

Foreign-Born Argentine Soldiers: Extension of Citizenship Status and Military Professionalization in Argentina (1995-2015)

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What was the percentage of naturalized immigrants in the composition of the Argentine all-volunteer force (AVF) between 1995 and 2015? What are their national origins? How did the present state of affairs come about? What are the modalities and issues involved in their participation in military service? These are some of the questions this article will attempt to answer.

As will be seen, the salient fact is that while the numbers of naturalized citizens in the forces over the period considered are exceedingly small, there have been low but significant increments in their share among new recruits recently. The working hypotheses used to account for such realities are several in number. One is that Argentina, unlike European countries and the US, is not so desperate for new recruits as to specifically target foreign-born citizens. Another is that this particular group has few incentives to enlist. A third resides, as noted elsewhere (Boëne, 2003), in a de-emphasis of patriotism or nationalism in the relationship between armed forces, State and nation, as well as in the motivations of young people who join the forces (as seems reflected in Argentinian Armed Forces recruiting campaigns). Last but not least, part of the hypothesized explanation is that the concrete possibility offered to immigrants of accessing the military was basically due to the immigration policies Argentina has implemented since the 21st century's first decade. Therefore, rather than the rules governing recruitment considered in isolation, it is essential to observe how those norms combine with the historic restrictions and opportunities which have affected immigrants' access to rights, and to review Argentina's immigration policies between 1995 and 2015 (particularly the changes that occurred after 2004). This will provide a better understanding of the significance of immigrant recruitment at this stage in the military professionalization process in light of recent alterations of the military scene.

Indeed, Argentina has experienced changes that have significantly transformed socio-political arguments over defence issues and have brought about a modification in the relationship between the military, State and society. In the post-Cold War era, the relation between these entities was marked by at least four trends. First, compared with Brazil and Chile, the Argentine State followed a restrictive budget policy in the defence sector, as shown by its share in the country's GDP. Second, during the past ten years, there has been a

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progressive reduction in the number of hypothetical conflicts with other countries of the region, especially Chile¹: potential tensions and sources of conflict deriving from what the Argentine military called ‘mutual distrust’ have been eliminated in the last decade, through the diplomatic resolution of all border disputes, as well as combined drills such as ‘Southern Cross’, and the participation of the armed forces of both countries in peacekeeping operations like the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Third, Argentina is increasing its participation in multinational deployments in conflicted regions of the world, with the result that notions such as national sovereignty or territorial defence have lost prominence. The military operations that have been carried out in the last quarter-century – UN peacekeeping in Cyprus (1993-present) and MINUSTAH (2004-2015) – clearly show as much. Last, Argentina also joined neighbouring countries in actively promoting regional integration in the area of defence through the creation of a South American Defence Council within the framework of UNASUR.²

Thus, military professionalization, with all-volunteer service as a key component, should be considered in light of very specific processes, where the Malvinas-Falklands War defeat, the end of State terror and the post-Cold War environment added to the regional dynamics.

So far, no particular interest has been expressed in the analysis of how the new format changed the proportion of non-native citizens in the forces, nor are there any studies that compare this with the situation that prevailed when military service was compulsory. Likewise, the impact on military organization, now forced to implement strategies to attract and retain volunteer soldiers, has not been addressed. The focus until now has been on the previously banned participation of women in the armed forces, and the effects on military professionalization of having soldiers in training for over a year and up to ten, the maximum time allowed, between ages 18 and 28 (Laferriere & Soprano, 2014). The present contribution is thus intended to fill a gap.

The Reasons behind the Shift to an AVF (1995)

To cut a long history short, while the 1901 Law which codified compulsory military service in Argentina had contemplated the recruitment of naturalized citizens, there existed, in fact, regulatory restrictions and practices that hampered it until recently. In 1995, Argentina passed a new law that suspended conscription and ushered in voluntary military service. The authorities also laid down new requirements for joining the armed forces, allowing women to serve in the military and recognizing naturalized citizens and citizens

¹ Argentina shares with Chile a very extensive border marked by the Andes Mountains. For most of the 20th century there were border conflicts, especially in the Patagonia and southern areas, finally settled through diplomatic channels. However, in 1979 Argentina and Chile moved their troops into the Andes region, and were, for several weeks, on the brink of war.

