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# The Political Influence of the Latin American Military

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Dirk Kruijt



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# The Political Influence of the Latin American Military

## Abstract

Latin America has been and maybe still is the continent of political soldiers and military politicians. In this essay I follow the military's professional evolution, its involvement in society and politics, and the dual engagement in external *and* internal security. Since colonial times the Latin American armies were and are in charge of confronting external threats and internal enemies. The paradoxical duality of military professionalism and political 'calling' is a recurrent theme during the last 65 years. I make a distinction of political armies of the Right and the Left. In both cases a kind of 'military mystique' prevails, but its content is different. In both cases the military justify their involvement in politics as a 'calling' based on their vanguard role in politics and society. The two characteristics of dual tasks (internal and internal security) and dual pathways (military professionalism and political involvement) are a revolving theme in this paper. The substance of this contribution is divided in four sections (1) the basic characteristics; (2) political armies of the Right and the Left; (3) the military in democratic Latin America; and (4) new security agendas and 'unconventional' counterinsurgency. In the conclusions I reflect on these striking particularities of the Latin American military ethos.

**Keywords:** military in politics, political armies of the Right and the Left, military mystique, new security agendas, popularity of military

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

During most of the two centuries of independency, the military in Latin America have been important and every so often decisive political actors. Statistically speaking, an officer's career is the most convenient way to the presidency of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. Military – and sometimes civilian – dictators alternated with constitutional presidents, elected by popular vote.

To illustrate this by one example I mention the case of Peru. Four of the commanding generals and marshals of the South American Liberation Armies (José de San Martín, Antonio José de Sucre, Simón Bolívar and Andrés de Santa Cruz) were invested with presidential power in this country between 1821 and 1827. Of the seventy-seven Peruvian presidents until the present, fifty-one were officers: eight marshals, thirty-four generals, six colonels and three lieutenant colonels. Only twenty-six times a member of the Peruvian armed forces managed to become president by staging a coup; the other twenty-five presidents with army background were elected by constitutional means.

This publication is about the 'longue durée', the continuity and evolution of the military during five centuries. In this paper I will discuss the role of the military in colonial times and in the nineteenth century. However, the period most examined will be the second half of the twentieth century and the first seventeen years after 2000. More specifically I will illustrate the military's professional evolution, its involvement in society and politics, and the dual engagement in external *and* internal security. Contrary to European and North American armed forces, the Latin American military have a long tradition of involvement in national defence against external threats but also of continuous role extension to tasks that are in fact the realm of the national police. One can even argue that during its functioning after the independence wars, the military have always liberally interpreted its core missions: sometimes as engaged in conventional warfare against other countries, more times in frontier disputes, and probably even more in internal warfare, counterinsurgency campaigns against real and perceived adversaries, armed or supposedly armed. In that sense, the Latin American military has demonstrated its proclivity to act as the guardian of the nation, as protector of the state against *all* its threats and *all* its enemies.

Latin America has been the continent of political soldiers and military politicians: as a stabilising force, as a disinterested arbiter, as custodian of the constitution, as guardian of national development. This inclination of intervention in domestic politics is what Kees Koonings and I in another publication characterised as 'political armies'.<sup>2</sup> During most decades of the previous century the true significance of the Latin American armed forces was its political nature. They emerged as such during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the period between the 1930s to the 1950s. The professionalisation of the armed forces (see below in the first section) did not result in the making of a non-political military (thus uniformed civil servants engaged in national defence) but rather in the perfection of engagement in national politics. During the Cold War, military juntas

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<sup>1</sup> In a previous version this paper was presented as a keynote lecture at the Conference of the International Sociological Association (ISA), Research Committee on Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution (RC01), Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, 24 – 27 September 2016. I also thank the staff and librarians of the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA, University of Amsterdam) where I wrote the original text between July and September 2016. On 19 June 2017 I presented a new version at a lecture at the CEDLA. This is the final version after comments and revision (1 August 2017). I make use of ideas and texts of Koonings and Kruijt (2002a, 2002b, 2015), Kruijt (1994, 2008, 2011, 2016, 2017), and Kruijt and Koonings (2013). Kees Koonings read a much larger first draft of this manuscript and I am very grateful for his critical comments and suggestions. I thank Helena Carreiras, Celso Castro, Barbara Hogenboom, Christien Klaufus and Arie Ouweneel for their critical suggestions as well.

<sup>2</sup> Koonings and Kruijt (2002b).

(commanders of the army, navy and air force<sup>3</sup>) were the common heads of state and government in most countries in the region. The paradoxical duality of military professionalism and political 'calling' has been a recurrent theme during the last 65 years.

In this contribution I will make a distinction of political armies of the Right and the Left. In both cases a kind of 'military mystique' prevails, but its content is different. Political armies of the Right start generally as heavy-handed authoritarian regimes (dictatorships or civil-military governments, 'dictaduras') supporting elite and middle class interests and repressing 'enemies'. But political armies can also gyrate to the Left (reformist military governments with popular support, 'dictablandas') while implementing reformist political projects intended to favour the poor and excluded. In both cases the military justify their involvement in politics as a 'calling' based on their vanguard role in politics and society, their 'destiny' as leading institute of the nation in times of crisis, their ingrained patriotism and their 'sacred mission' to guide the nation to their desired destiny. The Rightist version was based on a conservative ideology of 'national security' and 'defence of western values', justifying the overthrow of 'weak' or 'incompetent' governments too lenient to 'communism'. The Leftist variant was mostly based on the 'revolutionary military mystique' that stipulates the undividable unity between armed forces and people within the same nation, justifying nationalisations, taming of the 'oligarchy' and defence of the underprivileged. When the large period of military governments came to its end in the late 1980s, the military concern for the fate of nation only diminished, became more latent, but it never disappeared, as the large subsection about the Venezuelan military demonstrates.

The two characteristics of dual tasks (internal and external security) and dual pathways (military professionalism and political involvement) are a revolving theme in this paper. In the conclusions I will again reflect on these striking particularities of the Latin American military ethos. The substance of this contribution is divided in four sections: the basic characteristics; political armies of the Right and the Left; the military in democratic Latin America; and new security agendas and 'unconventional' counterinsurgency.

I adjoin an extensive bibliography. Even with the field experience of writing several studies about the Peruvian, the Central American and the Cuban military and political situation in times of war and peace, I was obliged to update my knowledge of the entire region. The CEDLA library where I prepared this large essay was a magnificent place to easily compare relevant studies about the subject. It is one of the few libraries where a researcher is permitted to enter the book storages and to compare all relevant publications per country before using them. This essay is aimed at a general public and I thought it beneficial to present the literature that I consider the most appropriate per country and issue.

## 1. Basic Characteristics

This section is a descriptive portrait of the Latin American military. It involves six subsections : the strong presence of the army in comparison with the navy and the air force and its relative trimness compared with its North American, European and Asian counterparts; the relative absence of interstate wars; the historical pattern of engagement with internal enemies; the long European influence in the professionalization of the armed forces in the period before the Second World War; and the dominant position of the United States with respect to training and equipment in the second half of the last century, a dominance that persists until the present.

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<sup>3</sup> And in the case of Chile the Carabineros, the militarised police force.

## 1. 1. Small armies

With its 610 million inhabitants, the armed forces of Latin America are comparatively small. During the entire twentieth century (and even to the present) the armies and navies have remained modest in comparison with these of the European Great Powers of the time. The Latin American states never created armed forces of the scale and magnitude of the present day American, Chinese, Russian, Indian or even Vietnamese armed forces. They have never had the most sophisticated weaponry. Nor have there been enormous battles involving massive armies. In Central America and some South American countries, the 'armed forces' are in fact only the army, with small detachments for naval and airborne operations.

After the Wars of Liberation in the 1810s and 1820s there were many small frontier conflicts. But the number of combatants involved, and military and civilian victims, are not comparable to the deployments of the millions of soldiers and the millions of victims during the European and the Asian wars of the last century.<sup>4</sup> However, during times of civil wars army leaders commanded enormous contingents of peasant armies (during the Mexican Revolution) and indigenous paramilitary forces (during the Guatemalan and Peruvian counterinsurgency campaigns).

## 1.2. Few inter-state wars

A second characteristic is the low frequency of large inter-state wars in the region. The conquest of Latin America and the Caribbean was a military-religious mission, endorsed by the Iberian monarchs and ratified by a papal edict about future frontiers.<sup>5</sup> The expeditions were headed by commanders of private armies under charter of Spain and Portugal. In less than one hundred years after the initial conquests, the pattern of colonial frontiers was established. The only region in dispute was the South American heartland: the Portuguese moved westwards, the Spanish eastwards. The once important papal treaty was continuously adapted as a consequence of territorial disputes between Spain and Portugal in Europe.

In the nineteenth century only three substantial frontier shifts took place. In the 1830s and 1840s Mexico lost 55 per cent of its original territory due to enforced secession (of Texas) and wars with the United States.<sup>6</sup> Mexico did better when a French army invaded the country in 1861. Napoleon III had the plan for a conquest: to establish a vassal empire under Austrian Archduke Maximilian. The accompanying Spanish army and the smaller British detachment nearly immediately withdrew, but the French sent huge reinforcements. Initially the French invasion force of 35,000 was successful, but combined Mexican guerrilla- and regular military campaigns eventually forced the French into defence and finally, six years later, led to Mexico's reconquering of the country's complete territory.<sup>7</sup>

The second substantial frontier change was the result of the war of the Triple Alliance of Paraguay against the combined forces of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay in the 1860s.<sup>8</sup> The third frontier

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<sup>4</sup> For statistical data about battle deaths and the death toll of the population in nineteenth and twentieth century Latin America, see Centeno (1998, 2002: 33-47). However, the numbers of displaced persons in countries like Colombia, plagued by 'internal armed conflicts' during decades are astonishingly high.

