

Between Autonomy and Independence The Democratisation of the Armed Forces in Latin America in the Twenty-First Century¹

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the new forms of militarism as well as the position and the role of the armed forces in Latin American political systems in the twenty-first century. The first part analyses two selected forms of military participation in politics: the participation of former servicemembers in presidential elections and their performance as presidents, and the militarisation of political parties. The second part of the article focuses on the issue of contemporary civil-military relations in Latin America, discussing the problems associated with the establishment of democratic control over the armed forces, the reform of the Ministries of Defense and the redefinition of the functions of the army.

Keywords: militarism, politics, civil-military relations, democratisation, Latin America

¹ This text is an updated version of the publication M. Stelmach, *Military and Politics in Latin America at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Century*, *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne*, No. 61 (1), 2019, expanded by adding the results of the research on contemporary civil-military relations in Latin America, especially on the democratic control over the armed forces, the militarization of the Ministries of Defense and the redefinition of the functions of the army.

Introduction

The article focuses on new forms of militarism as well as the position and the role of the armed forces in the political systems functioning in Latin American countries in the twenty-first century. Since the 1990s, the processes of democratisation and establishment of democratic control over the armed forces in Latin America have been accompanied by steady advancement of militarisation in politics. The armed forces as an institution are still an important, albeit informal, role of centre of power or, at least, a powerful and influential pressure group, while high officers, especially retired ones, actively participate in the social and political life of their countries, playing the role of leaders and rulers.

Modern militarism in Latin America is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Involvement of service members in politics takes diverse forms and varies in the degree of intensity. Contrary to the political activities of the armed forces from the 1950s on, currently, they assume more personal (“politicians in uniforms”) than institutional character (“political forces”). As an institution aware of possibilities limited if only for international conditions, the army tries to avoid carrying out coups d’état and exercising direct power. It has not, however, completely abandoned interventionism in the form of a coup or given up its role as a political arbitrator, which was confirmed by events in Honduras in 2009. Nevertheless, modern militarism should be seen primarily as a form of state power organisation, in which armed forces, their officers or retired service members who are still related to the milieu, indirectly and informally exert decisive influence over state policy, *de facto* dominating civil institutions, despite legal regulations establishing civil authority over the armed forces.

Due to a broad scope and complexity of the issues, the article analyses two selected forms of military participation in politics, which in my opinion deserve special attention. Firstly, it focuses on the problem of former service members who, having broken the constitutional order inspiring and/or carrying out coups or exercising dictatorial power and having violated human rights during the period of dictatorships and internal armed conflicts, participate in presidential elections and serve a presidential function; and secondly, on the question of militarisation of political parties, which demonstrates the involvement of former servicemen in the creation of new political parties representing milieu interests of former servicemen joining political parties. Other forms and manifestations of contemporary militarism in Latin America, which are excluded from considerations contained in the article, include, among others, putting pressure on those in power by veteran associations, acts of disobedience, consisting i.a. in a refusal to execute orders of manifestation pacification issued by presidents or participation in public and political debates. The second part of the article concentrates on the problem of contemporary civil-military relations in Latin America. The army is constantly strengthening its

position and expanding autonomy, which in some regions (mainly Andean and Central American countries) is erroneously identified with independence. The article analyses the limits of democratic control over the army, the issues of militarisation of Ministries of Defence and the problem of extending prerogatives and competence of the armed forces to include tasks in the sphere of internal security and socio-economic development, which to my mind, in conditions of poor, and in some countries only formal, control over the army and dysfunctionality of constitutional bodies, poses a serious threat to resurgent and unconsolidated democracies.

Literature overview

Civilian-military relations in Latin America have been the subject of scientific research for decades, mainly abroad. Depending on the historical period, the researchers' attention was focused on other aspects of the relationship between the civil authorities and the armed forces. In the first period, from the turn of the 1950s and 1960s to the end of the 1980s, they focused on analysing the conditions, the course and the consequences of military coups and military rule, as well as the development and the functioning of "political troops" (i.e. S. Huntington, S. Finer, B. Lovemann, D. Krujic, K. Koonings, A. Rouquie). In the second period, at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, scientists focused on the transition of political systems from military dictatorships to democracy (i.e. D. Pion-Berlin, D. Krujic, K. Koonings). In the third period, in the decade of the 1990s, the analysis focused mainly on the problems of establishing democratic control over the army, punishing military personnel for crimes committed during the period of internal wars and dictatorships, and redefining the functions of the army (i.e. R. Diamint, R. Kohn., A. Stepan, R. Manaut, A. Sotomayor Velásquez). Contemporary research has concentrated on the issue of the position and the role of the military in Latin American democracies in the 21st century (i.e. D. Pion Berlin, J. Zaverucha, A. Valenzuela, F. Montecinos). In Poland, the issues of civil-military relations and the role of the army in the selected state have been researched by, among others, R. Stemplowski, R. Mrozwicz and W. Rómmel, A. J. Kaczyńska, M. Lisińska and P. Trefler.

