



The Militarization and Beyond

The deployment of military forces in public security crises is an increasing trend all across the Americas. During the Cold War, the practice of mobilizing the Armed Forces in Latin American and Caribbean countries was deeply rooted into the anti-communist, anti-guerrilla and repressive law enforcement against any kind of political opposition. However, the end of the East-West confrontation and the rise of formal democracies throughout the continent have raised the hypothesis that this form of military or militarized intervention in societal dynamics is connected to even older modes of political, economic and social arrangements in the Americas' post-colonial societies.

According to authors such as Desmond Arias and Goldstein (2010), the promises and hopes from the democratization processes in the region, during the 1980s and early 1990s, were not fulfilled by the peace agreements, the transitional justice experiences, the general amnesty policies, or the installation of institutions inspired by the US and Western European models of liberal democracy and regional cooperation. The expectation that from authoritarian regimes would blossom polyarchies –in the sense described by Robert Dahl's model (1971)– was frustrated by the continuity of a vast array of forms of violence both related to state agents and non-state actors. Desmond

Arias and Goldstein consider that “political transition theories” developed by scholars such as Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (2010) have overestimated the capacity of intrinsically unequal, racist and authoritarian societies to transit toward liberal states and liberal forms of societal organizations.

For Desmond Arias and Goldstein, “violence here emerges as a key element in Latin American democracy itself, as the basis on which it was founded and a critical component allowing its maintenance” (2010: 13). They follow arguing that “violence is implicated both in the institutional structure of the regimes and in the way these regimes are inserted into the international system” (*idem*). The authors’ original premise is that in Latin America and the Caribbean it is crucial to have a broad concept of violence in order to understand how societies and political regimes are organized and how they actually work. By applying these analytical lenses it would be possible, for example, to formulate hypotheses to understand why complex processes of “democratization”, such as the Brazilian and the Mexican, were relatively well-succeeded in creating institutions and legal frameworks inspired by the developed liberal democracies, while they remained countries with entrenched social inequality, institutionalized corruption, concentration of political and economic power within traditional elites, alarming levels of violence as a regular course of action for their security forces in relation particularly with the poor, African-descendants or Original Peoples, not to mention encompassing the most lethal cities in the world (Rodrigues, Kalil, Augusto 2018).

When the issue is the militarization of public security, the question is not, as well as, one of simple response. While part of the specialized literature (Zaverucha 2000; Soares 2019) understand the “militarization” of public security as the actual deployment of the armed forces in domestic anti-crime or counter-narcotics missions, replacing or gaining control over police forces, there are other perspectives that consider the concept of “militarization” in a broader fashion (Graham 2010; Balko 2013; Neocleous 2014; Rodrigues & Labate 2019). From this angle, the “militarization” of a given society goes beyond the process of “policialization of the military” by including the “militarization of the police” (the use of militarized tactics, equipment, and doctrine by policemen and policewomen) and the spread of “practices of control”

previously developed for the military and now available for civilian use, such as video surveillance systems, satellite monitoring, GPS surveillance, armored cars, bullet proof jackets, devices for nocturnal observations, codes in mobile devices to allow the entrance or exit of places, residential condos built as security compounds etc. Besides that, a broad notion of “militarization” includes the proliferation of armed actors, both legal and illegal, competing for the control of urban and rural areas and, for instance, putting on the edge the Weberian definition of the State as the political entity that monopolizes the legitimate use of coercive power.

Finally, the “militarization” could be taken as a social and individual practice; it is to say, a way of living in which the military discipline, aesthetics, use of weapons, hostile attitude toward the “otherness”, and an idyllic notion of order are worshiped by several social groups all along the social fabric. An audience such as that is prone to accept –and even to demand– from the political institutions and/or illegal sources of actual political and coercive power the increasing of violence against minorities, populations living under certain conditions of deprivation, African-descendants or Original Peoples, women, young men and women engaged into illegal economies, LGBTQ+ communities etc. Hence, the securitization of “organized crime” eclipses the securitization of some social groups, some cultural practices and certain colors of skin (Buzan, Wæver, De Wilde 1998).

Nowadays, all across the continent, it is possible to identify different kinds of political regimes (from a self-declared leftist position to openly alt-right standpoints) that have been pushing forward policies of militarization, while their populations are partially mesmerized by the idea that “mano dura” policies would defeat criminal forces, even if the cost would be the systematic assassination of “undesired people” by police forces, military troops, or death squads (Rodrigues & Rodríguez-Pinzón 2020). Since we believe that it is not possible to think reasonable and pragmatic policies toward more peaceful societies in Latin America and the Caribbean without a critical approach to “militarization” in the continent, we proposed this Special Issue to *Pensamiento Propio*, a journal that is internationally known by its compromise to include dissident voices and to amplify subjected problems to a broader arena of scholars, practitioners and decision

makers in the field of peacebuilding and the empowerment of civil society organizations.