<sup>5</sup> The Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494.

<sup>6</sup> Nearly five million km<sup>2</sup> of Mexico's extended northern region. The territorial extension of the present European Union covers less, only 4,425,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Fehrenbach (1995: 423ff.).

<sup>8</sup> For details, see the three volume study of Whigham (2013) and Doratioto (2004a, 2004b). Initially the Paraguayan army invaded the southern Brazilian and the northern Argentinean provinces. But then the tide changed. Paraguay was no match for Argentina and Brazil. The leading armies were provided by Brazil; the emperor raised an army of 200,000 soldiers (of which 56,000 were 'Volunteers of the Fatherland', 62,000 guardsmen and 12,000 slaves). Eventually Brazil invaded Paraguay; the last military campaign was the battle of Cerro Corá where 4,500 Brazilian soldiers demolished the last Paraguayan detachment of 400 combatants, soldiers, women and children. Paraguayan casualties were about



change took place after the Pacific War between Chile and the combined forces of Bolivia and Peru in the 1880s.<sup>9</sup> Chile won the war and expanded its territory northwards. The territories of Bolivia and Paraguay were reduced with 50 per cent.

In terms of inter-state wars the twentieth century was largely peaceful<sup>10</sup>; only boundary disputes occurred with frequency.<sup>11</sup> Precisely the two most affected losers of the wars in the nineteenth century, Bolivia and Paraguay, waged war over control of the supposedly oil-rich Chaco region in the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> Paraguay conquered two thirds of the Chaco territory.

### 1.3. Internal enemies

The third characteristic of the Latin American military is the fact that its armed forces were (and at present are) in charge of combating both internal *and* external enemies. This is a clearly established historical pattern. During the three centuries of the colonial regime, army leaders (and bishops) played a crucial role in shaping societies and politics.<sup>13</sup> In the Portuguese captaincies-general as well in the Spanish vice-kingdoms, the first military organisations were militias formed by landlords and their subordinated tenants. The Iberian kingdoms also sent small military and naval contingents; the officers' corps remained in the hands of peninsular-born officers. They were engaged in three complementary tasks: Firstly, fighting and controlling the native indigenous population; secondly, defence against French, British and Dutch buccaneers; and thirdly, the frontier skirmishes, between rivalling Spanish and the Portuguese colonisers.

But the principal military engagement was campaigning against 'wild' and rebellious indigenous leaders who regularly assaulted colonial villages or who in the second half of the eighteenth century tried to re-establish indigenous empires.<sup>14</sup> From São Paulo, bandeiras, private armed expeditions in search of indigenous workers and precious metals, explored the Brazilian Hinterland. In the late eighteenth century Peruvian Quechua rebel Tupac Amaru II and Bolivian Aymara rebel Tupac Katari fought against colonial rule and routed the Spanish military during years. After independence, the armed forces of Argentina and Chile fought against their 'wild' indigenous citizens. All those counterinsurgency campaigns contributed to a long-standing tradition of the armed forces to be engaged with the internal rather than the external enemy.

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200,000; Brazil lost 50,000 soldiers, Argentina 30,000 and Uruguay 3,000. Brazil occupied Paraguay during several years and annexed parts of its territory, as did Argentina. According to the Paraguayan post-war census of 1871, its population was reduced from 400,000 to 160,000, of whom only 28,000 were adult males.

<sup>9</sup> See Farcau (2000) and López Urrutia (2003).

<sup>10</sup> In 1932 and 1933 Colombia and Peru went at war about the Leticia region in the Amazon Hinterland. During a couple of weeks in 1941, Ecuador and Peru were engaged in a war at the Amazon border; the border question was again a *casus belli* in 1981 and 1995. In 1969 a four-day war flared up between El Salvador and Honduras. The Salvadoran army invaded Honduras and nearly reached the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa. The Organization of American States (OAS) negotiated a cease-fire. With the exception of the Chaco war between Bolivia and Paraguay, the casualties of these wars were relatively modest: between 500 and 1,500 combat death (Dominguez et al. (2003: 20).

<sup>11</sup> See Mares (2001) and Dominguez et al. (2003).

<sup>12</sup> See Farcau (1996) and Chiavenato (2007). The death toll was around 100,000; of them 60,000 were Bolivians, mostly untrained indigenous conscripts.

<sup>13</sup> González Cruz (2007: 69-70). According to this Spanish military historian, in the course of the entire colonial period there was "an intimate partnership established between the Spanish monarchy and the Catholic Church, widely propagated in the discourses of preachers, prelates and theologians (...). There subsisted a close tie between the interests of the King and those of the Eternal Sovereign".

<sup>14</sup> Although sometimes the Mexican viceroys tried to establish alliances with 'friendly' indigenous leaders at the northern frontier; see Sheridan Prieto (2005: 29 ff.) and Zavala (2007: 96-97, 114-119). See also the fine PhD thesis of Bernardo Arevalo de León (2015) about the formation of colonial militias in Guatemala. About Brazil, see Puntoni (2004: 42 ff, 57-64). About the revolt of Tupac Amaru II in Peru, see Flores Galindo (1999). During the Tupac Amaru revolt, the number of militias raised by the viceroy in Lima grew from 4,200 in 1760 to 51,467 in 1781 (Flores Galindo 1999: 7).



#### 1.4. Personal and professional armies

The theme of this fourth subsection is the tradition of 'personal' armies and the late professionalisation of the Latin American military. Spain fortified her most important harbours (Vera Cruz, Cartagena, and Havana) against naval attacks by European pirates.<sup>15</sup> But its armies remained small and the colonial administrators had to rely on local militias as well. The Napoleonic invasion in Spain in 1808 brought about rebellions in nearly all Spanish American possessions. Initially, royalist troops could suppress the uprisings<sup>16</sup>, but in the following decade local-born liberators waged war against royalist armies from Mexico to Chile.<sup>17</sup> Several of the greatest Latin American heroes of the liberation wars were self-styled military commanders who initially fought with local and regional militias. In fact they created 'personal armies', as would many of their nineteenth century successors.<sup>18</sup> In the last and decisive battle against Spanish rule, in Ayacucho (1824), a liberation army of 6,000 routed a royalist army of 7,000 combatants.<sup>19</sup>

Brazilian independence was the result of an agreement between elites and the Portuguese royal family. Portugal had a poorly trained infantry army and a tiny war fleet.<sup>20</sup> When Napoleon invaded the country, the royal family, the court, the cabinet and the public sector boarded the Portuguese fleet that, escorted by a British squadron, set sail to Brazil. When the king was forced to return to Portugal, the Brazilian elite in Rio and São Paulo convinced the prince regent to declare independence and become emperor. The northern part of Brazil however remained in the hands of loyal Portuguese garrisons. During the battles that followed the new Brazilian army of soldiers, volunteers and foreign mercenaries, assisted by a small British flotilla, eventually obtained the upper hand.<sup>21</sup> Compared to the bloody Spanish American wars of independence, the Brazilians "fought a miniature war".<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the Brazilian army a system of paramilitary forces, called the National Guard, existed, in which local potentates ('coroneis' in Portuguese) served as commanders. A similar system of local officers with semi-private armies also existed in the Spanish speaking republics. Like in Brazil, these officers ('caudillos' in Spanish) were military and political bosses in the regions, sometimes becoming presidents or plotting against competitors who were presidents.<sup>23</sup> Bolivia and Guatemala were the theatres of so many coups that the list of presidents is largely comprised of military juntas that collectively exercised presidential power.<sup>24</sup>

The real professionalisation of Latin America's armed forces took place during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, when Latin American governments invited European military mis-

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<sup>15</sup> Marchena Fernández (1992) and Marchena Fernández and Gómez Pérez (1992).

<sup>16</sup> Archer (2000: 6-8).

<sup>17</sup> For detailed studies, see Archer (2000, 2007), Chasteen (2008), Herzog (2015), McFarlane (2014) and Ortiz Escamilla (2005). The first country to gain independence was Haiti. A rebellion of black slaves and free mulattos succeeded in crush and kill the colonial plantation holders and declared themselves independent in 1804. They even were victorious when Napoleon sent a French invasion army. The last country to achieve independence was neighbour island Cuba in 1902, nearly a century afterwards.

<sup>18</sup> See Rouquié (1987: 44) and McFarlane (2014: 57-61).

<sup>19</sup> Two third of the combatants 'officers of the liberation army were Argentinean or Colombian; the officers' corps of the royal army of Viceroy De La Serna was exclusively Peruvian. Vargas Llosa, reflecting on an essay of his compatriot De la Riva Agüero about this paradoxical situation, asks himself why Republican Peru was such a failure (Vargas Llosa 1993: 48-49).

<sup>20</sup> See Robson (2011: 34, 248-249).

<sup>21</sup> About the slowly dissolving Brazilian-Portuguese relations after independence, see Paquette (2013)

<sup>22</sup> As characterised by Chasteen (2008: 153).

<sup>23</sup> See Lynch (2007).

