

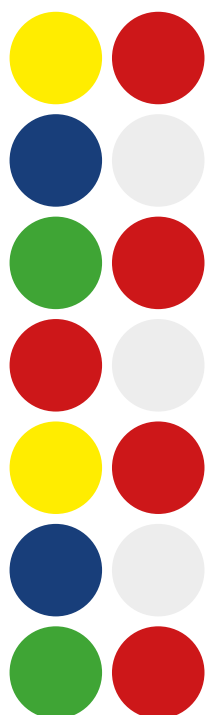


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FACTORS AND TRENDS AFFECTING CIVIL- MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE REGION SINCE THE CRISIS GENERATED BY THE PANDEMIC IN 2020. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Factors and trends affecting civil-military relations in the region since the crisis generated by the pandemic in 2020. Conclusions and recommendations.

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Introduction



The Security Policy Network was created in 2015 at the initiative of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru's Institute of International Studies (IDEI) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS). It is currently made up of specialists and professors from the PUCP, as well as academics from the University of Brasilia, the University of Chile, the Bolivian Catholic University, the Pontifical Javeriana University of Bogotá and the Institute of Higher National Studies of Ecuador.

In its eight years of existence, the Network has developed a series of valuable research, publications and annual public events that have been very well received by academics and specialists, but also by researchers and the general public. Specifically, the Network has worked on topics such as the new role of the Armed Forces in the region, illicit drug trafficking as a threat to security, the possibility of forming a security community among our countries, neighborly cooperation in response to regional threats, the challenges to security posed by the new international order, extra-regional threats to security, and the security implications of China's presence in the region.

On this occasion, the Network has devoted the present volume—the eighth in the series*— to the analysis of civil-military relations in the South American region. To this end, the group of academics that make up the Network considered it pertinent to assume a single work scheme, which would then facilitate the comparing of their different national realities.

The studies are thus aimed at answering the following question: What are the factors and trends affecting political / civil-military relations in Bolivia / Brazil / Chile / Colombia / Ecuador / Peru since the global and regional crisis generated by COVID-19 in 2020?

* Book citation:

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To achieve this purpose, each study addresses the following specific issues: effects on democracy (the military's participation in attributing domestic order control functions, the denaturalizing of their mission and calls to fulfill an arbitration role), corruption problems, weakening of political (civilian) control and of institutionality and professionalism, absence of multilateral regional coordination mechanisms and emergence of anti-Armed Forces movements or positions. The studies end with conclusions and recommendations on how to address the problems detected.

After analyzing the contents of the studies comprising the aforementioned collective work, the following general conclusions were reached regarding the main issues of concern:

1. Regarding the military's participation in politics: In most of the countries analyzed (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru), members of the Armed Forces are constitutionally non-deliberative and are prevented from exercising political power, participating directly in their country's political life, exercising the right to protest or taking part in any activity of a political nature. In these countries, the participation of Armed Forces members in politics takes place when they are retired, either in ministerial or popularly elected positions, which in no way threatens the democracy prevailing in these countries.

Nonetheless, there is a worrying trend in some governments in the region (as in the case of the Masista governments in Bolivia or Bolsonaro in Brazil) to establish an alliance with the military establishment in order to ensure their permanence in power or at least achieve long-term political stability. In exchange for this, the Armed Forces are granted budget increases, military companies or corporations are revitalized or new ones are created, their members are incorporated into political positions of high responsibility or representation abroad and members loyal to the regime are rewarded with promotions and other benefits, clearly distorting the institutional role and professionalization of the military career.

A gray area is the activism of some Armed Forces members in social networks, which, depending on the case, can be perceived as the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or as the military's undue participation in political issues.

2. Regarding the attribution of functions that go beyond their institutional mission: se aprecia una tendencia en la mayoría de Estados analizados de emplear a las FF.AA. en labores distintas a las que corresponden a su misión convencional.

En este sentido, se suele atribuir a las FF.AA. el control de las protestas sociales, el control de la población para el cumplimiento de las cuarentenas impuestas durante la pandemia del COVID-19 o ante desmanes producidos frente a desastres naturales, el control de olas migratorias, como también se les atribuye competencias para enfrentar a bandas criminales, luchar contra el contrabando, la tala o la minería ilegal, mantener el control de las cárceles, asumir la seguridad del presidente de la república, además de otras importantes labores sociales (referentes a la implementación o ejecución de una serie de programas de ayuda social) o de apoyo al desarrollo económico y expansión de la infraestructura.

Esto se aprecia, con variantes y en diferentes grados, en los casos de Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador y el Perú.



3. Regarding calls for the Armed Forces to play an arbitration role in society, this has manifested itself in different ways and at different political junctures in several of the region's countries.

Thus, for example, the Armed Forces in Bolivia recently resisted controlling the population's protests against the Evo Morales government, instead advising the president in office to step down as head of State; in Chile, some sectors of the population called on the Armed Forces to bring order to the population's looting and rioting, which led to the convening of a constituent assembly; in Peru, during the regime of President Martin Vizcarra, the Armed Forces tacitly supported the dissolution of the country's Congress, while currently, several sectors of the population are calling on the Armed Forces to put an end to the regime in office, given the impossibility of the Congress to impeach the president on grounds of "moral incapacity." Finally, in Brazil, sectors of the population are also contemplating a military coup to ensure the permanence of the incumbent regime and prevent the return of the left to power.

