of funds available for other public sector projects. Given the continuing economic problems, the country can ill afford to redirect its scarce resources away from development projects and social services. Moreover, given De la Madrid's policy of supporting the privatization of parastatal firms, the recent emphasis on presumably state-managed military industry appears contradictory.

Nevertheless, the method in which the military's industrial development may be pursued is uncertain. In the past, most

domestic items for the military have been produced by programs assigned to state-run industries. Should the military be permitted to contract out programs to the private sector, it would result in increased contacts between the military and businessmen that might, because of the traditionally antagonism between the private sector and the government, undermine military support for the ruling political elite.

On the other hand, if development is pursued through the public sector—as in the past—the diversion of funds from more socially beneficial projects could become an issue that pits the military's interest against the common weal and, hence, generates public opposition. Clearly, the determining factor will be the speed at which the government allows the military to pursue this effort, which hopefully would be slow enough for all its implications to be carefully weighed.

In terms of responding to the military's institutional interests, some minimal concessions have been made by the civilian leadership that were not granted to other sectors. There has been no indication that these concessions—for example, the authorization for increased manpower or the provision of improved compensation and benefits—were made in response to overt pressures or ultimatums issued by the military. Instead, they appear to have been made because of the political leadership's desire to accommodate legitimate institutional needs as much as possible—an attitude that is based on the realization that a perception of civilian neglect of the institution could undermine the objective of maintaining civilian control.

In terms of the civilian leadership's interest in responding to institutional needs, the area of compensation and benefits and pressures for force expansion are likely to represent a future source of tension in civil-military relations. From the perspective of the institution, the organizational desire to continue military expansion may be seen as a legitimate aim. The civilian leadership, on the other hand, may be less willing in the future to accede to the military's interests because of the associated personnel costs.

In the past, the government appears to have used the compensation provided military personnel as a means to ensure their loyalty as well as some degree of civilian control over the institution. Manpower expansion, then, implies that the costs of maintaining the same level of control will increase and, to the extent that these costs reduce the resources available for non-military spending, more controversial. It is unclear how the government can respond to this institutional interest while at the same time not permitting the costs of force expansion to be translated directly into budget increases.

Mexican demographic patterns, which suggest a continuing increase in the number of young adults entering military service for the foreseeable future, mitigate against the prospects for an easy resolution of this dilemma. While the De la Madrid administration has allowed moderate military expansion, the pressures created by increasing personnel costs, aggravated by inflation, make it likely that the government will need to contain this growth or otherwise address this problem in the near future.

Short of forcing widespread retirements or imposing manpower ceilings—which would be unpopular with the military—the government's obligation to increase expenditures will increase along with the size of the armed forces. In addition, the civilian leadership's failure to provide adequate military spending increases or to authorize necessary interim raises could lead to greater political activism among lower and middle-ranking military officers, who tend to be less institutionally insulated from economic shocks. Consequently, the civilian leadership which seeks to limit defense expenditures may find no easy solutions. The most successful approach for the civilian leadership will likely be a gradualist policy—wherein force expansion continues slowly, but not at a pace commensurate with the expansion in population growth.

Another apparent institutional interest has been the recent improvement in relations and increased contacts between the United States and Mexican militaries, a development that has been viewed as a capping achievement by most U.S. officials. Since members of the political elite have consistently blocked closer bilateral military ties during the post-war era, the present status of relations suggests the military leadership's successful use of political influence, given that the Mexican president's assent was likely needed before closer ties were established. In addition, given the historical record, it is likely that the establishment of close U.S.-Mexican military relations is and will continue to be a source of tension within the bureaucracy because of the strong opposition by some members of the political elite.



Morris Janowitz has described the applicability of the demonstration effect in terms of the impact on foreign militaries of ties with the United States. He has noted that as a result of such ties "pro-American loyalties" tend to develop as well as close personal bonds between individual officers. It is precisely this effect that elicits the greatest concern among many members of the civilian elite because of its potential to compromise Mexican national interest.

Presumably, the transference of institutional norms regarding the development of a professional military that remains aloof from involvement in national politics would also be a product of the demonstration effect. The record in Latin America over the past four decades, however, shows that such has necessarily not been the effect of close bilateral military ties. It appears significant that Mexico—the only major Latin American nation that did not sign a bilateral military assistance agreement during the 1950s—has not until the 1980s had to grapple with pressures to dedicate greater attention and resources to the military and has not been faced with a serious military challenge to the political leadership's authority. While it may be somewhat difficult to single out definitively U.S. military ties as a causal factor, serious consideration should be given to its impact on civil-military relations. Contrary to what is widely believed, it appears that the product of close U.S.-military relations is an unexpected variation of the demonstration effect—whereby the national political leadership comes to be viewed by the military's leaders through the lens of U.S. norms, prompting the development

of reformist tendencies and the broader politicization of the military institution.

It should also be pointed out that the United States' desire to ensure the security of its immediate southern neighbor would likely extend to support for modernizing and strengthening the military institution. The full implications of this U.S. policy interest need to be considered in terms of its influence on the Mexican military as well as the potential political repercussions in Mexico that such influence might cause. For example, it would be especially damaging to U.S.-Mexican political relations and to Mexican civil-military relations were the United States perceived to be lobbying the military to support its policies before the Mexican Government. Similarly, it would also be damaging were the military to seek to use U.S. support for its modernization to gain concessions from the political leadership.

