

Security Challenges in Latin America

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This article challenges established security ideas on Latin America, beginning with the assumption that militarised states and military coups d'état now belong to a bygone era. The attempt is to demonstrate that, despite a regional framework for cooperation, democratic governments here have not established a democratic process of decision-making, particularly where security issues are concerned. This absence of democratic civil control over the military could challenge, and even potentially undermine, the consolidation of democracy in Latin America.

Keywords: democracy, civil-military relations, security, defence policy, military, Latin America.

Introduction

This article challenges a number of security ideas on Latin America, beginning with the assumption that military coup d'état, a common enough phenomenon in the Cold War period, has given way to civil, democratic forms of government. Despite a regional framework facilitating cooperation and regional integration, democratic governments of Latin America have yet to establish democratic processes of decision-making in the security realm.

There are three issues that are taken up for detailed discussion here. First, we view regional security problems in the context of debates around international security issues. While current thinking on international security employs different paradigms, there is no model that comprehensively brings together the diverse explanations for the current state of affairs. For several years, security analysts have been puzzled by conflicts that defy strict classification. While the post-cold war period has been beset by conflicts of varying intensities around the globe, a growing number of multilateral agreements are also creating incentives for peace. Since the events of September 11 2001, and following the new security strategy of the United States launched in September 2001, a new system of confrontation has emerged for the post-Cold War phase (Haass, 2002),¹ which some authors have termed 'the age of terrorism' (Cronin, 2002). As against the single, monolithic

1 See also commentaries of de Lawrence J. Korb and Alex Tiersky (2001) *The End of Unilateralism? Arms Control After September 11*, *Arms Control Today*, October, and Peter Andreas and Richard Price, *From War Fighting to Crime Fighting*: 33.

nature of the threat presented to the world in the Cold War era, today's threats are unpredictable, multidirectional, and multidimensional. These threats further undermine the trend towards a security system based on citizens' needs.

Second, security is connected to democratic civil control over the military and is closely linked to democracy and political stability. Current discourses on public security in Latin America assume the development of democratic governments. In a democracy, citizens are not threatened by their own military, and civilian governments are devoted to demilitarising the state, thus avoiding the return to authoritarian rule. Further, international cooperation tends to demilitarise security, allowing civilian leaders to take action. The consolidation of democracy in Latin America means the institutionalisation of civilian supremacy over the armed forces. However, advances in successful civilian control over the military are subject to prolonged struggle, negotiation and, at times, setbacks, allowing military infiltration into the political arena.

Third, this analysis touches upon issues on the regional security agenda. Latin American governments use the international arena to regulate internal deficits in civilian control over the military, linking the national interest to a broad concept of economic and social development within a peaceful environment made up by countries sharing the same rules and values.² Both the post-cold war period and democratisation have made for advances in regional cooperation in the form of hemispheric agreements. At the same time, however, as will be discussed below, the new security agenda, including the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism, can produce effects diametrically opposed to purported democratic ideals.

These three issues are related to the idea that Latin American countries recognise the multilateral nature of mutual interchanges. It is necessary to understand that Latin America is not a homogenous region. It has diverse democratic processes, national interests, and domestic constraints. However, it is possible to see a shared sense of identity and a common desire to cooperate. If the agreements are not fully consistent it is in great part because democratic procedures have not been instituted and governments have not established the primacy of the rule of law. Consequently, democratic control of the armed forces has hardly been consolidated, and the security agenda has not been forged by democratic means.

The Security Paradigms

Since 1979, 19 Latin American countries have moved from military regimes to civilian rule. Does this signify a change in security perceptions? In the 1990s, the realist approach to defence competed with the liberal perspective, which focused on the peaceful settlement of disputes and human security. Realist studies

2 This does not mean uniformity, nor does it mean eliminating the domestic market or the use of the armed forces, or dismissing state institutions (see Waltz, 2000).

emphasise conflict, competition and military response (Kaplan, 2000; Waltz, 2000). The increase in arms sales and strategic defence plans exemplify this perspective. While taking into account the end of the bipolar confrontation, realism anticipates a world driven by competition that can be managed by counter-proliferation instead of non-proliferation (Luttwak, 1990; Mearsheimer, 1998). Structural neo-realism sees this uncertain scenario as one more example of the international system's anarchy in the absence of a global power.

At the same time several factors such as the growing creation of multilateral organisations for settling security conflicts, the expansion of mechanisms for controlling mass destruction and conventional weapons, and regional agreements, temper the realist view. All of these factors promote a scenario where security is attained through cooperation and reciprocal commitments.³ These factors have come into their own with the end of the Cold War (Buzan and Waever, 1998; Luttwak, 1990), and are based on the belief that a peaceful settlement of conflicts is possible (Ruggie, 1996).

A third perspective is concerned with the future of the world's citizenry, and is implicit in discussions on human rights, environmental protection, and the plight of refugees (Mathews, 1997). Thus, a social perspective is introduced into the new security agenda. Military missions have a strong civil component, in the logistics, communications, and medical support aspects,⁴ as well as in conventional military actions. Such an analysis affects the state-centred view of the discipline, introducing new players into the agenda and paving the way for the emergence of security models based on the individual citizen (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 25–37). Although tensions and disputes between states have not disappeared, the international community increasingly responds to threats to the safety and security of people who are the victims of conflicts within their own countries or who are put at risk by transnational actors (Kaldor, 2001).

