CONFLICT PREVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA: THE UN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CENTRAL AMERICAN RAPID SECURITY FORCE

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Conflict Prevention in Latin America: The UN and the Transformation of a Central American Rapid Security Force

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1. Abstract

Unconventional intra-state warfare, terrorism and natural disasters have absorbed the attention of the United Nations and the world since the turn of the century. However, strategic regions are being neglected, leaving open the possibility for inadequate response to future man-made and natural catastrophes in areas that are currently considered to be free of protracted conflicts. This inadequate response scenario could be prevented with a small UN presence. A fortuitous circumstance is present in Central America where a new regional rapid security force has been proposed. By endorsing it and technically assisting it, the UN can get involved modestly, yet create a new framework that has a positive impact on the problems of gangs, drug trafficking and disaster response in the region. This project could even expand to other sub-regions, such as the Andean community.
2. Introduction

The turn of the century has brought with it great political changes, rising economic powers and a heatedly debated war on terrorism; engulfing, in one way or another, almost the entire world. Grave natural disasters have left countries shattered, and in need of reconstruction and relief aid for years to come. Thus, international focus has turned away from ‘less-conflicted’ areas, such as Latin America, where international organizations have seen their funding of programs in impoverished countries such as Bolivia drastically reduced. However, violent crime and government instability have undermined democracy in the region. The UNDP groundbreaking report *Democracy in Latin America: Towards A Citizen’s Democracy* succinctly points out the illness, “despite the advances made, albeit under very precarious conditions, it must be recognized that, in terms of progress towards democracy and economic and social development, the region is in a period of change that, in many instances, takes the form of a widespread crisis.”

Scholars and politicians agree that nation-state success can be measured by its ability to deliver political goods. Among these, most importantly are security, which provides a framework through which all other political goods are delivered, and law, a system of codes and procedures that regulates the interactions of the population and sets the standards for conduct. With violent crime on the rise, drug trafficking and political unrest thinning the fabric of democracy, the region should not be neglected. To avoid future conflict-prone areas, and to stress UN advocacy of conflict prevention, the UN can

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play a key role in the development of the newly proposed rapid security force in Central America. Thus, this paper will delve into the controversy over “the new battalion-size unit of roughly 700 members trained and equipped for natural disasters, regional security and peacekeeping” proposed by Central American officials, and its potential.

Currently, the importance of the rapid security force lies in the need for stability in the region and the urgent aspiration to enhance global security. Latin America is considered to be an example of successful peace resolutions, and thus has played a less prominent role in the work of conflict prevention and early warning. However, as Marc Chernick’s study on Colombia shows, “the protracted political violence has roots in state weakness, unconsolidated democratic institutions, reigning impunity [and] as several United Nations institutions have already noted, the crisis rises to the level of a humanitarian emergency.” Though it seems that Colombia is an outlier case, the entire region is engulfed in a similar process of socio-political disentegration.

The core security problems are that crime rates and gangs are on the rise, there is little preparation to prevent or react effectively to natural disasters, and there are new migration and drug trafficking concerns; all which eat away at government capacity. At the same time, the military and police hold poor human rights records and thus fearful civilians are reluctant to give them any increase in powers. Furthermore, there is a lack of a framework that can address the types of political, social and institutional conflicts that are so prevalent in Latin America, but which do not escalate into full-blown humanitarian crises or open armed conflicts. This kind of unconventional conflict poses a threat to democratic stability in the region and cuts across borders and even across standard

4 Chernick, Marc. Analyzing Conflict, Democracy and Violence in Colombia. (Georgetown-UNDP Project on Conflict Prevention and Early Warning in Latin America, 2005), 9.
definitions of phases of conflict.⁵ Since both militarization and demilitarization are non-practical, a regional approach has been attempted by several countries, with different levels of organization and success. Though there has been a growing integration of sub-regions,⁶ the current attempts at security unification still need to be correctly directed to become preventive, peace-making regional efforts.

