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The Importance of Strong Governmental Institutions in Military Subordination: Mexico and Argentina, a Comparative Study

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Abstract

This paper examines the history of civil military relations in Mexico and Argentina in an attempt to understand why Mexico was able to subordinate its military following the fall of the Porfírian military regime, while Argentina experienced decades of military intervention into the civilian sphere. It argues that strong governmental and political institutions in Mexico were the key to subordinating the Mexican military to civilian control, while patterns of populist political movements in Argentina hampered the formation of strong governmental institutions that would have enabled the subordination of the military to civilian control.

Introduction

Max Weber famously defined the state as "a human community that successfully claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory."[1] This definition necessarily grants great power and influence to the armed forces within the system of the state, as without them no government could hope to claim any sort of monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force within its territory. Whether or not one agrees with the strict Weberian conception of statehood, or believes that the matter is of a more complex nature, it is impossible to deny his conclusions about the importance of the control of legitimate violence that a functional state must possess. Yet in the vast majority of states today, and throughout recent history, the armed forces have not been both the dominant political actors in their respective countries as well as the guardians of the monopoly over legitimate violence. One of the most central questions facing state makers, political scientists, and governments throughout the world is how and why a country's military can and should be subordinated to civilian control. History has shown us the disastrous consequences for societies whose militaries intervene in politics, and no one can legitimately claim that a society can benefit more from having a military government than a functioning civilian government with a fully subordinated military. The question of how a

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[1] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 1919, 1, http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf.

civilian government can subordinate its military remains important and topical, yet the answers for effective subordination likely lie within the annals of history, which certainly contain a plethora of attempts at military subordination, both successful and not.

The 20th century was a tumultuous one for governments in Latin America. During this time period no less than 38 successful coup d'état's occurred in the region, most of them with the active participation of the military. Military intervention in government was so common that, other than Mexico, every single country in Latin America experienced some sort of direct military intervention in government from the 1930's onward.[2] Following the overthrow of the Porfirio Díaz regime in 1910, and the 10 years of anarchy known as the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican military was gradually subordinated to civilian control, and no military faction would even attempt to wrest power from civilian hands for the rest of Mexico's modern history.

On the flip side, Argentina, which at one point in its history seemed destined to become the dominant economic power in Latin America, and in some minds, the world, experienced a century full of political turmoil and instability that was chock full of military interventions and usurpations of the civilian government's authority. This cycle of military intervention in government culminated in the military junta that overthrew Isabel Perón's civilian government in 1976 and tragically resulted in the clandestine disappearance and murder of approximately 30,000 Argentineans. It was only after the horrors of this final military junta that Argentina was finally able to establish a consistent pattern of civilian rule that has continued through today. What differentiated the experiences of Mexico and

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[2] Rodric A. Camp, "Groups and the State," in *Politics in Mexico*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 2014), 146.

Argentina; why was Mexico able to successfully subordinate its military to civilian rule, while Argentina failed repeatedly in this effort?

The story starts with the differentiating histories of the two countries. Following the Mexican Revolution and the removal of the Porfirian military dictatorship, a military government was incompatible with the desires of Mexican society and the ideals of the new regime. An institutionally strong government was created, led by a super presidency to which all other organs and institutions of government, including the armed forces, would eventually subordinate themselves. Helped by strong leadership, Mexico was able to establish a strong single party political system that would assume control of the Presidential succession process from the military, and further remove the armed forces from the political sphere. Bolstered by a lack of any strong, consistent subversive threat to the government, Mexico was able to manage external influences that under other circumstances could have pressured a military intervention in government. Argentina's history is littered with military coups and failures of democratically elected governments to succeed in establishing strong political traditions and institutions. The history of military intervention in Argentina is so strong that even their most famous democratically elected leader, Juan Domingo Perón, initially came to power as part of a military coup. The people of Argentina became so desensitized to the idea of military intervention in government that many of them actually called for a military takeover to help restore order to the increasingly fractionalized and polarized Argentinean society in the years immediately preceding the final military junta of 1976.

The institutional power of the presidency in Mexico enabled the Mexican military to feel secure as its influence was slowly removed from the political arena and it became completely subordinate to civilian rule. Argentina's rulers used populist techniques to secure support for their candidacies and governments, creating a political environment where the government's legitimacy was based on the power of particular rulers and their ideologies, with no strong government institutions to back them up. This allowed the military to become the most or one of the most important political actors in Argentina throughout the 20th century due to its institutional strength, support from various oligarchical sectors of society, and a willingness to interfere in politics, which made military intervention in government a constant threat or reality. The differing historical experiences of Mexico and Argentina determined each country's respective abilities to develop strong governmental and political institutions. These were the key determinants of each country's capacity to subordinate their militaries to civilian control, as well as the civilian government's capability to establish itself as the dominant power holder over the legitimate use of force within society. It will be suggested that this factor could also be shown to be applicable in similar situations throughout the world.

The first section of this study will examine the general literature on civil military relations. It will develop a framework in which we can then contextualize and examine the historical events that resulted in the differing manifestations of civil military relations in Mexico and Argentina. The second section will examine Argentina's pattern of populist political movements which prompted repeated military interventions in government throughout Argentinean history, and will show that this pattern prevented the formation of strong civilian political institutions, which, in tandem with a highly polarized society,

culminated in the final military junta of 1976 that would forever change Argentinean society. In the third section, I will look at Mexico's socio-political history and show how after the Mexican Revolution the development of an institutionally strong civilian government subordinate to the office of the presidency resulted in the effective subordination of the Mexican military to civilian control. The next section provide a comparison of the two countries governments' and militaries' reactions to subversive threats within society as a method for understanding the importance in strong governmental institutions in allowing Mexico's civilian government to subordinate its armed forces, while the threat of military intervention in Argentina was ever present until years after the final restoration of Argentinean democracy. Finally, I will briefly present the case that these conclusions are likely not applicable solely to the Mexican and Argentinean cases, but that these patterns can be seen throughout the world in countries that effectively subordinated their militaries to civilian control such as India, China, and others. The strength of the governmental institutions in Mexico and Argentina was the most important factor in determining each country's ability to subordinate their military to civilian control due to the ability of these institutions to create a stable political sphere that the military could trust to react appropriately to perceived threats, develop an environment in which the military could be depoliticized and professionalized, and remove the incentive for militaries to directly intervene through their capability to effectively rule and transition power legitimately when the ruling group is failing in its duties.

Civil-Military Relations Theories

While militaries in the modern world usually occupy a subservient role to their

civilian governments, this is not an intuitive position for them to hold. For most of human

history, the control of a country or region was determined by whoever could maintain and

control the largest army to fight off other would be rulers. But with a growing need for

complex political organizations, and the shift away from feudal systems of government,

new theories were needed to understand the military's acceptance of a subservient role to

the emerging civilian governments. Samuel Huntington famously described two types of

civilian control in the modern world, subjective and objective control. Subjective civilian

control is the maximization of the power of certain civilian groups over the military such

that the military is dependent on these groups for power, influence, and funding within the

state structure.[3] In a state where the civilian sector maintains subjective control over the

military, different civilian groups compete for power and influence within the armed

forces.[4] Subjective control denies the existence of an independent military sphere, and

maximizes the power of particular governmental institutions, social classes, and

constitutional forms.[5]   However, this is not to say that subjective control can only exist in

modern western democracies, as it can be seen in all types of governments including

various types of autocratic states in which the ruler or rulers are citizens and not military

men.[6] At its most base level, subjective civilian control means that the military is not

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[3] Samuel P. Huntington. "Power, Professionalism, and Ideology: Civil-Military Relations in Theory," in *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-military Relations*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 80-81.

[4] Ibid., 81.
[5] Ibid., 81-83.

[6] Ibid., 82.

subordinate to the state and its interests, but rather to group or personal interests that exist within the state apparatus.[7]

With the recent move in Western industrialized democracies towards the autonomous professionalization of the military, and an acknowledgment of a separate sector in society that is the military class, a different type of civilian control is needed to describe the emerging form of military subordination. Objective civilian control is based in the maximization of military professionalism. It militarizes the military, thus making it a tool of the state, rather than of any particular interest group within the state.[8] An objectively controlled military should have autonomy over the development of its professional apparatus, though its education should remain parallel to the goals and interests of the state that it defends, while its policy objectives should be determined by the civilian government.[9] Objective control is preferable to subjective control, as it reduces military political power to the lowest possible level, while still making the military an effective defender of national interests.

The objective control model of civil military relations is generally considered possible only within highly developed Western industrial democracies. In any type of system other than this, it is likely that the military serves a particular interest group whether that is a political party, particular social class, or a particular ruler, rather than the state itself. However, it has recently been argued that with the changing nature of conflict in the modern world, the objective model of control that features a completely apolitical military is no longer possible or desirable. The equilibrium model of civilian control,

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[7]Ibid., 85.

[8] Samuel P. Huntington, *Power, Professionalism, and Ideology*, 83.

[9] Ibid.

proposed by Sarkesian, believes that modern militaries are forced by the geo-political

realities of the world to understand and engage in, at minimal capacity, political decisions

with which the military sphere has relevant knowledge or experience. In the equilibrium

model, the armed forces exist for the sole purpose of defending and supporting the

democratic political-social order, which is understood and guided by their high level of

professionalism based on the morals and ethics of the state they represent.[10] Yet this

professionalism can and indeed must now include political elements and understanding, as

politics are key in developing modern military policy and understanding the effects that

military action can have on the socio-political environment of the world.[11] This model is a

reaction to the changing nature of threats for highly developed democracies throughout the

world, and is likely a better descriptor for civil military relations in developed democracies

in the modern era.

However, not all countries in the world are democracies. Civil military relationships

in states with dictatorial rulers, one-party systems, or communist systems are in many

senses different from those in Western democracies. In personal, non-military

dictatorships, the ruler often personally controls the armed forces though cronies in the

military, while simultaneously factionalizing the armed forces to prevent one sector from

gaining enough power to seize control.[12] The military is likely used as the dictator's

primary mechanism for maintaining power, and thus wields considerable political

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[10] S. C. Sarkesian, "Military Professionalism and Civil-Military Relations in the West," *International Political Science Review*, 1981, 290-91, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1601063.

[11] Ibid., 294.

[12] Samuel Huntington, "Reforming Civil-Military Relations," in *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

influence as well. In one party states, the military is often incorporated into the party system, and gives its loyalty to the party and party interests, rather than to the state.[13] Communist governments have a similar system, in which the military is an instrument of the party that is necessary for bringing the party to power, and then keeping it there once rule has been established.[14] Most high-ranking military officers are in fact communist party members, and many also hold important positions on high-ranking party boards.[15] Thus, the party and the army exist in symbiosis, neither would be an effective ruler nor tool without the support of its counterpart. All of these systems can be seen as possessing varying levels of subjective control of their militaries, due to the military's allegiance to various special interests groups rather than to the state itself.

In an ideal world it seems as though all militaries would be objectively controlled by their civilian governments, thus eliminating all possibility of intervention in the political system. Yet this is clearly not the case in the real world, as military coups and interventions have happened fairly frequently throughout history. Why do militaries choose to intervene, and what societal pressures prompt them to follow this path? One major reason for intervention is the existence of inadequate or malfunctioning state institutions.[16] This could be manifested in a government that is unable to effectively rule, or a fractionalized society in which the state as an institution seems threatened by the extreme polarization of society. The other reason that militaries may choose to intervene

[13] Samuel Huntington, *Reforming Civil Military Relations*, 4.

[14] David L. Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations," in *Modernizing China's Military Progress, Problems, and Prospects*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 12.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Deborah L. Norden, "Democracy and the Armed Forces," in *Military Rebellion in Argentina between Coups and Consolidation*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 13.

is to support a particular sector of society whose interests are threatened by the government that currently holds power.[17] These interest groups could emanate from within the armed forces themselves, or some outside group who manages to co-opt the military's support for their cause.

