

# THE DIRTY WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH: Recent Contributions on the Military and Politics in Argentina

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*DOSSIER SECRETO: ARGENTINA'S DESAPARECIDOS AND THE MYTH OF THE "DIRTY WAR."* By Martin Edwin Andersen. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993. Pp. 412. \$59.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

*I REMEMBER JULIA: VOICES OF THE DISAPPEARED.* By Eric Stener Carlson. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1996. Pp. 188. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

*EL DRAMA DE LA AUTONOMIA MILITAR: ARGENTINA BAJO LAS JUNTAS MILITARES.* By Prudencio García. (Madrid: Alianza, 1995. Pp. 585.)

*GAME WITHOUT END: STATE TERROR AND THE POLITICS OF JUSTICE.* By Jaime Malamud-Goti. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. Pp. 235. \$24.95 cloth.)

*NI LA CENIZA NI LA GLORIA: ACTORES, SISTEMA POLITICO Y CUESTION MILITAR EN LOS AÑOS DE ALFONSIN.* By Ernesto López. (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1994. Pp. 141.)

*INCOMPLETE TRANSITION: MILITARY POWER AND DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA.* By J. Patrice McSherry. (New York: St. Martin's, 1997. Pp. 408. \$45.00 cloth.)

*MILITARY REBELLION IN ARGENTINA: BETWEEN COUPS AND CONSOLIDATION.* By Deborah L. Norden. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996. Pp. 242. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.50 paper.)

*THROUGH CORRIDORS OF POWER: INSTITUTIONS AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN ARGENTINA.* By David Pion-Berlin. (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. Pp. 235. \$45.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

*THE ARMY AND POLITICS IN ARGENTINA, 1962-1973: FROM FRONDIZI'S FALL TO THE PERONIST RESTORATION.* By Robert A. Potash. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996. Pp. 547. \$55.00 cloth.)

Few events in the West since World War II have rivaled the devastating impact on civil and human rights of Argentina's Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. In the period from 1976 to 1983, better known as *la guerra sucia* ("the Dirty War"), security forces tortured and murdered at

least nine thousand but perhaps closer to twenty or thirty thousand individuals. The conduct of the military in these years—particularly the human rights abuses that the regime was responsible for committing—provoked tremendous domestic and international outcry and shriveled the status of the armed forces in Argentine society and politics.

How could a tragedy of such magnitude occur? How have Argentines dealt with the Dirty War in both personal and political terms? What impact did it have on ordinary citizens, politicians, and other major political actors? What lessons did Argentine men in uniform draw from the Proceso, the Malvinas or Falklands Islands War, and the tumultuous period of military trials and rebellions that followed? Are similar events likely to recur? The books under review address these and related questions. They range from historical accounts (Potash) to works of academic political science (López, Norden, and Pion-Berlin) to more journalistic renditions (Andersen, Carlson, Malamud-Goti, and McSherry). Together, these nine books give readers a good sense of the deep cleavages that have divided Argentine citizens, politicians, and the armed forces in recent decades; of the strife and violence that have marked political life; and of the immunity granted to many officers who have challenged the military hierarchy or civilian authority or both. These accounts differ, however, in the degree of optimism they express about the future of human rights and political liberties in Argentina and in the solutions they prescribe, either implicitly or explicitly, for strengthening Argentine democracy.

### *The Political Backdrop of the Proceso*

In *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1962–1973: From Frondizi's Fall to the Peronist Restoration*, Robert Potash offers insight into the historical roots of the events that occurred between 1976 and 1983. Potash depicts in remarkable detail the numerous intrigues in military and civilian circles as well as between the two spheres that plagued Argentine politics in these years. He also details the broader context in which they took place: a political system in which Peronism proved unsuppressible despite strong anti-Peronist elements in society and the military; major tensions and violent skirmishes between military factions (such as the Azules and the Colorados); and right-wing paramilitary groups and the eventual eruption of left-wing guerrilla operations. A picture emerges of a pathological political system destined to break down.

