

## Hemispheric Collective Security in the Post-Cold War Era: Policy and Practice in Latin America\*

As the felicitous events surrounding the collapse of the Berlin wall and the end of the Cold War recede into the past, it is surprising how much nostalgia is stirred by the memory of the conceptual clarity associated with this period of a bipolar conflict. Not a few politicians still are stuck in the simplified Cold War categories of "right" and "wrong" and continue to formulate policy on the basis of their sense of how the world had been organized.

This conceptual gridlock is reflected in the widespread analytical and strategic confusion that prevails currently concerning the nature of basic concepts such as national security, security interests, and security threats. As a consequence, there is a great deal of anxiety in the United States policy community over what instruments should be used to achieve its national goals and interests.

For the nations of the hemisphere, there is certainty that they do not want to be bullied by the U.S. and they have stated categorically that the old ways of unilateral intervention for the sole purpose of protecting U.S. interests is no longer acceptable. However, what has not been achieved as of this writing is a consensus as to what modes of hemispheric partnership might replace the present scenario of U.S. policies in the region since the policy community in the U.S. is far from agreement on how partnering or collaborative actions can help protect U.S. national interests at the same time.

The cases presented in this bulletin of the peace processes in Central America by *Jesús M. Rodés* and *Salvador Martí Puig*, both from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, are a stark reminder of the challenges that face the nations of the hemisphere in this age of a post-Cold War world. The difficulties encountered in the countries of Central America (namely El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua) reflect a policy framework for collective security that is dominated by the United States. My contribution highlights that there is a need on the part of the U.S. to overcome the temptation of unilateralism and to search out viable solutions for collective security. A new paradigm must be encountered in order to ensure that hemispheric policies do not fall into the historical trap of being dominated by U.S.-interests, a common characteristic of the Cold War.

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## THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF THE ARMED FORCES: A POST-COLD WAR PERSPECTIVE

By Joseph S. Tulchin-Woodrow Wilson Center

The proper role for the armed forces has particular significance in Latin America because of the sad history of civil-military relations in the region. The assumption after the Cold War had been that, with the decline in external threats to the hemisphere together with the transition to democracy throughout the region, the armed forces would retreat from the political stage and assume more professional roles similar to their counterparts in the developed nations. However, such an outcome has occurred only in very few countries. In the majority of cases, the situation is far more complex given the changing nature of transnational threats (i.e. drug trafficking) and pressure from the United States to get the military involved in responding to these new global challenges. Moreover, the peculiar position of the U.S. in the hemisphere has had the effect of blocking or distorting the evolution of the role of the armed forces in Latin America.

The U.S.-held conviction that we are essentially living in a unipolar world has not made formulating a defense policy for the hemisphere any easier. The United States may be the only nation with global reach, an active concern for events around the globe, and the political will to project its power to every corner of the world; but there

are a number of significant limitations on the use of its power which are not fully understood in the region.

*First*, it is clear that in the years after the end of the Cold War, it has been difficult for the U.S. to act alone anywhere in the world. That is not to say that the Bush administration does not prefer to execute defense policy unilaterally. The tolerance for such action is virtually nonexistent in the international community and especially in the Western Hemisphere. The political costs of unilateral policies far outweigh their benefits. As a consequence, while the U.S. is considered powerful enough to act alone, it is not viewed as the most effective use of the nation's force. Uniting with partners will best leverage U.S. influence, but the trick is to control these binding ties since accords, whether with individual nations or multinational institutions, constitute another constraint on power.

*Second*, U.S. power is being executed within a different context given the entrance of non-traditional security issues into its defense agenda. Most famously, the U.S. has been almost helpless in dealing with terrorists. As for the rest of this new agenda, the academic community is virtually unanimous in agreeing that none of these issues can be dealt with or responded to effectively by any individual nation. The illegal trafficking of drugs, environmental degradation, epidemic disease, and migration, among many others, cannot be handled unilaterally. Policy makers may want to do so, and the hyper-realists may insist on doing it, but the results argue against it.

It is unlikely, however, that Latin American nations will be able to step up their participation in more collective actions. The absence of a consensus on many issues among the countries of Latin America condemns them to being rule takers, not rule makers, and reduces the international influence they might have as a region or group of nations. In the specific case of the armed forces, the policy dilemma will continue over whether the U.S. military should expand its cooperation with counterparts in the region. If it does, one must ask: How does such collaboration strengthen democracy rather than undermine it?