<sup>24</sup> Military historian Loveman (1993: 398, 405) who analysed the regimes of exception in nineteenth century Latin America uses the term "constitutional tyrannies".

sions to train the officers' corps and to create armies by force of selective conscription.<sup>25</sup> Military professionalism (the creation of national military academies for cadets and officers, officer's training and equipment) and conscription of recruits was defined as a national priority in most South American countries: In 1900 Chile imposed conscription, followed by Argentina and Peru the year thereafter, Ecuador in 1902, Bolivia in 1907 and Brazil in 1916. Until the First World War, most countries sought expertise in Germany, Great Britain, and France. The new armed forces remained small.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.5. Dominance of the United States

The influence of European military missions on politico-military matters in Latin America lasted to the early 1940s, after which the United States became increasingly dominant. After the Second World War nearly all Latin American countries procured their military equipment in the United States. The preference for American (and, in lesser degree, British and French) equipment was unaltered during the entire twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> Under the terms of the Rio Pact of 1947, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance served as a security and defence umbrella institution for all independent countries of the Americas. Its political counterpart was the Organization of American States (OAS), created in 1948.<sup>28</sup> American leadership and dominance was only disputed by Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The American dominance was reinforced by a system of bilateral military and security support programmes. Most of these programmes were about training and equipment; others implied intelligence assistance. Not seldom they were also focused on 'civil-military action' (development activities by the armed forces).<sup>29</sup> During the Cold War (and thereafter) American assistance programmes were counterinsurgency-oriented, focusing on the persecution and destruction of 'communists', 'terrorists' or 'internal enemies of the state'. The United States established a tradition of political policing through military interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to a recent database, between 1890 and 2009 the United States intervened 56 times with regular troops, Special Forces, covert action operators and paramilitary forces.<sup>30</sup> During the Falkland-Malvinas conflict in Argentina in 1982, the United Kingdom also sent an expeditionary force. In this conflict 900 military men died, of whom 650 were Argentines.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rouquié (1987: 95). In 1918 Brazil abolished the National Guard, in fact a blow against political-military local potentates.

<sup>26</sup> Here I draw on Kruijt (1994: 31-33) and Resende-Santos (2007: 128-295). See also Nunn (1978) and McCann (2004).

<sup>27</sup> In fact, the only military industrial enterprises of Latin America are established in Brazil. During the 1970s and the 1980s, Peru and Nicaragua purchased Soviet weaponry; Cuba did that after 1960 and Venezuela after 2000. It is interesting to note that, whatever the preference for European missions, military 'geopolitical friendships' began to develop between Brazil, Chile and Colombia, without formal treaties. Another unwritten alliance was that between Argentina, Peru and Venezuela. A third, this time formal, alliance was created between Cuba and Venezuela in 2004.

<sup>28</sup> After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cuba was suspended in 1962.

<sup>29</sup> An early handbook about the benefits of 'civil-military action' or development tasks implemented by the armed forces is Barber and Ronning (1966).

<sup>30</sup> In Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico and Uruguay; see Becker (consulted 16 August 2016). See also Blum (2016).

<sup>31</sup> But Latin American armies also sent expeditionary forces. At least three Latin American countries sent large-scale expeditionary forces to other continents. Brazil that sent an infantry division of 25,700 soldiers to Italy to support the offensive of the Anglo-American forces in the Second World War (Castro: 2012: 113-141) and Smallman (2002: 75 ff). Colombia sent four of battalions, 4,000 soldiers, to assist the American forces during the Korean War (1951-1954). The third country, Cuba, sent military to several countries in Africa. Cuba that in the 1970s and 1980s probably had the largest and best equipped armed forces in the region. During the Angolan wars, it deployed 380,000 soldiers to Angola and 70,000 additional civilian technicians and volunteers (Risquet (2007: xlvi).) During the 1970s and 1980s, it had a military presence in Algeria, Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique, and sent civilian interna-

## 2. Political Armies of the Right and the Left

In the second section of this paper I will further explore the evolution and significance of the Latin American political armies, the core theme of this contribution. In the first subsection I will delve into the long tradition of autocracy and dictatorship. Several of these oppressive regimes had dynastic traits: dictatorial sons were the heirs of their despotic fathers who had been presidents-for-life or who ruled through puppet presidents (their former secretaries or subaltern staff members).

There is one country, namely Mexico, whose political history demonstrates a blockage of this tradition (see the second subsection). After the hard-handed pacification process following a decade of revolution and warfare between peasant armies during the 1910s, army leaders successively became presidents, using their military influence. The post-revolutionary constitution forbade a second term of presidential rule. Nevertheless President-General Calles created a de facto one-party state and continued to govern when his six-year term had ended through successors of his choice. One of his military successors, General Cárdenas, after having been elected president in 1934 however ended this autocratic tradition by restructuring the party and curtailing the political influence of the military; he still is remembered as an exemplary and progressive president.

In the third subsection I examine the influence of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 on two generations of guerrilla members in many of the Latin American countries and Caribbean island-states in the 1960s and the subsequent two decades.

The final, and most extensive, two subsections (four and five) are dedicated to the analysis of the many military institutional dictatorships (military juntas) of the Right and the military reformist governments of the Left.

### 2.1. Old-style dictatorship

Long before the Cold War, some countries in the Latin American region suffered from tyrannical regimes and dynastic dictatorships. All those old-style dictators were strongly supported by the United States. They were personal rulers who used the army, the political police and death squads to maintain order and assure obedience.

Central America had three long-term dictatorships. From 1933 on, Nicaragua was ruled by three successive members of the Somoza family who controlled the National Guard.<sup>32</sup> After an extended guerrilla campaign, in 1979 the regime eventually fell. Guatemala was governed by military coup leaders or military presidents from the 1920s to the mid-1980s (with only two exceptions). The despotic governments of President-General Estrada and President-General Ubico in the 1920s and 1930s served as models for the character in *El Señor Presidente*, a renowned novel by Miguel Ángel Asturias, whose son Rodrigo would become the leader of the one of the four Guatemalan guerrilla movements in the 1970s. In El Salvador, national politics was dominated by successive military rulers from 1931 until the outbreak of civil war in 1979 (sometimes interrupted by short-lived civil-military juntas).

The Caribbean island states also had their successive dictators. In the Dominican Republic the ruling style of Rafael Trujillo, the former head of the army, wasn't very different from that of the Somoza dynasty. Like the Somoza's, he received helpful support from the United States. He changed

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tionalists to at least ten African countries (see Mesa-Lago and Belkin 1982; Gleijeses 2002; George 2005; LeoGrande 2000; and Liebenberg, Risquet and Shubin 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Anastasio and his sons Luis and Anastasio, whilst grandson Anastasio was in charge of some counterinsurgency operations during the regime's final years. Anastasio Somoza García (Tacho) was assassinated in 1956. His son and successor Luis Somoza Debayle died in 1967 of a heart attack. His brother Anastasio Somoza Debayle (Tachito) fled the country on 17 July 1979 and was assassinated in Paraguay on 17 September 1980 by an Argentine guerrilla commando. About the Somoza regime, see Millett (1977) and Walter (2004).

the name of the capital into Trujillo City (Ciudad Trujillo). After his assassination in 1961, the United States intervened to ensure a succession by his vice-president Balaguer, who ruled until 1978.

In 1956, physician Francois ('Papa Doc') Duvalier seized power and was 'elected' president-for-life in Haiti. He consolidated his dictatorship backed by the paramilitary Tontons Macoute militia. After his death in 1971 his son Jean-Claude ('Baby Doc') succeeded him as president-for-life, before being ousted by a military coup in 1986. Afterwards, elected governments were supplanted by military coups that were replaced by elected, de facto or interim-presidents.

In Cuba, a military strongman, former sergeant-major turned general, Fulgencio Batista, became de facto president ruling the country from the military Camp Columbia, the army's headquarter in Havana. Between 1934 and 1940, he delegated government to seven puppet presidents of his choice. In 1940 he was officially elected president. In 1952 he staged a coup and after a student's underground campaign combined with guerrilla operations by Fidel Castro, he was ousted in 1959.

In Paraguay Colonel Rafael Franco staged a coup in 1936 and established a dictatorial regime. He was succeeded by another army man, Alfredo Stroessner in 1954. Stroessner governed under martial law and was ousted from power in 1989 by a military coup. Like Trujillo, he named the second largest city of the country after him: 'Stroessner City' (Ciudad Stroessner).

## **2.2. Avoidance of a political army in Mexico**

Strangely enough Mexico, the country with a profound social revolution where irregular and peasant armies were engaged in continuous confrontations, avoided the creation of a political army after its civil war.<sup>33</sup> The military phase of the Mexican Revolution lasted the entire decade between 1910 and 1920. The military campaigns morphed into a multi-layered civil war with different factions and agendas, emerging social and peasant movements, and conflicting regional armies. The death toll was enormous: around 10 per cent of the entire Mexican population (1,5 million victims). During the following 35 years, the political structure of the country was forged by military presidents in what was basically a one-party regime led by the National Revolutionary Party (later renamed the 'Institutional Revolutionary Party' or PRI). After he came to power in 1934 General-President Lázaro Cardenas moulded the party into four 'sectors': a labour sector (with the trade unions), peasantry sector (with the national peasants' organisation), a popular sector that in fact comprised the public sector and the middle classes, and a military sector. Subsequently, he suppressed the military sector and considerably reduced the political presence of the armed forces. Cardenas' elected successor was the last (retired) military president of Mexico, the country having been ruled by civilians since 1946.

## **2.3. The Cuban Revolution and the emergence of guerrilla movements**

Even more surprising than the developments in Mexico was the Cuban Revolution of 1959. In that year, the leaders of a successful rural guerrilla campaign supported by urban insurgency movements initiated by students overthrew a demoralised army and established a revolutionary government. Once in power, far-going reforms and nationalisations brought the former rebels in a situation of direct confrontation with the United States. The guerrilla army was quickly reconstituted in a regular army, strongly supported by Soviet assistance.<sup>34</sup> When in 1979 a comparable kind of revolution evolved in Nicaragua, Cuba's military and civilian assistance (and Soviet arms deliveries) were crucial for its success.

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<sup>33</sup> The most well-known analysis is the two-volume study of Knight (1986).

<sup>34</sup> About the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, see Klepak (2005).

