

security or blending security with personal safety, limits the possibilities of generating any policy capable of significantly impacting any of the issues thus addressed. The challenge lies in deciding how to link such challenges while forging a conceptual chain between citizen safety and international security while at the same time addressing national security in a clear, coherent, and serious manner.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In complying with the commitments established by the Esquipulas II agreements, Central America initiated, through the "Tegucigalpa Protocol," a new phase in its political, economic and social life. This made possible a qualitative change based on a democratic security model, one promoting a comprehensive vision consistent with the needs and realities of its people and governments. In this respect, the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America constitutes a democratic security model consistent with the multidimensional focus on security subsequently established in the General Assembly of the Organization of American States at Bridgetown, Barbados, and codified in the Declaration on Security in the Americas.

Central America finally has a political-institutional architecture for security issues, represented by the institutions of the Central American democratic security model that has made possible, among other things, a harmonious expression of the regional security system, developing specific plans, strategies and actions to implement the letter and spirit of the Framework Treaty. Central America is no longer mired in an international or extra-regional military-political conflict as it was in the 1980s, but the regional security situation continues to be less than optimal. The democratic governments that emerged from that conflict have thus far been unable to improve the quality of life of their citizenry, and especially so for young people. Such inaction or governmental inoperability has encouraged the growth of international gangs and mafias, to the point of making the isthmus almost a free trade zone for the trafficking of people, weapons, and drugs.

Central America currently faces structural challenges in its institutional ability to respond to these new concerns, which already go well beyond the boundaries of the Framework Treaty itself. These have resulted in a renewed and improved reputation among the formerly discredited armed forces throughout the region, a situation reinforced by institutional weakness among the police forces and political classes. In other words, many people remember the secure feeling of living in a military dictatorship, conveniently forgetting the negatives associated with such regimes.

Perhaps a more important aspect within the current global context is the fact that Central Americans themselves are the ones who determine the regional agenda of security and defense. For this the Framework Treaty is an excellent instrument, though a counter position suggests that the implementation of this agenda into the foreign arena can ensure that the changes proposed in the Treaty do not become risk factors hindering the transition and consolidation of democracy in Central America. The new concept of security was indirectly supported by

the recently-approved Mérida Initiative by United States President George W. Bush by including funds for Mexico's fight on drugs and organized crime and offering additional funds to the Central American region. Such a move may indicate a new phase of security cooperation between Mexico and the United States, more significantly it recognizes the importance of Central America by incorporating it into this process, through the Security Strategy for Central America and Mexico. It indicates that the Hemisphere's senior politicians are thinking along the same lines and have adopted an overall concept by proposing new programs for the region.

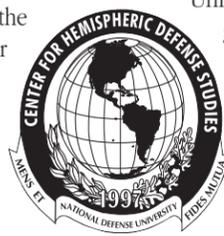
Such examples show a progress resulting directly from the advances in security doctrine as they evolve in Central America. Rising to meet this challenge indicates that the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America has strengthened the region, and furthermore this fact has been recognized by the government of the United States.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

The process described above indicates a clear preference among the Central American states for generating their own security concepts and agenda. The Framework Treaty specifically codifies a new definition of security to include a plethora of new roles and missions for the region, which poses specific problems to the United States. Given historic and legal prohibitions on using the armed forces in a domestic role, what venues are available to the United States' Department of Defense for cooperating in the region? On the other hand, stretching the definition of security to include personal safety issues could open new avenues of cooperation, such as, for instance, an increased role for the U.S. Coast Guard at sea, the Federal Bureau of Investigation in international or internal criminal issues, or the Secret Service or the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) for financial crimes.

The main challenge posed by this new definition of security is institutional, internal to the government, because of how the U.S. government is organized. It might be possible to alter this structure at the appropriate levels, however. The U.S. Southern Command may need to consider establishing a special unit for Central America that enhances the inter-agency function to more appropriately match the new regional structures, rather than having individual country specialists. This would allow the Combatant Commander to enlist the participation of other U.S. agencies, as appropriate, to form specific task forces for specific issues.

The possibility also exists of improving cooperation with regional or global actors such as the Organization of American States or the United Nations by forming working groups based on the regional grouping, thus replacing inefficient efforts at resolving regional problems with national solutions.



