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MILITARY STRATEGY

STRUCTURING FORCES IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS

By CR Ignacio García Solorzano

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Operation Welcome

By André Luiz de Melo Franco

MILITARY STRATEGY

Rhizomatic Wars

By Marcelo Daniel Pitrella

MILITARY STRATEGY

Air logistics in Antarctica

By Pablo Renzo Pereyra, Ernesto
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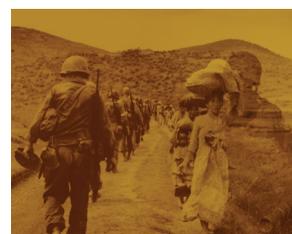
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THE REFORM OF THE PLA OF CHINA

MILITARY MODERNIZATION AND POLITICAL CONTROL

By **DR. JORGE E. MALENA**

Keywords:

- > China
- > People's Liberation Army
- > Military Reform
- > Xi Jinping

Introduction

The recent purges of China's senior military leadership have reignited the question of how firmly President Xi Jinping exercises control over the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China¹.

Until recently, Xi Jinping was portrayed as the most uncompromising Commander-in-Chief of the PLA since the era of Mao Zedong. However, in recent months, that public image has shown some cracks. A little more than twelve years after assuming the presidency of the Central Military Commission (hereafter, CMC), Xi has purged former vice chairmen of the CMC, more than fifty active-duty officers holding the rank of major general or above, the top leadership of the Rocket Force, the Minister of Defense, and has retired the head of the CMC's Political Work Department (whose function is to maintain the Party's control over the armed forces).

In some media outlets, these dismissals have been explained on the grounds that Xi may have begun to lose control over the armed forces. Such claims may be fanciful or ill-intentioned, but they raise the following question: Is Xi firmly in command of the PLA?

The political dynamics within China's military establishment are not an easy object of study, given their high degree of secrecy. Nevertheless, there are reliable sources through which the issue can be assessed, addressing matters such as purges, appointments, organizational changes, and the like. The picture that emerges from the evidence provided by these sources is that Xi Jinping has achieved relative success in reaffirming his leadership over the PLA, though this has entailed accepting certain limits.

This article begins with an analysis of the purges of senior military officials and then describes the combination of measures that Xi has employed since assuming power over the PLA in 2012 to exert control over the armed forces. Subsequently, it examines the limits of these measures and assesses that Xi has had to respect certain degrees of autonomy as well as other institutional interests

1. It is worth noting that the Armed Forces (AF) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) are officially designated as the "People's Liberation Army" (PLA). For this reason, in the present work the terms "AF" and "PLA" will be used interchangeably to refer to the armed forces of the PRC. When referring specifically to the land component of the PLA, the term "the Army" will be employed.



of the PLA. The text concludes by considering the effects of these decisions on the PLA's readiness, the relationship between the Party and the armed forces, and Xi's future capacity to maintain control over the PLA.

Political Tools

The purges of senior officers have constituted an important instrument employed by Xi Jinping to exert control over the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Although investigations into high-ranking officials for acts of corruption have taken place during both of his terms in office, there are two periods of particularly intense activity.

The first, between 2014 and 2016, included the prosecution of former vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission (CMC), General Xu Caihou and General Guo Boxiong, as well as the removal of more than fifty active-duty officers holding the rank of major general or above. Among the latter, notable cases included the Director of the General Political Department, General Zhang Yang, and the Chief of the General Staff Department, General Fang Fenghui (Cai, 2024).

These investigations contributed to the cleansing of the PLA and the consolidation of Xi's control, paving the way for his structural reforms of the PLA between 2015 and 2016, as they sent an unequivocal signal to the military that resistance would not be tolerated (McCauley, 2015).

The second wave of purges began in the summer of 2023. In August 2023, nine officers were removed from their positions as PLA representatives in the National People's Congress (China's legislative body) under suspicion of corruption². Most of them were linked to the Rocket Force—responsible for China's nuclear deterrence and its land-based ballistic and cruise missiles—or to the Equipment Development Department, the body in charge of PLA acquisitions.

The most prominent case involved the former commander of the Rocket Force, General Wei Fenghe, who had also served as Minister of Defense. Among the senior officials suspected of corruption linked to the Equipment Development Department was General Li Shangfu, who had led the department from 2017 to 2022 and subsequently replaced Wei Fenghe as Minister of Defense. In June 2024, the Politburo expelled both Wei and Li from the Communist Party and referred their cases to the military courts on charges of "accepting large sums of money" and "obtaining benefits" for themselves and their families (Xinhua, 27/6/24).

In November 2024, Admiral Miao Hua, who led the Political Work Department (PWD) and was a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC), was expelled from the Party on suspicion of "serious disciplinary violations," a term that typically refers to corrupt practices (Xinhua, 28/11/24).

It is worth noting that the PWD is the successor to the former General Political Department and thus inherited the function of Party control within the PLA. To this end, the PWD oversees the operation of Party committees embedded at every level of the military structure. Through the exercise of this role, it plays a central part in decisions regarding the careers of military personnel. During the second wave of purges, several executives of state-owned enterprises engaged in military equipment production were also investigated (Ji, 2024).

Institutional Tools

In addition to corruption investigations, Xi Jinping implemented organizational and personnel appointment measures to exercise control over the PLA. The main organizational change was the dissolution of the four General Departments, which had already

been affected by corruption prior to Xi's arrival, and their replacement with a new CMC structure (Wuthnow & Saunders, 2024).

The new structure incorporated separate offices for political work (responsible for the political commissar system and control over promotions), disciplinary inspection (responsible for anti-corruption investigations), financial auditing, and military prosecution. These agencies, created following the reforms, report directly to the CMC, providing Xi with independent channels to gather information on PLA officers, deter noncompliance with both political and professional obligations, control the management of financial resources, and sanction offenders.

Xi has also actively intervened in personnel appointments. During and after the 2015–2016 reforms, he promoted the rotation of commanders and political commissars to weaken patronage networks and prevent corrupt practices (McCauley, 2015). As a result, commanders no longer maintained long-term relationships with the political commissars assigned to their units, nor did they have strong ties with their superiors or with the officers under their command.

Although the rotation of senior officers was not a novel practice during Xi Jinping's era, he became directly involved in the process. According to reports, he personally participated in the selection of candidates up to the level of army group commander, dedicating half a day per week in his CMC office to this task (Cai, 2024).

Similarly, Xi used his appointment powers to place trusted senior officers in key positions. Apparently, Xi personally knew a higher proportion of the officers he promoted to the rank of general or appointed as members of the CMC compared to his predecessors, Jiang Zemin and

In addition to the anti-corruption investigations, Xi Jinping adopted organizational and personnel appointment measures to exercise control over the PLA. The most significant organizational change was the dissolution of the four general departments.

Hu Jintao. His method involved selecting officers with whom he had interacted during his previous political career at the provincial level (Mattingly, 2024).

At the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held in October 2022, Xi retained General Zhang Youxia, a long-standing close collaborator, as vice chairman of the CMC, despite Zhang having surpassed the established retirement age (Wuthnow, 2022). Another trusted associate is Zhong Shaojun, a civilian aide whom Xi brought with him to help manage the CMC General Office—which functions both as an access gatekeeper and as the executive arm for Xi and other CMC members—and who held the rank of senior colonel. Zhong was subsequently promoted to major general and appointed director of the General Office (Wong, 2015).

In 2024, Zhong was further promoted to lieutenant general and named political commissar of the National Defense University, a position that could serve as a launching platform for CMC membership. His alleged successor as director of the General Office is Fang Yongxiang, who spent most of his career in the 31st Army Group, based in Fujian, where he may have

come into contact with Xi (Sing Tao Daily, 2024).

To reinforce the Maoist principle that “the Party commands the gun” and to emphasize the centrality of anti-corruption campaigns, Xi also convened two significant political work meetings: in Gutian in November 2014 (Mulvenon, 2015) and in Yan’an in June 2024. At the Yan’an meeting, Xi reaffirmed the Party’s “absolute” control over the PLA, urging officers to “eradicate the conditions that favor the proliferation of corruption” (Xinhua, 19/6/24). Through these initiatives, the chairman of the CMC (and also Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in his capacity as President of the PRC) sent a clear signal that he was not only combating corruption but also demanding the PLA’s subordination to civilian authority.

Limits of Measures Implemented by Xi

Despite Xi Jinping’s use of coercive measures, there are limits to their effective application. Xi has initiated purges to remove officers aligned with his rivals and to displace those accused of corruption, but the scope of these dismissals has been limited, affecting only a small percentage of the thousands of generals who have served during his two and a half terms.

Several factors may explain this situation: Xi may have feared that excessive purges could provoke retaliation against him; he may have been concerned about the impact on military readiness; or he may have sought only to eliminate the most serious offenders. From an organizational perspective, the replacement of the General Departments with a broader set of control mechanisms aimed to improve management, although some problems persist. A fundamental weakness is that oversight of finances and the political commitment of the armed forces remains in the hands of the PLA itself.

Xi did not impose external controls or checks and balances, such as the appointment of civilian disciplinary inspectors or financial auditors to eradicate malpractice. Such changes might have generated excessive resentment among senior officers or proved too difficult to implement. Instead, Xi relied on members of the former General Departments—many of whom were ethically compromised—to monitor other officers (Lin & Lu, 2023).

2. It is worth noting that the former Air Force commander, General Ding Laihang, was among the nine individuals expelled from the National People’s Congress; however, in his case, no formal charges were brought against him.

To reinforce the Maoist principle that “the Party commands the gun” and to underscore the centrality of anti-corruption campaigns, Xi also convened two major political work meetings. Through these initiatives, (...) he sent a clear message that he was not only combating corruption but also demanding the PLA’s subordination to civilian authority.

There are also limits to Xi’s use of his appointment powers to constrain the bureaucracy. The fact that many of the targets of the second round of purges held sensitive positions and had been appointed by Xi himself is evidence that the selection processes were flawed. Likewise, the rotation of officers likely reduced opportunities for corruption in some units, but such rotations were not applied uniformly.

In fact, a considerable group of senior officers based in Beijing were not rotated: approximately 40% of the three- and four-star generals assigned to CMC departments in 2021 had not left the capital in the past decade (Wuthnow, 2022). These officers may have remained in their positions because they possessed the specialized professional knowledge required for their roles, or because their rotation would have been difficult to implement. In any case, it is not surprising that corruption persisted in the Equipment and Political Work departments.

Similarly, Xi had to follow certain courses of action to secure the support of the PLA, for example, by respecting its interests at both the individual and institutional levels. Regarding senior officers, Xi adhered to prevailing norms, rarely allowing generals to be promoted

without meeting the required time-in-rank, and permitting them to remain in service beyond the normal retirement age. Exceptions included Zhang Youxia and the appointment of He Weidong as vice chairman of the CMC in 2022 (who, as a theater commander, bypassed membership in the CMC to assume the vice chairmanship) (Wuthnow, 2022).

Consequently, those who waited their turn were rewarded, a circumstance that satisfied the junior officer corps. Moreover, during the reforms, no senior officer was displaced due to unit restructuring. Instead, in a move likely intended to secure support for the restructuring, new positions were identified for senior commanders, allowing them to remain in service until retirement, including posts in the temporary military region “transition office,” with the corresponding rank.

At the component level, Xi was careful not to antagonize the Army, which remains the largest branch of the PLA. The ground forces could have been the main losers of Xi’s reforms, as they were reduced by 300,000 personnel and lost five of their eighteen army groups (Blasko, 2019). However, Xi offered his senior officers compensation in terms of position and prestige:

he allowed Army generals to continue holding leadership posts, including most of the top positions in the theater commands and CMC departments, and three of the four current CMC members come from this branch.

The only current officer who does not belong to the Army is General Zhang Shengmin, who wears the uniform of the Rocket Force. However, Zhang began and spent much of his career in the Army before being transferred mid-career to the former Second Artillery Force, the predecessor of the Rocket Force.

In various ways, Xi has also respected the PLA as an institution. The Army continued to enjoy budgets that increased above official GDP growth, as occurred in 2024, when military spending rose by 7.2% compared to a 5% increase in GDP (Military and Security Developments, 2024). Allowing such expenditures serves not only to help the PLA achieve modernization goals but also to compensate military personnel.

As part of the reform process, thousands of mid-career officers were discharged, but Xi mitigated the impact by implementing policies designed to ensure their access to civilian employment and by creating a new Ministry of Veterans Affairs (Ma & Chen, 2019). For officers who

remained in the PLA, he granted a 40% pay increase (Chan, 2021).

What is the primary underlying reason for these changes?

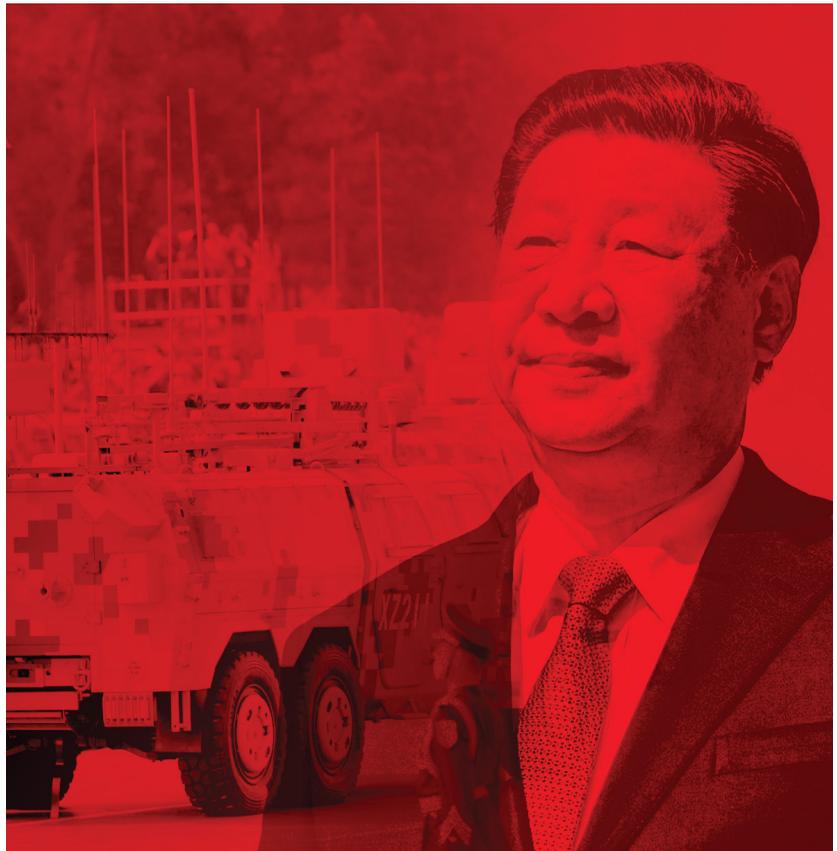
Internal power struggles and corruption are endemic in Leninist regimes, just as purges serve a political purpose. Therefore, control over the armed forces is vital for maintaining power.

Although Xi likely has no significant rivals within the CPC, the existence of internal power struggles cannot be ruled out. The two waves of purges mentioned above were directed at two power groups within the Party (both of which have extensions within the PLA): the Shaanxi³ faction and the Fujian clique⁴.

The current CMC is composed of five senior military officers in addition to Xi: General Zhang Youxia and General Zhang Shengmin, both from Shaanxi Province. General Liu Zhenli is an affiliate of the Shaanxi faction due to his relationship with General Zhang Youxia, under whose command he served during the Sino-Vietnamese War. The other group consists of General He Weidong and Admiral Miao Hua, who worked with Xi when he was a provincial official in Fujian (Tran & Zhang, 2025).

The anti-corruption campaign in the PLA, as mentioned above, can be divided into two distinct waves: the first began in 2015, while the second began in 2023 and continues to the present. Military personnel linked to the Shaanxi faction and the Fujian clique, respectively, were caught up in the second wave. During the initial stage of the second wave, the main targets were members of the Rocket Force, the Air Force, the Strategic Support Force, and the aerospace industry, who had ties to leaders of the Shaanxi faction, such as Defense Minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor, General Wei Fenghe.

General Li Shangfu was replaced by a member of the Fujian clique, Admiral Dong Jun, indicating



that factional interests played an important role in the reorganization of military personnel (Radio Free Asia, 24/11/23).

After a brief pause, the purges intensified in November 2024, amid rumors that Dong Jun was under investigation and the announcement that Admiral Miao Hua had been suspended. The PLA Navy became the primary focus of corruption investigations. The Fujian clique, which had benefited from the previous round of purges, became the target of the new raids (Erickson, 2024).

There is speculation that General Zhang Youxia was testing his strength following the fall of his followers. This interpretation is supported by a series of meetings that General Zhang organized with senior PLA officers at the end of 2024, from which Xi was notably absent (Lam, 2024).

What might be Zhang's motives for these initiatives? Party sources provide clues pointing to a power struggle. In December 2024, Xi Jinping published an article in the Party journal *Qiushi*, emphasizing that the first step of the revolution is "to

3. The origin of this faction lies in the province of the same name (Shaanxi), not only because it was there that Xi Jinping's father—the communist revolutionary Xi Zhongxun—was born, raised, and developed his legendary political and military career, but also because it was in Shaanxi where Xi Jinping himself began his own political career in the first half of the 1970s. For this reason, a considerable number of CCP cadres from that province supported Xi Jinping's subsequent rise within the Party structure, and—upon his entry into the Politburo of the

Central Committee—the so-called "Shaanxi faction" came to be identified as his power base.

4. The Fujian faction was formed by Party cadres who allied themselves with Xi Jinping as a result of the ties he developed during his tenure in Fujian province, where he held leadership positions at the Party, municipal, and provincial levels between 1985 and 2002. Once Xi became China's leader, these cadres assumed influential positions within the Party, the PLA, and the People's Armed Police.



adhere to the centralized and unified leadership of the Party Central Committee as the fundamental guarantee” (Qiushi, 2024).

In contrast, other members of the PLA leadership have advocated for the implementation of collective decision-making. In other words, while they accept that control of the armed forces must remain within the Party, they do not identify a particular body under Xi’s direct control (such as the Central Committee). In line with this, several articles published in 2024 in the PLA newspaper highlighted the importance of “adhering to collective leadership” and maintaining “democratic centralism.” Among these are an article from 9 July and five additional articles published in September and December. Most of

the authors of these articles have ties to General Zhang Youxia.

The article published in July, written by Wang Jun, a member of the Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF)—an organization associated with General Zhang Youxia’s faction—emphasized collective leadership at “every level of Party organization.” The author notes that “if secretaries and deputy secretaries adhere to collective leadership and focus on developing democracy, they will be able to extract the correct opinions on how to adapt to the laws of development and the basic interests of the masses, and create scientific policies.”

Wang also stresses the need for “multiple voices” in any debate, noting that “this is the foundation for adhering to collective leadership

and scientific decision-making, especially during the current phase of military modernization,” where the decision-making process “is becoming increasingly complex” (Wang, 2024).

The article published on 13 September was authored by Wu Chenggang, who is also associated with the JLSF, authored an article titled “Consciously Setting an Example in Defending Democratic Centralism,” a phrase that also serves as the subtitle for subsequent articles (Wu, 2024).

The main titles of the other four articles begin with the exhortation “Lead and...” and continue as follows: “Defend Collective Leadership” (Shao, 2024)⁵, “Develop Democracy Within the Party” (Chen, 2024)⁶, “Protect Group Unity” (Wu, 2024)⁷, and “Seek Reality, Deal with Reality,

The purge of senior commanders and the criticisms expressed in articles published by the PLA Daily suggest that Xi's control over the Armed Forces is far from absolute and that PLA leadership is not monolithic. Moreover, the PLA harbors factions, each with its own interests and networks of clientelism.

and Execute According to Reality” (Liu & Jin, 2024)⁶, respectively.

These articles repeatedly reject the notion that “individuals” (e.g., Xi Jinping) possess disproportionate power. A statement that appears repeatedly reads: “Individuals ‘do not set the tone’ before meetings, ‘do not make the final decision’ in discussions, and ‘do not resolve matters definitively’ when resolutions are drafted.” One article goes even further, asserting that Party leadership “is not the leadership of one or two people” and that “individuals must submit to the organization, the minority must submit to the majority, and individuals must not place themselves above collective leadership.”

Focusing specifically on the roles of secretaries, one article notes that it is “extremely important” for them to be “broad-minded and tolerant.” Another mentions that secretaries “are ‘the team leader,’ but must absolutely not consider themselves ‘the head of the household,’” while a third argues that secretaries should be “good at accepting advice.”

Apparently, the series aims to critique Xi Jinping’s leadership style. Xi himself is mentioned in each article and occasionally quoted, but only briefly and solely with the title “General Secretary,” without

epithets or additional descriptions. In contrast, other leaders such as Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao are cited and praised.

Impact of the Reforms on PLA Enlistment, Party-PLA Relations, and the Future

The purge of senior officers and the criticisms expressed in articles published by the PLA Daily suggest that Xi’s control over the armed forces is far from absolute and that PLA leadership is not monolithic. Moreover, the PLA hosts factions, each with its own interests and clientelist networks, which conflict with one another and occasionally challenge Xi (Dahm, 2024)⁹.

