

the Viceroyalty of New Spain and its largely autonomous subdivision the Capitancy-General of Guatemala. Independence came without a fight in 1821 as Spain lost its grip on its Central American provinces after being defeated in the Mexican War of Independence and the old provinces found themselves as independent states. Two years later, as two camps of Costa Rican society emerged, one favouring joining the Mexican Empire and one favouring full independence, and they resorted to civil war to settle their differences. The Republicans were victorious and the Republic of Costa Rica was established¹²².

Costa Rica developed considerably over the 19th and 20th Centuries. It was a backwater of the Spanish Empire, in part due to restrictive trade policies, so with independence came economic growth and in particular the development of the banana and coffee industries. While it had less instability and internal strife than other Latin American states, between independence and 1948 eight Presidents were deposed by coups or uprisings. The last uprising was the Civil War in 1948 that came about over a disputed Presidential election during which revolutionary forces overthrew the government. The uprising's leader Jose Figueres Ferrer was successful in using his own militia, the Caribbean Legion, to defeat both the Costa Rican Army and a Communist militia and establishing himself as provisional President. Figueres set about enacting a number of social reforms in Costa Rica, chief among which was the abolition of the Armed Forces¹²³.

Figueres was no pacifist as his use of force to overthrow the Government demonstrated. Likewise the Costa Rican Army was a small force of less than 500 soldiers with little conventional capability for either power projection or national defence, a fact highlighted by their defeat¹²⁴. Figueres was instead concerned about the loyalty and destabilizing nature of the military. The fact that it served no practical defensive purpose only added to his desire to remove it. As a revolutionary Figueres was of the view that the people would rise up against an invader or aggressor and an army was redundant. He abolished the Army because of his view that militarism was undercutting democracy in Central America¹²⁵.

Over the almost 70 years since the Costa Rican Army was abolished the stability of Costa Rica and the economic trajectory that stability has enabled have been in stark contrast to militarised countries in its neighbourhood such as Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, who

¹²² John A. Booth, Christine J. Wade, Thomas W. Walker, **Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion and Change**, (6th Edition), (Boulder: Westview Press, 2015), 55-59.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 72-74.

¹²⁴ Kirk Bowman, **Militaries and Modern States: The Comparative Evidence from Costa Rica and Honduras**, in Peter N. Stearns (ed.), *Demilitarisation in the Contemporary World*, (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 191.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 189-195.