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REGIONAL INSIGHTS

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SECURITY DIALOGUE IN CENTRAL AMERICA: A CHALLENGE THAT PROMOTES INTEGRATION

Guillermo A. Pacheco Gaitán



Abstract *The diplomatic processes that led to the peaceful resolution of the armed conflict of the 1980s in Central America initiated a dialogue on regional security that has made a significant impact on defense and security relations throughout the Hemisphere. Specifically, the Tegucigalpa Protocol of 1991 expanded the definition of security, focusing it directly on the individual citizen, rather than on a state or region. Unfortunately, this led to the militarization of all aspects of government authority connected to the safety and security of the individual citizen. The challenge lies in forging a conceptual link between citizen safety and international security while coherently addressing issues of national security.*

INTRODUCTION

The formation of the Contadora Group, which mediated an end to the regional crisis of the 1980s, gave rise to a discussion of security in Central America by proposing a general agreement on regional security. The proposal had two important components, one regarding any foreign military presence in the region, and one on the need to coordinate on weapons and troop levels among the various neighbors. This discussion questions the importance of traditional security agreements based on a threat perception of military readiness for any possible region-wide conflict or military intervention by the United States. No agreement was achieved at that time, but a consensus statement was subsequently included in the Esquipulas Peace Plan II signed by the Central American Presidents during August of 1987 addressing both concepts. The Esquipulas II plan institutionalized the Summit Meeting of Presidents by adopting an alternative security protocol through which all parties agreed to tackle problems of internal security resulting from the previous conflicts, including the cease-fire, national reconciliation, and future negotiations. The entire peace process assumed that the region would adopt liberal democracy as the primary form of political government; from this assumption emanated all concepts of security during the period, between August 1987 and April 1990. During this time a region-wide consensus developed regarding the role and influence of the United States in Central America. This phase unfolded in a post-Cold War context in which the United States' role in the world evolved, specifically revealing hegemonic and regional limitations. Elsewhere in the region, the South American Peace Commission proclaimed regional democratic security as a new and comprehensive concept.¹

The presidential summits took up the discussion of security issues, but addressed them as military security matters, resulting in an institutionalized security mechanism embodied in the Central American Security Commission. Subsequent discussions during the period from July, 1990, to December, 1995, led to a draft treaty on this subject and a new model for addressing regional security,

termed "democratic security." It should be pointed out that this phase unfolded in a very different context, as the Cold War alignment no longer led the Hemispheric security agenda. Initiatives proposed in the presidential summits now gave rise to plans for a comprehensive political, economic, social and security solution, even to the point of suggesting the idea of integration.

Throughout this process the concept of security was expanded, though a serious mistake crept into the discussion, as no one in the region delineated the functions of armed forces. This mistake became evident in the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America (TMSD), signed by the Central American presidents in December of 1995, an agreement designed to solidify and codify the concept of democratic security. All these achievements emanated from the process of democratization and pacification in Central America – the Contadora initiative and the Esquipulas Agreements – which set in motion political procedures to negotiate an end of the civil wars and begin the transition to democracy. These also included commitments to demilitarization, and introduced of a new way of thinking about defense and security among the civilian political leadership.²

NEW INTEREST IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The Central American integration efforts had been in hiatus during the 1980s, and the work of pacification reactivated an interest in that topic, including the creation of a solid regional security system. The initial impetus began with the conceptualization of security contained in the Tegucigalpa Protocol (of 1991) to the Organization of Central American States (ODECA) Charter, which laid the legal and institutional foundation organizing an integration system. The Protocol included a list of issues defining regional security (see text box below). The process through which Central America developed this concept of democratic security has had a significant impact at the Hemispheric level, being the first to be embodied in a regional agreement. The Tegucigalpa Protocol was also the first to

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codify the causal link between democracy, security, and development in each country as well as for the region.

This alternative vision of security was implemented institutionally in the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America of 1995, broadly expanding the concept of security, as mentioned above, to include four basic ideas now christened as “democratic security.” These are:

- The rule of law, achieved by strengthening democracy and human rights, social and economic development, and protecting the region’s environment and cultural heritage.

- Personal safety, which includes the right to life and property, the fight against crime, terrorism, illegal arms trafficking, drug trafficking and organized crime. Included in this definition is the recognition of poverty as causal factor to insecurity.

- Regional security, specifically defense issues such as the peaceful resolution of disputes, renunciation of the use of force, collective and coalition defense structures, confidence building measures, early warning mechanisms, the reasonable balance of military forces, the creation of a mechanism for sharing information, and securing borders legally.

- The final issue, incorporated after hurricane Mitch devastated the Isthmus in 1998, involved disaster relief and recuperation.