² UNASUR, the Union of South American Nations, is an international organization made up of the twelve countries of the South American region: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. It aims at building a space for cultural, economic, social and political integration, while safeguarding the specific traditions of each country.

by option as equally entitled to enlist as volunteers.³ In this way, all foreign-born citizens, of Argentine descent or not, could now join the ranks of the military.

The scenario that precipitated the shift from conscription to the new system of voluntary recruitment in 1994-95 was traumatic, and eclipsed other phases of the process. The focus was on the government's decision to promote a legal reform as a result of the brutal murder of a conscript, Private Omar Carrasco, at an Army base in Patagonia in 1994. The crime evoked the inhumane treatment of conscripts during the Malvinas War (1982) and, above all, stressed what was worst and most questioned in the recruitment system then in force, encompassed in the word *colimba*, as conscription was popularly referred to in Argentina. *Colimba* was a composite word made from the initial syllables of three words *corra* (run), *limpie* (clean) and *barra* (sweep). In fact, conscripts were at the beck and call of their superiors and ordered to carry out menial tasks, rather than receiving any kind of military training.

Of course, the murder of Private Omar Carrasco was not the only reason underlying the replacement of compulsory military service by an all-volunteer format. We are dealing here with a movement that started in the United States during the 1970s (Moskos, 1977), gained strength and progressively spread to almost all of Western forces, although each country adopted its own specific formats and regulations.

The answer to the question as to how effective the inclusion of the foreign-born into the armed forces was during the 1995-2015 time bracket will be derived from the analysis of the regulations governing the recruitment of troops, citizenship and residence requirements, and the data drawn from information supplied by the Argentine Army. Indeed, because it is the service that since 1995 has recruited 85% of the total number of volunteers, only the Army will be considered in the following.

Fieldwork as part of the present study included informal conversations and interviews with the highest military authorities of the General Secretariat and the Department of Recruitment and Mobilization of the General Staff of the Argentine Army, as well as with officers, NCOs and privates of both this department and the recruiting centre of the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (AMBA), i.e. staff dealing daily with the process of collecting, filing and recording the information concerning each of the recruits, still in service or discharged, for at least the past six years. They helped this writer understand the dynamics that has affected the use of data and the way it was recorded. After several meetings in the two AMBA recruiting units (Campo de Mayo and Palermo), the Department of Recruitment provided an exhaustive database listing of recruits from 1995 to 2015. This made it possible to explore the quantitative and qualitative impact of immigrants in the recent process of military professionalization – the very object of the present article.

³ Since 1995, the requirements for enlisting in the voluntary service are: be an Argentine by birth, by descent, or by naturalization ; be between eighteen (18) and twenty four (24) years old at the time of enlistment ; be a high school graduate ; pass the psychophysical exam, and produce a clean criminal record certificate.

Freedom and Obligation in the Provision of Military Manpower : Historical Background

In 1995, Argentina suspended the draft and shifted to voluntary military service in pursuance with Act n°24401. This law drew a distinction between naturalized Argentine citizens and citizens by option, not previously present in Law n°4031 of 1902 which had introduced conscription and forced naturalized citizens to perform military service within ten years following naturalization. The requirements imposed on the foreign-born whose parents were also foreigners had known almost no changes since the enactment in 1869 of Law 346 on Citizenship and Naturalization. This Act also considered eligible for naturalization those who had fought for the country, especially in the Paraguayan War, or the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). Although this rule, which somehow encouraged enlistment in times of war, remained in force throughout the 20th century, no troops were engaged in armed conflicts between 1870 and 1982.

In order to acquire Argentinian citizenship, immigrants had to be at least 18 years of age, and have two years' continuous residence in the country, while citizens "by option" could acquire citizenship through their parents before the age of 18. Also, Art. 21 of the Constitution, whose main provision has mostly remained unchanged since 1853 despite subsequent reforms, stated:

Every Argentine citizen is obliged to bear arms in defence of his country and of this Constitution, in accordance with such laws as the Congress may enact to that effect and with such decrees of the National Executive. Citizens by naturalization are free to render, or not render, this service for a period of ten years counted from the date on which they obtain their citizenship papers (Argentine Constitution, Art.21)

As can be seen, naturalized citizens had always been granted the freedom to undergo military service or not. However, the draft law of 1904, in defiance of the Constitution, forced naturalized citizens to serve in the military. With the enactment of the enrolment law of 1911, naturalized citizens were once again able to choose, although the law introduced an onerous caveat : *"Naturalized citizens are exempt from military service during the first ten years following their naturalization, after which they shall lose their citizenship, and all possibility of ever acquiring it again"*.

