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United States National Security Policy in Latin America: Threat Assessment and Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration

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INTRODUCTION

US national security policy in Latin America, from the Monroe Doctrine on, has mainly consisted of efforts to keep undesirable actors and flows out: out of power in Latin American countries and out of US territory. In the post-Cold War era, the earlier geopolitical emphasis has been largely supplanted by a focus on drugs, illegal immigrants, and refugees. During the administration of George W. Bush, however, the scope of perceived security threats from Latin America to U.S. security was again expanded to include President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and his anti-American ideological project, *Chávismo*, and global jihadi terrorists.

Yet the Latin American countries by and large, with the exception of Colombia, have balked at the new U.S. definition and agenda of security priorities for the hemisphere. The Global War on Terror, for instance, has received little resonance in the region. Similarly, although the vast majority of governments cooperate with the US war on drugs, many disagree with the dominant emphasis on eradication and source-country policies. Instead, the Latin American emphasis has been primarily on a long list of socio-economic problems, such as poverty, the lack of development, rising street-level crime and human insecurity, and corruption.¹

These two sets of agendas are not inevitably contradictory. The United States needs to recognize that many of the threats with which it is concerned, especially the illicit flows and global terrorism, frequently stem from and are exacerbated by state weakness in many parts of Latin America. Apart from President Chávez's anti-American agitation, the main threats to U.S. interests in Latin America do not come from state-sponsored actions. Rather, state weakness is the underlying condition at the root of the various illicit flows that the United States seeks to keep out of its territory and that undermine political and economic development in Latin America. Although the Bush Administration appeared to sign onto a more comprehensive approach to security, its state strengthening efforts in Latin America have been inadequate.

The basic US security policy in the hemisphere should become more responsive to human security concerns of Latin American populations and it should intensify and broaden efforts to strengthen states across the region. This paradigmatic shift, which will enhance efforts to promote US interests, must include a far greater emphasis on multilateral approaches and local buy-in.

EVALUATION OF THREATS FROM US PERSPECTIVE

LATIN AMERICA AS A HAVEN FOR GLOBAL TERRORIST GROUPS

Since 9-11, the Bush Administration has been focusing on Latin America through the prism of the Global War on Terrorism. In addition to drugs, a critical concern has been the potential of anti-American jihadi groups to exploit *areas sin ley* (areas without law) in the Southern Hemisphere for safehavens and fundraising activities and as staging grounds for terrorist attacks on the US homeland.

¹ At a meeting of nineteen Latin American heads of government in Cuzco, Peru in May 2003, the divergence of agendas was visibly manifest: terrorism and drug eradication were not even mentioned in the list of top concerns the region needed to give urgent attention. See, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Hemisphere Highlights: Americas Program," 2(6), June 2003.

US policymakers and analysts have paid special attention to Triborder Area where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay meet at the Iguazu Falls, perceiving it to be the center of jihadi activities in the region. A major tourist attraction and a historic locus of trade between the three countries, the area has seen the emergence of a city on each side of the border amidst expansive jungles. Minimal border controls to foster legal trade and facilitate tourism and difficult terrain have made the Triborder Area a smuggling hub for all kinds of illegal commodities and services, including drugs and money-laundering. The Triborder Area also has a Middle Eastern community of about 30,000-60,000 immigrants. Even though no publicly-available evidence has directly linked al Qaeda to financing or other operations to the Triborder Area, there are reports that Hezbollah and Hamas are using the area for fundraising and arms acquisition.² Despite pressure from the United States on the three governments to crack down on terrorist funding and illicit flows in the Area, much of the illegal activity continues unhampered.

The Triborder Area, however, is hardly a major locus of Qaeda and other jihadi groups' operations. Other regions beyond the Middle East and South Asia, such as Africa, provide easier hiding and organizing locations, and greater religious and ethnic affinity with the wider population. While the United States must pay attention to possible jihadi actions in Latin America and encourage joint intelligence efforts with Latin American governments, it should avoid defining jihadi terrorism in the region as its main preoccupation. Such a definition of the primary U.S. security interest will have minimal resonance with local governments, and result in minimal cooperation.