Further weakening Argentina's prospects for sustaining democracy and civilian rule from 1962 to 1973 and in subsequent years was the astonishing amount of officer insubordination tolerated by civilian executives as well as by top military commanders. For example, the timidity of President Arturo Illia (1963–1966) in attempting to minimize friction with the high command was so great that he ended up behaving in ways that validated

military autonomy and diminished his own constitutional authority: by accepting the service chiefs chosen by his predecessor rather than appointing new ones; by ceding excessively to the recommendations of military commanders regarding the promotion of high-level officers; and by failing to remove Army Commander General Pascual Pistarini, who openly defied the president (pp. 123, 142, 174). Defiance within the military chain of command was commonplace but was also detrimental to political stability. The weakness of subordination as a norm can be detected in the way that General Benjamín Rattenbach, Army Secretary under President José María Guido, depicted Lieutenant General Juan Carlos Onganía's rejection of his order to stop an army advance against the navy: "I believe he was not even aware that he had been insubordinate to me when he refused to carry out my order to halt the Army" (p. 99).

Overall, Potash's extensively documented work provides an excellent background for understanding the fault lines of political stability and civilian rule in Argentina in the 1960s and the decades to follow. The detailed portrayal of military factionalism and insubordination in *The Army and Politics in Argentina* sets an interesting stage for Deborah Norden's *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation*, which deals with parallel phenomena in a later period (from 1983 onward). Potash provides a mass of important facts that only a specialist with decades of research experience on the topic could have unearthed. Were it not for the extensive contacts that he managed to develop within the institution (a feat in itself), crucial information would have gone unrecorded. Yet at times Potash becomes so immersed in detailing the machinations and intrigues between political players in that era that the overarching content and importance of their disagreements gets lost. In this connection, *The Army and Politics in Argentina* would have benefited from punctuating long passages of historical detail with more general explanations of the events portrayed in order to arrive at a set of overall conclusions. Potash's book will stand nonetheless as an impressive piece of scholarship.

Prudencio García's *El drama de la autonomía militar: Argentina bajo las Juntas Militares* opens with the question of how an episode as horrific as the Proceso could have taken place only two decades ago in Argentina, arguably the most middle-class and educated industrial society in Latin America. In response, García takes a close look at military doctrine in the Southern Cone beginning in the 1950s and political factors specific to Argentina since that time, that is to say, at Peronism in its violent right-wing and left-wing incarnations. García examines in detail the military leadership's justification for the Dirty War at the time, the repression that took place from 1976 to 1983, and the role of the Malvinas-Falklands War in ending the dictatorship. He also considers major changes that have occurred within the armed forces and in civilian-military relations since 1983, including the emergence of groups of officers committed to strengthening

democratic accountability and civilian control. The book includes a theoretically oriented chapter that presents the views of various military sociologists on the Argentine case. It also provides a rare glimpse into the ideas and fate of legalistic officers who left the institution as a result of its conduct during the *Proceso*.

*El drama de la autonomía militar* constitutes one of the most comprehensive sources available on military interventionism in Argentina. García draws on an impressive array of interviews with protagonists on both sides of the drama: guerrilla leaders as well as military leaders and former presidents. The documentation he has amassed, presented selectively in chapters as well as in an appendix of more than a hundred pages, will not be easily rivaled. This excellent reference book offers a wealth of information organized in a systematic and accessible fashion.

While Potash and García focus almost exclusively on the domestic origins of political violence and instability in Argentina, Martin Edwin Andersen's *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the "Dirty War"* includes telling coverage of U.S. foreign policy toward Argentina during that period. U.S. policy vacillated from supporting the junta early on to promoting human rights under President Jimmy Carter to again supporting the regime under the administration of President Ronald Reagan.

The great myth of the Dirty War, Andersen argues, is that the guerrillas posed a real threat to the state. Argentine military and intelligence officials could not have doubted the actual weakness of the insurgency, given the fact that the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) had been decimated by the end of 1975 and several Montonero leaders had been neutralized. Anderson maintains, moreover, "U.S. intelligence officials knew early on the real size of the guerrilla threat and the stunning degree of Argentine military penetration in the leftist groups but remained silent and did nothing to bring the phony 'war' to a halt" (p. 14). Only with the Carter presidency and the appointment of Patricia Derian as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights did the U.S. government begin to promote human rights. Even then, it may well have sent mixed signals. Defense attachés and intelligence officials stationed in the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires found it difficult to get in step with this new policy orientation.