⁵ Chernick, 2005, 29
3. Conflict Prevention
3.1 Theoretical Background

Historically, Latin America played a central role in world politics and economics, and was directly shaped by Cold War policies. However, Central America was affected differently than the Andean sub-region or the Southern Cone. Each country in the region has dealt with its history in different ways, but it can safely be said that due to a history of high levels of militarization, human rights abuses, refugee mobilization and infrastructure destruction, the debate over a regional peacekeeping force does not seem entirely appropriate. Central American scholars and activists confer that the most efficient path lies in the eradication of the military entirely, a la Costa Rica, while others believe that realistically either the police should become militarized to be able to control border gangs or that a regional approach (which could be less prone to corruption) should be established.⁷

Dr. Marc Chernick, in collaboration with UNDP and Georgetown University, developed a methodology to analyze the needs for conflict prevention in Latin America in the Project on Democratic Conflict Prevention and Early Warning in Latin America, and stress in its findings the need for a conflict prevention unit. In the quest for a solution, Chernick and his collaborators create a framework to understand the particular form of conflict in Latin America. They suggest that conflict expressed in the actions of illegal organizations with diverse levels of organization and politization have an impact on the quality and quantity of democratic governance.⁸ It is important to specify his hypothesis. First, the increase of low organizational level, low level political forms of violence/crime

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⁷ “Fuerzas de Seguridad en Centroamérica: Balance y Perspectivas” Informe Especial Centro de Estudios de Guatemala (CEG) (Guatemala: August, 2005).
⁸ Chernick, 2005, 37.
(such as theft and extortion), can give way to more organized forms of crime (such as terrorism and guerrilla violence) by drawing law enforcement resources away to fight the lower level criminality. As constituents demand more safety, the perceived cost of crime reduces; further eroding government resources and allowing the development of higher-level criminal skills and networks. Second, highly politicized and organized actors use criminal methods and develop relations with organized criminal groups to obtain resources and meet objectives. Therefore, low organizational level actors and high organizational level actors are mutually reinforcing, as the conditions are created for both to have greater access to criminal resources.

This is clearly seen in Central America, where petty crime has gotten involved with gangs, which in turn are highly internationally mobile, and are now fighting for a cut in the drug dealing business. The stress this causes governments is observable in the elevated level of political instability, which has developed in the last decade, with high executive turnover and endemic social unrest. Furthermore, in El Salvador, more people have been killed in the post-war years, since 1992 than during the war period and in Guatemala, ten years after the peace agreement, not only has common criminality risen but also political violence expressed as acts of intimidation to human right activists and land leaders in rural areas. This demonstrates that the issue at hand reflects a crisis, and not just common criminality.

Conflict prevention models have neglected the specific types of political, social and institutional conflicts that are prevalent in the region, mainly because they do not

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necessarily escalate into a full-blown war. The traditional method of characterizing early warning and conflict prevention distinguished between escalating pre-conflict stages marked by weak institutions and growing challenges to governability, open armed conflict, and post-conflict. However, this three level approach does not adequately describe the current situation in Central America. Issues such as rising levels of violent crime, economic stratification, international organized crime, narcotics production and trafficking, human rights violations, electoral fraud and low participation, reduced representation, institutional instability, weak presidentialism, broken justice and law enforcement systems transcend the definitions of pre-conflict, open armed conflict or post-conflict situations. To varying degrees and multiple combinations, all the symptoms of crisis are found across the region.\textsuperscript{11}

New strategies are necessary for new world realities. This proposal does not fall far from the established consensus, which views conflict prevention as part of a broader peace initiative within a wide set of contexts. Prevention is part of a broader agenda, for example, the administrative Committee on Coordination, “Summary of Conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at Its First Regular Session of 1997” defined peace-building as, “a broad based approach to crisis prevention and resolution [that] should comprise integrated and coordinated actions aimed at addressing any combination of political, military, humanitarian, human rights, environmental, economic, social, cultural and demographic factors so as to ensure that conflict is prevented and resolved.”\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} Chernick (2005), 7. \\
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As Chernick correctly points out, even though the political arena has become increasingly violent and militarized, there has been an increase in political demonstrations in favor of human rights, peace and demilitarization. This shows that governments and the populace are ready and seeking for an efficient solution to violence. Under such an auspicious context, a regional organization would be able to be active without the constraints usually placed on UN operations by governments. Though the context presents an opportunity for solutions, the road ahead is paved with difficulties. Lack of consensus over sovereignty concerns and resistance from corrupt officials impede a rapid resolution for a crime prevention and control strategy. To illustrate, Guatemala’s parliament recently rejected the establishment of a UN appointed investigative commission.\(^{13}\) However, to be able to build an impartial and effective battalion trained and equipped for natural disasters, regional security and peacekeeping in accordance to international law and democratic parameters, the UN needs to play a tactical role.

3.2 The UN Role in Prevention

The central difficulty with the UN Council’s approach to intervention can be stated simply enough: “it is extraordinarily difficult to persuade the key Council members to commit major resources – human as well as political and economic – to issues in which they perceive no major interests to be at stake.”\(^{14}\) Prevention, like any kind of involvement in another state’s affairs, is then prone to censure from the country that has to accept help, and also from the country/ies that might – or might not – give it. Furthermore, with few tangible methods to assess success in prevention, neither external

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\(^{13}\) Arana, Ana. “How Street Gangs Took Central America” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2005), 5.