On the other hand, the steady growth of the budget and the determination to meet the military modernization milestones in 2027, 2035, and 2049 have already yielded results in terms of adding new capabilities and improving

5. The author, Shao Tianjiang, is a unit commander in Henan province.

6. The author, Chen Qinghua, is a member of the Reform and Organization Office of the CMC.

7. The author, Wu Zhibao, belongs to the Aerospace Force.

8. Among the authors, Jin Jiliang has ties with the SSF, while Liu Huibin is an editor of the PLA Daily.

9. It is worth noting that although both the Shaanxi faction and the Fujian clique were instrumental in Xi Jinping’s rise to the pinnacle of Party leadership, they were subsequently purged by Xi—not only due to their internal clashes, but also because of corruption and command failures that tarnished his administration.

CV

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enlistment in preparation for a potential war with Taiwan or the United States. These achievements have resulted from Xi's ability to pressure the military bureaucracy to focus on "fighting and winning battles," which has required purging the PLA of senior officers more committed to their own interests than to those of Xi or the Party.

However, as demonstrated by the 2023–24 purges, Xi's success in cleansing the PLA has been, at best, partial. While the purges indicate that Xi was able to identify and address problems that had previously gone unnoticed, the fact that they occurred more than a decade after the start of his first term and involved his protégés suggests that the military system suffered from persistent anomalies (Dahm, 2024).

Xi's limited control, and the reasons behind it, have three effects on the PLA. The first is the possibility—but not certainty—of reduced enlistment due to corruption. The focus of the second wave of purges on the Equipment Development Department, the services, and the defense industry suggests that substandard equipment may have been produced, potentially resulting in accidents.

The second effect is the lack of trust between Xi and the PLA. Low levels of confidence between the civilian leadership and the armed forces—more than hardware or funding—represent the PLA's most significant vulnerability (Wuthnow & Saunders, 2025).

Third, the current circumstances may have implications for the future. The transformation of the PLA into a more efficient combat force can be partly attributed to Xi's leadership as Chairman of the CMC. However, if the General Secretary cannot continue projecting an image of strength in this role, PLA leadership could be compromised: corruption might proliferate, competition between factions could intensify, and the reforms planned for 2025, 2037, and 2049 could ultimately be undermined.

Conclusion

While corruption is endemic in certain areas of the PLA, purges in Leninist regimes also serve a political purpose. Because power struggles are another defining feature of these regimes, control over the armed forces becomes a vital tool for leadership to consolidate authority.

Xi's authority over the PLA should neither be underestimated nor overestimated, as it is constrained by the inherent realities of the Chinese political system. Xi has consolidated his own power and implemented far-reaching reforms; however, he has had to pay a price: to strengthen his authority and persuade the PLA to accept reforms and commit to its mission, Xi has had to respect certain limits, such as the PLA's institutional autonomy, which ultimately affects both his authority and the goal of civilian control over the armed forces.

Therefore, nothing Xi has done to control the bureaucracy—including purges, personnel rotations, placing trusted officials in key positions, or reforming control mechanisms—guarantees that the problem has been fully resolved. There is no certainty that Xi can be completely confident in the PLA's reporting on its level of readiness or internal deficiencies, whether caused by corruption, ineffective leadership, or advantages held by foreign adversaries. Such uncertainty could affect his confidence when ordering the PLA into combat. ■

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OPERATION WELCOME

BRAZIL'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO THE VENEZUELAN CRISIS

By **CR (BRA) ANDRÉ LUIZ DE MELO FRANCO**

Keywords:

- > Venezuelan Crisis
- > Immigration
- > Refugees
- > Security
- > Brazil

At present, mass migrations have become one of the most challenging and complex issues for many nations around the world. By 2020, approximately 281 million people were living outside their country of origin, many of them as refugees or forcibly displaced persons (UN, 2020). This situation results from a combination of factors, including armed conflicts, natural disasters, persecution, and economic crises, which have compelled millions of people to seek safety and better opportunities abroad.

The civil war in Syria is a significant example of this issue, having forced more than 6.6 million people to leave their homes. The majority of these refugees have sought asylum in Europe, which has placed a heavy burden on the

reception and security systems of host countries. Similarly, migration from North Africa, driven by conflicts, extreme poverty, and political instability in countries such as Libya and Sudan, has led hundreds of thousands of people to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of safe refuge in Europe. In Latin America, the crisis in Venezuela has pushed millions to leave their country for neighboring nations such as Colombia, Peru, and Brazil, which have faced increased social and economic challenges as a result of this situation.

These migratory flows, uncontrolled in many cases, can exacerbate national defense and public security challenges, as they increase the risk of social instability, human trafficking, and cross-border crime. In addition, the pressure on public services and reception infrastructure can compromise the social and economic development of affected nations, generating significant social tensions and political challenges. In the specific case of Venezuela, a country that was once one of the most prosperous in Latin America, it has faced a profound political, economic, and social crisis over the past decade. This crisis intensified from 2015 onwards, triggering a humanitarian emergency that has forced millions of Venezuelans to flee in search of safety and better living conditions. The causes of this mass migration include hyperinflation, shortages of food and medicine, violence, and political repression. According to the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, more than 5 million Venezuelans have left their country since the onset of the crisis.

Faced with this desperate situation, many Venezuelans have chosen Brazil as their destination due to its geographic proximity and humanitarian reception

policies. The state of Roraima, particularly the cities of Boa Vista and Pacaraima, has served as the main entry point for these migrants. In 2018, approximately 90,000 Venezuelans entered Brazil, a figure that rose to over 210,000 in 2019, creating significant social and economic challenges in these localities. The massive arrival of migrants exacerbated issues such as begging, the occupation of public spaces, increased prostitution, and the overburdening of healthcare services, as well as isolated cases of xenophobia.

In response to this crisis, the Brazilian government launched Operação Acolhida (Operation Welcome) in March 2018, a joint, inter-agency humanitarian operation aimed at providing emergency assistance to Venezuelan migrants. The objectives of this operation include border organization, temporary accommodation, and the relocation of refugees to the interior. Under the leadership of the Brazilian Armed Forces, and in coordination with various governmental agencies and international organizations, the operation has become a model of humanitarian response in the region.

Reception and Border Organization

The first pillar of Operation Welcome focuses on border management, beginning with the reception and guidance of Venezuelan migrants upon their arrival in Brazil. This process is primarily carried out at the Reception and Support Post (PRA) located in Pacaraima, on the border with Venezuela. At this entry point, migrants are received by personnel from the Brazilian Armed Forces and humanitarian agencies, who provide them with crucial information regarding migration procedures, rights, and available services (Simões, 2022).

Identification and migration control are essential elements in this process, as they allow for a

detailed record of migrants entering the country. Teams at the PRA carry out identity checks, biometric registrations, and interviews to assess each migrant's situation, thereby determining their legal status and specific needs. This process is fundamental not only to ensure national security but also to properly coordinate humanitarian assistance. During 2018, approximately 175,000 Venezuelans were registered in the Brazilian migration systems, enabling more effective monitoring of vulnerable individuals (Silva, 2022).

In addition to migration control, another critical aspect of border management is health control. Migrants entering Brazil undergo health assessments, including the screening for communicable diseases and the administration of vaccines when necessary. This health component is crucial to prevent disease outbreaks in host communities and to safeguard public health. In 2019, more than 60,000 vaccine doses were administered to Venezuelan migrants at entry points as part of the preventive measures established by Operation Welcome (Oliveira, 2018).

In these shelters, migrants receive three meals a day, medical care, and access to educational services and socio-educational activities. These services are essential to ensure that migrants not only have their basic needs met but can also begin to rebuild their lives. Additionally, specialized services have been implemented for vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, children, and the elderly, to ensure they receive appropriate care. In 2021, it was estimated that approximately 60% of shelter residents were families with children, highlighting the importance of providing a safe and stable environment for these groups (Silva, 2022).

A key aspect of this pillar is the organization of shelters according to the specific characteristics of the migrants, such as their ethnicity or family situation. For example, shelters were established specifically for indigenous communities, helping to mitigate ethnic and religious conflicts among migrants. In addition, separate spaces were created for single men and women, as well as for families, in order to ensure a safe and appropriate environment for each group. This differentiated approach has been crucial for effectively managing diversity within migratory flows and ensuring that all migrants receive the necessary support (Brazil, 2022b).

Relocation

The third and final pillar of Operation Welcome is relocation, a process designed to redistribute Venezuelan migrants from border areas, particularly Roraima, to other regions of Brazil. This process aims to alleviate pressure on border cities and provide migrants with better opportunities for social and economic integration in different parts of the country. Since the program began in April 2018, more than 78,000 Venezuelans have been relocated through various modalities, especially during peak migration periods, when arrivals on some days exceeded 600 people (Silva, 2022), including family reunification and labor market insertion (Brazil, 2022a).

The relocation process is voluntary and is based on an agreement between the migrant and the authorities. Migrants are transported either by airplanes provided by the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) or by buses, depending on the destination. Upon arrival at their new homes, local authorities, together with non-governmental organizations and international agencies, are responsible for their

reception and follow-up. This program has been particularly successful in cities such as São Paulo, Curitiba, and Chapecó, where effective integration of migrants into local communities has been observed (Simões, 2022).

In addition to physical relocation, the program also includes training and employment initiatives. These programs, developed in collaboration with the National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI) and other institutions, aim to equip migrants with the skills necessary to enter the Brazilian labor market. By June 2022, more than 15,000 migrants had participated in these training programs, facilitating their economic integration and contributing to their self-sufficiency in their new environment (Oliveira, 2018).

Other Aspects

Security is a fundamental component of Operation Welcome, aiming to ensure both the protection of migrants and stability in reception areas. The Brazilian Armed Forces, in collaboration with the Federal Police and other security forces, have implemented a set of measures to control migratory flows and prevent incidents of violence or crime in border areas. In Pacaraima and Boa Vista, the military presence has been crucial in deterring potential acts of xenophobia and maintaining public order, especially during peak migration periods, when arrivals on some days exceeded 600 people (Silva, 2022).

On the other hand, logistics play a central role in the operation, particularly in managing the resources required to efficiently assist thousands of migrants. The Brazilian Armed Forces, through the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force (Força-Tarefa), have coordinated the transportation, storage, and distribution of

essential supplies such as food, medicine, clothing, and bedding. The deployed logistical infrastructure includes warehouses at strategic points in Roraima and a transportation system that utilizes both land and air fleets to ensure timely delivery of supplies. In 2021, more than 1.2 million food rations were distributed in the shelters managed by the operation (Brazil, 2022b).

In addition to the provision of food and medicine, logistics also extend to the management of infrastructure such as shelters and reception centers. These facilities require ongoing maintenance to ensure dignified living conditions for migrants. The Brazilian Army has been responsible for the construction and upkeep of these facilities, including the provision of potable water, basic sanitation, and electricity. The safe and efficient transportation of migrants during the relocation process is also part of the logistical component. Since the beginning of the operation, this process has involved more than 200 relocation flights, with a special focus on ensuring the safety and comfort of migrants during transit. Buses have also been used for land transportation to ensure that even the most remote locations can be reached (Brazil, 2022a).

It is important to note that Operation Welcome is a prominent example of inter-agency collaboration, as multiple governmental entities, international organizations, and NGOs work in a coordinated manner to respond to the Venezuelan migration crisis. The Federal Emergency Assistance Committee, established in 2018, leads this cooperation and integrates the efforts of eleven ministries, including the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and the Ministry of Citizenship. This committee is responsible for establishing strategic guidelines and ensuring

Mass migrations result from a combination of factors, including armed conflicts, natural disasters, persecution, and economic crises, which have forced millions of people to seek safety and better opportunities abroad.

that all involved actors work toward common objectives (Franchi, 2019).

International organizations have been key partners in Operation Welcome, providing technical, financial, and human resources to support migrants. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has provided technical assistance and collaborated in the construction and management of shelters, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has worked on educational and child protection programs for migrant children. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has also played a crucial role in the relocation process, assisting with family reunification and the safe transfer of migrants (Brazil, 2022a).

Collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been equally important. More than one hundred NGOs have participated in the operation, providing essential services ranging from medical care to legal and psychological assistance. Among these organizations, the Brazilian Red Cross stands out for managing health and first aid programs, while Caritas has worked on the social and economic integration of migrants through vocational training programs and support for entrepreneurship.

Cooperation with these NGOs has allowed for the expansion of both the reach and effectiveness of Operation Welcome, particularly in areas where governmental capacities are limited (Simões, 2022).

The synergy among the various agencies and organizations has been made possible through a clear and effective coordination structure. The operation is organized into committees and working groups that address different aspects of the crisis, ranging from security and logistics to health and education. These committees meet regularly to share information, assess progress, and adjust strategies according to the evolving needs of the situation. This collaborative structure has enabled a flexible and adaptable response, which has been crucial to the operation's success in a context as dynamic as the Venezuelan migration crisis (Oliveira, 2018).

Conclusion

Operation Welcome has been a crucial lifeline for thousands of Venezuelan refugees who have fled the crisis in their country, providing them not only with a safe refuge but also with the opportunity to rebuild their lives in Brazil. By offering a structured reception process and dignified temporary

CV

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Coronel de Infantería del Ejército Brasileño. Cursó el Curso de Mando y Estado Mayor en la Escuela de Comando y Estado Mayor del Ejército de Brasil (ECEME) y el Curso Oficial de Dirección Estratégica Militar en la Escuela Superior de Guerra Conjunta de las FFAA argentinas. Fue Instructor en la Academia Militar de las Agujas Negras (AMAN); Observador Militar de la ONU en el Sáhara Occidental; Asesor Militar de Brasil ante la Academia Militar de West Point (Estados Unidos); y Oficial de Operaciones del Centro de Coordinación de Operaciones del Comando Militar de la Amazonia. También se desempeñó como Comandante del 16º Batallón de Infantería Motorizada, con sede en la ciudad de Natal, estado de Rio Grande do Norte. Ha sido distinguido con la Medalla de la Orden al Mérito Militar de Brasil, la Medalla de Servicio de las Naciones Unidas, la Medalla de Servicios Meritorios de Estados Unidos y la Medalla Recompensa al Mérito a la Confraternidad Militar (Argentina).



accommodation, the operation has enabled these migrants—many of whom arrived in conditions of extreme vulnerability—to access essential services such as healthcare, education, and social protection. The availability of these services has been fundamental in preventing situations of exploitation and abuse, providing refugees with a safe environment in which they can recover and plan for their future.

For residents of affected border regions, such as the cities of Pacaraima and Boa Vista in the state of Roraima, Operation Welcome has mitigated the impact of the massive arrival of migrants. Initially, the influx of thousands of Venezuelans overwhelmed local resources and exacerbated social issues such as begging, unemployment, and social tension. However, the

implementation of Operation Welcome allowed for better management of migratory flows by distributing migrants evenly among shelters and facilitating their relocation to other regions of the country. This approach not only alleviated pressure on local public services but also reduced tensions between local communities and newcomers, fostering a more harmonious and cooperative environment.

Furthermore, the operation has contributed to public security in the border regions by establishing effective migration and health control mechanisms, which have been key to maintaining social stability. The deployment of the Armed Forces and the Federal Police in these areas has reinforced security, helping to prevent incidents of violence and crime that could have arisen

due to the migrants' desperation and difficult circumstances. The continuous presence of these forces has ensured that both migrants and local residents can coexist in a safe and controlled environment, minimizing the risks associated with mass migration.

A study of this operation cannot be concluded without addressing the lessons learned, one of which is the need for effective inter-agency planning to manage large-scale migration crises. Collaboration among different ministries, government agencies, international organizations, and NGOs has proven essential for coordinating efforts and resources, enabling a comprehensive and adaptive response to the situation in Roraima. This experience has highlighted the

The third and final pillar of Operation Welcome is relocation, a process designed to redistribute Venezuelan migrants from border areas. Since the program began, more than 78,000 Venezuelans have been relocated through various modalities.

importance of establishing clear coordination structures from the outset to facilitate the rapid implementation of emergency measures and the mobilization of resources.

Another significant lesson is the importance of logistics in managing humanitarian crises. The Armed Forces' capacity to organize and distribute resources efficiently has been fundamental to the operation's success. Operation Welcome's experience has highlighted the need for flexible and well-planned logistics that can quickly adapt to changing circumstances and ensure that

migrants' basic needs are met in a timely manner.

Moreover, the operation has demonstrated the necessity of integrating training and employment programs as a core component of the relocation process. Vocational training and labor market integration are crucial elements for the successful integration of migrants into the host society. Operation Welcome has shown that providing employment opportunities not only improves migrants' economic prospects but also contributes to their self-sufficiency and reduces their dependency.

Finally, the importance of providing differentiated care to vulnerable groups within the migrant population must be emphasized. The establishment of separate shelters for different groups, such as indigenous people, families, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals, has been key to ensuring a safe and appropriate environment for all migrants. This approach has proven effective in preventing internal conflicts and providing more specialized and tailored support to meet the specific needs of each group, significantly improving the quality of life of migrants during their stay in Brazil. ■

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RHIZOMATIC WARS

NEW TYPES OF WARFARE AND THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN FORCE STRUCTURE PLANNING

By **CR MARCELO DANIEL PITRELLA**

“The enemy interprets space in a traditional and classical way, and I do not wish to obey this interpretation or fall into its traps. Not only do I want to avoid these traps, I want to surprise him. This is the very essence of war. I need to win. I need to appear from an unexpected place, and this is exactly what we are going to do.”

Brigadier General Aviv Kochavi, Commander of the 35th Paratrooper Brigade, addressing his officers before the assault on the Palestinian refugee camp of Balata.

Introduction

As part of the response to the asymmetric challenge posed by the Palestinians to the State of Israel during the Second Intifada, members of the Operational Theory Research Institute (OTRI) began, from 1996 onward, to engage with authors who explored the notions of space and the rhizome, such as Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Guy Debord, among others.

This intellectual approach was complemented by concepts of “deconstruction of walls” or “anarchitecture,” developed by the artist Gordon Matta-Clark, as well as by the theories of Israeli architect and scholar Eyal Weizman on critical urban spaces and their relation to forensic sciences, as reflected in his work *Hollow Land*:

Israel’s Architecture of Occupation (Weizman, 2007).

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reconceptualized the city as a space for combat, shifting from an environment that imposes movement restrictions to a fluid space for maneuver. Of the current global population of 8.124 billion, approximately 55% reside in urban areas (4.468 billion). According to UN statistics, by 2050 the world population is projected to reach 9.5 billion, of which 66% are expected to be urban dwellers (UN, 2018).

This is a significant figure when considering the future of warfare and the study of war as a social phenomenon. General Mark Milley, as Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated at the 2017 Future of War Conference that within approximately ten years, the military must be capable of operating in megacities, with units organized in networked formations.

Currently, the majority of ongoing conflicts take place in urban environments. Examples of this include the Syrian Civil War, the War

ISRAELI SOLDIERS CROSSING WALLS IN NABLUS DURING OPERATION DEFENSIVE SHIELD



Source: <https://guerrasposmodernas.com/2015/01/19/israel-guerra-en-red/>

PALESTINIAN SNIPER WAITING FOR THE ADVANCE OF IDF SOLDIERS THROUGH THE STREETS OF NABLUS

Source: AUTHOR or SOURCE, 2002.

against the Islamic State, the war in Libya, the war in Ukraine, the Yemeni Civil War, parts of the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflict in Lebanon, in Sinai and the Golan Heights, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict under discussion, among many other hotspots where armed forces are deployed.

For this reason, the paradigm shift proposed by the IDF, as implementers of the operational theories of OTRI related to rhizomatic warfare, serves as an instructive example of how to meet the demands inherent in low-intensity, asymmetric conflicts in urban environments. These experiences are being leveraged by the U.S. Armed Forces (particularly the Marines and the Army), with contributions from former OTRI members such as Brigadier General Shimon Naveh, among the most prominent (MATTHEWS, 2007).

Inverse Urban Geometry

Inverse geometry refers to the reorganization or reinterpretation of urban spaces; that is, approaching the city in a non-traditional manner through multiple micro-tactical actions. This concept of inverse urban geometry implies that combatants avoid moving along streets and alleys or entering through doors

and windows, and instead navigate within the interiors of buildings. In this way, classical elements of urban environments—such as the civilian population, the service infrastructure on which it depends, and the constructed infrastructure itself—are fused and transformed into advantages for those adopting an offensive posture.

This concept was developed in contrast to the classical interpretation of urban spaces, in which a defending enemy positions shooters at dominant points to cover streets and alleys, blocks main routes with obstacles, and places booby traps and explosives behind doors and windows.

Instead of being limited by movement patterns dictated by the space, Israeli forces created the space in which to move and chose to approach Palestinian guerrilla positions from unexpected directions, opening gaps in the walls, ceilings, and floors of the apartments within a building. This form of maneuver, referred to as “walking through walls,” emulates the behavior of worms, which consume material to forge a path.

