



REVIEW

MILITARY AND POLITICS IN BRAZIL

MILITARES E POLÍTICA NO BRASIL

MILITARES Y POLÍTICA EN BRASIL

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INTRODUCTION

The book “Militares e Política no Brasil” (Military and Politics in Brazil) presents itself as an essential study for understanding the complex relationship between the Armed Forces and national politics throughout Brazilian history. The authors — Jefferson Rodrigues Barbosa, Leandro Pereira Gonçalves, Marly de Almeida Gomes Vianna, and Paulo Ribeiro da Cunha (eds.) — investigate the intersections between the military and political processes, addressing both the periods of dictatorship and the subsequent democratic regimes.

This review will explore the key arguments and contributions of the book, as well as their implications for understanding contemporary Brazilian politics. It will examine the role of the military in Brazilian political life, analyzing the relationship between the Armed Forces and the government from a historical perspective to future outlooks. The book offers a deep and comprehensive analysis of the military’s involvement in Brazilian politics, underscoring the importance of dialogue and the construction of a balanced and respectful relationship between the Armed Forces and civil society.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK

The author of the aforementioned work, along with the contributing co-authors, identifies that the Armed Forces have never been absent from Brazil’s political history. This enduring presence demonstrates that the military is neither apolitical nor politically disengaged. On the contrary, the military has historically occupied a central role in political power. With the establishment of the Republic, political disputes arose among various military factions—whose presence in the constituent congress once reached a quarter of its members—marking the beginning of a contradictory and lasting intervention in Brazilian politics, a proximity that continues to the present day.

Furthermore, “Militares e Política no Brasil” brings together contributions from scholars dedicated to the subject, offering a historical overview from the formation of the Armed Forces to their current role in society. The book emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between this institution and national political life, aiming to reveal the different ideological tendencies and political positions that exist within the military. These tendencies have been historically present within political parties—both left and right—and have also manifested in illegal acts carried out by military personnel aligned with the dictatorship, such as the Riocentro bombing in the early 1980s, among others, with ongoing relevance today. The book also highlights the military’s involvement in scientific research, humanitarian missions, and security operations at both national and international levels. Like other social forces, the military is both an actor in and subject to the dynamics of class struggle. Its political positioning has varied, whether acting in defense of democratic freedoms or engaging in Law and Order Guarantee (GLO) operations. In short, this volume is organized to contribute to a broader understanding of the conflicts, dynamics, and interactions between the military and politics in Brazil. Moreover, the work aims to support future research and inform readers seeking a more nuanced and pluralistic understanding of the Armed Forces—both as political and social actors and as institutions of hegemonic power—within the context of class struggles and the competing nation-building projects that have shaped contemporary Brazilian history.

Historically, the book begins by introducing the context of the Armed Forces in Brazil, tracing their role from the Imperial period to the present. The author highlights how the militarization of Brazilian politics began as early as the 19th century, culminating in various coups and interventions throughout the 20th century. The analysis of the military regimes—especially from 1964 to 1985—is in-depth, revealing not only the strategies used to sustain the regime but also civil resistance efforts and the social consequences of authoritarian rule.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Positive Aspects

This historiographical analysis traces the trajectory of military participation in Brazilian politics from independence through re-democratization. The work highlights the Armed Forces’ influence during key moments in history, such as the Proclamation of the Republic and authoritarian regimes. It provides a thorough examination of how the military became political actors in Brazil, playing diverse roles— from defending national sovereignty to intervening in internal affairs.

From this perspective, it is clear that since independence, the military has actively engaged in Brazilian politics, participating in conflicts, coups, and governments, thereby exerting a lasting influence that extends beyond the military sphere into areas such as security, defense, and infrastructure, continuing to the present day. One of the most compelling points in the book is the discussion of the civilian-military relationship. The author argues that this relationship is marked by ambivalence: while the military is often perceived as a defender of order and security, it frequently opposes the social and political demands of the population. This tension is explored through case studies that reveal how various political groups have sought either to leverage or to restrain military action during critical moments in Brazilian history.

Another crucial issue raised by the author concerns the role of the Armed Forces in post-1985 Brazilian democracy. The book analyzes how, despite their return to the barracks, the military has remained influential in political decision-making and power structures. The author also discusses the military's relationship with Jair Bolsonaro's government, exposing the complexities of an administration that seeks support from the Armed Forces while attempting to uphold a democratic discourse. The book emphasizes the enduring nature of military involvement in Brazilian politics. Furthermore, the volume compiles articles by fifteen academic researchers and three reserve officers from the Army and Air Force, demonstrating the breadth and depth of this longstanding relationship.

From the outset, in the preface, one of the contributing authors, Daniel Aarão Reis Filho, reaffirms the military's role in Brazilian history, stating: "In the current conjuncture, the Armed Forces once again hover like shadows over political institutions. Openly called upon to intervene by various social agents, expressing themselves in a threatening, irregular, and undisciplined manner through the voices of both reserve and active generals, the question remains whether Brazilian society will be subjected once more to 'salvage' interventions by those accustomed to identifying themselves as 'guardians' of the Republic."

Negative Aspects

On the other hand, the presence of the military in decisive moments of Brazil's history is an undeniable fact. In this context, the Bolsonaro government is cited, during which the public administration was unfortunately militarized, resulting in inflated and corruption-prone military expenditures in the country.