\(^{14}\) Mack and Furlong (2004), 64.
nor national donors feel compelled to invest in prevention amidst other pressing demands. However, prevention has been pointed out by a plethora of scholars, bureaucrats, and others to be cheaper than the cure – in lives as well as money.\textsuperscript{15}

Prevention is central to understanding the principal purpose of the United Nations, as defined in its Charter, which is the maintenance of peace and international security. The UN is thus mandated to prevent conflict that would endanger peace. This broad mandate demands a system of early warning, which encompasses all catalysts for potential conflict.\textsuperscript{16} It further has to distinguish clearly between democratic conflict and violent conflict, where the former allows peaceful channels for debate while the latter encompasses violent factions outside the established deliberation consensus.

For the UN, the problems surrounding conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace making are innumerable. For example, to achieve an early warning system, early warning must be understood as having three elements: information, analysis and a communication channel; yet UN initiatives are vulnerable at all levels. Restrictions on intelligence exist since states fail to report to the UN, which disrupts correct analysis and timely action. The UN also has to deal with its own slow and elaborate bureaucratic structure, which hampers clear communication and hence rapid deployment. On the other hand, regional organizations, which have a mandate similar to UN agencies such as WHO or FAO, can trigger responses with information alone, without the need of further research because of the greater flexibility given by governments.\textsuperscript{17}

A clear example of the intricate problems that can make it difficult to uphold the UN mandate in the region has been in Colombia. Different international actors during the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Sutterlin, 1998, 121.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 122.
1990s pursued policies that were fundamentally at odds with each other\textsuperscript{18} and as a result redirected and fueled the conflict. While the United States focused on fighting narcotics, the UN, EU and NGOs focused more on the peace process, the humanitarian crises and human rights violations. President Pastrana desired a ‘Marshall Plan for Colombia’ targeted at what are now commonly considered to be structural solutions to the conflict, but as result of US intervention, the final result was Plan Colombia, which funded an aggressive antinarcotics policy; and which sparked the criticism of the international community. The UN then had to deal with the internal conflict (in which members were hostile) and diverse international discourses.

The UN attempts to increase its involvement proved fruitless. For example, in 1998 a major conference was to take place with Secretary-General Kofi Annan as the main speaker; however, the Colombian government canceled at the last moment, only a week before it was to be held, with no explanation.\textsuperscript{19} In December 1999, Secretary-General Kofi Annan created the post of special advisor to the Secretary General for Colombia, to accompany the peace process and, with the help of James Lemoyne [who is…], managed to rescue the talks from collapse.\textsuperscript{20} However, by 2002 Pastrana declared the peace process over, UN credibility was thus damaged.

Chernick suggests that in a renewed negotiation, a stronger UN presence should be introduced by enhancing the UN special adviser’s role, giving him/her staff in Bogotá, and even engaging the Secretary General directly.\textsuperscript{21} However, this had already been done

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 246.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 259.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 263.
in 1996, when the UN named a special High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia and established a special office in Bogotá with little success. The UN operations in Colombia are so susceptible to collapse that such recommendations fall short of addressing the weaknesses described previously: lack of funding, lack of member state coordination and eroding credibility. Greater force or greater representation in the region will not prove successful; strength has to be gained strategically. One such idea is to reframe the regional rapid security force as a conflict prevention and peacekeeping unit.

With the support of the UN, this conflict prevention unit could be trained to be prepared for any man made or natural eventuality that could dislocate a peace process. A regional security unit can provide confidence that neighbors with a common history and language will be able to help in disaster relief and in smaller peace operations by deterring aggressors with non-military tactics until long term forces arrive. Though the new regional battalion is being proposed here for Central America, Colombia exemplifies the problems encountered currently in the Americas and the hardships the UN has encountered when able to get involved. Furthermore, Colombia’s example shows that other subregions will benefit from a similar project.