The three-dimensional approach to movement through walls, ceilings, and floors of urban buildings required a reinterpretation of preexisting

INTERIOR VIEW OF AN ABANDONED APARTMENT AFTER THE FIGHTING IN JENIN

Source: <https://progressive.international/wire/2020-10-06-dualcrisis-power-outage-leaves-gaza-without-water-during-pandemiclockdown/es>

urban and architectural paradigms. This form of maneuver, in which the interior becomes exterior, and where an obstacle such as a wall is transformed into a space for maneuvering and projecting force from one point to another, compelled the IDF to rethink its training and equipment. Specialized marksmen traded their wide desert fields of fire for ranges of only one hundred meters within buildings featuring four or five openings in the walls.

The Rhizomatic Experiment in Nablus and Jenin

During the Second Intifada—the so-called Al-Aqsa Intifada—more precisely in April 2002, a Hamas suicide bomber detonated in a hotel in Netanya, killing 30 civilians and injuring 160 others.

This event, together with the constant launches of Qassam rockets from the West Bank into Israel, prompted the initiation of Operation “Defensive Shield,” a series of air and ground operations aimed at halting suicide attacks and rocket launches into Israeli territory, as well as dismantling the Palestinian militia factions responsible for these attacks.

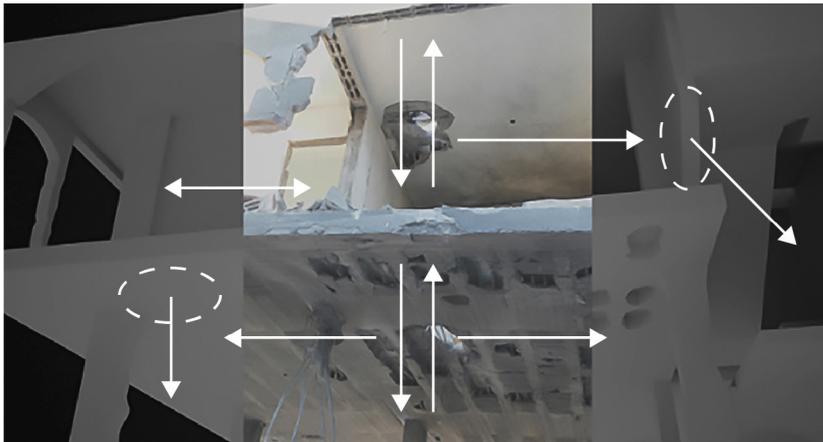
The objectives of both parties were the cities themselves. For the IDF in particular, these included the city of Ramallah, the historic city of Nablus, the holy city of Bethlehem, and the refugee camps of Jenin, Balata, and Tulkarem.

IDF TROOPS BEGIN THEIR ADVANCE INTO BUILDINGS, AVOIDING THE STREETS AND AVENUES OF BEIT HANUN (NORTHERN GAZA) DURING OPERATION "IRON SWORDS"



Israel Defense Forces, 2024

USE OF BUILDINGS AS MANEUVER SPACES: ROOFS, WALLS, AND FLOORS DO NOT REPRESENT OBSTACLES BUT ENABLE MOVEMENT WITHOUT USING STREETS AND AVENUES



Source: Own elaboration

Within the ground phase of the operation, the assaults on Nablus and Jenin served as testing grounds for the theories developed over years at OTRI, where the goal was to break paradigms and transform the way war is conducted in urban environments.

Advancing forces neither respect nor bind themselves to coordination and control measures such as phase lines or schedules; instead, they move in a decentralized manner, operating as a swarm through small, autonomous, and self-sufficient units guided by targets identified by human intelligence within the buildings.

In general terms, it can be stated that the phases in which rhizomatic combat unfolds would follow the sequence below:

- > **Observation:** Through the use of ANT and other means of surveillance and monitoring.
- > **Positioning of Forces:** Primarily at night, employing concealment and deception regarding the actual point at which the maneuver will be executed.
- > **Isolation of the Locality:** By means of encirclement and siege operations.
- > **Infiltration:** Conducted across four dimensions, with multiple forces.

- > **Infection:** Executed by small, dispersed units operating in a swarm-like manner.
- > **Liberation of Spaces:** High-value targets remain isolated, while those of lesser importance are secured.
- > **Observation:** The cycle is repeated in the same locality or in the next one to be attacked. Within the operational concept articulated by General Aviv Kochavi, commander of the 35th Paratrooper Brigade, to his subordinate officers prior to the assault on Nablus, the following ideas were emphasized:

"We are going to completely isolate the camp during the day, creating the impression of a classical encirclement operation, and then we will execute a fractal maneuver in the form of a swarm, simultaneously from all directions and across several dimensions of the enclave. Each fraction will reflect, in its mode of action, the logic and form of the overall maneuver, and through our movements within the buildings we will push the enemy into the streets and alleyways, where we will hunt them down..."

The assault on the old city of Nablus began on April 3, 2002, with the disruption of electricity, water, and telephone lines throughout the city. In parallel, specialized snipers and observation posts were positioned on the surrounding high ground and atop the tallest buildings near the perimeter. Subsequently, all entry and exit points to the city of Nablus were sealed. A large number of small units then entered the refugee camp simultaneously from all directions, moving through the walls rather than along the streets.

Following the clashes, analysts and architects reported that more than half of the buildings contained between one and eight openings within their interior spaces, oriented in multiple directions. These openings did not adhere to

any predetermined linear approach route but rather outlined a form of maneuver characterized by chaotic patterns with no clear direction.

Swarming and the Infection of the Battlefield

The military definition of swarming seeks to describe military operations as a network of multiple diffuse, small, and semi-independent units that operate synergistically with one another.

This concept is central to the recent doctrine of urban combat developed by the IDF, as could be observed in their response to the terrorist attacks carried out by the Hamas organization on Israeli territory during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood (October 7–9, 2023), coinciding with the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah.

However, the term is not new; its usage expanded in the context of the end of the Cold War, particularly in relation to network-centric warfare concepts.

The technique of swarming and its application in military operations has been extensively developed by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt in their works *Networks and Netwars* and *Swarming and the Future of Conflict*, both published by the RAND Corporation. These authors argue that—especially in urban combat—it takes a network to fight a network, as this constitutes a method for overcoming an asymmetric situation, particularly when the adversary possesses greater combat power and superior technology, or when its asymmetric techniques render one's own combat power irrelevant.

In contrast to traditional chains of command, whose structure is linear and hierarchical (that is, centralized), the swarm is configured as a set of polycentric, distributed, and decentralized networks, in which each autonomous unit can communicate

DIAGRAM OF A CLASSICAL APPROACH OF GROUND FORCES THROUGH MOBILITY CORRIDORS IN A TOWN NORTH OF NABLUS



Source: Own elaboration

with another without going through a central command.

This non-linearity in terms of command and control also extends to the temporal dimension of operations. In traditional tactical operations, time-sequence dictates the succession of actions, and the achievement of an objective normally depends on the success of a previous operation. By contrast, swarm operations rely on simultaneous actions that, although they influence the context, neither await the outcome of a preceding action nor determine that of a subsequent one.

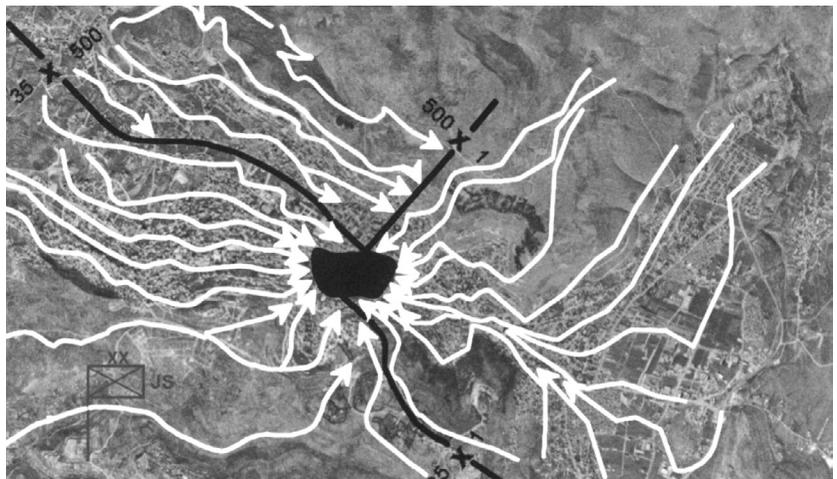
Relating the concept of rhizomatic warfare to that of the “infection of the battlefield,”

forces avoid maneuvering and fighting from classical spaces. Instead, swarm combat focuses on the deployment of smaller fractions—comprising between three and five men—that operate independently, guided by the objective of annihilating the enemy rather than conquering and controlling terrain.

As Aviv Kochavi expressed in an interview in October 2005:

“A military force whose enemy is dispersed like a network of freely organized fractions must rid itself of old concepts such as lines, units in linear formations, and transform itself into a more dispersed, diffuse, flexible, swarm-like form. It must adapt its organization to the enemy’s

ASSAULT ON THE CITY OF NABLUS



cautious capabilities (...). The swarm, as I understand it, is the simultaneous arrival at an objective from a large number of nodes, and if possible, from 360°.”

As a requirement of this simultaneity, swarm operations necessitate engaging with the concept of a “toolbox,” that is, equipping combat fractions with a

range of tools and resources that enable them to confront diverse emerging situations and scenarios, without being able to predetermine in advance the sequence in which such resources will be employed.

The swarm physically and psychologically undermines its victim, as it confuses the latter’s perception regarding the number of participants in the attack. On the one hand, the enemy appears to be everywhere; on the other, it is perceived as a reduced force with few soldiers, which leads the victim either to underestimate or to overestimate the opponent’s size.

In the case of the IDF, as a response to the attacks perpetrated by Hamas and other minor organizations on Israeli territory, the joint military operation “Iron Swords” was launched with multiple objectives, among them:

- > To recover alive the Israeli and foreign civilian citizens abducted by Hamas and held in the Gaza Strip;
- > To neutralize missile and rocket launching positions in Gaza;
- > To destroy weapons depots, explosives, and other systems that threaten the security of the State of Israel;
- > To dismantle the political-military leadership of the Hamas organization, along with its armed wing embodied by the Ezzeldin Al-Qassam Brigades;
- > To monitor and prevent potential attacks from the West Bank;
- > And to monitor and prevent

RHIZOMATIC ASSAULT BY THE IDF 35TH PARATROOPER BRIGADE ON THE TOWN OF NABLUS, APRIL 5-10, 2002



Source: WEIZMAN, 2007

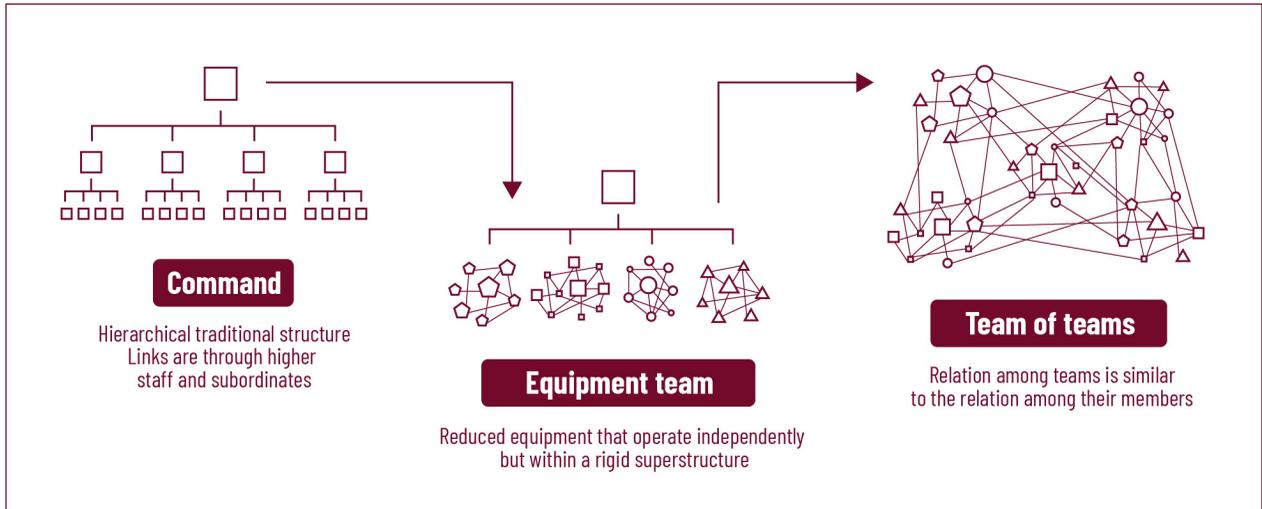
GENERAL MANEUVER DIAGRAM OF A BATTALION FROM THE IDF 35TH PARATROOPER BRIGADE DURING THE ASSAULT ON PART OF THE TOWN OF NABLUS. BESIDE IT, ONE OF THE OPENINGS CREATED BY ISRAELI COMBAT ENGINEERS



Source: WEIZMAN, 2007



DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMAND CHAINS AND ORGANIZATIONS



Source: McChrystal, et al., 2015

potential attacks from southern Lebanon by Hezbollah.

To this end, during the initial phases of the ground campaign, the IDF conducted operations across the northern, central, and southern areas of the Gaza Strip. Several of these operations employed rhizomatic warfare tactics and techniques in order to achieve the objectives previously established.

The units—particularly Light Infantry, Paratroopers, and Air Assault forces—were organized into so-called Combined Arms teams, according to the mission to be accomplished, the terrain in which they were to operate, and the anticipated enemy in each case.

Additionally, both on the surface and within the tunnels, they employed robots, drones and micro-drones, underground radars, seismic control sensors, fiber-optic motion sensors, thermal imaging devices, ultrasonic imaging devices, drills and boring machines, underground communications systems, and artificial intelligence for facial recognition of potential targets, among others.

Conclusions

The multilayered defensive military

strategy of area restriction leads us to consider urban centers as objectives to be protected and/or controlled. Furthermore, certain recent and ongoing conflicts—such as those in Ukraine, Gaza, and Syria, among others—underscore the importance of conducting operations in urban environments for ground forces.

In the case of the Argentine Republic, although the country possesses an extensive national territory, large portions of it are uninhabited—or more specifically, non-urbanized. The most developed urban centers are located in the central region of the country, particularly toward the eastern coast.

The Argentine military doctrine—specifically that of the Argentine Army—establishes in its Command Regulations for the Land Military Instrument and in Techniques and Procedures for Combat in Urban Areas that urban environments are multidimensional and require agile, flexible, and decentralized organizations in execution.

Lessons learned from current warfare scenarios suggest that in future conflicts, cities will be used either as objectives or as

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staging points to project forces into open spaces. This requires that future advisors at the Strategic Military Level take into account the

concepts of rhizomatic warfare, not only for planning but also for force design in each capability area of the Military Instrument for defense.

In summary, rhizomatic warfare embodies the principles of conducting operations with surprise, flexibility, focus on objectives, maneuver, economy of forces, and mass/concentration. Therefore, it is crucial that an initial and fundamental factor be established within the educational and intellectual spaces of the Armed Forces, such as the War Colleges and Training and Professional Development Institutes of the Armed Forces. This training must incorporate the concepts of rhizomatic and networked warfare as new approaches to solving operational military problems against an intelligent enemy who employs an urban area as both fortress and opportunity.

The conclusion of Operation “Iron Swords” by the IDF and Hamas will provide lessons learned from multiple perspectives and at various levels of command. It is our responsibility as military professionals to capitalize on these lessons to design, train, and prepare a Defense Military Instrument that is aligned with the Nation’s scenarios and threats. ■

DEGREE OF DAMAGE TO BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE GAZA STRIP SINCE THE BEGINNING OF OPERATION “IRON SWORDS” IN 2023



Degree of Damage to Building Infrastructure in the Gaza Strip Since the Beginning of Operation “Iron Swords” in 2023 (BBC, 2024)

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AIR LOGISTICS IN ANTARCTICA

THE CASE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

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Keywords:

- > Antarctic Operations
- > Infrastructure
- > RUGBIN
- > Air Power
- > South Atlantic

The operations carried out by the various actors present on the White Continent are intrinsically linked to their logistical capabilities. This logistics is fundamentally based on the use of naval assets, since, in

addition to being cost-effective and offering significant cargo capacity, they provide a high degree of autonomy, as they do not require third-party authorization to access infrastructures such as airfields. An example of this dependency can

be observed at the airfield on King George Island, which belongs to Chile and grants it the authority to regulate the operations that may be conducted there.

In this way, maritime logistics emerges as a crucial pillar for activities in the Antarctic environment, as it enables greater flexibility and sustainability in scientific and exploratory missions. Antarctic operations are characterized by the hostility of the environment and the geographical distance from any populated center, which imposes multiple operational and financial constraints. For this reason, both personnel and equipment must be highly adapted and trained for the tasks they are required to perform.

At the same time, all these operations fall within the legal framework of the Antarctic Treaty System, which is based on a combination of fundamental principles and values aimed at fostering international cooperation and protecting the environment. In 1960, a permanent working group was established within the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), known as the Working Group on Logistics (WGL), whose purpose is to coordinate logistical matters in the Antarctic territory in order to promote more efficient use of communication and transportation assets.

In 1988, an international forum specifically dedicated to Antarctic operations and logistics was established: the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP). This institution remains active and includes representatives from the Antarctic programs of the thirty States that are full members of the Antarctic Treaty (AT). Three years later, in 1991, the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was signed, which continues to serve as the environmental framework

governing operations and all activities on the continent.

At present, however, it must be recognized that in addition to States, multilateralism, transnational corporations, and NGOs have become new actors to be considered when addressing "Antarctic affairs."

The purpose of this article is to provide a description and analysis of the main features of the air infrastructure and assets available to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UKGBNI), which are essential to the logistics these countries conduct in Antarctica, from a tactical perspective and with consideration of their strategic implications. Furthermore, the article will explore the various activities undertaken by London in the Antarctic continent, including expeditions, scientific research, and tourism.

Air power emerges as the key instrument for the exercise of soft power. It is only through this means that the UKGBNI can project its influence, foster scientific collaboration, and ensure sustainable development in depth within this unique continent.

Before delving into the specific analysis of the issue, it is important to clarify certain concepts or guiding principles that must be taken into account:

> **The Antarctic Treaty**

The Antarctic Treaty is significant as it establishes a legal and political framework for the management and protection of Antarctica. The continent is reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes, and any type of military activity in the region is prohibited, even though most of the air assets employed are operated by the armed forces.

Within this conceptual framework for conducting Antarctic logistics, operations are guided by a series of principles

and regulations whose primary objective is to ensure the protection of the environment and the safety of the personnel working on the White Continent.

> **Air Power**

This study draws on the concepts and definitions of Air Power (AP) as established by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), since the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UKGBNI) is a member of that organization, a cornerstone of Western strategic thought.

The main characteristics of AP in terms of transportation are: immediate action without the need for prior maneuver; reach, as it faces no physical or geographical barriers; mobility, due to its capacity for dispersion and deployment; penetration, as it enables access to any point on Earth; speed, allowing for the coverage of great distances in a short period of time; versatility, since a single aircraft can be employed in different operational procedures; and flexibility, as it can shift configurations (humanitarian, medical, logistical, among others).

AP has consistently demonstrated that, due to its versatility, flexibility, and speed, it has established itself as an effective alternative for the exercise and efficient projection of an actor's power to any point on the globe. At present, there is a marked increase in logistical demands requiring highly efficient operations with a high degree of environmental safety, which makes air transport an indispensable necessity.

"As these capabilities of projection and sustainment largely determine the credibility of political action" (Medina, 2016), and moreover, "The sooner we accustom ourselves to considering as inescapable

The United Kingdom has historically been characterized by its naval power, which it employed in 1833 to invade the Malvinas Islands and project its naval influence in the region. Currently, it uses this archipelago as a platform to project both hard and soft power in preparation for the year 2048.

the fact that air power must constitute the nerve of the strategy that leads to success...” (Seversky, 1943).

> Logistical Infrastructure Toward Antarctica

Antarctic logistics is a relatively specialized and limited field of study, and consequently, the number of authors addressing this subject remains fairly small. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of articles and publications dealing with this issue, particularly regarding the competition of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UKGBNI) to consolidate itself as a logistical hub or “gateway” to the White Continent.

Finally, and before addressing the matter at hand, a preliminary clarification is necessary: so-called “private Antarctic logistics service companies” will not be taken into consideration, despite the fact that they often possess greater means and resources than the States themselves operating in the White Continent.

The following section analyzes the main components of the United Kingdom’s air logistics system in its operations toward Antarctica.

The United Kingdom, for its part, has always been characterized by its maritime power, which it employed in 1833 to invade the Malvinas Islands and thereby project its naval influence in the region. At present, the UK uses that archipelago as a platform from which to project demonstrations of both hard and soft power in anticipation of the year 2048, when the Antarctic Treaty will come under review.

Its historical objective is to maintain an active presence and play an influential role in Antarctic affairs. To this end, it has established guidelines centered on the implementation and development of a Scientific-Technical Plan, the provision of logistical support services, and the promotion of national and international Antarctic cooperation.

To carry out these guidelines, it relies on the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) as its national operator on the White Continent. This agency is responsible for planning and executing scientific programs and Antarctic campaigns through five-year plans that set forth the goals to be achieved. These goals align with the general directives established at the national level by the Natural

Environment Research Council (NERC).

