

## **Democratic stability, the military and national defense in Brazil and Latin America**

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### **The Americas after September 11, Hemispheric Integration and Human Security**

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The topic of the paper is part of the author's main line of research. Over the last ten years, individually or in association with other social scientists, both Brazilian and foreign, the author has been studying the political insertion of the Armed Forces in the young democracies of the Southern Cone. This means that my attention has been focused on countries that have had recent experiences with authoritarian military governments.<sup>1</sup> It is part also of a line of research that has been probing military memory, exploring the

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<sup>1</sup> The major result of this comparative research effort was the book entitled *Democracia e Forças Armadas no Cone Sul* [Democracy and Armed Forces in the Southern Cone], edited by Maria Celina D'Araujo and Celso Castro (Rio de Janeiro, FGV, 2000). See also *Changing military and security arrangements in the Mercosur: the possible role of the European Union* (co-authored by Celso Castro). Textos CPDOC, nº 30 (Rio de Janeiro, CPDOC, 1998).

perception of ranking military officers about the political performance of their institutions during the military governments that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985.<sup>2</sup>

From 1964 to 1985 Brazil lived under successive military governments. It was the second Latin America's longest military dictatorship and the one that most sluggishly evolved into a democracy. At least ten of the 21 years of military dictatorship were spent on the issue of "redemocratization". In the end, a pact between the military and society created a transition in which "the past was forgotten", by means of an amnesty that included both the agents of repression and those who had been involved (or were accused of being involved) in acts of terrorism.

In 1985 civilians began to rule Brazil again and since 1989 periodic presidential elections have been held at four year intervals, guaranteeing the institutional and cultural improvement of the democratic regime. In 1992 there was the impeachment of an elected president, Fernando Collor de Mello, an outcome of one of the most serious crises ever recorded in the country's republican history. The crisis was solved without any military

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<sup>2</sup> Among the major results of this line of research there are several books: *21 anos de regime militar: balanços e perspectivas* [21 years of military regime: assessment and perspectives], edited by Maria Celina D'Araujo and Gláucio Soares (Rio de Janeiro, FGV, 1994); *Visões do golpe: a memória militar sobre 1964* [Perceptions of the coup: military memory about 1964]; *Os anos de chumbo: a memória militar sobre a repressão* [The dark years: military memory about repression]; *A volta aos quartéis: a memória militar sobre a abertura* [Back to the barracks: military memory about redemocratization], all edited by Maria Celina D'Araujo, Gláucio Soares and Celso Castro (Rio de Janeiro, Relume-Dumará, 1994-1995).

Maria Celina D'Araujo and Celso Castro edited two other books: one contained a long interview with the ex-president and general Ernesto Geisel (1974-1978) - *Ernesto Geisel* (Rio de Janeiro, FGV, 1997), currently in its 5<sup>th</sup> printing; and *Militares e política na Nova República* [The Military and politics in the New Republic] (Rio de Janeiro, FGV, 2001). See also Maria Celina D'Araujo "As Forças Armadas na Nova República", in Maria Ângela D'Incao, *O Brasil não é mais aquele...* (Rio de Janeiro, Cortez Editora, 2001).

intervention, a fact that was considered by almost all analysts as a display of military professionalism.

This article has three goals:

First, to show how Brazil, when compared to other Latin American countries, represents a successful case of incorporating the military into the new democratic order. What is happening in Brazil is a process of subordinating the military to civilian power, to use the classic terms of Samuel Huntington (1979). As evidence of this subordination, we should stress that since 1985 there has not been a single political manifesto by the Brazilian Armed Forces, nor news about dissenting military factions, such as the ones we here about in several Latin American countries like Venezuela, Paraguay and Ecuador.

Second, to show that part of this process of subordinating the military to civilian power – and the consequent redefinition of civilian-military relations – can be credited to the manner by which Brazil conceived and negotiated political amnesty, during the transition to civilian rule. Besides, it will be argued that such success is explained also by the manners by which the democratically-elected governments of the 1990s dealt, in name of the State, with the persisting uncertainties about the “past scores to be settled”.<sup>3</sup> In contrast with other Latin American countries, “national pacification” was achieved in a much more effective way.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In 1995 the Brazilian government created the Committee on Missing Persons, charged with untangling the legal situation of the families of individuals considered to have disappeared during the military regime, many of whom lacked documents attesting the deaths of their relatives.

<sup>4</sup> It can be argued that the dictatorships of neighboring countries – Argentina and Chile, for example – were more violent than the Brazilian dictatorship and, because of this, that “pacification” in Brazil would have to be an easier matter. We will examine this point in the paper, showing that – despite the importance of the matter of more or less violent dictatorships – Brazil was more successful, from an institutional point of view, in achieving a new mode of relations between civilians and the military.

Third, to evaluate how the Brazilian military have taken stands in relation to border conflicts. This is particularly relevant to those conflicts occurring along the border with Colombia, where guerillas and narco-trafficking have made a powerful and dangerous alliance that, by controlling large territories, also questions the very sovereignty of national states. Another border area that has been under international scrutiny is the so-called “triple border” (between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay). Specially after September of 2001, the area has been considered a possible base for operations linked to international terrorism. This relates directly to the issues of the new threats to national security, and of the new missions and the future of the Armed Forces.

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Any observer of Latin American politics can notice the news stories that reflect each country’s agenda. In all cases, the social and economic crisis is evident, such as happens with the declining living standards of the general population, unemployment, the loss of legitimacy by public institutions (as recorded by public opinion surveys). Other recurrent topics are narco-trafficking, crime, corruption, the fiscal crisis of the State, inequality, injustice, inadequate public administration, deficient networks for social protection, poor public security and criticism of political elites. Throughout the continent, according to *Latinobarometro* surveys, the population is disheartened about democratic governments. This does not mean that there is a demand for military coups or authoritarian governments, but it indicates a certain weariness of the general population with democracy’s broken promises.

The perception that democracy did not entail economic development and the production of public goods genuinely available to all creates a fear that the citizenry may support charismatic or populist leaders, from the right or from the left. In sum, the scenario of economic and social crisis is causing several types of concern in relation to problems such as: social disorder or political chaos, and a consequent governability crisis; support to authoritarian solutions; emergence of a new form of military activism; election of populist leaders with little or no government experience; growing influence of organized crime over political and party institutions, among others.