This article fills a gap in Polish scientific research, showing in a cross-sectional way a wide spectrum of new forms of militarism and the difficulties in democratisation of the armed forces and demilitarisation of political systems in Latin America.

Military interventionism in the twenty-first century Latin America

In 1990–2018, 20 presidents lost power before the end of the term. Nineteen of them relinquished the office in accordance with constitutional procedures, through impeachment, under political pressure, and sometimes mass social protests. It should be emphasised that in Latin America the army has not taken actions in defence of presidents, neither has it interrupted any impeachment procedure for over 15 years. The armed forces did not protect against the impeachment procedure of, e.g. the president of Brazil, Fernando Collor de Mello (1992). They did not intercede in defence of civilian presidents of Bolivia – Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada (2003) and Carlos Mesa (2005), Peru – A. Fujimori (2000) and Pedro Kuczynski (March 2018), Argentina – Fernando de la Rúa (2001), Brazil – Dilma Rousseff (2016); and more importantly, stood up to protect their colleague, Gen. Otto Pérez Molina, who in September 2015 relinquished his office due to accusations of participating in a criminal group, passive bribery and tax fraud (“La Linea”).

It does not mean, however, that the armed forces only passively watched political events. At the turn of the twenty and the twenty-first centuries, the spirit of interventionism revived in Latin America several times. The first wave of protests and military coups took place in the first period of transformation, in the 1980s and 1990s. Service members undertook action against those in power in Argentina and Chile in 1990, 1993 and 1995, showing their dissatisfaction with the reforms in a defence sector and attempts to limit the autonomy of the armed forces and to hold the officers responsible for human rights violations during wars and dictatorships responsible. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, service members expressed their dissatisfaction by organising protests and coups. The greatest upheavals took place in Bolivia (2003), Ecuador (2000 and 2005), Venezuela (1992 and 2002) and Peru (2000 and 2005) (Kruijt 100–1). Military demonstrations should be perceived as political and military actions, which could have led to the overthrow of legitimate rule. However, the only successful, yet short-lived, coup was organised in Venezuela in 2002. Until 2009, when President Manuel Zelaya was deprived of power, the attacks in Latin America had not virtually happened. In Honduras, the army, following orders of the Supreme Court, entered the presidential palace, forcing the president to sign resignation and leave the country (Cáliz 41–2). Without going into conditions and course of the political crisis, nor supporting either parties’ opinions or faults, it should be stated that the army, which, admittedly, gave power to the president of the Congress (in accordance with the constitution), again appeared in politics as a key actor and instrument for resolving political conflicts. An impeachment procedure, provided for in the constitution, was replaced with the politics of force – also subject to the decision of civilian politicians.

New aspects of militarism in Latin America

I share the view of David Pion-Berlin (*Unexpected Civil-Military Relations...*, Pion-Berlin and Martinez 44–6) that the lack of or sporadic military coups (as Latin American practice shows) do not mean that civilian control is exercised over the armed forces, all the more withdrawal of servicemen from politics. The armed forces have learned how to use institutional and political autonomy guaranteed to them during the transition period. Getting around within their constitutional and statutory powers in a new way, they influence politics at various levels.

