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**THREATS TO BRAZILIAN
DEMOCRACY:
POLITIZATION OF THE
ARMED FORCES AND
THE RISKS TO THE
DEMOCRATIC STATE**

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Abstract: This essay explores the influence of the Armed Forces on Brazilian politics and the risks that this politicization can entail for democracy. The context of recent presidential elections and the history of military politicization and the prospect of military intervention in the electoral process highlight challenges faced by the Brazilian democratic system. The country's political culture, with its history of strong politicization of the Armed Forces, often associated with actions that are harmful to democracy, increases the concern regarding the resurgence of the possibility of military intervention in elections. Given this scenario, the objective of this study is to analyze the risks of politicization of the Armed Forces for democracy and to investigate measures to ensure its depoliticization, aiming to maintain the impartiality and prestige that its professionalism deserves. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between the Armed Forces and politics in order to safeguard democratic integrity. It highlights the importance of analyzing the political influence in the Armed Forces before and after redemocratization, as part of an effort to sustain democratic stability in the country. In view of this, the measures necessary to avoid setbacks in democratic achievements are highlighted. Ultimately, the depoliticization of the Armed Forces emerges as a crucial factor for the maintenance and strengthening of Brazilian democracy.

Keywords: Politicization; Armed forces; Democracy; Military intervention; Political stability

INTRODUCTION

The presidential elections in Brazil have reignited the debate on the politicization of the Armed Forces. Given the country's political culture, marked by a history of intense military politicization often linked to actions that threatened democracy, the resurgence of

the possibility of military intervention in the electoral process highlights the risks that this situation imposes on the democratic state.

The electoral defeat of the Captain of the Brazilian Army reserve, notorious for having considerably increased the presence of soldiers in civilian positions, combined with frequent attacks on the country's electoral system, may have contributed to the emergence of a movement led by civil society groups. These groups established camps in front of barracks, demanding military intervention in the electoral results. This sequence of events culminated in the arrest of hundreds of individuals and the dismissal of the Chief of the Brazilian Army.

The scenario outlined may have had its roots from 2013, as pointed out by Avritzer (2018). Since then, widespread popular dissatisfaction with politics and its representatives has resulted in demonstrations that have influenced the population's perception of democracy. Although Brazil initially did not seem vulnerable to significant risks to its regime (DIAMOND, 2015), the situation created fertile ground for the growth of voices critical of democracy.

According to Duarte's (2021) analysis, the rise of the far-right authoritarian political movement played a significant role in Brazilian politics. This enabled the election of Federal Deputy Jair Bolsonaro to the Presidency, with substantial implications for the democratic health of the country. The movement exploited the growing popular dissatisfaction with traditional politics, generating distrust in Brazilian democracy. Arguments against Bolsonaro's candidacy emerged, pointing out the risk it represented for democracy in Brazil (PONTES, 2020).

After the election, concern about the far-right authoritarian movement grew considerably. This movement, initially aligned with democratic principles, was

instrumentalized to challenge institutions, including the Brazilian Supreme Court, generating impasses in the relations between powers and intensifying attacks on the democratic structure (DE SOUZA NETO, 2021).

The appointment of military personnel to prominent positions in the government by Bolsonaro, under the pretext of technical competence, suggests an intention to re-establish a connection between the military and politics. However, the rapprochement between these sectors raises questions about the implications of this interaction. This raises questions about the possible consequences of this relationship and its impact on the democratic stability achieved in recent decades.

The absence of a public position from the President after his defeat in the elections, combined with the constant questioning about the reliability of the electoral process, fueled doubts about the results. This gave rise to a movement of civil society groups that sought refuge in the barracks, seeking military intervention in the outcome of the elections. This highlights the complexity of civil-military relations and the possible implications of these actions for democratic stability.