This focus on people's welfare was already a concern in the report by the Brandt Commission and in the approach taken by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, chaired by Olaf Palme in 1982, focusing on global governance.⁵ There it was argued that global security must be broadened

3 This thinking comes from the theory of conflict studies. It addresses human conflict as natural, but mitigates the military concept of power through common rules, standards and values. This concept serves as support to validate the ideas of cooperative security, confidence-building measures and the mediation of institutions to prevent conflicts.

4 See, for instance, *Strategic Concept of the Alliance*, Washington Summit, 23–25 April 1999. To defend against human rights abuses involves the development of a composite response strategy and doctrine, involving many different military and civilian agencies, such as Save the Children, International Committee of the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International etc.

5 'An important task of constructive international policy will have to consist in providing a new, more comprehensive understanding of 'security' which would be less restricted to the purely military aspects [...] Much of the security in the world is connected with the divisions between rich and poor countries, grave injustice and mass starvation causing additional instability,' *Report on the Brandt Commission. North-South: A programme for Survival* (1980), London: 124.

from its traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the planet. The individual-centred approach was also explained in the UN *Human Development Report 1994*, in which human security included safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression. The government of Canada has actively promoted such an idea of human security, and has gone so far as to include the concept in the agenda for hemispheric organisations.⁶

However, in this context, the terrorist threat appears as a new concern that places less importance on cooperative security and more importance on competitive hegemonic power. Terrorism is a form of atomised political violence rather than a conflict between states. In the wake of this new threat, the role of the armed forces has shifted from instruments exclusively designed for domestic policy to that of instruments used for external missions (i.e. DEA). In turn, the foreign apparatus is developing resources to act in internal operations. The National Security Agency of the United States is a good example. As pointed out by Andreas and Price (2001: 35), 'Although the distinction between police and military functions have never been absolute or fully completed (and should not be overstated), shifts in the state organisation of violence during the past decade have further blurred those distinctions.' This reinforces the notion of a 'region' in the sense perceived after September 11, when multilateral condemnation of the act lent legitimacy to the US reaction (Andreas and Price, 2001; Haass, 2002; Korb and Tiersky, 2001). The expansion of terrorist networks and other activities carried out by organised crime require the use of mechanisms backed by multilateral approval (CSIS White Paper, 2002).

How do these coexisting approaches on the security agenda impact the region? In Latin America, security has always been about national defence, restricted to the military and lacking both civilian leadership or inputs from the academic sector.

Cooperation among Latin American countries has improved substantially: economic integration organisations have been renewed, relationships among member countries and their armed forces have improved, and the effectiveness of international organisations has increased. However, though Latin America is considered one of the regions in the world with the lowest degree of interstate conflict, old geopolitical tensions persist, and domestic authorities often look at their neighbours as if they were potential enemies, demonstrating a traditional realist approach (Hurrell, 1998).

6 There has been a mutation in the way security is conceived. In the 1990s, priorities in terms of security essentially involved the strategic competition among superpowers to maintain deterrence and balance of power and nuclear war threat (see, for instance, Axworthy, 1997). The vision of the UN exceeds the actual capabilities of Third World countries and for this reason it is virtually impossible to make it practicable: Human security, in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Secretary General Kofi Annan (2000) Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 8–10 May.

Thus, although there are no immediate risks of confrontation on the continent and progress has been made in weapons control, there is no evident progress in gaining political control over the armed forces. That still remains an unresolved issue in the political history of these countries. Furthermore, new threats (i.e. drug trafficking, organised crime, terrorism, migration and above all, poverty) have emerged, leading to social conflict. These are alarming developments that cannot be overlooked when evaluating Latin America's future.

One of the most confusing issues as regards the present-day definition of Latin American defence policies is governments' response to the pressure exerted by the US to involve the military to combat two new security threats – drug trafficking and terrorism. Where drug trafficking is concerned, in the case of some countries such as Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and some Caribbean countries, this is a matter left to the state, and hence might include the armed forces. In the case of other countries like Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, the military is involved in external defence alone. A third group of countries, including Argentina, Paraguay and Ecuador, now seem to be accepting US discourses, severely straining civilian control over military powers.

Antiterrorism is a new factor allowing for the involvement of armed forces for the entire region. As can be observed with Plan Colombia, developed by the US government to fight drug trafficking, and in the new directions suggested by the American administration to Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay in the Triple Frontier,⁷ the US government seems to be offering only military solutions to confront these threats, launching expensive programs that, however, are not yielding any positive outcomes. This militarisation of the campaign against Colombian guerrilla warfare runs in opposition to the efforts launched by several Latin American governments through multilateral arrangements, such as CICTE (Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism). CICTE has participated in the drafting of model regulations for the prevention of terrorism, functioning through the exchange of information amongst eminent leaders, experts and decision-makers, working together to strengthen hemispheric solidarity and security within the OAS framework.