Presidents in uniforms in Latin America

In the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, presidential elections in many Latin American countries gave power to former dictators or officers of the armed forces, organisers of unsuccessful coups in the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, who had left their uniforms and pursued political career (Montecinos 110). Many countries of the region experienced a revival of the myth of *caudillo* – a strong, charismatic leader originating from military circles or, at least, connected with them to a large extent. In 1997, the Bolivian people expressed their electoral will to bring Hugo Banzer, a former dictator in 1971–1978, back to power. In 1998, a presidential election in Venezuela was won by a candidate of the Fifth Republic Movement (MRV), Hugo Chavez Frias, a leader of the coup of 1992, whose aim was to overthrow the President Carlos Andrés Pérez. In 2002, Lucio Gutierrez, (Partido Sociedad Patriótica), who in January 2000 led an insurgency organised by indigenous peoples and lower rank servicemen, resulting in overthrowing a constitutional president, Jamil Mahuad, was elected president of Ecuador. The 2006 presidential election in Peru was almost won by Lt. Col. Ollanta Humala (lost to Alan Garcia), who at the end of 2000, together with his brother, Antauro, and the Ethnocacerista movement (a pressure group, a movement directed at those disappointed by the rule of the Fujimorist veterans of the internal conflict) organised an armed action consisting in arbitrary leaving the military base in opposition to the third term of office of A. Fujimori lasting since July 2000. Attempts were made to link him to the next military action taken by his brother in 2005 against President Alejandro Toledo, but no sufficient evidence was found. Interestingly, in August 2006 Ollanta Humala was accused of violations of human rights, including the use of torture and murder during military service in fights against Shining Path members. He denied the charges and consistently referring to those excluded, but significantly softening his rhetoric, he won the 2011 elections, standing at the head of his own political formation: Partido Nacionalista del Peru (Pietraszczyk-Sękowska 80–7, 96–107). In 2010, electoral success was achieved in Suriname by Col. Desiré

Delano Bouterse (a leader of the National Democratic Party), who had led a coup d'état twice: in 1980 and 1990 and exercised dictatorial power in 1980–1988 and 1990–1991, being additionally accused of close cooperation with the cartel of Medellín. In 2011, the highest state office in Guatemala was taken over by the retired general, Otto Perez Molina, (in the second attempt, in 2005 lost to Alvaro Colom) and his party, Partido Patriota, strongly associated with the military milieu, which, during the campaign, had promised “strong-arm rule,” peace and security (Stelmach 244–50) Gen. Otto Perez Molina was the first retired serviceman who became the president of Guatemala since the formal end of dictatorship in 1986.

What is also worth mentioning is unfulfilled ambitions and unrealised plans of retired servicemen to gain power in their countries. Despite a constitutional ban on taking part in the elections for those involved in coups d'état, Gen. Lino Oviedo aspired to take over the highest office in Paraguay. Although he was not allowed to stand for the 1998 election, in 2008 he became a candidate recommended by Partido Colorado. He gained 22% of the votes, losing to Fernando Lugo and Blanca Ovelar (Kruijt 102; Kruijt and Koonings 8). In Guatemala, although the constitution expressly prohibited (and still prohibits) those who have launched a coup from running for the presidency, after the greatest political crisis since the civil war (massive and violent protests inspired by Montt) and fears of a possible coup d'état in 2003, the Constitutional Court accepted the candidacy of Ríos Montt (the first attempt to run was prohibited in 1996), responsible for organising and carrying out massacres on the Indian population during the civil war.² In January 2011, an intention to taking part in the presidential election was announced by a daughter of the former dictator, Zura Ríos Sosa, who is currently a deputy from Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (Guatemalan Republican Front, GRF). It should be emphasised that despite the failure in the presidential election, Montt remained a significant figure on the Guatemalan political scene. Being an (informal) leader of GRF and, since 2013, Partido Republicano Institucional (Institutional Republican Party, IRP), in the years 200–2004 he was a chairman of the Congress (4 terms). The General *de facto* took over the most important part of responsibilities of the civil President Portillo, exerting his influence on military appointments and coordinating of the work of the presidential cabinet (Kruijt 100; Booth, Wade and Walker 188; Stelmach 236).

Servicemembers' entry into the political scene in Latin America was favoured by several factors. Firstly, a crisis of institutions representing society, including mainly traditional political parties. Chavez and Gutierrez have taken over the electorate of, respectively, Acción Democrática (Democratic Action, DA) and Izquierda Democrática (Democratic Left, DL), which, proclaiming neo-liberal slogans

² 2003 presidential election was won by Óscar José Rafael Berger Perdomo, winning 34% of votes in the first round and 54% votes in the second one, defeating Alvaro Colom. Ríos Montt did not enter the second round, winning 20% of votes (Booth, Wade and Walker 188).

departed from their electorate (Montecinos 113). In 2006, Humala took over a part of the electorate of Partido Aprista Peruano (American Revolutionary People's Alliance, APRA), which in this election did not put forward a candidate and, additionally, moved to the right side of the political scene (Pietraszczyk-Sękowska 80–7).

