

THE LATIN AMERICAN REGION



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Country	Population	Geographic area	GDP (in US dollars)	Per capita GDP (in US dollars)	Armed Forces Personnel	Defence budget (in US dollars)	% GDP
Argentina	43,712,000	2,780,400 km ²	437,856,000,000	10,017	79,845	4,287,426,700	0.98
Bolivia	10,904,000	1,098,580 km ²	33,983,000,000	3,117	34,078	568,421,520	1.67
Brazil	209,486,000	8,514,880 km ²	1,534,782,000,000	7,326	366,614	19,978,247,480	1.30
Chile	18,276,000	756,100 km ²	235,419,000,000	12,881	67,683	4,571,174,008	1.94
Colombia	48,650,000	1,141,750 km ²	253,240,000,000	5,205	265,050	4,916,946,842	1.94
Costa Rica	4,870,000	51,100 km ²	56,908,000,000	11,685	14,497	949,094,945	1.67
Cuba	11,425,000	109,890 km ²	3,549,345,000	311	-	293,154,167	8.26
Dominican Republic	10,652,000	48,670 km ²	71,433,000,000	6,706	63,349	454,610,819	0.64
Ecuador	16,385,000	256,370 km ²	94,014,000,000	5,738	41,403	2,510,507,785	2.67
El Salvador	6,324,000	21,040 km ²	27,327,000,000	4,321	24,023	146,139,840	0.53

* Defence, Internal Order and Administration budget.

Note: Costa Rica and Panama: Security Forces Personnel and Ministries of Security. Haiti: National Police Personnel.

Guatemala	Haiti	Honduras	Mexico	Nicaragua
				
Population: 16,703,000	Population: 10,890,000	Population: 8,183,000	Population: 126,248,000	Population: 6,152,000
Geographic area: 108,890 km ²	Geographic area: 27,750 km ²	Geographic area: 112,490 km ²	Geographic area: 1,964,380 km ²	Geographic area: 130,370 km ²
GDP (in US dollars): 68,142,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 8,160,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 20,632,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 1,082,431,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 12,903,000,000
Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 4,080	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 749	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 2,521	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 8,574	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 2,097
Armed Forces Personnel: 18,181	National Police Personnel: 14,385	Armed Forces Personnel: 15,216	Armed Forces Personnel: 267,656	Armed Forces Personnel: 12,793
Defence budget (in US dollars): 264,313,810	Defence budget (in US dollars): 7,953,535	Defence budget (in US dollars): 332,560,070	Defence budget (in US dollars): 5,978,115,551	Defence budget (in US dollars): 72,558,630
% GDP: 0.39	% GDP: 0.10	% GDP: 1.61	% GDP: 0.55	% GDP: 0.56
Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
				
Population: 3,991,000	Population: 6,723,000	Population: 31,776,000	Population: 3,443,000	Population: 30,936,000
Geographic area: 75,420 km ²	Geographic area: 406,750 km ²	Geographic area: 1,285,220 km ²	Geographic area: 176,220 km ²	Geographic area: 912,050 km ²
GDP (in US dollars): 55,755,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 26,804,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 178,643,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 53,145,000,000	GDP (in US dollars): 185,611,000,000
Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 13,970	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 3,987	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 5,622	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 15,436	Per capita GDP (in US dollars): 6,000
Security Forces Personnel: 23,105	Armed Forces Personnel: 16,087	Armed Forces Personnel: 78,296	Armed Forces Personnel: 22,316	Armed Forces Personnel: 365,315
Defence budget (in US dollars): 1,279,093,620	Defence budget (in US dollars): 357,354,910	Defence budget (in US dollars): 2,237,685,498	Defence budget (in US dollars): 770,840,944	Defence budget (in US dollars): 8,549,765,946
% GDP: 2.29	% GDP: 1.33	% GDP: 1.25	% GDP: 1.45	% GDP: 4.61

Source: See section "The Countries" of this Edition (dates as to 2016 except for the cases listed there). Territory and Population (projected 2016): Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean 2015, ECLAC. GDP (projected 2016): IMF, World Economic Outlook Database.