However that may be, at the beginning of the 20th century, it was almost impossible in practice for a naturalized citizen (that is, one without at least one Argentine parent) to join the line Army.⁴ Only young males between the ages of 18 and 28 could serve in it (and admission was only possible up to the age of 24); those who had acquired citizenship at a

⁴ In 1901, parliamentary debate considered the possibility of granting citizenship to foreigners who performed compulsory military service. At that time, they represented a very high percentage of the population. However, this proposal was dropped for two reasons: first, the risk of an influx of immigrants from Chile, with whom war threatened; second, the idea of bringing together the legislation on recruitment and on citizenship into one single act was rejected; and last, the Constitution provided that naturalized citizens were excused from performing military service for ten years after naturalization (Rodríguez Molas, 1983).

later age could join the National Guards (between 28 and 40), or the Territorial Guards (at ages 40-45). If we consider that, while naturalized citizens had the obligation to perform military service, they also had a ten-year grace period, and 54% of the immigrants naturalized between 1904 and 1910 acquired citizenship between the ages of 34 and 49, and only 17% between ages 18 and 29 (Canton & Jorrot, 1999), it was quite unlikely that any of them could have served in the regular Army.

In addition, the lottery-based system of recruitment considered all 18-year-old citizens as a class liable to serve in the military as conscripts. The lottery determined who was called, and the service they were assigned to. Although young males were first drafted at the age of 21, and later (1976) at age 18, it would have been impossible to include natives and naturalized citizens in the same class. Therefore, these citizens remained mainly ineligible for mandatory service under arms ; also, the National Guard and the Territorial Guard which recruited citizens over the age of 24 no longer existed in the 1950s. Finally, in 1949, Part I, paragraph (b) of the Organic Law for the Army established who was obliged to serve and who was not. According to Art.33, paragraph (d), “*naturalized citizens benefiting from the exemption provided for under Art. 21 of the National Constitution of 1853*” were henceforth free to render or not render this service.

‘Open Doors’ and Military Service

When the law on compulsory military service was passed at the beginning of the 20th century, migration flows to Argentina were such that foreigners represented fully one-third of the total population. Government policies promoting skilled labour immigration from Europe started in the late 19th century and lasted until the Second World War. The vast majority of immigrants arriving in Argentina were either Italian or Spanish. During the 20th century, Argentina had the second largest community of Italians after the United States. Hence, the reasons for introducing a compulsory military system included its relevance as a means of assimilating young people born into and brought up in foreign families. Therefore, when the law on mandatory enlistment was passed in 1901, one of the discussions focused on the possibility of recruiting foreigners and granting them Argentine citizenship at the end of their tour of military service. This possibility was ruled out for two main reasons : first, it was inconsistent with Art.21 of the National Constitution of 1864, and second, a great number of Chilean immigrants would possibly enlist, and this was not regarded favourably by Argentina due to the frequent border disputes with that country.

The law on voluntary military service was enacted in a different context, where immigration was mostly discouraged. The current law on immigration had been adopted by the *de facto* military government in 1976; it contained a system of penalties that deterred rather than encouraged the influx of immigrants, and above all, complicated the regularization procedures for undocumented aliens. Since the 1950s, European immigration – until then much preferred by Argentines brought up in the belief that they were part of Europe and who thus shared an anti-Latin American sentiment – had virtually stopped. After the 1960s, immigrant populations came for the most part from neighbouring countries : Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile. However, the majority entered the country

illegally : many of them were undocumented and refrained from applying for a residence permit because of punitively dissuasive sanctions. Due to strict background checks and implicit racial discrimination, the naturalization process was out of reach for a lot of them.