Given the fundamental and nationalistic issues at stake in the opposition to these military ties, the domestic political pressures in the coming years presently appear to mandate against the prospect that this relationship will become closer. At the same time, however, should a more conservative individual assume the national leadership, these ties may be pursued regardless of what they symbolize—a policy stance that has uncertain implications for domestic political affairs. Were polarization to develop as a result of domestic alignments over such relations, U.S. ties could lead to political destabilization—precisely the outcome that both the Mexican Government and U.S. policy planners seek to avoid.

### Concluding Observations

The decade of the 1980s appears to have marked the beginning of a new phase in civil-military relations in which the military is seeking to improve its standing in the political system. Existing trends make it difficult to imagine that the military's political influence will not continue to grow, and its political role expand. Clearly, given Mexico's international prominence and its position as a hemispheric leader, a policy supporting limited and gradual modernization of the armed forces is appropriate. Military expansion for the sake of military expansion, however, will inevitably be destabilizing.

Efforts to modernize and develop the institution must be balanced against other social and political interests and priorities, including a realistic assessment of the security threats the institution might have to confront and of the adequacy of existing resources. It is equally important that the civilian leadership convey to the military an understanding that such an approach in military policy is in its institutional interest and for the benefit of Mexican society as a whole.

Gains in the military's political influence will likely result primarily from the civilian leadership's recognition of and response to the military's institutional needs. Only marginal influence is likely to be derived from the direct efforts of military personnel—such as through personal contacts or appointment to political posts—to improve their political standing. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that the government's failure to respond to legitimate

institutional needs could also result in the military's politicization, either out of resentment or in response to the perceived need to protect the institution. Consequently, the burden is on the civilian leadership to maintain an equilibrium in limiting some institutional needs and responding to others, while at the same time avoiding the perception of either catering to or neglecting the military institution.

The civilian leadership's ability to maintain authority over the military rests with the strength of Mexico's political institutions, in particular the PRI, and with the maintenance of the government's legitimacy. Just as the party organization was critical in helping reduce the military's political role, it continues to represent a key element in ensuring civilian supremacy over the armed forces by maintaining the unity of the political elite and reducing the possibilities for the development of conflicting political allegiances among military personnel. In turn, the legitimacy of the system in part rests on the leadership's ability to promote the PRI as being sufficiently broad and flexible so as to guarantee that the interests of all of Mexican society are represented in the organization.

At present, the civilian leadership finds itself challenged to maintain a status quo in civil-military relations amidst a rapidly changing environment. Extraordinary social and related economic pressures will challenge the government's ability to maintain the legitimacy of the present system. Likewise, the pressures for opening the system to political competition—which have been especially intense over the past year—may be expected to increase if economic problems continue.

While the military's leaders likely recognize that at present no political party other than the PRI has sufficient national organization and support to govern, the institution will continue to be subjected to pressures by civilian groups to respond to their calls for democracy. Should the military enter the political arena in the near future, it would likely occur in response to the PRI's eroding legitimacy and continuing pressures by outside groups, whereby the military would carry out a preemptive coup, or even establish a civil-military coalition, in a vain effort to maintain stability and, sadly, national unity.

The military's leaders continue to have no serious interest in ruling the country. On the other hand, neither is the military an apolitical institution. It clearly supports the present political leadership and, if challenged, it would act to preserve the existing system. The military continues, in effect, to fulfill its role as the guardian of the political leadership and, by extension, of the principles of the Revolution. Despite the institution's apparent willingness from time to time to act unilaterally to put down challenges to public order, which could arguably be called fulfillment of its "moderator" role, it has not pursued efforts to establish a collaborative role with the political leadership, even in the area of national security.

While trends suggest that the military's political role will gradually expand, all indications presently point to a continuation of the armed forces' present guardian role. At the same time, however, rapid systemic change—brought on by major threats to

security or public order—could again speed up the process. It is, for example, not inconceivable that the denouement of sustained and violent political turmoil would be the replacement of the civilian leadership by the armed forces hierarchy. It is unclear whether the continued deterioration of social and economic conditions might give way to such turmoil, an eventuality that is the subject of wide speculation in Mexico.

In the absence of overt political or security challenges, the burden will be on the civilian leadership to maintain the careful balance in responding to the military's institutional needs as well as to maintain unity within its own political ranks. Civilian success in these efforts will help ensure the continuing ascendance of the political leadership over the military institution. In contrast to the civilian leaders of many other Latin American governments, the Mexican leadership is fortunate in that this burden is eased by the predisposition of the armed forces in its favor, by the existence of the unifying "ideology" of the Mexican Revolution, and—not insignificantly—by the military's continuing disinterest in political affairs. Despite the important changes that have affected the military during the present decade, so long as the political leadership maintains itself intact and responds in a measured way to the needs of the military institution, the advantage in the civil-military equation will be on the side of the civilian government.

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