Considering the growing military influence in Brazilian politics, with an increase in military personnel in civilian positions and involvement in electoral discussions, the question arose: how does the growing influence of the Armed Forces in Brazilian politics, evidenced by the increase in military personnel in civilian positions and involvement in discussions elections, could they pose a risk to democracy?

This study starts from the hypothesis that the increased influence of the armed forces in Brazilian politics may threaten the advances obtained since the 1988 re-democratization,

due to the military's history of interference in democratic institutions.

The problem is relevant and current, especially in the post-redemocratization Brazilian political context. Democratic institutions faced several challenges in this period, and military influence in politics is one of those challenges. The growing presence of military personnel in government positions and their involvement in political and social issues raise concerns about possible setbacks in the country's democratic achievements.

To answer this question, this study established as a general objective to analyze the consequences of the growing influence of the armed forces in Brazilian politics, seeking to understand the impacts of this phenomenon on the democratic state. As specific objectives, it is proposed to identify the main forms of influence of the armed forces in Brazilian politics, examining the role of these military institutions before and after redemocratization; identify the main areas of action of the armed forces in politics, with emphasis on recent years; analyze the political and institutional implications of the growing participation of the armed forces in strategic government positions, in order to understand the possible consequences of this influence for Brazilian democracy; and identify measures that can be taken to prevent the politicization of the armed forces, as a means of strengthening democracy.

Therefore, exploring the risks and consequences of the growing influence of the armed forces in politics is fundamental to understanding the impacts of this phenomenon on democracy. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify and discuss solutions and measures that guarantee the preservation of democratic institutions in the face of this trend. The research seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of the relationship between the armed forces and politics in

Brazil, contributing to the promotion and strengthening of a democratic society.

The methodology adopted to achieve these goals involved a systematic review of the literature on the role of the armed forces in politics and its consequences for democracy. The study had Samuel P. Huntington's theory as a theoretical framework and dialogues with the reflections of Robert Dahl and José Álvaro Moisés. Relevant articles published in the last 10 years in Portuguese, English and Spanish were selected through academic databases such as Google Scholar and databases of scientific journals. At the end, the results will be presented through a critical analysis and conclusions based on the data and literature studied.

INFLUENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN POLITICS

The dynamics of democratization waves outlined by Huntington (1994) reveal the historical oscillation between moments of democratic expansion and authoritarian retraction. After the first "long wave" (1828-1926) and the second "short wave" (1943-1962), the world entered the "third wave" of democratization from 1974 onwards. reverses", the first between 1922 and 1942 and the second between 1958 and 1975. In chapter 6 of "The Third Wave: Democratization at the End of the Twentieth Century", Huntington (1994) raises an intriguing question: will the end of the third democratic wave will give rise to a third reverse wave, reversing the hard-won democratic gains?

This questioning spurred researchers like Larry Diamond to look for evidence of a possible third reverse wave. While Diamond was investigating the state of global democracy and its indicators of growth, stability and decay, in Brazil, José Álvaro Moisés turned his attention to the redemocratization of 1988. His research, present in the book "Os

Brasileiros e a Democracia", analyzed the quality of democracy based on data collected between 1989 and 1993. Although Huntington (1994) did not list the depoliticization of the armed forces as a factor of democratization, his work suggests a correlation between the fall or weakening of authoritarian regimes and military depoliticization.

This study focuses on the risks of the politicization of the armed forces for Brazilian democracy, contextualized by the 1988 transition process. The peaceful transition in that year represented an agreement between the military and civilian representatives, in which the Armed Forces weighed the costs and benefits of continue in power. Moisés (1995) argues that the democratic regime depends on a fundamental agreement between political actors for the peaceful dispute of power. The Brazilian Armed Forces, despite agreeing with the transition, maintained political prerogatives due to their previous politicization.

Given the history of oscillation between democracy and authoritarianism, the relationship between the armed forces and politics must be analyzed, both in the period prior to re-democratization and after 1988. Understanding the dynamics of this relationship is vital to assess the lasting stability of Brazilian democracy in the face of the challenge of avoiding setbacks and ensuring peaceful coexistence between the military and civil society.