With more or less intensity, in every country in the region the outlook is full of uncertainty and fear. Democracy and development do not seem to come hand in hand, and State institutions are going through a deep reliability crisis, with the exception of the military institution. Throughout Latin America, the military are an institution that continues to deserve the trust of the general population. This process of waning legitimacy is not exclusive to the region, as can be seen in recent European elections, in which voters have been uneasy in relation to traditional parties. Among Latin Americans, however, this crisis is more serious, given the gravity and intensity of our problems.

Furthermore, social and economic crisis in Latin America has always been associated with military interventions. These interventions have usually produced authoritarian solutions, with critical losses of political liberties and disrespect to human rights. Therefore, as we reflect about the dimensions of the current crisis, we notice that many observers think that we are effectively experiencing a moment of serious threats to the still emerging democratic order.

However, and in a paradox, never has the commitment to democracy been stronger in the region. Economic cooperation treaties, such as the one that created Mercosur, and the joint decisions of the countries that belong to the *Grupo Rio*, include clauses that require the maintenance of democratic institutions as a condition for regional cooperation. This stands out clearly in the Inter-American Democratic Charter (*Carta Democrática Interamericana*), signed in Lima, on September 11, 2001. It recalls that the chiefs of State and government of the American continent, meeting in Quebec, in April of the same year, had decided that any changes or disruption of the democratic order, any violation of the Constitutions of member countries, would signify an “insurmountable” obstacle for the participation of the respective state in the *Cumbres de las Américas* (American Summits). It also spells out that the effective existence of representative democracy and the rule of law are the basis of the regimes for all member countries of the Organization of American States, and that representative democracy includes, among its essential components, the respect for human rights and fundamental liberties, periodic and fair elections, and access to power exclusively under the condition of respecting the rule of law. Furthermore, it stated that the constitutionally mandated subordination of all State institutions to legally constituted civilian authority is mandatory.

Article 20 of the document states categorically that, if a member State suffers a change in its Constitutional order, seriously affecting democratic rule, any member State or the Secretary General of the OAS may request the immediate meeting of the Permanent Council, in order to collectively examine the situation and propose pertinent measures to be taken.

These positions were restated in April of 2002, in the “Declaration of the Rio Group about the Situation in Venezuela” (*Declaração do Grupo do Rio Sobre a Situação na Venezuela*). It reaffirmed the rights of the people to live under a democratic regime, the obligation of governments to promote and defend democracy, and recognized that representative democracy and respect to the Constitution are indispensable for peace and prosperity in the region.

In July of 1998, when there was an attempted coup in Paraguay, member States of Mercosur, together with Chile and Bolivia, associate members, also signed the Ushuaia Protocol on the Commitment to Democracy (*Protocolo de Ushuaia Sobre Compromisso Democrático*), stating that respect to the Constitutional order and to democracy were required conditions for these countries to remain as members of this regional block. The six countries recognized that the operation of democratic institutions was a fundamental part of the process of regional integration and that any change in democratic rule would represent an insurmountable obstacle to the continuity of this process. On the same occasion, a document entitled “Political Declaration of the Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile as a Peace Zone” (*Declaração Política do Mercosur, Bolívia e Chile como Zona de Paz*) was issued. The governments of the six countries vowed to stimulate processes of regional cooperation in the areas of defense and security and to maintain peace as a requisite for the existence of Mercosur. Other documents issued by international organizations, inside the region, insist on this principle. We can find indicators that such formal requirements are being followed in the attempts to effect a coup, in Venezuela, in April of 2002. There was no regional support for the coup against President Chavez, although his government is not exactly of the kind that inspires a high degree of confidence among several American countries.

It is important also to point out that these documents – treaties, agreements, proclamations, etc. – always emphasize that poverty, low levels of human development and high levels of

illiteracy have negative effects on democracy. In this sense, it is put forward that member States of the OAS must promote national or regional cooperative measures seeking to create income and jobs for the populations of the several countries and to make efforts to promote development. Article 11 of the *Carta Democrática Interamericana* states literally that “democracy and economic and social development are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing”.

The possibility of poverty being an obstacle to democracy has been strongly emphasized. This concern shows up clearly in the Brazilian government’s guidelines for its defense policies. The document entitled “National Defense Policy” (*Política de Defesa Nacional*) states that “the implementation of a sustainable defense policy, aimed at the progressive modernization of the capacity of self protection, depends on the construction of a developmental model that reinforces democracy, reduces social inequalities and regional imbalances, and combines political, social economic and military priorities with the requirements of defense and diplomatic action”.

Therefore, economic crisis is seen as a possible agent of the disruption of the democratic political order and that development is a condition for peace and for successful democratic rule. At the same time that peace is reinforced, defense and security policies are discussed in the region with an explicit concern about the roles of those institutions - the military and the police - charged with forceful coercion.

Besides all this, all Latin American countries lack a deeper and more encompassing discussion and more studies about the subject of national defense. This leads to a paradox: while democracy became a rule and, consequently, the military subordinated themselves to democratic civilian control, there has been no substantial increase – either in academia or among civilians in general – in interest about the matter of defense and security. It remains a military topic, and this reinforces the tradition of hegemonic military reflection about what should be the interest and the goals of a country’s national security.

In the midst of the social crisis, there is a growing concern about employment, income, health, economic growth, public deficit, etc., but the matter of the role of national defense has yet to gain the center of the stage of political debate. The region becomes more

unstable politically, the threats of organized crime are growing, but the attention given to the topic of defense is not increasing in accordance with the seriousness of the situation.

### **The military and politics: Brazil and Latin America**

The importance of military topics or of the military themselves to society can be easily gauged by looking at news reports published during the first semester of 2002. If we limit our observations to the abstracts produced by the *Observatorio Cono Sur De Defensa Y Fuerzas Armadas* (Southern Cone Defense and Armed Forces Observatory), the situation is clear. News reports are collected there about military and defense matters in four countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. The differences among the contents of the news are symptomatic of the differences among the countries and among the weights given to the Armed Forces in each country – or the weights that they may actually have.

The most glaring difference refers to the matter of missing citizens and crimes committed during dictatorships. While this topic is recurrent and abundant in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, it is practically absent in Brazil. On the other hand, in Brazil the topic of internal security and violence is highly debated and visible, in contrast with the other three countries.