Another factor was the lack of charismatic civil leaders. Right-wing parties have been forced to look for candidates in the barracks. Finding no better solution, the Ecuadorian right-wing supported Lucio Gutierrez in the 2008 election, forgetting his embarrassing involvement in attacks, his leftist views and numerous attacks on the oligarchy. Hoping to defeat Evo Morales, the Bolivian right-wing also decided to support a serviceman, namely a retired captain, Manfred Reyes Villa, a former prefect of Cochabamba and once a candidate in the presidential election (Montecinos 113–14).³ It needs to be mentioned that high popularity of servicemembers resulted, among others, from the presence of the armed forces in the furthest corners of the country. In the provinces, they are often the only representation of the state, and, conducting development missions, they contribute to the growing popularity of particular politicians, who eagerly use soldiers to conduct field campaigns (the case of Peru during Alberto Fujimori's presidency and in the 2011 campaign, as well as Guatemala, but above all Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador) (Norden; Pion-Berlin and Martinez 1–12, 44–76).

Thirdly, what turned out to be an important factor favouring the emergence of the military on the political scene was a security crisis and the need for strong leadership: a president with "strong-arm" rule, ready to take radical steps for the benefit of the citizens. Since the 1990s, we have seen a steady increase in crime and criminal violence in Latin America. Central America with an average of 25.9 homicides per 100,000 population, South America with 24.2 homicides per 100,000 populations and the Caribbean with an average of 15.1 are the sub-regions with the highest homicide rate in the world. In 12 Latin American countries, the number of homicides exceeds the threshold of 10 homicides per 100,000 populations. In the 4 most dangerous countries in the region, the number of homicides is higher than 40 homicides per 100,000 populations (Venezuela, El Salvador, Jamaica, Honduras). In the group of relatively safe countries with homicides below the global average (6.1 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants), there are only three countries (Argentina, Ecuador and Chile) (UNODC 13, 16–17; Dalby, Carranza). Under the conditions of permanent threats from organised crime groups, gangs and common criminals, security issues are identified by citizens as the main challenge for governments and have been a leading topic of election campaigns in Latin America and the Caribbean for years. Starting from 2006, presidential candidates in many countries (including Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica) have

³ Morales outstripped Reyes by 36% (Montecinos 2010: 114).

been calling for radical action against criminals. Former military personnel joined the competition for the highest office in the state more and more often, and for a large part of citizens they were a guarantee of the effective restoration of public security.

Military and political parties

Political parties established in recent years by servicemen play significant roles on national political scenes. Although the government of Lucio Gutiérrez failed in 2005 under the influence of social protests, the party founded by him, Sociedad Patriótica (Patriotic Society, PS), has remained the second force on the Ecuadorian political scene. In addition, it is worth noting here that the presence of servicemembers in Ecuadorian politics is not limited only to Gutiérrez. Other military men, such as Paco Moncayo (an alcade of Quito since 2000, a deputy in the National Assembly in 2009–2013), Gen. Jose Gallardo (Movimiento Unión Cívica Independiente candidate in the 1996 presidential election and later Minister of Defence) and Col. Luis Fernandez, remain influential politicians (Montecinos 110–11). In Paraguay, Lino Oviedo created the third political force: Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Eticos (National Union of Ethical Citizens, NUEC).

Central America also experiences a phenomenon of militarisation of political parties. It is particularly strongly present in Guatemala. Guatemalan Republican Front, the party established by Gen. Rios Montt, was one of the key political parties in the country until 2013. Additionally, in 2002 Gen. Otto Perez Molina entered the political scene with his Partido (Patriota Patriotic Party, PP). Currently, the leading force – almost 24% of votes in the 2015 election (Eliás 2015) – is nationalist Frente de Convergencia Nacional (National Convergence Front, NCF), founded in 2004 by a group of war veterans demanding rehabilitation and recognition of merits in the conflict, after unjust (in their opinion) accusations of violation of human rights advanced by those whose family members had been murdered and missing. A candidate supported by the party, Jimmy Morales, won the 2015 presidential election with 68.5% support (Martinez). The core of the party is formed by servicemembers, who led the anti-subversive campaign during the military dictatorship and after its formal end in 1996. Among the highest party ranks there are i.a. Lt.-Col. Edgar Justino Ovalle Maldonado, Gen. Luis Miranda Trejo, Gen. Cesar Cabrera Mejia (head of the G-2 intelligence during the rule of Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo (an adviser to the Minister of Health in Perez Molina's office), Cpt. Gregorio Augusto Lopez Gonzales (a member of the National Executive Committee of the FCN), Gen. Quilo Ayuso (currently a secretary of the party), who hold important leading positions. The names of the first three former officers appear within the context of mass murder at Coban (a recently discovered mass grave containing