Andersen, a special correspondent for *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post* in the mid-1980s, based his narrative on dozens of interviews with Argentine citizens persecuted by the regime, families of the disappeared, former guerrillas, U.S. intelligence agents, and Argentine military officers. He also consulted recently declassified documents of the U.S. State Department. *Dossier Secreto* is journalistic rather than academic in style, focus, and documentation and is recommended reading mainly for nonspecialists. Beyond its discussion of the role of U.S. foreign policy, one of the book's most interesting and provocative aspects is its treatment of Montonero leader Mario Firmenich. Bringing to light new and controversial information

about the guerrilla leader, Andersen questions the genuineness of Firmenich's motives, suggesting a level of collaboration with the authorities not generally suspected and implicating him in the death of thousands of students and workers who were willing to follow his lead. On this subject, Andersen reveals a balance not easily detectable in the early pages of his book: although the Argentine security community and U.S. foreign policy and defense establishments went out of their way to exaggerate and distort the threat posed by the guerrillas, the guerrilla leaders themselves bear some share of the blame for the violence that led ultimately to the Proceso.

### *The Aftermath of the Proceso*

While the three works reviewed thus far trace the context of events leading up to the Dirty War, the books by Carlson, Norden, Pion-Berlin, López, Malamud-Goti, and McSherry cover its aftermath. They discuss how Argentines as individuals and families have coped with the personal losses they suffered, how politicians have responded to the military after the transition to democracy, and how Argentine society has dealt (or failed to deal) with the experience of the Proceso.

In *I Remember Julia: Voices of the Disappeared*, Eric Stener Carlson portrays the life and death of a young physician, wife, and mother-to-be who was kidnapped by agents of the military government in March 1977 from the clinic where she worked. Carlson traveled to Argentina in 1991 to work as a volunteer for the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense. At the site of a mass grave on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, the team uncovered the skeletons of more than three hundred people, many with obvious signs of torture and execution. Among them was "Julia," initially classified as "Skeleton Number 17." Julia was identified by the extensive dental work she had undergone, suture wires remaining from heart surgery, and pelvic bones bearing traces of childbirth, physical markers about which her brother had informed the authorities. He had worked doggedly since her kidnapping in 1977 to learn his sister's fate and find her remains, if only to achieve a sense of psychological closure for himself and their family. After locating her remains, giving her a proper burial and service, and promoting her memory through the testimonies set forth in this book, the family was ultimately able to confront Julia's death at last, renewing their own lives in the process. The fact that Julia's family felt privileged to be able to undergo this process of discovery and healing in a situation where most families of the disappeared remain ignorant of their loved ones' fate is sorrowful indeed.

From the ashes, Julia emerges as a vital and compassionate individual full of plans and goals. Carlson reconstructs her life through the poignant personal testimonies of friends, family members, colleagues, and fellow prisoners. The stories of friends and family reveal a child who ex-

celled in school, loved animals, and always wanted to be a doctor. Those of colleagues and fellow prisoners depict a committed and socially aware young physician engaged in the politics and social movements of the era. Carlson intersperses the testimonies of those who knew Julia intimately with commentaries by leaders representing major political and social groups—a politician, a human rights activist, a journalist, a prosecuting attorney in the trials of military officers, a priest, and others. Their commentaries enrich the picture of politics and social life portrayed by Potash and Andersen. A gripping and deeply moving book that brings home the depth of the human tragedy stemming from the Proceso, *I Remember Julia* contributes a critical dimension to understanding the Proceso that conventional works of history and social science cannot.

Whereas Carlson focuses on the personal, Deborah Norden, Ernesto López, and David Pion-Berlin all examine the realm of politics, specifically, government attempts to hold the military accountable for its actions and to reduce the institution's political influence in the aftermath of the Proceso. In addition to analyzing the effectiveness of these attempts, all three offer specific suggestions as to what policies civilian leaders should implement regarding the armed forces in the period following the transition.