In an article that appeared in *The Miami Herald* (9, March 2003), General James T. Hill, commander of the Southern Command, stated that radical Islamic groups from the Middle East are receiving between 300 to 500 million dollars from several Latin American criminal networks involved in drug trafficking, arms smuggling and other illegal activities. Among the danger zones identified by General Hill are the Triple Frontier between Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil and Margarita Island off the Venezuela coast. He said: '... the religion that is expanding the most in Latin America is Islam. ... We believe that there are around 3 to 6 million people from the Middle East in Latin America'.

Since September 11, the United States had been citing links between Islamic terrorist groups and the Triple Frontier. In December 2001, Francis X Taylor,

7 See, for example, the speech of Ambassador Francis X. Taylor (2001).

then the State Department's counterterrorism coordinator, visited Paraguay and expressed concern about Islamic terrorism. He warned: 'Local support cells could be activated to conduct terrorist attacks here in the region' (Goldberg 2002: 12-20-02). Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld discussed the Triple Frontier with his South American counterparts at a November 2002 conference in Santiago, Chile. As was critically pointed out: 'On the agendas of South American governments and the US agenda for the region, Islamic terrorism waits behind fiscal crises, trade negotiations and local terrorist groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)' (Goldberg 2002: 12-20-02).

Such a US-led understanding of security encourages realist arguments for more militaristic action, undermining the slow process of building a cooperative framework of security by Latin American civilian administrations. In the 1990s, Latin America supported the philosophy of Confidence and Security Building Measures that created a mechanism of dialogue and transparency. In the case of Chile, both the Presidency and the Chancellery promoted a commitment to human security through participation in a group led by Canada and Switzerland, although they failed to impress the Ministry of Defence with this model. The new realist approach of the American administration creates an incomplete process in settling principles of multilateral institutions and the defence of human rights, which are replaced by a state-centric conception, in which the nation's sovereignty and defence are more important than the citizen.

Society and the Military

While stabilising democracy is a clear priority for the entire region, Latin American governments have also had to simultaneously undertake fiscal reform, involving downsizing various agencies, carrying out tax reforms, opening up their markets, and facing conditions far too competitive for the business sector to cope with. These reforms succeeded to different degrees but had two distinct effects. On the one hand, they catalysed the process of democratisation, putting a stop to military resistance to government decisions. On the other hand, they created tensions when the government failed to meet the demands of different sectors of society.

The addition of social concerns to issues of political stability and governance enlarges the security agenda, transforming social matters into state security matters (Waever, 1995). As a result the armed forces which, for many years, had considered the citizenry their enemy, have had to adapt to the idea of protecting the people, even becoming promoters of peace in operations outside their country. When a peacekeeping mission is carried out, the military finds itself operating on the same terrain as NGOs, health caretakers, observers from multilateral organizations, and soldiers.⁸ Humanitarian assistance, health care,

⁸ NATO has recently acknowledged that in the new missions set for the next millennium 'civilian support to military operations is important for logistics,

and combatant demobilisation are tasks that require the armed forces to undertake roles contrary to their military nature.

This new philanthropic role runs contrary to past actions of the military, often remembered for its human rights' abuses. The military's tradition of confrontation with governments highlights the key difference between the democratic transition in this region and Eastern Europe. The militaries in Eastern Europe had to democratise the armed forces that had been loyal to single-party regimes but were used to responding to political leaders. In contrast, in Latin America, commitment of many in the armed forces to their governments is still wanting. They seem to owe loyalty to military establishment rather than to the society that gives them the mandate to exercise a monopoly on the use of force. In addition, Latin American governments have been inefficient in organising defence based on parameters set forth by multilateral organizations.

Latin American democracies are afflicted with shortcomings that encourage novel forms of military participation, while employing procedures that preserve a democratic image. For example, military officers manage considerable economic resources, intelligence agencies still serve the administration in power, military coup plotters espouse populist causes, paramilitary forces are instruments of social control, and a militarised police also undertake social control. Against this backdrop, the role of the military tilts the balance of social forces to weaken democracy (Diamint, 2003).

Latin American armed forces maintain extensive functions and privileges with weak civic or democratic control over them. For example, Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutiérrez, who participated in the uprising to overthrow the former President Jamil Mahuad, is a retired military officer. The Ecuadorian armed forces maintain a remarkable contradiction between a rejection of economic reforms and a convenient adaptation to free market rules and competition in the private sector. This participation in business activities has given the Ecuadorian armed forces the highest credibility rating, above even those of the Church and the media.⁹ As in Ecuador, in the Venezuelan case too, a triumphant coalition came to power with the help of popular and military support, not from the endorsement of any political party. President Hugo Chávez is presently embroiled in a prolonged crisis in which the armed forces are divided. One division, fulfilling the role of the police, is loyal to the government, while the other has assumed a political role and is confronting the president.

Chávez's reliance on the armed forces has raised the fear of militarisation, a fear further exacerbated by a thirteen percent increase in the military budget (despite an overall ten percent cut in the government's budget), and a provision in the new 1999 Constitution that deprives Congress the right to a say in military promotions (Manrique, 2001: 316–27). The leader of this political ploy is, not fortuitously, a military man who resorts to the rhetoric of restoration and order

communications, medical support and public affairs' in *Strategic Concept of the Alliance*, Washington Summit, 23–25 April 1999.