For the next three decades, the Cuban Revolution advised, supported, and even trained (small detachments of) guerrilla movements in fourteen Latin American and Caribbean countries.<sup>35</sup> Cuba also served as a kind of general medical facility for many wounded or crippled guerrilla combatants. Furthermore, it provided shelter to many exiles (of diverse political strands), especially during the period of long-term dictatorships in the region (see below).<sup>36</sup> Many guerrilla movements were initiated by student movements, excisions of the Moscow-oriented Communist Parties and disillusioned military officers.

Another important factor that radicalized many young Latin American activists had to do with academic and religious changes.<sup>37</sup> The late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were the period of the Dependency Theory at the universities and the Liberation Theology in the churches. The student generations and the faithful Catholics were not terribly interested in communist or religious doctrines and splits, but they were influenced by the anti-imperialist arguments of the dependency theorists at the regional UN office for social and economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the *Escuela Latina*, also established in Santiago.<sup>38</sup> Social exclusion, social conflict and political violence were seen as the consequences of Latin America's dependent integration into the capitalist world system. Social and economic scientists began to publish material about the roots of Latin America's underdevelopment, imperialism, the role of unsuccessful national bourgeoisies, and the inevitability of reforms and even revolutions.

Liberation Theology was even more influential in the hearts and minds of considerable segments of the Latin American population.<sup>39</sup> In countries like Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Mexico and Uruguay –and especially in Central America– theologians and priests emphasised a new interpretation of the Bible. They established a moral relationship between religious ethics and political activism for the benefit of the poor, the exploited and the victims of persecution and injustice. In many countries, Base Communities – small groups of 20 to 30 persons who regularly met to study the Bible's relevance for the solution of social and political problems – were formed. Priests and laymen were engaged in organising workers and peasants into unions and associations that were forbidden or controlled by officials of the military dictatorships. Radicalising priests compared crucified Christ with murdered Che Guevara, asserting that “liberation and revolution are a legitimate extension of the gospel”.<sup>40</sup> Effectively, guerrilla icon Che Guevara and guerrilla priest Camilo Torres became both revolutionary and moral icons immediately after their death. San Salvador's Archbishop Romero was murdered in 1980 while celebrating mass; he was incorporated into the rows of revolutionary heroes and martyrs as well.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The evolution of the Latin American and Caribbean guerrilla movement and its historiography is a subject matter beyond the theme of this paper. For comparative studies, see Gott (2008), Kruijt (2017), Oikion, Rey and López (2014) and Pereyra (1994). For the role of Cuba, see Suárez and Kruijt (2015). Of all guerrilla movements, the case of the Peruvian Shining Path is an exception; see Degregori (2010).

<sup>36</sup> When in 1979 a comparable kind of successful revolution emerged in Nicaragua, Cuba's military and civilian assistance (and Soviet arms deliveries) were crucial.

<sup>37</sup> Here I draw on sections of the fourth chapter of (Kruijt 2017).

<sup>38</sup> For the evolution of the ECLAC ideas in the Dependency Theory, see Guzmán (1976). The scholars who developed Dependency Theory (including Fernando Henrique Cardoso who later became Brazil's president, Enzo Falletto, Osvaldo Sunkel, Theotonio Dos Santos, and Edelberto Torres-Rivas) elaborated ideas of ECLAC economist Raúl Prebisch regarding the structural dependency and exploitation of Latin America's poor peripheral and underdeveloped economies by wealthy central and economically developed ones.

<sup>39</sup> For the evolution of the Liberation Theology, see García Rubio (1977), Löwy (1996) and Saranyana and Alejos-Grau et al. (2002.) A recent publication is Noble (2013).

<sup>40</sup> Miguez Bonino (1979: 2 – 3).

<sup>41</sup> After the civil war in El Salvador, guerrilla leader Schafik Handal (the former secretary general of the Communist Party) became the undisputed leader of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). After his death in 2006, a museum and a memorial monument were built.<sup>41</sup> The memorial is a pantheon of three revolutionary heroes:



## 2.4. Institutional coups and political armies of the Right

In many countries of the region the Cold War was a period of persecution, repression and civil war. A new type of military coup d'état became customary: the institutional overthrow of elected governments by the commanders of the armed forces.<sup>42</sup> The first institutional coup took place in 1962 in Peru, but the most important one was the military takeover in Brazil, in 1964.<sup>43</sup> It gave rise to a sequence of Latin American dictatorships, afterwards known as 'national security regimes', of right-wing military army leaders, where succession of military cabinet members in military or civil-military governments was arranged by internal promotions within the army, the navy and the air force.<sup>44</sup> Between 1964 and 1990 the military institutions of eleven Latin American countries established long-term military-led governments: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay.<sup>45</sup>

Many of these regimes were at war with their own society, persecuting, and in some cases explicitly engaging in warfare with so-called 'enemies of the state'.<sup>46</sup> Their ideology was characterized by fervent anti-communism. The governing military juntas developed the full characteristics of political army leaders: governing as the legitimate stabilising force and as 'last resort' defenders of Western democracy against communism. Under the umbrella thesis of global continental security – provided by the United States – complementary theses of national security were conceived by the Latin American geo-politicians.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, they fought wars against the 'enemy within': 'subversive' or 'terrorist' adversaries, real (members of guerrilla movements) or imagined (the leadership of trade unions and peasant associations, left wing writers and students, journalists and priests).

In the case of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and especially Central America, it took the form of dirty warfare: state terrorism, including widespread torture, assassinations and disappearances, even amounting to genocide (in the case of Guatemala)<sup>48</sup>. In Brazil and the Southern Cone countries, repression was meted out not only to deal with known adversaries but also to instil fear within society as a whole. Open civil war in Central America followed the same basic pattern of conflict (leading to a much larger number of victims). The military muscle of the dictatorships was based on

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Handal (above), Farabundo Martí and Archbishop Romero (below). Pope Francis declared Romero 'blessed', a prelude for an eventual sainthood.

<sup>42</sup> For the character of this type of coups, see Nun (1967, 1986) and for a recent discussion, Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán (2014).

<sup>43</sup> See Dreifuss (1981) and Castro, D'Araujo and Soares (1994a, 1994b).

<sup>44</sup> And the Carabineros, the militarized police force, in the case of Chile.

<sup>45</sup> In Ecuador (1963–1966, 1972–1978) Guatemala (1963–1985); Brazil (1964–1985), Bolivia (1964–1970, 1971–1982); Argentina (1966–1973, 1976–1983), Peru (1968–1980), Panama (1968–1989), Honduras (1963–1966, 1972–1982), Chile (1973–1990), and (Uruguay, 1973–1984), while in El Salvador the military governed de facto between 1948 and 1984 (Loveman 2011).

<sup>46</sup> For analytical studies see McSherry (2005) and Menjivar and Rodríguez (2005); see also O'Donnell (1973), Fitch (1998), Pion-Berlin (2001) and Silva (2001). For the military regimes in Argentina, see Pion-Berlin (1997) and Robben (2005); for Bolivia, see Dunkerley (1984), for Brazil see Castro, D'Araujo and Soares (1994b), Hunter (1997), Stepan (2000) and Soares and D'Araujo (1994); for Chile, see Constable and Valenzuela (1991), Huneus (2000) and O'Shaughnessy (2000); for the Central American civil wars, Aguilera and Torres-Rivas (1998), Algeria and Flakoll (2004), Battalion 2008), Dunkerley (1988), Kruijt (2008), Le Bot (1997), Montgomery (1995), Rosada-Granados (1999), Schirmer (1998), Torres-Rivas (2011).

<sup>47</sup> It was gradually combined with aid from the American intelligence community (especially the CIA, later also the DEA and other intelligence services). Under the umbrella thesis of continental security, a complementary thesis of national security merged with the Latin American tradition of geo-politicians. The writers of the national security theses were a new brand of Latin American official, military intellectuals of the staff schools and training institutes. Military intellectuals held key functions in the general staff, at the military training schools and the higher military academies, and within the intelligence and security services. In line with the consolidation of political armies in these institutional, professional and intellectual moulds, Latin America, intelligence became preoccupied with internal rather than foreign enemies of the state.

<sup>48</sup> According the Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico, the Truth Commission (CEH 1999) under the auspices of the UNDP.

three components: control over the national system of intelligence and security forces; the predominance of the military over the police forces; and the military presence in poor and remote areas of the national territory as the de facto only representatives of law and order. Of these three factors, control over security and intelligence has been the most important.<sup>49</sup> The ‘internal wars’ against subversion were conducted by an array of parallel services: military intelligence, the security organs, the police and para-police bodies and the para-military groups. As dorsal spine of the counter-insurgency operations, the intelligence and security systems expanded to such a degree that their official and unofficial ties with paramilitary units became difficult to distinguish.<sup>50</sup>

The use of paramilitary forces as auxiliary deterrent and local enforcement could take grotesque forms: death squads like the AAA (Triple A) in Argentina, two parallel paramilitary forces in El Salvador and particularly the Self-Defence Patrols (PACs) in Guatemala terrorised the country. At the height of the counterinsurgency campaigns in Guatemala, the army forcefully incorporated more than a million indigenous ‘civil patrol members’, probably half of the entire indigenous adult male population, out of a national population of nine million.<sup>51</sup>

Elected presidents of countries engaged in guerrilla warfare also made ample use of paramilitary formations. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, during the counterinsurgency operations of the Fujimori government against the Maoist guerrilla movement Shining Path, the Peruvian army eventually armed around 400,000 indigenous paramilitary troops (‘ronderos’ in Spanish), operating under authority of the local commanding officers. Their presence was the decisive factor with respect to the victory over this guerrilla movement.<sup>52</sup>

During many years, the Colombian army maintained close ties with private armies, regional paramilitary forces that were finally unified into the umbrella organisation Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). The most recent report of the Colombian Centro de la Memoria Histórica attributes 70 per cent of the victims of massacres to the campaigns of the army and the paramilitary forces.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.5. Reformist Political Armies

Military men were not always inclined to the political Right. Especially among the low-ranking young officers one can discern revolutionary lieutenants and captains. Already in the 1920s rebellions were led by young officers, who in later years came to be characterised as the ‘Military Youth’ in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador.<sup>54</sup> During later decades, the Military Youth in Central America participated in rebellions with reformist agendas.<sup>55</sup> In Guatemala, in 1960, young lieutenants with a na-

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<sup>49</sup> The military predominance over the police forces were expressed through nominations of ex-military personnel as chief of the national police corps or of (retired) generals as Minister of the Government or the Interior. Sometimes – as was the case in Guatemala and Honduras until recently – the police depended on the military intelligence’s analysis, even with respect to criminal or forensic issues. A third factor was the fact that in the majority of the Latin American countries, the armed forces acted as the sole representative of the public sector in remote and underdeveloped regions, and derived from this ‘monopoly of representation’ its legitimacy to control and to coerce.