Deborah Norden's thought-provoking and well-researched book, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation*, assesses government policy toward the military and military responses under President Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989) and the first administration of Carlos Menem (1989–1995). Her central argument is that the Alfonsín administration's efforts to diminish the political weight of the armed forces erred in also hurting the military in professional or strictly military terms. The damage done by these policies to institutional prestige (not the loss of power or budgetary privileges *per se*) provoked three military rebellions under Alfonsín's presidency. Consistent with Norden's thesis is the fact that the most successful uprisings (those attracting the strongest support among officers of different ranks and political persuasions) were precisely those in which the rebels' protestations and demands stayed closest to purely professional issues. The one rebellion that took place under President Menem (on 3 December 1990) drew the weakest following because it tried to elevate one group within the army to political prominence and wandered far from issues of central concern to the military as a whole.

Norden concludes that transitional democracies, rather than diminishing the military's ability to carry out external defense and other strictly military missions, should cultivate extant professional impulses within the services while limiting the institution's political capacity and challenging insubordination. In Argentina, these professional impulses inside the armed forces were considerable after the 1982 Malvinas-Falklands War, and they revealed the devastating effects of long-term political involvement on the military's war-fighting capabilities, particularly having held

power since 1976. In Norden's view, President Menem's policies toward the military have been better suited to the situation at hand. While keeping the institution's independent political power circumscribed and tolerating little dissent from officers, Menem has tried to incorporate the military into the state, according symbolic prestige to its contribution to external defense and involving the armed forces increasingly in international missions, namely U.N. peacekeeping.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the crux of Norden's argument and original research. Here she draws on numerous interviews with key participants and extensive archival research. Her detailing of military cleavages (summarized on p. 108) is instructive and reveals several intriguing parallels with those discussed by Potash for an earlier decade. One of the many strengths of these core chapters is their relevance to policy making. But two questions arise that Norden leaves unaddressed. First, how can governments realistically reward military professionalism when budgets are tight and external enemies absent or remote? How much can Menem's success in depoliticizing the military be attributed to factors other than his treatment of the institution as a valued part of the state? Specifically, is not Menem's greater acceptance among officers due partly to the fact that Alfonsín came first, initiated the difficult task of rolling back military influence and made considerable headway, thereby allowing Menem to appear as the lesser evil? In any case, *Military Rebellion in Argentina* is an impressive piece of scholarship that is well worth reading.

The perspective set forth by Ernesto López in *Ni la ceniza ni la gloria: Actores, sistema político y cuestión militar en los años de Alfonsín* dovetails in significant ways with the viewpoint advanced by Norden. This excellent work on the Alfonsín period is recommended reading for students of Argentina as well as those interested in military reform universally. López explains that subjective civilian control has been the mode of control historically pursued by Argentine political parties. Subjective control seeks to minimize military power by maximizing the relative power of civilian groups and institutions. Civilian actors define, oversee, and monitor military activities. Sometimes they politicize the military—or groups within it—in their own image. According to Samuel Huntington, "the maximizing of civilian power always means the maximizing of the power of some particular civilian group or groups" (1957, 80). Because of this connection and because civilian groups in Latin America have often supported military activism to advance and protect their own interests, "control" over the institution does not necessarily mean keeping officers out of politics. In fact, as López argues convincingly, the subjective mode of control has only fueled military interventionism (p. 34). He therefore advocates that Argentina adopt mechanisms of objective control, a strategy that promotes an independent professional military sphere based on the assumption that officers engaged in military maneuvers will become less interested in poli-

tics. Military modernization, based on technological improvements as well as advancements in training, organization, and leadership, helps create the conditions for objective control.

Like Norden, López argues that civilians who tried to reform the military during Alfonsín's presidency focused too exclusively on reducing the institution's ability to be a factor of political power. The prolonged focus on the military trials and the failure to establish credible and honorable missions for the armed forces prevented mechanisms of objective control from developing. So too did divisions among civilians with respect to "the military question," with Peronists and Radicals alike continuing to search within the armed forces for reliable allies. With respect to the question of whether government leaders have made progress in learning how to deal with the military (as in reducing the institution's political influence without provoking unrest), López is more pessimistic than Norden. Part of the reason is that Norden's analysis extends beyond Alfonsín into the first Menem term in office. The greater optimism she expresses is based on precisely the same kinds of developments—the move toward a more objective form of control—that López advocates for Argentina but finds entirely lacking in the Alfonsín period.