316 bodies with traces of torture). According to the documents of the National Security Archives (NSA), the above-mentioned generals headed intelligence services or individual intelligence sections in Coban between 1982 and 1983. Heavy charges of human rights violation during the civil war have also been made against Gen. Quilo Ayuso. Apart from them, a list of candidates from the Chimiltenango department included Lt. Col. Alsider Antonio Arias Rodriguez, an owner of the “Satelites y Informatica SA” company, which provides security services to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Herber Armado Melgar Padilla, who in 2007 ran for a mandate in Quiche on behalf of FRG and for some time advised to President Coloma and Sandra Tores in UNE-2. The report submitted to the National Electoral Court shows that, in fact, the party is financed in 37% by the military (Villatoro). Interestingly, one week before the election 18 party members, former servicemen, were arrested and made immediately available to tribunals due to serious human rights violations. It was a deputy position and immunity that protected a leading politician, one of the party founders, Col. Edgar Ovalle Maldonado, from being arrested. The prosecutor’s office initiated a procedure for depriving him of immunity.

According to Felipe Montecinos the participation of retired servicemen in political parties differs from country to country (112). It means that not in all political formations, participation of servicemen is significant, both at leadership level and among rank-and-file members. In Partido Nacionalista del Peru (Nationalist Party of Peru, NPP) and Paraguayan NUC only the leader and a few high-level members have a military background. In Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (United Socialist Party of Venezuela, PSUV), GRF and Guatemalan PP there are many more servicemen, but they do not represent the majority either. In the Ecuadorian PS almost the entire leadership is made up of service members but their participation is negligible at the level of rank-and-file members. By far, the largest group of military members (until the time of the arrests) was within the Guatemalan NCF.

Regardless of the number of retired servicemen within the ranks of individual parties, all above-mentioned political formations are characterised by an army-like organisation. They differ from other political parties due to a strong hierarchical (vertical) organisational structure and chieftainship. The Ethnocacrista movement in Peru is organised on the basis of national commands. During elections, PSUV is divided into “battalions, squadrons, units and electoral combat units.” Full power rests in the hands of a party leader who runs the party *de facto* in an authoritarian manner. Additionally, election campaigns frequently include references to the fight in (e.g. during the re-election of Chavez in 2006). It seems obvious that people raised in the spirit of discipline from an early age (theoretically, the academy may be joined at the age of 17, but the army opens secondary schools) try to transfer this kind of organisation to their political formations and impose discipline in the first place. Militarised political parties in Latin America

can be divided into several trends: left-wing and anti-liberal (Hugo Chavez), left-ist nationalist (Ollanta Humala), right-wing populism (GRF, NCF). Regardless of whether they are located in the middle or on the left or right side of the political scene, they are always nationalistic. They guard the integrity of the state and the nation. Hence, strong opposition against the attempted separation of Crescent in Bolivia, Guayaquil in Ecuador, Zulia in Venezuela or autonomy of indigenous peoples in Guatemala (Montecinos 112).

Democratic control over the army

Civil-military relations relate to three actors. The first one is military institutions, whose culture, mentality and organisation method brings them closer or away from intervention. The second actor is a political class, which assumes or does not assume responsibility for the leadership of the state. The third one is society, which strongly supports democracy or is reluctant in the face of military intervention. According to Marcela Donadio (*Las relaciones civico-militares...*), effective civil control over the armed forces in Latin America is conditioned by three factors. Firstly, a type of professional mentality of soldiers. Values and codes accompanying a soldier from the moment of joining the army shape their thinking and create concepts related to the role and function of the army in the society and in the state, which, in turn, translates into interventional tendency. Identification with the nation and homeland, deeply ingrained in Latin American servicemen's minds, prompts intervention in the name of defending their sovereignty, integrity and protection of endangered national interests. Secondly, it depends on the attitude of citizens and their visions and concepts of the role and mission of the army in society. It should be remembered that military attacks in Latin America gained, and in the democratic period still enjoy, support of a large part of citizens – 53% of Latin Americans express their support for democracy), but, at the same time, over 60% of region inhabitants support coups in a crisis situation (Latinobarometro 10). It seems that a change of an attitude – social acceptance of an idea of democracy, support for democratic changes and strong opposition against militarism – may stop or at least seriously limit military interventions. When the armed forces are publicly assigned an alternative role to civilian power and the political class, the possibility of control is severely limited. Thirdly, taking over responsibility for conducting security and defence policy by civilians. Apart from necessary knowledge, qualifications and skills, elites also need courage and political will to introduce radical reforms, which frequently prejudice military interests.

