

Chapter 6:

# The Ministries of Defence



### Institutional Guidance

Country	Can the military members be Ministers of Defence?	Number of military members who were Ministers of Defence	Number of civilians who were Ministers of Defence	Were there women in charge of the Ministry of Defence?	Date of creation of the Ministry	
<b>Argentina</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	4	33	Yes (Nilda Garré current Minister performed functions as Defence Minister in the former administration)	1958	
<b>Bolivia</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	38	41	No	1933	
<b>Brazil</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	None	5	No	1999	
<b>Chile</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	18	29	Yes (Michelle Bachelet, 2002-2004 and Vivianne Blanlot, 2006-2007)	1932	
<b>Colombia</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	11	11	Yes (Marta Lucía Ramírez de Rincón, 2002-2003)	1965	
<b>Dominican Republic</b> (Secretariat of the Armed Forces)	Yes	34	3	No	1930	
<b>Ecuador</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	34	20	Yes (Guadalupe Larriva, 2007 and Lorena Escudero Durán, 2007)	1935	
<b>El Salvador</b>	Yes	24	None	No	1939	
<b>Guatemala</b>	Yes <sup>(1)</sup>	11 <sup>(2)</sup>	None	No	1945	
<b>Honduras</b> (Secretariat of National Defence)	Yes (if they have retired)	None <sup>(3)</sup>	3 <sup>(3)</sup>	No	1954	
<b>Mexico</b>	Secretariat of National Defence	Yes	13	None	No	1937
	Secretariat of the Navy	Yes	15	3	No	1940
<b>Nicaragua</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	None <sup>(4)</sup>	7 <sup>(4)</sup>	No <sup>(4)</sup>	1968	
<b>Paraguay</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	17	5	No	1943	
<b>Peru</b>	Yes	11	3	No	1987	
<b>Uruguay</b>	Yes (if they have retired)	15	20	Yes (Azucena Berruti, 2005-2008)	1935	
<b>Venezuela</b>	Yes	35 <sup>(5)</sup>	1 <sup>(5)</sup>	No	1946	

(1) According to the Constitution of the Republic, civilians cannot be Ministers of Defence.

(2) Since 1996, year of the Lasting and Consistent Peace Agreements.

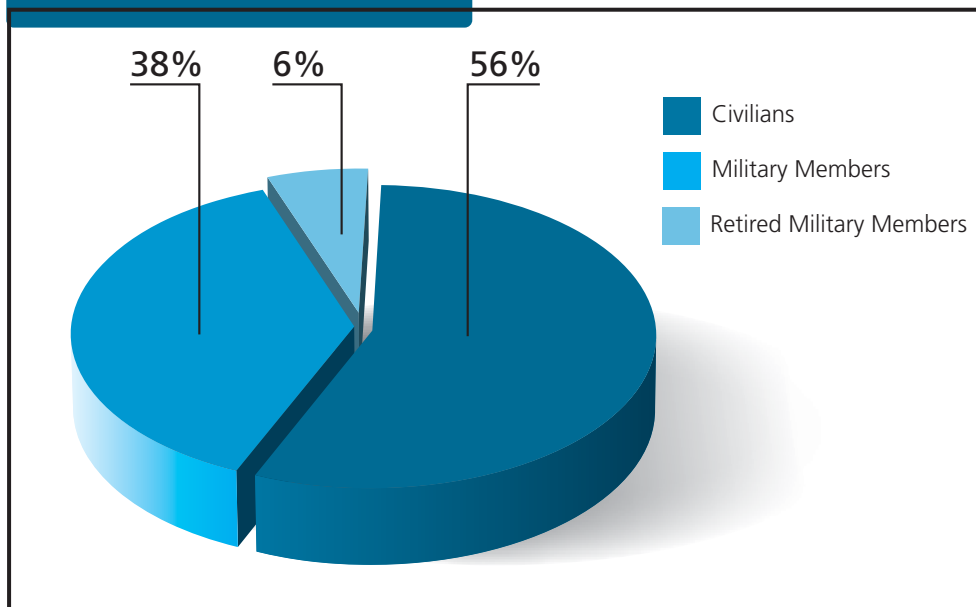
(3) Since 1998, year of the constitutional reform

(4) Since 1998, year of the Act on the Organization, Competence and Procedures of the Executive Power (N° 290 - 1998/06/03).

(5) Since year 1958.