PREOCCUPATION WITH DRUGS

Between the end of the Cold War and 9-11, US concern over the supply of illegal drugs from the Southern Hemisphere to American consumers came to dominate the agenda of US-Latin American relations. This preoccupation led some Latin American government officials complain about the "narcotization" of US-Latin American relations.³ Latin America is indeed the principal supplier to the US of cocaine and a prominent supplier of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamines.⁴ Cocaine, heroin, and marijuana production is centered mainly in the Andean region of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, while Mexico has become a key transshipment area and supplier of methamphetamines to the United States and remains an important supplier of marijuana.

To combat the drug trade, Washington has been relying heavily on policies of eradication and interdiction. Designed to destroy the cultivation of the illicit crops, eradication is intended to increase prices and hence reduce consumption and also to prevent belligerent groups from obtaining money from the drug trade. Interdiction – the destruction of processing laboratories and the capture of smuggled drugs and traffickers – seeks to disrupt the trade and stop the drugs from reaching US users. Although alternative livelihoods policies often accompany eradication and interdiction, they have been minimal in scope and funding and have overall failed to provide legal alternatives to populations dependent on the cultivation of illicit crops.

In addition to the threat to the well-being of U.S. society posed by the consumption of narcotics and its associated criminal activity, the U.S. government has been concerned with the funding the illicit drug economy provides for belligerent groups in Latin America and the rampant

² See, for example, Rex Hudson, *Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America*, Report by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, July 2003.

³ Author's interviews in Latin America, summer and fall 2005.

⁴ Canada and the United States themselves are also important producers of both of these illicit drugs.

rise in violent crime in transshipment countries, such as Mexico. Beyond the potential for jihadi terrorists to profit from illicit flows, a host of locally-oriented belligerent actors have profited from the trade. These have included leftist guerrillas, such as the Shining Path and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru in Peru and the FARC and the ELN Ejército de Liberación Nacional in Colombia. Rightist groups fighting the insurgents have equally profited from the trade – be they the paramilitaries in Colombia or counterinsurgency groups in El Salvador and Guatemala during the 1980s. Indeed, any time active military conflict overlaps with large-scale illicit economies, such as drugs, belligerent groups of all ideologies and orientations are likely to derive large and multifaceted benefits from such illicit economies, leading to conflict expansion and intensification.

The effort against such illicit flows needs to be much more cognizant (than it has been in U.S. policy) of the multiple roles such illicit economies play the lives of the poor and marginalized populations in the region and hence must focus much more robustly on rural development. Careful sequencing between rural development and eradication is needed.

ANTI-GOVERNMENT INSURGENCIES AND OTHER BELLIGERENT ACTORS

Various leftist insurgencies in Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Colombia have been seen for decades by Washington as proxies for Soviet and Cuban influence in the region. The end of the Cold War brought the demise of the vast majority of such groups, FARC being an exception, through military defeat or political reconciliation.⁵ Remnants of insurgent groups persist, for example, in Peru and Mexico, and could increase in size, but currently do not pose a significant threat for the United States or national governments.

While the other insurgencies were expiring in the early 1990s, the FARC continued to expand, largely as a result of its ability to exploit the drug cultivation and trade. By 2000, it posed a very serious threat to the Colombian state, not only controlling large sections of the rural areas, but also preventing travel between major cities and even threatening Bogotá.

Despite holding three US contractors hostage and periodically attacking oil pipelines belonging to US and other countries, the FARC was not primarily interested in attacking Americans. But it did clash with US interests by unleashing large levels of violence and threatening the stability of the Colombian government and by enabling the expansion of coca cultivation in the country. The FARC has militarily opposed coca eradication policies sponsored by the United States, thus obtaining support from the rural population. Efforts by the FARC to buy uranium for resale on the international illicit market, as disclosed by the Colombian government in the spring of 2008 and a later discovery of 30 kilograms of depleted uranium near Bogotá, would of course further threaten US security. Indeed, stopping illicit trade with WMD materials, such as for terrorist groups, should be a key US security priority globally.