9 See *Diario Hoy* (1999) Quito, November 26.

as he breaks all the rules of the political game, though he is still unable to create a new basis for legitimacy.

Bolivia is no different. The military acted as a strike force during the incidents in January 2003 against civilian protesters. As was reported by NACLA: 'Two days of mass demonstrations against a nationwide tax increase left at least 33 people dead and 200 injured . . . The policemen began to exchange gunshots with soldiers after the violence escalated from rock throwing, to tear gas canisters and finally automatic weapons fire' (Teo Ballvé, 2003). President Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada turned to the military to establish public order.

Paraguay's military has never abandoned a powerful presence in the government, participating both in the administration as well as in the opposition led by General Lino Oviedo. The international community views democracy in Paraguay with suspicion, surprised by the new diplomatic relations it has recently established with Qatar. An intelligence report says: 'Paraguay – one of the poorest nations in South America . . . is not likely to become a major consumer of Qatari oil and natural gas any time in the near future. However, what Paraguay does have in abundance are drug traffickers, arms smugglers and Islamic militants – including Hezbollah and possibly al Qaeda suspects' (The Global Intelligence Report, 2002). The state's illegal activities, earlier confined mainly to smuggling, have now come to also include connections with Islamic terrorism.

It is the Colombian situation that has become the main hemispheric concern. President Uribe's election campaign promised that he would be the 'peace constructor' and that he would put the country on a war footing to fight against the FARC. However, conflicts continue and a military response appears to be the only available political instrument. As President Uribe concentrates his strategy in the military realm, he is also under pressure from his officers, who export insecurity to the borders of Venezuela and Brazil (Cepik, 2002). Recently, Colombia has been part of the literature on state failure, demonstrating the limited success of Plan Colombia and the extensive loss of control over the entire territory (Vaicus and Isacson, 2003). Writing about the Colombian situation, Robert Rotberg (2002: 86) says: 'One measure of the extent of a state's failure is how much of the state's geographical expanse a government genuinely controls.' He adds: 'An otherwise well-endowed, prosperous, and stable state has the second-highest murder rate per capita in the world, its politicians and businessmen wear flak jackets and travel with armed guards, and three private armies control relatively large chunks of its territory with impunity. The official defence and political establishment have effectively ceded authority in those zones to the insurgencies and to drug traffickers' (ibid.: 92). The present situation is a dangerous combination of increasing violence delivered by the FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces), and a host of paramilitary groups isolated from Uribe, who had supported them before he gained office. Both sectors impose systematic aggression against a population that is not protected by the regular armed forces.

Mexican President Vicente Fox must renounce his objective to reform the defence sector and accept military autonomy accorded during the PRI times

(Institutional Revolutionary Party). Mexican armed forces maintain domestic roles, combating drug trafficking and social unrest, negotiating directly with American agencies without the intervention of the Mexican civilian administration. The absence of a civilian Ministry of Defence allows the military to decide their own policy.

As is common in some Central American countries, the attempt to establish control over the Guatemalan armed forces has proven to be a process of advances and setbacks.¹⁰ The program to restructure the army did not eliminate all the injustices of the authoritarian regime. Trust between civil society and the military is still a distant goal. Implementation of the peace accords has only been partially successful. The size of the military was reduced by 33 percent, but other pending agreements have either been only partially implemented or not at all.

In Chile, the intent to reform the Augusto Pinochet Constitution of 1980 by the Concertación governments has proven futile, blocked by the military coalition and the most conservative sections of the right parties. President Ricardo Lagos insisted that the courts would decide Pinochet's future; Lagos also sought to change the Constitution. The Chilean political reform process has been notably slow and cautious. Due to international factors, only in the late 1990s was it possible to develop conditions necessary to legitimise civilian authority without the censorious mediation of a military that still considered itself guarantor of the state (Fuentes, 1997).

In Brazil, the military increased their participation in President Itamar Franco's government (1992–1994). Franco expanded the number of military officers appointed as ministers from five to seven: the three military ministries (Army, Navy and Air Force) as well as Transportation, Communications, Federal Administration, and the Strategic Affairs Secretariat. Members of the armed forces also headed two state companies (Sudene and Telebras) and the Federal Police (Mathias and Beleli, 1994).

The armed forces in Brazil still have a powerful role in the civilian government. The civilian Ministry of Defence was established in 1999. In its first year, the defence ministry did not have a full contingent of administrative staff. Only in 2000 was it assigned a building. Many tasks still remain in the hands of the armed forces. The actions of the state bureaucracy, especially that of the Foreign Ministry, suggests that the Brazilian government's strategic policy remains remarkably stable. Little resistance is expected from the military so long as defence ministry objectives coincide with military interests.