In Argentina, news stories about the topic of defense and security suggest the possibility of a military coup as solution to the nation's crisis. The hypothesis is dismissed by local military authorities, but the fact that the matter is brought up at all indicates that the concern is genuine. Besides, there are frequent news about the judicial status of investigations and trials involving prominent people involved in the Argentinean "dirty war". The news stories about the "cases" of Mahamed Ali Seineldin, leader of the *carapintada* rebellion in 1990, about Adolfo Schilingo, one of the leading torturers during the dictatorship, among other stories, are quite frequent.<sup>5</sup>

Such as happens in the two other countries, the "revision of the past" still engages public opinion. In Uruguay, promotions of new generals are prime matter for the press. The date of the coup that established the dictatorship (in 1973) is profusely remembered, the same

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<sup>5</sup> About military uprisings in Argentina, see Catela, 1998 and 1999; and Sain, 2000.



happening with the findings of the *Comission para la Paz* (Peace Committee) that investigates cases of violation of human rights during the dictatorship. The press also follows closely the work of forensic anthropologists who search for the remains of people who were killed during the dictatorship. Such as happens in Argentina, an issue that is still hot is the one related to the abducted children of political prisoners. Mobilization about the issue of missing people remains strong. The sorting out of the perverse side of the dictatorship is far from completed and goes on, with much impact on society and the mass media.

In the case of Chile, the Pinochet affair remains unresolved and some military officers are still being tried for crimes committed during the dictatorship. In Chile the press also pays much attention to relations with Peru, with whom Chile had serious border problems in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in the Pacific War. In this case, underlining the intentions to build peace in the region, there was an agreement to study common methodologies to evaluate the defense spending of both countries.

In contrast with Brazil, these three countries are still experiencing a set of unresolved problems connected to their respective dictatorships. In this sense, the military are more often seen at the center stage of politics in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, sometimes as defendants, at other times defending their institutions. As far as the press coverage is concerned, in Brazil past crimes do not have the same dimension. Military authorities, high level commanders and ranking officers are practically absent from the news and remain unknown to the general reading public. However, there is a remarkable number of stories about police violence and abuse. In recent times the police has been the most widely criticized actor in the field of security issues. Several arbitrary actions have caused the Brazilian police to become news all over the world. Some instances of this were the killing of street children in Rio de Janeiro, in July of 1993, and the massacre of landless rural workers, in Eldorado do Carajás, in the Amazonian state of Pará, in April of 1996.

Together with the coverage of police action, the topic of violence appears in the Brazilian national press in several contexts, such as common crimes that impress because their rates are so high. For example, there are the 9,000 homicides per year in Rio de Janeiro, a situation that is getting worse and to which the police is far from giving a satisfactory answer. Other prominent topics are the participation of ex-soldiers (discharged from elite

corps) in the training of organized crime forces, the lack of preparation of or inadequate actions by civilian and military intelligence units, the inability of the police to face the challenge of organized crime in Rio de Janeiro's slum areas, and the concern of the Brazilian military with drug trafficking and border conflicts, particularly in the case of Colombia and the "triple border" (with Paraguay and Argentina), an area that became famous after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in the US, as there emerged suspicion about financial and tactical support given in the area to terrorism networks, including Hesbollah e Hamas.

The contrast between Brazil and the other three countries is shocking. On the one hand, we can conclude that Brazil has a more successful trajectory in terms of controlling its economic crisis, of political institutionalization, of maintaining a standard of financial stability. On the other hand, the topics of domestic violence and corruption show clearly the seriousness of the problems that may jeopardize institutional security and the continuity of a democratic rule of law that can guarantee everybody's right to life and liberty. The situation experienced by Colombia and Venezuela also contrasts with Southern Cone countries. None of the Southern Cone countries is affected by guerrilla warfare or by paramilitary groups, such as Colombia, and none is living under the tension of a situation in which traditional party structures are undergoing a legitimacy crisis, such as Venezuela under Chavez. In other words, these crises have different characteristics, although the outcomes are quite similar to each other when one looks at the social and economic issues. The outcomes are different also in terms of the military point of view.

It can be said that Brazil is going through an enormous internal security problem, combined with serious economic and financial difficulties, but it does not have a military problem. There are no antagonistic "debts" or scores to be settled in relation to past events. Two reasons for this, as will be discussed later on, were the manner by which political amnesty was negotiated and the approach adopted in the matter of missing people.

Several factors explain the distance created between the military and internal politics in Brazil and the refusal by the military to engage deeply in the struggle against organized crime. This situation has been even surprising if we take into account the militarist traditions of Brazilian society and the interventionist disposition of Brazilian Armed Forces. When the military elite examines the episode of the impeachment of president

Collor, in 1992, it stresses that military intervention was not required at that moment because the political system was working and, mainly, because Brazilian society did not demand such an intervention. Public opinion was against the president and the military decided to side with the people.<sup>6</sup>

Considering what has been argued above, it seems very clear that there is a lesser presence of the military in the Brazilian political scene during the New Republic, starting in 1985, and the increasing acceptance by the military of a new standard of civilian-military relations. With Hunter (1997) and Oliveira and Soares (2000), we believe that the military actually lost a significant share of their strength and influence in the new Brazilian political order.

Two remarks should be made, however. First, it is necessary to distinguish the first years of the political transition from those that followed. In those first years, during the tenure of José Sarney (1985-1990), the military still exerted significant political power.<sup>7</sup> Second, even agreeing with Hunter that military influence has decreased since 1985, and that it will possibly continue to decline as the democratic regime becomes stronger, we should be careful before stating that the Brazilian military are “paper tigers”. All we need to do is to look carefully at the history of military interventions in Brazilian politics and to consider the enormous problems and social inequalities that still characterize Brazilian society – in doing so we can imagine that the deepening of social and economic crisis may change the current trend of military subordination. Besides, the Brazilian political culture also displays an ancient authoritarian tradition, much older than the 1964-1985 military regime. Under other scenarios, there can always emerge political groups that will “knock on the barrack gates”, or there may be a resurgence of ancient messianic values or national security doctrines held by the military for so many years.

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<sup>6</sup> On this topic, see Castro e D'Araujo (orgs.), 2001. All information related to the changes in current military thinking is taken from this book.

<sup>7</sup> Oliveira (1994) presents a competent analysis of the military in politics during the Sarney administration.

Keeping these points in mind, we should really ask how and why changes in military behavior were possible to begin with. First, as emphasized by Hunter, one of the major factors in the decline of the political influence of the military was the operation of democracy itself – and the perception, by the military, of the new situation. Other factors must be mentioned, such as external influences derived from the international scene. The end of the Cold War and the ensuing new international order that emerged after the end of ideological bi-polarization, associated with stronger regional integration through Mercosur, put a check on strategic scenarios and ideological cleavages that had prevailed for 40 years. Besides, there were the effects of the “defeat” that the military suffered in the historical memory about the military regime and the consequent lack of support and political credibility. Consensus about democracy is much stronger today than in the past. Finally, we should mention that the passing of time causes a natural substitution of the generation that experienced military rule by a new one, emotionally detached from the period of military dictatorship.