In addition to the expansion of the FARC, the 1990s saw the expansion of rightist paramilitaries in Colombia who engaged in massacres of those whom they suspected of sympathizing with the FARC. The paramilitaries too were deeply involved in the drug trade, with many key drug traffickers buying themselves positions of leadership among the umbrella organization of the paramilitaries, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, to attain political legitimacy. By the early 2000s, the Colombian state had thus lost the ability to provide minimal security throughout much of its territory, not mention its inability to carry out other state functions. But the mobilization of resources by the government since then, under the leadership

⁵ Although the ELN continues to be active and has not formally demobilized, the belligerent group is largely defeated.

of President Álvaro Uribe, crucially aided by US military training and assistance, has vastly improved the levels of security in Colombia and significantly weakened the FARC.⁶

Having suffered very serious hits, including recently against its top leadership, the FARC's combatants have dwindled and desertions are increasing. Its political capital has also critically shrunk, even among its strongest base, the *cocaleros*, many of whom are angry at the FARC's failure to protect them against eradication and at its own abuse of the population in areas where its units have taken over the role of drug traffickers. Nevertheless, the FARC is far from fully defeated. It still maintains support among the *cocaleros* who have failed to provide intelligence on the belligerents or embrace the government. Most intelligence comes from FARC deserters. Nor has the FARC been financially bankrupted by the crop eradication campaign although some FARC *frentes* face severe financing problems as a result of military encirclement and limited ability to move through the territory without detection. The military successes against the FARC are the result of the expansion and improvements in the Colombian military forces, benefiting from US material aid and training, not the result of the anti-drug campaign. Still, the FARC continues to pose a threat to the Colombian state, which is still critically weak in large areas of the country where despite the declared commitment of the Colombian government state presence, including police and social, is frequently minimal or altogether absent.

The Uribe administration has also demobilized Colombia's rightist paramilitaries under a collective amnesty program, allowing them to avoid extradition to the United States on drug trafficking charges and to serve only minimal sentences for their crimes.⁷ But the paramilitaries have not disappeared from the scene. New armed militias have emerged, taking over territory, and continuing with the drug trade. Some of these groups are in collusion with the FARC in drug trafficking. And some of the ex-paras have morphed into criminal mafias that control large urban and rural areas; others have deeply penetrated the Colombian political system.

While able to claim major improvements from aiding the Colombian government's counterinsurgency campaign, the United States has not been able to show a corollary effectiveness in countering the drug threat. The level of cultivation, processing, and trade with illegal drugs in Colombia remains unabated and at essentially the same levels as during the 1990s⁸ despite the largest aerial spraying campaign in history under Plan Colombia. US government coca estimates for Colombia put the 2006 (latest available) level of cultivation at 156,000 ha, more than the 136,000 ha in 2000, and only slightly less than the peak of 169,000 ha in 2001. Similarly, US street price for cocaine, while registering a slight increase over the past 15 months, still remains close to lowest ever and only 25% in nominal terms of what it was in 1981.⁹

In addition to the FARC, several other belligerent groups persist in Latin America, even though they are very weak. In Peru, for example, remnants of the Shining Path, such as Sendero Rojo, continue to operate in the drug-growing regions, providing security to drug traffickers and attempting to mobilize the *cocaleros*. Their efforts could become more successful

⁶ See, for example, Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007*, CSIS Report, November 2007, <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071112-backfromthebrink-web.pdf>.

⁷ In May 2008, the Uribe government in a surprising move extradited the 14 most notorious paramilitary warlords to the United States on drug trafficking charges.

⁸ See, for example, Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports, 1999-2007*.