*Achieving National Goals Through Community Action.* The key to selecting appropriate instru-

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ments for a national defense policy in the hemisphere is to identify modes of collaboration with Latin American armed forces and governments that will not excite anxiety in the region and which will not appear on the radar scope of U.S. domestic politics. Cooperative efforts will be most likely and effective where the levels of mutual confidence are highest and where the similarities among national interests are the greatest. Under this scenario, the most likely sphere for such action is at the sub-regional level rather than through hemispheric or bilateral channels.

### *The U.S. needs to overcome the temptation of unilateralism and search out viable solutions for collective security.*

To create a sense of community in the hemisphere that goes beyond sub-regional interests, it will be necessary to establish an active role for the region within the international community. Three areas, in which the region already plays an antagonistic role, could be expanded:

- 1) *Regulating the control of arms*
- 2) *Participating in peacekeeping*
- 3) *Supporting human rights*

The nature of the existing sub-regional collaboration will suggest the instruments of policy to be used. In the Caribbean, the United States—through the Department of Defense (DOD)—should work with the members of the RSS (Regional Security System) to provide such training and matériel as might be required and to determine which complementary instruments of power would be helpful in making the Caribbean a more secure area. In the Southern Cone, the situation is very different. There, the rapprochement between Chile and Argentina is nothing short of historic. The dense institutional framework for cooperation is strong and growing but they have not succeeded in exporting their mode of confidence building to Mercosur or the Andean region. In Mexico and in Central America, the primary task for the DOD is to demilitarize U.S. policy. In the struggle against drug trafficking, there is a need to match military

instruments with non-military measures. The same holds true for the sub-regional responses to natural disasters and organized crime.

*Conclusion: Fitting Instruments to Policy.* In formulating a defense policy for the Western Hemisphere that strengthens democratic control of the armed forces in the region, the United States faces a dual challenge. The first is to suit the instruments of policy to the peculiar history of U.S.-Latin American relations and the pattern of security threats in the hemisphere. The second is to adapt policies to the ongoing debate in the region over the role of the armed forces and the constraints on U.S. policy imposed by the hemisphere's response to the pressures of globalization.

The asymmetry between the U.S. and the nations of Latin America in terms of military mission and power has become one of the most complex problems in the consolidation of democracy in the hemisphere. In the most categorical terms, it is necessary to eliminate the autonomy of the armed forces in Latin America. To do this will require the involvement of citizens and civilians and the control of the armed forces by democratic institutions. Finally—and here is where the role of the U.S. and the international community becomes crucial—mission creep must be avoided. Where there exists or arises the temptation to assign a task to the military (because of convenience, resources, or capability), the temptation has to be resisted.

### **PEACE PROCESSES AND NEW SECURITY DOCTRINES IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

By Jesús M. Rodés-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Throughout its history, Central America has been subjected to policies that have overdetermined the region's strategic importance vis-à-vis the United States, beginning with the Monroe Doctrine and ending with the National Security Doctrine at the conclusion of the Cold War. From a military standpoint, this "backyard" presence has been a fundamental element in understanding not only the rise of internal conflicts but also the very nature of the state in Central America. Just as the region underwent coloniza-





tion before colonialism had begun, so too it experienced independence before de-colonization even occurred. This premature process of nation-building resulted in the weak but authoritarian state which came to characterize Central America by the mid-twentieth century, where the trilogy of bishop, colonel, and land owner formed the substantive element of its structural failings.

Central America is also a special case in the region because it was shaken by a series of violent conflicts during the end of the twentieth century. In some cases the violence was associated with wars (i.e. El Salvador), in certain countries it was declared an internal conflict in order not to use the word "war" (Guatemala), and in others it was of a completely different nature (i.e. Nicaragua and Honduras). Among all of the cases of conflict in the region, I will focus on those I know best: the cases of El Salvador and Guatemala.