In *Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina*, David Pion-Berlin advances an innovative thesis to explain the loss of military power in different issue areas since 1983. By deriving his argument from the more general approach of institutionalism, Pion-Berlin links his study to theoretical debates in political science and thus overcomes the frequent insularity of military studies. The underlying premise of the work is that political power does not translate automatically into policy but is instead mediated through governing institutions. The higher the concentration of authority and decision-making autonomy enjoyed by civilian executives, the more able they will be to reduce military influence. Conversely, the greater the dispersion of authority among different civilian actors, the more the armed forces can preserve their privileges by playing these actors off against one another. Invoking the institutional variables of authority and autonomy, Pion-Berlin explains the considerable success of post-authoritarian civilian governments in reducing defense spending; their modest success in human rights policy; and their virtual ineffectiveness in defense reform (integrating the services and eliminating unnecessary support structures). By differentiating among issue areas, he captures the disjunctive manner in which democratization tends to proceed.

Pion-Berlin regards "the military question" as subject to reform: if military influence is excessive, institutions should be reconfigured to give civilians more leverage over the armed forces. In this respect, he is more optimistic about the promise of civilian supremacy in Argentina and the rest of Latin America than are many of the authors featured in this essay. Ironically, however, the policy formula that Pion-Berlin prescribes to ad-

vance this goal—concentrated executive power—presents a dilemma for the advancement of democracy per se.

Two questions of substantive importance arise from reading *Through Corridors of Power*. First, would concentrated executive authority not have the opposite effect that Pion-Berlin tends to assume if a given civilian executive were not inclined to reduce military power? Second, can institutional configurations fully account for the relative success of civilian policy making in the issue areas that Pion-Berlin explores? Perhaps policy content rather than policy context accounts for the ability of civilians to make greater inroads into defense spending than defending human rights or restructuring defense? In all likelihood, civilian motivations for economizing on military expenditures vastly outstrip civilian incentives to reorganize the defense sector. By the same token, the military's resistance to the prospect of officers being imprisoned for human rights abuses undoubtedly exceeded its rejection of declining budgets and salaries.

Notwithstanding these questions, *Through Corridors of Power* offers a compelling prism for viewing civilian policy making toward the military and thus makes a significant contribution to the literature on civil-military affairs in Latin America. Superbly researched and written, it draws on vast primary documents as well as interviews with top officials, including President Alfonsín. The book also includes an excellent chapter on comparative cases.

### *Have Change and Learning Taken Place?*

A question addressed by several of the books under review concerns whether and to what extent the major political players in Argentina have learned from the country's tumultuous past and taken steps to prevent repeating the horrific events that occurred in the Dirty War. It is to be hoped that the average Argentine citizen has become less tolerant of arbitrary government actions and the use of violence by wide-ranging groups in society, both long-standing features of the Argentine political system. Were uniformed leaders and their subordinates sobered enough by the Proceso and the subsequent military uprisings to develop a greater commitment to democracy, human rights, and civilian control? The books yet to be discussed arrive at divergent conclusions about the progress that Argentina has made toward developing a political system in which basic civil and human rights are respected and civilian control is expected by those in uniform.

Has the experience of the Dirty War inoculated Argentine society against political violence and arbitrary state conduct? Jaime Malamud-Goti, an adviser to President Alfonsín on human rights issues, clearly thinks it has not. In *Game without End: State Terror and the Politics of Justice*, Malamud-Goti argues that the Proceso had little impact on ordinary Argentine citizens. The way in which the issues of blame and punishment for

misdeeds committed during the Dirty War were handled limited its impact. In Malamud-Goti's view, the problem in Argentina is incorrectly conceived as "the military question." The more fundamental problem rests with the prevalence in the larger society of values that are antithetical to democracy and human rights. The persistence of these values can be perceived in voters' support for civilian leaders with autocratic views and in the electoral appeal of former officers like Carapintada leader Aldo Rico and General Domingo Bussi, who were accused of widespread torture in the province of Tucumán during the dictatorship.<sup>1</sup>

Malamud-Goti argues that because the trials conducted during Alfonsín's presidency focused exclusively on the military, they were misguided. Post-authoritarian governments have failed to assign blame to other guilty parties, which include the Catholic Church, right-wing vigilante groups, the Peronist Alianza Argentina Anticomunista, the Montoneros, and the ERP. In doing so, these governments have perpetuated the tendency of many Argentines to view the world as consisting of allies versus enemies and to avoid taking responsibility for their own actions. As a result, Argentina's post-authoritarian leaders missed a critical opportunity to lay the foundations of what Malamud-Goti terms "a rights-based democracy," one less prone to violence and arbitrariness.