⁹ See, Karen P. Tandy, "Cocaine Price/ Purity Press Conference," Bogota, Colombia, November 8, 2007, <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/speeches/s110807.html>, and WOLA, "Are We There Yet? Measuring Progress in the U.S. War on Drugs in Latin America," *Drug War Monitor*, December 2004, http://www.wola.org/ddhr/ddhr_data_measures2.htm.

if forced eradication continues to alienate large segments of the rural population lacking legal representation in the political process and living in critical poverty. The Zapatistas in Mexico have also seen a significant decline in their power. But if food prices stay high and poor Mexican farmers remain unable to compete in the global economy, the Zapatistas could potentially find a much larger mobilization base. Although groups, such as Sendero Rojo and the Zapatistas, could pose a certain level of threat to national governments in the region, they are not primarily anti-American.

While such groups oppose various US policies and frequently cloak themselves in anti-US rhetoric, they are not engaged in terrorism against the US homeland, even though they could engage in attacks against American business or drug eradication assets in their countries. Nonetheless, the US should become more conscious of how its policies in the Hemisphere, such as forced eradication of illicit crops, can inadvertently fuel such belligerent groups.

MARAS

The decline of leftist insurgencies in the early 1990s coincided with the expansion of urban youth gangs (or *maras*) in Central America and the United States. For some analysts, the threat posed by the *maras* has replaced the previous threat posed by insurgencies, a threat all the more serious since some of the *maras* are physically located on US territory and since there are connections between US-based *maras* and their Central American counterparts. As with the leftist insurgencies, the emergence of the *maras* stems from the inability of states in Central America to provide for the physical safety and socio-economic needs of large segments of the population increasingly living in sprawling urban slums. Even in the strong-state model of the US, when the state is not a respected presence (e.g., in urban ghettos with large disaffected populations), such urban youth gangs tend to proliferate. Indeed, some prominent *maras* seem to have originated among Salvadoran immigrants in the *barrios* of Los Angeles in the 1980s.

Frequently conceived of as the largest criminal network in the world, the *maras* in El Salvador are estimated at 25,000, with comparable numbers in Guatemala, Honduras, and the United States. The *maras* are involved in a variety of street level crimes –kidnapping, extortion, murders, and drug retail – as well as to some extent with transnational crime, such as cross-border traffic in drugs and illegal aliens. Although government officials in Central America and organized crime groups themselves frequently find it convenient to attribute the bulk of illegal trade and threats to public law and order to the *maras*, in fact, organized crime groups mostly operate fully independently of the *maras*, even if they occasionally hire the *maras* for specific services.

US attention to the *maras* has typically been focused on keeping them out of the US and suppressing the violent ones that already exist here. Yet paradoxically, it was the deportation of *mara* members living in the US to their countries of origin, that has greatly added to the increasingly more organized, violent, and crime-sophisticated character of the *maras* in Central America. The US has also encouraged national governments in Central America to forcefully deal with the *maras*, and Central American governments have adopted a variety of harsh “*mano dura*” policies, which make even membership in the gangs a crime.

The failure of the deportation and suppression policies on their own to eliminate the *mara* threat points to the importance of paying attention to the socio-economic causes of their emergence and to the complex role the *maras* fulfill in areas of state absence. Policies for addressing the problem must also include socio-economic development of the urban areas that

spawn the *maras* as well as rehabilitation of their members and programs to prevent recruitment among Latin American disaffected youths.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

A final threat emanating from Latin America the US has focused on has been illegal immigrants and refugees from failed states, such as Haiti. The issue of illegal immigration does not easily fall into the realm of security threats. Some illegal immigrants do end up engaging in various domestic and transborder crimes, such as the illegal cultivation of marijuana on US territory or smuggling of drugs across the border, and have also become members of the *maras*. But such law offenders are a minority among illegal immigrants. The impact of both illegal immigrants and refugees has been felt mainly in the economic and social domains. Although illegal immigrants in the US, currently estimated at perhaps 12 million, contribute to the overall growth of the US economy and assume jobs that US citizens are frequently uninterested in performing, they nonetheless displace at least some vulnerable low-skilled American workers and suppress their wages. They also can impose large social costs on state and local communities – for schools and health care. It is these social costs, more than any security threat, that have fueled backlashes against immigration in communities with large illegal immigrant settlements.