Richard Kohn (29) points to elements necessary for the establishment of democratic control over the armed forces. A necessary condition is the existence of a stable democratic regime. Democracies in Latin America are mostly weak and

unstable. Key state institutions do not cope with basic problems: poverty and exclusion, intensifying social conflicts, crime and violence. The researcher draws attention to the need for developing a vision and strategy of organisation of relations between civil authorities, society and the armed forces in the conditions of democracy and peace. Meanwhile, countries of the region still lack long-term policy, consistently and consequently implemented against the armed forces. Political authorities in the countries of the region do not pursue any previously prepared strategy, but rather act *ad hoc*, responding to specific moves of the army and its members. Another necessary factor is political will and determination of the ruling class in making changes. Meanwhile, political elites are characterised by the lack of courage and political will to implement necessary reforms. According to Arevalo de Leon (122), a conservative attitude is characteristic of political classes in states with authoritarian past, where militarism is still deeply rooted. Fearing a reaction and a possible intervention of the armed forces, the elites avoid making decisions or introducing changes that could in any way prejudice fundamental interests and undermine a position of the army. Another reason is strong informal connections between a political class and military establishment. The last but by no means least important factor indicated by Richard Kohn is the consent of the armed forces to withdraw from the political life of the state. The return of servicemen to the barracks after decades of civil wars and dictatorships, and ceding power to civilians did not, actually, mean resignation of the armed forces from participation in the political life and consent to changing their current status and limiting functions of the army. It should be remembered that processes of transition in Latin American countries did not result from actions of the political class and citizens, nor did they occur due to weakness of authoritarian regimes (except Argentina), but they rather resulted from decisions of the armed forces. Civil governments established in the first period after the end of military operations failed to change a position and role and limit the influence of the armed forces. On the contrary, the servicemen strengthened their economic and political position and secured their interests as an autonomous actor of the political system. Using its good organisation and the weakness of the civil institutions, the army took control over the processes of democratisation, which enabled it to effectively block all initiatives aimed at limiting its privileges and prerogatives, and consequently dominating civil-military relations.

Civil leadership in Ministries of Defence

To speak about subordination of the armed forces to the executive, at least three conditions must be met. Firstly, Ministries of Defence are authorised to design and coordinate security and defence policies, establish organisational criteria for the armed

forces and plan financial resource, and must be able to act as a mediator in relations between the armed forces and the society as well as a coordinator regulating cooperation of the armed forces with other ministries within the scope established by the constitution and lower-level legal acts. Secondly, a defence sector must be *de jure* and *de facto* coordinated by a member of the government: a civilian nominated by the President of the republic. Thirdly, among high-ranking public officials, there must be specialists able to cooperate with the army and to develop, manage and supervise national defence and security policy (Manaut, Sotomayor 408).

Reorganisation and demilitarisation of Ministries of Defence was one of the priorities of reforms in a defence sector. It was rightly considered that strengthening civil control requires institutionalisation of relations between the armed forces and politicians. New Ministries of Defence were intended to be the core of the reorganised system, therefore creating them from scratch or reforming the existing ones was primarily aimed at strengthening minister's position, granting him a number of crucial competences within the scope of formulating defence and security policy, including development of military plans, strategies and doctrines, but also organisation and providing the armed forces with necessary supplies.

In Latin America, there are greatly diversified models of organisation of Ministries of Defence, ranging from those which are specialised institutions of the executive power and control the armed forces that recognise the Ministry's responsibility for the shape of defence policy and supremacy of the executive; through those which subordinate to its orders; to models with a high degree of autonomy of the armed forces, which are only responsible to the president as their commander-in-chief. A characteristic feature of the countries of the region is the institution of *jefe militar*, who is assigned various roles, depending on the accepted model. In the first variant, which results from the historical process of autonomy of the armed forces and traditional domination of the ground forces, the commander-in-chief of the army has ministerial powers and contacts the head of state directly, bypassing a Minister of Defence. The second variant includes a position of general commander of the armed forces, who occupies a higher position in the structures than a commander of particular types of armed forces, yet he acts as a coordinator, not the actual commander-in-chief. The first variant refers to a model of management of the armed forces by the Ministry of Defence which may be found in Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay. In Colombia, following an identical model, the Ministry of National Defence serves only administrative functions. In Brazil, in turn, the Ministry, which, in the light of the legal act, exercises control over the armed forces, is only an advisory body of the President, who is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Such inaccuracies and sometimes even obvious contradictions hinder effective supervision over the military sector and make effective control over the army dependent on the quality of leadership. Examples of the latter solution, in which the head of the armed forces closely cooperates with the President