*Defense and Security Structures in Central America:*

*El Salvador and Guatemala.* The concept of a non-military state administered by civilian authorities does not exist in Central America. The military has constantly extended itself into the activities of the state. In its relations with other governmental institutions, the armed forces have become involved in whatever they are not impeded from doing, which is almost nothing. The extension of the functions of the military has implied an increase in the armed forces' political and economic power in Central America, as well as the militarization of its institutions and societies. Such "military spillage" has been a fundamental characteristic of the organization of the Central American state, namely El Salvador and Guatemala.

*The Salvadoran Case.* In the case of El Salvador, it is important to discuss the notion of a national military doctrine and how this concept was incorporated into the Chapultepec peace accords. The parties at the signing of the peace agreement could not fathom the fact that a defense policy

could be designed and executed by a civilian government. This occurred not only in the accords for El Salvador but also in the peace agreements signed for Guatemala. The concept of a national military doctrine inevitably entered the text of both agreements although it was used to craft a defense policy and establish limits for the missions of the armed forces. In El Salvador, the sections of the accords related to the issue of a military doctrine for the country is clearly more thoughtful than what was produced in Guatemala and can be considered representative of the power the United Nations (UN) had as the mediator in the process to impress its views on both parties. The ability of the UN to act in this manner was a product of the status of the conflict in El

***The lack of civilians in leadership positions will continually undermine the ability of Central American nations to restructure their states in the image of a true democratic state.***

Salvador: the two competing armies had reached a technical tie and they knew that their bargaining capacity was almost equal.

The peace process in El Salvador attempted to divide the function of providing public security between the armed forces and the police but such a distinction had never existed given that the three existing police forces were all connected with the military: the Police of the "Hacienda," the National Guard, and the National Police force. In this sense, one of the most important elements of the agreements was to dissolve these police forces and create an alternative: the National Civil Police Force. According to the initial agreements, only individuals who were not involved in the original civil war could join this new force, but a later modification gave the guerrillas and the police equal representation in it (20 percent each). In spite of this change, the end result has been an increase in the ability of the Salvadoran state to assume a more public and less military character.





The UN has considered the case of El Salvador to be a great success—I would say it is a reasonable success—but the same cannot be equally said of the peace process in Guatemala, where verification of the state's fulfillment of the agreements remains unfinished.

*The Case of Guatemala.* The armed forces in Guatemala were very attentive to the peace process in El Salvador in order to ensure that the same reforms would not be carried out against them. As a result, the creation of a truth commission or measures to cleanse the armed forces of members involved in the conflict were out of the question. While the idea for an intelligence organization that would act parallel to the military's agency was considered for responding to civil cases, it was never created.

Similar to the case of El Salvador, the Guatemalan peace process included stipulations that were designed to carry out a revision of the national military doctrine. However, the armed forces and the government managed to commandeer the process because of the weak position of the guerrillas in the negotiations, leaving it to them to write a new national military doctrine. The resulting document was presented during the final hours of the Arzú administration and failed to distinguish properly between which forces were responsible for domestic and international security. As a result, a tension has been created between security agencies because the preexisting police has not been disbanded and actually has expanded its ranks. The command and organizational structure of the previous Guatemalan police force has also been maintained, which means that the force is composed of the country's white minority rather than the multiethnic and multilingual society that is truly Guatemala. The current police force continues to have strong ties with the military apparatus of the country and the executive's own intelligence agency ("Estado Mayor Presidencial").

While the Guatemalan armed forces have fulfilled a list of other promises as outlined in the peace accords, such as ending their monopoly over the sale of liquor and giving up their own television channel, there have been problems related to reducing the military's power within

the state. The armed forces have failed to cut by 33% the number of government soldiers based upon how many existed when the accords were signed. Unfortunately, neither party ever counted the exact number, and most observers believe the military never fulfilled this stipulation of the peace agreements. The military also continues to have a strong presence within the present civilian government of President Alfonso Portillo. His Vice President, Francisco Reyes, is an ex-army officer, and the President of the Guatemalan House of Representatives is a general, Rios Montt, who was the de facto president during the darkest years of the military's repression.