Analysis

The apocalyptic violence of the 20th and 21st centuries and military institutions

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The guns fired in August 1914 marked the outset of a devastating war which, except for a “truce” between 1918 and 1931 (Asia) and 1939 (Europe), extended over up to August 1945 and ended with the horror of the atomic bombs launch.

In that period, humanity lived the aftermath of an extreme violence. The result was total war: genocides occurred, they experimented in politics and social organization, military technology changed continuously and military institutions reached its zenith as to becoming highly relevant organizations for society.

A little over one-hundred years ago, the battle of Verdun was waged and, in eight months, caused a quarter of a million deaths and about half a million wounded from both factions. In July 1916, the battle of Somme started and, in four months, it caused the loss of 420,000 British troops (almost 22,000 died on the first day!) under artillery and machine gun fire. Fully-tracked armored vehicles came to the scene and aviation started to become active component of combat.

The victims of war included more military personnel than civilians, more soldiers than officers and most of them were young. But it did not only impact the lower classes but also the future leaders of the middle and high classes, which never reached that state. Some nations suffered the loss of a significant portion of their population (such as the Serbians in a figure that might have been as high as 27%)

During the so-called World War II, the civilian casualties outnumbered the uniformed victims who responded to a formal command. No matter how controversial figures may be, the death toll is estimated from 55 to 60 million people, even reaching over 70 million according to the most pessimistic estimations, and decreasing to 40-45 million in line with the most optimistic views.

The estimation has been hampered by the concealment and continuous change of the “official” numbers, for instance, Stalin admitted in 1945 that the tally for the USSR was 7 million deaths (at present, the estimations range from 17 to 37 million deaths). China,

the second leading country in terms of fatal casualties, finds it hard to calculate the losses since the nation was staging a civil war at that time, so estimations range from 8 to 30 million. Germany was the third most affected country, showing figures estimated at 4.5 to 10 million losses (1.5 million civilians are believed to have been killed by bombings attributed to the Allied forces).

Poland was the fourth country with the highest death toll, ranging from 3 to 6 million, including the Polish Jews exterminated at the concentration camps. Other figures have not been included since they were deliberately concealed from history, such as the war-driven starvation in Bengal, killing from 2 to 4 million Indians. Japan is assumed to have had 1.2 million soldiers and 1 million civilians killed, and 1.4 million disappeared.

This cataclysm strongly affected the young generation, causing notorious demographic imbalances.

One example may be cited. According to G. F. Krivosheev (on a statistical study published in 2001), out of the 8,668 million Soviet soldiers killed in WWII (figure currently acknowledged by the Russian Joint Chiefs of Staff), 18% were under 20 years old, 40% were under 25 and 57.5% were under 30. Some scholars contend that Krivosheev underestimated the number of deaths at the hospitals located in rearguard areas as well as the fatal casualties among prisoners of war.

Fortunately, after 1945, none of the leaders who had access to the nuclear weapons button pressed it. Just some threatening rhetorics are recalled, such as Mao Zedong claiming that a better world would emerge after a nuclear war. Large-scale chemical or biological weapons were not employed either, despite the “experiments” done by the big powers and the use of defoliants in the Vietnam war, Saddam Hussein’s actions in Iraq or Assad’s Army in Syria.

Although a nuclear war scenario was a possibility, the armed forces -with a prominent role in the ‘40s in the XX century- sought to prevent it. The United States and the USSR, the military leaders of the first and second world, never confronted each other. The

United States was directly involved in Korea and Vietnam, but for other third world scenarios it resorted to inner lines, using “proxies” as combatants, subversive organizations for one and traditional armed forces for another. Numerous forces would fight, mostly recruited as conscripts, following traditional values and structures.

Up until the ‘50s in the XX century, governments controlled the information, censorship worked effectively, and the propaganda attempted to persuade the population, pushing dissidents to the sidelines.