Both of these scenarios by themselves are not enough to spur the military's entrance into the political sphere. As has already been noted, the level of professionalism within a military is key to its decision to intervene or not. However, the type of military professionalization is also fundamental in this regard. If a highly professional military's definition of security includes adversaries of both foreign and domestic natures, the professional military may justify its intervention in the civilian sector as a way to protect the state against internal enemies.[18] In the second half of the 20th century many Latin American militaries justified their intervention in the political sphere as a way to defend their countries against an internal communist or subversive threat.

How the military chooses to pursue its professional autonomy from civilian institutions is essential in determining whether a military is a threat to intervene or not. When militaries assume offensive attempts at obtaining autonomy, these attempts are politically guided in nature and are designed to limit the civilian government's power and influence within the armed forces. Offensive attempts to secure autonomy often lead to situations of direct confrontation with the civilian government.[19] If the military pursues

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[17] Deborah L. Norden, *Democracy and the Armed Forces*, 13.
[18] Ibid., 17.

[19] David Pion-Berlin, "Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America," *Comparative Politics* Vol. 25, No. 1 (1992): 85, http://www.jstor.org/stable/422098.

defensive attempts to guard their professional functions from unqualified outsiders, the

result is generally an increased level of professionalization and modernization, which

reduces the risk of military intervention.[20] Other societal and historical factors also remain

important in understanding the motivations behind military intervention. Societies with

greater political violence, histories of military intervention in government, and military

training from foreign governments suffer from increased chances of political participation

by the armed forces.[21] On the contrary, countries with higher levels of participation in civil

society, high levels of economic development and industrialization, a strong middle class,

and strong civilian political institutions have a lower probability of military intervention in

government.[22]

It seems obvious that societies in conflict have a higher chance of military

intervention in government, mainly due to the destabilizing nature of intra-societal

conflicts. But what makes societies more or less prone to conflict? The cross cutting ties

theory of conflict believes that societies with more interaction among divided sectors of

society are less prone to conflict than those with entrenched divisions that serve to

reinforce each other.[23] For example, a society where there is reasonable access to

education across economic classes, and where different classes of people are dispersed

throughout the country, would be less prone to violent intra-societal conflict than a state

where all the poor live in rural areas with poor access to education, while the upper class

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[20] David Pion-Berlin, *Military Autonomy*, 85.

[21] Robert D. Putnam, "Toward Explaining Military Intervention in Latin American Politics," in Armies and Politics in Latin America. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976), 90.

[22] Ibid., 89.

[23] Leslie F. Anderson, "Of Wild and Cultivated Politics: Conflict and Democracy in Argentina," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2002: 101. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20020149.

lives in urban localities and are highly educated. The developmental theory of conflict

believes that the more developed state institutions are, the less prone to conflict a society

is. Development in this theory is not defined as democracy, but rather as the relative

strength of these institutions that explains the existence or lack of conflict within a

society.[24] Many of these theories accurately describe many of the different situations

present in Mexico and Argentina throughout their histories, and help to explain the

differing relationships that each country has experienced between their armed forces and

civilian governments.

Argentina

In 1815 Simon Bolivar, leader of the South American wars of independence against

Spain, predicted "en Buenos Aires habrá un gobierno central en que los militares se lleven

la primacía por consecuencia de sus divisions intestinas y guerras externas."[25] (In Buenos

Aires there will be a central government lead by the military as a result of its internal

divisions and external wars.) This prediction was startlingly accurate, and in many ways

perfectly described what the Argentinean political system would experience until a stable

democratic government finally emerged after the fall of the 1976 military junta. Starting

with the Juan Manuel de Rosas military dictatorship that began in 1835, Argentina would

experience a century and a half of political flux in which different political factions vied for

power, and prevented the development of strong political institutions that were harmful to

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[24] Leslie F. Anderson, *Of Wild and Cultivated Politics*, 102.
[25] Simon Bolivar to Henry Cullen, "La Carta de Jamaica," 1815,
http://www.elhistoriador.com.ar/documentos/independencia/bolivar_carta_jamaica.php.

their own self-serving interests. The dearth of these institutions encouraged the army,

which had a strong tradition of intervention, to insert itself as a political actor that was

willing to intervene anytime it felt that Argentinean society, or its own interests within

society were threatened. The trajectory of Argentinean political history is key for

understanding the inability of the Argentinean government to subordinate the military to

civilian control, and will be examined in this section.

In the early 1800's Argentinean society was extremely divided politically, physically,

and culturally. The population was separated between those who lived in Buenos Aires

and its surrounding area, and those who lived away from the city in the provinces. This

geographic gap was also representative of a strong political divide between the Unitarians,

who lived mainly in Buenos Aires and wanted to unify the nation under a strong central

government, and the Federalists who lived primarily in the provinces and hoped for

greater autonomy and independence for themselves.[26] These divisions were made worse

by the strong cultural split between the higher educated Unitarians and the more rural

Federalists who were often seen as "crude" by the Unitarians.[27] When Rosas took control

of the country these conflicts were still prevalent in society, but rather than working them

out through constructive political discourse, Rosas began a process of clandestine violence

against his opponents, designed to force their views out of society. Violent bands of

Federalists would roam the streets at night; murdering or imprisoning suspected

Unitarians without any semblance of due process of law.[28] Though Rosas initially denied

his government's involvement in the violence, it quickly reached a level where denial was

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[26] Leslie F. Anderson, *Of Wild and Cultivated Politics*, 104.

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 105.

no longer possible. At this point, Rosas stopped feigning ignorance, and simply portrayed the violence as better than any alternative, normalizing the idea that clandestine violence could be used as a viable political tool.[29]

Rosas ruled by violent force, and through the strength of his character alone. The stability of his government was entirely dependent on its leader's personal political strength, which prevented the formation of any strong political institutions. This type of personalistic rule would be copied in subsequent governments, even after a democratic system had been established. The Saez Peña voting law of 1912 made universal male suffrage legal, and allowed for the election of Hipólito Yrigoyen from 1916-1922 and 1928-1930.[30] Yrigoyen used his popular support and electoral victory to govern in a near authoritarian manner, negating the purpose of any established political or governmental systems.[31] The strength of his government was not based on the support of any party, but was based in the following he was able to cultivate due to his personal strength as a leader and ruler. His government's authority to rule was not grounded in any government institutions. As Yrigoyen's word was law, there was no need for a strong system of government to legitimize his policies. This personalistic system of rule extended to his attempts to subordinate the military as he promoted officers based on personal ties and affiliations rather than for professional reasons.[32] This undermined the value of military professionalism and encouraged and standardized the participation of officers in politics, even if it was not direct participation.

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[29] Leslie F. Anderson, *Of Wild and Cultivated Politics,* 107.

[30] Deborah L. Norden, "The Political Roles of the Argentine Military: A Historical Overview," in *Military Rebellion in Argentina between Coups and Consolidation*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 22.

[31] Leslie F. Anderson, *Of Wild and Cultivated Politics,* 112.

[32] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 22.

The growing power of the US as the world's principal exporter during and after WWI, and the ensuing depression that blindsided the world led most countries to pursue protectionist economic strategies. Argentina found itself unable to compete in the global marketplace, and Yrigoyen found his government losing support and legitimacy quickly.[33] As Yrigoyen's government was based solely in the political strength and figure of Yrigoyen himself, no reliable political institutions or parties existed for the public, and specifically the ever-restless Argentinean oligarchy, to express their discontent with Yrigoyen's government or to challenge his rule in a legitimate fashion. With no viable means to create an opposition to Yrigoyen's rule, his government and his ideology were thrown out of power in 1930 by a military coup led by General Uriburu, and supported by the Argentinean oligarchy, which that would set the precedent for military intervention in government for the next 50 years.[34]

From 1930 until 1943, various illegitimate governments representing the will of the conservative elite came to power through fraudulent electoral practices. No strong political parties or forum for true political discourse and change arose during this time period leaving a power gap as soon as each government failed or lost legitimacy. This period came to be known as the infamous decade due to the rampant corruption, and bad policies of the governments. In 1943, a military coup removed Ramón Castillo from government and a group of military leaders took control, hoping to fix the ailing

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[33] Joseph S. Tulchin, "The Origins of Misunderstanding: United States- Argentine Relations," in *Argentina Between the Great Powers 1939-46*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 46-47.

[34] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 21.

Argentinean society.[35] Among the military leaders who took control was General Juan

Domingo Perón, who in a short time would consolidate his power and become the best-

known and most polarizing figure of Argentinean politics even to this day.

The military coup that brought Perón to power was led by a coalition of various

factions within the armed forces, the most powerful of which was the Grupo de Oficiales

Unidos (GOU) who were controlled by Perón himself. The principal motivations for the

coup were to guard Argentina against communism, a fear of involvement in WWII, and,

ironically, a resentment of the intrusion of the Army into politics.[36] Privately members of

the GOU also expressed concerns with a need for social justice and wealth redistribution

reform efforts, though these beliefs were not representative of the armed forces as a

whole.[37] As one of the principal leaders of the coup, Perón also used his position as the

head of the National Labor Department to mobilize the urban working class, and force the

labor unions to be loyal to him as a political figure and ally.[38] In 1946 he was elected to the

presidency with 54 percent of the vote, mainly due to his promises of an improved future

for the Argentinean working class, and his perceived ability to actually follow through on

these promises during the short time he had been head of the Labor Department.

As President, Perón used and cultivated his figure as the workingman's leader that

had brought him to the presidency. Along with his beautiful wife Eva, he delivered

speeches to massive crowds of screaming Argentinean workers, using populist rhetoric to

mobilize the masses in support for his programs. Peronism had many early successes

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[35] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 23.

[36] Ibid., 24.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 25.

improving conditions for workers, which bolstered Perón's cult of personality, and allowed him to consolidate his power with support from the masses.[39] While Perón's social and economic policies felt threatening to many sectors of society, it was his consolidation of power that was most damaging for Argentina's future. Many anti-peronist opposition parties accused Perón of forming, or attempting to form, a totalitarian government under the guise of a liberal democratic one with huge popular support. In reality, Perón's government never became totalitarian in the way that its opposition claimed, though there was significant censorship and repression of opposition movements and groups.[40] As Perón's power and influence grew, not even his beloved unions were immune to repression if they refused to fall in line with his mandates. Opposition parties never grew strong due to internal fractionalization, in addition to this repression and censorship from the Peronist government.   Perón used his immense popular support as legitimation for his policies and for further consolidation of power, rather than to form an institutionally strong government, the strength of whose institutions could have legitimized Peronism outside of Perón's personal power and influence.

As Perón further developed and strengthened his cult of personality and slowly removed his opposition from the official political spheres, he was paving the way for the armed forces to force their way back into the Argentinean political scene. Through censorship, Perón negated opposition parties the ability to compete effectively in the electoral system, and forced members of the opposition to express their discontent through

[39] Jorge A. Nállim, "In the Shadow of Peronism: Marginalization, Continuities, and Changes, 1946–1955," in *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930–1955*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 155. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh51x.11.

[40] Ibid., 156.

different means, creating an environment in which it seemed as though Peronism would remain the dominant political philosophy with Perón as its leader without challenge or debate unless someone could impose a switch. Through his cultivation of a populist political movement, Perón tied the success of his government directly to himself and never allowed or needed a set of strong governmental institutions to support his policies. Thus the successes and failures of Peronism were tied directly to Perón himself, and there was no opportunity for legitimate political turnover or change even within the Peronist party. The lack of a legitimate avenue to support political turnover strengthened the divisions within Argentina, and as the economy under Perón's government began to struggle, the anti-peronist factions organized a way outside of the legal political spheres to express their discontent.

The 1955 coup that overthrew Perón contradictorily cited a wish to return to the "republican way of life" that they felt Perón had forsaken.[41] It was supported by a long-standing tradition of military intervention in government as a legitimate method for expressing discontent with those in power, and a fear of Perón's ever growing power and influence. The new military government excluded Peronist parties from all future elections, and looked to fix the failing economy through controlling inflation and increasing exports.[42] However, their attempts were largely unsuccessful, and in 1958, elections were held under the supervision of the armed forces without a Peronist candidate on the ballot. Despite his prescription from the election, Perón supposedly made a deal with the candidate Arturo Frondizi to continue some Peronist policies in return for Perón's electoral

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[41] Guillermo O'Donnell, "Modernization and Military Coups: Theory, Comparisons, and the Argentine Case," in *Armies and Politics in Latin America*. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976), 205.