**Source:** Compilation based on information provided by the Ministries and Departments of Defence of each country. The Ministers and Secretaries currently in charge are not considered (August 2008). The creation date is related to the moment in which the term "Defence" becomes part of the Institution's name (except of the Secretariat of the Navy from Mexico and the Secretariat of the Armed Forces from Dominican Republic).

### Condition of Current Ministers



Source: Compilation based on information provided by the Ministries and Departments of Defence of each country. Currently, Nicaragua does not have a Minister of Defence. In the case of Mexico, both the Secretary of National Defence (including the Ground and Air Force) and the Secretary of the Navy were considered.

### Main Offices within the Ministerial Structures\*

Country	Does it have a political planning office?	Does it have a budget office?	Does it have an internal control office?
<b>Argentina</b>	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Bolivia</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Brazil</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Chile</b>	No	No	No
<b>Colombia</b>	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.
<b>Ecuador</b>	Yes. No Director in charge	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>El Salvador</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Guatemala</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.
<b>Honduras</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.
<b>Mexico</b>	Secretariat of National Defence	No	Yes. With a military member in charge.
	Secretariat of the Navy	No	Yes. With a military member in charge.
<b>Nicaragua</b>	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Paraguay</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Peru</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge.
<b>Uruguay</b>	No	Yes. With a civilian in charge.	Yes. With a civilian in charge.
<b>Venezuela</b>	Yes. With a military member in charge.	Yes. With a military member in charge	Yes. With a military member in charge.

\*At a General Directorate level, at an equivalent or at a lower category.

Source: Compilation based on the information provided by the Ministries and Departments of Defence of each country. The mentioned powers have been placed within the structure, regardless of the exact name or hierarchical position of the respective office.



**Inter-ministerial Relations in Latin America**



Analysis:

## The Ministries of Defence in the Americas: the Time for Transformation

■ **Guillermo Pacheco Gaitán\***

■ In order to be able to analyze the evolution of the Ministries of Defence, we should understand its links with the State modernization process, which must be perceived from a multidimensional perspective. Then acknowledging the economic and institutional aspects that are common to the studies on the reform of the State, but also other less frequent issues related to the social welfare the State is capable to generate, or to its ability to solve - through democratic means - the conflicts on distribution presented in societies subjected to fast and intense economic and political changes.

The State modernization sources are diverse but not necessarily complementary within the rationales they inspire. Some reforms come from the minimalist-inspired economic policies environment, some others from political processes that are part of the democratization and appeasement dynamics. All of them merge within the State capacities transformational process, showing the advances and setbacks the last decade has seen.

We can not lose track of the current challenges in this context. The former model was based on a centralized and militarized State; today's model has to respond to a decentralized and political (civilian) one in its decision-making. Where propitious fields prevail for the development of political-military relations (generated through the various State and Armed Forces instances), and civil-military relations (seen as the way Armed Forces place in society).

The shift has gone from a repression-centred State - as a distorted answer to social demands, during the authoritarian period - towards a model based on keeping the fiscal balance and promoting the private sector, during the reforming

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period of the reform. In both cases, the development of institutional means for transparent and responsible decision-making and, the administrative mechanisms for the promotion of citizen participation-oriented activities, remained downgraded.

### The political leadership

The political leadership of the defence constitutes in essence, the exercise of its governing faculty, incumbent to an administrative authority to attain public issues, applied to the defence sector and its respective function. It is, besides, the central core of the political-military relations organization. The leadership of defence has an “intermestic” nature, as it should be executed at the highest levels of domestic and international politics and its legal endorsement is the final step in its formal structuring process.<sup>1</sup>

The Ministries of Defence are the institutions in charge of the political leadership of defence, as they formulate, implement and execute the pertinent public policy. This includes, among other matters, advising on the different ways to employ the defence means: deterrence, cooperation or the coercive use of the military force and, the transformational processes of the Armed Forces. However, the current structures in most countries are far-off from being the most appropriate for that purpose. These structures derive from a succession of legal instruments that drew on tendencies of different times, and refer to partial aspects of them.

First, the political leadership of the defence needs to have a real hierarchical position, in order to attain its purpose. Secondly, it needs to have material and legal decision-making capacity, and third, a structure that enables to endure the sector's liabilities. Current ministerial structures show significant flaws in all these fields. Despite the great progress made in State modernization matters, over the last years, through the endowment to the ministries of the necessary capacities and procedures to administer, execute and assure the fulfilment of the public policies, this has not happened in the defence sphere. Although the Armed Forces have carried out modernization processes in their administrations and structures, this process has not been taken to the political level. Moreover, the political leadership of the defence does not only involve management and administration; it should also represent a field that organically articulates the political-military relations. Therefore, it is evident that the current organization should be transformed, so as to embrace the individual disparities of each country subscribing to democracy.