Regarding the race to obtain Antarctic resources, its earliest precedent can be found in the competition for the conquest of the southernmost point of the Earth between the Norwegian Roald Amundsen and the British Robert Falcon Scott. “Once on the plateau, Amundsen maintained his consistent pace of 27 kilometers per day, which allowed him to complete the race in an additional three weeks. On December 14, at three in the afternoon, the five Norwegians simultaneously planted their country’s flag at the southernmost point on the planet” (Cacho, 2017, p. 135).

Similarly, Fontana (2014) notes, “It was a period characterized by a progressive confrontation among several countries seeking control and bases for an effective claim of sovereignty over various Antarctic territories, which triggered a dangerous race among British, Argentine, and Chilean forces, a race that only came to a halt with the signing of the Antarctic Treaty” (p. 15).

Following the conclusion of the conflict over the Malvinas Islands, the UKGBNI initiated a series of projects and milestones that position the Islands as a gateway to



Antarctica. This grants the NATO member an unparalleled strategic and control point, with the capacity to project power across the South Atlantic and Antarctica.

With the evolution of technology and its impact on various activities, there is a consequent reinvention of concepts or paradigms. In this way, we move from the notion of “geography as destiny” to “connectivity is destiny.” For this reason, Khanna (2017) states: “Global infrastructures are transforming our world system, shifting from divisions to connections and from nations to nodes.”

“Connectography” is increasingly gaining importance in the international arena, as it constitutes an innovative tool for conducting analyses with strategic characteristics, notably incorporating supply chains and

infrastructure. “Supply chains will become a more important source of power than armies, whose primary objective will be to protect supply chains rather than borders. Competitive connectivity is the arms race of the twenty-first century (...)” (Khanna, 2017).

Airport Infrastructure

Airports are not composed solely of the main runway; they also include other components such as the terminal building, parking facilities, control tower, hangar, landing strip, taxiway or approach runway, apron, and navigation systems.

The airport infrastructure connecting the UKGBNI to the Rothera Antarctic Base consists of five airports under the direct control of the Royal Air Force (RAF). Additionally, operations can be conducted at Amílcar Cabral International Airport near the

city of Dakar; St. Helena Airport; and, as required, at international airports on the African continent (Cape Town, South Africa) and the Americas (Galeão International Airport, Rio de Janeiro; Carrasco International Airport, Montevideo; Presidente Carlos Ibáñez del Campo Airport, Punta Arenas).

It is necessary to consider that the European country’s capacity in terms of its airport network is not limited to generating air connections; it also has the ability to deny access. From Nogueira’s perspective (2022), “Foreign military bases in the South Atlantic, and particularly the one in the Malvinas, have the capacity to interfere with connectivity between the continents of South America and Africa, with Antarctica, and with the Pacific and Indian Oceans.” Similarly, Khanna (2017) notes that “the

primary responsibility of armies will not be the protection of borders but of supply chains.”

The following section outlines the central characteristics of the United Kingdom’s airport network leading to Antarctica.

> **RAF BRIZE NORTON (IATA: BZZ, ICAO: EGVN)**

This is the United Kingdom’s primary air transport unit, equipped with strategic and tactical air assets as well as aircraft capable of aerial refueling. It has extensive apron facilities to accommodate several dozen large aircraft.

> **RAF ASCENSION ISLAND (IATA: ASI, OACI: FHAW)**

The Wideawake military airfield is a joint base shared between the USAF and RAF. It serves as a strategic logistical point between the UKGBNI and the Malvinas. It is currently partially operational due to runway maintenance. Aircraft that can operate here include the A400M and C-17 (up to 190,000 kg).

> **ST. HELENA AIRPORT (IATA: HLE, OACI: FHSH)**

Opened in 2016, St. Helena International Airport has limited infrastructure for sustained logistical support. It serves as an alternative to Ascension Airfield and is rarely used for stopovers to or from the Malvinas. Military aircraft operations are minimal.

> **MOUNT PLEASANT AIRFIELD (CÓDIGO IATA: MPN, CÓDIGO OACI: EGYD)**

The military airbase on the Malvinas Islands is home to Expeditionary Wing 905. Inaugurated in 1985, it hosts Typhoon FGR4 combat aircraft, Atlas C1 A400M, and MRTT A330. It is currently the United Kingdom’s main logistical hub in the area. Additionally, it is adjacent to the naval base (Mare Harbour), providing a logistical advantage for operations.

> **PORT STANLEY AIRPORT (IATA: PSY - OACI: SFAL)**

Operational since 1979, this airfield serves the islands’ civil aviation and can also function as an international airport. It is used by the local government to operate the Malvinas Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS) and is reinforced during the summer to support the British Antarctic Survey (BAS).

> **ROTHERA ANTARCTIC BASE**

Located on **Adelaide Island**, Rothera is one of the largest and best-equipped facilities in Antarctica. It has extensive experience in Antarctic exploration and has developed a robust logistical infrastructure to support operations in the region. The base benefits from its proximity to the port and is administered and operated by the **British Antarctic Survey (BAS)**.

Another relevant logistical element in addition to Rothera Base is the **British Logistics Facilities** operating on the Antarctic Peninsula, namely:

> **FOSSIL BLUFF** on Alexander Island – operational during the summer.

> **SKY BLU** in Ellsworth Land (according to the British designation) – operational during the summer.

Sky Blu Airfield is managed and operated by BAS and serves as an advanced UK logistical camp. This facility is located approximately in the center of the Antarctic Peninsula. Its operational window is during the summer season (November to February), at the beginning of which maintenance tasks are conducted, including snow removal from the runway to prepare conditions for air operations. The airfield began operations in 1993; by 1995, Twin Otter aircraft equipped with skis were landing, and two years later, wheeled aircraft such as the DASH 7 were also operating.

The characteristics and

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geographic location of these airfields allow the UKGBNI to reach strategic depth in Antarctica without relying on continental airfields, granting freedom of action and independence from third-party countries for Antarctic operations.

Air Assets

Throughout history, the doctrine for the employment of aerospace power has evolved based on technological advancements and operational experience. In this regard, it is important to note that doctrine should be understood as the best way to conduct operations, or, as stated, “military doctrine is what we believe to be the best way to conduct military affairs (...)” (Moro, 1999).

It is appropriate to recall the logistical transport operations conducted by the United Kingdom during the Malvinass War, during which the UK carried out a large-scale strategic airlift as part of Operation Corporate (the name given to the operation aimed at “recapturing” the Malvinas Islands).

One of the objectives was to establish logistical support (air bridge) for the British task forces from the UK to Ascension Island and subsequently to the Malvinas Islands, covering an approximate distance of 8,000 NM (around

13,300 km). During the first weeks of combat, the RAF conducted approximately 160 flights from the UK, transporting around 8,000 tons of various supplies and cargo of different types.

Military air transport continues to demonstrate its importance as a mechanism for deterrence. As Kissinger (1971) stated, “Deterrence occurs, above all, in the mind of man.”

Generally, the air assets operated by the UKGBNI in Antarctica belong to the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), although they are occasionally supported by aircraft from the British Forces South Atlantic Islands (BFSAI) (the UK Armed Forces deployed in the Islands).

The following section specifies the air assets that comprise the UKGBNI’s Antarctic logistical system.

Royal Air Force (RAF)

The UKGBNI’s new strategy, titled the “Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy” (2021), has had an impact on resource optimization at all levels and across all areas, aiming to generate fiscal savings. Under this initiative, a series of acquisitions and retirements of air assets were carried out, such as the Lockheed

C-130J Hercules, which was officially retired in June 2023 due to the aforementioned restructuring.

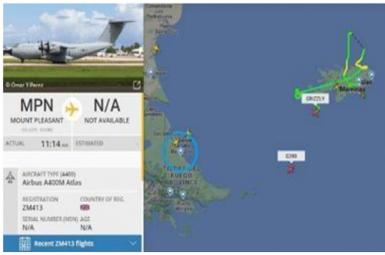
It is also noteworthy that the UKGBNI conducts military operations in the Arctic, meaning they already maintain a logistical component operating in extreme cold regions. This provides the British Armed Forces with the capability to be trained and prepared for power projection in polar areas.

The RAF operates three weapon systems (WSystems) specifically designated to develop logistics from the United Kingdom to the White Continent. Primarily, the most important strategic air transport asset is the C-17 Globemaster III, which is notable for its relatively infrequent presence in the South Atlantic.

In 2008, a C-17 of the United States Air Force (USAF) made its first nighttime landing in Antarctica. This milestone could represent the first step toward the widespread implementation of supply flights to scientific bases on the White Continent during the harsh months of polar night.

Secondly, the Atlas C.1 A400M, which entered service with the RAF in 2014, currently maintains a permanently stationed aircraft at Mount Pleasant Military Base. Its

Vector	Main features	Image
<p>BOEING C-17 GLOBE MASTER III</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Its design allows for steep approaches and high-angle landings at relatively low speeds, enabling operations on small airfields (1,000 m runway). > It can transport up to 45 tons of cargo over distances exceeding 4,500 NM (8,334 km). > Its configurations include cargo, personnel, and equipment transport, as well as conducting aeromedical evacuation missions with onboard surgical facilities and personnel. 	

Vector	Main features	Image
<p>AIRBUS A400M ATLAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It operates on short and soft-support runways (unprepared or semi-prepared short airstrips). > It can transport up to 37 tons over distances exceeding 2,300 NM (3,700 km), or carry an NH90 or CH-47 Chinook helicopter, nine pallets, and fifty-four passengers. > Its configurations include cargo transport, military personnel transport, paratrooper drops, medical evacuations, and in-flight refueling operations 	
<p>VOYAGER KC.MK 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It operates on prepared runways, as the aircraft's design is not fully military. > It can transport up to 270 passengers, or up to 380 for troop transport, along with 27 LD3 containers in the cargo compartment. > Its configurations include cargo transport, military personnel transport, and in-flight refueling (capable of refueling two aircraft simultaneously). In its basic MEDEVAC¹ configuration, it can carry 130 NATO-type stretchers, medical personnel, and 50 passenger seats. 	

Prepared by the author with information and images from Flightradar24.

primary logistical activities include the air delivery of cargo to Antarctic camps and bases.

Thirdly, the Voyager KC.MK 2 is notable for its dual role in cargo transport and aerial refueling of deployed aircraft, including Typhoon FGR4 combat jets and the A400M operating in the Malvinas.

The following table specifies the main technical characteristics of the United Kingdom's air assets capable of maintaining the air bridge from Europe to Antarctica and supporting operations in the South Atlantic.

Regarding air logistics operations, it is important to highlight the Combined Exercise MOBILITY GUARDIAN 2023.

On 3 July 2023, an Airbus A400M Atlas transport aircraft of the RAF (registration ZM401) completed an exceptionally long flight. Departing from RAF Brize Norton, it flew non-stop for twenty hours and thirty-six minutes to

Guam Island in the western Pacific, conducting aerial refueling on three occasions: once over the Atlantic, once over Alaska, and finally over the Pacific Ocean.

The first in-flight refueling was performed by a Voyager from No. 10/101 Squadron, operating from the UKGBNI. The second and third refuelings were carried out by a second Voyager operating from Eielson Air Base of the United States Air Force (USAF) in Alaska.

Air Commodore Anthony Lyle, Commander of the RAF Air Mobility Force, stated:

*"The non-stop flight of the A400M Atlas from RAF Brize Norton to Guam is an excellent example of our ability to project air power, as it allows us to deliver aircraft, crews, and vital equipment across the world at the right time, ready for immediate operations."*¹²

It is also important to consider a strategic air operation conducted by the RAF in the South Atlantic. On 2

June 2020, an Airbus A330 operated by the company providing logistical support to the Armed Forces deployed in the Malvinas (Air Tanker Service) completed a non-stop flight from RAF Brize Norton to Mount Pleasant Airfield in a record time of fifteen hours, covering a distance of 12,800 km (6,948 NM).

Air Tanker Services

In 2004, the UKGBNI Ministry of Defence announced its intention to acquire a variant of the Airbus A330 MRTT. Pursuant to an agreement in March 2008, the Airtanker Services consortium was selected to supply fourteen aircraft under a

1. MEDEVAC or medical evacuation is a system/procedure for transferring patients from a remote location to a hospital, usually by military means (aircraft or helicopter).
 2. Galaxia Militar. Retrieved 10 July 2023, from: <https://galaxiamilitar.es/un-a400m-de-la-raf-vuela-sin-escalas-desde-el-reino-unido-aguam/#:~:text=El%20comodoro%20Anthony>

twenty-seven-year contract. This contract includes a “core fleet” of eight military airframes and one civilian airframe, complemented by a “surge fleet” of five civilian aircraft, which Airtanker operates commercially to generate additional revenue.

The Voyager is the RAF’s sole in-flight refueling tanker and also performs strategic air transport tasks.

British Antarctic Survey (BAS)

In 1962, under the authority of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) was established as a state institution of the UKGBNI dedicated to Antarctic research, operating under the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

Currently, BAS conducts operations from Mount Pleasant, Port Stanley, and Punta Arenas (Chile), utilizing De Havilland Canada DHC-6 Twin Otter and De Havilland Canada DHC-7 Dash 7 aircraft.

On its official website, BAS states:

“Our ambition to maintain an active and influential presence in Antarctica on behalf of the Government

of the United Kingdom is realized through successful partnerships and collaborations with other national polar operators.”³

During the winter season, the aforementioned aircraft and access points to and from them, as well as the internal access routes into the Antarctic interior (Antarctic depth), are vital for maintaining presence, conducting scientific research, and exercising control over these territorial spaces.

National power is not held—it is exercised. Accordingly, logistics on the White Continent require that Antarctic actors possess modern and adequate ports, runways, efficient communications, meteorological centers, SAR systems, and all-weather-capable assets. Control and decision-making authority over lines of communication confer territorial authority, which translates into the exercise of sovereignty.

The exercise of states’ “soft power” through Antarctic science and logistics is determined not only by their transport capabilities but also by those actors capable of projecting influence deep into Antarctica (south of 70 degrees latitude).

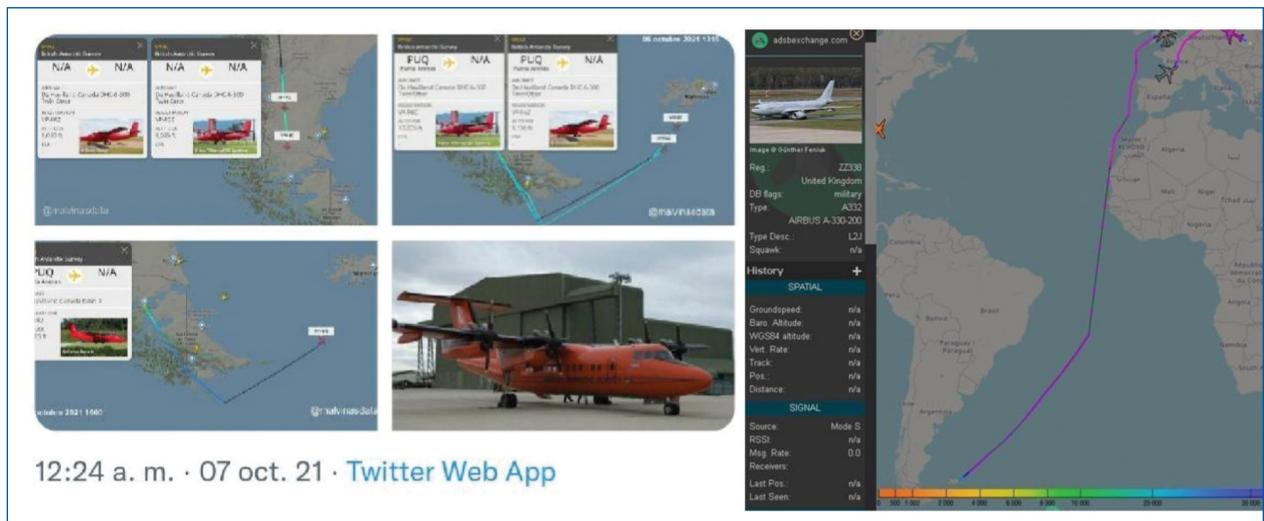
The air assets and infrastructure possessed by the UKGBNI are more than sufficient to conduct Antarctic logistics. As a concluding remark, it can be stated that London has been pursuing Antarctic depth for over a century, and the chosen means to achieve this are fixed-wing aircraft.

During the 13th and 9th centuries, the Anglo-Saxon state focused on occupying strategic points. Today, it occupies and strengthens the main connectivity points and logistical nodes leading to Antarctica.

The 1982 Malvinas War marked a turning point, as following this event, projects were developed and implemented to enhance air interconnectivity, aiming to optimize the UKGBNI’s Antarctic logistics.

The high strategic value of Mount Pleasant lies in its capacity to receive a large volume of logistics for the projection of both hard power and soft power. In this way, the Malvinas Islands serve as a power projection platform,

3. British Antarctic Territories. Retrieved 25 November 2023, from: <https://www.bas.ac.uk/polar-operations/our-operational-strategy/>



Source: Pucara.org (left image) – BAS aircraft arriving for the 2022 summer campaign / Source: <https://globe.adsbexchange.com/> (right image) – Airbus A330 MRTT aircraft on a direct flight to the Malvinas Islands.



allowing control over the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Similarly, scientific competition and the connectography of logistical nodes in Antarctica actually

represent a geopolitical competition among powers with suspended sovereign territorial claims.

The alliance of DROMLAND countries facilitates and optimizes

the costs of Antarctic logistics and, at the same time, enables the exchange or imposition of soft power among its member countries. ■

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BUDGET AND ACQUISITIONS

THE ESSENCE OF MILITARY STRATEGIC PLANNING

By **BRIGADIER PATRICIO JUSTO DEL NIÑO JESÚS TREJO, COLONEL RICKEY J. TORRES**

Keywords:

- > Budget
- > Contracts
- > Acquisitions
- > Combat contracting
- > Deployment of contracting teams in support of ongoing operations

Professional Argentine military personnel are well aware of the importance of organization and foresight from the outset of their military training. It is widely recognized that detailed planning—not only in tactical aspects but, above all, in logistics—enabled General San Martín to cross the Andes and achieve victory in Chile. His performance as Governor of Mendoza, through efficient public administration, was a key factor in this success.

This article has two objectives. First, it aims to introduce the relevant aspects of national budget formulation to raise awareness of its importance in military strategy. Second, it seeks to examine aspects of budget execution related to the contracting processes used by the United States Army.

The Budget: “The Strategic Law”

First, it is important to recognize that establishing strategic objectives and goals without allocating resources is merely a

wishful expression. In this sense, the National Budget Law is the “Fundamental Law”; it represents true military strategic planning, as it reflects the goals and the resources allocated to achieve them in the upcoming fiscal year, which runs from January 1 to December 31.

The Budget Law is the primary instrument of governmental planning¹; it is also considered the “law of laws” because it reflects the national government’s expenditures and fiscal resources.

When referring to resources, we mean all goods and services necessary to accomplish our mission, including salaries, weapons, ammunition, vehicles, aircraft, ships, combat rations, services, per diems, scholarships, office supplies, hardware, cleaning materials, etc. In addition, this includes research and development projects driven by technological innovation and acquisitions from abroad.

1. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/economia/transparencia/presupuesto>

The budget summarizes the plans for the operation of the entire State for the upcoming year. This means it details how each branch of government—the executive, legislative, and judicial, including the Armed Forces—will function, how it will be financed, and how resources will be allocated.

Furthermore, this document requires special consideration in both legislative chambers; it is a dynamic instrument that may undergo modifications throughout the fiscal year.

The Budget Cycle

Within the Ministry of Economy, the National Budget Office is responsible for preparing this document, which comprises four stages: formulation, discussion and approval, budget execution, and monitoring and evaluation:

Formulation: This stage is the responsibility of the National Executive Branch and involves establishing the government’s priorities for the following year. Estimated expenditures are then calculated based on predetermined economic variables. This first stage concludes on September 15, when the Budget Bill is submitted to the National Congress.

In the military context, during this stage, the Planning, Programs, and Budget Directorates of each branch consolidate their budgets and submit them to the Ministry of Defense, which in turn forwards them to the Ministry of Economy.

Discussion and Approval: For the national budget to be approved, it must pass through Congress. Once presented by the executive, the process begins in the Chamber of Deputies, which receives the budget bill for the following year. After its initial approval, the Senate acts as the reviewing chamber.

Within both chambers, budget and finance committees work to understand, discuss, and process the information in the budget

bill submitted by the Executive Branch. Each chamber has its own committees, where members debate the bill before presenting it to the floor for voting.

Budget Execution: Once the budget is approved by Congress, at the start of the new fiscal year, the Chief of the Cabinet of Ministers, through an administrative decision, activates the Budget Law, and public agencies begin executing the expenditures outlined in the law as resources become available.

During this stage, the Planning, Programs, and Budget Directorates of each military branch again play a key role, distributing the allocated budget for the execution of each task.