According to Huntington (1994), although it is not possible to attribute the democratization of authoritarian countries in the 1970s and 1980s to a single isolated cause, it is feasible to identify a series of factors that contributed to this process and that recurred in many of the nations involved. Among these factors are:

(...) higher levels of economic well-being (most important of all), leading to greater

literacy, education and urbanization, the growth of the middle class and the development of values and attitudes favorable to democracy; changes in both the rank and file of the Catholic Church, leading the Church to oppose authoritarian regimes and support democracy; the new policies in favor of democratic development by the European Community, the United States and, in the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union; and the snowball effects that the emergence of democratic regimes in leading countries such as Spain, Argentina, the Philippines and Poland has had on the strengthening of democratic movements in other countries. (HUNTINGTON, 1994, p. 111)

Even though Huntington has not explicitly mentioned the depoliticization of the armed forces as one of the elements that contributed to the democratization process, it is evident in his work that this depoliticization is intrinsically linked to the fall or weakening of authoritarian regimes. This relationship becomes clear when he includes among the common causes that influenced democratization:

(...) the diffusion of democratic norms globally and in many countries particularly; the resulting general lack of ideology-based legitimacy for authoritarian regimes other than one-party ones: military defeats; economic problems and failures stemming from the OPEC oil shocks, Marxist-Leninist ideology and misguided and inefficient economic policies; success in certain goals, reducing the need for the regime (such as the overthrow of guerrilla rebellions) or intensifying social tensions and demands for political participation (as with very rapid economic growth); the development of divisions within the dominant coalitions in authoritarian regimes, particularly in military regimes, with the politicization of the Armed Forces; and the snowball effects that the fall of authoritarian regime sieges have on the confidence of rulers and opposition in other authoritarian countries. (HUNTINGTON, 1994, p. 110-111)

Despite Huntington pointing out several

factors that contributed to the process of democratization in the third wave, as well as several factors that must be observed for democracies to avoid the third reverse wave, the object of this research was delimited to the risks that the politicization of the armed forces can represent for Brazilian democracy.

The author proposes that the depoliticization of the armed forces is one of the measures that democratic governments need to adopt as a way to minimize the risk of resumption of authoritarian governments. Huntington makes constant reference to the Brazilian transition of 1988 as having been peaceful, characterized by an agreement between the armed forces that represented the authoritarian regime and the civilians that proposed what Moisés classifies as “liberalization”, resulting in Brazilian redemocratization.

Dahl (2012), in his proposal that the states have not yet reached the democratic regime, but the regimes by Polyarchy, proposes that these agreements are made when the political leaders involved outweigh the cost benefit of accepting the agreement of alternation in power or impose itself on the other side. The author argues that both opposition and situation use this metric, considering that the situation may have its legitimacy shaken and not feel strong enough to confront the opposition, or the opposite, the opposition interprets that the situation is strong enough to prevail in a confrontation outside the democratic field.

It is possible to identify that the Brazilian Armed Forces, in the 1988 transition process, considering the social context of that historical moment, pondered whether it would be more feasible to compose with the political group that represented civil society than to maintain the struggle for the maintenance of power.

In line with Dahl's proposition and in agreement with what was proposed by

Huntington, Moisés (1995) defended, in a research that had as its object the transition from an authoritarian regime to Brazilian democracy in 1988, that the “democratic regime presupposes an agreement fundamental among political actors regarding the peaceful dispute for power”, which corroborates the idea that the Brazilian Armed Forces agreed with the redemocratization of 1988.

In his results, the author identified the ‘rejection of the military and adherence to democracy’, which indicates that, based on the evaluation system proposed by Dahl, the Brazilian Armed Forces agreed with the transition, but that does not mean that they have given up of power. Moisés (1995) argued that the military retained “a wide range of prerogatives over governments, democratic institutions, and political processes” due to its past politicization.