Moreover, the comprehensive articles comprising the aforementioned work reconstruct the military's participation from its formation to its role in contemporary society. As the organizers highlight, the compilation "aims to provide tools for new research and to inform readers interested

in a more multifaceted and polyphonic understanding of the dimensions between members of the Armed Forces as political and social actors and the military institutions as hegemonic political apparatuses, within the contexts of class struggles and nation-building projects that permeate contemporary Brazilian history.”

The 1930 Revolution, which brought Getúlio Vargas to power, serves as a clear example of how civilians and the military interact within spheres of power. The military became key players in internal politics, alternating between supporting civilian governments and leading coups, such as the 1964 coup that established a military regime lasting until 1985. This period is one of the most discussed in the book, as it represents a time when Brazilian politics was marked by repression, censorship, and institutional restructuring.

A central aspect of the book is its analysis of the military’s role in Brazil’s democratic transition following the dictatorship. The authors discuss how popular dissatisfaction, coupled with internal and external pressures, forced political opening. Military participation in this process was not unanimous; while some advocated for regime continuity, others recognized the need to return to democracy.

This ambivalence was reflected in the military government’s actions, which, although resistant to change, began negotiating the transfer of power back to civilians. The analysis of this historical phenomenon reveals how the civilian-military relationship can simultaneously embody conflict and cooperation. The book includes testimonies and documents evidencing this transition and internal debates within the Armed Forces, showing that not all military personnel were aligned with repression and the maintenance of the status quo. Regarding the term status quo, o *Status Quo* ou *Statu quo* it originates from Latin, meaning “the current state.” Both forms, *status quo* (more popular) and *statu quo* (more correct), are used. In this context, the *status quo* relates to the state of facts, situations, and conditions, regardless of time. It is commonly accompanied by verbs such as maintain, defend, challenge, or change.

Moving away from semantics and returning to the work itself, another relevant point in the book is the analysis of the cultural and ideological influence the military exerts on Brazilian politics. Over the years, various narratives have been constructed around the Armed Forces’ role—sometimes glorifying their actions, other times denouncing abuses committed during the dictatorship. This duality is crucial to understanding how Brazilian collective memory deals with its military past. The authors investigate how military training institutions, as well as the media, have promoted specific perspectives on the military’s role in society. The militarization of certain political and social discourses is a theme that resonates strongly today, especially in moments of crisis or public insecurity. In this regard, the militarization of educational spaces is seen as either a

means to disseminate or to impede society's freedom to engage in important debates. Furthermore, beyond being a historical affront to the redemocratization process, attempts to introduce military corporate values into schools violate the fundamental democratic principle. Constitutionally, schools are spaces of freedom, diversity, and plurality, where children and adolescents must learn democracy through experience—unlike what occurs in military schools, which have existed since Brazil's early history.

Regarding military actions in Brazil, the book provides access to ongoing military interventions in Brazilian politics. This relationship began during the Empire, as John Schulz shows in his book *The Army in Politics: Origins of Military Intervention, 1850–1894*, and continued through the republican era from its inception: the proclamation of the Republic was a military coup (both of the first presidents, Deodoro da Fonseca and Floriano Peixoto, were military officers). Throughout the Republic, there were many events involving the military in politics, including mutinies and revolts such as the tenentista revolts of 1922 and 1924 and the 1930 Revolution, which was actually a coup, resulting from, among other factors, intra-oligarchic conflicts strengthened by dissident military officers. Even today, this relationship persists, as seen in recent coup attempts and the assassination attempt against President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

In the final chapter, the author proposes some challenges currently facing Brazilian politics concerning the military. These include issues such as the militarization of public security, internal conflicts among different factions within the Armed Forces, and the impact of social media on public opinion regarding military politics. The author suggests that greater understanding of this dynamic is crucial for strengthening democracy and preventing authoritarian backsliding.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above, “*Militares e Política no Brasil*” is an indispensable work for researchers, students, and anyone interested in understanding the complex relationship between the military and politics in Brazil. Through a meticulous and well-supported analysis, the book opens space for a necessary discussion about the future of the country's democratic institutions—so that democracy itself is not left vulnerable to a dictatorial context forcibly pursued by members of the military.

With its critical lens and extensive research, the work stands out as a valuable contribution to the debate on contemporary Brazilian politics. This review has aimed to offer a detailed overview of the book, aligned with the proposed theme of exploring the relationship between the military and politics in Brazil.

Ultimately, the work seeks to deepen the understanding of the intricate dynamics between these two spheres. The authors argue that Brazil's national history is marked by cycles of tension and cooperation, in which the military—even after redemocratization—continues to play a significant role in political decision-making. By analyzing different contexts and narratives involving the Armed Forces, the book invites readers to reflect on the future of this relationship. The critical analysis offered by the authors is fundamental for understanding both the risks and opportunities that emerge from this interaction—particularly in a political environment that is increasingly polarized and volatile.

In sum, reading “Militares e Política no Brasil” is essential for those seeking to understand not only the past but also the ongoing dynamics that continue to shape contemporary Brazil. Open dialogue and continued research are crucial for civil society to strengthen its institutions and promote a truly participatory and pluralistic democracy.

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