[42] Ibid., 199.

support, which brought Frondizi's to victory.[43] This not only hurt Frondizi in the eyes of

the armed forces, but made it nearly impossible for Argentina to move towards developing

any sort of strong political institutions outside the personalist influence of Perón.

Frondizi's government did not fare much better than its predecessors. He was largely

conciliatory in his stance towards the armed forces, granting any wishes they had as soon

as the threat of a coup presented itself.[44]

This threat finally manifested itself after Frondizi allowed the Peronists to compete

in the 1962 election and win despite the absence of Perón. Frondizi was replaced by the

military with Arturo Illia, who attempted to create a certain level of separation of politics

and the military by accepting the leadership of General Onganía as commander of the

armed forces, and allowing for autonomy in military promotions, removing civilian politics

from the equation.[45] Whether or not this would have begun the process of

professionalization and subordination of the military became irrelevant as the economy

began to lag, and Illia's support in the military dropped considerably. When Illia made the

decision to allow Peronism to compete in the upcoming elections he was removed from

power and replaced with a military government headed by General Onganía.[46] As with

Frondizi, Illia never had a chance to establish any sort of meaningful political institutions,

largely because of the constant threat of a military coup to his government. The public's

continued support for Perón never made the army feel comfortable enough to remove itself

from the political sphere, and certainly not to allow Peronism to become a legitimate

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[43] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 28.

[44] Ibid., 33.
[45] Ibid., 38.
[46] Ibid., 39.

opposition party to the civilian governments they had installed. The weak political

institutions and lack of a legal Peronist party meant that each democratic government's

legitimacy and authority was severely limited, and thus the military was forced to remain a

political actor in order to legitimize and help with the functioning of these governments.

The military saw itself as the glue that held society together and protected it from dangers,

and this vision prevented the formation of a set of institutions that could have removed the

military from this role.

The 1966 coup that dispatched Illia's government was further reaching than the

decade's earlier coups. At this point, Argentinean society had become so desensitized to

military intervention in the political system that many people actually supported the coup

in the hopes that the military could help stop the growing social disorder and get the

country back on the right path.[47] Unlike earlier coups, this intervention was led by the joint

high command from all three branches of the military. More importantly, its aim was not

temporary, the junta wanted to permanently transform Argentinean state and society by

instituting new political, economic, and social structures.[48] The junta instituted a vertical

militarized state based on the national security doctrine, which considered the principal

threat to Argentina's security to be from an internal enemy. Accordingly, all political

parties, not just Peronism, were banned under the new government, various state

monitoring systems were set up to watch over the Argentinean population, and the junta

dramatically reformed Argentina's civil, criminal, and commercial codes, the first time a

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[47] Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Military Coups*, 211.

[48] Patrice J. McSherry, "The First National Security State and Its Consequences," in *Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 60.

military government had directly interfered with these statutes.[49] Left with no legitimate

legal way to protest the government and supported by an exiled Perón, radical left-wing

Peronist ideologies emerged, with groups such as the "Montoneros" and the "ERP" waging

guerrilla terrorist wars against the military government.[50] This political violence, which

was reciprocated towards the guerrillas by the military government, culminated in the

kidnapping and murder of General Aramburu in 1969 by the Montoneros, which exhibited

how polarized and unstable Argentina was under the military junta.[51]

By this point in Argentinean history, the main fear of the ruling military leaders was

no longer Peronism, but rather communism and internal subversion that had the potential

to destabilize society and disrupt the established social order.[52] As the economic situation

began to worsen, the military government started to lose the legitimacy it had possessed.

During the military's tenure of government no strong governmental or political institutions

ever had the chance to develop due to the prescription of all political parties and the

military's ability to enforce its laws without any sort of institutional support. Argentinean

society was the most polarized it had ever been, and political violence was constantly

threatening to destabilize the military government's capacity to control society. With

practically no strong institutions in existence, the only viable option for a military trying to

remove itself from a worsening situation before it lost all legitimacy was to allow for the

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[49] Patrice J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 60-62.

[50] Ibid., 65.

[51] Maristella Svampa, "El populismo imposible y sus actors 1973-1976," in *Nueva Historia Argentina 1955-1976*. 3. http://maristellasvampa.net/archivos/ensayo25.pdf.

[52] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 41-42.

return of a man who's figure alone had enough political capital and support within society to potentially calm the skyrocketing tensions and restore order.[53]

Perón returned to a nearly impossible situation in Argentina. Things were so bad that when Perón landed in Ezeiza airport in Buenos Aires, a day that was supposed to be filled with joy over the return of the long exiled leader, the radical Peronist right began firing indiscriminately at the gathered crowd over fears that disturbances would be created by the radical left, resulting in 30 deaths and over 300 injuries.[54] Perón's once stable base headed by his authority as a populist leader was severely fractionalized with strong sectors on both the radical left and the radical right, both of which used Perón's personalist discourse for their own goals.[55] One of the conditions the military government insisted on before allowing Perón's return was a condemnation and withdrawal of support from all guerilla forces and factions. The military also required that the new government be prepared to actively fight subversion, which they saw as existing most strongly in the radical Peronist left, or risk another intervention.[56] But Perón needed the support of the left leaning Peronist sectors to be able to govern, and thus he was forced to find a delicate balance between condemning the violent actions of the radical left groups without alienating the rest of the Peronist left.[57]

Perón was caught in the middle, hanging on solely through his status as a political icon and the legitimacy that it gave him. No strong party structure existed to help reconcile

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[53] Patrice. J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 65.

[54] Maristella Svampa, *El populismo imposible y sus actors 1973-1976*, 13.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 44.

[57] Maristella Svampa, *El populismo imposible y sus actors 1973-1976*, 16-17.

the two competing Peronist factions, and no opposition party was able to emerge as a viable alternative. Nothing represented this fact better than Perón's selection of his new wife Isabel Perón as his vice president, who's only source of political experience and legitimacy was her shared last name. Perón's unexpected death in 1974 left a completely inexperienced person in control of a violently polarized society with practically no support from any stable political or governmental institution. Unlike Perón's first wife, Eva, Isabel also did not possess the cult following that had practically deified the original first lady, and thus was left with nothing other than her last name to lend legitimacy to her government and try to repair the Argentine system that seemed to be circling closer and closer to the drain.

Unfortunately Isabel Perón was unable to produce the miracle necessary to save Argentina from devolving into near anarchy and eventually regressing to military rule. While her government did not perform well economically, and did practically nothing to begin subordinating the military to civilian control or to form the strong institutions that would have been necessary to help facilitate this transition, her greatest failure was the creation of the Triple A, an organization headed by her principal advisor José López Rega that began a program of clandestine violence against the far left radicals in Argentina. This decision had two major consequences; it escalated and normalized clandestine violence within Argentinean society, and threatened the armed forces monopoly over the legitimate use of violence in the state, which were fearful of an armed Peronist group with firepower to match their own and the backing of a (somewhat) legitimate democratic government.[58]

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[58] Patrice. J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 74.

However, the armed forces did not immediately intervene in the hopes of another quick fix

junta. Rather they waited until the Peronist government was completely discredited in

society's mind by the rising anarchy before initiating their coup.[59]

This coup was different from previous military takeovers as it was carefully

organized and instigated by leaders of all three branches of the armed forces rather than

just one disgruntled faction.[60] Additionally, it was legitimized by the total lack of control of

Isabel Perón's government, and was supported by powerful social forces, political actors,

and foreign interests.[61] A few words should be said about the foreign interests that

supported the coup, as they will prove useful in our comparative analysis later.

With the advent of the Cold War, the US instituted its strategy of containment, which

tried to limit the spread of communism throughout the world, but especially to its

neighbors in Latin America. The fear of communism in Latin America grew tremendously

after Cuba fell under communist rule in 1959. Definitive links have been made between US

government organizations, especially the CIA, and various military coups and governments

throughout Latin America during this time period. While the US did not play as direct a

role in Argentina as it did in Chile or Nicaragua, there are some concrete links that show the

US was ok with the dissolution of democracy in Argentina, and likely supported some of the

clandestine violence methods used against the Argentinean population. The Gerald Ford

administration, with Henry Kissinger serving as secretary of state, had long been

mistrustful of Peronism and its followers. Seeing Peronism as reminiscent of communism,

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[59] Patrice. J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 80.
[60] Deborah L. Norden, *The Political Roles of the Argentine Military*, 50.

[61] Patrice. J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 78.

the US had no problems with a military intervention in government as long as the illegal

government's policies aligned with US anti-communist missions. [62] It is also known that

Argentinean military members received training at the infamous School of the Americas,

which is best known for teaching its graduates methods of torture as ways to combat

subversive, communist threats within society.[63]

With the radicalization of the Peronist left, Argentinean society was perfect for the

utilization of these methods, and many of the members of the Triple A used techniques they

had learned from US officials, or people trained by them. But these counter subversive

methods were by their nature, best carried out by an authoritarian, military regime that

would already have the structure, capacity, training, and willingness to carry out these acts.

Though it is unconfirmed, it is believed that Kissinger likely gave explicit approval for the

military coup, and possibly approved the counter subversive processo that followed.[64] If

Kissinger himself did not explicitly approve the coup, there were certainly powerful US

officials who knew of the coup and did nothing to prevent it before it actually happened.

The US did not preoccupy itself with the atrocities being committed in Argentina until the

Carter administration, though Regan's administration largely regressed to the old policy of

feigned ignorance, and even secured Argentinean assistance in training the Nicaraguan

contras, and other repressive Central American military forces.[65] American policy, though

totally unacceptable from the country that was supposed to be the leader of the free world,

was entirely a reaction based in a lack of confidence in the strength of the Argentinean

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[62] Patrice J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 81.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 82.

government and political institutions. Despite its socialist leanings, the US would never

have supported the overthrow of a democratically elected and stable Peronist government

if the Peronists had a strong control over their country, and if stable political institutions

had existed to keep them there.

This final military junta would last from 1976-1983, disappearing and murdering

approximately 30,000 Argentinean citizens without any legal processes. As the economy

struggled throughout the military's rule, the leaders of the junta eventually made the

terrible decision to go to war against Britain over control of the Malvinas Islands in an

attempt to galvanize support for and relegitimze their government in the eyes of the

public.[66] This awful choice was made under the impression that the US would for some

reason support Argentina over the UK, America's largest ally in the fight against

communism, and with a severe overestimation of Argentina's military capacity. The war

was a slaughter, and when coupled with the terrible economic policies of the junta, and the

growing awareness of the human rights violations committed under their government, any

remaining legitimacy that the military possessed was lost, necessitating the return to

democracy.[67] Argentina faced an uphill battle due to its long history of military

intervention in government, the extreme political violence that had occurred under the

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[66] Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, "Missions and Strategy: The Argentine Example," in *The Military and Democracy*. (Lexington: Lexington, 1990), 168.