In the late ‘60s, the scenario no longer existed. The TV news reported the daily developments in Vietnam. The effects were atrocious for a military force that won battles but lost the war. Although the number of deaths was much higher among the Vietnamese (according to Guenter Lewy, from 1965 to 1974 the deaths totaled near 444 thousand between the North Vietnamese Army soldiers and guerrilla men, and some 587 thousand civilians, and around 282 thousand Americans and allies). According to official sources from the US archives, the KIAs (killed in action) plus the deaths of non-combatants, the disappeared and those killed in captivity totaled 58,315 people, while the number of the hospitalized wounded reached 153 thousand (in addition to 150 thousand who did not require hospital care).

In the light of the US public opinion, the military institutions were the main responsible for the defeat. The consequences came swiftly. Compulsory military service was abolished and replaced with the recruitment of professionals (AVF). Little by little, the military technology yielded supremacy to the dual-use civil force and -most importantly- rules and values changed, at least from the discursive perspective. The influence of these changes spread across a large part of the third world countries, even more after the implosion of the exterior and interior Soviet empires. In 1939, Alfred Vagts stated (on his book “Militarism”) that armed forces disappear if the political regime they serve also disappears. Vagts only took into consideration the fall of a regime as a result of a military defeat, which did not occur in the former USSR.

Today, the prevailing violence in wars takes a lower military toll. The United States has been on a long-running war in Afghanistan since 2001, which has claimed 18,675 lives and 20,904 wounded up until 2016. In Iraq, from 2003 to 2011, the US reported 32,222 deaths and 36,719 wounded. The number of deaths include those of civilian recruits of the US Government. From 2001 to 2011, the number of deployed personnel

reached around 1,9 million troops (according to a report by Rand Corporation, which cannot accurately determine how many members of the US armed forces have more than one period of service).

The number of civilian victims of violence, instead, is higher. According to the Iraq Body Count (ICB), from 2003 to 2011, some 114 thousand civilians are believed to have been killed while millions of refugees and internally-displaced persons were recorded. In Afghanistan, from 2001 to 2014, some 450 thousand deaths occurred (not including those produced in Pakistan), but only 26 thousand have been documented.

This has resulted in the efforts by the military organizations to entrust the “dirty” tasks to the civilian contractors, including cross-examination of prisoners, propaganda and public affairs and ongoing presence of legal counselors.

Latin America was not alien to these changes. The last, large-scale bellicose confrontation between nations took place a long time ago. It was the Chaco war between 1932 and 1935, where the death toll was estimated from 90 to 100 thousand. In the three years that the war lasted, Bolivia mobilized 250,000 soldiers and Paraguay 120,000, who combated leaving a high number of casualties (perhaps 60,000 Bolivians and 30,000 Paraguayans), and a large number of wounded, maimed and disappeared persons. The various types of diseases both physical and psychological, the hostile theater of operations and the lack of water and decent food, claimed the highest toll of lives and affected the health of surviving soldiers, many of them for good.

More recent “peripheral” conflicts reported fewer casualties. In 1982, during the Malvinas/Falklands War, the Argentine troops killed in action amounted to 635 men while 1,068 were wounded, reporting a total of 1,703 casualties. Almost half of those killed were onboard the General Belgrano cruiser sunk on 2 May 1982. Argentina had some 14,600 troops engaged in the conflict.

For its part, Great Britain used 28,000 men and two aircraft carriers, and the war lasted for 74 days, of which combat was staged for 44. The official figures accepted by Great Britain reveal 255 men killed during the operations and 777 wounded, 1,032 casualties in total. Given that the supporting documentation has been seized until June 2072, such data, which shows very low figures for Argentina, cannot be checked. Also the death of 3 inhabitants of the island has been reported. The information about the number of suicides and mental disorders suffered by combatants from both sides in the aftermath, is not very reliable.