The issue of civilian control over the military in seeking to end the role of the armed forces as intermediaries in internal political conflicts, has become a regional and as well as a global concern. Serious institutional deficiencies have occurred due to the lack of well-qualified civilians and the lack of effective

10 On May 25, 1993, well into the democratisation process, President José Luis Serrano decreed the suspension of the Constitution, dissolved Congress and the Supreme Court, removed both the Attorney General and the Civil Rights Advocate from office and suspended the Electoral and Political Party Laws.

control over the intelligence services. A common characteristic of the region is that Congress has only a nominal capacity to monitor public sector spending. In a democracy, fiscal policy is the tool that sets public administration priorities according to the government's political preferences. Yet, in most cases, finance ministries lack the tools to assess, in detail, the proper use of appropriated funds once these have been allocated to military service. Congress is even less capable of auditing expenditures. The ministries of defence have not developed the required knowledge. Furthermore, academics and scientists are not contributing to the exchange and construction of common ideas in the defence field.

If we consider these institutional deficiencies in the light of the proposals known as Security Sector Reforms (SSR), democratic governments in Latin America have a major task ahead, without which it is unlikely that democratic values will be consolidated in society and politics. For a couple of years now we have been discussing the SSR concept as part of governance programmes, insisting on the need to establish better accountability mechanisms. Such reform includes setting up institutions with a mandate to guarantee the country's and individuals' security, under the civil control of the ministries of defence, interior, justice and foreign affairs.¹¹ It is a comprehensive reform that covers more than just the military. It is aimed at reinforcing the role of civil society as well as ensuring human security (Axworthy, 1997; Mack, 2000). Such reform of the security sector would not lead to an overlapping of defence and law enforcement functions. However, there is a tendency among both defenders and opponents of more military involvement in domestic security problems to present an irreconcilable image, presumably justified by the SSR model and the new threats that transcend nation-state borders. Discussing the role of the armed forces and security forces outside the framework of democracy and human rights is an abstraction, i.e. a curtailing of society's claim for the rule of law.

One of probably the most dangerous developments in Latin American democracies is the participation of the military in internal security missions. Democratic control over armed forces has yet to be achieved in many nations of the region, and the new tasks will allow the military to maintain prerogatives, intervene in the decision-making process, and evaluate social problems through a military lens.

The democratic reform of the defence sector implies effective civilian control over any activity or action related to the military. Even if Latin American governments claim to have incorporated civilian management of the defence sector formally, in real terms, this control is superficial and clearly incomplete.

New Threats and Old Deficits

As we have explained, the new global security agenda is confronted with drug trafficking, migration, and terrorism, all of which have created an overlap

¹¹ See, for instance, Chanaa, 2002 and Mendelson Forman, 2001.

between defence and domestic security or public order issues (Diamint, 1999). What appears in the global agenda as progress towards public security may, in the case of many Latin American countries, provide justification for military intervention in domestic affairs. This process is clearly demonstrated in the drug trafficking issue.

The US has promoted military involvement in drug control, which in some cases has been combined with guerrilla-related activities. Every time the US has conducted bilateral or multilateral discussions on security matters, this issue has been included in the plan for negotiations.

When this subject was first introduced to the hemispheric agenda, the debates focused on the inconvenience of using armed forces in domestic affairs, in light of the fact that Latin American governments were making efforts to demilitarise the politics of their countries. It was argued that security forces were capable of developing controlled actions against criminal activity. An objection even came from the Armed Forces themselves, as they feared an increase in corruption as had happened with the police. Finally, there was the fact that the US was externalising an internal problem – drug consumption and its effect on the US economy – and engaging countries in a crusade where there were no winners.

However, in recent years, the dimensions of drug trafficking have grown; unevenly in various regions but with more possibilities of challenging state power and creating conflicts beyond country borders (Kurtenback, 2001). The risk is that in order to take part in the fight against drug-trafficking, local armed forces demand the authority to undertake internal intelligence functions. In this capacity they acquire powers to make decisions affecting civilians. For example, in the so-called ‘Plan Colombia,’ one single method of combat has been defined such that farmers, carriers and the population at large, who do not use weapons, are confronted by military power. In other words, a complex conflict is simplified into an armed confrontation. Overlapping defence and security functions tend to confuse institutional controls even more, and do not contribute to providing better solutions to the public’s lack of security. As María Carrilho (2001: 5) points out: ‘In societies where democracy is still not sufficiently consolidated, it is thus advisable to define the formal and informal separation between military functions (Armed Forces) and police functions (security forces).’

A similar process could be set up to fight terrorism. Democracy can be weakened if a government does not define its defence policy and if Congress lacks the power to oversee intelligence and military activities. Terrorism must be prevented by an internal security force supported by the judiciary. The Patriotic Act generates fear because it reduces civil liberties and privacy rights in the United States.¹² This causes greater alarm in Latin America. In countries where

12 USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 – Sections 802–811 was introduced by Attorney General John Ashcroft on September 17 and published in Federal Register on September 20. The critics of this law signalled that it is an instrument to curtail civil rights: ‘The War on Terror has seriously compromised the First, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights of citizens and non-citizens alike. From the USA PATRIOT Act’s over-broad

there is a delicate equilibrium between democratic progress and risks to governance, and there is no innate respect for the rule of law, this new task challenges the commitment to justice and the respect for human rights. It then begins to appear as an excuse to re-militarise the security agenda (Eguizábal and Diamint, 2002).