*Concluding Remarks.* The lack of civilians in leadership positions with the capacity to make defense decisions will continually undermine the implementation of peace accords and the ability of Central American nations to restructure their states in the image of a true democratic state. As long as the armed forces are backed by political forces as in Guatemala, it is unlikely that there will be a dialogue between the military and civil society on these topics. The armed forces will continue to have the political autonomy that they have historically enjoyed in the countries of Central America. While there is an ambitious project to recast civil-military relations by FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), I believe that it is going to be a long process given that governments will be hesitant to accept that national security should be a matter left for civilian authorities. Until a new generation of leaders appears, it will be impossible to think about security and defense from the perspective of the world's democracies.

### POST-COLD WAR POLICIES IN ACTION: THE PROCESS OF GUERRILLA DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION IN NICARAGUA

By Salvador Martí Puig-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

*Beginning the Process: Rhetoric versus Action.* The signing of the Sapoá and Tela Agreements (March 24, 1988 and August 7, 1989, respectively) marked the end of a war that was fought for almost nine years between the Sandinistas and the





Contras. However, it also signaled the beginning of another equally complicated process: the demobilization of the members of each army and their reintegration into society.

The Tela agreement provided the framework for the Contras and Sandanistas to be repatriated or relocated to third-party countries. Five presidents from the region signed on to the accord which included the creation of the International Verification and Support Commission (CIAV), an agency staffed with representatives from the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS). The CIAV was given the responsibility of returning 8,000 resistance fighters to Nicaragua and reintegrating them back into society and the country's political process. However, it proved to be a long and difficult task.

The relative autonomy of the Contra troops with respect to their representatives who signed the agreements, and the complex social situation that had sparked the conflict, led the process to take a different direction.

The high level of autonomy that prevailed among the Contra troops meant that many soldiers were not willing to give up their weapons until the promised changes had happened. Therefore, while the civilian leaders of the Nicaraguan Resistance (RN) were reintegrating themselves back into the political life of the country, its military cadre chose to amass its troops and launch an intense campaign in favor of the political party UNO (National Opposition Union).

The Contras kept their troops intact and inside Nicaragua until March 23, 1990, when the Toncotín Agreement was signed. As a result, they were able to maintain their integrity as a force, to wait for the results of the presidential election, and to witness the signing of the Protocol for the Transition of Executive Power, which guaranteed the transfer of power to newly-elected President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. The Toncotín agreement, accepted by the RN and

the new government, called for a complete cease-fire and a commitment by the Contras to disarm within one month (April 23). In return for the Contras' concessions, the incoming Chamorro government promised to provide for their rehabilitation and social reintegration.

In the months after Toncotín, new agreements were signed to define the security conditions for the demobilized Contra troops, to assist in their relocation, and to create "development poles" to satisfy the land demands of the combatants and their commanders. To fulfill the agreed-upon conditions, ex-combatants started to concentrate themselves in nine security zones to proceed with their demobilization, but their numbers (including family members) surpassed any estimation. At the same time, the U.S. significantly reduced the

*A new phenomenon has arisen which we can call "bottom-up reconciliation." It is surely the force that can stimulate the healing of the country that has not materialized directly from the peace accords.*

amount of aid that had been promised initially to assist in the reintegration process.

*The Lack of Effective Reintegration Policies.* Both of these developments generated many questions about the capacity and political will of the new government to carry out the agreements while satisfying the demands of the newly demobilized troops.

The complexity of the problem was most obvious in the difficulties encountered with the Chamorro government's reintegration plan. A document published by the Civic Association of Nicaraguan Resistance notes that at the end of 1991 the land redistribution plan (through "development poles") was only able to satisfy 20 percent of the total demand. This report confirmed the belief among observers that the "development poles" existed solely on paper. Members of the Contras not only felt abandoned by the United States, which had been their mainstay of support during the conflict, but also deceived by the Chamorro government.



The failure of this component of the reintegration plan marked the beginning of a complex and conflictive process of disagreements between all the parties involved. Observers and participants alike saw the government's incompleteness of this part of the agreements as the catalyst for renewed social conflict in the countryside. The Contras who arrived to the "development poles" found nothing; they were simply a chimera of the government. The resulting discontent that arose among them was expressed in two ways. First, there was a remilitarization of members of the RN, called the Recontras, and ex-soldiers of the EPS (Ejército Popular Sandinista), the Recompas. Second, a collective consciousness among the campesinos and ex-combatants, two former enemies, over the Chamorro government's failed promises of land redistribution developed.