Monitoring and Evaluation: In this stage, all expenditures are accounted for and compared against those projected in the budget proposal. This record is called the Investment Account and is publicly accessible. During this stage, the Budget Management Control Department

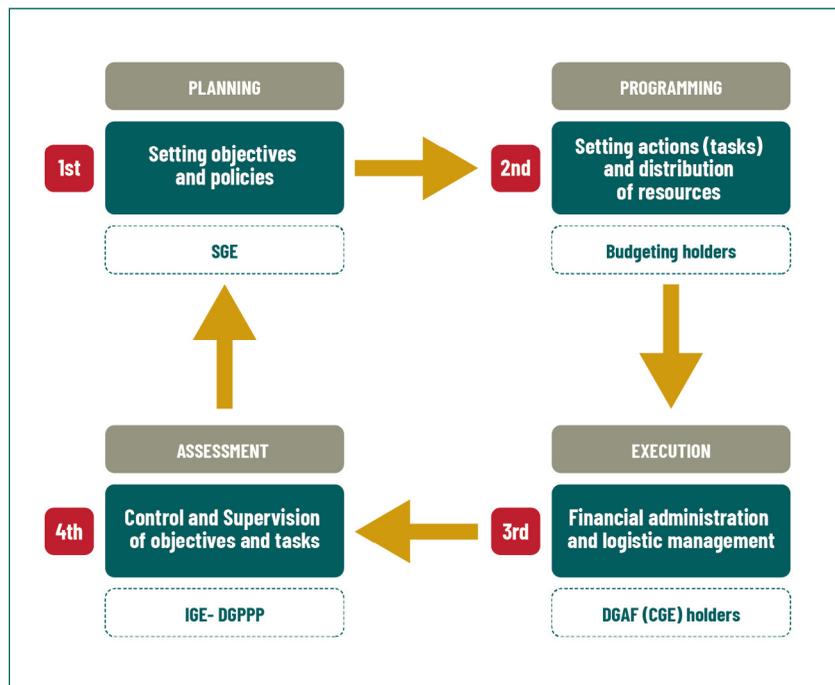
of each Planning, Programs, and Budget Directorate supervises the distributed funds; additionally, the inspection bodies of each branch have the authority to audit their execution.

How the National Budget is Divided

The National Budget Office² is the governing body for budget formulation. Through the Budget Classification Manual for the National Public Sector³, it performs the necessary updates that help users understand its methodology, logic, and terminology, facilitating the planning, monitoring, and control of the National Budget. Among other aspects, the classification system includes jurisdiction, purpose and function, expenditure object, and geography; it also includes a classifier for the origin of resources.

Expenditures by Jurisdiction: Public administration is divided into jurisdictions, sub-jurisdictions, and entities, that is, ministries and public agencies, which are

CHART 1. BUDGET CYCLE



Source: Own elaboration

responsible for carrying out state functions and incurring the necessary expenditures. In the case of the Army, for example, it corresponds to Sub-jurisdiction 21 of Jurisdiction 45 – Defense.

Expenditures by Purpose and Function: These represent the amount the state allocates to the services it provides to citizens. This may include social services, public debt, economic services, defense, security, education, health, among others.

Expenditures by Object: This category represents how the National State spends according to the type of goods and services it purchases or contracts, such as personnel expenses or consumable goods. These are usually referred to as items, derived from a nomenclature that records all goods and services that can be acquired. For example: Item 1 – personnel expenses; Item 2 – consumable goods; Item 3 – services; Item 4 – durable goods, etc.

Expenditures by Geography: This corresponds to the breakdown of the total expenditures by geographical region.

Resource Classification: This details the composition of revenue by category, given that the state obtains income through taxes, referred to as Source 11. Additionally, it generates revenue through the sale of assets or financing operations, referred to as Source 13, among others.

Balance Between Expenditures and Resources: This is a fundamental aspect for the current administration, as the President has repeatedly stated that the focus of this new economic and fiscal planning will be zero deficit, meaning that revenues must cover expenditures.

Planning, Programs, and Budget System in the Argentine Armed Forces

The General Directorates of Plans, Programs, and Budget (DGPPP) of each branch are responsible for implementing the Program-Based Budget—a technique used to execute public expenditure by the National Administration since the 1990s, with the United States being a pioneer in its application.

The logic of the system begins with planning, where objectives are established. Subsequently, the activities and/or tasks required to achieve these objectives are detailed, grouped into programs according to their purpose or function, and resources are allocated to meet the goals (Graphic 2). Once the budget is approved, it is executed, and finally, evaluation is conducted for improvement.

To fulfill its mission, the Armed Forces operate several Programs, each with specific characteristics and objectives:

- > Central Activities (overall force management – Program 1)

- > Operational Readiness (training, readiness, and force support – Program 16)
- > Education and Training (education – Program 17)
- > Health Assistance (health – Program 18)
- > Remount and Veterinary Services (Program 19)
- > Military Tailoring (Program 20)
- > Operational Sustainment (ongoing operations – Program 24)

Each Program has specific activities/tasks with defined goals that contribute to achieving the overall objectives set by the highest level of command (Graphic 3).

Budget Execution begins on January 1st and ends on December 31st of the fiscal year. It follows a sequential or phased progression, divided into four quarters throughout the year. In this way, the allocation of funds occurs gradually according to the amounts the State expects to collect, which are also reflected in the budget (Graphic 4).

Budget Execution by Quarters is related to the annual procurement

CHART 2. BUDGET ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY THE HEADS OF EACH PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES



CHART 3. PROGRAM 18- SANITARY ASSISTANCE



CHART 4. PROGRAM 18: HEALTHCARE ASSISTANCE. TASK 1: OPERATION OF MILITARY HOSPITALS



2. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/economia/onp>
 3. <https://www.economia.gob.ar/onp/documentos/manuales/clasificador16.pdf>

Source: Own elaboration

Setting strategic objectives and goals without allocating resources is merely an expression of wishful thinking. In this sense, the national budget law is the “Fundamental Law” and constitutes the true framework for military strategic planning.

plan prepared by the Dependent Administrative-Financial Services (SAF UD), which are responsible for managing, before the General Directorate of Administration and Finance, the commitment and accrual quotas of the assigned funds. All of this is carried out with the assistance of various commissions that oversee tenders during their opening, evaluation, and the receipt of goods.

Each budgeted task is, in turn, broken down into specific expenditures categorized through a classifier by Items, Main Budgets, and Partial Budgets (IPP)⁴, covering everything necessary to achieve the proposed physical target (Graphic 5).

The preparation of the budget presupposes efficient operations, which is why the purpose of expenditure must be broken down in sufficient detail to allow for the correct allocation of funds according to the priorities

established by the heads of each branch (Air Force, Army, and Navy), as well as to facilitate supervision and control, enabling timely corrections when necessary.

Timing in Budget Formulation

One year prior to the relevant fiscal year, the General Directorate of Plans, Programs, and Budget prepares the Multiannual Planning Directive and provides the various heads/responsible officers for budgeting with basic information, such as inflation estimates, projected exchange rates, initial budgetary limits, etc., which allow them to prepare the Preliminary Budget for each organization.

The final ceiling will be set by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance, which will determine the budget limits, allowing the preparation of the Draft Budget for the corresponding sub-jurisdiction (Air Force, Army, or Navy), which will then be

submitted for consideration as law. Once the adjustments to the budget draft are completed, usually by mid-year, it is submitted to the National Congress for approval before September 15 of each year.

On a date to be determined between these events, or even afterward, the Budget, Contractual Analysis, and Monitoring Commission (COPREACOSE in the case of the Army) convenes. This body serves as an advisory and integrative organ for the proposals that each budget officer presents in order to achieve the objectives set with the resources allocated to them.

This process enables the Chiefs of Staff of each Force to exercise leadership in line with the attainment of the objectives determined during planning, providing a holistic view of the policies and priorities established.

The commission is chaired by the Chiefs of the General Staff of each Force and is composed of the heads/responsible officers for budget execution, the General Directorate of Plans, Programs, and Budget (responsible for planning, coordination, and control), and the Inspectorate General (responsible for supervision).

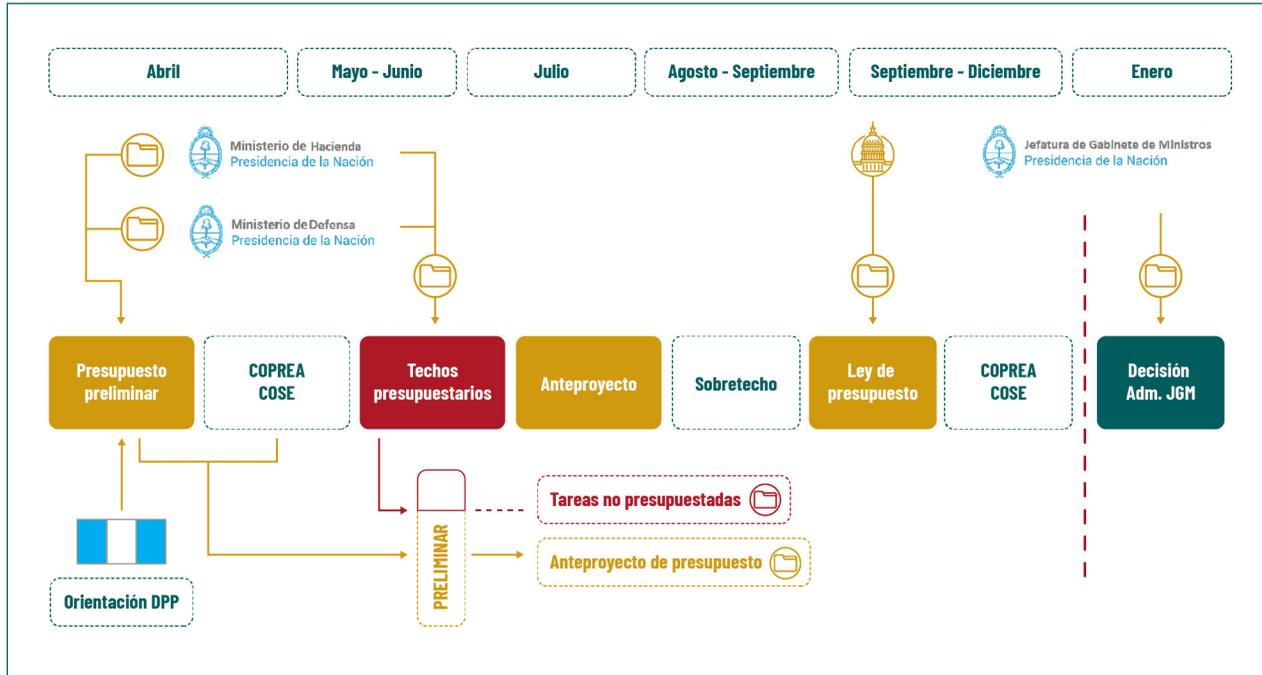
Once the Budget Law is enacted, at the beginning of the fiscal year, the Chief of the Cabinet of Ministers

CHART 5. HEALTHCARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. TASK 1: MILITARY HOSPITALS, 1ST QUARTER



Source: Own elaboration

CHART 6. BUDGET FORMULATION TIMELINE



Source: Own elaboration

issues the Administrative Decision in which the approved credits are allocated. Notably, the decision includes an annex specifying the various authorities of officials, according to their hierarchy, to make any necessary modifications to the budget during its execution.

During the Execution stage, the heads of each program, together with the General Directorate of Administration and Finance, are primarily responsible for ensuring that the planned objectives are achieved—some by executing the budget, and the others by processing the allocated quotas according to the anticipated amounts, timing, and procedures.

Finally, the Evaluation of the process is carried out by the Inspectorate General of each Force and the Management Control Department of the General Directorate of Plans, Programs, and Budget, with the purpose of supervising the proper functioning of the system and achieving continuous improvement.

Military Procurement

Military procurement has particular characteristics that differentiate it from other state entities, as it must respond to requirements arising in situations of extreme urgency, where human lives and state security are at risk.

As a case study, we will analyze the procurement model employed by the United States Army, a function centralized under the Army Contracting Command, which is part of the Army Materiel Command⁵ (see Figure 7, page 40).

The Army Contracting Command is responsible for acquisitions, managing contracts to support military operations. It has the duty to plan, coordinate, and execute contracts that ensure the force has the necessary goods, services, and resources available in a timely manner to carry out its missions effectively.

This command comprises several organizations that directly support the operational force. Depending on the level, these

include brigades, battalions, regional offices, and specialized teams (Figure 8), both within U.S. territory and in international deployments, ensuring that logistical and procurement support is efficient.

Contracting Brigades⁶ are units responsible for carrying out procurement functions at the Theater of Operations or Regional Army Command level. These brigades not only manage contracts to support troops in the field but also play a key role in integrating contracts between the force and external suppliers.

Contracting Battalions

Contracting Battalions⁷ are units subordinate to the Contracting Brigades and provide support to Army divisions. Each battalion is composed of contracting

4. <https://www.economia.gov.ar/onp/documentos/manuales/clasificador16.pdf>

5. <https://www.amc.army.mil/Organization/MajorSubordinate-Commands/>

6. Contracting Support Brigades

detachments⁸, which can be deployed independently to support contracting operations at the tactical level in specific operational areas. The battalions provide direct oversight of contracts and ensure that they are executed in accordance with federal contracting law.

Contracting Teams are small units, typically composed of 10 individuals, usually supporting brigades or battalions that are isolated or have specific functions. These teams are organized under a commander and include a chief, an operations and intelligence

officer responsible for market research, and the development of agreements with suppliers while ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

Additionally, contracting teams may include technical personnel according to the mission. They are responsible for managing the procurement processes and providing technical advice and training to tactical elements in all aspects related to contracting. (Figure 9)

Regional Contracting Offices

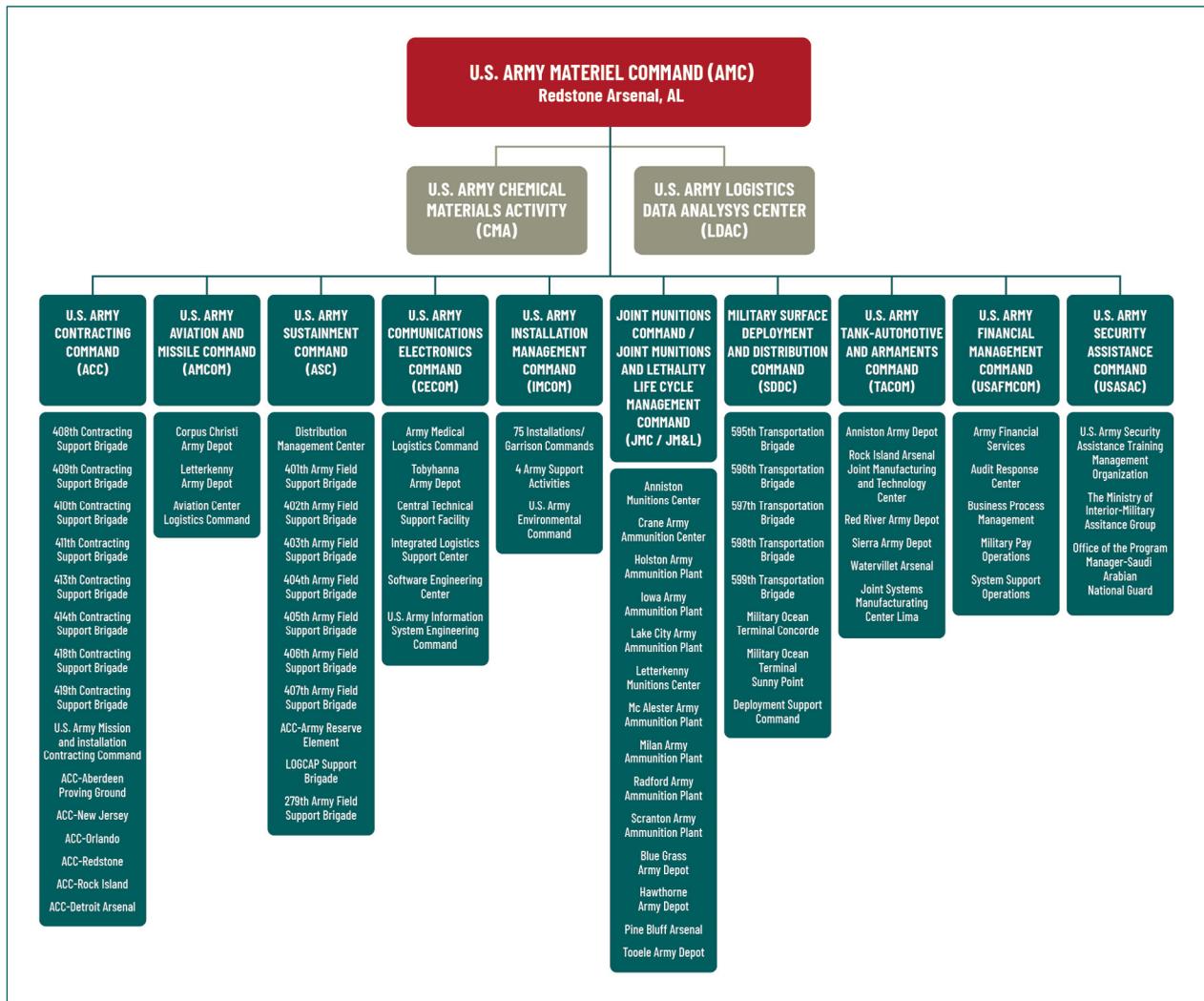
The Regional Contracting Offices⁹

are responsible for providing support at the local or regional level to facilitate contracting operations, ensuring that contracts are managed effectively across various areas of responsibility. These offices coordinate the necessary purchases and acquisitions to support military operations within their designated area.

Strategic Importance of the US Army Contracting Command

The Contracting Command is vital for the success of Army operations, as it ensures that all contracting requirements

CHART 7. ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND



Source: Own elaboration

are managed efficiently and in accordance with federal laws. Its ability to coordinate and oversee large-scale contracting allows the Army to operate effectively across various environments, ranging from combat operations to humanitarian missions. Furthermore, the Contracting Command facilitates the integration of joint and multinational capabilities, contributing to cohesion and success in complex operations.

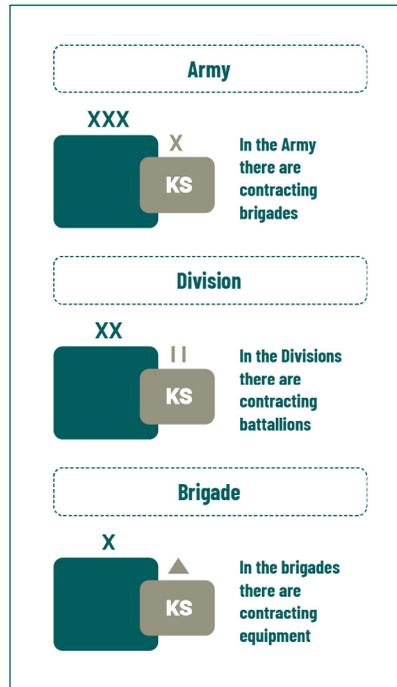
The organizational structure of the Contracting Command, composed of brigades and battalions that can be rapidly deployed, ensures that the Army can adapt to logistical challenges anywhere and under any circumstances.

Furthermore, it enables effective management of contracts ranging from the acquisition of supplies to complex weapon systems. Through its role in contract execution and oversight, the Contracting Command ensures that the Army has the necessary resources to carry out its mission efficiently and ethically, while maintaining integrity in the management of public funds and contractual processes.

In this regard, promoting transparency and integrity in contracting processes ensures that all contractual operations comply with established ethical standards, preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in resource management. This is especially important in high-value and complex contracts, where proper oversight can yield significant cost savings and ensure compliance with government policies.

To fulfill this function, contracting personnel operate in a support capacity and are not part of the organic structure of operational organizations. This arrangement allows for greater transparency in processes. While

CHART 8. ORGANIZATION OF THE PROCUREMENT COMMAND



Source: Own elaboration

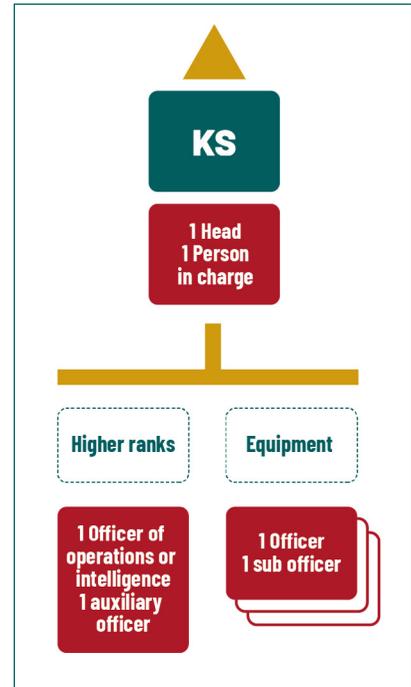
the tactical commander sets priorities regarding operational needs, the authority to contract rests with the contracting personnel, who are expressly appointed and overseen by the executive branch. This benefits the tactical commander by freeing them from bureaucratic activities that could distract from military operations on the ground.

According to the U.S. model, contracting officers have robust institutional backing, with the legitimacy of the contracting officer grounded in a combination of legislative authority (DAWIA), federal regulations (FAR/DFARS), and rigorous administrative procedures, providing strength and transparency to the system.