Considering that the relationship between the armed forces and politics is a factor to be observed to avoid a reversal of democracy, it is important to analyze the political influence in the armed forces both before and after the 1988 redemocratization. As a result of an agreement between the military and political groups representing civil society, understanding this dynamic can be fundamental to assessing the sustainability of democracy in Brazil.

ACTION OF THE ARMED FORCES IN POLITICS

During the period of the military regime, which lasted in Brazil from 1964 to 1985, the country’s armed forces held a series of extensive political prerogatives. This included not only the ability to intervene in government, but also control over internal national security. Playing a central role in the political sphere, the armed forces came to directly assume command of the government, resulting in the suppression of civil and political rights of Brazilian citizens. In addition to this role,

the military also maintained control over vital areas of public administration such as internal security, education, and infrastructure.

On March 31, 1964, the coup d’état took place, led by high-ranking military personnel from the armed forces, which resulted in the deposition of President João Goulart. Although it was justified and presented as a measure to “preserve democracy and contain corruption and communism”, its true nature consisted of an effort to seize the reins of government and prolong the rule for more than two decades (DIAS, 2015).

Promulgated during the period of the military regime in Brazil, the 1967 Constitution represented a point of reference in the political trajectory of the country. Although there have been few changes in relation to previous constitutions, certain changes of great relevance have been introduced. As observed by Mathias (2010), one of the central innovations of the 1967 Constitution was the granting of the *status* of regular entities to the Armed Forces. This recognition differentiated them from similarly organized military groups that were independent of state command, such as paramilitary groups. This transformation reflected the military forces’ desire to maintain dominance over state institutions and ensure political stability.

The author identified a second modification, which consisted of replacing the expression “constitutional powers” with the phrase “constituted powers”. This alteration signaled the perspective of the military that it was their responsibility to ensure order and political stability, regardless of the legality of the constituted powers. This perspective strengthened the conception that the military must play an active role in the country’s political sphere, implying that they placed themselves above the restrictions imposed by the Constitution and laws. The 1967 Constitution characterized a period marked

by remarkable military influence on national politics, reflecting the view of the armed forces that it was up to them to preserve order and political stability, even if this implied the restriction of civil rights and freedoms.

However, the most impactful transformations that allowed the Brazilian Armed Forces to consolidate their dominance took place through Constitutional Amendment No. 1 of 1969, widely considered a new Constitutional Charter. This amendment gave the military a crucial political role, significantly expanding its attributions and designating them as “essential to the execution of the national defense policy”. This resulted in a substantial increase in its ability to act, supported by a legal basis (MATHIAS, 2010).

In addition, it was the Institutional Acts that provided the Armed Forces with the formulation and implementation of legal mechanisms for consolidating their power. Institutional Act Number 05 of 1968 constituted a set of measures that granted the Chief of the Federal Executive the authority not to be obliged to obey the provisions of the 1967 Constitution. 10 years, as well as the dismissal of elective mandates”.

Considering that the leadership of the executive power was in the hands of representatives of the Armed Forces, the consolidation of a considerable accumulation of political power under the control of the military was remarkable, prevailing over all the rights and guarantees conquered by the citizens until then. This situation evidenced an excessive politicization of the Armed Forces during this period in Brazil.

However, even though the military movement received support from certain segments of civil society, over time, as the regime faced challenges in the country's governance and went through institutional pressures, including the decrease in support from some sectors of society civil service,

the Brazilian Armed Forces agreed, in 1985, with the beginning of the redemocratization process that culminated in the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution (MOISÉS, 1995).

The 1988 Constitution, shaped during the redemocratization process, emerged from extensive debates and deliberations in the National Constituent Assembly, which involved not only the Armed Forces, but also various segments of society. Although there was an effort to minimize conflicts with the military, the constitutional text endeavored to establish a balance between the responsibilities of the Armed Forces and the need to preserve democracy.