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### Decision-making

It is necessary to underscore the importance of decision making and execution in matters of defence policies. It is important, because a process of bureaucratic and individual negotiations is required and, because formulated objectives can be altered or not fulfilled at the moment of carrying out the decision, and above all,

<sup>1</sup> NAVARRO MEZA, Miguel, *La conducción política de la defensa: una aproximación conceptual*, on the ANEPE Portal, Chile, July 16th, 2003.

because this reflects the state of the political-military relations in a country.

The adoption of any decision is established within a decisional framework that fosters and conditions the process. It is conformed by three elements: the stimulus and the external and domestic conditionings (“intermestic” nature); the domestic macro-political context that embraces both the general characteristics of the political system of a country under study and, the particular features of its defence policy; and the specific micro-political context of the decision in particular. In this sense it is important to determine the current state of the Ministries of Defence in the decision-making process as regards to the policy of defence: Are these decisions within the sphere of the line of command? Are they carried out by the Armed Forces in direct association with the President of the Republic?

Most of the countries show a high level of centralization (given their strong presidentialism), though a more pronounced tendency towards decentralization has been revealed lately, through the development and formulation of the White Books of Defence, and the development of some legal regulations in certain countries, pursuing to grant the Ministry of Defence a better institutionalization, so that the political decisions bear the required technical support.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the influence of Congress on the decision-making process, given that the Legislative Branch can modify the primary will of the Executive Branch or, prevent the final decision from complying with the original guidelines planned by the latter. The main role of the Congress is to influence the decision-making process of the defence policy.

Given the “intermestic” nature of numerous questions - the rupture or weakening of pre-existent consensuses, the multiplication of transnational relations and, the proliferation of non-governmental actors that can legitimate the decision making process, higher participation and influence of the political parties, business sector, academic and intellectual circles and, public opinion in general, is one of the outcomes of these changes. These actors have had a significant influence on decision-making processes, through, for instance, the stages (defence communities) created by some countries for the formulation of defence policies.

## The future evolution

Considering the current number of Ministries of Defence directed by a political leadership, we can perceive a substantial change in the political leadership of the defence. Only five ministers are active military (Mexico<sup>2</sup>, Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic and Venezuela). But if we could make a meticulous analysis of the institutional structures bearing that leadership, this still has a high military meddling. This fact reflects both the lack of political determination to carry out changes in the context of State modernization, and the lack of qualified or knowledgeable civil servant who can assume the tasks corresponding to a ministry, which should also aim at improving the relation with the Armed Forces.

The question of the State capacities offers then an analytical horizon, in view

<sup>2</sup> Mexico should be counted twice, as it refers to the Secretariat of the National Defence and the Secretariat of the Navy.

■ New actors have had a significant influence on decision-making processes.





of the development of potentialities. The State capacity depends on its skill to establish and keep technical, administrative, institutional and political functions, mainly in all defence matters.

We should understand the progress of the regional Ministries of Defence, grounded on those four issues. The **technical** functions – which should be associated with the economic administration and the technocratic and operational capacity –; the **administrative** functions – related to the administrative capacity and the efficient performance of the defence instances; the **institutional** capacities that regard to the establishment of regulatory parameters meant for political, technical and administrative interactions, and the **political** capacities, which can be associated to what in other contexts is known as Good Governance and are related to the preparation of conditions for decision-making; more precisely, the exercise of the leadership of the defence to strengthen the political-military relations within each country.

In this context, the query to be cleared is: Is a civilian leadership based on the supremacy bestowed by law to the Chief of State enough? Is it also necessary to exercise a substantive (political) leadership in several decision spheres, relevant to the defence and Armed Forces? If so, how do civilians prepare to exercise that substantive leadership?

That is why defence educational programs should be launched in order to allow civilians and military within the defence community to have a good management of to the defence policies implementation related problems, even when the responsibility still lies in the Armed Forces hands. Likewise, important innovations should be introduced in the defence institutionalization, which are in turn sustainable and consistent with the evolution of the sector and, above all, institutionalize a group of current newly developed good practices that have proved efficient within the defence sector within the realm of democracy. The leadership of the national defence should consolidate as a State policy area, above partisan rationale, and based upon a wide national consensus; a spirit that should be respected and consolidated through the initiatives of each country.

■ The State capacity depends on its skill to establish and keep technical, administrative, institutional and political functions.