*Nicaragua's Demobilized and Rural Violence: The Remnants of the Conflict.* The lack of solutions to the problem of reintegrating the demobilized Contras motivated mid-level leaders of the RN to take up arms against the government in order to pressure it to fulfill the agreed-upon promises. In October 1990, 200 ex-combatants of the Contras took over the town of Waslala, starting a movement that would later be called the Recontras. Tension worsened between the government and demobilized troops after this uprising and a new period of violence in the countryside began.

As was expected, this rearming of the contras frightened members of the agricultural cooperatives in the countryside, who were mainly Sandinistas, as well as other demobilized soldiers (ESN) that were living there. These groups decided to arm themselves for protection also, creating the Recompas. The scenario that developed was an unfathomable vicious cycle: accusations of failed promises by both sides, acts of vengeance, and unending negotiations. By 1992, almost the same number of people who participated in the demobilization process in 1990 had rearmed. The new conflict had no ideology or political meaning; the violence that emerged was anonymous and the lines between positions and sides became blurred. New, short-lived alliances would form, bringing parties together that had been enemies

in the past to fight against the government in armed troops called the Revueltos. The practices of these new groups were closer to banditry, where the perpetrators were more worried about survival than "fighting communism" or "creating the new man." The takeover of farms and agricultural cooperatives became commonplace, as well as the assassination and kidnapping of campesinos and producers.

*Concluding Remarks: Finding Optimism in the Fighting.* Within this context of violence, it is important to try to find any positive developments that were generated by the reintegration of the Contras. For example, the process of reintegration led to collaborative efforts between the peasants who had worked for the resistance, the producers with ties to UNAG, and the Sandinista cooperatives. Based on the fact that between them there were more affinities than they had with their previous leaders in Managua or Miami, these new partners started reconstructing their communities in the small towns that previously had been war zones.

In this sense, the reintegration process can be characterized by two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the creation of a new conflict that followed the steps of the contra-revolutionary war of the 1980s had no direction and was based solely on survival, social breakdown, and the despair of those who had fought in the previous war. On the other hand, the collaboration between ex-combatants and some of their former enemies helped to reconstruct Nicaraguan society and mend the divisions that originally led to its violent collapse. From this collaboration, a new phenomenon has arisen which we can call "bottom-up reconciliation." It is surely the force that can stimulate the healing of the country that has not materialized directly from the peace accords.

### FINAL COMMENTS ON THE FUTURE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

By Joseph S. Tulchin-WoodrowWilson Center

The historical legacy of U.S. hegemony, combined with the recent history of Latin America's transition to democracy and the current context of regional security, have distorted certain instru-





ments of U.S. policy. My article argues that these factors have rendered the Cold War policy framework ineffective. By extrapolation, the U.S. national defense policy for specific regions must be reformulated based upon each area's history, culture and the legacy of its relations with the United States. The cases presented from Central America by Drs. Martí Puig and Rodés clearly fit well with the paradigm I presented about the need to tailor defense policies. The difficulties encountered in the demobilization of the Contras in Nicaragua, discussed by Dr. Martí Puig, can be linked to the failure of the U.S. to recast its policies to the country's post-conflict context. As explained by Dr. Rodés, similar policy mismatches were evident in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The policy recommendations I offer could provide the impetus for hemispheric collective security to embark upon a new path consistent with the present exigencies of the international system. *First*, the peculiar context of hemispheric relations mandates the use of multilateral cooperation, whether through informal or formal mech-

anisms, to pursue the national defense goals of the United States in the region. The U.S. could implement such a policy by using OAS articles and treaties or even different UN conventions to rectify some of the democratic frailties being experienced in Central America as revealed in the articles by Drs. Martí Puig and Rodés. *Second*, the asymmetrical nature of the missions of the U.S. in several countries in the region makes it beneficial to work with institutions such as police forces or border control agencies that might not be appropriate in other settings. As the cases of El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua presented here demonstrate, this cooperation is particularly necessary in Central America. *Third*, the fragile quality of confidence building among the nations of the region puts the U.S. defense policy in the unusual position of fostering sub-regional cooperation in order to achieve its own national goals. For example, the U.S. objectives of combating drug trafficking and terrorism could be realized by strengthening better inter-state relations in Central America in commerce, infrastructure projects, and the regional development programs.

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