<sup>50</sup> See here Esparza, Ruttenbach and Feierstein (2010) and Mazzei (2009).

<sup>51</sup> According to the author’s interview with former peace negotiator Héctor Rosada-Granados (Guatemala City, 14 April 2010); see also Vela Castañeda (2009; 2013: 167 – 169).

<sup>52</sup> See CVR (2004) and Fumerton (2002).

<sup>53</sup> CNMH (2013).

<sup>54</sup> In Copacabana, Rio, a movement of *tenentes* (lieutenants) revolted asking for electoral and political reforms in 1922. In 1924 *tenentes* in São Paulo and in Rio Grande do Sul took up the cause of opposition movements; their rebellion lasted several years (Castro 2001; McCann 2004: 259; and Murilo de Carvalho 1999). In 1924, in Chile, a military committee of young officers protested against low salaries and revolted against Congress requiring immediate social legislation. A military reformist junta was installed, even a short-lived socialist republic was proclaimed. In 1925, in Ecuador, the League of Young Officers rebelled against repressive government and accelerated social legislation and ‘protection for the proletariat’; a second coup in 1931 ended this reformist experiment; see Ospina Peralta (2016: pp. 142ff).

<sup>55</sup> Arévalo de León (2015), Figueroa Ibarra, Paz Cárcamo and Taracena Arriola (2013), and especially Martín Álvarez (2017).



tionalist and anti-imperialist agenda participated in an effort to overthrow a military dictatorship and, after its failure, created the first guerrilla groups in that country. In 1982 and 1983, young officers were instrumental in the overthrow of the two merciless dictators, Generals Lucas García and Ríos Montt. In El Salvador they were the actors behind the two last military coups, in 1972 and in 1979, trying desperately to prevent large-scale guerrilla warfare before the civil war broke out.

More renowned than the Military Youth were the governments of nationalist-leftist military leaders who used the armed forces to implement anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist nationalisations and pro-poor social reforms. Many of them and their younger military ministers were of lower middle class background or belonged to the precarious urban working class.<sup>56</sup> They were elected or staged a coup and sought legitimisation by elections and/or by mass organisations. Elected Colonel Jacobo Arbenz (1950-1954) in Guatemala was the first one. He was elected president maintaining his army rank, and initiated an Agrarian Reform nationalising American properties. A CIA coup ended his presidential term prematurely.<sup>57</sup> His political successors, Generals Juan Velasco Alvarado in Peru and Omar Torrijos in Panama headed institutional coups in the same year, 1968.<sup>58</sup> Like the Velasco government in Peru, Panamanian army chief Torrijos announced a social reform program for the benefit of the poor.<sup>59</sup> Both were passionate nationalists with sympathy for the underprivileged.<sup>60</sup> Both defined themselves as military reformers with special missions to break the power of the economic and political oligarchy, to restore national control over the economy and to carry out social reforms, implemented by the armed forces.<sup>61</sup>

Military reformism was not restricted to Panama and Peru. Other army chiefs followed suit and adopted similar, albeit more modest, programs: in 1971 in Bolivia (Generals Alfredo Obando in 1969-1970 and Juan José Torres in 1970-1971) and in 1972 in Ecuador (General Guillermo

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<sup>56</sup> Rouquié presented an overview of the background of the officers of significant Latin American armies in the 1980s and concludes that, maybe with the exception of the Argentinean Army, officers' recruitment slowly had been focused on the poorer segments of society, especially the lower middle classes (Rouquié (1997: 84-93). I did a case study on the social background, education, and ideological influences within the inner circle of senior officers of the Peruvian generals around General-President Velasco, and I became astonished about the number of officers who had begun their career as common soldier (as did Velasco himself), whose background had been of provincial urban poor families and whose loyalty to their institution that had provided them with their complete education and training was enormous. I also noted that their upbringing in poor neighbourhoods and villages was the source of their strong feelings for the needs of reforms, if not within the margins of formal democracy, then in the context of a revolutionary coup (Kruijt (1994: 44-56). Cuban diplomats who observed closely the first political movements of Hugo Chávez, former Lieutenant Colonel in the 1990s reported to Havana very comparable notions about the Venezuelan army officers in the 1990s (Suárez and Kruijt (2015: 611-615, 621-626).

<sup>57</sup> The most recent detailed study of the army under Arbenz and thereafter is that of Arévalo de León (2015).

<sup>58</sup> The military advisory group around Velasco had been influenced by Peruvian socialist Mariátegui whose ideas of pre-Spanish 'socialism' were discussed in clandestine discussion groups on national dependency and underdevelopment and the urgent need of social reforms.

<sup>59</sup> Here I draw on sections of the fourth chapter of Kruijt (2017). For a very detailed analysis of Velasco's legacy, see Aguirre and Drinot (2017).

<sup>60</sup> Velasco never wanted to create a political party and instead incorporated the slum dwellers, peasants and members of the indigenous communities into a presidential ministry, called SINAMOS (Sistema Nacional de Movilización Social, National System of Social Mobilisation). Torrijos founded a political party that attracted the support of the urban poor, the rural peasantry and the students' movement, called the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD, Revolutionary Democratic Party).

<sup>61</sup> Here is a quote from a discourse by Torrijos (that could have been said by Velasco or by Hugo Chávez): "I am a soldier of Latin America who lives his daily life in the barracks since I was seventeen years old. That gives me the right, and knowledge, to treat a delicate, complex and sensitive subject (...). Since 1959, the year in which, utterly remarkably in our century, a guerrilla triumphs over a regular army in Cuba, at the peak of the period of McCarthyism, military schools began to analyse a problem that had not been recognised previously. What had happened in Cuba? And why? (...): social terror, terrorism, "exotic theories". No, no, the real breeding ground for these so-called exotic theories is [poverty and] misery. The real cause is the lack of schools, the lack of provision of potable water, the lack of a national development programme (...). Many common soldiers, sergeants and lieutenants, men who live in the same [circumstances of] misery in which ordinary people live, realise quickly that their rifles should be targeted at those who enslave (...)" (Zárate and Vargas 2010: 255-261).

Rodríguez Lara).<sup>62</sup> In retirement, several of the reformist military founded an NGO for progressive officers in retirement.<sup>63</sup> In the mid-1990s its president was a Venezuelan former Lieutenant Colonel (comandante in the Venezuelan military argot) Hugo Chávez.<sup>64</sup> The case of Venezuela and the role of the armed forces during the consecutive presidencies of Chávez and Maduro will be analysed in the next section (subsection 3.3.).

### 3. The Military in Democratic Latin America

In the final decade of the twentieth century all former military dictatorships had disappeared. In this section I analyse the changes that came about with respect to the military, the new military doctrines and the military missions, as developed or at least approved by elected governments. Sometimes military governments made silent or formal agreements with the incoming governments about amnesty and pensions, or even about a certain phase of co-governance (see the first subsection). In nearly all cases, military budgets and personnel were reduced. However, also in times of peace and democracy, former military leaders and even dictators were (re-)elected as presidents, an indicator of the silent approval of continuing military influence in politics. Several coup intents even took place in the twenty-first century (see subsection 3.2). In section 3.3. the military's explicit adoption of the political programmes set out by the presidents of Bolivia and Venezuela is discussed, the latter country providing the clearest example of military co-governance in the entire region. In the last subsection (3.4) provides examples of the nature of the new military missions in the region.

#### 3.1. Military exit strategies and reductions of budget and personnel<sup>65</sup>

Between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s elected democratic rule was re-established in nearly all Latin American countries. With the exception of Colombia, guerrilla movements had been re-integrated in society and even in Central America, where three bloody civil wars were fought out, peace and stability had returned. Simultaneously, all dictatorial military regimes had been succeeded by elected civilian governments. In general, democratic transitions considerably diminished the political influence of the armed forces.<sup>66</sup> Sometimes outgoing military governments arranged their own transition pacts with incoming civilian governments; by maintaining their military functions of command (like in Peru) or by preserving their influential cabinet positions (like in Brazil). In Guatemala, military hardliners continued to have substantial influence behind the scenes, controlling the system of national intelligence.<sup>67</sup> The most extreme case was that of Chilean dictator Pinochet who remained commander-in-chief of the armed forces and took a senatorial seat for life. However, eventually military influence on politics diminished substantially while former dictators fell in disgrace or were imprisoned.