This arbitral role, which some sectors of society seek to attribute to the Armed Forces in times of crisis, seriously damages the democratic institutionality of these countries, but also harms the Armed Forces by politicizing them and placing them at the center of the national political debate.

4. Regarding political control of the Armed Forces: three tendencies can be observed. The first is the total Armed Forces autonomy and weak political control by the Ministry of Defense and the competent congressional committees in exchange for their support of and loyalty to the regime (Bolivia). The second is semi-autonomy (Chile), with civilian control of the Armed Forces at the same time as autonomy reigns in certain areas (military culture, promotions, etc.). Finally, the third is full civilian political control of the Armed Forces (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru), where political power has hierarchical superiority, heads strategic planning and military operations and decides the military budget and promotions, with congressional commissions controlling and overseeing them, among other manifestations of balance and control.

Several of these countries exhibit a regrettable absence of specialists on security and defense issues, disconnection and disinterest by both political actors and the majority of the population in the sector's problems and a lack of civilian careers and weak permanence of civilians in command of the Defense Ministries, all of which would allow greater and better civilian control over the Armed Forces.

5. Regarding corruption cases, unfortunately, the Armed Forces of virtually none of the countries analyzed have been exempt from this problem, with accusations of embezzlement and illicit enrichment, among other crimes, leveled at both individuals and institutions.

In the case of Bolivia, some such crimes were not judicially prosecuted; on the contrary, the implicated officers were rewarded with high-ranking executive or diplomatic posts. In some cases (Peru) there are low levels of compliance with policy transparency, while in others (Colombia) some bad elements have been found to be linked to illegal organizations.



6. Regarding institutionalization and professionalization of the Armed Forces: notable progress has been made in almost all the countries analyzed in establishing an adequate structure for the Defense Ministries, strategic planning and white papers on national defense; the creation of mechanisms for specialization, training and professionalization of the three Armed Forces branches; as well as the implementation of policies to achieve interoperability of the Armed Forces and, consequently, a joint acquisitions and purchases policy. The three forces in general are also being strengthened with respect to doctrine, education, organization and training, including training on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as participation in peacekeeping operations.

In some countries, however, events such as undue government interference in the promotion process, breaking the principle of meritocracy to favor those close to the political regime in power, have threatened this institutionality (Peru). In others (Brazil), it has not yet been possible to ensure that resources are destined mainly to military training rather than to support a high administrative bureaucracy, establish a hierarchical superiority of the head of the Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff over the other three general commanders in order to ensure unity of command in case of armed conflict, as well as the interoperability and doctrinal unity of the three:

7. Regarding participation in regional multilateral coordination mechanisms: although the Armed Forces of the countries analyzed participate actively in various bilateral and multilateral defense coordination mechanisms, including some of a hemispheric nature—such as the Inter-American Defense Board or the American Air Forces Cooperation System—as well as in joint international options, there is unfortunately no defense coordination mechanism at the South American regional level following the disappearance of UNASUR and the South American Defense Council. .

8. Regarding the emergence of anti-Armed Forces movements or positions: these do not exist in most countries; on the contrary, the Armed Forces generally enjoy high prestige and consideration from the population and public opinion. The critical voices tend to be circumstantial and are usually raised in response to corruption scandals or excesses committed by their intervention in tasks involving control of the domestic order.

Only in the case of Colombia, local anti-military groups emerged in Medellín and Bogotá in the context of the last electoral contest, but there have also been many criticisms of compulsory military service and enormous defense sector expenditures in the context of the armed conflict.

From all of the above, a set of recommendations can be formulated to strengthen the institutional framework and democratization of the defense sector in the six countries analyzed. In this regard:

- a) It is essential to avoid the politicization of the Armed Forces, as this would undermine the foundations of a democratic system as well as the institutionality and prestige of the Armed Forces themselves.



- b) It is of paramount importance to evaluate the roles that the Armed Forces should play, not involving them in tasks that are outside of their professional competence or preparation, since this not only generates violations of the populations' human rights with the consequent discrediting of the forces, but also generates distortions in their institutional mission.
- c) It is necessary to continue strengthening the Defense Ministries and ensure their civilian leadership.
- d) It is a priority to encourage a civilian career in the Defense Ministries and a corps of professionals with expertise in security and defense issues, so that they may occupy political decision-making positions in the sector.
- e) It is important to strengthen further the institutional framework of the Armed Forces and the professionalization of the military career to achieve full interoperability.
- f) It is a priority to continue training the forces to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the values and principles of any representative democracy.
- g) To preserve the Armed Forces' morale, it is essential to severely repress any act of corruption by any of its members, as this damages the prestige, image and trust placed in them by the population.
- h) It is essential that the Armed Forces continue to participate in joint military exercises and peacekeeping operations, as this allows them to gain experience in the field, improve their training and consolidate their professionalization.
- i) It is essential to educate the population about the tasks that the Armed Forces should perform, in particular their non-deliberative and non-arbitration role in situations of political upheaval or crisis.
- j) Finally, the Armed Forces must maintain cooperative links with other sectors of the State and the population itself, in order to achieve a closer understanding of the sector and its institutional competencies.