The Armed Forces gradually adapted themselves to democratic rules and it is not trivial that, since 1985, they did not spawn a single **political** crisis, nor have they pronounced themselves about the crises that the country went through. However, there remains the persistent problem that matters related to defense and military institutions have little importance to most civilians. In this sense, Oliveira and Samuel (2000) emphasize the importance of a stronger **political control** over the Armed Forces in order to make them adequate to democracy. This seems to be an important concept to understand this new phase of their behavior. These analysts also insist on the existence of problems, such as the timid stance of Congress in defense and military matters, or the scant involvement of university-based academics in matters related to defense and strategy.

For these reasons, most of the topics that could and should be on the agenda of national debates end up being discussed only among the military, who thus retain a stronger power of opinion about some matters. This is what we can see today, for example, in the discussion about the possibility – imaginary or not – of the “internationalization” of Amazonia and about the fight against local and international narco-trafficking. Another important point to be made is that the Brazilian military are changing their perception about their relations with society. No longer is there a discourse that argues an antagonism with

society, nor are civilians seen as a different and opposite **other** against whom the Armed Forces should protect themselves. Another remarkable innovation is the ease with which internal divergence can be expressed inside military institutions.

While old guard officers refrained from – or censured – internal criticism, for the sake of the unity of a strong military institution that should be able to guide a weak society, today we find a creative discussion about the definition of the nature of the military regime. Here we see the differences and the realization that all military officers had to carry the burden of an experiment in power in which a single branch, the Army, was hegemonic.<sup>8</sup> In the name of the dichotomy **society** (prone to fall under the influence of Communism) versus **military** (better prepared to govern), all military institutions were forced to assume joint responsibility for the actions of those in the top positions of power (the generals).<sup>9</sup>

It is still not consensual that civilian and democratic control occurs in Brazil. Jorge Zaverucha (1994 and 2000) argues that there still are military “prerogatives” in Brazil. He defines them as areas in which military institutions presume “to have achieved a right or privilege, formal or informal, of governing such areas, of having a role in extra-military areas inside the State apparatus, or even of structuring the relationship between the State and political or civil society” (Zaverucha, 1994:93). He calls this situation a “tutored democracy” or “friendly tutelage”, marked by the institutional and political autonomy of the military, who thus are the “guardians” of democracy. In this situation, the military, by means of threats of coups, explicit or not, would pose limits to the range of action of politicians. Zaverucha notes the almost unchanged permanence of a list of 15 military prerogatives, throughout all government of the New Republic – Sarney, Collor, Franco and Cardoso’s first term (1995 1998).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> All presidents during the military regime were army generals.

<sup>9</sup> For more information about this matter, see Castro e D’Araujo, orgs, (2001).

<sup>10</sup> Namely, the prerogatives are: 1) the Armed Forces are warrant constitutional powers, law and order; 2) the military have a potential for becoming an independent executive force during internal interventions; 3) military control over major intelligence agencies; 4) Military Police corps and Firefighter Corps are under partial control of the military; 5)

Several analysts supported or disagreed with these arguments. Tollefson (1995), for example, decidedly defends Hunter's theses, criticizing Zaverucha and what he calls the "myth of tutored democracy". Martins Filho and Zirker, on the other hand, reach conclusions that are opposite to those of Hunter, stating that the political maneuvering space of the military was not reduced, and even pointing to the birth of a new king of military influence.<sup>11</sup>

Our own point of view is that Brazil is in fact experiencing a process of democratic control over the Armed Forces, when compared to other Latin American countries.<sup>12</sup> The explanation for this – besides the measures linked to "national pacification", to be discussed below – lies in the 1967 military professionalization law, written by the military

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strong possibility of civilians being tried by military courts, even if they commit common or political crimes; 6) weak possibility of active federal military personnel being tried by civilian courts; 7) absence of legislative routines and of detailed hearings about domestic military issues and national defense; 8) lack of intervention of Congress in the promotions of generals; 9) the Armed Forces have major responsibility for the security of the president and vice-president; 10) presence of military personnel in civilian economic activities (space industry, aviation, etc.); 11) active or reserve military officers occupy posts in the presidential staff; 12) absence of a Defense Ministry (only created in 1998); 13) the Armed Forces may sell military properties without full accountability to the National Treasury; 14) a military payment system similar to the one that prevailed during the military regime; 15) the military retain the right to arrest civilians or other military without a warrant in the cases of military transgressions or military crimes (Zaverucha, 2000:37).

<sup>11</sup> Oliveira and Soares (2000) emphasize that society has shown a weak capacity to deal with the topic of defense. In other words, these authors have a more negative evaluation of civilians than of the military in respect to the initiatives for effective democratic control over Brazilian Armed Forces.

<sup>12</sup> We do not deny that the military still manage to elicit differentiated treatment in several matters such as, for example, retirement plans and social benefits.

governments, and the creation, in 1998, of the Ministry of Defense, a political decision of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

The 1967 law outlining military careers introduced significant changes in military institutions. The law makes it impossible for any officer to remain in the highest posts for more than 12 years. This preempts the possibility of long periods in prestigious posts being translated into loyalty and clientele networks that compromise professionalism. In more simple terms, this was an attempt to preclude the Armed Forces from producing their own brand of **caudilhos**. This type of leadership was even easier to emerge when we know that officers could accumulate political careers and military careers. Thus, several Brazilian officers spent more than 20 or 30 years as generals, while occupying important political positions such as state governors, ministers and legislators. Internal leadership was associated with groups and loyalties in the field of civilian politics, and several times this caused serious disciplinary problems for the military institutions. By forbidding military officers to pursue parallel political careers, the law was trying to keep politics outside the barracks. Another important detail about this law was a more intense circulation between the several posts of the higher military elite, avoiding a demand concentrated on the middle-ranked officers, who were thus limited in their ability to move up in the ranks. The law strengthened the concept of merit and opportunity and forced officers to dedicate themselves entirely to their military careers. Those who chose to pursue political careers had to hang up their uniforms. The generation of military officers that occupied and still occupies all important command positions in Brazil, since the 1985 redemocratization, was formed when this law was already in place. This is reflected in their new ways of thinking, which are much less interventionist. It is important to record that the change in the attitude of these new military leaders is not a mere generational matter. It was a product of institutional change.