When the parliamentary reform projects were proposed at the end of 1999, the aforementioned immigration law was strongly criticized. Nevertheless, no changes were introduced until 2004, when Law 25.871 was passed, framed by agreements concluded with the member-countries of UNASUR to facilitate the residence of immigrants. In 2005, Argentina also established a National Programme for Migrant Documents Regularization called *Patria Grande*, easing the formalities for temporary or permanent residence imposed on undocumented immigrants and imposing no fines on irregular residents. Since then, a period of so-called ‘open doors’ started, where Argentina considerably eased the conditions for permanent residency status, imposing no fines on foreigners who chose not to regularize their situation. This policy went hand in hand with improved economic conditions and the opening of the labour market, as well as other factors that encouraged migration like the public health system and free public education, far better in Argentina than in neighbouring countries. Research funded by the International Organization for Migration revealed that three out of ten foreigners arrived in the country between the years 2002 and 2010, the most extensive period of immigration growth in Argentina’s migration history. The countries from which the highest proportion of immigrants living in Argentina originated are Paraguay (550,713), Bolivia (345,272), Chile (191,147) and Peru (157,514).⁵

In contrast to other UNASUR countries, Argentina has facilitated immigrant permanent residence, and refrained from carrying out punitive policies, or from persecution. This means that since 2004 it has been possible to reside and work in Argentina on the strength of a simple procedure that allows foreigners to have an identity card issued by the National Registry of Persons, just as any Argentine citizen.

While acquisition of naturalized citizen status follows a different procedure, the process of naturalization also seems to have been simplified in recent times, as only 2-year residency in the country and legal majority are required of applicants to become eligible.

Registration of Citizenship Status in the Argentine Army

As this writer attempted to assess the impact of non-native citizens’ access to the armed forces, she noticed an absence of data regarding this matter. During fieldwork, as she spoke with the various previously mentioned military authorities, the lack of official registration of soldiers’ citizenship status was confirmed. Further contact with the Army Enlistment Division, which channels the largest number of volunteer recruits from the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, showed that registration and classification of citizenship status, notably how citizenship has been acquired, was non-existent there, too.

The fact is that any citizen interested in joining the Army (as officer, NCO, or private) must fill in a similar form called Army Enlistment Single Document (DUPIE),

⁵ Beccaria, 2012.

under oath and certify that the personal information supplied is true and correct. The first question in Part I of this form is 'Place of Birth', followed by 'Nationality' and 'Foreign Identity Card Number'. Although the DUPIE indicates if the applicant is a native or a naturalized citizen, once he or she is accepted into the Army, the document becomes part of his or her personal military record, which the Army keeps throughout the soldier's whole career. But the information can only be accessed in the military units where the soldiers serve, or once he or she is discharged, at their initial recruiting centre.

The information requested and stored on personnel forms consists of first name and surname, enlistment centre, date of entry and discharge, name of the unit in which they serve, identity card number, combat role and location of the military service record. Clearly, the Argentine Army does not systematically record the citizenship status of soldiers: it has no interest whatsoever in whether the recruits are natives or naturalized citizens. Thus was borne out the belief of the interviewed military authorities: beyond legal requirements, the enlistment of foreign-born citizens is neither promoted nor prevented.

Therefore, in order to identify which of the registration forms belonged to naturalized citizens, it was necessary to check the numbers that the National Registry of Persons sets aside for the identity cards of other-than-natural citizens.⁶

Data on the geographical distribution of the foreign-born soldiers is made easy to obtain by the Army's decentralized system of enlistment, with recruiting centres throughout the country. They are situated in Campo de Mayo and Palermo (AMBA), Tandil and Bahía Blanca (Buenos Aires Province), Paraná (Entre Ríos), Posadas (Misiones), Salta (Salta), Neuquén (Neuquén), Comodoro Rivadavia (Chubut), Santa Rosa (La Pampa), Rio Gallegos (Santa Cruz), Mendoza (Mendoza), Curuzú Cuatiá (Corrientes) y Córdoba (Córdoba).⁷ The recruiting centres with the highest proportion of enlisted non-native Argentine citizens are the AMBA and Misiones. According to data provided by the Army Recruiting Department, since 1995 the AMBA has regularly provided the Army with the largest share of its total number of recruits, reflecting the large concentration of population (almost 13 of the country's 42 million inhabitants) in the area.