*Game without End* prompts readers to contemplate a number of thorny issues on the assignment of blame and the meting out of punishment for widespread atrocities committed under previous governments. Should subordinate officers be made to pay for crimes that they were ordered to carry out by their superiors? To what extent should justice focus on punishing the perpetrators of misdeeds versus providing redress for the victims of abuse?<sup>2</sup> What should be the goal of punishment—retribution or deterrence? These and related dilemmas have emerged at the forefront of debate in this third wave of democratization. While Malamud-Goti's criticism of the human rights trials as they were conducted under Alfonsín are thought-provoking, they would be more valid had he provided a clearer blueprint of the path that he thinks the government should have taken to create a society more likely to sustain and advance democracy over the long run. *Game without End* would be on stronger empirical ground had he included survey or other data as support for his somewhat disputable claims about the lack in change of values among Argentines. While some

1. Shortly after his pardon by President Menem in October 1989, Aldo Rico managed to obtain 11 percent of the vote for governor of the province of Buenos Aires. Domingo Bussi received 43 percent of the vote in his bid for the governorship of Tucumán province in 1991, losing the race to his Peronist opponent by only 3 percentage points.

2. In this connection, the Argentine government plans to issue three billion dollars in bonds to compensate the families of those who were "disappeared" under the dictatorship. Given the extensive documentation that families will be required to provide, it is not yet clear how many will actually receive the indemnity payments.

of them remain disturbingly unshaken by the country's violent and conflict-ridden past, it is difficult to imagine that the average Argentine who lived through the Proceso did not become convinced of the need to avoid repeating such a tragedy.

Robert Potash, employing a long-term historical perspective and arguably more pragmatic criteria than Malumud-Goti, expresses a contrasting opinion. He maintains that the years since President Alfonsín's inauguration have in fact witnessed a strengthening of Argentines' faith in democracy. He points to various indicators: numerous rounds of elections to fill congressional and gubernatorial offices; a presidential election in 1989 that resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from the Radical incumbent to the Peronist victor; and the complete absence of civilian support for the series of military uprisings that took place between 1987 and 1990. Potash asserts, "Indeed, the evidence of recent history suggests that the very sectors that had supported one or another of the military coups that occurred between 1930 and 1976 have learned that they had little to gain and much to lose from a military regime" (p. 510).

On the issue of whether the military has learned from the past and made a commitment to change, distinct viewpoints emerge as well. Potash and García maintain that significant improvements have indeed taken place. Positive public reaction to the imprisonment of men charged with abusing human rights or participating in the rebellions convinced leading officers of how much many Argentines despised the armed forces and the need to win back public support if the institution was ever to become integrated into the country's new democracy. According to Potash and García, this recognition goes a long way in explaining the low political profile kept by leading officers in recent years and their acceptance of policies like reductions in defense expenditures and the elimination of obligatory military service.

Pion-Berlin agrees with Potash's observations about the current military leadership's adherence to democratic processes and procedures that have constrained its reach. But he recognizes a distinction between respecting the rules and swearing allegiance to them—and between ceasing to engage in provocative acts (such as saber rattling, rebellions, and coups) and fully accepting civilian control. Pion-Berlin therefore does not reject altogether the possibility of future military subversion. Lacking thus far in the military's adaptation to the new democracy is a profound reorientation in values. Most sectors within the military have yet to engage in the kind of critical self-examination required for fundamental reform. Pion-Berlin concludes nevertheless that significant strides have been made toward attaining civilian supremacy and more are occurring. As he reminds readers, "Democracies must crawl before they can walk, and walk before they can run" (p. 220).