The other important measure that helps explain the larger distance that the Brazilian military now keep from politics is the creation of the Ministry of Defense, in 1998. This was a decision of president Cardoso, who had announced it as part of his platform during the 1994 electoral campaign. It took a rather long time to materialize, because the matter

was not a priority for any of the branches of the Armed Forces, although the Army displayed a stronger acceptance of the initiative than the Navy and the Air Force.<sup>13</sup>

Why did it take four years to create the new Ministry? On the one side, there was the lack of consensus among the members of the three Armed Forces about the opportunity of the decision, because it would bring changes to consolidated structures. On the other hand, because, although it was a campaign topic, the president gave it a priority status only in 1997, closer to the end of his first term in office (1994-1998). Therefore, the decision was not delayed by any divergence between civilians and military. Actually, the important factor was the divergence **among the military themselves**. Each branch had a different point of view about the institutional design of the new Ministry. Tensions were particularly strong between the Navy, on one side, and the Army and the Air Force, on the other. Technical questions and specific traits of each branch played a stronger role in the delay than ideological or political conflicts.

Concluding this topic, the Ministry of Defense introduced a new institutional model to the Brazilian Armed Forces. Although it is still an emerging institution, the Ministry can become a crucial support mechanism for the consolidation of the new military culture that is developing in Brazil.

### **Amnesty and the “revision of the past”**

*Nobody who meditates about history and politics can ignore the enormous role that violence has always played in human activities, and at first sight it is surprising that violence has so rarely been the object of our attention (Arendt, 1970:6).*

Most Latin American countries living under military dictatorships during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century used economic growth indicators – even though such growth was not

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<sup>13</sup> The Brazilian Army is responsible for practically two thirds of the men and woman in arms – a total of about 300,000 people.



sustained – as a basis for the legitimacy of arbitrary politics. In the words of Amartya Sen (2000), what happened in the region was a growth model “built on blood, sweat and tears”, a strategy that is typical of authoritarian governments.

These dictatorships followed the logic of the Cold War and as such their goal was to defeat “internal enemies” - leftist groups, armed or not, and opposition parties. In the name of the war against Communism, they generated a series of exceptional pieces of legislation that authorized persecution, arbitrary imprisonment, banishment. In many cases, they gave implicit authorization to kill members of the opposition. This climate of ideological terror produced several types of victims: politicians of the opposition, innocent by-standers and thousands of families.

As these countries moved towards redemocratization, there came a need to grant amnesty or to revise these authoritarian measures, and this brought about a serious competition over the memory of these governments. On the one side, the supporters of the authoritarian regimes tried to reconcile themselves with the past by having society forget what happened, while, on the other side, social groups linked to the protection of human rights fought for truth, justice and the judicial prosecution of those responsible for exceptional measures and acts.

This section has two goals. First, to examine how Brazilian military officers argue in favor of the strategy of forgetting. Second, to show that recent Brazilian democratic governments have taken positive steps, in the form of policies aimed at recognizing the crimes committed by the Brazilian State during the military dictatorship. If we look at what is happening in most Latin American countries, it is easy to see that Brazil was more successful in its politics of revising the past.

Most Brazilian military leaders consider that remembering the violations of human rights, acts of torture and the “dirty war” does not help the country’s history. There is an almost unanimous opinion among them that “exceptional facts” and “excesses” did occur during the confrontation between the military and the left, armed or unarmed, but they also agree that it is not relevant to insist on these points. Much to the contrary, to insist on the recollection of such facts means moving backwards, looking into the past, not to the future.

The insistence on overlooking these facts, many times described as an act of “turning the pages of history”, was central to the definition of the political agreement that put an end to the military dictatorship (a transition commanded from above) and that remains a central tenet of Brazilian politics. Despite this, Brazil, among all Southern Cone countries,<sup>14</sup> is the one in which the policy of compensation for the families of the victims of political repression advanced the most.

The military dictatorships of the Southern Cone countries started to take roots in the 1950s and lasted until the 1980s. Paraguay went through the first and most durable dictatorial experiment (1954-1989), followed by Bolivia (1964-1982), Brazil (1964-1985), Uruguay (1973-1985), Chile (1973-1990) and Argentina (1976-1982). Although the effectiveness of violence does not depend on numbers, as Arendt (1970) wisely reminds us, the aftermath of these regimes is nothing less than terrifying. Besides the thousands of people who were imprisoned, there were about 1,000 dead in Paraguay, about 300 killed or missing in Bolivia, 213 dead and 152 missing in Brazil, about 310 dead or missing in Uruguay, about 2,300 in Chile, and between 10 to 30 thousand missing in Argentina. In the aftermath of the traumas caused by these facts, the move towards redemocratization of these countries was coupled with strong pleas for justice.<sup>15</sup>

Each country found its own way of reconciling with the past and all of them – except Paraguay and Bolivia – passed a law granting amnesty. It is relevant to recall that all such acts of amnesty, although with different colorings, were dictated by the military who were stepping down from power. This process became known as self-amnesty. In all countries there continued to exist demands for reforms in these laws, and the search for truth and justice became a common aspect of their post-dictatorship political processes. More recently, the international prosecution of two ex-dictators - Augusto Pinochet, from Chile, and Jorge Rafael Videla, from Argentina – introduced the novelty of extra-territorial

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14 We refer to the following countries: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia.

15 For a comparative analysis of the processes by which these countries decreed amnesty, see Catela, 2000. Information used here about people who were arrested or considered missing was taken from this article.

judicial processes. Apparently, this precedent may be able to expand and include dictators from these countries, and from other countries. Inside or outside their borders, we see that the pleas for justice remain strong in Southern Cone countries, while the forces linked to the *ancien regimes* insist that such facts should be forgotten.

This competition between remembering and forgetting leads us to the issue of which memory each society wants to (or can) build about itself. About this matter, Jacques Le Goff has stated that there are “the owners of memory and forgetting”, when he explains that collective memory can be understood as an instrument and a goal of power. According to him, “the act of forgetting and the silences about history reveal the mechanisms by which collective memory is manipulated” (Le Goff 1984).