Instead of redefining the military's role within the new institutional game, the public space has become militarised through the process of using the military organisation, models and doctrine for police activities.¹³ In the face of the government's inability to provide security, citizens start to address the issue individually, as they do not trust government institutions to maintain public order. Police forces are also not trusted due to corruption and their relation with illegal practices such as drug trafficking, contraband and extortion.¹⁴

Thus, despite the effort to separate domestic security and defence, Latin American governments have had to resort to military force to address drug trafficking and organized crime. Deficiencies in the civil management of defence policies, coupled with the government's request for the military to police the civilian population, reinforce the undemocratic tradition of military control.

Thus, the mandate through which civil missions are assigned to the military in Latin America is contradictory. In their actions aimed at preserving global or regional peace, the military must include civil missions, but when these missions are performed in the national arena, they pose a new challenge to the consolidation of democracy. This is the risk in introducing a human security agenda where democratic control is not yet securely in place. The military end up performing domestic intelligence tasks, pursuing citizens and managing information with no parliamentary control.

The Other Agenda

When new threats are introduced to regional foreign relations through a series of multilateral institutions and practices, the security agenda of Latin America has expanded. The Organization of American States (OAS) allowed for the creation of a discussion framework for security issues through the Hemispheric Security Commission (HSC). Alongside the OAS initiatives, the Rio Group's declaration

definition of domestic terrorism, to the FBI's new powers of search and surveillance, to the indefinite detention of both citizens and non-citizens without formal charges, the principles of free speech, due process, and equal protection under the law have been seriously undermined.' (Cohn, 2002).

13 See, for instance, *La Nación*, Friday, 28 February 2003.

14 For example, the Auditing Office of Rio de Janeiro reported 1586 events in nine months of activity (60 percent involved military police and 40 percent civil police). In spite of these reports, none of these police people was arrested or dismissed from the service. News published on 22 December 2001, *Folha de São Paulo*. Out of the total reported events, 19.8 percent were related to extortion practices and 13.2 percent to violence against citizens.

includes a reference to security issues. The Summit of Latin America Ministries of Defence was also held on the basis of a cooperative approach to security, with the goal of making national defence policies more transparent and cooperative. The ministries of defence agreed on the subordination of armed forces in order to defend sovereign democratic states' interests (Department of Defence, 1995: 4).

After September 11, a number of initiatives and agreements were built up in the hemispheric realm to fight terrorism. The Meeting of Ministries of Foreign Affairs at OAS on September 21 in Washington took the decision to re-activate the CICTE (Inter American Committee against Terrorism) and after two years of inactivity, the Commission met on 28–29 January 2002.¹⁵ The resolutions of the CICTE were also presented at the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism in the XXXII General Assembly (2–4 June 2002) at Barbados. This convention established rules to control terrorism and financial transfers, emphasising that all these new regulations could impede individual liberties and human rights (art. 14 and 15).

During the 1990s, cooperative security concepts started playing an important role in speeches delivered by foreign affairs ministers and defence ministers in the hemisphere. At the same time, armed forces intensified their exchanges through a series of activities clarifying their organisational structure and doctrine. Combined missions, sub-regional operations and bilateral exercises have diminished the occurrence of a military confrontation. However, the absence of a national and regional defence doctrine makes the coherence and feasibility of state policy a moot point. Progress in regional cooperation requires an inclusive discussion concerning the principles of the doctrine and the definition of military missions. Democratic values must lead to a weakening of the mutual conflict hypothesis and the development of regional military co-operation (Diamint, 2001).

Cooperation and trust have also been established by signing bilateral security agreements, such as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) endorsed by MERCOSUR members. Argentina encouraged the signing of an MOU between different states as it was difficult to move at a hemispheric level.¹⁶ Once the MOU between the Argentine Republic government and the US on the transfer and protection of strategic technology was signed on 12 February 1993, many other agreements followed.¹⁷

15 Resolution 23/RES.1/01 adopted measures to fight terrorism in a cooperative mode. *Amenaza terrorista en las Américas*. Vigésimo Cuarta Reunión de Consulta de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores actuando como Organo de Consulta en aplicación del TIAR.

16 Argentina, Canada, Argentina and Great Britain have a consultation mechanism for security issues where the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces participate under very well defined rules.

17 On November 1995, after the OAS's Meeting on CSBMs, a MOU between the Argentinean Republic and the Chilean Republic was signed to strengthen cooperation in security matters. The MOU between Argentina and Brazil was signed after a long series of meetings and negotiations that started in 1991. In April 1997, they executed the agreement and gave their mutual defence issues an official framework. MOUs of

At present there are a remarkable number of arrangements and treaties in the hemisphere. Besides those named above are the Summits of the Americas, the Andean Pact, the Central America Marco Agreement of Democratic Security, the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System (RSS), the Iberoamerican Summit, the Group of Financial Action of South America, the Inter-American Treaty (TIAR), the Inter-American Committee to Fight against Drugs (CICAD), and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacture and Traffic of Weapons, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Equipments (CIFTA). Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these agreements is limited. Three factors can explain these limitations. First, the increasing number of agreements, meetings and summits are managed by a small group of officers with precarious resources. Second, some of the policies accorded through presidential meetings are personal commitments; they remain government policy instead of 'state policy,' changing when a new political party takes office. Lastly, in various cases the executive power has not had the capacity to enforce the military's new directives.