One of the concerns of the Army has been to have troops that adequately represent the geographical reality of the country and its population, believing that it should reflect the social and cultural diversity of the provinces as well as the country's federal character. The military authorities often emphasize this idea, even if they back a policy of officer rotation. The construct of a national entirety coexists with the cultural diversity of the provinces, against the backdrop of a history of civil wars between the 'interior' and the 'port' that prevailed during most of the 19th century. The eventual pacification and subsequent organization of the national State into a federal system of government resulted in the creation of 24 provinces. That is, twenty-four political jurisdictions whose authorities,

⁶ From 18,000,000 to 19,999,999, and from 93,000,000 to 94,999,999.

⁷ See Figure 1, next page.

elected by popular vote, embody the local production of natural resources, gastronomy, music genres, indigenous population, among many other typical aspects.⁸

Figure 1: Recruiting Centres of the Argentine Army



Source: National Geographic Institute Argentina

⁸ There have been no requests to include ethnic or religious minorities in the military in Argentina. There were, however, policies to sustain and increase female participation, and also to prevent any restrictions on access and/or retention of homosexuals, or non-Catholics. This tendency was especially prioritized between 2006 and 2011.

Table 1 : Army recruitment per year

Recruitment Year	Recruit Number	Foreign-Born Soldiers	%
1995	19,353	15	0.07
1996	4,436	10	0.02
1997	4,354	7	0.16
1998	5,316	6	0.11
1999	4,762	6	0.12
2000	3,521	3	0.08
2001	1,291	2	0.15
2002	5,528	4	0.07
2003	4,544	5	0.11
2004	4,773	5	0.10
2005	6,041	6	0.10
2006	4,283	4	0.10
2007	3,522	4	0.11
2008	6,019	20	0.33
2009	6,644	11	0.16
2010	1,386	5	0.36
2011	3,531	8	0.22
2012	4,852	12	0.24
2013	5,015	23	0.45
2014	6,384	20	0.31
2015	8,465	9	0.10
Total	114,020	185	0.16

Between 1995 and 2015, the Army recruited a total number of 114,020 troops, i.e. an annual average of 5,430, with highs of over 19,000 soldiers at the AVF's inception, 8,465 in the period's final year, and lows of 1,291 and 1,386 respectively in 2001 and 2010. These figures were broadly sufficient to counterbalance yearly separations from service of 2,500 to 5,700.⁹ The proportion of naturalized citizens among recruits ranges from 0.02% (1996) to 0.45% (2013), with an average of 0.16% over the whole period.

International Comparisons

When looking elsewhere for comparisons with other national cases, the numbers cited above appear literally dwarfed by those of foreign-born soldiers – many of them not even naturalized at the time of joining the services – in countries like Spain (where they are reported to account for one in eleven serving soldiers in 2016), the US (some 5% overall), Britain (Army: over 6%) or France (Army: close to 6%). Such differences are enormous: in the last few years, the comparison of *proportions* yields ratios of 1:30 when the reference is to the Spanish Army, and around 1:20 in the other three cases mentioned; absolute numbers (2016: 65,000 in the US military as a whole; 6,000 to 8,000 in the armies

⁹ Apart from enforcement of statutory age-limits (28 for rank-and-file volunteers), discharges are always initiated at soldier's request, never on the military's initiative. Among the most common reasons for a discharge is the soldier's wish to join the civilian labour market; discharge requests due to posting assignments are not usual.

of Spain, Britain and France) are so out of proportion with Argentina's mere 185 over two decades that they make them look insignificant... The reader is thus fully entitled to ask why the share of naturalized foreign-born soldiers serving in the Argentine Army is so low.

Various explanations can be advanced. First, the Argentine State, unlike other Western States, obviously shows no particular interest in promoting the recruitment of foreign nationals into voluntary military service, which can only mean that it can do with existing numbers of Argentinian recruits, or does not have the necessary budget means to increase them. Furthermore, immigrants have precious few incentives to become naturalized citizens or to join the military. For one thing, the rights they are offered on the strength of the policy of 'open doors' apply as soon as they step on Argentine soil, which automatically grants them legal residence.¹⁰ For another, with rank-and-file volunteer pay hardly exceeding minimum wage level, and in the absence of additional symbolic or material rewards, the system discourages recruitment and results in a high personnel turnover.