[67] Harold A. Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Deomcracies: Argentina and Venezuela," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* Vol. 42, no. 2, (2000): 87, http://www.jstor.org/stable/166439.

junta, and the desire for justice among the Argentinean people for the perpetrators of the atrocities.[68]

However, the Argentinean military was weak and fractionalized internally and the new government had been elected on a platform of subordinating the military to civilian control and obtaining justice for the murdered Argentineans.[69] Internal divisions within the armed forces were strong between branches of the military, but also existed between senior and junior officers over the war in the Malvinas, which made it impossible for the military to resist the democratization occurring, or reinsert themselves into political society. The only unifying factor for the armed forces was in their commitment against prosecution for human rights abuses perpetrated during the junta.[70] The electoral victory of Raúl Alfonsín against his Peronist opponent was actually a surprise due to the radical nature of his campaign rhetoric over subordinating the military and obtaining justice. Had Alfonsín achieved or tried to follow through on all of his campaign promises, the armed forces likely would have set aside their differences and reentered the civilian sphere.[71] Thus, Alfonsín wisely focused his efforts on establishing civilian control over the military, slashing the military budget in half within the first two years of his presidency, and deciding to punish only the military members who had actually ordered others to commit human rights violations, in addition to allowing the military to self identify and prosecute these perpetrators.[72] Unfortunately, Alfonsín misjudged the number of officers directly involved in the processo, as well as the Argentinean public's willingness to accept any form

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[68] Deborah L. Norden, *Democracy and the Armed Forces*, 2-3.
[69] Harold A. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Deomcracies*, 87-88.
[70] Ibid., 87.
[71] Ibid., 91.
[72] Ibid.

of limited justice. As a result, the Argentinean people began going through the civil justice system to obtain their personal justice, which threatened the already nervous armed forces and forced Alfonsín to enact the extremely unpopular "full-stop" law, which placed a time limit on future prosecutions of the perpetrators.[73]

The passage of this law did not have the desired effect of calming the armed forces. Rather it led to a military revolt in 1987, which was stopped by Alfonsín conceding to the demands of the military to halt all prosecutions, as well as the outpouring of support from civil society groups such as human rights organizations and labor unions for Alfonsín's government.[74] Subsequent revolts in 1988 and 1989, allowed the military to re-expand some of its societal influence that had been lost in the initial years of democracy. However, when Carlos Menem assumed the presidency in 1989, he offered amnesty in exchange for obedience to civilian control, thus gaining the confidence of important officers, and re-dividing the military internally whose only common ground had been fear of prosecution.[75] When a group of disgruntled officers rebelled in 1990, Menem received support from other sections of the armed forces to defend his civilian government, the first time this had happened in the new democracy. The support of the armed forces for Menem consolidated the civilian control over the armed forces, and allowed the President to reorganize the structure and mission of the military thus making it far less threatening as an institution to the Argentinean government.[76]

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[73] Harold A. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Deomcracies*, 93.
[74] Ibid., 88, 94.
[75] Ibid., 94.
[76] Ibid.

Argentina's subordination of the military after the final military junta was a combination of the military's complete lack of legitimacy and support among the Argentinean population, which proclaimed that never again would a military government be acceptable. This attitude gave the new government legitimacy in its efforts to subordinate and discipline the military for its actions. Though many Argentineans were disillusioned with the amount of justice handed down to the perpetrators of the genocide, certainly no one would have taken a return to military rule over the eventual consolidation of civilian power over the armed forces. It is tragic that the murder of 30,000 civilians was required for Argentina to successfully create a society in which military intrusion into the civilian political sphere became unacceptable. Argentina was unable to develop this system for most of its history as competing and polarized factions consistently undermined any attempt to create strong, stable governmental and political institutions. Populist leaders emerged as the face of whichever faction was the most powerful at any given point in time, and the military felt forced to intervene whenever this leader lost legitimacy as no strong political institutions or parties that could have efficiently removed poor leaders from power existed. Constant intervention normalized the intrusion of the military in the civilian sphere of government, and made the formation of strong political institutions that would have provided an avenue for legitimate turnover of government and an effective subordination of the Argentinean military impossible. The dearth of strong governmental institutions propagated this vicious cycle of populist leaders and subsequent removals of these leaders by the military, leading to the extreme polarization Argentinean society and culminating in the final military junta of 1976, which was responsible for the clandestine disappearance and murder of approximately 30,000 Argentineans.

Mexico

The relationship between the Mexican military and its civilian government could quite easily have gone down a similar path as the Argentinean case of consistent intervention. However, some key societal conditions and a couple great decisions by early 20th century Mexican leadership led to the development of an institutionally strong government, headed by an extremely powerful office of the president, under which the Mexican military was effectively subordinated. The Mexican government and presidency were supported by the creation of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), which legitimized the Mexican government and helped to streamline the transition of power between administrations. The military's faith in the government's capacity to maintain control, even during moments of crisis such as the 1968 student protests, was unparalleled in Latin America during this time period, and demonstrates how institutionally strong and stable the Mexican government was, as well as the high level of professionalization and subordination that the Mexican military had obtained. Similarly to our study of Argentina, it will be useful to examine the historical consolidation of power within the Mexican government into civilian hands, and how the institutional strength of this civilian government, led by the office of the presidency, was able to effectively subordinate the armed forces to civilian control.

The story of the modern Mexican government starts with the military dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, which began in 1876 and lasted for more than three decades until the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. While the Díaz regime had initially been relatively popular among the Mexican people, increased repression and the expansion of

economic policies that supported the large *haciendas* at the expense of the peasants created

resentment and anger among the population, which came to a head in 1910 with the

advent of the Mexican Revolution.[77] The Revolution was a period of near anarchy in

Mexico, with multiple different factions warring throughout the country, each guided by

different sets of motivations. The revolution's leaders had such different ideas that by its

conclusion, the main conflict was occurring between the revolutionary generals, rather

than against Porfirian troops. Despite this, there were some major, relatively universal

ideals that would be used by the victors to create a proverbial myth of the Revolution that

supported the emerging Mexican government, and the subordination of the military to its

control. These ideals included the need for a peasant friendly policy of land reform, the

establishment of a democratic regime, a culture of *indgenismo*, and a growing Mexican

nationalism.[78] The constitution of 1917 officially recognized some of these ideals in article

123, which guaranteed a minimum wage for the Mexican worker, and Article 27, which

paved the way for land reform efforts, though these reforms never emerged in the way

many of the revolutionaries probably imagined them.[79]   Additionally, by the time the

Revolution came to its conclusion, Mexican society was simply tired of violence and ready

for a stable government that would include the peasantry in the understanding of the new

Mexico.

Mexico's first presidents were all important revolutionary generals. However, these

generals recognized that it was the peasantry who had brought them to power, and

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[77] Alan Knight, "The Myth Of The Mexican Revolution," *Past and Present*, 2010: 232.
http://past.oxfordjournals.org/content/209/1/223.full.pdf+html.
[78] Ibid., 228.
[79] Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller, "Radical Mexico: Limits To The Impact Of Soviet Communism," *Latin American Perspectives* Vol. 35, no. 2, (2008): 61. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27648087.

attempted to accommodate some of the principal desires of the masses into their policies.

The first post revolutionary president, Alvaro Obregón, introduced many new reforms

designed to help Mexican workers, however they never translated into the real, significant

improvements promised.[80] Obregón's land reform policies were the first major set of

preemptive reforms, or sets of policies created by political elites to minimize political

mobilization in the less advantaged sectors of society before it begins. The success of these

types of policies is relatively unimportant, as their goal is simply to pacify the masses and

do just enough to quell any rumblings of dissent in the general public in the short run.[81]

Preemptive reform would often be used as a method to gain political capital for Mexican

leaders throughout the 20th century, especially following moments of crisis.

Additionally, Obregón took some very important steps in subordinating the Mexican

military to the office of the president, which laid the groundwork for future, more

comprehensive subordination efforts that President Calles and President Cárdenas would

undertake in the future. First, Obregón cut the size of the armed forces in half, a logical

step given that Mexican society was trying to emerge from a decade of turmoil and war.[82]

Second, he began rotating military commanders through different zones, which diminished

their ability to establish a loyal base of officers and enlisted men whose fidelity could be

used in a revolt against the government.[83] Finally, he recruited highly educated civilians

into prominent government posts, thus making his government a composition of military

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[80] Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller, *Radical Mexico*, 63.

[81] Kenneth M. Coleman and Charles L. Davis, "Preemptive Reform and the Mexican Working Class," *Latin American Research Review*, 1983: 3-4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2502854.

[82] Mónica Serrano, "The Armed Branch of the State: Civil–Military Relations in Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 1995: 432. http://www.jstor.org/stable/158121.

[83] Roderic A. Camp, "Civil-Military Relations in Historical Context" in *Mexico's Military on the Democratic Stage*. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 18.

and civilians leaders.[84] Obregón was able to implement these changes due to his status as

an important revolutionary general whose control of the office of the presidency also gave

him the authority to act as supreme military commander. The legitimacy of the office was

supported through the use of the ideals of the Mexican Revolution in his political rhetoric,

which supported the formation of a liberal, revolutionary government, rather than a return

to the oligarchic military rule of the Díaz regime, or the formation of a populist regime

under his control.

When General Plutarco Calles took over the presidency from Obregón in 1924, he

was determined to continue and enhance the subordination and professionalization efforts

that Obregón had begun. He reopened the Colegio Militar and reformed its curriculum to

more accurately reflect the ideals of the emerging Mexican state.[85] Additionally, he updated

promotion laws within the military, forcing officers to take tests requiring further military

training in order to receive a promotion, which increased professionalization in the

military as a whole, and reduced the need for officers to involve themselves in politics in

order to achieve their professional goals. Finally, he further cut the overall number of

troops, and decreased the army's budget.[86] Upon leaving office, Calles placed two ex-

generals but current civilians into the office of presidency, who would rule from 1928-

1934, when President Cárdenas took over.[87] While Calles remained the true power holder

throughout these years, this was still the first time that the Mexican presidency had been

occupied by a civilian, albeit with deep military ties, and set a precedent of renouncing all

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[84] Roderic A. Camp, *Civil-Military Relations in Historical Context*, 18-19.

[85] Roderic A. Camp, *Mexico's Military on the Democratic Stage*, 19.

[86] Edwin Lieuwen, "Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolucionary Army, 1915-1940," in *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment*. (U.S. Mexican Studies Center, UCSD, 1984), 55.

[87] Roderic A. Camp, *Mexico's Military on the Democratic Stage*, 19.

military duties upon entering into the political sphere that after Cárdenas' presidency, would become standard.

Another important part of the Calles presidency was his creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PRN), which would eventually change its name to the PRI and secure a dominant, hegemonic rule over Mexican politics until the mid 1990's. Calles realized that the newly formed Mexican government could go one of three directions, he could personally seize power and assume a dictatorial role (something he did not want), the army could find a different general or group of generals to run the state, or an entirely separate mechanism could be created to ensure regular presidential succession and prevent the return of a dictatorship to Mexico.[88] With support from other important generals and political leaders, Calles chose this third option, and began the construction of a new party, the PNR. The new party would exemplify the key ideals of the Revolution, as understood by Calles, and would incorporate groups that typically reside in civil society such as the newly forming workers unions and all local government parties.[89] The inclusion of these groups bolstered the legitimacy of the PRN and helped create an infrastructure that went beyond the federal level, and incorporated all aspects of society. The formation of the PNR went hand in hand with the military subordination efforts taking place, as for the new party to be effective, the military would have to relinquish its dominant position of control in the Mexican political scene. When Cárdenas came into office, he realized that the consolidation of this party's power would transfer the

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[88] Luis Javier Garrido, "La Constitución del Partido (el Proyecto de 1928-1929), " in *El Partido De La Revolución Institucionalizada: Medio Siglo De Poder Político en México: La Formación Del Nuevo Estado (1928-1945)*. (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1991), 73.

[89] ibid p.97

responsibility for protecting the Mexican state from a dictator's rule from the military's hands to the civilian government by providing a legitimate institution that would support the president's choice of successor in their path to the presidency. The strength of the PNR civilianized the legitimate transfer of power from one Mexican head of state to the next, and made the military feel comfortable in removing itself from its role of ensuring regular presidential succession.

When Cárdenas took power in 1934, it was after nearly 10 years of direct or indirect rule by Calles, who commanded significant influence among the Mexican military as well as in important political circles. Thus the first important step to consolidating his power and the power of the newly forming party was to expel Calles from Mexico, and remove all his followers from positions of political importance.[90] These moves removed any personalistic influence that remained of Calles within Mexican government and military, and consolidated and legitimized the office of the president as the primary power holder of the new state rather than any individual leader.[91] Cárdenas then used the power of the presidency to strengthen the power of the PNR, which he renamed the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM).