Profile for Integration into the US Army Acquisition Command

Personnel assigned to serve in this command must have a specific profile, capable of integrating combat experience

CHART 9. ORGANIZATION OF PROCUREMENT TEAMS



with expertise in administration and contract management. The United States Army has established an effective human resources pipeline by requiring at least seven years of service in combat units (Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers, or Communications). This requirement ensures that personnel possess adequate operational experience, translating into a true understanding of the needs, requirements, and urgencies of operational units.

Additionally, personnel are encouraged to pursue education in relevant fields that provide appropriate technical knowledge, such as industrial engineering, business administration, accounting, or master's degrees in administration and business. These qualifications complement the necessary profile for the position.

- 7. Contracting Battalions.
- 8. Contracting Detachements.
- 9. Regional Contracting Offices.

Those who request (requesting units) do not purchase (Purchasing Operational Unit), and those who purchase do not authorize payments (Financial Administrative Service).

CV

LTC PATRICIO JUSTO DEL NIÑO JESÚS TREJO

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Conclusions

Unlike the United States Army, the Argentine Army does not have a dedicated Acquisition Command. Although many functions are concentrated within the Acquisitions Department and the Operational Purchasing Unit of the Directorate of Materials, there are other directorates responsible for acquiring specific types of equipment, such as the Directorate of Communications or the Directorate of Engineers, each with its own Operational Purchasing Unit.

At the tactical operational level—Divisions and Brigades—this function is carried out by the Operational Purchasing Unit (UOC), which is part of the Financial Administrative Service, an entity purely focused on financial administration. Ideally, the UOC should not be subordinated to the Financial Administrative Service. In this regard, it is always advisable to respect the principle of internal control, which states: *those who request (requiring units) do not purchase (Operational Purchasing Unit), and those who purchase do not pay (Financial Administrative Service)*. The purpose of this principle is to avoid conflicts of interest, thereby enhancing transparency and public ethics, ultimately reducing corruption.



At higher levels of command, understanding budget formulation and execution is essential, since it represents the true military strategy, aligning resources with established objectives. Ignorance in this area can lead to resource

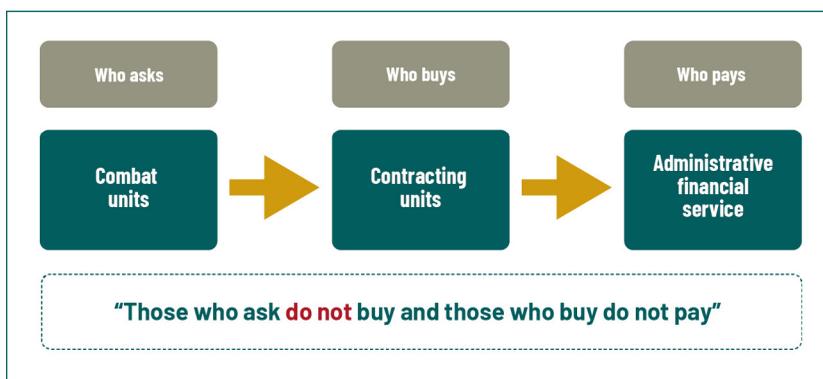
losses, which directly translate into a loss of operational capabilities.

Meanwhile, having a dedicated element, command, or agency responsible for acquisitions, as in the U.S. model, would contribute to the efficient use of resources,

optimizing time by utilizing pre-existing contracts and streamlining bureaucratic procedures within garrisons. This becomes even more critical during deployments in armed conflicts, disasters, or peacekeeping missions, where agile, legal, and transparent systems must be implemented to ensure the timely acquisition of resources necessary to operate and achieve mission objectives.

Based on the analysis conducted, it is advantageous to have an organization that centralizes the entire acquisition process, is independent of the Financial Administrative Service, and allows for a concentrated effort at all levels to optimize, accelerate, and increase the transparency of procurement processes within each of the Armed Forces. ■

INTERNAL CONTROL PRINCIPLE IN PROCUREMENT PROCESSES



STRUCTURING FORCES IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS

AN ANALYSIS OF FORCE STRUCTURE FOR MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS IN HYBRID CONFLICTS

By **COLONEL IGNACIO GARCÍA SOLORZANO**

Keywords:

- > Modern Conflicts
- > Planning
- > Multi-Domain Operations
- > Hybrid Conflicts

Introduction

The nature of military conflict has undergone significant changes throughout history. Technological advances, geopolitical shifts, and social and cultural transformations have given rise to a new era of conflicts that differ considerably from traditional confrontations. In contemporary times, armed conflicts are no longer confined to conventional battlefields; they have expanded into the cyber and space domains, and involve non-state actors, within what we now recognize as hybrid warfare.

This essay examines the nature of future conflict and its implications for military force structure planning. Current trends, emerging threats, and the strategies required to develop an effective and adaptable force structure will be explored. Through case studies, historical analysis, and theoretical evaluations, the discussion will provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject while emphasizing the need for strategic planning that integrates

multiple domains and can respond to emerging threats with flexibility and effectiveness.

Historical Evolution of Conflicts

The evolution of military conflicts has been shaped by technological, tactical, and strategic changes. From Napoleon's strategy of mass mobilization to the World Wars of the twentieth century—with the development of weapons of mass destruction and air power introducing unprecedented challenges—conflict has continually adapted to shifting contexts.

During the Napoleonic Wars, the employment of heavy artillery, the large-scale mobilization of forces, and the introduction of attrition strategies marked a significant transformation in the conduct of warfare (Luttwak, 1987). This evolution continued in the First World War, with the strategy of trench warfare and the introduction of new technologies such as tanks and aircraft, which altered the dynamics of combat. It was further



deepened during the Second World War, which introduced the concept of “total war” and the atomic bomb. The latter gave rise to the threat of mutually assured destruction, a defining feature of the Cold War, where conflict was increasingly characterized by deterrence and power struggles. During this period, intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) technology and satellite surveillance played crucial roles in shaping global military strategy.

In the closing decades of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first, asymmetric conflicts and irregular warfare have predominated. The global war on terrorism and the conflicts in the Middle East highlighted the centrality of intelligence and special operations. As Smith (2005) notes, *“the utility of force in the modern world lies in its ability to adapt to rapid change and respond to emerging threats.”*

Current Trends in Conflicts

Contemporary trends in conflict

are shaped by the proliferation of advanced technologies that are redefining tactical and strategic concepts, such as the use of drone swarms and unmanned aerial systems. One of the most significant developments is the growing prominence of cyber warfare. Cyberattacks have the capacity to paralyze critical infrastructure, steal sensitive information, and destabilize governments. As Rid (2011) observes, *“cyber war is not merely about computer attacks, but about a new form of conflict that affects all aspects of national security.”*

The use of drones and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has transformed modern warfare by enabling surveillance and precision strikes without putting soldiers at direct risk (Singer, 2009).

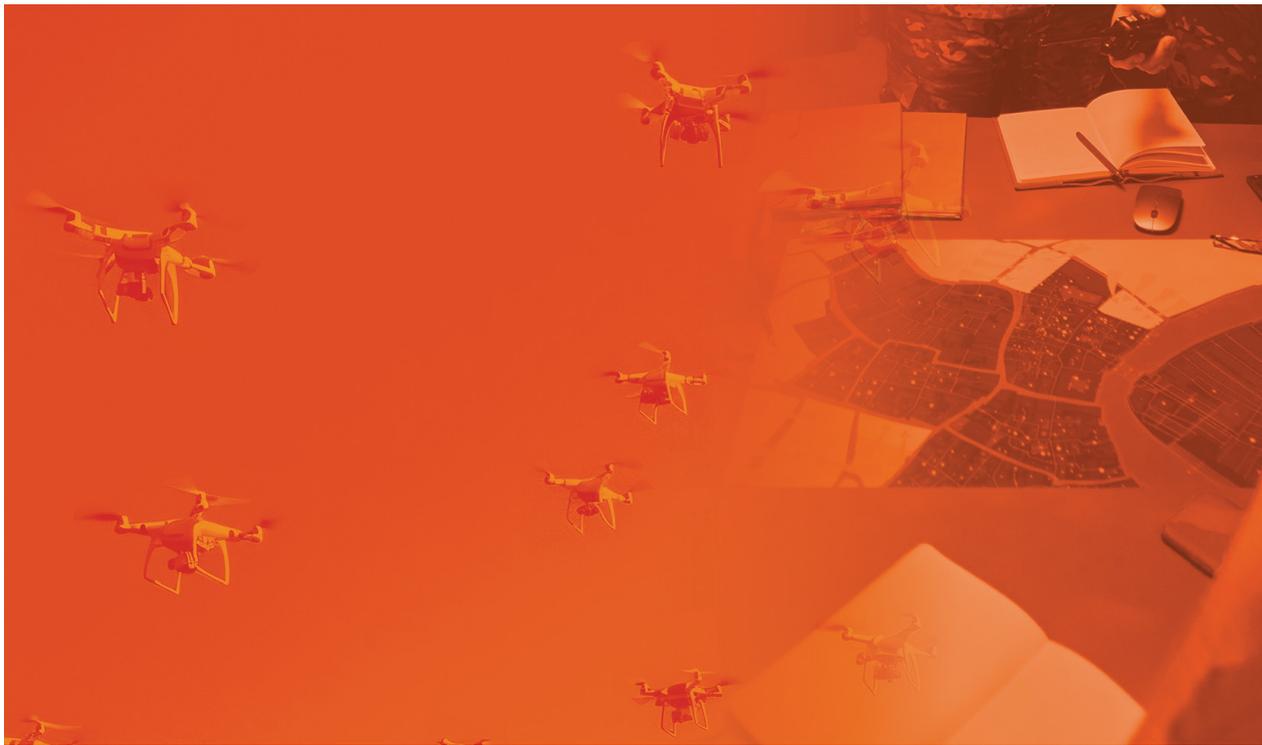
Artificial intelligence (AI) is also assuming an increasingly prominent role in modern conflicts, providing a significant advantage to those who employ it effectively. AI enables the analysis of vast amounts of data to identify patterns and predict enemy

movements, thereby contributing to more informed decision-making (Scharre, 2018).

The rise of non-state actors and hybrid warfare also represents key trends. International terrorism, criminal organizations, and paramilitary militias employ unconventional tactics to challenge state actors. Hybrid wars combine conventional and unconventional military operations, cyberattacks, and propaganda. As Kaldor (2012) argues, *“hybrid wars are a complex phenomenon that requires a multifaceted response and effective coordination across different domains.”*

Emerging Threats

Emerging threats in the field of global security are diverse and complex. One of the most prominent is cyber espionage, as both states and non-state actors seek to collect sensitive information that can be used to destabilize adversaries or to launch cyberattacks (Rid, 2011). Among these threats, global terrorism remains a critical



concern: groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt and operate across multiple regions. In this regard, Jones (2012) notes that *“the fight against terrorism requires a combination of intelligence, military operations, and international cooperation in order to be effective.”*

Resource disputes—particularly over water and minerals—are also emerging as potential drivers of conflict. Climate change exacerbates these disputes by altering patterns of resource availability, which could potentially lead to both local and international confrontations (Boot, 2006). Pandemics, as demonstrated by COVID-19, likewise have the capacity to destabilize entire regions and trigger conflict. Infectious diseases can weaken economies, destabilize governments, and heighten social tensions, and according to Singer (2009), states must develop rapid and effective response capabilities to address such contingencies.

Multi-Domain Operations

Multi-domain operations are, conceptually, a response to the increasing complexity of modern conflicts. These operations integrate land, air, naval, cyber, and space forces to achieve decisive superiority. Such an approach requires effective coordination and interoperability across different branches of the armed forces, whether operating jointly or in combined formations.

In the land domain, forces must be capable of operating in a wide range of environments, from densely populated urban areas to rural, desert, or mountainous terrain. The integration of autonomous vehicles and artificial intelligence can further enhance the effectiveness of land operations. As Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1996) argue, *“the integration of advanced technologies into land operations enables greater precision and a more rapid response capacity.”*

Meanwhile, since its disruptive emergence in the First World War, the air domain has remained essential to battlefield control and, as Boot (2006)

notes, *“is critical as a component of military strategy.”* Fighter aircraft, drones, and air defense systems play vital roles in surveillance and power projection. The military application of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems is revolutionizing air capabilities, enabling greater flexibility and speed in operations.

The naval domain is likewise essential. Naval theorists such as Alfred T. Mahan and Admiral Ernesto Pertusio, among others, have emphasized in their works the strategic importance of sea control, particularly in regions with critical maritime routes. Submarines, warships, and amphibious forces thus acquire the character of a critical component in this context. The integration of submarine drones and artificial intelligence into naval operations is enhancing and modernizing detection and response capabilities.

The most recent domain, cyberspace, has emerged as a critical battlefield. Cyberattacks

The evolution of military conflicts has been shaped by technological, tactical, and strategic changes. From Napoleon's strategy of mass mobilization to the World Wars of the twentieth century, with the development of weapons of mass destruction and air power.

can paralyze critical infrastructure, steal information, and destabilize governments. Cyber operations must be integrated with other military operations to maximize their effectiveness. As Rid (2011) notes, *“cybersecurity is an integral part of modern military strategy, and cyber operations must be coordinated with other domains to be effective.”*

Finally, the space domain is gaining increasing importance. Satellites are crucial for communication, navigation, and surveillance. The militarization of space presents both new challenges and opportunities for armed forces, making it a priority to develop capabilities for effective operations in this domain.

Force Structure Planning

Force structure planning, under the concepts of multi-domain operations and hybrid conflicts, combined with technological development, entails a complex decision-making process that must continuously adapt to emerging threats. An effective force structure must be flexible, resilient, and capable of operating across multiple domains.

Training and preparedness of the forces must be adapted to the new realities of conflict. Multi-domain operations require

effective coordination and interoperability among different branches of the armed forces. This involves joint training and the development of doctrines and tactics that integrate land, air, naval, cyber, and space capabilities (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1996). Enhancing interoperability with allied nations is another key consideration. International alliances and coalitions play a crucial role in responding to global threats. Interoperability optimizes the armed forces' capacity to operate jointly and respond effectively to crises.

Funding, Acquisition, and Ethical Considerations

Funding and resource acquisition have always been challenges in force structure planning. It is crucial to balance modernization needs with budgetary constraints. This requires making strategic decisions regarding the allocation of investments to maximize the impact of available resources, placing funding and allocation in the priority position they deserve as fundamental components for the overall success of the force structure (Boot, 2006).

Ethical and legal constraints must also be considered in force structure planning. According to

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Scharre (2018), the use of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and drones, raises ethical and legal questions that must be addressed as they evolve, since their full scope is not yet determined.

Challenges and Considerations

Force structure planning faces several challenges, some of which have already been highlighted in the preceding sections. One of the primary challenges is the rapid evolution of technologies, along with the financial and strategic costs associated with adapting to keep pace with these advances and ensuring that armed forces are equipped with the latest capabilities.

Political leadership also influences force structure planning and projection. Political decisions regarding defense and security can affect resource allocation and strategic priorities, either facilitating or hindering effective medium- and long-term development. It is crucial for military leadership to work closely with policymakers to ensure a coherent and effective defense strategy. As Smith (2005) notes, *“coordination between military leaders and policymakers is essential for the success of defense strategy.”*

Technological limitations may also pose challenges. While advanced technologies offer numerous advantages, they also have constraints and vulnerabilities. For example, cyber systems may be susceptible to attacks, and autonomous technologies may face reliability challenges. Recognizing these weaknesses is fundamental in force structure planning.

Case Study: The War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine provides an opportunity to analyze how modern conflicts are being conducted and the implications for force structure. This conflict has involved multiple state and non-state actors and has seen the use of a wide range of tactics and technologies. It has also highlighted the importance of multi-domain operations.

Russian forces, for example, have employed a combination of air, land, and cyber operations, demonstrating how multi-domain operations are critical to achieving strategic objectives (Jones, 2012). The use of drones has been another notable feature of the Ukrainian conflict. Both government forces and insurgent groups have utilized drones for surveillance and strikes, establishing them as an important tool in modern warfare.

According to Jones (2012), the war in Ukraine has also underscored the challenges of international cooperation and interoperability. International coalitions operating in Ukraine have faced difficulties in coordinating their efforts and operating effectively.

Conclusions

The nature of future conflict requires an innovative and flexible approach to force structure planning. Current trends and emerging threats underscore the need for comprehensive strategic planning that encompasses multiple domains in order to respond effectively to threats. This approach reinforces the importance of new technologies, joint training, and interoperability with international allies, contributing to an adaptable and resilient force structure capable of operating in a constantly evolving conflict environment. Continuous investment in research and development is essential to maintain technological superiority.

Finally, with respect to our own Armed Forces, there is a highlighted need for increased international cooperation and the development of doctrines and tactics that integrate multi-domain capabilities, positioning them as central actors in the Southern Cone. ■

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INTERSERVICE RIVALRY

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT FAILURE

By CR GABRIEL ALEJANDRO ESBRY



Keywords:

- > Interservice Rivalry
- > Armed Forces
- > Joint Environment
- > Weapons
- > Services
- > Ranks

If, after analyzing armed conflicts in the contemporary era, we sought to determine the factors that negatively affected military leadership in the conduct of a battle, we would conclude that these were the result of a multicausal relationship linked to tactics, strategies, procedures, planning errors, improvisation, and so forth. The lessons learned are studied by a wide range of military academies around the world with the simple aim of avoiding the repetition of the same mistakes.

However, there exists a phenomenon often overlooked due to its deep cultural impact within a military organization: interservice rivalry. This issue, which originates in times of peace, can have devastating consequences in war. It may be considered a taboo because of the reluctance to address it, and represents a scourge that gradually undermines the synergy that all armed forces should maintain in their fundamental mission of fulfilling the objectives assigned by the Nation.

Interservice rivalry can be defined as the opposition, confrontation, or enmity between the various military organizations responsible for national defense. It is, essentially, a conflict in which one service seeks to protect and promote its own interests at the expense of another's objectives. This confrontation also occurs within each service among different branches, departments, ranks, and so forth. For this reason, the phenomenon is also commonly referred to as inter-branch or inter-service rivalry.

From a historical perspective, it is important to note that this confrontation does not only impact the specific and joint operational levels. Warfare has demonstrated that, at the combined level, heightened competition between forces from different countries within a military alliance can occur and may even extend to involve various sectors of government and politics.

This rivalry is far from being a "healthy competition" intended to foster esprit de corps or encourage personnel identification with the organization in which they serve. On the contrary, it constitutes a distortion of this idea of healthy competition, where ambition and prejudice serve as emotional drivers over any logical reasoning.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that any action with these characteristics will have a direct or indirect impact on operations, potentially resulting in a victory with an unforeseen high cost in personnel and equipment, or an unexpected defeat accompanied by mutual accusations during post-operation reviews.

The struggle among services or branches for various spheres of power extends across multiple arenas, such as the acquisition and management of resources, appointment of command positions, officer promotions, professional training, prominence in combat operations, political lobbying, and so forth.

Jason Barlow, an officer of the United States Air Force (USAF), studied cases of interservice rivalry during the Pacific War of the Second

World War (WWII). He suggests that what is often dismissed as a humorous or folkloric aspect of the armed forces can, in times of crisis, degenerate into a situation that endangers personnel lives and jeopardizes mission success. He further observes that it is inexplicable for such intense rivalry to exist when a nation's security is at stake, and that military organizations thereby risk losing the trust of their people. Lessons regarding this phenomenon are often addressed only after the wounds have healed, following a high price paid in blood. The scrutiny of incidents that generated interservice rivalry in wartime is usually undertaken with great diligence by nations committed to responsibly safeguarding their future and ensuring they do not repeat the same mistakes.

INTERSERVICE RIVALRY THROUGH HISTORY

The Attack on Pearl Harbor, 1941

On December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked Pearl Harbor (Hawaii), home to the United States' most important military base in the Pacific Ocean. The toll on that day was 18 ships sunk, 188 aircraft destroyed, and 2,043 lives lost. The sudden attack surprised not only the United States but the entire world.

However, was the United States truly caught off guard? Subsequent investigations and declassified data confirm that both the Navy and the Army had advance intelligence signals indicating an imminent attack by Japan. Nevertheless, neither the armed forces nor

"[Rivalry] that is generally seen as something humorous or part of military folklore, in times of crisis can escalate into a situation that endangers the lives of its members and leads to the failure of accomplishing a given mission."

Washington were able to recognize these indicators or act accordingly.

By 1940, both the Navy and the Army had deciphered the Japanese codes used for transmitting classified information. However, this significant achievement was undermined by mutual distrust between the services, which prevented them from sharing information or cooperating in the analysis and interpretation of intercepted data. In fact, unnecessary competition arose between the two services as each sought to gain prominence with the political leaders of the time. There were also moments of distrust toward certain government officials, leading to the withholding of information from President Roosevelt himself.

Both the Army and the Navy maintained a presence in Hawaii, but because a joint command did not exist, each service managed its own affairs, and coordination between commanders was practically nonexistent. Astonishingly, even when abundant evidence pointed to the likelihood of war with Japan, both services continued to refrain from sharing intelligence and information. There were no liaison officers, and a joint command had not been established because the fleet commander "never deemed it necessary," despite preexisting orders on the matter.