The regional agreements articulate hemispheric and global accords, constituting a framework to prevent conflict and foster cooperation. Yet, inside the regimes, there is a lack of consensus on many issues. The expansion of terrorist and other criminal activities seek responses with mechanisms of high legitimacy, which means the rule of law, the force of universal justice and the efficacy of institutions. The legal and institutional understandings between groups of countries are more effective to fight anarchy and insecurity. Multilateralism, mediation and preventive diplomacy are the primary resources to build a democratic defence system. Despite some scepticism about the efficacy of multilateral arrangements, regional integration is a major foundation to promote more democratic defence policies. In this sense, we do not share the vision of Andrew Hurrell (1998: 529) that 'successful economic regionalisation can also be a significant potential problem for regional order and a source of negative security externalities.' As we demonstrated above, cases such as that of the Triple Frontier, instead of encouraging 'illicit flows of all kinds' (*ibid.*: 540) promote multilateral solutions, as was the case with CICTE. Instead of undermining identities, as Hurrell suggests, integration included the military in discussions on common concerns in the Central America Marco Agreement of Democratic Security led by civilian officers. Finally, the successive crises faced by Argentina demonstrate that MERCOSUR relations are stronger than imagined, despite continuous frictions reinforced by mutual interdependence. As in the case of Mexico's migration debates with the US, tensions have improved institutional mechanisms. It is true that there is no natural trend towards regional stability, but it is also true that societies of Latin America have incorporated and now try to advance on the basis of shared values such as peace and freedom.

cooperation were signed as regards international defence and security between Argentina and Bolivia, on 19 November 1996. It has been already agreed that Paraguay and Argentina shall sign in the future, but Uruguay is not interested in formalising the said agreement.

Conclusions

The shortcomings in civilian control of the armed forces do not imply a return to coups d'état. What we see today are different forms of military influence over political life. The situation has certainly improved. But there is no doubt that we are failing to establish a rational way to deal with defence issues, compared with other state policies. The human rights issue, far from disappearing, is very much alive in spite of the legal strategies by which governments hoped to put an end to past violations.¹⁸ Amnesties and demobilisation plans are not enough to wipe out the memory of past atrocities or create renewed confidence in the armed forces. Security forces are seen as unmindful of the law. They are perceived as violators of human rights and uncommitted to democratic principles and procedures.

Traditionally, the inability of society to channel its demands through government institutions and political parties created, in Latin America, a power vacuum that was filled by the institution best prepared to mediate in crises. The armed forces, fortified by arms and their centralised organisation, were the institution best fitted to fill that vacuum. If the present models lead to a higher degree of social fragmentation and leave more demands unsatisfied, new power vacuums will arise and, in turn, new forms of military intervention will appear. For example, a state that transfers social welfare functions to the private sector, to civil associations and to armed force institutions, could potentially create social unrest. Thus, the countries' institutional weaknesses could perpetuate military power. There has even been a revival of these authoritarian mechanisms in the re-election attempts of former and current presidents, i.e. Menem, Cardoso, Fujimori, Chávez and Pérez Balladares.

Military-to-military contacts have been a constant in relations between the United States and Latin America. In the past, these relations were the result of serious distrust of Latin American governmental institutions, as well as the recognisable disorder in the political history of these nations. More recently, the predominance of military-to-military connections has been ascribed to the US state departments' *disinterestedness* in hemispheric relations. The consolidation

18 In Argentina, a series of amnesty laws decreed by both the Alfonsín and Menem administrations in the 1980s and 1990s (*Obediencia Debida, Punto Final y Amnistía*) seemed to have closed the issue. However, a new denunciation by the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo (*Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*) provided incontestable evidence that the dictatorship had implemented a systematic, programmed plan for kidnapping children together with their parents (the *desaparecidos*). The kidnapping of children, who were subsequently given in illegal adoption, fell outside of the crimes protected by the above-mentioned laws, and therefore provided a legal alibi to reopen, under different charges, the cases of many military officers. In Chile, the trial of General Pinochet challenges the government's actual chances to succeed in suppressing Pinochet's immunity and trying him in ordinary courts. In Uruguay, the investigation to determine the situation of Argentine poet Juan Gelman's son and daughter-in-law led to investigating six Army officers to have them tried by civilian justice. In Bolivia, the Banzer administration is paying no heed to the subject. Guatemala is only now starting to disclose the atrocities committed.

of democracies in Latin America and the decrease in internal and neighbouring conflicts wiped out any concern with US foreign policy. In its place, the Southern Command acquired a dangerous autonomy, which has led to the promotion of anti-legal measures. One example is the Argentinean Congress' opposition to the US request to introduce American military in the territory without Parliament's authorisation, as required by Constitution, giving immunity to US officers and inviolability to related documents.¹⁹ Another example is the refusal of human rights groups and politicians to accept a US base in Manta, Ecuador. This site had been designated a centre of operations by both governments in 1999, during President Jamil Mahuad's mandate, to fight drug trafficking. But now it was charged with being a base of support for Plan Colombia that might involve Ecuador in an external matter.²⁰ Still another instance is the confusing support given to the revolt against Chávez on 11 April 2002. The American government considered the Venezuelan president hostile to democracy.²¹ In contrast to President Bill Clinton's reaction calling for a return to democratic rule in the rebellion that ended President Jamil Mahuad's mandate, George W. Bush's response was ambiguous. Furthermore, the American administration did not consider the 2002 revolt in Venezuela a civic-military coup d'état against a democratically elected authority (Oppenheimer, 2003; Shifter, 2003).