His first move was to reorganize the party to include equal representation from military, labor, peasant, and popular sectors, symbolically and literally telling the military that they would receive no special influence or treatment in his government.[92] This move

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[90] Edwin Lieuwen, *Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolucionary Army*, 57.

[91] Aguilar Zinser, Adolfo. "Civil-Military Relations in Mexico," in *The Military and Democracy*. (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1990), 221.

[92] Edwin Lieuwen, *Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolucionary Army*, 58.

was aimed at preventing the formation of a separate military class in society, and thereby creating a powerful force that would act in its own best interests rather than those of the state.[93] However, rather than further subordinating the military to civilian control, this move sent mixed messages to a military who had by this point been trained to stay out of the civilian political sphere, and the decision was in fact protested by some of the confused military members. Now, the with the military's informal connections to the government and its official representation in the new party, the military sector was clearly the most powerful in the PRM.[94] The one positive aspect of incorporation was unification of civilian and military interests behind Cárdenas', and thus the party's, choice of successor. As all of the nominees for important roles were military men, the incorporation of the military into the PRM enabled these candidates to present themselves as party members, rather than military leaders, to the rest of the military, thus reducing the personalist ties that necessarily formed in a superior to subordinate relationship. However, Cárdenas' successor, Manuel Avila Camacho, recognized the danger in the continued participation of the armed forces in the political realm of the party, and he reversed Cárdenas' decision to incorporate the military into the party.[95] This cemented the civilian authority over the armed forces, literally and symbolically in his presentation of a new form of civil military relations that clearly separated and removed the Mexican military from all political decision making roles and capabilities.[96]

With the military subordinate yet still somewhat involved in his new party structure, Cárdenas embarked on new professionalization efforts, first, by encouraging the

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[93] Roderic Camp, *Mexico's Military on the Democratic Stage*, 22.
[94] Ibid., 23.
[95] Ibid., 24.
[96] Ibid.

promotion of younger, and thus more recently trained, officers, and by lowering the

maximum retirement age, which forced some older, and perhaps less loyal, generals into

retirement.[97] This move strengthened the executive's power, and made it harder for

leaders in the armed forces to take control, as the newly trained officer corps had loyalty to

the Mexican state, rather than personal ties to senior members of the military.[98] After his

removal of the military from the national party, President Avila Camacho continued these

efforts at professionalization, retiring many older, revolutionary generals without the

technical knowledge for modern warfare, and then reducing the military expenditures from

21 to 15 percent of the national budget.[99] Finally, the start of WWII enabled larger

numbers of Mexican officers to train in the US, increasing the technical knowledge and

professionalization among the military's future leaders.[100] By the end of Avila Camacho's

presidency, the military had been fully subordinated to civilian control through a

combination of increased professionalization efforts, and the literal and symbolic removal

of the military from all political roles in the new party and state.

The professionalization and subordination of the armed forces under Cárdenas,

resulted in a marginalization of the role of the Mexican military in the political sphere,

which in turn legitimized the office of the presidency as the sole political power holder in

Mexico. However, the military was still a powerful force within society, and thus an

informal agreement regarding the new power balance between the Mexican military and

the civilian government was created. In this special agreement, the military agreed to stay

out of politics in return for a sizeable amount of autonomy over things like military budgets

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[97] Roderic Camp, *Mexico's Military on the Democratic Stage*, 20-22.
[98] Ibid., 22.
[99] Ibid., 25.
[100] Ibid.

and training. The agreement was grounded in the ideas that the military should have a respect for civilian power, that arms are not a suitable instrument to further the goals of the Revolution, and that the organization and maintenance of power in Mexico is not contingent on the support of the armed forces.[101] Because of this agreement, the military accepts the President of Mexico as its supreme commander, is obligated to recognize the laws created by the civilian government as legitimate, and allows the government to be responsible for managing the economy, developing natural resources, and distributing income as it sees fit.[102] As commander in chief, the President assigns all the tasks and functions of the armed forces, and is technically responsible for all military appointments and promotions, though per the agreement these are mostly left up to the discretion of military authorities.[103] This agreement was made possible by the military professionalization efforts of Cárdenas, and his establishment of the institution of the Mexican presidency as the most important power holder in Mexico, above any particular leader's personal influence and power. Cárdenas' consolidation and legitimization of the power of the office of the President, rather than of the person who happened to hold it, created an environment in which subordination of the military was not only possible, but the best option for the future of the Mexican military and state.

The constitution that emerged after the Mexican Revolution had given the President of Mexico an enormous amount of power. Given the desire of the Mexican public to move away from an autocratic system of government after the fall of the Porfirio Díaz regime, the

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[101] Jordi Díez, "Legislative Oversight of the Armed Forces in Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 2008: 118. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/msem.2008.24.1.113.

[102] Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, *Civil-Military Relations in Mexico*, 222.
[103] Ibid.

super presidency was a dangerous creation for the new Mexican state. For this reason, the

constitution mandated that no president could serve more than one term, in order to

ensure that a new dictatorship would not arise out of the ashes of the recently dispatched

one. Until Calles, the military had ensured the clean succession of power when a

president's term was up. Calles laid the groundwork for the PNR in order to help remove

the military from the decision over the succession of power. However, as he remained

heavily involved in government, and handpicked his successors, his personalist influence

on Mexican government was palpable, and risked a return to an autocratic style of

government despite his official exit from the office of the presidency. Cárdenas also picked

his successor, but he supported his choice through the mechanism of his newly created

party, and once out of office, he stayed there, allowing Avila Camacho to rule as his own

president.[104] Since this transition, the party has managed the presidential succession at the

behest of the President, supporting his choice of a successor throughout the election

process, and providing a sense of legitimacy to their candidacy. The institutional ability of

the PRI to reliably facilitate the transition of power from one president to the next replaced

the need for the armed forces to manage this change. The armed forces felt safe

subordinating themselves to the office of the presidency as an avenue for presidential

succession was predetermined, rather than attaching themselves to a particular leader

from within their own ranks and risking the possibility of a personalist ruler seizing

control. This trust allowed the military to focus its efforts on increased professionalization

and modernization, thus enhancing its capabilities and allowing it to stick to roles that it

was designed for and trained to handle.

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[104] Edwin Lieuwen, *Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolucionary Army*, 60.

By the end of Avila Camacho's presidency, the military had been effectively removed

from the civilian government and subordinated to civilian control, a fact proved by their

acceptance of Miguel Alemán, a pure civilian, as Avila Camacho's successor. The

subordination of the military is further exemplified through the percent of military men in

government during Obregón's and Calles' presidencies, 37 percent, and the percentage

during Alemán's tenure, just 8 percent.[105] Yet the fact that the Mexican military had been

subordinated did not mean that it had become entirely depoliticized. Despite the

drastically diminished number of military men directly elected or assigned to posts during

Alemán's presidency, a military presidential staff was created in order to have a much

closer liaison between the President and the armed forces.[106] Additionally, the military has

been used to carry out many operations that are political in nature. These include,

enforcement of political decisions such as removing rebellious governors and "defending"

elections, intelligence gathering, repression of riots and protests, pacification of labor

disputes, and destruction of potential guerrilla movements.[107] Despite the political nature

of many of these activities, the armed forces have never taken action without explicit

orders from the civilian government. Furthermore, all of these actions can be viewed from

within the context of the special civil military relationship and as protecting the office of

the presidency from internal crises. Even in the moment of most dire crisis, when the

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[105]Roderic A. Camp, "Military-Civilian Interlocks," in *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 67.
[106] Ibid., 68.
[107] David F. Ronfeldt, "The Mexican Army and Political Order Since 1940," in *Armies and Politics in Latin America*. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976), 293-295.

strength of the Mexican government appeared to be in doubt, the military waited for explicit approval of the President before intervening.[108]

In the years immediately following the Mexican Revolution, the most serious crises to threaten the state were armed rebellions, which clearly came under the jurisdiction of the military to repress. But in 1968, after years of political stability, a wave of massive protests led by students in Mexico City threatened the stability of the Mexican government by questioning the legitimacy of its most powerful and important institution, the presidency. The military was called in to repress the riots, which they did, violently, thereby preserving the power of the civilian government without ever threatening any sort of military takeover of government. What happened in 1968, and why did the Mexican military remain subordinate to civilian control in a situation in which many other militaries in Latin America during this time period would likely have taken control of the country in the interest of preserving and protecting the state from perceived internal threats?

On July 23rd, 1968, a small number of students in Mexico City were involved in a fight for no particular reason, certainly without any political motivations. Yet for some reason, the special riot police arrived to break up the fight, rather than normal cops. They chased some of the kids into a nearby university, where they proceeded to beat students, professors, and janitors indiscriminately.[109] An official protest of the police actions was planned and approved for July 26th, but when it coincidentally merged with another, totally unrelated protest, it moved out of its approved zone. This prompted a harsh, violent

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[108] Arthur Liebman, "Student Activism In Mexico," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1971, 165. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1038584.

[109] Arthur Liebman, *Student Activism In Mexico*, 164.

response by the riot police in order to repress the students, who then barricaded themselves inside of their schools out of protest.[110] After three days of rising tensions, the police and army moved into the schools to violently disperse and arrest the students. This move was justified through claims that the Mexican communist party was behind the disruptions and was threatening the stability of society, an assertion that was entirely propaganda being used to discredit the movement and without factual evidence.[111]

The fighting came to an end on July 31st, but protests continued throughout the month of August, developing into student and professor strikes, and becoming increasingly political in nature. Among the demands of the students were calls for a repeal of Articles 145 and 145 *bis* of the Mexican penal code, which allowed authorities to arrest people for their thoughts and words, freedom for all political prisoners, and justice for the wounded and murdered students.[112] At its peak, between 200,000 and 400,000 protestors gathered in front of the national palace where speakers broke with tradition when they criticized the President, Díaz Ordaz publicly. On August 28th, the government decided that they had had enough, and called in the armed forces to occupy Mexico City, eventually occupying the grounds of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the first time the autonomy of the university had been so blatantly breached in forty years.[113] Thousands of students and professors were arrested in attempts to halt the protests. However, the straw that finally broke the protestors' backs came on October 2nd when, after being shot upon, the army fired indiscriminately into the crowd at a peaceful but unauthorized protest, killing dozens

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[110] Arthur Liebman, *Student Activism In Mexico*, 164.
[111] Ibid., 164-5.
[112] Ibid., 165.
[113] Ibid.

and injuring hundreds more.[114] In reality the first shots were fired by government snipers

dressed in civilian clothes among the protestors who had been ordered to fire upon the

military by Díaz Ordaz in order to produce and justify the violent response from the

military.[115] This violence effectively ended all public demonstrations against the

government, and largely halted any political progress that was being made. The 1968

Olympics proceeded without a hitch, the PRI maintained a firm grip on its control of the

Mexican political order, and students and professors slowly returned to class.[116]

The student protests of 1968 were a shock to the Mexican government and forced

Mexico's political leaders to reevaluate their position in society. Though the government

had maintained control, it had necessitated the use of force, and the complete willingness

and cooperation of the armed forces to carry out the government's orders. The army had

been forced to pull units out of the provinces to help stabilize Mexico City, and had the

protests spread beyond the city to the provinces, the government would likely have lost

control.[117] When Luis Echeverría assumed the presidency in 1970, he introduced a set of

preemptive reforms designed to pacify any remaining negative sentiments among the

Mexican population over what had happened in 1968, as well as to help stimulate the

struggling Mexican economy. These reforms included attempts to stimulate employment

while also increasing wages and public expenditures on health and education.[118] Clearly,

none of these policies fulfilled the demands of the protestors, and were rather a way for the

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[114] Arthur Liebman, *Student Activism In Mexico*, 165-166.

[115] Ibid., 166.

[116] Ibid.

[117] David Ronfeldt, "The Modern Mexican Military: An Overview," in *The Modern Mexican Military a Reassessment*. (Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD, 1984), 13.