The Framework Treaty replaced the traditional concept of security with an alternative definition, expanded to include a very broad agenda through which almost all problems of governance could be relegated to the security sector. This was significant at the time, because the Framework Treaty was a legal instrument designed to create the new conceptual and institutional basis for regional security, and developed to govern the signatory states’ behavior based on new guidelines. In this sense, the Framework Treaty represented the first legal instrument that consecrated a multidimensional vision of security, one that would subsequently be incorporated into the Declaration on Security in the Americas, adopted during the June, 2002, General Assembly of the Organization of American States at Bridgetown, Barbados.

THE TEGUCIGALPA PROTOCOL TO THE ODECA CHARTER

TO DEFINE A NEW REGIONAL SECURITY MODEL BASED ON A REASONABLE BALANCE OF FORCES, THE STRENGTHENING OF CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, THE ELIMINATION OF EXTREME POVERTY, THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT, PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THE ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE, CORRUPTION, TERRORISM, AND TRAFFICKING IN DRUGS AND ARMS.

The Framework Treaty promotes the need to establish and strengthen mechanisms to coordinate all security-related institutions, hoping thus to enhance efficiency in the struggle against crime, confront traditional and non-traditional threats. This effort extended to the issues newly included in democratic security, those requiring the use of military or police forces such as terrorism, illegal arms trafficking, drug trafficking and international organized crime. Because the Framework Treaty emanated from the Tegucigalpa Protocol, it included those decision-making bod-

ies already in existence – the Meeting of Presidents, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and the Central American Security Commission.

This last one is the decision-making body established to evaluate, coordinate, implement, and analyze any emerging problem or recommend prompt action on regional security issues. This body acts on any proposal or recommendation presented at the Meeting of Presidents and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Security Commission is composed of the Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Vice-Ministers of Defense, and Vice-Ministers of Public Security or Government of its member states, and is subordinate to the Meeting of Presidents and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. These in turn are responsible for promoting and implementing the provisions of the Framework Treaty or any other decision made during their official sessions. The Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs lead the delegations of the member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) when assembled as the Security Commission. To promote regional security initiatives, the Security Commission has a coordinating body known as the Office of the President Pro Tempore, chaired on a six-month rotation by each SICA member; it relies for support on the Office of the Secretary General of SICA.

The Security Commission currently concentrates its efforts on three specific items: natural disasters, the security of individuals and their property, and regional security. Under the Framework Treaty, SICA is similarly divided into three sub-committees: defense, legal issues, and public security. The Meeting of Police Chiefs of Central America has been integrated into the latter’s agenda.

A separate issue addressed within the Framework Treaty is military doctrine, seeking to transform the old Cold War theories into new doctrines to deal more effectively with current security threats. Overall this effort has led to a lowering of the threat perception, while at the same time seeking to increase cooperation among military forces to the point where they no longer considered themselves rivals or even enemies. The objective is to implement such changes not only within each force but also to coordinate a united front against common threats, as currently required by various international conventions and treaties. This objective requires a profound change in the spectrum of security and defense material requirements and the manner in which each force relates to its neighbors. The result should increase the possibility of combined action carried out under the aegis of the Central American integrative structures. This objective also supposes a departure from the old conceptual basis of threat perception, setting aside issues of national security and adopting a new definition of citizen safety, strengthening the rule of law, and adopting new long-range policies on crime reduction. This idea has been an underdeveloped theme in previous normative treaty terminology, but could serve to develop a political space for the armed forces replete with liberty, security, and justice similar to that which exists today in the European Union.

Another issue of vital interest in this process is that of civilian-military relations. This relationship plays a vital role in the process of effectively implementing the Framework Treaty and in guaran-

teeing the adoption of effective security structures designed to address the new conditions of integration and common security. In addition, the education of civilians specialized in security and defense – from a democratic perspective – will be crucial for the project’s success, though this may require assistance from foreign educational centers.

In the current international arena, so concentrated on the new internal enemy – the war against terrorism – the Framework Treaty plays an important role by subordinating the activity of the armed forces to the rule of law and civilian political control. The Treaty serves to guide the security and defense agenda, acting as it does through elected civilian authorities. It also enhances military cooperation through confidence-building measures and increased transparency by encouraging uniform reporting of armament levels, force structure, and budget expenditures, but also supposes the legal right of its member states to make their own national security decisions. In this way it seeks to dismantle the risk factors that in a previous era led Central America to the edge of the abyss of open war between its member states.