Finally, when the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor arrived, most personnel were on leave, no unit was ready to repel the Japanese assault, and the alert from Washington arrived practically after the first explosions at the harbor and other facilities. Paradoxically, despite a general warning about a possible Japanese attack having been issued a month in advance, all levels of command were "surprised" by what was already an open secret. This, among other factors, can be attributed to the incompetence revealed by interservice rivalry.

Nimitz vs. MacArthur

If the consequences of the attack on Pearl Harbor were partly rooted in the intense rivalry between the Army and the Navy, what followed would reaffirm the persistent struggle for power between the services. Far from seeking common ground to effectively confront the Japanese enemy, each branch sought to impose its own vision of how to conduct the Pacific Campaign.

After the attack on December 7, 1941, and faced with the necessity of creating the Pacific Theater of Operations, problems arose with the appointment of the Commander-in-Chief of the Joint Forces. Each service vigorously

sought to promote its preferred candidate. The Joint Staff required five weeks of deliberation to determine how to resolve the situation, and even then, the agreed solution violated one of the most fundamental principles of warfare typically taught in military academies: unity of command.

Although a joint command was established, the parties clung to their positions and ceded no ground. To prevent further discord, two separate theaters of operations were created: one under the command of General MacArthur and the other under Admiral Nimitz. The former reported to the Army General Staff, while the latter reported to the Chief of Naval Operations.

This divided command resulted in a constant overlap of efforts and competition for the allocation of ships, landing craft, and aircraft. The Joint Staff was forced to act as a mediator—a role clearly outside its intended responsibilities. This situation produced a diffuse strategy that led to ongoing disputes between commanders, with mutual accusations reaching President Roosevelt himself. MacArthur later acknowledged that the divided command had been a mistake, causing an unnecessary prolongation of the conflict that



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resulted in unexpected casualties and material losses. According to Barlow, the consequences of the events in the Pacific Theater were the result of *“the selfish interests of each service and personality conflicts.”*

The British Intelligence Disaster in Malaya

By early 1942, Malaya had become the most important British military stronghold in Southeast Asia. Due to the presence of mineral resources of economic and military interest, the Japanese saw the need to conquer this British colony to enhance their power and influence in the region. As in Pearl Harbor, British military intelligence was not lacking in indications to deduce what was imminent. In Malaya, an office was established to coordinate intelligence efforts to fulfill the crucial task of providing early warning and enabling timely reaction through their own means. However, the prevailing situation demonstrated that little could be coordinated due to disorganization among

intelligence agencies and constant disputes between them. Within the organizations themselves, the various officers responsible for gathering information and producing intelligence were so antagonistic that cooperation was virtually nonexistent.

Meanwhile, in this environment of selfishness and constant disputes, a Japanese espionage network acquired high-level military secrets that enabled the Japanese armed forces to plan a precise strike. Astonishingly, the head of the Japanese spy network was a Royal Air Force officer who, taking advantage of weaknesses in counterintelligence, was able to transmit valuable strategic and military documents to Japanese intelligence. The traitor's capture on December 10, 1941, was insufficient to convince London of the storm approaching Malaya and Singapore. Japanese aerial reconnaissance continued up to days before the final attack. Nothing escaped the eyes of British military personnel, who, with a hint

of arrogance, underestimated their opponent's military capability. They clearly believed that Japan would not dare to attack—but reality proved otherwise, and the British Empire suffered one of the most significant military debacles in history.

Regarding this, military historian Hugues Wilson notes: “... *the southern extremity of Malaya surrendered to a Japanese assault force numerically much smaller. Some 130,000 well-equipped British, Australian, and Indian officers and soldiers, with abundant battle supplies, capitulated to only 35,000 hungry and exhausted Japanese troops, nearly out of ammunition and at the brink of collapse.*”

From WWII to the Gulf War: The Struggle for Air Power

The entry of the United States into the Second World War necessitated a series of structural changes to efficiently direct the military effort toward victory. One of these changes was the creation of the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF), which originated from and separated from the U.S. Army Air Corps after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, when it was determined that an independent air force was necessary.

One of the first lessons learned against Erwin Rommel's Africa Korps was the need for a centralized air command, meaning that a single commander should have control over all air assets regardless of their parent service. Until that point, the focus had been on the integrated use of each service's combat power, but the services were reluctant to relinquish areas of authority or prominence.

The USAAF ultimately centralized all air power, planning and conducting operations often independently of the ground component. Both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) strongly opposed ceding their air assets, arguing that their aircraft

were intended to support operations within their specific domains—that is, to fulfill the mission of each service rather than to be employed jointly in a unified manner by the air component. In this way, a rivalry over the use of aerial resources on the battlefield began to emerge.

The USAAF argued that, regardless of whether the level of operation was tactical, operational, or strategic, all air assets should be controlled by a single command at the highest level, independent of the specific mission. Early air force theorists maintained that the true power of the airplane lay in its use as a weapon for strategic bombing. They contended that the Army was responsible for providing its own fire support through artillery and that air assets should be reserved for deep strikes against enemy infrastructure.

This concept soon led to a neglect of close air support at the tactical level by the USAAF—a point that the U.S. Army and USMC would contest throughout the war. The advent of nuclear weapons further emboldened the newly established U.S. Air Force (1947), where enthusiasm reached the extreme of believing that the Navy and Army were dispensable, as it was assumed that an air component equipped with atomic bombs would be sufficient to win any war.

The Korean War (1950–1953)

The Korean War did not demonstrate operational improvements in the employment of air assets. Disputes with the USAF were commonplace, providing both the Army and Marine Corps with grounds to appeal to the Department of Defense for the necessity of having their own close air support systems. Soon, although only briefly, the requested concessions were granted. Air Force officers, with greater political acumen, managed to impose restrictions on the size, capabilities, and missions of the aircraft acquired by the other services, clearly defining

the roles each would play in the use of air platforms. “*The USAF did not allow other services to perform interdiction against ground targets, close air support, aerial reconnaissance, or troop transport.*”

The Vietnam War (1965–1975) found the armed forces more divided than ever. It was a low-intensity conflict dominated by ground operations that required more close air support than the large-scale destruction typical of conventional warfare. The USAF focused almost exclusively on strategic bombing over North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The reluctance to provide tactical support forced both the Army and Marines to develop, “*in the midst of war,*” capabilities that had been lost since WWII. Consequently, both services, in opposition to USAF policy, extensively employed transport and attack helicopters, as well as turboprop aircraft for reconnaissance and surveillance. Regarding the planning and execution of air operations, the absence of a unified command resulted in the inefficient use of air power and caused unnecessary casualties among ground forces due to the lack of required fire support.

The Gulf War (1990–1991)

During the Gulf War, despite lessons learned in Vietnam and certain agreements signed in the 1980s that were intended to end disputes between the services, coordination failures and rivalries revealed that the longstanding problem of employing and controlling air assets persisted.

Although the USAF initially obtained centralized control over naval and Marine Corps air assets, the latter's dissatisfaction with the limited tactical support led them to follow the Army's example and operate their aircraft and helicopters independently. Ultimately, the situation had changed little since Vietnam. The USAF insisted on

centralized command, but the Army and Marine Corps opposed this, citing the lack of adequate close air support as well as insufficient interdiction of enemy rear-area ground targets.

Market – Garden: Jealousy over Glory

The optimism generated by the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944, led the Supreme Allied Command, under General Eisenhower, to create the First Combined Airborne Corps. Jealousy and the desire for prominence drove British General Montgomery to claim leadership of the first large-scale combined parachute operation, as he felt it was his moment to seize the glory that the Americans had taken from him. Everyone was eager to see the great Allied airborne army participate in the campaign against the Germans. Winston Churchill maintained that it was time to restore the diminished prestige of the British Army. At the time, *TIME* magazine highlighted: *“In the postwar world, we may maintain peace through the creation of an international airborne army.”*

However, the planning of Operation Market–Garden did not begin under the best conditions. A mixture of jealousy, envy, rivalry, and aversion to criticism led General Montgomery to decide that American commanders would no longer be invited to participate. Additionally, due to mutual accusations regarding performance in North Africa in 1943 between the Royal Army and the Royal Air Force, pilots were also excluded from the planning process, contrary to the need for integrated work at both joint and combined levels.

To these issues must be added the gravity of ignoring countless intelligence warnings, which had cautioned about the unusual increase of German forces in the target area, the dangers of conducting a

daylight airborne operation, and the extreme distance of the drop zone relative to the mission assigned by Montgomery.

Ultimately, Operation Market–Garden resulted in a series of tactical and operational errors that culminated in the Allies’ most resounding failure: Montgomery’s 1st Airborne Division was decimated, suffering eight thousand casualties without even accomplishing the assigned mission. Although everyone acknowledged the defeat, no one wanted to take responsibility, leading to mutual accusations. David Fraser, a battle veteran, succinctly summarized the engagement: *“Strictly speaking, Operation Market–Garden was futile. It was flawed from beginning to end, poorly planned, and the only thing that redeems it, though tragically, is the exceptional courage of those who carried it out.”*

Civilian Control of Defense

The Cuban Missile Crisis (1961) marked a turning point in President John F. Kennedy’s (JFK) relationship with the leadership of the U.S. Armed Forces. His Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, was the architect of a management policy rooted in academic and corporate principles, which was largely disconnected from the military environment.

Whereas World War II and the Korean War had exposed relentless inter-service conflicts, JFK’s approach, far from promoting harmony, exacerbated tensions, resulting in serious confrontations that multiplied during the Vietnam War. Mutual distrust existed between the military leadership and the president. McNamara, a former successful manager at Ford Motor Company, believed that the micro-management methods of Harvard Business School could introduce innovative reforms in the military, which could then be applied in wartime.

Alongside his team, he disregarded advice from uniformed officers, convinced that the military intellect was insufficient to develop a clear strategy for victory against the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army. He only listened to generals who were politically and ideologically aligned with the administration, granting them approval for certain military projects.

To ensure the neutralization of all commands, regardless of their level, the Secretary of Defense hired hundreds of civilians from leading business schools to conduct “profitability inspections” within military headquarters. In this way, young individuals—who had never even smelled gunpowder—treated experienced military officers with arrogance and disdain.

However, there was little that could be done. The service chiefs were mindful of the fate of General MacArthur during the Korean War, when he confronted President Truman. The complacent attitude adopted would erode the prestige previously earned by military leaders, and the never-ending inter-service rivalry would become a co-responsible factor in the tragic defeat in Vietnam.

The Malvinas War

The armed conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was no exception to the rule, as there were frictions and instances of miscoordination stemming from incompetence at all levels of command. On the Argentine side, one of the most emblematic cases was the dispute between the commander of Task Force Mercedes (Argentine Army) and the head of Cónдор Military Air Base (Argentine Air Force).

This conflict persisted even after the surrender at the Battle of Darwin–Goose Green. On April 27, 1982, the Task Force



commander received orders to relocate to the isthmus to carry out multiple missions, including the defense of the Military Air Base, which entailed operational control over his personnel and resources. It is worth noting that, until that moment, the aforementioned Air Force unit was not within the command chain of the Third Infantry Brigade (Army) but reported directly to the Air Component Command in the Malvinas.

Although there was a wide range of issues sowing discord among the commanders at Goose Green, the treatment of the local population required the intervention of Civil Affairs. For security reasons, and based on indications that led him to believe the Kelpers were collaborating with British intelligence, the Task Force commander ordered all civilians to be gathered in the town hall, which provoked strong resistance from the population.

The residents' situation of relative comfort created tensions

between the Argentine commanders, a circumstance that the locals exploited to align with one of the conflicting parties and gain certain advantages. On May 21, the Second Brigade Commander arrived at the garrison and noted that, citing operational needs, none of the Force commanders at Goose Green were willing to assume responsibility for the issue. The authority on site decided that the Kelpers should return to their homes and that a Civil Affairs team would soon be sent to manage the situation.

At the time of the British landing at San Carlos, a command relationship between C ndor Military Air Base and Task Force Mercedes had still not been established, and the combat on May 27 caught both organizations fighting independently, without any coordination.

On the British side, a considerable number of errors arose from inter-service confrontation. From the moment the mobilization order was issued to execute Operation Corporate,

and despite the apparent resistance of each service branch, a joint intelligence cell was created, the effectiveness of which—evaluated at the end of the conflict—did not meet the expectations of senior commanders. The Fleet Air Arm was accused by its RAF counterparts of withholding technical intelligence and operational experience regarding the effectiveness of the Argentine 35-mm anti-aircraft guns.

Furthermore, the pilots were never provided with the location of the front-line contact between their own ground forces and the enemy, which hindered close air support operations and endangered the safety of the British infantry. Additionally, one day before the Battle of Darwin, the RAF detected the location of Argentine artillery in Goose Green through aerial reconnaissance photography, but, incredibly, this information never reached the G2 of the 3rd Commando Brigade.

Moreover, the urgent need to neutralize the Exocet missile system

led British military leadership to plan an operation with Special Forces on the Argentine mainland. On May 18, 1982, while troops from the Special Air Service (SAS) were conducting a heliborne infiltration in Tierra del Fuego, the aircraft was detected by the electronic systems of the Argentine ship ARA Bouchard, forcing the patrol to divert its course toward Chile and cancel the mission.

It was later revealed, in 2012, that the RAF was aware of Argentine ships conducting a “radar picket” mission off the coast of Río Grande but failed to transmit the alert to the Royal Navy, which might have led to the postponement of Operation Plum Duff.

However, the hostility between the forces was not limited to the combat arms or services; support organizations and specialized units also experienced the rivalry firsthand during the fighting.

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Jolly, a medical officer, served as the head of the field hospital at Ajax Bay following the British landing on May 21. Under his command were medical professionals from both the

Royal Marines and the paratroopers. Regarding the distrust between the two forces, Jolly noted:

“Inevitably, the occasional brawl broke out. The attitude of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ became evident, and the old tribal prejudices between the green berets and the red berets surfaced.”

Professional suspicion, verbal disputes, and even petty disputes over medical supplies were a constant while the Argentine Air Force carried out attacks against the British fleet. The situation became so critical that Jolly had to gather all medical personnel from both forces outside the field hospital and severely reprimand them, urging them to work together and set aside old rivalries. From that moment on, the situation changed dramatically for the better.

At the Medical Forces in the Malvinas (CIMM) in Puerto Argentino, the situation was not much different. In this regard, Major Raúl Ceballos recorded the following considerations in his postwar report:

“Once the CIMM was integrated, the relationship with the personnel of the Air Force (FAA) was good, and with the Navy (ARA) it was very good, though neither reached excellence, primarily evidenced by the withholding of information regarding incoming flights to evacuate the wounded.”

The greatest danger is doing nothing

History shows us how the struggle for spheres of power has been a constant both in peacetime and in war. In pursuing their own interests, each Service adopts a corporate mindset that undermines the fundamental principle of “joint military action”: interoperability.

At the service-specific level, antagonism between branches can degenerate into petty disputes aimed at protecting or promoting individual interests above those of the whole. In such situations, bureaucracy and favoritism may erode the value of meritocracy, leading to an increase in mediocrity levels due to the diaspora of highly skilled men and women. ■

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MILITARY PROFESSIONALIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

INTEGRATION OF THE MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM INTO THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

By **MY FEDERICO MIRANDA GROPPA**

Keywords:

- > Military professionalization
- > Military education
- > Professional military education

Introduction

In the 1990s, timelines began to be established for the formal recognition of the graduation of non-commissioned officer training institutes at the high school level or its equivalent, and for university

degrees for officers¹. Evidently, this discussion held significant importance within the historical and political context of the time,

¹ For promotion to senior officer: Colonel and General.

It was acknowledged the sustained effort made by the armed institutions in the education of their members and in opening their institutes to the civilian sector, while it was also considered appropriate to continue the policy of training and professional development of personnel.

which is why it was brought into the legislative sphere and incorporated into the Armed Forces Restructuring Law of 1998.

The response of the Armed Forces' training institutes to this development was the adjustment of academic programs and the formal issuance of the corresponding degrees upon graduation as non-commissioned officers and officers. Additionally, further measures were required concerning university-level qualifications, as a solution needed to be found for officers who graduated prior to 1998 and therefore lacked the minimum degree necessary to access postgraduate programs offered by specific senior war colleges. For example, the Argentine Army provided these cohorts with the opportunity to combine studies at the Senior War College with a university degree (a Bachelor's in Strategy and Organization).²

This article aims to analyze and understand the professionalization process of the Armed Forces, its underlying needs, origins, principal actors, and its evolution both geographically and historically—from the end of the bipolar world to well into the first two decades of the 21st century.

During the 1990s, several significant developments occurred that illuminate the path toward the

professionalization of the Armed Forces. The first of these was the statute of the Army's Institute of Higher Education (IESE), which consolidated the national recognition and validity of degrees and university-level qualifications under the framework of Law 17,778 on Provincial Universities. One year later, the same process took place at the Naval Military School, following a precedent set in 1971 by the Military Aviation School.

The incorporation of part of the academic offerings of the National Defense School into the IESE in 1992 represents a development consistent with the university status recently granted to that institute, which from that point onward became responsible for issuing and processing university degrees with the Ministry of Education.

In 1995, with the enactment of Law 24,521 on Higher Education, the three branches of the Armed Forces renewed the statutes of their university institutes—previously governed by Law 17,778 on Provincial Universities—thereby formally incorporating them into the National Education System.

A practice characteristic of higher education institutions is the establishment of a broadcasting service, a process that the IESE managed before the Federal

Broadcasting Committee, ultimately obtaining approval in 1997.

By 1998, with the enactment of Law 24,948 on the Restructuring of the Armed Forces, the process known as the “reform of the Military Education System” was formalized, a matter that had been present on the agenda since the initial discussions of the National Defense Law (Simons Rossi, 2010).

The first significant development of the 21st century was the project entitled “*National Defense on the Democratic Agenda*.” This project was sponsored in 2003 by the United Nations Development Programme and supported by the Ministry of Defense. It consisted of three stages: the first aimed at designing an agenda on the topic, the second focused on conducting seminars and workshops on the issue, and the third involved disseminating the results to national authorities and the National Defense Council (HCN) (Ministry of Defense, 2003).

The first stage was organized into nine working groups, each of which met three times with the objective of addressing its assigned topic and issuing a unified report. The groups included individuals of recognized expertise relevant to the subjects under discussion: foreign policy and national defense, the role of the Armed Forces in the new



international and regional strategic context, defense and the community, the management of defense policy, the military instrument, economy and defense, mobilization and reserves, intelligence, and the topic of greatest relevance to the present article—defense education.

Regarding military training and education, the sustained efforts made by the armed forces in the education of their members and in opening their institutes to the civilian sector were recognized. At the same time, it was deemed appropriate to continue the policy of training personnel both domestically and abroad in fields of interest to the Armed Forces. It is noteworthy that the working group also considered it advisable to revisit studies aimed at a possible unification of the Senior War Colleges: “a matter for which studies exist that should be updated; it would also be beneficial to gradually develop a joint curriculum based on general-interest subjects offered at each School” (Ministry of Defense, 2003, p. 51).

Finally, the need to advance integration at all levels—both civilian and military—between the Military Education System and the National Education System was emphasized. The work of this group coincided with the IESE initiative to reform its existing statute, which, among other aspects, was tasked with reviewing the institutional interpretation of the concepts of autonomy³ and university self-sufficiency conferred by the LES.

Another event of interest for this research is the creation in 2006 of the Advisory Council for the Reform of Armed Forces Education, whose purpose was to lay the foundations for the educational process. Among the Council’s accomplishments, notable measures included projects for restructuring the institutes, curricular reform of officer training institutes, standardization of course presentation formats in military academies, implementation of the Defense Education Statistical Information System, the Civilian for Defense program, and the process

for selection and admission to military institutes, among others.

The next development to consider is the creation of the Joint Senior War College (ESGC) to address the requirements established by Law No. 24,948 on the Restructuring of the Armed Forces, which called for the provision of commands and general staff trained at the military strategic, operational strategic, and senior tactical levels. The decree establishing the ESGC states that its purpose is to train general staff officers from all three branches of the Armed Forces in the planning and conduct of joint military operations.

2. This program concluded in 2013, with the entry of the first class of officers graduated from the CMN holding a university degree.

3. For a deeper understanding of this topic, it is necessary to consider the foundational manifesto of the 1918 University Reform. There are numerous authors and collections addressing this subject, particularly publications released on the centenary. Likewise, it is advisable to review the opinions of specialists regarding the application of these principles to military institutions, such as Carlos Pérez Rasetti, Ricardo Biazzi, and others.



Following the creation of the ESGC, the next milestone was the establishment of the Armed Forces Educational Center (CEFA). Its purpose is to ensure that both the specific service schools and the joint school are not only linked in terms of curricular organization and coordinated in their overall functioning, but also physically integrated within infrastructure that allows for such integration (Ministry of Defense, 2008).