[118] Kenneth M Coleman and Charles L. Davis, *Preemptive Reform and the Mexican Working Class*, 6-7.

new government to shift the people's attention away from any bad feelings remaining from 1968 and on to a more positive future. These policies were mainly geared towards organized urban workers as an attempt to gain short-term political capital among the urban population where the protests had been the strongest, and where support for the PRI had been the lowest. The motivation for these preemptive reforms is hard to miss, though they very likely may have done just enough to pacify any remaining negative sentiments towards the government and the PRI, and contributed to PRI dominance as the sole political party within Mexico for another 20 years. Additionally, they showed the armed forces that the leaders of the civilian government were taking the unrest seriously, and were committed to preventing further outbreaks in the future.

The ability of the Mexican government to emerge from the chaos of 1968 and reestablish itself as a strong guiding force in Mexican society demonstrated to the military that a stable government existed that could be counted on to reliably manage threats to the Mexican state. Though the military was ultimately responsible for ending the student protests, they never took matters into their own hands; every action was taken with explicit instructions from the President or other civilian authorities. Equally important was the response of the civilian government in the aftermath of the protests. A clean transition of power occurred between Díaz Ordaz and Echeverría, and Echeverría's reforms helped to calm any lingering feelings of resentment over the actions of his predecessor. The government's ability to adapt to fit the political needs of Mexican society was a testament to the institutional strength of the civilian government and the office of the presidency. Faith in the ability of the government to manage crises and adapt appropriately encouraged the military to feel comfortable in its retreat to its normal duties in the wake of

the most politically turbulent period in Mexican history since the end of the Revolution. Had the government been weak and unable to manage the crisis or its aftermath, perhaps the military would have intervened in the civilian political sphere in order to prevent a collapse of the Mexican state. The institutional strength of the Mexican government and presidency, and their ability to adapt to the changing needs of Mexican society kept the military feeling safe in its autonomous but subordinate position, and kept PRI candidates in power for another 25 years after the most serious political turmoil that Mexico had experienced since its consolidation as a modern state.

If the institutional strength and power of the Mexican presidency and civilian government were the most significant factors in subordinating the Mexican military to civilian control, what happened when this institutional strength was weakened by internal crises, and a breakup of the political party that had come to be synonymous with government in the minds of many Mexicans? The decline of the PRI began in the mid 1980's as the party fractionalized internally over the pursuit of reform policies. In 1987, a group of angry priístas broke ranks and ran against the PRI's establishment candidate, Carlos Salinas.[119] The rebels lost a close election, but established the Partido de la Revolución Democratica (PRD), which would become the main opposition party to the PRI, until the PAN won in the 2000 presidential election.[120] Realizing that the PRI's position in Mexican society was precarious, Salinas instituted a set of policies designed to combat rural poverty, which effectively galvanized support in the early 90's. In 1994, the PRI candidate,

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[119] Mark Eric Williams, "Traversing the Mexican Odyssey: Reflections on Political Change and the Study of Mexican Politics," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 2002, 174-75. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/msem.2002.18.1.159.

[120] Ibid.

Ernesto Zedillo, won the presidential election just in time, as the peso crashed later that year, leading to a huge growth in support for the opposition.[121] The combination of the peso crash, along with some unfavorable policy decisions in the late 80's and early 90's, such as the privatization of industry and NAFTA reduced support for the Zedillo administration and by consequence for the PRI. When the Zapatista rebellion broke out in 1994, faith in the Zedillo administration's ability to manage the Mexican state and pick a competent successor from within the ranks of the PRI was drastically reduced.[122] The PRI's legitimacy was hurt, and President Zedillo, was forced to accept the opposition's demands for electoral reform measures, which paved the way for the PAN's victory in the 2000 presidential campaign.[123]

As the PRI gradually lost its legitimacy and support in the country it had dominated for nearly three quarters of a century there was never any sort of attempt at military intervention in government. The principal reason for this was the high level of professionalization and modernization that the Mexican military had obtained by this point in its history. Discipline in the Mexican military is incredibly strict, especially when it comes to subordination to the civilian political sphere. Officers who publicly criticize the government are generally relieved of their duties, or transferred to the most unpleasant assignment possible.[124] As the PRI had been most important for ensuring that the President's successor would have support and legitimacy during their run for office, and had not directed any sort of policy formation, whether or not the presidency was held by a

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[121] Mark Eric Williams, *Traversing the Mexican Odyssey*, 176.

[122] Ibid., 175-176

[123] Ibid., 177.

[124] Roderic A. Camp, "Generals and Politicians in Mexico: A Preliminary Comparison," in *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment*. (Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD, 1984), 152-53.

PRI party member or not was of no concern to the military. As long as the President was able to effectively utilize the power of their office, and could be reliably expected to exit the office at the end of their term, the military would still view themselves as subordinate to this institution. Additionally, the Mexican public expressed no desire for a military intervention in government, which reinforced the military's subordination to civilian rule.[125] As the Mexican public was one of the driving forces behind the shift in the political power balance, there were no outside influences for the military to do something that went against all of its training. Finally, as the process of change was a slow one that did not involve any sort of violent uprising against the government, but was rather a result of multiple crises within both the PRI and within Mexican society, there was never a sole moment of crisis that spurred the military into action. It was able to observe and react accordingly to the changing political situation as events developed, rather than making rash decisions that would have had serious consequences for the future of Mexican government and democracy.

As Mexican society emerged from the violence and turmoil of the Mexican Revolution, it needed a stable government that had the potential to effect real change for its people based on the ideals of the Revolution. With the strong leadership of post-revolutionary presidents, Mexican society moved away from its history of military governments, and instead developed a strong institutional government controlled by the power of the presidency, the holders of which were able to effectively subordinate the military to the office as an institution rather than to any of their individual personalities. The government's institutional strength created an environment in which the military felt

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[125] Rodric Camp, *Generals and Politicians in Mexico*, 154.

confident in the abilities of the president to manage internal and external threats to the

Mexican state. The trust among the armed forces for the strength of the civilian

government, allowed them to greatly professionalize and modernize their corps, which

further subordinated them to civilian rule. By the time a true moment of crisis emerged in

1968, the military was sufficiently professionalized and trusting of the capacity of the

government to manage threats that it did not intervene until directly called upon by

President Díaz Ordaz. The establishment of the PRI created an institution that efficiently

and reliably presided over the transfer of power between leaders, which had previously

been a key role for the military in preventing a regression to dictatorship. When the PRI

began to lose its hold over the process of political succession in Mexico, it was no longer

needed as an institution to safeguard the electoral process, and its removal from the office

of the presidency never threatened the institutional strength of the presidency itself. The

institutional strength of the Mexican government and presidency was the key to the

professionalization of the Mexican military, and even through moments of crisis,

encouraged the military to remain true to its professional values, which honored and

continued the tradition of military subordination to civilian rule throughout the 20th

century and into the modern day.

Comparative Study: Argentina vs. Mexico

On the surface Argentina and Mexico appear very similar in their socio-political

histories. Both countries experienced decades of dictatorship under a military leader, a

lack of true democracy until the last few decades, a series of heads of state who came

directly from the military, and instances of violent repression against their own citizens at the hands of the armed forces. Yet despite these surface similarities, Argentina's political history is littered with military intervention in government, which culminated in the terrible military junta of 1973, while after the fall of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship, Mexico effectively subordinated its military to civilian control, and after the mid 1940's, never saw a member of the armed forces become the Mexican head of state. The crucial differentiating factor between the two countries was the existence or lack of strong political institutions. Helped by strong, future minded leaders, Mexico developed an institutionally strong super presidency that resisted domination by any single personalist leader through the creation of a tradition of regular succession based on the ideals of the Mexican Revolution and institutionalized by the PRI. Argentina on the other hand, consistently followed leaders who catered to specific societal sectors, and led by their strength of personality alone, which discouraged the formation of strong political institutions and led to the frequent destabilization of society and the formation of power vacuums, which in turn encouraged the continued participation of the military in the political realm. This section aims to compare analytically why the strong political institutions in Mexico were able to mitigate other factors that in a less politically stable society could have encouraged the continued participation of the military in politics, while the inability of Argentina to place power in the hands of institutions rather than in individual leaders allowed these societal conditions to destabilize society and encourage the repeated intervention of the Argentinean military in civilian government.

Populism is a dangerous political tool for various reasons. Based in a cult of personality created by a charismatic leader who uses popular societal sentiments to further

their own political goals, it provides fertile ground for the establishment of an authoritarian regime with power consolidated solely in the hands of the leader. It has been used to stir up disillusioned and frenzied populations, perhaps most drastically in Hitler's Germany, which resulted in the murder of six million Jews during the Holocaust. Its use of grandiose speeches to gain popular support for policies can negate the official political processes and institutions by seeking legitimacy from the masses rather than through political discourse. Populism encourages the formation of personal ties within government, as the key to gaining power in a populist system is by currying favor with the leader, rather than by progressive advancement through the system because of personal merit. This provides the leader with personal support rather than support for any sort of political party or mechanism to legitimize the leader and their policies. Without an official mechanism to support the leader's policies, the only person capable of legitimately leading the movement is the leader themself. The entire ideology of the movement is based on the leader's conception and dissemination of their politics to their followers. This system of legitimizing politics by the personality and discourse of one leader can quite clearly lead to an authoritarian takeover of government. By its nature, populism does not create a mechanism for the transition of power, and thus the leader either rules until they lose the ability to obtain popular support for their programs, they are forced out of power by an outside force, or they pass away, likely without leaving a clear successor to take their place. It would be extremely difficult for a populist movement to exist and rule effectively without its principle leader, as it is this same leader who gives the movement strength and legitimacy, rather than any sustainable institution in which their ideas can be formalized, institutionalized, and then supported through official political mechanisms.

Strong political institutions, whether they are political parties or governmental bodies, legitimize the power and structure of a government. They give legitimacy to the actions of a government as a whole, rather than to the decisions of a particular leader or group. When opposing forces disagree with decisions made by a government, there is no personal threat to those involved in the decision making process. Opposition to a populist leader's policies or politics is a direct affront to the legitimacy of the leader themself, while opposition to a government's policies does not threaten the authority of the government to govern. This does not mean that governments without populist leaders do not ever feel threatened by opposition to their policies, or that the opposition to a non-populist government never denies the government's leaders the legitimacy to govern, but rather that the institution of government itself is always granted the authority to administer. An illegitimate military government may not be based in the cult of any particular leader, but the system of government within which it resides will still be recognized as necessary by any rational, non-anarchical, person. Thus a country with strong government institutions will be more able to adapt to threats, as its institutional strength will always maintain its legitimacy. If the ruling people or parties within the government are viewed as legitimate power holders within society, than the legitimacy of that government is greatly magnified.

Argentina's populist leaders, such as Perón, prevented the formation of a strong government outside of their personalistic influence, thus negating the chance for Argentina to form a strong government whose legitimacy could stand on its own. This encouraged the military, an inherently strong institution, to intervene whenever things went south or they felt threatened by the actions of particular leaders operating with nothing other than popular support to legitimize them. Military leaders assumed that the masses are easily

manipulated, and thus the use of their support to legitimize a government or leader was always suspect. With no legitimate structure to back the populist leaders, military intervention was always a viable option to secure what the military saw as the best interests of society.

Mexico on the other hand, developed an incredibly strong institutional system of government. The office of the presidency was an extremely powerful position, and was respected and followed throughout the Mexican political system. The office of the president directed all policy, was the leader of the PRI, and enabled its holder to choose who would be his successor. The President's authority was unquestioned in all branches and levels of government, and the military respected and trusted this authority to protect the Mexican state. Even if individual military members disagreed with a President's politics privately, they still respected his legitimacy and authority in an official capacity because of their subordination to the office. The military's professional values dictated that they respect the institution of the Mexican presidency as supreme commander of the armed forces, and the holder of the office never gave them reason to worry that it could not maintain control over the powers granted by this institution. Therefore, there was never any reason for the military to break with its professionalism and endanger the authority and legitimacy of the guiding institution of the Mexican state they had sworn to defend.