and is dependent on him, are Bolivia and Ecuador. In both these countries, there is a strong tradition of controlling the army by the President, which was strengthened during the rule of the left-wing populists. What Ministers do is only following presidential orders. When assessing the effectiveness of exercising democratic control over the army, it should be stated that the Ministries of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Honduras and Nicaragua perform their tasks most effectively. An excessively high degree of independence and autonomy of the armed forces as well as poor control are observed in the case of Ministries in Guatemala, El Salvador, Paraguay and Ecuador (Pion Berlin, Martinez 45–9).

Governments of Latin American countries have serious problems with demilitarisation of Ministries of National Defence, which, contrary to specialists' recommendations, remain strongly militarised in most states. It mainly results from the fact that currently, servicemen are primarily the only specialists in the area of defence and security, while civilians have still little influence on the shape of defence policy. Great credit in this respect is earned by servicemen themselves, who treat policy of security and defence solely as a sphere of influence of current and former members of the armed forces and effectively block the development of civil scientific centres, which could and should educate independent specialists. However, it should also be noted that civilians do not show particular interest in the subject of defence. As a result, civil personnel are present in the structures of ministries, but almost exclusively at the lowest and medium level and have no decision-making powers. The highest positions, including the position of Ministers of Defence, are often occupied by either former military personnel or active generals or colonels. Interestingly, the legislation of all states in Latin America allows a service member to hold the position of a minister of defence (and others). Significantly, in four countries, namely Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, the Minister must be a soldier. Without a legal ban, politicians are free to choose their ministers. Sometimes they prefer to choose a serviceman for the post of a Minister of Defence. Considering the competence criterion, the knowledge of military and security issues, it is easier to nominate an active general or a retired one, who knows problems and the environment, and often enjoys the respect of other servicemen, than a civilian-layman without an established position among members of the armed forces. At the end of this section of deliberations, it is worth noting that demilitarisation of Ministries of Defence progressed most considerably in 2003, when 88% of all Ministers of Defence in Latin America were civilians. Since then, we have observed the process of remilitarisation of the Ministries. According to the latest data (2016), 53% of the Ministers of Defence in Latin America are civilians, and 47% – servicemembers, 35% of whom are still active ones, and 12% – retired generals. While remaining critical in the assessment of a demilitarisation process, it should be noted that 20 years ago, only 38% of ministers of defence were civilians (Pion Berlin, Martinez 57).

Insufficient parliamentary control

Parliamentary control is also insufficient. There are very serious discrepancies between theory and practice. In theory, parliamentary control covers such areas as the declaration of the state of war and peace, approving the budget and expenses of the armed forces, allocation of troops, creation of laws, nomination and promotion of officers (Sotomayor 6). In practice, parliamentary control is very weak, which results from several reasons: firstly, the lack of professionalism of parliamentary staff; secondly, a key role of former servicemen in the security and defence committees (Chile, Brazil, Mexico), who are more interested in securing interests of the army than imposing and exercising control. In addition, parliaments do not have adequate competence to monitor the armed forces' policies and budgets. In Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela, congressional approval is not required when nominating officers.

Functions of the armed forces in Latin America

In recent years, the increase in the position and role of the armed forces is manifested through the development of a list of their responsibilities. Currently, the armed forces (mainly ground forces) under the constitution (Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Suriname) or laws, or decrees/ordinances (Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guyana, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Venezuela) perform development tasks related to the construction of infrastructure, development of education and literacy of society, environmental protection (in the whole region, but mainly in countries governed by the “new left-wing”), poverty eradication (Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador), providing aid to victims of natural disasters (Central America, Caribbean, Chile) and providing medical care (Uruguay) (Velazquez; Kruijt 105). This raises serious concerns: on the one hand about professional preparation of military personnel to perform these tasks and manage funds professionally, and on the other – about arousing political ambitions among servicemen, who want to use their popularity to build capital and political position (the case of servicemen in Venezuela during the presidency of Hugo Chavez). However, taking the risk seems necessary due to the weakness of state institutions. It should be remembered that in the majority of Latin American countries only the armed forces have the infrastructure to carry out long-term projects.