The acts of political amnesty that resulted from the processes of transition towards democracy in some of the countries mentioned above are illustrative of this discussion between forgetting and remembering. Indeed, the word and the concept of amnesty have been interpreted in several ways, and there are those who believe that it is possible to erase the past. From the judicial point of view, amnesty is a legal act dictated by public authorities, “erasing” the criminal character of certain acts. As a consequence, the relevant crimes cease to exist and those who practiced them are no longer criminals. An important detail is that amnesty is something that cannot be refused. Those who receive amnesty cannot refuse it and neither can they demand a review.

In the field of politics, amnesty has been a convenient solution or tool for the State. When the conditions that caused punishments and excesses change, the State has been able to use the strategy of forgetting. The usual allegation is that societies victimized by political violence must heal themselves (Elias, 1997). In this sense, the concept of forgetting is joined by the concept of forgiveness. The State plays the role of using a political instrument to redeem balance and peace between social segments or social actors that antagonized each other.

Symptomatically, as we look at the etymology of the word amnesty, we find that in Greek it meant forgetting, and that in Latin it meant forgiveness. To forgive, however, is not the same as to forget. It does not erase the sequels of traumatic events, neither does it mean social amnesia. Much to the contrary, as societies thrive on their memories, forgiveness (a

liberating event) works also as an instrument that interferes in the future of memory.<sup>16</sup> Besides, those who receive amnesty many times have nothing to be forgiven for. They may have been the victims of violent acts of an authoritarian government that managed to convict them as criminals only because they said or thought something that did not please the powers that be.

However, the fact is that societies choose how to manage their dramas and traumas. It is legitimate to suppose that a society, because of a spur of the moment, strategic decision, may choose to throw a blanket of silence over its past, such as did Uruguay, when a national plebiscite decided, in 1989, to maintain the amnesty granted by the military. This amounted to a decision not to engage in a more detailed reexamination of victims and acts of persecution. It is also legitimate that a society chooses to exhaust the matter from the factual and legal points of view and to keep it on the political agenda for a long time, as a means to exorcise the ghost of arbitrary rule. This is what happened in Argentina and, to a large extent, in Brazil. Brazil, despite the fact that the military insisted on the virtues of forgetting, adopted over the last few years a strategy that is close to a conciliation with the past – it does not incriminate directly those responsible for crimes, but it keeps alive the flame of memory and acknowledges the perils of arbitrary rule.

Amnesty in Brazil was granted in 1979 and included people punished for political activities between 1961 and 1979. It was “broad, general and unrestricted”, meaning that winners and losers were equally protected. More specifically, the major goal was to guarantee that there would be no reprisals, that crimes committed during the dictatorship would not be prosecuted in courts – such as happened later in Argentina – and that the military personnel directly in charge of political repression, together with their commanders, would not be tried, under any circumstances.

This law was strongly influenced by the limitations of a political transition to democracy controlled from above. One of its goals was to insure legal protection for the military institutions responsible for the “dirty war”. It responded to the demands of the moderate political opposition and at the same time it created limitations to any pleas for expanded civil and political rights and to any attempts to seek justice through the judicial system.

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<sup>16</sup> About amnesty and forgiveness, see, for example, Ricouer, 1994.

Precisely because of this, it did not consider the situation of missing persons, most of them killed as a consequence of the repression of guerilla warfare in the Amazon region. This topic was extensively discussed until December 4, 1995, when the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration approved Law number 9140. This law created a Commission, linked to the Department of Justice, responsible for reviewing and making determinations about the situation of missing persons whose disappearance might be linked to participation, or alleged participation, in political activities deemed illegal by the military dictatorship. The law was valid for persons missing between 1961 and 1979, the same period covered by the 1979 amnesty law.

This issue of missing persons was the most delicate one for the military, as most of them had been killed while fighting the repression of the Armed Forces. For the military, what happened was an armed conflict in which those who were killed were simply enemies. It was alleged also that the bodies of the deceased had not been formally identified and buried because of the exceptionally adverse circumstances of the war in the tropical jungle. The deceased were considered to be enemies of the country and there was nothing to be corrected.

The topic was indeed sensitive, because any investigations would lead to military personnel being held responsible, an outcome that was unacceptable to the Armed Forces. The government found a way out: It would recognize that there were missing persons, but it would not recognize that any specific military government, institution or personnel was responsible for this. The responsibility would fall to the State. The Brazilian State would recognize that citizens had been killed as a consequence of political conflict and that their bodies had been hidden, and it was willing to clarify their legal situation and to give support to their families.

These were the circumstances under which the Commission on Persons Missing for Political Causes, composed by representatives of several social sectors and institutions, including the Armed Forces, was formed. It fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. The Commission convened between 1995 and 1998, examined 366 cases,

recognized 280 and denied 86. The value of individual monetary reparations varied between 100 to 150 thousand reais.<sup>17</sup>

The first practical result of the Commission's work occurred in January of 1996. It issued a death certificate for Rubens Paiva, an ex-legislator who had been arrested at home, in 1971, and "disappeared" ever since. During the ceremony of the issuance of this certificate, held in the presidential Planalto Palace, the Chief Military Aide to president Cardoso, general Alberto Cardoso, hugged the widow of Rubens Paiva. The scene was captured by cameras and published on the first page of the leading newspapers the next day. It was interpreted as a new attitude taken by the military in relation to the past – although some reserve officers voiced their criticism of the scene. General Cardoso thinks that the indemnification of the families of missing persons was the cornerstone of the real transition to a full democratic order in Brazil.

The most controversial decision emanating from the Commission was to recognize Carlos Lamarka, a military officer who deserted the Army to join the guerrilla, as missing for political reasons. Lamarka, in the words of the military, had "betrayed his superiors", because he used his standing as a young officer to smuggle arms belonging to the Brazilian Army to a leftist organization, having joined the group in order to personally command a guerrilla warfare front. The Commission decided that the State was responsible for his death, because he was killed by police forces after he had been captured.

This finding of the Commission was harshly criticized by several military organizations representing reserve officers. Active military officers, however, did not address the issue publicly, although most of those interviewed by us considered this decision to be disrespectful of the institution. However, the institution did not take an official stand and publicly accepted the decisions of the Commission, approved by the presidency.