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<sup>62</sup> Rodríguez Lara announced an Agrarian Reform; it was only partially implemented. Bolivian President Torres was less lucky; he was quickly removed from power. Exiled in Argentina, he was murdered in 1976. Peruvian President Velasco was ousted by a coup in 1975 and was succeeded by a more conservative military team. Rodríguez Lara shared the same fate and held power until 1976, when conservative officers ended this reform period.

<sup>63</sup> The Organización de Militares para la Democracia, la Integración de América Latina y el Caribe (ORMIDELAC), the Organisation of Military Officers in favour of Democracy and Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean).

<sup>64</sup> In Cuba, 'comandante' was the army argot for 'major'. After the Cuban Revolution, the high ranking guerrilla leaders still use their former ranks in the Rebel Army (comandante, captain, etcetera). Fidel Castro was comandante-en-jefe. Other guerrilla movements also made use of the former Cuban guerrilla ranks.

<sup>65</sup> Here I draw on sections of Kruijt and Koonings (2013).

<sup>66</sup> See Franz and Geddes (2016).

<sup>67</sup> Also, an essential part of the system of military intelligence and a considerable segment of the demobilised Special Forces shifted alliances and became incorporated in the newly emerging drugs and contraband mafias.

However big the efforts of the outgoing militaries, the final outcome in most countries was a significant reduction in terms of their political influence, accompanied with a sharp cutback in terms of budget, personnel and equipment. The transition also implied the loss of their de facto monopoly on intelligence matters. In general, the transition from military rule to democracy was a process of gradual but controlled conversion.<sup>68</sup> Especially after the Central American peace agreements in the 1990s and the electoral defeat of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, the reduction was sometimes dramatic: from a fighting army of 97,000 officers and troops to a miniature army of 15,000 soldiers.<sup>69</sup> Similar reductions took place in El Salvador and Guatemala, where the wartime armies of 63,000 and 55,000 soldiers were reduced to around 15,000 men.<sup>70</sup>

In the entire region the size of the armed forces decreased significantly. At present, the militaries of the largest Latin-American countries and those with the largest populations are relatively small: 334,000 in Brazil (with a population of 202 million); 268,000 in Colombia (with a population of 49 million); 265,000 in Mexico (with a much larger population of 121 million); 195,000 in Venezuela (with a population of 31 million).<sup>71</sup> In comparison: the armed forces are made up of 78,000 members in Peru, which like Venezuela has a population of 31 million, and of 77,000 members in Argentina (on a population of 42 million).<sup>72</sup> The relatively extended armed forces of Colombia are to be explained by its warfare against two guerrilla movements and around 50 organised private armies of criminal gangs. According to Colombian military experts, its army is in fact “one enormous infantry battalion”.<sup>73</sup>

Military expenditure is, as to be expected, the highest in Brazil. Nearly 45 per cent of all Latin American and Caribbean national defence spending is spent in Brazil. Current military security doctrines in Brazil focus on the re-equipment and modernisation of the three branches of the armed forces. In geopolitical terms, Brazil gives priority to its sovereignty and effective control over its Amazon basin (including its natural resources and biodiversity), and to protection of its shorelines and the oil resources in the subsoil of its continental shelf.<sup>74</sup> Place two, three and four in terms of regional defence spending are held by Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela. Including Brazil, these four countries spend around 75 per cent of the total military budgets in the region.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.2. Continuing popularity of military leaders

Paradoxically enough, the Latin American and Caribbean electorate maintains a weak spot concerning soldiers in politics. In the 1990s and the 2000s one can distinguish two tendencies: the election of former conservative dictators and military strongmen as airbrushed democrats in leading political positions; and a nostalgic potential for classical coups d'état.

In 1998 in Bolivia, for example, former dictator Banzer made a political comeback through the ballot box. And Guatemalan dictator Rios Montt, ousted in 1982, won the municipal elections of 1993 and was invested with the presidency of the National Congress after the presidential elections in

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<sup>68</sup> See Bruneau and Tollefson (2006), Goodman, Mendelson and Rial (1990), Hartlyn, Schultz and Vargas (1992), Nunn (2007), Pion-Berlin (2012) and Pion-Berlin and Trikunas (2010). See Arcenaux (2001) for the countries of the Southern Cone and Brazil. For Brazil in particular, see Brandão Atunes (2002), Bruneau (2007), Bruneau and Tollefson (2014), Figueiredo (2005), Martins Filho and Zirker (2000) and Zaverucha (1994; 2005; 2006; 2013). For the intelligence structures in Mexico, see Aguayo Quezada (2001).

<sup>69</sup> Kruijt (2008: 167).

<sup>70</sup> After 2010, El Salvador and Guatemala saw an increase, to 25,000 and 22,000.

<sup>71</sup> Additionally, Venezuela has built up popular militias; see Machillanda (2010).

<sup>72</sup> My source is RESDAL (2014).

<sup>73</sup> Borrero (2006).

<sup>74</sup> Castro (2006).

<sup>75</sup> RESDAL (2014: 34).

1999 during the so-called Portillo-Rios Montt government (2000-2004).<sup>76</sup> Coup intents weren't completely absent either. In Peru, the military backed the neo-populist self-coup of elected president Fujimori in 1992. In Guatemala, a similar coup intended by president Serrano and initially backed by the Armed Forces in 1993 failed and led to the appointment of a former human rights prosecutor as the new president. In 1996, Paraguayan General Oviedo who had helped to oust dictator Stroessner attempted to overthrow the civilian government. The coup effort failed due to public demonstrations in the capital and the rumours about a possible intervention by Brazil, other neighbouring countries and sanctions by the Organization of American States. In 1997 in Ecuador the military supported a kind of 'civilian coup' of the parliament against President Bucaram, who was declared mentally ill.

Beyond mere intents, in 2009 the Honduran military staged an actual coup to remove the democratically elected President Zelaya. A rich landowner, during the term of his government Zelaya had evolved into a leftist 'spokesman of the urban and rural poor', who flirted with the idea of an alliance with Cuban and Venezuelan politics. His leftist policies led his adversaries to believe they were dealing with 'communism' within the presidential palace. A 60 per cent increase of the national minimum salary decreed by the president pushed them over the limit, leading to discussions between the cardinal and retired army generals on the 'dangers of communism'. Subsequently right wing opponents and the military leadership started negotiations about the possibilities of a 'corrective coup'.<sup>77</sup> The coup was, in strictly military terms, a success. However, politically it resulted in a disaster. All member states of the OAS reacted with dismay. The appointed 'interim government' became a regional pariah and had to organise new elections.

Most military analysts consider the aforementioned cases as exceptions. Indeed, most Latin American army leaders opt for a non-political positioning. For example, during a police riot in Ecuador in 2010, which produced rumours of a coup intent against president Correa, the armed forces maintained their constitutional loyalty and, at the president's order, intervened with arms in hand to crush the revolt of insurgent police officers. In 2016, when Brazilian parliament initiated an impeachment procedure against President Rousseff and the government party publicly characterised it as a coup, the military, pressured by the press to take a stance, clearly refused to give its opinion: this was "a political issue, not a military one".

### **3.3. Military revolutionary mystique: the case of Bolivia's Armed Forces and Venezuelan National Bolivarian Armed Forces<sup>78</sup>**

As exemplified by the Honduran veto coup of 2009, political militarism still lingers on in present-day Latin America. We may even be witnessing the emergence of a new variety of political armies in a new ideological dress; that of nationalist and anti-imperialist 'socialism-of the twenty-first-century'. In 2010, for instance, Bolivia's armed forces declared themselves a "socialist, anti-imperialist and

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<sup>76</sup> His party won the elections; but constitutionally, a former de facto president cannot participate in presidential elections. His colleague, former General Pérez Molina campaigned under the banner of law and order in 2007 and lost only with a small percentage. In 2011, financed by some Guatemalan billionaires, he won the presidency with an ample electoral victory. He had to leave the presidential palace after impeachment and was condemned to prison for corruption, not for war crimes, in 2015.

<sup>77</sup> The military staff asked a donation of US\$ 10 million; the Honduran elite could only amass US\$ 5 million in cash on short notice and the generals happily agreed (Author's interview with Víctor Meza, at that time minister of the interior of president Zelaya (Tegucigalpa, 26 and 27 October 2010). For a more detailed analysis, see Meza (2009) and Salomón (2008, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Here I heavily draw on Kruijt (2016).

anti-capitalist institution”, in full support of president Morales’ Plurinational State of Bolivia and the political ideology of the ruling MAS government.<sup>79</sup>

At present Venezuela’s armed forces act as a political army in support of an elected government that substituted its elected Parliament for a Constituent Assembly dominated by presidential supporters. Like in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, Venezuelan army officers are recruited from lower middle class or labour class families. In 1992, Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez, son of a shoemaker, a life-long devotee of Simon Bolivar and admirer of Velasco and Torrijos, staged a coup that failed. When he was released from jail, he campaigned for presidential election in slums and rural villages. Cuban diplomats that observed his campaign were impressed by the adoring people he attracted. When Chávez was welcomed by villagers saying, “The Messiah has come, I want to touch the Messiah”, they were convinced that Chávez would be the next Venezuelan president.<sup>80</sup> He visited Cuba where Fidel Castro greeted him as if he already were the Chief of State. It was the beginning of a special bond: Fidel the wise old mentor, Chávez his young revolutionary successor and then colleague.<sup>81</sup>

Like Velasco and Torrijos, Chávez was embedded in the military revolutionary mystique that supposes the indivisible unity between people and the army. In his own words: “We can say that it is like the formula of water: H<sub>2</sub>O. If we say that the people are the oxygen, the armed force is the hydrogen. Water doesn’t exist without hydrogen”.<sup>82</sup> During the fifteen years of his presidency (1999 – 2013), his political trajectory demonstrated a deepening radicalism.<sup>83</sup> He eventually founded his own political party.<sup>84</sup> His political management reflects a mixture of mass movements and use of the armed forces in civilian administration. A new constitution in 1999 established the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. After a failed coup, in 2002, president Chávez purged the armed institutions.<sup>85</sup>

Chávez and Castro cemented their relationship by a mutually beneficial agreement: Cuban doctors, literacy trainers and educational experts went to Venezuela in benefit of the pro-poor programmes (the so-called ‘missions’) and Cuba received oil deliveries of 90,000 barrels per day at preferential rates. The Cuban-Venezuelan covenants were periodically renewed.<sup>86</sup>

In the mid-2000s, Chávez began to expand his reach, emphasizing his ‘socialism of the twenty-first century’. He launched a large series of domestic social and economic ‘missions’, headed by trusted military and loyal civilians. The Venezuelan Armed Force, now the ‘National Bolivarian Armed Force’ gradually became the executive instrument of the Comandante-President. The nationalist-

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<sup>79</sup> See *El País*, 16 November 2010. The journal quotes Bolivian army chief general Cueto’ whose public declaration at the Colegio Militar en La Paz was shared by a visibly emotional president Morales.