Furthermore, as political initiatives such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) contain a series of proposals on education, poverty reduction and the improvement of institutional performance, the only valid reforms are those that facilitate trade liberalisation. As a result of this new approach to the hemisphere, all that is left is a lack of general policies for the region. The most consistent proposals for hemispheric security have come from the Pentagon and not from the State Department.

Meanwhile, Latin America has not been able to establish a regional security policy. It is convinced that previous mechanisms do not respond to present challenges, but is still confused about the objectives and the criteria needed for new hemispheric institutions. From May 6 to 8, 2003, Mexico was supposed to hold a Special Conference on Security, summoned by the OAS. Countries of the Americas have been expressing the need for a review of the institutions of the inter-American security system. However, differences about the role and conception of military missions among OAS members were clear during the preparatory meeting, and Mexico decided to postpone the conference to October 2003 in order to achieve at least some consensus on the reforms.

Although there is a perception that the political public sphere interacts at a regional level, internal disputes for the control of the state still prevail where the economy has not inspired confidence. The ascendancy of the military in many countries has contributed to an ethos adverse to human rights, integration and democratic values.

19 See, for instance, *Página 12*, Buenos Aires, 20 April 2003.

20 See *El Comercio*, Quito, 11 July 2002.

21 See *Miami Herald*, 7 February 2002.

The conflicts in the region today are related to the stability of democratic regimes, which may be threatened by weak political institutions. This weakness can be seen in the absence of coherent security and defence policies and in the threats that guerrilla or terrorist groups can make to the political order. They can also be seen in the ability of non-state players to threaten governments, and in the level of corruption in the civil service (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). In the meantime, in Latin America, what prevails is the autonomous national state, with a low commitment to cooperation in defence coupled with military prerogatives that have not yet been eliminated by re-democratisation.

Among those countries that exhibit positive signs of integration, security matters are excluded from the agenda of commitments. The business community, NGOs, academic conferences and, to a certain extent, congress members have built regional ties without including a concrete design in security matters. Any issue discussed ends up placing the military outside the political arena, but there has yet to be a discussion about the legal or de facto roles that the military plays.

The creation of a regional community is a voluntary decision on the part of participating countries, built with the purpose of enhancing the economic welfare of their people and creating a stable and peaceful environment. There can be no cooperation and development without common rules and values. There can also be no integrated regional market with mutual security threats. For that reason, there should be a close relationship between the various national security policies and a collective policy on regional security. Moreover, for Latin American countries, where there is social debt, human security could be seen as a collective action leading towards global norms that are desirable because they produce some positive effects. These might include a) generating external regulations that compel internal directives; b) making transparent the consequences of some internal policies, in the sense of a positive externalisation; and c) creating an ideal model that helps to put in place more democratic policies. This model, for example, could locate the armed forces as a foreign policy tool of diplomacy and could facilitate the process of governments assigning an innovative role to the military (Rigby, 2001).

In Latin America, both the military and civilian leadership shaped strategic criteria during the Cold War, when state sovereignty and territorial defence were primary concerns. Although many leaders recognise that security concepts must adapt to risks that now include a strong humanitarian component, for them the Cold War ended just a few days ago. But we cannot understand the transition from military insecurity to social insecurity in the same terms and using the same instruments. Thus, there is a real danger that in attempting to reform security systems we will simply bring back old winners in new skins, and try to combat new risks using institutions, strategies, and weapons from the past.

In order to enlarge our conception of national defence to include threats to ordinary citizens as well as professional soldiers, we must achieve a new, creative, multidisciplinary understanding of security (Chanaa, 2002). Changing military planning into a democratically determined public policy will require pressure from diverse actors, as well as the commitment of the governments themselves.

All these possibilities must be taken into account simultaneously with the notion that in the region it is necessary to respond to the contradictions stated above. On the one hand, there is the need for a wider security agenda based on social order and democratic principles; on the other, an enlargement of the security agenda may lead to a re-militarisation of Latin American countries. Resolving this tension is the first step to developing a hemispheric consensus.

At present, the multilateral nature of politics is not questioned. Neither is the organisation of a central plan for the resolution of conflicts. It is recognized that these changes are new facts in an ever-changing international order. Despite the existence of different political styles and different processes of democratic consolidation, together with participation in global politics, there is a common hemispheric interest to negotiate amongst American countries, as the Inter-American Democratic Chart approved in Lima in September 2001 stipulates, promoting representative democracy and the defence of human rights. The terrorist attacks cannot change the basic values defended in the hemispheric institutions, as there is an awareness that regional security depends on sustaining these values and organising the required institutions and mechanisms necessary to implement a continual rule of law.

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