Yet since 9-11, interdiction efforts against illegal immigration have become overlain with concerns over US border security and integrity from the perspective of homeland defense and counterterrorism. The more porous the border, especially with Mexico, and the larger the volume of both licit and illicit flows, it is argued, the greater the odds that jihadi terrorists will slip into the United States and carry out attacks on US homeland. Hence, the United States has adopted a panoply of measures to strengthen the southern border, including various smart-border detection technologies and the construction of the border fence. But many of these measures whose effectiveness is yet to be proven have been highly controversial not only in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, but also among US border communities.

EVALUATION OF THREATS FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Even issues that jointly concern the United States and Latin American countries, such as drugs and *maras*, frequently manifest themselves in the region in more complex ways than Washington perceives them. Consequently, the US-designed policies often have only a limited buy-in from the Latin Americans, whose dominant concerns are not so much state-based external threats or global illicit flows as they are immediate and local insecurities.

Despite the spring 2008 flare-up of tensions between Colombia and Venezuela and Ecuador over Colombia's violation of Ecuador's border in pursuit of the FARC and the resulting activation of Organization of American States diplomacy to prevent their further escalation, Latin America no longer faces traditional state-to-state threats and conflicts. Although many territorial disputes persist, they are unlikely to erupt into violent confrontations between the countries. Perhaps the biggest potential threat to territorial integrity could emerge within Bolivia, should the increasing and more and more violent polarization between president Evo Morales and his indigenous, poor supporters and their white, more well-off opposition result in secession of the southern regions of the country and an outbreak of *internal* war.

Instead, the dominant types of threats that Latin American governments and populations face stem from the inability of national governments in Latin America to provide *human security*

for large segments of their populations. The human security critically lacking in many areas includes not only physical safety from violence and crime, but also economic safety from debilitating poverty and fundamental underprovision of elemental social goods: basic infrastructure (reliable electricity, communications and transportation, uncontaminated water, sanitation), health care, housing, education.

Despite the compliance of Latin American governments with the US counternarcotics policies, street-level crime and corruption have greatly increased and become key social concerns for a majority of people. Except in Colombia, which since 2002 has experienced a drop in homicides, kidnapping, and violent robberies, criminal activity throughout the region has exploded. Homicide rates in many of the other countries are among the highest in the world: The approximately 140,000 annual murders are 27% of the global total; a number all the more arresting given that the region that has no more than 8.5% of the world's population. Well above 50% of the approximately 7,500 world-wide kidnappings in 2007 took place in Latin America.¹⁰

Illicit flows, such as drugs, do greatly exacerbate street-level crime and the day-to-day insecurity of ordinary citizens. Illicit flows also pose serious threats to national governments in source and transit countries. Corruption, fueled by illicit trade, frequently affects not only the top levels of the government, but also corrodes the entire public sector, seriously undermining law enforcement and the judiciary throughout the system. Bribery is inevitably accompanied by threats of death against those who refuse to participate in the corruption. Law enforcement, investigation, and prosecution of criminals collapse. The weaker the state, the more corrosive the effect of illicit-trade-related corruption. This is an especially acute problem in Latin America where both the judicial system and law enforcement are very weak and virtually absent in large parts of the countries.