The analyst most critical of the armed forces and most pessimistic

about the future of Argentine democracy is Patrice McSherry, author of *Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina*. She measures progress against an ideal standard rather than a deep understanding of Argentina's admittedly pathological past. For example, rather than recognizing that Army General Martín Balza's public *mea culpa* for the institution's conduct during the Dirty War constituted a remarkable break with historical precedent, she criticizes the fact that not all the commanders in chief have followed suit.

While presenting one's own normative evaluation is legitimate, misrepresenting the facts is not. In this regard, McSherry goes so far as to charge that post-authoritarian Argentina, which she disqualifies as a "guardian democracy" (p. 270), engaged in practices that reflected a "continuity of dirty war methods" (p. 173). These claims, which rest on incidents ranging from the hazing of conscripts to the harassment by unidentified agents of congressional representatives who issued a bill regulating intelligence activities, are tendentious and unfounded. Even though post-authoritarian Argentina has witnessed more incidents of police brutality, right-wing terrorism, and military involvement in civilian intelligence operations than are commonplace in most democracies (certainly more than most champions of civil liberties and democratic accountability would find acceptable), the kind of systematic terror that the state promoted during the Dirty War has clearly abated since 1983. To suggest otherwise is seriously misleading.

Why, McSherry asks, has the Argentine military not been forced to adapt more to the new democratic era? Why has the institution not undergone more fundamental changes in the way it views its past and present role, socializes members, and presents itself publicly? In partial answer to this question, McSherry blames President Alfonsín. Although he was well positioned, at least initially, to launch a frontal assault on the institution, McSherry charges that he caved in to intimidation and compromised too much with men in uniform. She is also highly critical of Alfonsín's endorsement of the Punto Final and "due obedience" legislation, which confined prosecution to the junta members and allowed most of the officers who participated in the Dirty War to go free. McSherry further dismisses the importance of the trials as merely "symbolic" (p. 121). The clear implication is that the government could have held out further. Yet what alternative paths it could have taken in the face of marked discontent and restiveness in the ranks is an issue she evades addressing.

McSherry expresses even greater disapproval in *Incomplete Transition* of President Menem's dealings with the military: "From the outset Menem augmented military political capabilities and utilized these capabilities to fortify his own power" (p. 4). Menem certainly has pursued a highly pragmatic strategy vis-à-vis the armed forces: conceding when challenging its members promised to maintain or even fuel civil-military

tensions (as over human rights), and standing firm when it appeared possible to prevail (as over the budget) (see Hunter 1998). Similarly, Menem has left various matters of importance to the hierarchy itself, including the disciplining of insubordinate junior officers and the reform of military education and socialization.<sup>3</sup> Yet the assertion that Menem has gone so far as to increase the military's political role and resources is unfounded. Neither McSherry nor any of the other authors under review here provides evidence that would substantiate this claim.

One wonders how to explain such strong divergences in viewpoints. The often implicit criteria that individual authors use in assessing progress account for part of the variations in their views on how far Argentina has come and how far it needs to go. For some, the reference point is Argentina's recent past. For others, it is other Latin American countries or the advanced industrial world. For still others, the measuring stick is a theoretical ideal. Another baseline for judgment consists of the opportunities precluded or exhausted by poor civilian decision making on the military (the counterfactual or "what could have been"). The more rigorous the criteria for conduct compatible with democratic governance and civilian control, the less the armed forces are judged to have changed. In any case, greater conceptual clarification regarding the question of progress promises to be at least as important as undertaking more empirical research to sort out the validity of the various positions summarized here.

#### *Suggestions for Further Research*

When read together, the nine books reviewed here provide a comprehensive look at the role of the military in Argentine politics in recent decades. The picture that emerges reveals a middle-class Latin American country where a once-factionalized but powerful and arrogant military intervened repeatedly in a fragmented political system over the course of several decades, overstepped all bounds during one period, and subsequently lost political authority and economic status. After a turbulent period of adjustment, the military was forced to accept civilian authority. Although most of the works focus exclusively on Argentina, many touch on themes of broader interest and relevance to students of democratic breakdowns, authoritarian regimes, democratization, and civil-military relations.