Also noteworthy as a precedent is the creation of the Coordination of Education and Training, whose purpose is to design and coordinate the educational policies established for military and civilian personnel engaged in defense management. A few months later, this initiative led to the establishment of the Undersecretariat of Training, within the organizational structure of the Secretariat of Military Affairs of the Ministry of Defense. This development, occurring in the context of the restructuring of the ministerial organization, expanded

the scope of the Coordination of Education and Training while elevating the importance assigned by the ministry to advisory functions related to the obligations arising from educational policies, whose technical and administrative aspects demanded such attention.

In the same year, there was significant ministerial activity concerning decisions oriented toward military training. One of the principal actions was the institutional reform of military training academies, which were tasked with revising their university statutes to align with the proposed changes and their integration with the National Education System. This resolution triggered further measures, including the formalization of curriculum reforms⁴ for officers and certain educational content for non-commissioned officers, the standardization of institute presentations, and the creation of a statistical system for defense education.

To implement the ministerial resolutions, the Armed Forces undertook various activities. Foremost among these was the 2008 seminar-workshop on the coordination of the Armed Forces' university institutes, which brought together specialists, authorities, and officials from the Ministries of Defense and Education, Senators and Deputies, CONEAU, and others. Secondly, the Framework Cooperation Agreement of the Armed Forces was established, aimed at creating conditions for coordination among the academies, facilitating faculty exchanges, developing programs of interest, and promoting research within the educational domain. This agreement, along with other similar initiatives, established the framework for mutual understanding among the three branches of the Armed

4. Seven subjects related to the disciplinary field of social sciences were incorporated in accordance with Ministry of Defense Resolution No. 872, dated June 25, 2007.

The next event to consider is the creation of the Joint War College (ESGC) to address the need for trained commands and general staffs at the strategic-military, operational-strategic, and senior-tactical levels.

Forces, ensured the avoidance of overlapping efforts, and optimized resource utilization.

During the 21st century, educational planning for the basic training of officers and non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces underwent a considerable number of modifications in line with the developments described earlier in this article. One of the principal changes relates to three central aspects: the full integration of theoretical and practical content, the incorporation of pedagogical traditions of a university nature, and the cultivation of responsibility. In this regard, the Armed Forces established a shared working agenda in connection with Ministerial Resolution No. 1648 of 2010, addressing the joint graduation profile, specific profiles, and the scope of academic degrees.

A further significant development was the creation of the National Defense University (UNDEF), which represents one of the key milestones in the phenomenon under study. UNDEF emerged as a political necessity to reaffirm civilian leadership over military education and as the highest expression of the integration of the Military Education System into the Higher Education System in Argentina. These two needs constitute a common denominator in the events described throughout the article and, to varying

degrees, served as driving forces behind this outcome.

Up to this point, the article has described a curated selection of events that either represented or stimulated changes in professional military education. There exists a large number of similar events that constitute the complex network leading to the present state of the phenomenon under study. Nevertheless, this representative selection allows for the identification of the features that various actors sought to imprint on the process we term the military professionalization of the 21st century.

Analysis of Events

From this point onward, the article seeks to analyze the origins of changes in professional military education and the extent of influence exerted by different levels of leadership. To this end, the tactical and operational levels will be examined within the framework of the Armed Forces, while the sectoral and national strategic levels will be analyzed through the lens of political leadership.

In other words, distinctions will be drawn based on the degree of participation and involvement of, on the one hand, the leadership of the Armed Forces themselves and their Joint General Staff, and, on the other hand, the ministerial sphere as a constituent part of the National

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Political participation in military sector decisions gained importance with the arrival of the 21st century. This can be seen in the observations or recommendations regarding the Military Education System and the Higher Education System, which are now guided by ministerial resolutions or executive decrees.

Executive Power. For analytical purposes, these will be referred to as the military domain and the political domain, respectively.

The initial interactions between military institutes and CONEAU represent the autonomous response of the Armed Forces to the Higher Education Law (LES); at that time, they were among the first institutions to undertake this initiative.

To understand the internal and ongoing nature of this process, it is necessary to examine the internal communications of each institution. For example, following the enactment of the LES, the Argentine Army issued Military Institutes Command Directive No. 81 of 1997. The following year, the foundations of an Evaluation Subsystem at the IESE were established through Special Order No. 13 of 1998.

Also in 1998, a general agreement was signed with CONEAU for the development of evaluations, and the participation of technical teams at military facilities was coordinated. Internal evaluation was completed in 1999, and the following year the first peer review report (external evaluation) was produced. The evaluation process was repeated in 2008 and 2009, both of which served as opportunities to demonstrate

the institution's commitment to meeting evaluation standards.

From the review of the first three CONEAU reports on the military academies, one can also infer the degree of autonomy exercised by the Armed Forces in matters of military education during the 1990s. On several occasions, the reports refer to the evaluated issues⁵ in terms and observations that indicate that the decisions indeed originated within the Armed Forces themselves. Examples include the organizational structures and their relation to university functions; the separation between military professional training cores and academic training cores; the selection of disciplines and undergraduate and postgraduate degrees to be offered; among many other similar decisions.

By contrast, in the second round of institutional evaluations, a significantly higher degree of civilian leadership in decisions affecting the military academies is evident. Political participation in decisions within the military sector became more pronounced with the arrival of the 21st century, as noted in the first part of this article and as will be discussed further below. In this context, the observations and recommendations reveal a closer integration between the Military

Education System and the Higher Education System, albeit this time grounded in ministerial resolutions or decrees issued by the National Executive Power (PEN). The period between evaluations is considered one of satisfactory responses and notable achievements.

It is also important to emphasize that military authorities and instructors at training institutes perceived that the work of external peer reviewers appointed by CONEAU primarily focused on aspects of scientific and professional university organization and education, while excluding those aspects deemed more critical and fundamental: the institutional dimension of the armed forces and the theoretical and practical components that constitute military training (Soprano, 2016, pp. 77–78).

Another event from the 1990s that illustrates initiative from within the Armed Forces is the creation of a university radio station under the IESE. This is a characteristic attribute of higher education, through which the dissemination of institutional, scientific, and technological content constitutes the expression of one of the university's functions: knowledge transfer and exchange with society. The radio station

received its frequency and was authorized to operate by Presidential Decree (PEN, 1997).

In 1998, Law 24,948 on the Restructuring of the Armed Forces was enacted. This landmark event reflected the magnitude of the phenomenon surrounding the need to establish policies adapted and updated to new regional and international contexts. These needs required renewed legal, organizational, and functional foundations for the planning and execution of National Defense. For the analysis of this development, beyond the provisions of the law itself, it is instructive to review the parliamentary debate. Of particular note is the participation of National Deputy Martínez Martinoli: "The primary fundamental society is the family, and the first National Defense begins within that sphere and in the education of its members [...] we must instill, through education, a humanistic and progressive mindset to preserve democracy through peace. For this reason, I believe the inclusion of the Ministry of Education is fundamental" (Simons Rossi, 2010).

The review of parliamentary debates highlights the importance, at the national strategic level, of the participation of sectoral strategic levels in matters of professional military education. These discussions constitute immediate precedents of the phenomenon under analysis—topics that would later become part of the government policy agenda, and subsequently of state policy, such as the sectoral involvement of the Ministries of Defense and Education in basic military training. This example illustrates actions of a heteronomous nature at the operational level, which fall under the responsibility of the Joint General Staff of the Armed Forces.

A brief partial conclusion regarding the first part of the period under consideration appears to

indicate a high degree of autonomy within the Armed Forces, even within the complex historical context of the return to democracy, when civilian leadership could likely have exerted greater influence in matters of military training. Some authors who have studied this topic facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon:

"The leadership of the Argentine Armed Forces reformed military education from the 1990s onward, seeking to elevate its status and adapt it to ongoing transformations in the national education system. They created military university institutes encompassing basic training as well as the instruction and professional development of officers, and introduced modifications to their curricula" (Soprano, 2016).

From the analysis of the preceding paragraph, two primary conclusions can be drawn. First, the autonomy of the Armed Forces in the 1990s to implement changes, as previously noted; and second, that these changes were carried out individually by each branch, that is, they originated within each component at the tactical level of command. Meanwhile, participation at the operational level did not emerge above the actions of each individual branch.

Regarding the involvement of sectoral and national strategic levels mentioned earlier, the author identifies a paradoxical outcome of the transition and democratic consolidation process, in which the military maintained control over the defense agenda:

"This is a case in which the autonomy of the Armed Forces relative to the democratically elected political power has been notably limited, but also one in which the effective exercise of civilian political leadership—particularly by the Ministry of Defense—over them has been absent or deficient" (Soprano, 2016, p. 36).

In brief summary, the period spanning the 1990s up to 2006 can

be characterized as one in which the Armed Forces were essentially subordinated to the constitutional order, yet exercised broad control over strictly military matters.

From 2006 onward, the autonomous character previously noted was increasingly constrained by the active intervention of the Ministry of Defense in the political management of professional military education. Some precedents indicate that the political intent to assert leadership emerged as early as 2003 within the previously described period; however, these actions were neither decisive nor did they extend beyond academic discussions. An example of this is the *National Defense on the Democratic Agenda* project, implemented through Presidential Decree 545 of 2003, which promoted the convening of specialist working groups composed of academics, non-governmental organizations, and universities, with the aim of generating enriching contributions.

Working Group Six, dedicated to military education, proposed a series of contributions, among which the following stand out: the education of civilians for defense, the career development of civilian officials, the work of the National Defense School, the training and professional development of military personnel, and the relationship with the national education system. These proposals did not result in formal resolutions until 2006 and later. One of the group's contributions consisted of "revisiting studies on aptitude, feasibility, and acceptability for a possible unification of the Armed Forces' War Colleges, a matter for

5. Teaching; research, development, and creation; outreach, technology production, and transfer; management and governance; human resources; infrastructure and material resources; IT services and library; and integration of the university institution. These are common aspects whose formalities follow the document prepared by CONEAU entitled *Guidelines for Institutional Evaluation*.



which studies exist that should be updated; it would also be beneficial to gradually develop a joint curriculum, based on general-interest subjects offered at each School” (Ministry of Defense, 2003, p. 51).

From the analysis of the preceding paragraph and a thorough reading of the source, two observations can be made. First, until 2006, these proposals remained merely ideas, confirming the cautious stance of political authorities regarding the exercise of civilian leadership in defense during the period. Second, these ideas constituted only potential solutions to issues already known from the 20th century, such as the need to train civilians for positions as defense officials and the professionalization of the Armed Forces, even encouraged by the United Nations Development Programme, as will be discussed later.

If we examine the specific case of the creation of the Joint Senior War College of the Armed Forces,

it is not accurate to speak of autonomy at the operational level or any other, since military units are established only as a result of a decision by the National Executive Power (PEN). Nevertheless, it is possible to observe that the origin of the initiative does not necessarily respond to national strategic needs, but rather to requirements identified within the military sphere following World War II. This is documented in the article by Lieutenant Colonel Ricardo Gutiérrez, written in 1957 and published in *Revista Militar*, in which he thoroughly proposes the creation of the Armed Forces Senior General Staff College, detailing its general framework, purpose, institutional dependency, organizational structure, students, faculty, pedagogical approach, and curriculum (Gutiérrez, 1957).

In 2003, the working group revisited this idea, emphasizing the need to review previous

studies (Ministry of Defense, 2003), and in 2006, the institute was formally established through the corresponding decree (National Executive Power, 2006).

This is an example, traceable through the application of the scientific method in the social sciences, which illustrates that the exercise of autonomy or heteronomy at different levels of command does not always correspond to the origin of the stimulus driving the actions. Other examples⁶ include the prioritization of military graduates, discussed by other authors even as early as the 1980s, highlighting the advisability of “frequent adjustments and agreements between military authorities and the Ministry of Education [...] it may be recommended that the career plans of officers include degree programs, or at least postgraduate courses, to be undertaken at universities” (Orieta, 1985).

Ultimately, through convergent initiatives, the Armed Forces secured provisional recognition under the Law of Provincial Universities and subsequently consolidated degree programs under the Higher Education Law, only to later witness, as observers, the creation of UNDEF—representing the culmination of a process whose foundations had necessarily been laid decades earlier.

For this to have been possible, the Armed Forces carried out countless actions without requiring any form of authorization, acting instead as an autonomous and axiomatic response to a phenomenon transversal to military academies within the context of globalization. The prioritization of graduate qualifications in the training of professional military personnel constitutes a common denominator of the Armed Forces, particularly in nations that, during the Cold War, comprised the Western bloc.

Taking the example of the Argentine Army, the transformation of the IESE leadership (for the Military Education System) into a rectorate (for the National Education System) entailed the responsibility of leading a coordination process involving over one hundred working groups dedicated to technical and professional training courses, as well as the planning and structuring of university degree programs (Sarni, 2005).

Returning to the analysis of ministerial activity from 2006 onward, this period can be characterized as one of intensive political leadership in Defense, marked by a large number of ministerial resolutions, some of which were described in the first half of this article. In summary, these actions reflect the heteronomous character of sectoral strategy over the joint level.

To illustrate the observed interactions, consider the 2008 seminar-workshop entitled *Coordination of the Armed Forces'*

University Institutes. This event was organized by the recently established Undersecretariat of Training of the Ministry of Defense, indicating that the initiative originated at the sectoral strategic level, which exercised its autonomy while leaving the Armed Forces in a secondary role, limited to the framework agreements they could enact among themselves. Within this framework, the Armed Forces employ such coordination instruments, facilitating faculty exchanges, shared research interests, and other collaborative initiatives.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense continued to advance initiatives such as joint courses, international seminars, modernization committees for training, reviews of pedagogical proposals, curricular organizations, and other indicators of political leadership that even extend to standardizing presentation formats for military institutes (Ministry of Defense, 2008).

Regarding modifications to curricula⁷—an area of responsibility that by 2008 fell under the Undersecretariat of Training (National Executive Power, 2007)—it is noteworthy that this period involved deeper and more comprehensive changes compared to earlier stages, as evidenced by Ministry of Defense Resolution No. 1648 of 2010:

“...the reform not only aims at modifying the curriculum, but also intervenes in the institutional culture. For example, allowing cadets to decide when to take a final exam, with five sessions per year and three attempts, prevents the clear identification, at the end of each academic cycle, of which students advance to the next course or the establishment of a clear merit ranking, which is so characteristic of institutional culture” (Clotet et al., 2018, p. 34).

The statement in the resolution represents only an excerpt among a wide array of changes promoted

within the curricular organization of military academies, many of which were ultimately not fully implemented, precisely because they are disruptive proposals that challenge established military pedagogical traditions. Other examples include restrictions on exercising command within classroom, study, or recreational spaces; excessive flexibilization of the residential training regime; and exempting cadets from honor ceremonies that interrupt instructional or academic activities.

The analysis of the foregoing leads to reflection on whether this heteronomous framework, exercised by the Undersecretariat of Training over the Armed Forces' Training Institutes, may in fact recreate a tension with the very state policies that established it. The educational reform implemented that year and in subsequent years effectively consolidated the dissolution of the boundary between the military professional training core and the academic training core. The integration of knowledge across classroom settings, field exercises, and military routines arguably constitutes one of the greatest challenges to professionalization.

The revision of curricula generated by Ministry of Defense Resolutions Nos. 20 and 1371 of 2011 confirmed the decision to unify the academic degree with the military rank within a single curricular structure, incorporating competencies that span both academic and military domains.

6. These will not be fully developed due to the synthetic nature of the present work, but they constitute important observations regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

7. The pedagogical approach of the CMN has changed eight times since the institution began awarding university degrees, making it a more complex phenomenon, simplified here according to the needs of the present article. A detailed study on this topic was conducted in 2018 by a research team led by Licenciada Cinthia Clotet, who has been affiliated with the institute since 1984.

"The curricula were structured around the following axes: a) competency-based curriculum design; b) integration of theory (associated with academic training) and professional practice (associated with military instruction); c) the establishment of a single officer profile for the Nation's military instrument, alongside specific profiles for each branch of the Armed Forces" (Ministry of Defense, 2015, p. 244).

In summary, on one hand, this initiative promotes the creation of a unique and indivisible profile for an officer of the Armed Forces, dissolving the distinction between academic and operational training. On the other hand, certain activities inherent to military routines seem to integrate, in an almost unnatural way, attributes associated with the officer profile—such as exercising command, military honors, internal service duties, reveilles, retreat ceremonies, night activities, and rest periods. The inclusion of these duties introduces significant complexity when formalizing them within a curricular structure.

Ministerial activity from 2006 onward carries a strong connotation linked to the excessively delayed implementation of Law 24.948 on the Restructuring of the Armed Forces, which stipulated that the "Reform of the Military Education System" should be completed within no more than three years from 1988. Furthermore, Decrees Nos. 545/03 and 1336/03 establish that the Ministry of Defense holds primary responsibility for the training and professional development of the Armed Forces (Ministry of Defense, 2006, p. 1).

The analysis of this regulatory framework provides two insights. First, regarding the educational reform, according to Article 33 of the Law, the changes were to be implemented before 2002; second, responsibility for this reform rests with the military strategic level.

Given the failure to complete the restructuring within the established deadlines—likely due to other prevailing social phenomena, such as the 2001 crisis or the political and economic instability in the subsequent years—actions were undertaken to advance the process. One of the main initiatives was the creation of the Advisory Council for the Educational Reform of the Armed Forces, designed as a source of experiences, complementary perspectives, and other contributions necessary for the training and professional development of the Forces.

Other notable developments include the publication of the *Directive on the Organization and Functioning of the Armed Forces*, the creation of the ESGC and CEFA, decisions regarding Defense attachés, the establishment of the National Defense Planning Cycle, and the first Directives on National Defense Policy. Additionally, a common framework was established for the organization of Armed Forces leadership. These and other decisions emanating from the sectoral strategic level, as noted, placed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces (EMCFFAA) in a position of heteronomy, characterized by intense political management of Defense during this period.

Finally, the creation of UNDEF, as the highest expression of state policy regarding military and civilian defense education, triggered extensive discussions within and beyond the Armed Forces, which have continued for nearly a decade. We do not delve deeply into this topic here, but it should be noted that it constitutes a decision of national strategy, given that publicly managed universities are established through laws passed by the Honorable National Congress.

The second half of the article focused on analyzing certain events

related to professional military education from the 1990s up to the creation of UNDEF, which were previously described in the first half, reflecting on the level of leadership from which they originated. At the same time, these events are considered in dialogue with the role of the Armed Forces and the EMCFFAA, attempting to distinguish moments of greater or lesser participation.

Conclusions

Within the framework of actions carried out during the period under consideration, two main phases can be distinguished: one characterized by greater autonomy on the part of the Armed Forces, spanning from the 1990s to 2005; and another marked by greater heteronomy, defined by a stage of increasing political leadership in the defense sector, from 2006 until the creation of UNDEF.

The first period resulted from a convergence of factors that can be summarized as the Armed Forces' need for autonomy in leadership. During this historical moment, a paradoxical situation emerged: on the one hand, there was a need to discuss military subordination to civilian authority; on the other, there was a civil incapacity to exercise leadership over the military without delegating it. These phenomena converge toward the dynamics described above and help explain why the majority of decisions regarding professional military education were made internally within the Armed Forces, rather than by the sectoral or national strategic levels.

Another reflection on the first period, which helps explain the delegation of authority to the Armed Forces, concerns the manner in which the Restructuring Law was implemented. The law mandated the continuation of military educational reform, aligning military education with the plans and requirements



of the National Education System within a period not exceeding three years. These developments—apart from resolving the duplication of academic offerings—had largely occurred independently, without external stimuli.

The second period, extending from 2006 until the creation of UNDEF, was characterized by intense ministerial activity in matters of professional military education. This period, in our view, was driven by two motivations within the national strategic sector: first, the need to complement the incomplete aspects of integrating the military education system into the National Education System; and second, to reassess the provisions comprising the military education system, which lacked certain university-level pedagogical traditions.

Regarding the first motivation—to complement the integration with

the National Education System—it is considered that both the law establishing UNDEF and the related ministerial decrees and resolutions had a centralizing character that could not be achieved during the previous period under the autonomous leadership of each branch of the Armed Forces. However, there is also continuity in the processes initiated by the Armed Forces themselves, such as the creation of the Armed Forces' University Institutes, which transitioned from the framework of the Provincial Universities Law to alignment with the Higher Education Law, and subsequently to the presentation of degrees with national recognition and validity before the Ministry of Education. The creation of UNDEF was one of the measures adopted to prevent the negative effects of fragmentation, among others proposed by the United Nations Development Programme in 2006.

With regard to the second motivation, concerning military pedagogical traditions, there was an intensive intervention in the curricular design of military academies, aimed at aligning military training with university pedagogical traditions. Many of these traditions proved inapplicable or of questionable feasibility, although this issue is complex and its variables exceed the scope of the present article.

In conclusion, the period under consideration can be divided into two phases: one characterized by greater autonomy exercised by the Armed Forces in decisions regarding professional military education, from the 1990s until 2005; and another marked by pronounced heteronomy from 2006 onward, in which political leadership of Defense significantly influences the training of military personnel. ■

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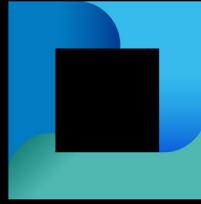
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