The public safety and law enforcement apparatus are easily paralyzed. In Mexico, for example, entire police units have stopped performing their official role and have come onto the payroll of the traffickers. In extreme cases, such as the Zetas, Mexican counternarcotics policemen have defected to provide violent protection to the traffickers against the state and against rival traffickers. Turf battles, frequently set off by a vacuum at the top level of the trade following the state's law enforcement actions against prominent cartels, can turn so bloody and intense that the public safety of ordinary citizens collapses. Mexico, for example, is gripped by a particular vicious war among drug gangs fighting over smuggling turf and between the gangs and the state. In 2008, death related to the drug violence have surpassed 3,000, well over the 1,000 death frequently used as a marker of civil war. The state thus fails both in the provision of security and in the dispensation of justice. The 2008 Merida Initiative, a \$1.4 billion US counternarcotics aid package to Mexico, with some minimal amounts for Central American countries, is one US program meant to fortify Mexico's struggle against drug-related crime.

Crime-related corruption can also undermine the entire political process, making a mockery of democracy and basic accountability. In 2007, for example, criminal networks in Guatemala blatantly interfered with the national elections, bribing politicians and participating in the murder of more than 50 candidates and their supporters.

From the perspective of many in Latin America, however, the principal source of the crime and corruption is not cultivation of illicit crops. Hence, the populations do not perceive forced eradication to be an appropriate policy – a policy on which the United States insists on by

¹⁰“La industria del secuestro esquilma a América Latina”, *El País* (Madrid), 17/2/2008. The quoted source of this information is the British consulting firm Control Risks Group.

default. Indeed, such suppression policies imposed irrespective of the complex role that illicit economies play in the region generate a new set of threats to both the populations and the state itself.

Although national economies in Latin America have been booming over the past few years (at least until the global financial meltdown), fueled by high prices for raw materials, national governments have failed to distribute the benefits to large segments of the population. Many marginalized populations in rural areas and urban slums have not been able to break out of the cycle of poverty. Instead, inequality and resentment are growing, reflected across the region in popular protests against free trade deals with the United States that national governments have wholeheartedly embraced.

Many in Latin America simply do not have the ability to participate in formal legal economies. Hundreds of thousands of people across the Andean region cultivate coca and other illicit crops because they do not have legal opportunities. In sprawling urban slums, the majority of the population participates if not in outright illegal economies, at least in informal ones outside the purview of the state because the state is absent and peoples' access to the legal economy is limited. They resent policies designed to suppress such illicit economies, like the cultivation of illicit crops, because they face a critical crisis of subsistence in their absence. Not surprisingly, demands by the United States that local governments shut down illicit traffic in the Triborder Area to dry up Islamic terrorist funding activities have received little buy-in among the local governments and the populations. They do not perceive a jihadi threat to themselves, and they are economically dependent on the illicit traffic in the region.

Given the lack of even minimal improvements in their socio-economic condition, marginalized populations frequently transfer their loyalties to non-state actors who oppose the state and protect their livelihood from state actions. Populations dependent on illicit economies become antagonized from the state and transfer their loyalties not only to outright belligerent groups like the FARC, but also to other anti-state or outside-the state groups, such as crime groups, *maras*, and street gangs. This dynamics becomes all the more pronounced when the United States insists that any legal political mobilization by the *cocaleros*, such as in Peru and for years in Bolivia, should be opposed and dismissed as bought by drug traffickers. Frequently drug traffickers do encourage and facilitate protests and even formal political mobilization, but the protests are nonetheless a genuine reflection of great resentments and frustrations on the part of the marginalized populations with policies conducted by the national governments on behest of the United States.

Furthermore, the criminal groups and gangs, while undermining the official rule of law, often facilitate at least some provision of essential public goods, such as public safety and social services, that the state is otherwise unable or unwilling to provide. They imposing regulations and a level of order that enables basic economic transactions to take place. The *organisations populaires* and *chimères* (gangs of armed young men) in Haiti, for example, while the source of the country's persistent violence and turmoil, are also, within their areas of control, the source of order, albeit a brutal one. Similarly, drug trafficking groups in Brazil's *favelas* provide the same proto-state functions. Although the public goods they provide are suboptimal, they are nonetheless the only ones available to the *favela* population since the state is largely absent. Moreover, as the Brazilian police are widely perceived as brutal and corrupt, populations of the

sprawling slums in fact reject the presence of the police and the state.¹¹ No longer is the state just absent as it had been for decades. It is frequently resented because the natural aspirations of the populations are not being met while, at the same time, the only manifestations of the state are policies designed to suppress illicit economies in which the populations participate.