What should be the next steps in research on the Argentine military? Two major gaps exist in the literature at present. The first concerns the question of change within the military institution. The extant literature focuses squarely on the public behavior of the officer corps, revealing that they no longer intervene directly in politics or challenge civilian authority outwardly. The military has retreated from the front lines, for tactical rea-

3. On the issue of military education and the limited reforms undertaken in this sphere, see López (pp. 117–22) and Norden (pp. 95–96).

sons at least, and accepted a degree of subordination not previously seen. This acceptance has meant suffering a deterioration in economic as well as political status. But have the armed forces changed in more fundamental ways that will lead them to remain apolitical and accept civilian control under all circumstances? For example, have senior officers undergone serious self-examination and rethinking of their past conduct? Have they begun to socialize and educate cadets in ways that instill respect for the rule of law? What kind of individual now seeks to become an officer, and how does this self-selection bode for the future of the armed forces? Responding to these many questions requires penetrating the institution, which in many ways remains "a black box."

Unpacking the black box will be a tall order. To some extent, the military's outward conduct provides cues as to what may be happening on the inside. They need to be supplemented by more direct evidence, however. Research should be carried out that taps the attitudes of officers. Such work could determine whether they have discarded notions about the superiority of their own norms compared with those of the civilian world; whether they have developed an unconditional rather than a merely tactical adherence to civilian control; and whether they have acknowledged that they are accountable to the public rather than operating above the law. The only researcher to have surveyed the attitudes and role beliefs of Argentine military officers in a direct and systematic way until now is Samuel Fitch, whose results have appeared in his new book (Fitch 1998).

Participant observation of interactions among officers, especially of the ways in which superior officers deal with cadets and junior officers, would yield interesting insights as well. Numerous questions merit asking. In their daily conduct as well as in formal instruction, what messages do high-ranking officers transmit to underlings about the goals and values of the institution? What do they signal to junior officers about the limits of obedience? How does the hierarchy represent the institution's past involvement in overthrowing democratically elected governments and committing human rights abuses—as justifiable at the time or inexcusable even under the circumstances? Fieldwork inside the Argentine military is necessary to get a handle on these important questions. But even an institution that has undergone some degree of renovation and tried to reach out to the civilian world can be expected to remain guarded about outsiders entering its inner corridors and gathering data on these kind of queries.<sup>4</sup>

The answers to these and related questions are key to how the military will behave under different economic and political circumstances. Present conditions in Argentina include an economy on the rebound after forty years of decline, relatively high levels of social and political stability,

4. A young Brazilian anthropologist conducted a study of the Brazilian army academy by living alongside cadets for three months (see Castro 1990). The fact that his father was a high-ranking officer evidently helped him gain privileged access to the institution.

a society weary of state arbitrariness and domestic strife, and military leadership acutely aware of the need to regain the public's faith. But these circumstances do not fully test the military's commitment to political neutrality and subordination. If underlying attitudes have not changed significantly, it is worthwhile pondering how the economic performance of future civilian governments, the social stability they can ensure, and the levels of corruption associated with them will affect the political influence of the military. Will economic failure or rampant corruption possibly reopen the gates to military interventionism?

The second major gap in the literature concerns the military vis-à-vis political economy issues. Most recent literature on the Argentine armed forces concentrates on their evolving political role. Yet highly significant changes in the military's economic role remain understudied.<sup>5</sup> Since the early decades of the twentieth century, the military has been one of the main agents of economic modernization in Argentina. The model of development advocated by the officer corps, import-substitution industrialization (ISI), required extensive state intervention in production and finance to insulate the domestic economy from global competition. Motivated largely by the desire for autonomy in manufacturing military equipment, leading officers promoted the growth of strategic industries like steel, petroleum, chemicals, and petrochemicals. Fabricaciones Militares, a producer of arms and other heavy industrial goods, represented the pinnacle of their involvement. The emergence of neoliberal economics and the extensive privatization it occasioned in the 1980s rolled back the military's involvement in industrial production. What have been the consequences of privatization for arms production and procurement? How did economic reformers obtain sufficient military consent to enact neoliberalism? Has the career leap from active-duty service into the ranks of heavy industry been severed as a result of privatization, and if so, with what consequences? These and other questions raised here promise to lead scholars of the Argentine military down new and intriguing paths.

5. A notable exception is Acuña and Smith (1995).

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