One of the best ways to show how the differences in political institutional strength affected the subordination efforts of each country's military is by examining instances when society itself rebelled against the institution of government, and the way that each country was able to respond. In the second half of the 20th century, communism and other

"subversive" beliefs were often seen as the principal destabilizing threats to society. Subversion is defined as a threat that intentionally tries to undermine the established social and political order, and can potentially be present in all parts of society.[126] While not solely communist in its definition, the communist goals of a revolution arising from the proletariat designed to overthrow an oppressive bourgeois order, was certainly the most feared example of subversion, especially during the Cold War era. Subversion must be combated in non-traditional, political and psychological, ways in order to counteract its ability to invade and disrupt all sectors of society.[127] What did Argentina and Mexico do differently in handling internal, subversive threats to their society, and what role did their political institutions and leaders play?

When Perón mobilized the working industrial class, it was against an established oligarchic order that was used to being in control of the Argentinean economy and possessing significant influence in the political sphere as well. No matter how Perón had gone about organizing the working class, it would have felt threatening to this established oligarchy. However, his dramatic speeches to thousands of screaming Argentineans felt a lot more like a revolution attempting to break the established order than any real, lawful political discourse attempting to reform it. While at this point in Argentinean history there was already an entrenched pattern of military intervention in politics, and little to no strong political institutions, the coup that dispatched Perón ironically called for a return to the "republican way of life," they felt Perón had forsaken.[128] As the military was

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[126] Carina Perelli, "The Military's Perception of Threat in the Southern Cone of South America," in *The Military and Democracy*. (Lexington: Lexington, 1990), 94-95.

[127] Ibid., 95.

[128] Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Military Coups*, 202.

dispatching a democratically elected government, they clearly did not believe in the establishment of a true democracy, but rather wanted to restore the established order of government that they felt comfortable in. Though at this point Peronism may not have been directly defined as subversion, its subsequent prescription from the ballots showed the military's willingness to combat this threat to the established regime outside of the traditional norms. As Perón did not use political institutions to advance his policies, the military and other threatened societal factions felt they could not express their discontent in a traditional manner, and thus were forced to combat Peronism in non-traditional ways. Peronism became subversion, and without strong institutions to support and legitimize it, there was nothing that could delegitimize the army's decision to go outside of these weak institutions to advance its goals.

The same argument can be made for the armed forces' treatment of what they saw as subversive elements in Argentina during the end of the 1960's dictatorships, Perón's second government, and during the final military junta of 1976. Please note that this is in no way a justification for the horrendous war crimes that these governments participated in against their own populations, but rather an attempt to understand why they acted in the way they did, and why Argentinean society did not have the mechanisms needed to exit the vicious cycle of repression and intervention it had found itself in. As support for the military governments of the 60's declined, radical leftist Peronist groups began to form a strong and violent opposition to their rule. The prescription of Peronism from the ballots made these groups feel as though they had no legitimate place for their protests within the formal institutions of government, and thus pursued their motives outside of the

traditional legal system. As violence between both groups increased, it became progressively more clandestine. The kidnapping and subsequent murder of General Aramburu by the Montoneros in 1969, as well as the violent, clandestine repression of the left that followed, are perfect demonstrations of how the activities of these groups operated outside of society's institutions.[129]

As Perón never condemned the violence of these groups, and in reality supported many of their actions against the government, it was nearly impossible for him to plausibly deny their legitimacy to operate upon his return from exile. The split in Peronism between the radical left and the radical right meant that the political violence did not end with the return of Perón. Rather, years of intense fighting and clandestine organization against the military enabled groups like the Montoneros to create organizational structures and institutions like traditional armies.[130] Had strong governmental institutions existed, these extra-societal institutions would have had no need and no ability to form within civil society at a level that rivaled and significantly threatened the military. Perón created a revolution within the legitimate context of official government, but his inability to institutionalize and consolidate the ideas and power of this revolution outside of his cult of personality and within the legitimacy of a government office or institution forced the rest of society to form its own separate institutions and organizations outside of the official governmental sector in order to express their opinions that differed from Perón's conception of society. As the armed forces was the oldest, best organized extra-governmental institution, it was able to insert itself as a seemingly legitimate and dominant

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[129] Maristella Svampa, *El populismo imposible y sus actors 1973-1976,* 3.
[130] Maristella Svampa, *El populismo imposible y sus actors 1973-1976,* 26.

actor within Argentina's political sphere. The military's institutional strength rivaled or eclipsed any political movement's, and thus it justified itself in using this institutional strength to get what it wanted from Argentina's government, rather than going through weaker institutional channels. This pattern perpetuated itself, and by the time of Perón's populist movement of the 50's, any strong political activity that went outside or threatened the established order of the Argentinean political system was viewed as subversion by the Argentinean military, and defended against accordingly. This prevented the creation of strong governmental organizations and institutions that could have acted in conjunction with a strong political movement to facilitate change and the cycle continued, until the horrors of the final military junta forced Argentina to break and reform the established order.

Outside of the 1968 student protests, which have already been discussed, one of the best ways to look at subversion within Mexican society is through the roles of traditional "subversive" bastions within society, communist parties and organizations as well as labor unions. These groups have typically been associated with subversive activity due to their generally left leaning politics, and that their main avenues of support are generally derived from the lower economic classes of society. As has already been mentioned, Mexican workers were an important actor in the Revolution, and thus were afforded certain rights and benefits within the new Mexican state and constitution. While they were certainly a subordinate part of the new Mexican state, they were officially included, which was a real victory for the Mexican working class.[131] The creation of the Confederación Regional

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[131] Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller, *Radical Mexico*, 61.

Obrera Mexicana in 1918 was the culmination of mutual communication and support between the government elites and the working classes. This agreement forced the working classes to accept capitalism as the dominant economic system of the new state, but also legitimized their cause within the newly forming government, and assured the workers that they would not be entirely excluded from the Mexican state building project. While the inclusion of workers did not result in the myriad of reforms that many had hoped, it did lead to some changes for the workers, and was able to pacify any radical desires for communism within their ranks.

When Cárdenas consolidated the PRM into Mexico's only important political party, one that would manage the clean succession of the Mexican presidency for decades and would be the institutional backing for the Mexican government during this time period, he made sure that the party had equal representation from four sectors of society; military, peasant, popular, and labor.[132] The inclusion of labor into the official party structure told workers two things: first, you will be a part of the Mexican state and its future and second, you will have no special status and will remain subordinate to the institution of the Mexican government. Additionally, Cárdenas created the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), which would unite the fractionalized labor movement under one organization. He stated that his government would deal exclusively with this organization, which was another way of saying that the state would essentially control organized labor, but that they would still be included and their interests would be recognized.[133] Though in many ways this ensured that organized labor would never get all of its demands, the

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[132] Edwin Lieuwen, *Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolucionary Army*, 57.

[133] Joe C. Ashby, "The Dilemma of the Mexican Trade Union Movement," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 1985, 279, 282. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1052039>.

popularity and strength of Cárdenas during this time forced labor unions to take what they could get, and agree to work with the government. The institutional strength of the Mexican government and the PRI meant that being included was a better option than attempting to force change from the outside. From the inside, a movement could attempt to control and alter political discourse, while operating from the outside would likely have necessitated a revolution against the government, something that was not politically viable or literally feasible.

While various Mexican presidents worked to bring Mexican labor unions into the institutional political sphere, thus neutralizing the potential threat from these organizations, the same was not true of communist parties and movements within Mexico, which were inherently anti-government in their nature. In some respects Mexico was lucky not to have a stronger communist presence. Many participating sectors in the Mexican Revolution could identify strongly with the Bolshevik Revolution that began in 1917 as the Mexican Revolution was coming to an end.[134] But the tyranny and oppression that arose following the Bolshevik Revolution caused a cooling off in Mexican revolutionary circles, and led to the establishment of Mexican radicalism as a rival model to communism.[135] Thus when a congress designed to create a Mexican communist party was held in 1919, many of its declarations were more anarchical in their nature, and the communist party (PCM) that emerged was weak.[136] Following a failed armed rebellion in 1929 they were outlawed and persecuted until the mid 1930's when Cárdenas allowed them to reorganize in order to

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[134] Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller, *Radical Mexico*, 57-58.
[135] Ibid., 58.
[136] Ibid., 62.

support his land reform policies.[137]   However, following Cárdenas, most Mexican

presidents were far less sympathetic to the communists, and the party became divided

among itself.[138]

By the mid 1950's, membership was down to approximately 2,500 members from

its high of 20,000 in the late 30's.[139] Unlike communist parties and movements throughout

Latin America during this time period, the PCM participated in relatively tame actions that

mainly involved propaganda production and distribution, the goal of which was not to

bring communism to power in Mexico, but rather to advance the prestige of international

communism.[140] By the 1970's, the PCM was tired of repression at the hands of the

unsympathetic Mexican government. Rather than attempting a violent overthrow of

government, for which they had neither the resources nor the political capital, the PCM

decided to shift their objective away from the delusions of pushing the PRI to the left, to

instead work towards the creation of a democratic Mexican government and society.[141]

When the PCM opened itself up to participation from other left leaning parties and

organizations that were not strictly communist, they were able to have some success in

penetrating the Mexican government, even winning some seats in the legislature in the

mid-70's, which more than anything was a sign of the declining dominance of the PRI. [142]

The institutional strength of the Mexican government and the PRI were incredibly

effective in diminishing the power and influence of communism within Mexico. Though

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[137] Karl M. Schmitt, "Communism in Mexico Today," *Political Research Quarterly* 1962, 112,
http://www.jstor.org/stable/446101.
[138] Ibid
[139] Ibid
[140] Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller, *Radical Mexico*, 115-16.
[141] Barry Carr, "Mexican Communism 1968–1981: Eurocommunism in the Americas?," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 1985, 211, http://www.jstor.org/stable/157503.
[142] Ibid (212)

they were helped by the fact that there was never a strong communist presence in the first place, the Mexican government made sure that the communist party could not effectively disseminate its ideas to the Mexican public, often by shutting down communist printing presses or disrupting the postal service that carried the propaganda to its intended targets.[143] The institutional strength of the Mexican government is perhaps best shown by Cárdenas' use of the PCM to support his programs for land reform, followed by subsequent governments' denial of the PCM's legitimacy and right to exist within the Mexican state. Cárdenas used the PCM for the purpose of furthering the goals of the PRI and his government, even though its mandate was inherently opposed to the existing power structure. A less institutionally powerful government would never have dared to manipulate a communist party in this manner, during this time period, out of fear that the communist message could be inadvertently spread to the general public, no matter how little power they currently possessed within society. Without a credible threat to the Mexican state, the Mexican military had no reason feel threatened itself, or to get involved without direct requests from the government. The institutional strength of the Mexican government was able to easily control, manipulate, and repress communist movements within Mexico, using the military only when necessary, and removing fears of any real destabilizing threats from a sector that while relatively weak, still had a message with the potential to resonate with the Mexican public.

One final area of comparison will help to solidify our understanding of the differences in institutional strength between the Argentinean and Mexican governments during this time period, and how this strength affected the abilities of these respective

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[143] Karl M. Schmitt, *Communism in Mexico Today*, 115.

governments to subordinate their militaries to civilian control; the relationship with the US that each country had in this time period. After the start of the Cold War, the US began its policy of containment, which hoped to limit the spread of communism and the Soviet sphere of influence as much as possible. This strategy often included supporting repressive and dictatorial regimes as long as they were sufficiently anti-communist. Nowhere was this strategy more evident than in Latin America, where multiple dictatorial and military governments were helped or placed into power by the CIA and the US government largely without regard for the human rights abuses that these governments would go on to commit.