This episode was, of course, an important landmark in the process of democratic consolidation in Brazil. By accepting this decision without a scratch in discipline, the military corporation signaled its acceptance of civilian rule, a basic tenet of military

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17 During this period, the value of the Brazilian currency "real" varied from one US dollar to 50 cents.

institutions in all stable democracies. More than this, though, even if it did not investigate individual responsibilities, the Brazilian State proved that it wished to reconcile itself with civil society by acknowledging acts of injustice committed in the past. Symbolically, the President himself received in his office several family members of missing persons, adding a public dimension to the acts of reconciliation. The federal government also proposed to extend until 1990 the period for filing new petitions by those who were victimized by terrorism or discretionary political behavior of State agents. The search for bodies and burial sites is still going on, and even military personnel have helped in these efforts, side by side with medical doctors, anthropologists and coroners who try to identify the remains that have been located.

Anyhow, groups who stand for human rights still consider the Brazilian government to display a weak stance on this matter, as it chose to pay reparations and not to request the forgiveness of the victims' families, nor to open judicial proceedings against those responsible for undue behavior. To a large extent, the pact of silence around the "dirty war" continues to exist.

One may think that the idea of forgetting such episodes appeals only to the officers who held command posts during the military regime or who attended military academies during the harshest years of the dictatorship. However, this is not true. More than a generational expression, those who are in favor of forgetting actually take an institutional stance. Thus, the idea that society must be generous and dismiss the memory of past maladies is shared even by military officers who had no involvement at all with the military dictatorship. As the institution was perceived to be threatened, the bulk of the officer corps chose to defend the institution.

In our oral history research projects, we divided our interviewees in two groups: those who held high-ranking positions in the repressive apparatus and in government during the dictatorship, and those who commanded the institution after 1985, when the democratic period called New Republic was born. This second group consisted of generals who were still very young in 1964 (year of the military coup) and who built their careers independently of the military groups that shared political power during the dictatorship. They were closer to being what has been called "professional soldiers", to use a term coined in the military sociology literature (Huntington, 1979).

However, the feeling that predominates among them is that forgetting is preferable to the building of a memory that factors in these traumatic episodes. Besides, they all feel exposed when an officer appointed to a public post is denounced as a torturer by human rights groups. Over the last 10 years the position of the federal government, in face of such accusations, has been to cancel these appointments.

The Brazilian State, therefore, has pursued an agenda of reconciling past and present, recognizing the existence of crimes and abuses committed by political authorities in relation to political opponents. This policy of reviewing arbitrary acts is still going. Congress is preparing to have a final vote about a law that extends the benefits of amnesty and financial indemnifications to all who suffered any type of political constraint between 1979 and 1988, when Brazil's current Constitution was issued.

### **New threats, new missions? - the future of the Armed Forces**

Given the serious problems derived from social and political violence and from the actions of armed groups located along the borders of some countries, some nations, particularly the US, have demanded that Latin American military institutions take on a more direct and active role in matters of internal security. It can be argued that the seriousness of these problems gives them the status of matters of national security, considering that in several countries organized crime has been operating as a parallel State, as a sovereign entity that competes with the State based on the rule of law.

Narco-trafficking, associated with insurgency, guerilla and terrorism, is a concrete threat to the democratic stability of some countries. Furthermore, in practice they obscure the limits between organized crime and political violence. These organizations represent a challenge to any police or military force in Latin America: they have financial autonomy, technological capacity and operate with the organizational framework of international networks.<sup>18</sup> That is precisely why many people argue that, given the seriousness of the situation in some

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<sup>18</sup> Ortiz (2001) presents an excellent analysis of the repercussions of these organizations, that he analyzes as non-state organizations endowed with a violent nature.



countries, Brazil included, it would be irrational not to employ a professional corps that has the training to deal with it.

The US have been emphatic in its requests for collaboration of national Armed Forces of Latin American countries in the campaign against Colombian guerilla warfare. Brazil, for example, has rejected this request by stating that the Armed Forces cannot engage themselves as ancillary forces to North American police institutions. Chile has stated the same position.<sup>19</sup>

As North American pressures grows, there are also increasing reservations about the US involvement in this campaign and its real goals. This could be an indirect way to keep North American soldiers trained and prepared to intervene in the continent. It could also be an equally indirect way of preserving the military presence of the US in the entire region.

The involvement of the military with narco-trafficking or the demands that they participate in related combat operations have raised the issue of the possibility of a new form of military activism in Latin America. Therefore, several analysts and governments have come out against this type of involvement, arguing that it will produce or reinforce the political engagement of the Armed Forces, making them more prone to interfere in domestic political matters. This unrest has led to a series of speculations about the return of the military to the political scene. Several press stories illustrate this concern. A relevant topic that shows up in the news is the increase in the numbers of generals in several Latin American countries, in the years after redemocratization. This happened in Venezuela, Peru, Mexico, for example – Chile was an exception in which the number of general actually decreased.<sup>20</sup> In the Brazilian case, there has been concern about the salaries and

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<sup>19</sup> About the participation of the Armed Forces in the fight against narco-trafficking, see “Narcotráfico y Seguridad em América Latina y el Caribe”, in *Paz e Seguridad em las Américas*, Informe Especial, n. 15, dezembro de 1997.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *Miami Herald*, February 10, 2002. Resdal - Red de Seguridad de América Latina – is initiating a project that will prepare a comparative picture of the duties and rights of the military in all Latin American countries, including their size and political rights.

the maintenance costs of military missions abroad.<sup>21</sup> This quantitative increase in the numbers of high-ranking officers is explained as a sign of weakness of civilian governments, who would feel forced to hand out special rewards so that the military will keep out of domestic affairs. It is explained also a show of force of the military in the face of civilian governments and it would be one among several reasons that have led analysts to doubt the subordination of the military to civilian rule in several countries.

The September 11, 2001 attacks in the US provided a new meaning to the topics of defense and security. There was an immediate and legitimate concern about protection, but on the other hand there emerged the issue that anti-terrorist fears could open the gates to new opportunities for the militarization of Latin American politics. This concern becomes more evident when we take into account the precarious intelligence services existent in most of these countries and the lack of technically prepared civilians to take on this role. In many cases, there is the risk of the continuity of military monopoly on intelligence activities, something that would give military institutions exceptionally strong resources to intervene in domestic affairs.

There are still other negative aspects stemming from North-American pressure in favor of anti-terrorist policies in the continent. This may reinforce the values of defense and security and injure the values of civil rights and democracy. It can also feed a strong feeling of military nationalism, with serious political consequences.