One last example is the border war in Amazonia be-

tween Ecuador and Peru from late January to late February 1995. The number of army and aviation troops engaged from each country remains unknown. The official death toll varies depending on each country's version. Ecuador officially reported the death of 33 soldiers and 70 wounded, but the Association of Veterans of Cenepa reports 131 deaths. For its part, Peru has been silent in this regard. Although it finally reported the death of 60 soldiers, the war veterans assert that the actual number is higher.

There are no subsequent examples of conflicts between States, and the likelihood for disputes to emerge among Latin American countries is low. This strongly limits the region's military organizations, whose key mission today is to confront internal conflicts.

Just to cite some numbers. The long-running conflict in Colombia reports outrageous figures. According to weekly publication *Semana* of February 8, 2014, the national (state) record pointed to more than 6 million casualties. Most of them were victims to forceful displacements, which totaled almost 5.4 million from 1984 to 2014 (based on this, at last, the official figure nears the numbers revealed by specialized NGOs such as *Codhes*).

However, thousands of other people also suffered all kinds of war crimes: more than 130,000 were threatened, around 75,000 lost their assets, over 90,000 disappeared, and their relatives were among the 21,000 kidnapped persons, almost 55,000 were victim of some kind of terrorist act, near 95,000 people were murdered and more than 540,000 were affected by the murder of a loved one, 10,500 were victims of anti-personnel mines, 6,500 cases of torture, almost 7,000 cases of forcefully-recruited children and 4,000 cases of sexual violence make up the map of the scourge compiled by the Victim's Unit.

According to the National Center for Historical Memory of the Colombian government, victims of abductions totaled 27,000 from 1970 to 2010: 24,000 were carried out by guerrilla groups and the rest by paramilitary formations. From 1985 to 2012, selective murders accounted for 150,000 victims. From 1988 to 2012, 95 terrorist acts were recorded, claiming 1,566 victims. From 1985 to 2012, 25,000 forceful disappearances allegedly occurred. From 1985 to 2012, the cases of sexual violence amounted to 1,760 (a low rate showing cases are rarely reported). The number of internally-displaced persons between 1996 and 2012 was estimated in 4.7 million. From 1988 to 2012, mines took a toll of 2,100 people and wounded 800.

The so-called "War against Drugs" staged in Mexico with a strong military involvement shows "a period that

accounts for some of the bloodiest years of the nation's war against drug-trafficking and drug cartels" from 2007 to 2014, which claimed the lives of 164,000 people. In that same period, more than 103,000 people were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, two countries at war. In other words, Mexico reported more deaths in the same period without being at war with another nation, as published by journalist Jason M. Breslow on *Frontline*.

Lastly, a research study currently performed by RESDAL shows that according to the *2016 Public (In)security Index*, homicides per day in 2015 accounted for 16.3 in Honduras, 13.6 in Guatemala and 10.6 in El Salvador. In 14 countries of the region included in the study, the count reveals 11 homicides and 10 rapes per hour.

Fortunately, no terrorist actions were reported like the ones occurred in Europe linked to the conflicts in the Middle East (except for isolated cases such as the bombings in Buenos Aires in 1994), which would entail a different bias beyond the usual discursive reference made to the matter. For their part, mass cyber-attacks -one of the most serious threats to today's increasingly urbanized world- have not occurred either.

Finally, a discourse and practice which are taking roots should be mentioned: the gender perspective in the armed forces. Military institutions have faced the need to include the gender discussion; however, practical resistance is still considerable. A chauvinist culture still prevails and female presence in the armed forces is nothing but "tolerated". If the female members intend to have a career and climb in the ranks, they must behave in line with traditional values. However, substantial progress has been made. Legally speaking, certain barriers have disappeared and practices are changing little by little. A long road must still be walked but the direction is correct. Efforts are being made by the armed forces to show the progress, but much of it is still the exception than the rule.

The security forces, which must serve and protect citizens, have updated their practices but still have certain barriers in place which are hard to overcome.

As military and security forces are increasingly "occupational" rather than "heroic", female presence and its values will become progressively more important.

This situation depicts the strong changes that have occurred and still occur in society and within the political entourage in relation to the military forces and their use. Readers are welcomed to draw conclusions.