In fact, the most insidious threat that Latin America faces is that large segments of society are developing an identity and means of existence that are outside of, and sometimes, outright antagonistic to the state. Paradoxically, policies designed to suppress the illicit economies without addressing the socio-economic needs of the populations only exacerbate this dynamic.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The incoming US administration should not allow its national security policy in the region to be once again trapped by the US historic conception of security in the Hemisphere as keeping undesirables out: out of national governments, out of the US sphere of influence, and out of US territory. The US should not define as the focal point of its policy in the region either *Chávismo*, Cuba, or, in the long-term, China. The existing and potential threats these countries pose are hypothetical and limited. In the case of Chávez's anti-American mobilization and Cuba's persisting anti-capitalist posturing, their own contradictions and excesses will contribute to their demise.

The primary sources of security threats emanating in Latin America to both the US and the Latin American countries are threats that stem from state weakness. While the US has focused on global terrorism and illicit flows that emanate from the Hemisphere, populations in Latin America and increasingly their democratically-elected governments have come to focus on the lack of human security many in the region face.

The basic US security policy in the Hemisphere should become more responsive to human security concerns of Latin American populations and it should intensify and broaden efforts to strengthen states across the region. Cooperation and assistance in such state-strengthening efforts should be defined as more multidimensional and multisectoral than simply "zipping" the seams of sovereignty by insisting on greater intelligence and interdiction efforts against jihadists and narcoterrorists.

The US should continue to provide military and technical assistance for counter-narcotics operations, such as border interdiction, and for developing intelligence-sharing among the governments in the Americas for counterterrorism and anti-crime purposes.

But, the US should also encourage and assist in state-strengthening efforts that improve public safety on the Latin American street and enable improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the populations. Such a policy will facilitate the buy-in by national governments and their populations into issues that are of high concern for the US and improve the effectiveness of these policies. The United States can easily afford such a more comprehensive policy in the region since it faces a benign security environment in the Hemisphere, not only in relative terms as compared with the Middle East and Asia, but also in absolute terms.

¹¹ See, for example, Enrique Desmond Arias and Corrine Davis Rodrigues, "The Myth of Personal Security: Criminal Gangs, Dispute Resolution, and Identity in Rio de Janeiro's Favela," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 48(4), Winter 2006: 53-81.

The US should also help in improving and expanding the law enforcement apparatus and the judiciary throughout the region. These efforts need to be integrated. A greater capacity on the part of the state in Latin America to deliver justice and rule of law to the populations will not only improve their lives and increase accountability, it will fundamentally enhance the connection between the individual and the state, reversing the trend of outside-the-state identity that many in Latin America have been left with to adopt. Once again, this will facilitate popular cooperation with state policies and enhance their effectiveness, including in areas that are of top concern to the United States. The OAS has been putting energy into public security and police-justice initiatives, and the United States has an opportunity to join with Latin American governments as stake-holders.

US police training assistance should not only focus on top-level drug interdiction operations, but should also help with increasing public safety against ordinary crime on the streets and in the rural backwaters of the region. For the United States to do so with high levels of effectiveness, the US should develop its own police expeditionary units that can in a sustained way train local police to improve and increase the state's ability to deliver public safety and order or provide urgent delivery of law and order following the collapse of a government, though deployments to Latin America for this reason are rather unlikely (and are more likely to be needed in the Middle East, Africa, and part of Asia). While the U.S. military has been called upon to provide such functions, it is not the optimal locus of such police training efforts. Improvements in public order, law enforcement, and the judiciary will also help reduce the high levels of corruption in the region. The US should encourage the development of a police expeditionary capacity and peacekeeping forces at the regional multilateral level, such as through the OAS.