The current debate about the mission of the Armed Forces has focused on the following topics: the protection of national sovereignty; the state of preparedness for this protection; and the ability to deter threats. This last view is shared by most Latin American countries. It is understood that, on account of the emergence of regional agreements such as the Mercosur, that became more of a political reality than an economic one, there are new spaces open for understanding and measures based on mutual trust. Historical tensions in the region have been defused, particularly those between Brazil and Argentina. Therefore,

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, *Correio Braziliense*, February 8, 2002. The article compares the costs of these missions to those of graduate scholarships given to Brazilians who study abroad. According to the data presented, military missions cost Brazil seven times more than the funds spent in the training of Brazilian scientists out of the country.

there is no perspective of conventional military aggression in the form of border wars. The armies must be ready, trained, and technologically capacitated, in order to discourage any threat of intervention. Such dissuasion may work in two ways: as a show of force that inhibits enemy attacks, or as a sign that attacking a better prepared country will not happen without costs.

A distinct tradition in Latin America has been the participation of the military in the process of development, something that still happens in Ecuador, but is not encouraged in most countries inside the region.<sup>22</sup> However, there is growing support for the notion that the Armed Forces should act in cases of disasters such as earthquakes, floods, epidemics, hurricanes, etc. This type of action has been called humanitarian. In the same manner, UN peace missions appear as a legitimate activity to be stimulated.

Besides these options, there are several other activities suggested for the Armed Forces, all of them linked to internal security. Given their good standing among the general population, the Armed Forces are constantly cited as a solution for many problems involving security, development and social welfare. Maybe because of this the best thing to do may be not to think about the future of the Armed Forces in Latin America, but to understand their present duties, or what is actually happening right now.

There are several distinct realities and several paradoxical situations to be considered. At the same time that there are formal measures to strengthen democracy, from the constitutional and diplomatic points of view, the situation of public insecurity and the advance of organized crime suggest a more intensive use of the military and their installed capacity. While many people are concerned with the subordination of the military to democratic civilian power, there are constant demands to hand over more power and autonomy to the Armed Forces.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> About the Armed Forces of Ecuador, see Bustamante, 1999 and Gallegos, 1999 and 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Besides humanitarian assistance situations, in Brazil the Armed Forces, on several occasions, have been requested to act in several internal matters, especially in the city of Rio de Janeiro., In June of 1992, they were deeply involved in the security of the Rio-92

Military interventionism, once considered something that was about to be left behind, is now deemed by some to be a possibility, given police crises and the intensity of the violent actions perpetrated by narco-traffickers. The violent phase of the military dictatorships had barely been left behind and now we must deal with speculation about a possible downfall of civilian rule. The military of several countries – particularly those from Peru and Venezuela, who did not go through the experience of right-wing military dictatorships – have not yet adapted to the new times of political absence. For example, they display resentment when civilian power or the press demand a fuller disclosure of their actions and budget spending.

Our tradition carries the mark of authoritarianism and military intervention. In any circumstances, it would not be easy to discard these traits, and it seems harder to do so when the situation is one of social crisis and general dissatisfaction with governmental public policies. For this reason, I believe that in Latin America the major concern in relation to the future of the Armed Forces and to their possible new roles is tied to the following question: Is there effective subordination of the military to democratic civilian rule?

We are aware that the situation in each country is different and that there are no easy generalizations. But we also know that the reputation of the military is socially constructed. There would not exist a good reputation of the Armed Forces if they were not positively evaluated by their respective societies. Civilian-military relations are a two-way road. There is the way of the power projection that the military wish to build in relation to society, and then there is the way of the respect and autonomy that society offers to the military.

Under the risk inherent to fast conclusions, it seems that Latin American military institutions resent the evaluations made about their experiences in power. Although they retain social prestige, they lack political legitimacy in the eyes of academia and informed public opinion, creating higher risks for any sort of impulsive action by the men in uniform. Furthermore, the agreements signed under the aegis of OAS and regional blocks include

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environmental summit, and in August and October of 1994 and January and April of 1995 they occupied several slum neighborhoods in search of arms.

clauses defending the continuity of democratic regimes, and this has inhibited the political initiatives of both civilian and military adventurers. Venezuela just provided a paradigmatic example of this.

Refraining from the direct involvement in politics is still a project under construction, but even so it is necessary to build a military culture that is less corporatist. In other words, returning to the barracks is not enough. It is necessary to accept that the guarantees and rights offered to the men and women in the military cannot reach above or beyond what the State offers to the majority of the people. The military must understand that their choice of a career generates different obligations – in comparison to civilian life – but that this not entail any sort of privilege – in terms of retirement, or of access to special courts, etc.

The future depends on this unfinished and on-going process. If we do not learn to weigh properly the demands and criticism made to the military institutions, there is a risk that the future will be a rerun to the past. Worse than that, the future may be grimmer than the past, because, if the social prestige of the military is strong, their political legitimacy is almost null. In this circumstance, they would be the weak agents of a government with exceptionally strong powers.

In the midst of all this, the Brazilian military believe that military interference in politics is characteristic of undeveloped countries. Such interference would occupy empty spaces generated by the inability of civil society to maintain a stable political arrangement. The Brazilian military think that military professionalization is a product of the development of each country and that, therefore, putting a distance between themselves and internal politics is a symptom of the political maturity attained by each country. In general, they accept the current definition of the Armed Forces as a health insurance plan: you pay dearly for it, but you pray you never have to use it.

## **Conclusions**

There are still other topics that are notorious in Western societies and that could be summoned to further explore the present and the future of the Armed Forces. However, there is much resistance to them in Latin America. Issues such as gender and sexual preference have already become a part of the military agenda in several countries. Despite the changes entailed by the presence of women in the Armed Forces, military leaders in

general continue to associate the national defense capacity mostly to the male population. In any sense, the incorporation of women is an evidence that the Armed Forces in Brazil and other Latin American countries have gone with the process of changing social values in relation to the professions.

In the Brazilian case, we see that the Armed Forces have displayed a significant capacity to adapt to democracy, in opposition to its recent past of political hegemony and autonomy.

We stand behind the proposition that Brazil, in the context of Latin America, is the country that currently deals best with the military question. The military have returned to the barracks and the State engaged in the difficult task of reviewing crimes of the past without the Armed Forces feeling publicly targeted. This text has also pointed to an unstable context in Latin America, in which democratic guarantees are still doubtful and in which the military resist the directives of civilian governments, that on their turn have shown themselves incapable of providing acceptable solutions to the myriad of problems that plague the region. From all that has been discussed herein, we can also conclude that, in general, a military intervention, in any country, would have such high internal and external costs that it has become a remote possibility. Even if such an intervention occurred, everything points towards the trend of the government stemming from such an action not gaining international recognition, leading to further instability.

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