<sup>80</sup> Author’s interview with Carlos Antelo Pérez (La Habana, 24 and 27 October 2011), at that time the party representative at the Cuban embassy in Caracas.

<sup>81</sup> See Gott (2005) for a fine political biography of Chávez,

<sup>82</sup> Bilbao (2002: 28-29).

<sup>83</sup> Here I draw on August (2013), Gott (2005), Bitar Deeb and Isidoro Losada (2015), Bruce (2008), Ellner (2008, 2013) and Serbin (2010).

<sup>84</sup> The Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV, United Socialist Party of Venezuela).

<sup>85</sup> Fidel Castro provided him, like in the case of Allende in the early 1970s, with Cuban bodyguards.

<sup>86</sup> Díaz Polanco (2008: 17, 51-53). By 2005, Cuba had sent 30,000 doctors, dentists and paramedics; it promised to train 40,000 Venezuelan doctors and 5,000 medical specialists in Venezuela. In that year, by means of the Milagros mission, 100,000 Venezuelans had already been treated in Cuba. By the late 2000s, around 40,000 Cuban teachers, literacy experts, university professors, doctors, dentists, paramedical personnel and other experts were employed in Venezuela. In 2013, the year of Chávez’s death, that number increased to 50,000. For details about the Cuban – Venezuelan medical collaboration, see Kirk (2015).

leftist ideology of the 'military as emancipators of the nation', acting in the benefit of the entire nation, especially the poor, contributed to their institutional proud.

The appointment of the military to managing positions in the new missions, the public administration and the nationalized economy did increase their loyalty. It also helped that military salaries were increased and that popular access to the military and the militia's was enlarged. Between 2008 and 2015, the armed force's budget grew from 1.06 per cent to 4.61 per cent of the GDP. Military personnel grew from 117,400 in 2010 to 197,744 in 2014 (from 40 to 63 per 10,000 citizens). In 2015, the number of (auxiliary) people's militia's was 365,046, organized in hundred "integral defence areas".<sup>87</sup>

The social and political divide in Venezuela, already visible during Chávez' last years, became catastrophic under Maduro's presidency (2013 – present). Oppositional marches and wide-spread discontent were the consequence. After elections in January 2016 the opposition dominated parliament, but in May 2016 the government declared an emergency situation. Since then it has ruled by decree. Large opposition-led protest marches have become an almost daily occurrence. Civilian ministries and management functions have increasingly been transferred to the military.<sup>88</sup> Military officers in active service or in retirement occupy key cabinet positions. Important sectors and strategic public instruments like tax collection, budgeting, public contracts and tendering, purchases and acquisitions of the public sector, public imports, control over the public banks and the superintendence of banks, are managed by military officers as well.<sup>89</sup>

Maduro extended the system of selecting only fierce military loyalists. General Vladimir Padrino López, commander-in- chief in 2013, was made minister of defence in 2014. Confronted with political mayhem and economic calamity, Maduro issued an 'economic emergency decree' in July 2016, creating a super-mission for 'sovereign and safe supply', to be headed by his minister of defence. Currently, general Padrino is in charge of national defence and management of the national economy, at the same time overseeing all other social missions and acting as a kind of super-prime minister. As a consequence, senior members of the military are strongly intertwined with the socialist party.

### **3.4. New military missions and structures under civilian rule**

The context of regular elections and civilian rule also implied the need for redefining military missions. In general this signified a move towards conventional, non-political professionalism as most of the Latin American military sought new roles in an altered national, regional and global security environment. New missions referred to environmental issues, protection of the biodiversity, role expanding as key actors in 'civil defence' and assistance in natural disasters.<sup>90</sup> Emphasis is put as well on participation in peace missions. During the last decades, military contingents of many Latin American countries participated in foreign peace missions, operating under a United Nations mandate. These missions still continue today.<sup>91</sup> From 2004 on, Brazil and Chile headed the UN Stabili-

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87 According to RESDAL (2016: 210-215). See also Jácome (2011). Among analysts, there are huge discrepancies about the real number of militia's, their training and their armament.

88 For details, see Tablante (2016: 260-266).

89 For a recent analysis, see Ramos Pismataro and Rodríguez (2017).

90 In the majority of countries in the region these missions have a constitutional base (in Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru and Suriname) or at least a legal base (in Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela). Protection of the environment and assistance in the case of national disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, flood disasters and tsunamis) is considered to be a regular supporting role of the Latin American and Caribbean armed forces (Kruijt and Koonings 2013: 99).

91 Here a draw on Sanchez (2010). Probably the first Latin American peace mission was the Battalion Peru, an army unit dispatched by Peruvian President-General Velasco as peacekeepers after the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt.



zation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).<sup>92</sup> Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru created special peace keeping schools.<sup>93</sup>

In 2008, a new institution, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR by its acronym in Spanish) was created. In rivalry with the Inter-American Defence Board, the governing body of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, a South American Defense Council (CDS by its acronym in Spanish) was created by UNASUR's country members. In April 2015 UNASUR also founded the Escuela Suramericana de Defensa (ESUDE, South American Defence School), as antithesis of the former School of the Americas in the (then) American Canal Zone of Panama where Latin American officers were instructed between 1946 and 1984.<sup>94</sup> The Secretary General of the Board, former Colombian President Ernesto Samper, declared that "the South American Defence School is committed to develop its own doctrine aimed at ensuring peace."

## 4. Internal security missions and 'unconventional' counterinsurgency

In this last analytical section I examine the return of the military to missions of internal security. I begin with an overview of the internal security threats in many of the Latin American countries: increasing violence, new violence actors, and the normalcy of 'new warfare' within the national territory as part of the military profession. Especially in the case of drugs violence and the national policies of 'zero tolerance', this generally means a more proactive and often leading role of the military in police operations (see the subsections two and three).

### 4.1. Internal security risks

Many Latin American governments formally established internal security missions for the armed forces: Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.<sup>95</sup> Confronted with highly violent organised crime and drugs cartels, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico adopted presidential decrees and parliamentary legislation that issues the armed forces to assist the police, or even to take up the leading role in handling the internal security given the clear and present threat by the cartels and crime syndicates. This is part of the so-called 'new violence' in Latin America.

Redemocratisation in Latin America coincided with a prolonged economic crisis in the region, a shock from which it has been recovering during the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, a process of mass poverty materialised, strongly affecting the urban middle and labour classes. Its consequences became manifest in a class transformation where segments of impoverished and unprotected urban inhabitants and new urban migrants became informalised; seeking employment in low-quality jobs, making a living in the slum cities in the urban periphery, while being subjected to violence by 'non-state actors' as well as by state representatives of law and order.<sup>96</sup>

After the disappearance of the military dictatorships and the negotiated peace agreements in Central America, new, predominantly urban, violent actors emerged: gangs, urban vigilantes, organ-

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92 Brazil initially deployed 1,300 military, other Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) sent smaller contingents; around 9,000 Latin American soldiers participated.

93 The Latin American Association of Training Centers for Peace (ALCOPAZ by its Spanish acronyms) is based in Rio de Janeiro.

94 In August 2016, Bolivian President Evo Morales inaugurated the Anti-Imperialist Military School "Juan José Torres" for captains of the Bolivian, Ecuadorian, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan Armed Forces. Juan José Torres, progressive President-General of Bolivia (1970-1971) was murdered in exile in Argentina by death squads in 1976.

95 In the following three headings I draw on ideas in Kruijt and Koonings (2013) and the two first chapters of Koonings and Kruijt (2015).

96 See Ungar (2011).



ised crime, lynching parties, private security companies, and violent law enforcement agencies deploy violence and reproduce insecurity and fear in many Latin American urban areas.<sup>97</sup> Their emergence brought forth the establishment of extra-legal power and control of areas by gangs, drugs factions, or vigilantes.<sup>98</sup> The presence of drugs and the cultivation, transformation, commerce and smuggling of coca, poppy and marihuana led to a surge of violence by non-state and state actors that in some countries caused more victims than decades of civil war. This ‘new warfare’ didn’t remain limited to urban territories but quickly expanded to rural areas in Colombia, Central America and Mexico.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.2. The ‘War on Drugs’

Extreme drug-related violence is directly linked to the two Latin American countries that declared a ‘war on drugs’: Colombia and Mexico. It is also linked, but to a different degree, to coca- or cocaine-producing countries. When compared with Colombia, it is remarkable however that the region’s two other cocaine-producing countries (Bolivia and Peru), where coca producers are not immediately considered as state enemies, have experienced much less deadly violence. Brute force is also common in the countries that form the corridor between the Colombian and Mexican cartels and gangs: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. In these countries, drug-related organised crime is the major cause of murder, fear and political corruption.<sup>100</sup>

When the Mexican government declared its war on drugs in 2007 the number of homicides grew significantly within cartels of all sizes. ‘Mini-wars’ emerged at the local and regional level between Mexican cartels themselves, as well as between the Mexican law and security institutions and organised crime.<sup>101</sup> The Mexican cartels established ‘local’ branches in Guatemala and Honduras. In other countries, there has been a gradual merging of militarised mini-armies and armed youth gangs, criminal bands and local territorial militias. In Colombia, a diversity of armed actors (especially neo-paramilitary groups, criminal gangs and guerrilla forces) took power in disputed regions where intensive coca cultivation takes place.