The content of the 1988 Constitution brought with it a set of legal elements that resulted in the reduction of military politicization, such as the prohibition of the participation of military personnel in political positions and the reduction of the role of the Armed Forces in the scope of internal security. Additionally, the Magna Carta established external supervision of the Armed Forces by the National Congress, through a joint parliamentary commission of inquiry (CPMI), and established the subjection of the military to common criminal jurisdiction in cases of transgressions against civilians.

This way, the 1988 Constitution had as its primary objective to ensure a defined separation between the functions of the Armed Forces and the political domain, consolidating democratic principles and respect for human rights in the Brazilian scenario. Since then, governments that followed the redemocratization process have endeavored to reduce the influence of the military in the country's political conduct, often limiting or, in certain periods, eliminating their participation in political matters.

However, in 2018, through a process of democratic elections, Brazil witnessed the arrival of a Reserve Captain of the Armed

Forces to the Presidency of the Republic, accompanied by both reserve and active military personnel who entered the political sphere. This indicated that the country began to follow the opposite path to that of the depoliticization of the Armed Forces, restarting a process of greater military involvement in politics.

The Technical Note from the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea), prepared by Flávia de Holanda Schmidt and released in 2022, highlighted a change in the distribution of positions held from 2019, when Jair Bolsonaro's mandate began. At levels 5 and 6, which represent positions of greater decision-making authority, there was a significant increase in the percentages of occupancy by military personnel. In addition, the analysis pointed out that the Government area recorded a strong presence of the military in the development of public policies.

The Technical Note also identified that certain government sectors, such as the Ministry of Economy, experienced a considerable increase in the participation of military personnel in their staff, with notable percentage increases, such as 8300.0%, and 2000.0% in the Ministry of Environment. These data show a resurgence of the phenomenon of politicization of the Armed Forces in Brazil, from the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency.

According to data collected by Flávia de Holanda Schmidt, there was a substantial increase in the number of first and second-level positions from 2019 onwards, which concentrate considerable political-administrative power. These positions include ministers of state and executive secretaries of ministries, having doubled in number since that year, with small increments in subsequent years of analysis.

In addition to the notable expansion of the military contingent in civilian positions

throughout his administration, the then President of the Republic also appointed military personnel to lead portfolios reserved for the highest levels of government. These portfolios included the Institutional Security Office, the Government Secretariat, the Ministries of Defense, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Transparency and Comptroller General of the Union, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Mines and Energy. During his term of office, civilians were replaced by soldiers in the administration of the Ministries of Health and Education.

During the four years of Jair Bolsonaro's mandate, what was seen in Brazil was a growing trajectory in opposition to the depoliticization of the Armed Forces, which could rekindle the desire of certain segments of civil society for military intervention, if the political path adopted according to their interests. In other words, if expectations, according to the metric proposed by Dahl, turn out to be no longer worth it.

After the end of the mandate and the attempt to be re-elected to the position of Chief Executive in the 2022 elections, after the proclamation of the defeat at the polls of the candidate associated with military interests in Brazilian politics, a movement emerged on the part of the military wing that attracted the attention and stimulated the formation of movements from different sectors of civil society. These movements seek military intervention as a means of contesting the election results. As a result, groups of people gathered in front of barracks asking for intervention by the Armed Forces in the electoral process. These movements were fueled, in large part, by the strategy of discrediting the Brazilian electoral system, which was widely used throughout the election period for the position of Chief Executive.

An indicator of the beginning of the

impacts of the politicization of the Brazilian Armed Forces materialized in the refusal of the military to adopt an unequivocal posture of non-involvement in that political context. On the other hand, they began to issue ambiguous statements regarding their positions, which resulted in ambivalent interpretations by the Bolsonarist movement, which sought to intervene in the elections.

