



Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers

Wendy Hunter

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Wendy Hunter explores civil-military relations in Brazil following the transition to civilian leadership in 1985. She documents a marked, and surprising, decline in the political power of the armed forces, even as they have remained involved in national policy making. To account for the success of civilian politicians, Hunter invokes rational-choice theory in arguing that politicians will contest even powerful forces in order to gain widespread electoral support.

Many observers expected Brazil's fledgling democracy to remain under the firm direction of the military, which had tightly controlled the transition from authoritarian to civilian rule. Hunter carefully refutes this conventional wisdom by demonstrating the ability of even a weak democratic regime to expand its autonomy relative to a once-powerful military, thanks to the electoral incentives that motivate civilian politicians. Based on interviews with key participants and on extensive archival research, Hunter's analysis of developments in Brazil suggests a more optimistic view of the future of civilian democratic rule in Latin America.

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