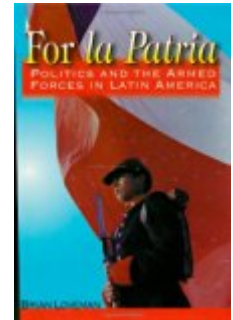


Brian Loveman. *For La Patria: Politics and the Armed Forces in Latin America.* Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1999. xxvii + 331pp. \$30.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8420-2773-1.



Reviewed by Andrew G. Wilson

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For La Patria, Brian Loveman's third work dealing with the military forces of Latin America, will serve as a new benchmark for years to come in the field of civil-military relations within the modern nation-state. Arguing correctly that las fuerzas armadas of Latin America have had a "pervasive...influence in Latin American politics since the early nineteenth century," Loveman traces this influence from the legacy of the Iberian military tradition and the "conquest" of the New World up to the modern era of the "Dirty Wars" and beyond (xi). Because the military has played such a central role in the history of the region, it is imperative that the student of Latin America's past and future fully understand the love-hate relationship between civil and military organizations in this part of the world. Loveman's *For La Patria* represents a major step towards unlocking the mysteries of Latin America's militaristic past.

Drawing upon a broad range of official documentation, statements of military doctrine, organizational charters and secondary literature, Loveman surveys the "historical evolution" of the

military in Latin America to illustrate his point that "it is impossible to teach about Latin American politics without focusing on the armed forces" (vii).

Loveman's work provides the reader with an interesting and important explanation of what "La Patria" ("the nation, or fatherland") really means in Latin American terms. Following his explanation, the difference between the impact and role of the military in Latin American society and government as compared to that of the United States and most western European states is made clear. As expressed by Loveman:

As guardians of national sovereignty and security, the Latin American armed forces did not 'intervene' in politics. They became, in effect, a fourth branch of the government...a tutelary elite carrying out both the quasi-religious role of secular priests and the constitutional and statutory roles assigned to them when Spanish American colonies and Brazil gained their independence (xx).

The bottom line: the relationships between the constitutional government, society, and armed

forces of the Latin American nations are quite distinct from those of the United States (the "Colossus to the north") and most other nations of the western world. Why? This is the question which Loveman labors to address.

Perhaps the first chapter of this work is the most important and enlightening regarding this question, as it outlines the legacy of the "Iberian Military Tradition," including the impact of the *reconquista*, or reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors from 711 A.D. to 1492. It is the historical impact of this almost eight hundred year struggle against the Moors from which "emerged...a warrior-priest tradition that fused military conquest, religious and cultural subordination of the conquered, and political authoritarianism" (1). Put in a more modern context, the history and traditions of Latin American military organizations were and are used to legitimize "internal and external security, public order, law enforcement, political intelligence, economic development, and defense of sovereignty" (279). Clearly this list of potential military missions goes far beyond guaranteeing a national constitution—the publicly stated mission of most Latin American military institutions. As a result, the military and military leadership of Latin American nations have stood apart from the political arena while simultaneously remaining an integral part the Latin American political system.

In addition to placing the history of the armed forces in Latin America against the backdrop of Iberian and colonial conquest, Loveman also discusses such issues as the wars of independence, the military during the Great Depression and the First World War, foreign military missions, World War II, as well as the more recent Cold War period. This latter section is key to understanding current U.S.-Latin American relations, as U.S. forces left an indelible mark upon many of the military institutions and leaders of the region during Cold War operations. In many nations of Central and South America the training

and military doctrine of military forces are modeled on those of the United States. In fact, the U.S. Navy continues to conduct anti-submarine exercises with certain Latin American naval forces. Known as the UNITAS exercises, this multinational training opportunity left over from the Cold War period is still a key link between regional naval forces. Furthermore, the United States remains one of the key suppliers of arms and equipment to the nations of Latin America.

The final chapters are particularly relevant today as they cover themes and issues which military forces around the world, including those of the United States, are presently coping: human rights, international peacekeeping, hemispheric defense policy, the international drug trade (and other non-state actors), shrinking defense budgets, force projection, and the search for organizational missions. In fact, Loveman points out that "in the 1990s, Latin American participation in peacekeeping missions mushroomed" (267). Furthermore, the Chilean armed forces even provided active support in the 1990 Persian Gulf War (269). Like the U.S. military, the military forces of Latin America are also working to adjust to changing missions and economic conditions. Among these changing missions are deployments outside national borders, as noted above. Perhaps the continued and growing contact with military organizations of other nations will bring change to the perceived role of the military in many Latin American nations. In the meantime, Loveman's research brings us closer to comprehending the military forces and issues in Latin America as they stand today.

On top of Loveman's superb narrative and analysis, this book also benefits from such useful ingredients as a glossary of relevant terminology, excellent notes, and a superb bibliography for those wishing to do further research in the field.

The classroom professor and his students will greatly appreciate Loveman's insights and his clear presentation of what is to many scholars a

very unclear field of study. When read in conjunction with works by such writers as Adriane J. English, Frederick M. Nunn, and John Lynch, *La Patria* can only improve our understanding of the unique history and relationship between the Latin American armed forces and the societies they serve and preserve. All in all, a superbly written, researched, and documented work which upon reading the student of armed force and Latin American history will find was time well spent.

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