Despite the issuance of a note by the Ministry of Defense that rejected the feasibility of irregularities based on the analysis of ballot papers, the report expressed the folder's dissatisfaction with the participation of the military in supervising phases of the electoral process. This situation contributed to strengthen the segments of civil society that question the authenticity of that election.

The positions adopted by the Brazilian Army were interpreted as indications that the Armed Forces could be preparing an intervention in the electoral results. An example of this is the Note to the Press issued to deny a report by the *Estadão* that claimed that the military had accepted the results of the polls. Although the note aimed to clarify supposedly untrue information, its response to the article may have contributed to reinforce, among emotionally inflamed groups, the perception that the Armed Forces of Brazil would not be willing to accept the outcome of the elections.

Interestingly or not, the Brazilian Army, which held the highest proportion of military personnel in commissioned positions (appointed by the Chief Executive) during the Jair Bolsonaro government, has emerged as one of the three Armed Forces institutions most associated with the movement to contest the electoral results. This scenario culminated in the dismissal of its commander on January 21, 2022, a measure officially announced by the Ministry of Defense.

After the change in command of the

Brazilian Army, there was a notable reduction in institutional tensions and a decrease in movements by civil society groups seeking military intervention. It is worth mentioning that this substitution cannot be identified as the only cause, nor the main one, since the institutions had already adopted measures to demobilize the movements after the events of January 8, 2022, known as Antidemocratic Attacks. However, this change of command can be seen as a significant time frame that contributed to the decline of institutional animosity towards the election results.

The 2019 military movement, so named based on the indicator of the growing accession of military personnel to strategic government functions, as well as its relationship, albeit indirect, with movements contrary to the electoral process, bears similarities with other historical events of a similar nature.

History offers us a valuable lesson on the politicization of the Armed Forces in Brazil. The period in which the Armed Forces took control of the government in 1964 and maintained this intervention until redemocratization in 1985 had a profound impact on Brazilian democracy for twenty-one years. The transition to redemocratization, although friendly, represented a significant reduction in this politicization, as suggested by Huntington (1994). This historical period highlights how excessive military influence in politics can have long-lasting and complex effects on a country's democratic stability.

In the world, a relevant example is that of Adolf Hitler, who served as a German soldier in World War I, being awarded the Iron Cross second and first classes for his bravery in combat. This context led him to be part of an authoritarian movement that emerged from the politicization of the German Armed Forces, culminating in the emergence of Nazism. This case can be associated with the feeling that the agreements established

by the German political leaders at the end of the First World War were no longer being considered advantageous, which opened the way for a military rise in the country, as part of a movement that rejected the previously established terms, agreed and sought new solutions, however extreme. This historical example underscores how the politicization of the Armed Forces and the breakdown of political agreements can have profound and even catastrophic consequences for a country's stability and democracy.

A parallel can be seen in Russia with the case of Josef Stalin, who emerged as the leader of an authoritarian government with intense politicization of the Russian Armed Forces during a similar period. Stalin also had military experience during World War I and later led the rise of a movement that resulted in authoritarian, centralized government. As in Germany, the situation in Russia can be interpreted as reflecting the perception that the agreements made by Russian political leadership after the First World War were no longer being satisfactory or beneficial. This created a favorable environment for the strengthening of military forces and for the emergence of authoritarian leaderships that sought a radical change in political and social conditions.

In Brazil, the trajectory of General Castelo Branco in Brazil offers another example of how the politicization of the Armed Forces can have an impact on the political dynamics of a country. His participation in the 1964 intervention and subsequent government reflects the complex relationship between military history and Brazilian politics. His involvement as a leader of the military intervention can be seen as a response to the perception that the post-Vargas era agreements and political stability did not meet the aspirations of certain military sectors. This situation led to the 1964 coup,

which culminated in the Armed Forces taking power.

As happened in Germany and Russia, the Castelo Branco case highlights how the politicization of the Armed Forces can be influenced by the feeling that existing political agreements are no longer satisfactory or do not represent the interests of the Armed Forces.