ANALYSIS

The end of the 20th century bought with it the breakdown of certain concepts of security that gave structure and order to the international system in the post World War II and Cold War era, and thus posited the need to formulate new ones. The Soviet Union disappeared as a protagonist in the international balance of power, and the Cold War ceased to be a valid topic for analysis as the major scenario for international policy. The basis of national security in Central America, originally linked as it was to external threats with implications of a territorial nature, was reformulated and conceptually linked to domestic factors having more to do with the life of its citizenry, democracy, and the rule of law, than with issues of diplomacy, strategy and the use of military force. Thus in Central America at the beginning of the 21st century the human being finally occupies a place at the center of its governance, both domestic and regional. This indicates a fundamental change in region’s perception of global politics, a situation that makes it possible to link several problems with new priorities.

Many of the new priorities, however, do not yet have a guiding principle to organize them hierarchically or even coherently. One example is peace. Currently, peace can be linked directly to social issues, economic justice, political justice, human governability and common responsibility for ecological balance. The concept of security, at the same time, is undergoing a re-definition that focuses the state’s power on personal safety as a necessary condition for development, and not just as an end in itself. Further, the dialogue is transitioning from a strictly military definition toward a comprehensive concept, in which security results from a combination of many factors. The discussion thus centers on whether the expansion of the traditional security agenda is to include natural and technological threats, the fight against poverty, the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, among others subjects, without as yet clearly establishing the limits and scope of the new concept of security. In other words, insufficient thought has been given to the role of the armed forces, and thus these find themselves in a situation where they are

responsible for these new roles, regardless of their capacity, funding, or mission.

Introducing such a great variety of issues into this emerging agenda has resulted in an incoherent and inconsistent set of policy parameters. The absence of a clear hierarchical priority makes it imperative to set and control the agenda appropriately, and for this reason, civilian and military leaders alike seek to define their own stance on

OVERALL THIS EFFORT HAS LED TO A LOWERING OF THE THREAT PERCEPTION, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SEEKING TO INCREASE COOPERATION AMONG MILITARY FORCES TO THE POINT WHERE THEY NO LONGER CONSIDERED THEMSELVES RIVALS OR EVEN ENEMIES.

each of these issues. In this context, any situation at any given time may become the basis for defining the national priority of any given issue. In Central America, for example, a constantly-changing political arena has set the priority for the security agenda thusly: Plan Colombia and its counter-drug trafficking assistance; hurricane Mitch and its devastating effect; old disputes over undefined borders raising the issues of sovereignty and territory; the events of 11 September 2001, raising the specter of terrorism; and, more recently, the significant impact of juvenile gangs, or maras, because of their connections to organized crime. It is difficult to have a rational and dispassionate dialogue in the midst of such overwhelming issues.

Democratic security thus continues to be a concept very much in flux, broad enough to transcend military-specific issues. For this reason it is necessary to pay more attention to conceptual clarity. What little clarity exists on content and overall limitations constitutes in itself an important factor in explaining the apparent skepticism and outright rejection the concept still generates. In Central America, the predominant trend is to view the issue of citizen safety from a very broad perspective; this very breadth, however, leads to the inclusion of a whole series of generalities and vagaries that result in such ambiguity as to make implementation nearly impossible. For example, if one looks only at those institutions responsible for developing military strategy, or to those responsible for national development, it appears that both believe that strengthening security requires delving into the other’s sphere of responsibility. In other words, ministries of defense, to cite one example, expect to have a say in security matters and also on issues of national development or the environment, while ministries of national development expect to have a say in defense decisions as these impact their area of authority.

This broadening of the concept of security to include human and environmental security requires the existence of a series of new precepts and definitions to preclude degenerating into the militarization of almost everything under governmental control. The greatest risk here is amalgamating dissimilar processes and situations together under a single concept. Obviously, the various spheres must be kept separate sufficiently that each responsible agency can operate effectively by, for instance, keeping aspects of national security away from civilian managers who deal with national development, to continue the example above. One of the most common criticisms is that the multiple relationships can be expanded into an almost limitless list of issues, to the point of making it practically inoperable. The concept of security as outlined in the United Nations (UNDP, 1994) links security to issues such as employment, income, health, the environment, security with respect to crime and common violence, among others. The use of the armed forces in controlling violence is a gray area that each country has done in its own way, with diverse results.

This complexity of subjects, linked only recently to the concept of

^{1/1} José Miguel Inzulza and Juan Somavía. Regional Democratic Security, an Alternative concept (Santiago, Chile: American Peace Commission and Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1990).

² For a complete understanding of Central America during this period, see Edelberto Torres-Rivas, General History of Central America. Immediate History (Madrid: FLACSO/Quinto Centenario, 1993). Approximately half of the 40 million Central Americans living today had not been born on August 7, 1987, the date of the Esquipulas II treaty. Only a minority of Central Americans living today were aware of, experienced and participated in the political and military conflicts that plagued the region during the 1980s.