



Sociological Briefing

Do societies trust in the military?

The analysis of the armed forces and conflict resolution requires advancing knowledge about their development, historical grassroots, and social or economic effects. Sociology contributes to this research topic by developing investigations aimed to understand the sociological aspects linked to the trust of societies in the military, among many others. The [history](#) of the RC01 Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution shows that the initial interest of this RC was to “provide international exploration of the comparative sociology of military institutions”, involving scholars from the United States and Western Union to a first meeting in 1964. The number of scholars affiliated to this RC increased and several publications have been launched since then, such as the journal “Armed Forces & Society”, which is currently indexed in JCR and Scopus.

The author of “[Trust in the military in post-authoritarian societies](#)” published in *Current Sociology* includes the topic of trust in the military, raising questions about the contradiction of trusting in the military although their history of violence. By analyzing the interaction between individual factors and support to the armed forces in three countries (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), the author finds evidence that demonstrates divergences across them, contributing to further developments in the field.

Theories of military sociology and public perception of the armed forces, including the case of South America

The author articulates the previous knowledge about the research topic, including contributions from the mid-twentieth century, that were mainly focused on military organizations and social life. One of the authors highlighted in this contribution is Janowitz, considered the founder of military sociology. Throughout the years, other authors have expanded the societal analysis of the armed forces with works about the public attitudes, the public opinions, and the confidence in the military across political groups. In Latin America, the military has increased its role in daily social and political life, requiring more analysis of related attitudes and behaviors to understand the causes of societal support to the armed forces. In this vein, the author includes the role of democratic rule, the distrust towards politics, the waves of criminality, or the emergence of populist politicians.

The high levels of corruption and delinquency are incorporated in this article to seek if societal support to military coups is correlated with support for the armed forces. The United States are compared with Latin America, with examples of the US, Chile, or Brazil regarding trust and the role that senior officers, retired military officers, or the number of volunteers can play in this arena.

Hypotheses and explanatory factors

Public support for the armed forces constitutes the dependent variable of this work. On the basis of previous theoretical and empirical contributions, the five explanatory factors included in the article are: trust in institutions, ideology, support for democracy, coup justification, and militarization of security. The author implements an analysis with data (2016/2017) extracted from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), allowing comparisons of countries. The analysis illustrates diverse results for each of the aforementioned five factors, with explanations about the militarization of the *favelas* in Brazil or the contribution of the armed forces to policy bodies fighting crime in Chile. The five hypotheses are discussed and explored considering aspects such as the impact of different presidents in the countries, dismantling with evidence the idea that the ideology influences the trust or no trust in the armed forces.

The article summarizes the main findings, revealing the **lack of evidence about the relevance of residence, income, schooling, and religion as strong predictors affecting confidence in the military**. It is important to develop qualitative and quantitative research through the lenses of sociologists to respond to answers such as the following ones raised by the author “Why and to what extent do citizens see the military as the ultimate defenders of the patria? Why is society keen to separate the military from the less popular political institutions that make up the political system?”. There is arena to continue researching on this topic.