Much more controversy is caused by entrusting the armed forces with political and police functions. In connection with the dynamic growth of criminal and organised crime in the 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the army in Latin American countries is again entrusted with responsibility for public safety. Civil authorities are under public pressure, demanding quick results

and spectacular actions. Politicians willingly refer to populist solutions, hoping for improvement of pre-election ratings (so-called penal populism). Another thing is that the armed forces themselves feel responsible for this area and willingly take responsibility for citizens' security. Nowadays, the armed forces in Latin America are used to settle political disputes (Ecuador) as well as, under decrees (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico) or under the constitution and laws to pacify demonstrations (Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Guatemala), guarantee public security and fight against crime (states of Central America, Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela), or to regularly fight against drug trade (Mexico, Colombia) (Kruijt 105–106). It is worth noting that by introducing such solutions, civil authorities limit their own power and allow the army to strengthen its position and expand prerogatives.

Conclusion

The experiences of the last two, and in some countries even three decades of transformation, seem to confirm that reform programs in a defence sector and in the armed forces themselves, willingly proclaimed by politicians and medially publicised, as well as the actions taken to completely exclude servicemembers from politics, have turned out to be unfeasible in post-authoritarian realities, in the conditions of transition controlled by the army, existence of non-constitutional centres of power in the form of influential interest groups, not only economic, but also originating from veteran communities (war veterans associations) and patron-ridden connections developed between various interest groups in the years of dictatorships and wars, interested only in maintaining the political and social *status quo*. The changes are seriously hampered by growing social problems: poverty, social exclusion as well as a sharp increase in (common and organised) crime and accompanying violence with total helplessness of weak and ineffective state institutions responsible for security.

The crisis of democracy, expressed by a significant decrease in public trust toward the state, its institutions and representatives, growing frustration and disappointment due to the economic situation, as well as the sense of threat from criminal groups and paramilitary formation (death squads), which is present in the society, have created favourable conditions, firstly, for holding a strong position by the army and expansion of its sphere of influence, and, secondly, for return to power, this time through democratic elections. Numerous sections of society which are disappointed with the neo-liberal rule of civilian politicians, who have not contributed to the improvement of the economic situation, nor have managed to stop the growing wave of violence, have turned to “politicians in uniforms,” proposing in some countries revolutionary societal, economic and political changes

(Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru), and in others (Guatemala) – “strong-arm” rule in difficult and dangerous times. Citizens of Latin American countries have, actually, agreed to limit democracy (introduction of people’s democracy) in the name of social inclusion, reducing social inequalities and increasing security.

The militarisation of politics in Latin America used to be justified with the instability of democracy, a historically established role of the army, instability and inefficiency of political institutions, a crisis of representation and public trust in the state and its institutions. Actually, the more developed political culture, expressed by a high level of legitimacy of power, the existence of compromise between transferring and taking over the power, a high level of public trust, the efficiency of public institutions, a low level of corruption and existence of civil society, the smaller the chances of military intervention. In countries where democracy enjoys more significant support (Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Panama), service members are almost absent from politics, while in countries where support for democracy is weaker (Peru, Paraguay, Guatemala, Honduras), the participation of servicemen in politics is significant. Additionally, engagement of servicemen in politics is undoubtedly correlated with social support for a coup d’état. The higher the social acceptance for extra-constitutional actions of the armed forces, which is very high in Latin America, the greater the presence of servicemen in politics. Increasing position and role of the armed forces is possible due to insufficient institutional democratic control over the armed forces, and on the other hand – extending the scope of the army’s competence to include development tasks, but mainly those related to security.

Summing up the deliberations regarding civil-military relations in Latin America, I am inclined to formulate the following conclusions. First of all, the majority of servicemen have accepted electoral democracy as “the only game in the city” (Stepan and Linz), in which elections are the only way to acquire and legitimise power. Secondly, servicemen are currently striving after strengthening their position at democratic governments rather than after overthrowing them. Thirdly, the armed forces have conditionally accepted civil power and democracy, while securing themselves considerable autonomy that ultimately prevents the consolidation of weak and young Latin American democracies. Admittedly, the era of military rule and military coups has ended, but it does not mean the end of militarism and military intervention in political and social affairs in Latin America.

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