It is common knowledge that drug money pervades the institutional fabric of society at most levels. The use of violence and intimidation induces or paralyzes action by civil servants and law enforcement officers in ways that suit the interests of violent actors. The ‘northern triangle’ of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) is probably the most affected region in terms of violence, weakened public institutions and infiltration of the economy, society and political system by organised crime. As in Mexico, criminal groups as well as youth gangs use brute force and violence as an operational culture, using carrot-and-stick tactics to dominate or to infiltrate. When con-

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<sup>97</sup> This has all been well documented in the scholarly literature and in reports of international agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other UN agencies. The UNDP report *Regional Human Development Report 2013–2014* (2013) again ascertained that Latin America was the only region with rising homicide rates between 2000 and 2010. Of the world’s ten deadliest cities indicated by the UNODC *Global Study on Homicide* (2013), only two are found outside Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>98</sup> About this complex situation, see Arias and Goldstein (2010), Durán-Martínez (2015), Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (2014), Gutiérrez Sanín and Peña Supelano (2009), Levenson (2013), Muggah (2012), Rodgers, Beall and Kanbur (2012), and Youngers and Rosin (2010).

<sup>99</sup> In terms of production, the situation in the three cocaine-producing Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia and Peru) has hardly changed; recently, Peru overtook Colombia, although by only a small margin, as the largest producer and exporter. Only in terms of consumption does the panorama vary. Traditionally, the principal markets were in the United States and the European Union (EU). However, consumption underwent a process of globalisation. At present, the level of consumption in Latin America’s metropolises is the same as that of the larger cities in Europe and the United States.

<sup>100</sup> Kruijt (2011: 35 ff.).

<sup>101</sup> In many countries, the groups behind organised crime are known as ‘mafias’: Brazilian mafias, Colombian mafias, and Venezuelan mafias.

fronted with resistance, extreme violence by enforcers is used against enemies and adversaries. For instance, local police officers are murdered. A more common tactic for cartels however is to systematically bribe local police and local public sector officials; to accommodate the power structures of local powerbrokers and mayors; and to infiltrate, as benefactors, local and regional social movements.<sup>102</sup>

### 4.3. Zero tolerance policies and American pressure

Democratically elected, civilian governments have categorised violence and crime as new national security threats. This is the result of two kinds of political pressure. The first is domestic: important constituencies, especially in middle- and lower classes, favour ‘zero tolerance’ policies (called *mano dura* in Spanish) to repress crime and impose order. This is eagerly exploited by politicians who use a discourse of punitive populism to win elections. This discourse taps into a widespread insecurity and fear that has taken hold of Latin American communities, especially in the cities and the popular neighbourhoods. The second source of pressure is international: the focus on prohibition of production and trade of narcotics in source- and transit countries as the key strategy of the American ‘war on drugs’. This has contributed to a permanent intertwining of American anti-drug agencies and national police and military forces, especially in the Andean countries, Central America and Mexico. It also implies a gradually increasing militaristic approach to the drug problem.

Combating drugs and their producing and trafficking organisations, characterised as ‘organised crime’ and ‘terrorists’, is strongly supported by the United States, by far the largest assistance provider in the region on security matters.<sup>103</sup> However, serious concerns exist about this policy’s positive result.<sup>104</sup> Military analysts and historians only perceive “minimal effects” and are concerned about the “blurring between internal security and national defence”.<sup>105</sup> Internally, the emphasis on the ‘war on drugs’ and the zero tolerance policy produces a serious by-effect: the persecution and mass arrests of small-scale offenders, such as petty criminals acting as retailers on the domestic markets in slums, often indigenous and black young male adults who are easily detained and sent to prison. Gradually, detention centres in the Americas, north and south of the Rio Grande, are becoming more populated by the poor and the underprivileged.<sup>106</sup>

Reluctantly or not, the absence of external warfare has led Latin American armed forces to fulfil a multiplicity of internal security missions: the military as provider of internal security; the military as a parallel police force; the military as the principal actor of internal warfare, be it against ‘terrorists’ or ‘organised crime’; the military as pacifier in slum wars, like in Medellín or Rio de Janeiro. Additionally, one can observe a reciprocal process: the militarisation of the police with ‘special police forces’ trained in urban warfare and armed with heavy weaponry. Some of the old and new missions can be interpreted as particular role extensions that can be considered politically risky.

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<sup>102</sup> For the social and political consequences, see the studies of Aguayo Quezada and Benítez Manaut (2010), Briscoe, Perdomo and Uribe Burcher (2014), Felbab-Brown (2010), Garzón (2008), Kruijt (2011), López Hernández (2010), Mazitelli (2012), Pantsters (2012), Sierra Guzmán (2003), Thoumi (2003, 2010), Williams and Felbab-Brown (2012), and Vellinga (2004).

<sup>103</sup> See Crandall (2006) and Fukumi (2008).

<sup>104</sup> See Bagley and Tokatlian (2007) and Valenzuela (2007).

<sup>105</sup> Bruneau (2013: 158) concludes his article on the effects of the American military assistance writing that “In my view, the likelihood of these programmes’ success, beyond the nebulous justification of ‘engagement’, is minimal” And Loveman (2006: 256-257) justifiably concludes that American assistance policies on security implanted in the region the idea of “new threats, the expansion of global terrorism, transnational organized crime, and worldwide drug trafficking”. He even considers a second consequence as more serious: “that new threats demand removing the separation between internal security and external defence: the work of the police, security agencies, and armed forces should overlap and (...) the lines between police and military functions effectively erased”.

<sup>106</sup> See Gottschalk (2015) and Hinton (2016) for the United States and Garces, Darke, Duno-Gottberg and Antillano (2017), Müller (2013; 2016) and Weegels (2017) for Latin America.

## Conclusions and Reflections: between professionalism and political involvement

In the four previous sections I explored the continuity and evolution of the Latin American military from colonial times to the present, while emphasising the period between the second half of the twentieth century to the present. In the first section of this paper I examined several characteristics of the military: to begin with, the relative trimness of the armed forces and the preponderant weight of the army in comparison with the navy and the air force; the relative absence of inter-state wars after independence in the early nineteenth century and the many frontier conflicts in the twentieth century. I also pointed out that the military has regularly felt inclined to establish voluminous paramilitary contingents in periods of 'internal armed conflicts' and civil wars. I ended with the influence of European instructors and military missions before the Second World War, followed by the dominance of the United States with respect to training and equipment. During the entire twentieth century, the United States has also had a long history of military and paramilitary interventions in the Latin American region.

The core subject of this contribution is the evaluation of a double paradox. Firstly there is the continuous involvement with both external *and* internal security, sometimes due to a freely interpreted role-extension by the military establishment, and in other periods at the explicit request or at least approval of elected governments. In fact, Latin America has a tradition of attributing tasks and missions to the military that go beyond defence against external threats. Secondly, we have seen that there are two rivalling tendencies within the officer's corps: to function as professional armed forces with the ethos of obedience, courage, abnegation and patriotism, and at the same time to act as saviours of the nation in times of crisis, thus getting explicitly involved in politics and national development. This was elaborated upon in sections two and three.

Latin America and the Caribbean are now ruled by elected governments. The legacy of decades-long civil wars and dictatorships are memories of the past. The past decades of democratic rule have meant that important changes were made with respect to the security agenda for Latin America. For instance, Cuba and the United States normalised their relations in 2015 leading many observers to finally declare the official end of the Cold War. In Colombia, the government and the FARC made peace in 2016 and at present the government and the ELN are negotiating in Quito. In the entire region, the Latin American military operates under the command of legal and legitimate governments without developing other agendas than those prescribed or solicited by their national governments. But are the members of the armed forces only 'citizens in uniform' or a kind of 'citizens-plus'?

One way to find out more about the position of the military in present-day Latin American society is by taking a look at Latinobarómetro's public opinion polls in the region (which have been carried out consistently during the past twenty years). These show that the confidence in institutions is, in descending order<sup>107</sup>: (1) the churches with 66 per cent; (2) the armed forces with 50 per cent; (3) the police with 38 per cent; (4) the electoral institutions with 32 per cent; (5) the government with 26 per cent; (6) the judiciary with 28 per cent; (7) the parliament with 25 per cent; and (8) the political parties with 17 per cent. The two institutions of public security thus enjoy twice as much trust from the public than parliament and political parties.

The conquest of the Caribbean islands and subsequently the entire Latin American region was embarked on as a military-religious mission. For centuries bishops and generals used to perform

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<sup>107</sup> The order is calculated on the base of the average scores between 1995 and 2016; the scores of 2016 are mentioned in the text (Latinobarómetro 2016: 32-33).

political functions, and interestingly enough today the church and military are the only two institutions in which the general public has confidence. Can we thus say for sure that the armed forces have finally stopped worrying about the fate of their nations? Or is Latin America still the continent where church- and military leaders take a political stance? Taking all the above into account we can conclude that the next half century bishops, pastors and generals will continue to be 'more equal than others' in Latin America.

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