As political violence grew in Argentina during the late 1960's, the US sent a team to train elite squads in Argentina for anti-guerilla warfare. The mission of these groups was to combat subversion, and was seen as a way for the military to win the hearts and minds of the people.[144] Thus the US was already supporting the intrusion of the Argentinean military into the political realm during the military dictatorships of the 60's, and had provided a precursory validation of the military's intervention in 1976. Upon the return of democracy, the US likely provided financial assistance to the Triple A, Jose Lopez Rega's clandestine organization that fought outside the institutions of government against the far left extremist organizations within Argentina, legitimizing clandestine violence in Argentina even under a democratic state.[145]

The US had little to no faith that the institutions of Argentinean government would be strong enough to support themselves in the fight against communism, and thus they

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[144] Patrice J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 66-67.
[145] Ibid., 73-74.

supported organizations that would work to combat subversion outside of these traditional institutions. As the military had already proved itself institutionally capable and willing to take control of the Argentinean political sphere, the US trusted the institutionally strong military to act more than they trusted the democratically elected government, and likely supported the military coup in 1973, as well as implicitly supporting the political violence that followed it through the training that had been provided. Henry Kissinger, the US secretary of state at this time, is thought to have given approval for the coup, believing that the institutional strength and stability of the armed forces was better for US foreign interests than to take a chance with the unstable and institutionally weak democracy that was barely holding power.[146] While the military coup would likely have occurred with or without US approval, the support of the US for the military's intervention in politics shows how little faith they had in the strength of the legally elected Argentinean government. This can be reduced to a lack of faith in any strong civilian political and governmental institutions in Argentina, which made the US feel safer and justified in supporting Argentina's strongest, most established institution, the military, in its ascension to power, despite the atrocities that the military would inevitably come to commit.

In Mexico, it was quite common for promising officers to receive training from the US. In the late 1950's and early 1960's 41 percent of Mexico's generals had trained abroad, while only 5 percent of all officers were given the opportunity. Additionally, 90 percent of these generals received their foreign training from the US.[147] However, despite the large proportion of high-ranking officers in the Mexican army, there were never any attempts at

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[146] Patrice J. McSherry, *The First National Security State*, 81.
[147] Rodric A. Camp, *Generals and Politicians*, 126.

a military coup within Mexico after the 1920's. The extreme professionalization and discipline within the Mexican army meant that any supplemental training received abroad served only to enhance the professionalization of the officers who received it, rather than teaching the armed forces to protect Mexican society from internal enemies at all costs. The Mexican government's institutional strength and ability to monitor internal threats were enough to convince the US that its closest neighbors were safe from subversive threats even during moments of crisis such as the 1968 student protests. Mexican military professional values and training negated any US training that could otherwise have promoted an intervention into the Mexican political sphere, and ensured that the Mexican military maintained its undying allegiance to the office of the presidency. The US attitudes towards the Mexican military show that the high level of professionalization inspired by the institutional strength of the Mexican government, was enough to keep the US feeling safe in the Mexican civilian government's ability to ward off internal threats, and keep the country from falling prey to internal instability and threats.

Populist leaders in Argentina consolidated their power outside of government offices and institutions, which created a legitimate opening for the highly institutionalized military to enter the political arena. When subversive elements within society, including some of these populist movements themselves, threatened the established order, as understood by the armed forces, the military used its high level of institutionalization to become a dominant actor in the political sphere. The institutional weakness of Argentina's government is best demonstrated by the US support for the final military junta, accepting inevitable human rights abuses rather than trust the floundering and nearly powerless institutions of the civilian government to guard against communism and subversion. On

the flip side, the institutionalization of Mexico's political system included certain portions of civil society that have typically been seen as hotbeds of subversion within the government's official structure. The inclusion of labor unions within the government institutionalized the avenues for dissent available to this important portion of the Mexican public. The Mexican military recognized that the institutional strength of the government could be trusted to manage acceptable levels of opposition from within its own institutions, while snuffing out external dissent that superseded the tolerable levels. The confidence displayed by the US in its closest neighbor's ability to manage conflict within its own society demonstrates the strength of governmental institutions within Mexico, and the control that they were able to exert over society. The difference in governmental institutional strength between the two countries was the principal reason why Argentina fell into a pattern of military intervention in society while Mexico effectively subordinated its military to its civilian government.

Conclusions

This study has traversed the political histories of Mexico and Argentina in the hope of discovering what allowed the Mexican government to subordinate its military to civilian control, yet forced Argentina to become trapped in a vicious pattern of military intervention in government that had terrible consequences for its people. Despite a myriad of surface similarities between the two countries, there is one major difference that stands out; the existence or lack of strong political and governmental institutions. After the Mexican Revolution, Mexico's leaders consolidated the power of the new state into the

office of the president, and placed a clause in their constitution ensuring for regular

presidential succession to prevent a return to the ways of the Porfirian dictatorship.

Despite the fact that all of Mexico's initial Presidents were important revolutionary

generals, they used the power of the office to make key decisions that began the

professionalization and subordination of the Mexican military to the civilian government,

and specifically to the President who also held the title of commander and chief. The

strength of the presidency as an office, allowed the military to feel comfortable that their

interests would be best advanced by leaving the governance of Mexico to the civilian

sphere, focusing instead on their own professionalization and modernization efforts. They

willingly removed themselves from the political sphere, and after Miguel Alemán became

the first civilian president in 1946, the country never again saw a military leader to power.

It was the institutional strength of the government that ensured its capacity to manage

threats and implement policy initiatives, and this ability to rule legitimized the authority of

the government's institutions over society, and made the military feel secure in its

subordinate position.

The fall of the Rosas military dictatorship in Argentina did not lead to the

establishment of a strong system of political institutions as the collapse of the Porfirian

dictatorship did in Mexico. Rather Rosas' tendencies for populist mobilization and

dependence on personal relationships to govern established a pattern of populist

movements in Argentina whose legitimacies were based in popular support and cults of

personalities that the various movements' leaders worked hard to develop. This created a

set of political institutions that were based in the power and support for specific

movements and leaders, rather than a strong government whose institutional strength a

leader could use to back and legitimize their authority to institute and enforce their policies. A pattern of poor governance in the early 1900's encouraged Argentina's military to intervene whenever its interests became threatened to an unacceptable level, from which a vicious cycle emerged of institutionally weak governments replacing military dictatorships and subsequently finding themselves unable to establish the strong governmental institutions necessary to begin the subordination of the military, which would result in a return to military rule. Even as Perón secured the support of a strong majority of the population, he was unable to craft the government institutions necessary to legitimize his policies outside of his movement, and his threatening politics led to his eventual removal from office in the same ways that his predecessors had been shown the door. The institutional weakness of Argentina's various civilian governments made it impossible to establish any sort of legitimate authority over the institutionally strong and capable military, who used their own institutional strength as a legitimizing feature during their interventions in government. In comparing the cases of Mexico and Argentina, it is clear that the most important determinant in the civilian government's ability to subordinate the military to its control was the strength of its governmental institutions as they legitimized the idea and practice of civilian government and authority in the minds of society and the military.

Initial research seems to show that this conclusion could likely be supported on a broader conceptual scale. In India, after the end of British colonial rule, an institutionally strong government was founded along with the Congress Party, who's representatives, like the PRI, would come to dominate Indian politics for most of the second half of the 20th century. The dominance of the Congress Party in Indian government provided stability for

a country that was figuring out how to deal with the legacies of colonialism, and move on to form their own government.[148] Though the consolidation of power in the new government took time, India was fortunate in that all Indian officers serving in the army at the time of transition were young and posed no real political threat. As the army had been dependent on British support and leadership, it was institutionally far weaker than the new government, and there was no possibility that the armed forces could legitimately attempt to enter into the political realm while still performing their basic defense functions.[149] As the government and Congress Party consolidated their power over the state, the military was effectively subordinated to the government's rule through a combination of removal from government, reduction in prestige and value of a military career, which kept the upper classes and therefore interests out of the ranks of the military, and an emphasis on diplomacy in foreign relations rather than the use of force.[150] Additionally, the government's ability to legislate, as well as their willingness to involve the military in the repression of internal threats when necessary helped the military to trust the Indian government to protect the interests of the state.[151] The institutional strength that the Indian government came to develop helped the military trust that the government could rule effectively while protecting the stability of the Indian state, and was certainly a factor in India's ability to subordinate the armed forces to civilian control.

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[148] Marcus F. Franda, "The Organizational Development of India's Congress Party," *Pacific Affairs* 1962, 248, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2753185

[149] Stephen P. Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy," in *India's Democracy: An Anaylsis of Changing State-Society Relations*. (Princeton University Press, 1988), 105. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zv3bg.11

[150] Stephen P. Cohen, *The Military and Indian Democracy*, 105,116.

[151] Ibid., 111.

The victory of the communists in the Chinese Communist Revolution was as much a military one as it was political. Once in power, Chairman Mao recognized that the while the army was key to the Party's ability to maintain power, it was necessary that the armed forces be subordinate to the party itself in order to advance the goals of the party rather than some other sector of society.[152] As discussed earlier, communist societies are typically viewed as having party-army relations, when the military becomes an instrument of the party and the two organizations develop a symbiotic relationship, rather than any form of traditional civil military relations. While communist China generally followed this form of party army relations for much of its history, the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, in which a significant number of officers objected to the use of the armed forces in repressing the protestors, led high ranking party members to reevaluate the type of control that the party had over the army.[153]

Following Tiananmen Square, significant changes began to occur in the relations between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the military. Officers have now been promoted based more on merit than for political reasons, which has increasingly professionalized the officer corps.[154] Additionally, by 2003, no senior party leaders had any prior military experience, signifying a shift away from military involvement in key decisions for the Chinese state.[155] Finally, there has been a significant disengagement of China's military from internal security issues in favor of a larger focus on professionalization and foreign defense.[156] These changes were mandated by the CCP's

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[152] David L. Shambaugh, *Civil-Military Relations*, 16.
[153] Ibid., (13, 22, 24)
[154] Ibid., 13.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid., 47.

leadership, and enforced by the party's unquestioned authority within China. This

authority and ability to rule stems from the institutional strength of the CCP. Without a

strong institutional government whose decisions carry legitimacy in Chinese society, it

seems unlikely that the Chinese military would have willingly allowed itself to be removed

from the political sphere, especially since the decision to use the army in Tiananmen was

not widely supported. The institutional strength of the CCP gave legitimacy to its decisions,

and likely helped the military feel comfortable in removing itself from the political realm,

despite its high level of participation up until that point.

In Taiwan and South Korea, the development of strong democratic institutions in

which the political elites agreed not to involve the military as a political actor, as well as a

strong civil society helped subordinate the military to civilian control.[157] On the other

hand, despite the formal exit of the military from Indonesian politics, the military remains

an important political force. It is common for retired generals to serve in political office,

and civilian leaders commonly court military leaders for political support. All of this has

damaged the attempts to truly democratize the country and there has been little

establishment of strong governmental institutions outside of the military's influence.[158]

While more research certainly needs to be done on all of these cases, it seems clear that the

existence of strong political and governmental institutions are strongly correlated to the

subordination of a country's military. In Mexico, the development of these strong

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[157] Muthiah Alagappa, "Military and Democratic Development in Asia: A Complex Narrative," in *Military Engagement Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions Volume II, Regional and Country Studies*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 105. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt4cg8dn.8.

[158] Ibid., 106.

governmental institutions were the principal reason that the government was able to begin the professionalization and modernization efforts of the military, the success of which enabled the government to establish firm civilian control over the military. Argentina's dependence on populist political leaders tied the legitimacy of the government to particular movements and their leaders rather than to the institution of government itself. This made for a climate in which the armed forces could easily enter the political realm whenever their interests were threatened, and gave military governments essentially the same amount of legitimacy as the populist leaders, but with stronger institutions to back themselves up. The inability to form strong governmental and political institutions perpetuated this pattern of intervention, and was the main cause of repeated military interventions into the civilian sphere of government. More research may show that in all cases the existence or lack of strong governmental or political institutions has been the most important factor in determining a country's ability to subordinate its military to civilian control. The subordination of a country's military to its civilian government is key to producing a stable society, and in the cases of Mexico and Argentina, the level of development of government institutions was the most important factor in determining whether or not the civilian government would have success in subordinating the armed forces to its control.

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