

A defence structure for the future

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JAIME RAVINET is the Minister of Defence appointed by President Piñera in February this year. A law graduate of the University of Chile, where he was President of the Students' Federation, and later became a Professor, he was subsequently a Fulbright scholar at the John Hopkins University. He is a businessman, and was Mayor of Santiago for 11 years. A Christian Democrat, he served as Minister in three departments under President Lagos, including as Defence Minister.

Chile's Ministry of Defence (MoD) was first established in 1814 under the Secretariat of War. In 1818, along with the annexation of the Department of the Navy, it was renamed the Ministry of War and Naval Affairs. In 1887 two separate departments were created under the authority of the Minister: the Secretariat of War, responsible for the Army, and a Secretariat of the Navy, responsible for naval and maritime affairs. In 1932 the Ministry was created by merging the War and Navy Departments with the Aviation Secretariat, at those times under the authority of the Minister of the Interior.

The passage of time saw this organisation grow in complexity and responsibilities and, following international examples, new areas were added and new visions permeated the way in which the services were conducted; probably the most evident trend was the increasing relevance of a joint approach to military matters. Although the essential functions of any MoD were developed with some degree of effectiveness, it is also true that the organisational configuration that characterised the MoD was not functional to the challenges we can foresee in the medium and long term. An important and comprehensive transformation process was needed, and it is happening now.

Chile's MoD is currently undergoing a major structural reform, the first one in fifty years. During the last decade we have witnessed an important modernisation of the services, focused mainly on the equipment they operate. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the defence system as a whole, the pending modernisation was of the institutional structure and the incentives it generates. As is well known, the way in which a group of activities is organised influences the decision making process and the strategy the organisation uses to face its demands. We have had essentially a non-systemic organisational construction; the challenge was to design a new institutional structure where, with a systemic approach as the basic goal, the likelihood that decision makers have both the relevant information and the incentives to use it efficiently, were maximised.

After a long period of analysis, in February 2010 Congress approved the MoD's new organisational structure, with two Undersecretaries (Defence and Armed Forces) and a redefined Joint Services Command. The Undersecretary of Defence's main function is to develop a Defence strategy and to generate the inputs to

the authorities that will have to approve defence policy; the Undersecretary for Armed Forces (a fusion of the previous Services' Undersecretaries) has to deal with personnel affairs and education, and the Joint Services Command is in charge of strategic military planning to face international crises and natural disasters.

The achievement of our national security objectives is a multi-variable problem, but at least to some extent is a function of our ability to maintain military capacities that match the country's requirements. This, in turn, is correlated with the quality of the cycle of capability development, which involves setting policy objectives, developing capabilities proposals, acquiring equipment and putting those capacities to work. The Ministry is mainly involved in setting policy objectives, ensuring that capabilities proposals are consistent with those objectives and deciding about arms acquisition proposed by the services under the Ministry's guidelines. The core structure of this decision process is changing now towards a better integrated analysis and decision making.

Additionally, it is crucial to remember that defence supports our wider foreign policy goals and that defence relationships are essential to them. The Ministry is playing a leading role in Chile's international defence relations, participating actively in security dialogues, in the promotion of military exercises for natural disasters reliefs and in training exchanges. But we have not yet been able to develop an international defence policy that purposely enhances our international role.

Finally, if something should be emphasised, it is that the transformations briefly described create a civil bureaucracy in charge of providing all vital inputs to top-level decision making and significantly improve the MoD's technical capacities. The essential aim of this transformation is to empower the Minister and to foster a systemic analysis of defence. The results will be a more efficient defence system and better integration among defence and foreign policy. This reform, then, is an essential component of our defence agenda, which can be synthesised by the following objectives:

- (a) To develop an institutional structure coherent with our estimated challenges and with civil leadership of defence;
- (b) A greater efficiency in resource allocation and use;
- (c) A military career attractive enough to motivate good young people to incorporate within it; and,
- (d) A deeper integration of the country's Armed Forces within civil society.

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