Although one can only be struck by the fact that both the numbers and percentages involved are very small, a shy though at times significant increase has manifested itself in the percentages, especially since 2008, when Argentina more firmly established its open-door immigration policy. However, this proportion growth can be explained by the massive regularization of UNASUR immigration,¹¹ rather than any legal changes to the requirements for citizenship acquisition. According to scattered information obtained from foreign-born persons who wanted to acquire citizenship either by option or naturalization, the bureaucratic process that until the 1990s was remarkably discouraging has apparently become simpler since 2004. That is, the increment in the proportion of the non-native soldiers in the Argentine army does not seem to be the result of less demanding enlistment requirements, which apparently remained unchanged, but rather of an increased willingness of the State to regularize foreigners, granting either residency status, or citizenship, according to the applicant's preference.

Vacancies are determined annually by the General Staff of the Army, according to the requirements of the Brigades in each of the thirteen Recruiting Centres, or Recruiting and Mobilization Jurisdiction Commands (CCJRM). The distribution of recruits among the CCJRMs has remained relatively stable over the years, as the recruiting centres individually diffuse the advertising material prepared by the General Secretariat of the Army General Staff through the local media.

Based on the data collected for all of the AMBA, out of a total of some 35,000 recruits there were only 25 foreign-born recruits in that area from 1995 to 2015 (nine in 1995-2002, sixteen in 2003-2015). Their countries of origin were Paraguay and Bolivia. However, these Buenos Aires figures do not faithfully reflect the state of affairs that

¹⁰ This can explain the scant attention paid by the National Directorate of Migration to systematic data about the naturalized population just as about legal foreign residents.

¹¹ Though a request was lodged with Argentina's Ministry of the Interior for National Registry of Persons data on the absolute and relative increase in the foreign-born population that acquired citizenship between 1995 and 2015, this information proved unavailable.

prevails in the country as a whole, where a substantial growth in the total number of non-native recruits occurred in 2008 (from 4 the previous year to 20, or 0.11% to 0.33%, respectively) and later in 2013 (when it jumped to 23, or 0.45%). As for the countries of origin of these troops, while no disaggregated data is available, based on information provided by Misiones and AMBA the estimate is that two out of three recruits come from Paraguay.

Still, one can further speculate on the reasons behind the increase in naturalized citizens in the Army. The fact is that after 2007, when Argentina started to prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity committed during the military dictatorship (1976-1983), recruiting soldiers for the Army became a difficult task. Also, a growing number of discouraged young officers and NCOs were leaving the armed forces. The results of a recently published study carried out in 2008 make visible the demands of the military establishment for government recognition (Frederic, Masson & Soprano, 2015). The claims for better wages, modernization of the institution and provision of the necessary training resources reflect how the absence of government recognition seemed to be one of the main demotivating factors, and a reason why young people no longer wish to pursue military careers. Perhaps one could venture that the loss of prestige of the military in the eyes of part of the Argentine society did not seem to affect those born and raised in foreign countries.

However, difficulties in soldier recruitment persist ; this is especially the case in the Patagonian region where vacancies have reached problematic levels. In October 2015, authorities of the Department of Recruitment and Mobilization invited applications to fill up 2,500 soldier vacancies throughout the country. At the beginning of March 2016, six hundred positions still remained vacant in Patagonia alone. The reasons cited by the authorities were that (a) the highest proportion of applicants come from the northeast and northwest of the country, where the labour market is weak ; (b) usually, two-thirds of the total of applicants are rejected on medical and/or psychiatric grounds (the most common causes being : in the first case, early childhood malnutrition, and in the second, addictions). The vacancies in Patagonia, the most difficult to fill, are usually taken up by applicants from other regions of the country, mostly because Patagonia has the lowest enlistment rate due to the growing demand for labour in the private sector and wages that are almost three times as high as military recruit pay.

Nevertheless, whenever military units can afford to be selective about applications, as is the case in the northeast and northwest of the country, they tend to favour those most qualified for the job – irrespective of their citizenship status. There is generally a preference for applicants with a secondary education, mechanical skills, and other trades.

