Research Idea

The Experience of Mexico and Argentina in the Participation of the Armed Forces in the Distribution of SARS COV – 2 Vaccines

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Abstract: The participation of the Armed Forces in Latin America in tasks other than those for which they were created is due to a paradigm shift in the concept of national security in the 1970s and later, with the end of the Cold War, from a traditional conception that prioritized the State, foreign defense and military deterrence, the armies in the region began to adapt to the new challenges they face to their security and survival through a humanistic approach where the role of the military in matters such as the welfare of the people, economic development, natural disasters, climate change among others. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the governments of the region began to mobilize their Armed Forces to distribute vaccines to their population as soon as they had access to biological vaccines, focusing particularly on Mexico and Argentina, the central purpose of this article is to learn from experience from two of the most important countries in the region, in charge of distributing the AstraZeneca vaccine to the countries of the region except for Brazil.

Policy Problem Context

The use of the Armed Forces to carry out civilian tasks in Latin America has grown in the last decades from carrying out public security tasks, it has gone on to develop in other activities that correspond to civil authorities, among which civil protection stands out with the support of the military in the face of natural disasters and in the current context, transfer, and storage of vaccines against SARS COV-2. The armed forces have become a toehold for governments in Latin America in the absence of strong institutions with technical, financial, human resources and political authority. The militaristic history in Argentina and Mexico are diametrically different, while military participation is not well seen by society in the country of the southern cone of the continent due to the past of its Armed Forces, in Mexico there is a wide acceptance of their society in the military intervention in various public affairs.

Opportunity in Literature

Government dependence on the military is a problem of public policy of the construction and development of institutions, infrastructure for these institutions and investment in the human resources that would make up these institutions. What is the high level of trust of the armed forces in Mexico due to? and the low level of trust in Argentina? Given the exponential increase in drug trafficking and organized crime, phenomena that generate high rates of violence and insecurity, confidence in the Armed Forces would be based on the significant role they
have had to assume in the fight against these scourges, considering the incapacity and corruption of a large part of the police. The Armed Forces have become the last resort for the protection of Mexican society. In the case of Argentina this could be due to several factors. In the first place, due to the history of military interventions in the government during the twentieth century, but particularly by that of 1976-1983, which, in addition, it had poor government management. Second, there would be the defeat of its Armed Forces in the Malvinas War, because of a deficient political and strategic leadership of the conflict. Finally, we estimate that they also contribute a long period after the return to democracy characterized by communication discredit, professional postponement, and social isolation of the Armed Forces (Izurieta, 2015).

This opportunity in literature it seeks to expand the investigation of the participation of the armed forces in responsibilities that go beyond the sphere of public security and in emergencies that concern the health sector, such as the SARS COV - 2 pandemic in Latin America.

We aim to develop research that contributes to strengthening civilian government institutions in the face of this preponderance of Latin American politicians to put military institutions at the forefront to solve public problems and stop the militarization of public administration.

**Theoretical Framework and Data**

Logistical support comprises the transportation and distribution supplies to hospitals and individuals. It makes the military use its great logistical capacity – after all, it is with efficient logistics that modern conflicts are overcome. The logistical support is comprised the distribution medical supplies and food, centralized in hospitals and warehouses. This task also involves soldiers distributing supplies directly to individuals and efforts repatriation citizens abroad (Medeiros, 2020).

Only in Argentina, 26 flights have been carried out through which 2,972 citizens have been repatriated through Operation Belgrano. The military deployment for the distribution of vaccines is presented below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Own Elaboration with Data from the Secretariat of National Defense of Mexico and the Ministry of Defense of Argentina**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mexican Armed Forces</th>
<th>Argentine Armed Forces</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military Deployed</strong></td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>61,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Redistribution centers</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicles</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aircraft</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between the military deployed in Mexico and Argentina is abysmal, this is because in the southern cone country it was decided to fully deploy the army, while Mexico has more consolidated civil institutions that require support from the army and in this case, civil authorities are not substituted. The Mexico - Argentina alliance to produce the AstraZeneca vaccine for the Latin American region except for Brazil, together with the military deployment for its distribution, maintain them as the countries with the highest vaccination rates in the region.

In Table 2 we can see the number of vaccines applied up to the date of November 15, 2021.
Table 2: Own Elaboration with Data from Our World in Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mexican vaccinated</th>
<th>Argentines vaccinated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One dose</td>
<td>75, 455, 207</td>
<td>35, 816, 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully vaccinated</td>
<td>63, 394, 870</td>
<td>27, 479, 827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booster dose</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>892, 457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Implications and Conclusion

Government dependence on the military is a problem of public policy of the construction and development of institutions, infrastructure for these institutions and investment in the human resources that would make up these institutions. The operational capacity of the armies in Mexico and Argentina is the main reason why they are leading the fight against the pandemic. The inclusion of the Armed Forces to face public policy problems is increasingly constant in Latin American countries, particularly in Mexico and Argentina, the problem with their incorporation is the very nature of the military, not to be so open in terms of transparency or accountability that injures these values that have been incorporated into our societies through democracy, by which we can exercise responsible citizenship. There is not much information about how the Armed Forces operated or what budget they had to deal with the pandemic, this is the most important challenge to solve for those researchers interested in doing research on it.

References


Our World in Data (2021) Retrieved November 30, 2021, from
https://ourworldindata.org/COVID-vaccinations?country=OWID_WRL.