Overall, these historical examples highlight the complexity of the relationship between the Armed Forces and politics in different countries and times. The politicization of the Armed Forces can be influenced by a number of factors, including changes in political arrangements, internal grievances and institutional identity issues, and can have profound impacts on national political trajectories.

By all indications, the rise of a Captain from the reserve of the Brazilian Army, who also served on active duty during the 1985 re-democratization, can be interpreted as influenced by the feeling that the agreements reached by groups of Brazilian political leaders in 1985 were no longer being considered advantageous. Jair Bolsonaro gained national prominence by defending the increase in the salaries of army officers, who had been suffering a delay. This action was pointed out by the military wing as a maneuver to weaken the Armed Forces by the José Sarney government, which fed the dream of a return of General Figueiredo to power.

However, the retired captain was arrested for publishing an article that criticized the position of the Brazilian Army. He was also appointed as the mentor of the "Dead End" terrorist plan, which consisted of setting up bombs in barracks as a protest against the military's stance during the redemocratization process (PONTES, 2020).

Considering that the then-elected President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, expressed

criticism of the 1985 redemocratization and the performance of the Brazilian Army during this process, in addition to his history as a defender of the strengthening of officers, added to the significant increase in the number of military personnel occupying civilian positions in his government and the positioning of a wing of the Army in relation to the result of the elections, which represented its defeat, it is possible to affirm that, within the concept of democracy proposed by Moisés, the group represented by the reserve captain no longer saw viability in the agreements established by the political leaderships that led to the redemocratization of 1985. This could indicate projects to reestablish a new form of access to power, representing a potential risk for democracy.

MEASURES TO AVOID THE POLITIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

According to Huntington (1994), the politicization of the armed forces is a common occurrence in countries that have undergone a reversal in the democratization process, representing one of the issues that require attention to ensure the continuity of the democratic state. For Moisés (1995), political culture plays a key role in providing the appropriate context for liberalizations. In Brazilian political culture, civil society groups persist that see in the Armed Forces a potential solution to challenges unresolved by democracy.

As pointed out by Moisés (1995), Brazil went through a separation from the notion that the country's social problems were intrinsically related to the regime, evolving to the perception that these issues were more related to the current government. This allowed for the replacement of the person in charge in the next elections, indicating a strengthening of democracy in the country.

While this trend has faded over time, there has been a resurgence of the feeling that the military could provide answers to identified challenges in democracy, even if not directly related to the regime.

As of 2019, however, this scenario underwent a transformation with the resurgence of the politicization of the Brazilian Armed Forces, evidenced by the increase in the number of military personnel occupying strategic functions in the government. This politicization became more evident when the Brazilian Army became the epicenter of political debates in the 2022 elections, leading several civil society groups to gather in front of the barracks, calling for military intervention in the electoral process.

During the presidential term, there was an increase in attacks on institutions and the electoral system, denoting the adoption of the strategy identified by Huntington (1994) and employed by authoritarian governments: the deliberate weakening of institutions. In this same context, Avritzer (2018) argues that authoritarian governments weaken democratic structures through mechanisms of power concentration, such as the suppression of freedom of the press, the criminalization of political opposition and the mining of civil rights. Furthermore, authoritarian governments tend to undermine control and oversight institutions, such as the judiciary and regulatory agencies. These practices make the political system more vulnerable, weaken democracy itself, and pave the way for the emergence of authoritarian regimes.

On the risks of politicizing the Armed Forces Huntington states that:

The problem of dealing with the criminal actions of authoritarian officials overlapped with another, broader, more enduring, and politically more serious problem faced by many new democracies—the need to tame the political power of the military establishment and the country's external *security*. The

civil-military problems of new democracies took one of three forms, depending on the type of authoritarian regime, the power of the military *establishment*, and the nature of the transition process. (Huntington, 1994, p. 228).