Recruiting Campaigns: From Patriotism to Personal Challenge

Campaigns aimed at attracting applicants for the Army volunteer slots are conducted at national level, using the web pages of the Armed Forces and/or the Ministry of Defence. Spot ads, promotional posters, and messages are produced by the General

Secretariat of the Army and sent to all the recruiting centres in charge of spreading the information via the local media. The Army also produces the enlistment single document (DUPIE) that applicants must complete and submit, and uses a toll-free number and a website; those who want to join as soldiers, NCOs, or officers must apply online for the DUPIE on the Army's official website. The DUPIE is then sent to the applicant by email. There is an institutional three-minute video on the web page that shows male and female recruits explaining why they wanted to join the Army. The website¹² only carries the following statements made by three soldiers: "I like challenges", "I want to see the country", and "I know what I want".

As can be seen, the Army's enlistment campaigns no longer appeal to traditional motivations such as "defend the Motherland", or "serve your country". Values and principles like patriotism or the national cause do not overly concern young people today, which may explain why patriotic appeals are not part of the message.¹³ Rather, the motivations those recruiting campaigns encourage boil down to an identification with a different set of values, like autonomy, self-determination, self-development, and the personal challenge of proving that "they have what it takes".¹⁴ Although probably unintentional, this undoubtedly helped foreign-born applicants or others who have lived abroad, to find their place in the Argentine Army.

There is thus a growing tendency in the Argentine Armed Forces to assign military service new meaning, away from the cult of sacrifice and suffering for the service. Although there are service members who still embrace their career as an all-encompassing way of life to the exclusion of all other social activities and interests, a growing number of them sees it as a career choice like any other and pursue it as other professionals pursue their *métiers*. This more prosaic approach would not have been tolerated only ten years ago.

Conclusions

The proportion of foreign-born young men and women who acquired Argentine citizenship and enlisted in the Army as volunteer soldiers has remained relatively stable since the suspension of the conscription system in 1994 – and very small. The slight increment in that group's participation in the Army in 2008 and 2013 cannot be explained by a deliberate Army policy aimed at stepping up recruitment. The reasons for this increase are more likely to lie in easier procedures for acquiring citizenship.

¹² See : <http://www.ejercito.mil.ar/incorporacion/>.

¹³ However, the Army will request proof of a patriotic and national commitment when the applicant joins the service.

¹⁴ The lineaments of an explanation for such a shift from patriotic values to the satisfaction of personal expectations and motivations are provided by Tibor Szvircesev Tresch (2011). He shows how, in the case of the Swiss militia, this change brought the armed forces closer to the interests and expectations of young people, rather than continue to uphold the traditional nationalist or patriotic motivations. Szvircesev further demonstrates how the concept of citizens in uniform has been gradually lost, and replaced by the idea of personal benefits and motivations. In Argentina, however, that concept was developed in the 2009 reform of the Military Justice Code that granted civilian rights to military personnel, and eliminated military jurisdictions. The new Code gave military men and women the right to refuse to obey orders and abolished capital punishment.

However that may be, the numbers of foreign-born Argentine soldiers have been remarkably low throughout the period examined, especially when compared to the situations in which European or North American militaries have found themselves of late. This is due to the Army's lack of attractiveness in terms of material or symbolic compensation (resulting in recruitment problems and high turnover), as well as to the fact that immigrants hardly need to become naturalized to enjoy the benefits of the country's 'open-door' policy.

Yet it is clear that the system of voluntary recruitment made possible the participation of naturalized citizens in the country's armed forces. In contrast, under the former annual lottery-based system of conscription of young males aged 18, together with the legal requirements imposed after 1904, naturalized citizens were unlikely to be eligible for the draft. As previously mentioned, the citizenship application process now only requires the applicant to be 18 years or over and to have resided for two years in the country. The system of voluntary service allows citizens – natives and non-natives alike – to enlist up to age 24. Therefore, the recruitment of citizens not born on Argentine soil, especially Paraguayans, Bolivians, and Brazilians, seemed (slightly) more probable. A future qualitative study on the experience of serving in the armed forces as non-native citizens would be of special interest.

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