The United States should also encourage the build-up of regional peacekeeping forces under the umbrella of OAS to deal with potential critical state failure, such as in Haiti. Particularly when situations require an out-of country policing or military presence to apprehend criminals, to deal with a critical state-failure situation, or to police a truce in a civil conflict, it is important that such intervention be designed and managed primarily by the Latin Americans themselves. The US can provide training, financial, and logistics support but except for dire and direct threats to US security (events of low probability), it should refrain from deploying any substantial numbers of its combat personnel into countries south of its borders.

The US also needs to stop paying mere lip service to direct demand reduction efforts for drug consumption and instead elevate them to the core of its counternarcotics policy at home and abroad.

The US should encourage economic development of the region not only through steadfast promotion of free trade, but also by assisting national governments with the development of socioeconomic periphery areas. As the previous two decades have shown, free trade on its own does not guarantee that unskilled, poor, marginalized populations in the rural peripheries and urban slums will be able to participate in global economic exchange and reap benefits from it.

The US needs to pay greater attention to rural development in the Hemisphere as well as to the integration of urban slums into a productive realm of the state. If greater segments of the populations are capable of plugging into the global legal economy and see their socio-economic conditions improve, they will be both less dependant on illicit economies and more willing to cooperate with US efforts to reduce them. It also needs to reduce its agricultural subsidies for US farmers so that rural development in Latin America has a chance to take off.

In its aid policies, including funding through the IMF, the World Bank and regional banks, the US should emphasize comprehensive socio-economic improvements, encouraging efforts to reduce inequality, particularly in providing access to health care and education. This is no small task as national governments in Latin America have been historically unable to carry out land reform or use taxation to redistribute wealth. Targeted subsidy programs have worked well in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, and should be expanded in scope and size and coupled with a greater emphasis on public education. Economic growth in the rural sector and for marginalized populations in urban slums will not necessarily reduce inequality, but can at least ease the deprivation of the poor and hence reduce the level of resentment and frustration. Moreover, when coupled with efforts to improve public safety, such policies can help reduce political exclusion and inequality and the resulting alienation that breeds violence, including terrorism. Although there is no linear one-to-one relationship between poverty and crime and economic development, comprehensive development can reduce illicit activities, including illegal immigration to the US. If effective in improving the lives of the populations, such policies will make local populations in the region more responsive to the prioritization and definition of US security concerns and make it easier for national governments to cooperate with the US in wholeheartedly tackling these concerns.

The US needs to continue promoting anti-corruption efforts in the Hemisphere. Such efforts should include US assistance in strengthening regulatory and tax administration and in improving the effectiveness and accountability of the judiciary throughout the region.

In such a reconceptualization of its security policy in the region, the United States needs to remain acutely sensitive to issues of sovereignty. Not only is Latin America greatly concerned with perceptions of its independence and US interference, such a state-strengthening project will ultimately only be successful if it is fundamentally owned by the national governments and their populations. If such efforts were to be simply imposed from abroad, they could not be effective. Not all governments in the region will be fully responsive: Dealing with inequality, for example, is a difficult issue for all of them, and they have been chronically unable to address it. Similarly, tackling corruption and state penetration by high-level organized crime may receive little resonance among governments deeply plagued by these problems. In that case, the US will have to limit its assistance efforts, concentrate on areas where cooperation still remains possible and necessary. It can also encourage at least some multilateral monitoring and assistance for tackling such difficult issues. In the case of efforts against corruption and crime, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) may turn out one model.

Although there will be inevitable limits and local constraints to what scope and shape such US assistance in multidimensional state-strengthening efforts can assume in particular countries in Latin America, the new US administration will have a good opportunity to launch such a long-term and comprehensive approach to security issues in the Hemisphere. The national governments and local populations in the region are intently focused on human security needs in their countries, and such broad state-strengthening efforts will marry local and localized concerns with US key priorities in the region and hence enhance the effectiveness of policies for addressing them.