In this study, the perspective was adopted that the authoritarian regime in force between 1964 and 1985 in Brazil assumed a predominantly military characteristic, marked by the significant presence of the Armed Forces. In addition, it was observed that the process of transition to democracy occurred in a peaceful manner. In this context, considering that the politicization of the Armed Forces can serve as a mechanism for strengthening authoritarianism, it becomes extremely important to identify strategies that can control this phenomenon, in order to preserve the stability of democracy.

According to Huntington:

In countries with weak and depoliticized militaries, the functioning of democracy reduced, over time, the number of coup attempts. In countries with strong military establishments and a strong cooperative spirit, the functioning of democracy has been reducing, over time, the powers and privileges of the military inherited from the authoritarian government. In both situations, the development of a “normal” pattern of civil-military relations was significantly affected by the policies and actions of the new democratic governments with respect to their Armed Forces. (Huntington, 1994, p. 238-239)

Considering the proposition that the depoliticization of the Armed Forces contributes to the strengthening and maintenance of democracy, Huntington identified that “programs that combined punishments and stimuli affected aspects of the military establishment”. The purpose of these programs was to draw military personnel away from non-military activities and “to ensure that they have the *status* and

respect their professionalism deserves.”

Based on the action guide for democracies to promote military professionalism through strategies proposed by Huntington (1994, p. 247-248), Brazil can adopt the following measures for the depoliticization of the Brazilian Armed Forces:

- Prepare a technical study on the feasibility of transferring officers who may represent a risk to democracy to the reserve;
- Punish, according to the legislation, the military who have been involved in movements contrary to the democratic State;
- Promote a restructuring of the chain of command in the Armed Forces, designating officers who have historically shown respect for the idea that the civilian head of government is the commander of the military;
- Reduce the size of the military forces to adapt them to the real needs of the country;
- Use resources saved from restructuring to increase military salaries, pensions and benefits and improve their living conditions;
- Reorient military forces towards exclusively military missions;
- Decrease the number of troops stationed in capitals and large centers, moving them to the borders;
- Adapt the Armed Forces to the new technologies and instruments necessary for military activities;
- Demonstrate identification and gratitude for the Armed Forces, bestowing homage and honors on its officers and making it clear that the military embodies the nation’s highest values;

- Develop and maintain a political organization capable of mobilizing democracy advocates against possible military coups.

Adopting such measures, even without guarantees that the result will be the depoliticization of the Armed Forces, according to Huntington, will undoubtedly remove the military from activities that are not related to their institutional functions and will be able to assure them the status and respect *that* their professionalism deserves, removing the risks that the politicization of the military can bring to democracy.

CONCLUSION

The politicization of the Armed Forces represents a significant risk for democracies, being considered one of the variables that can trigger reverse waves in countries that have gone through democratization processes. The Brazilian political trajectory shows a long history of politicization of the Armed Forces since the time of the Republic, indicating the persistent challenges in maintaining and consolidating democracy in the country.

It is crucial to recognize that institutional

setbacks and democratic instability in Brazil cannot be solely attributed to military involvement in politics. Numerous other factors play determining roles in these events. However, it is undeniable that the depoliticization of the Armed Forces could act as a containment factor, preventing military groups inclined towards authoritarianism from interfering in the democratic system.

The recent case of Brazil, with its oscillation in relation to the depoliticization of the Armed Forces, vividly illustrates the risks associated with the politicization of these institutions. In the previous government, there was a notable increase in military participation in civilian positions, resulting in a growing call for military intervention by civil society groups during electoral processes.

Taking into consideration, the Brazilian political culture and the remarkable history of military interventions harmful to democracy, it is imperative to adopt strategic measures for the depoliticization of the Armed Forces in the country. This will ensure that the Armed Forces maintain their professionalism and integrity, while strengthening the stability and consolidation of Brazilian democracy.

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