Therefore, we are glad to present this Special Issue composed by a section with original articles followed by a section of comments on the security problematique in the Americas. Fortunately, we received a good amount of proposals which allowed us to cover a substantial number of angles, cases, and theoretical and methodological approaches to the “militarization” in the continent. This Special Issue is, of course, a partial panorama of a deep and multifaceted set of questions and problems that are not the same across the region. Yet, we do believe that we can offer a fine overview of the themes and challenges concerning the “state of violence”, to use a Frédéric Gros’ (2010) attempt to define the rare situation faced by societies that exist in a condition that is not the one of warfare, civil wars, nor peace. We want to contribute to the debate on the massive *securitization of the existence* in Latin America and Caribbean in order to provoke debate and to touch hearts, minds and souls of scholars, practitioners and decision makers.

The Articles

The dossier on militarization in the Americas opens with Cairo’s & Ríos’s important historical and conceptual contribution on the changes of notions and practices toward geopolitics, security and defense in the continent from the 1960s to present time (“Critical Geopolitics of Security and Defense in Latin America, 1960-2020”). That article is complemented by Gieras’ analysis on the use of drones and new military (or military originated) technologies in surveillance policies across Latin America (“Drones: Latin America under surveillance – the impact of the new technologies on conflict resolution”).

The following group of articles focuses on various angles of the South American problematique. Constanza Boettger presents a relevant overview of the armed forces’ presence in tasks of public security in Colombia, considering its historical process and its impacts to the Colombian social fabric (“Colombian Armed Conflict: the institutionalization of the armed forces presence in public security: a retrospective analysis and the fractures to the social. Right after, Badrán’s and Niño’s

“National Security in Colombia: a critical approach to the missional contradictions” deepens the attention toward Colombia, focusing on the paradoxes of the complex interaction between Colombia’s Army and Colombia’s National Police due to their mission’s juxtapositions and the traditional military and also the non-traditional features of both forces.

Calatrava Piñerúa’s article is a contribution on the presence and relevance of the armed forces in the Venezuelan political structures, an issue which is, according to the author, crucial to understand the country’s current political and social crisis and the quality of the civilian-military relations in Venezuela (“A political military regression: an approach to the Venezuelan case”). Finishing the section on South America, Gois & De Sá offer a rich study on the participation of the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio during the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and its relationship with the Brazilian military leadership of the mentioned UN mission in order to scrutinize a possible “Brazilian way of pacification and securitization” that would be tested in Haiti and later applied into Brazil’s domestic public security programs.

The last two articles look to Central, North America and the Caribbean. First, Verdes-Montenegro Escáñez and Rodríguez-Pinzón present an accurate and up-to-date analysis on the Salvadorian President Nayib Bukele and his organic connection with the country’s armed forces which threatens the bases of a fragile democracy that has been erected since the early 1990s upon the rubbish of a deadly civil war and pressured by the current existence of the “Maras” and other gangs related to local conflict heritage and the transnational flows of illegal goods, specially South America’s cocaine toward the US (“Bukele and the Armed Forces: a relationship that erodes the Salvadorian democracy counter-weights”). Finally, Zepeda, Rosen and Rodrigues explore the connections among militarization, the “cartels” activities and the ongoing process of democratization in Mexico, highlighting the symbiotic relations established by *narcos*, political parties, local police forces and the judiciary which have produced a network of interdependences and interests that impact the levels of illicit activities in the country with huge domestic impacts and influence toward Central America and the Caribbean.

Comments and Acknowledgments

The section “Comments” presents three sharp and provocative essays on the role of the armed forces during the massive popular demonstrations in Ecuador (2005) and in Bolivia (2019) – by María Belén Garrido and Theo Roncken –, on the current crisis of the regional security governance and its possible consequences – by Pablo Celi De La Torre and Wolf Grabendorff – and on the National Defense in Argentina (2015-2019): A view from the strategic culture”– by Paola Di Chiaro. This group of brief reflections shed light on countries such as Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador, as well as the general system of security governance in Latin America – which complements and fortify the previous analyses delivered by the articles.

Finally, we the Special Issue Guest Editors would like to thank Dr. Andrés Serbin, *Pensamiento Propio*'s Chief Editor, the Associated Editors MSc. Andrei Serbin Pont and Carolina Pedroso, and the Editor's Assistant Constanza Boettger for welcoming our proposal for a *dossier* on the topic of militarization in the Americas. We hope that the conjunct of reflections, critics, analyses, and suggestions we gathered here can push forward to more inclusive and less lethal policies on public security in our continent.

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