The delegation of preventive security measures then can help the UN streamline the necessary logistics for information gathering in order to prevent conflict and maintain troops prepared for an emergency, natural or man made. Further, prevention can also help the UN meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Not one of the 48 indicators used to monitor progress towards the various development goals relates to security, with no mention of reducing the numbers of wars or refugees. Thus, Dr. Andrew Mack, Director Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia, suggests that it is
necessary that the UN lead with a strategy to promote coordinated structural prevention in conjunction with other international agencies and donor governments, playing on its strength of norm-building, norm-sustaining and norm-enhancing.\textsuperscript{22}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{22}Mack and Furlong (2004), 72.}
4. Political Context
4.1. Latin America: Status Quo of Security Paradigm

After the end of the cold war, new paradigms arose in the sub-regions of the Americas that stressed a form of action that favored cooperation. During the cold war, the security paradigm of each country was centered on state sovereignty, or if it pertained to international relations, it was related to the ideology to which each state identified and the resulting levels of militarization. In the postwar period, the concept of *human* security appeared with the focus and purpose of individual protection.\(^{23}\) With the erosion of mistrust between neighbors, it has been possible to design coordinated policies to increase national and international or regional security.

Regional stability has also improved because Latin America has had a substantive advantage. Latin America adequately resolved the issues related to nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction, for example. The region has systematized and formalized a disarmament policy through several international treaties. The key problem then is the institutional vacuum in the security realm, which hampers fulfillment of state commitments. Illegality and informality eat away at the legal web, which sustains peace, preventing implementation of security measures following the signing of formal treaties. To improve collaboration, the current state of relative peace has to be reinforced by a shared concept of security in the Americas. Security issues are different for Caribbean nations than for South American nations, within which the problems faced by the Andean Region countries (CAN) are different from the ones that the Southern Cone nations face. Though the region has been engulfed in violent crime and drug trafficking issues, lack of real political will has hampered a more effective multilateral approach. Besides the

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\(^{23}\) Ibid., 164.
economic and administrative difficulties, political clashes impede the bringing to life of treaties and proposals; current examples are the – unstable – divisions between Colombia and Peru against Venezuela and Bolivia. Thus, a regional conflict prevention unit could help center the security discussions on similar needs and goals, bringing together a coherent, effective way of dealing with future threats. Even though a power vacuum exists in many of the governments, civil society in Latin America desires peace and development which can open a window of opportunity for the use of force within a new framework in which non-military means can be the primary vehicles for security.24

This is an uncommon proposal. With the partial exception of OSCE, none of the world’s regional organizations has, at this time, a unit responsible for the collection and analysis of information related to potential conflict.25 The most successful cooperation between the UN and a regional organization has been at field posts where both the UN and OSCE have representation because an informal exchange of information can take place, and thus information from OSCE sources can be incorporated in the reports sent by the UN field staff to Headquarters’.26 Therefore, Dr. James Sutterlin, former Director of the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General, recommends that due to the potential value of such information, the UN should encourage regional organizations to establish early warning and conflict prevention units.27

24 Ibid., 173.
26 Ibid., 127.
27 Ibid.
4.2. Central America: Confronting Structural Crime

Having observed the status quo of security issues in Latin America as well as the need for conflict prevention in the region and for the UN, and before delving into a concrete proposal, it is important to understand the context that led to the current plan for a Central American rapid security force. Central America has severe gang problems, which have worsened due to the porous borders between each country. Besides dealing with this problem, each government faces, to one degree or another, violence related to stark social and economic inequalities. On one hand this means an increase in crime, and on the other, this means violence related to drug trade that comes en route from South America. To illustrate,

After the apparent blow suffered in November with the arrest of Adan Castillo, head of Guatemala’s anti-drugs agency, the drug-traffickers have struck back in the manner that has highlighted the extent to which they have infiltrated the law-enforcement establishment. This has come against the background of a sharp increase in violent crime, in which Guatemala’s two main security menaces, the drug cartels and the mara street gangs, appear to be pitted against each other. Is this the beginning of a ‘mini-Colombia’?\(^{28}\)

In the first three weeks of 2006, 350 murders in Guatemala, mostly of members of the maras, have led the authorities to conclude that they are facing a new threat: a turf war between established drug cartels and the maras for the illicit drug markets. Salvadorian immigrants who fled the civil war and settled in Los Angeles formed the maras in the early 1980s. Hondurans, Guatemalans and other immigrants later joined them, and a great number of them were deported back to their home countries when Central America’s civil wars ended. The complexity of Central American gangs is

\(^{28}\)“Cartels Strike Back, Engage In Turf Wars With Maras” Latin American Newsletters (Security and Strategic Review: January, 2006)
beyond the scope the scope of this paper, it is sufficient to say that currently Central American nations are struggling to contain the illicit activities of the maras, which have expanded from vandalism to drug trade, kidnappings and assassinations. US State Department’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, Daniel Fisk, outlined Washington’s views as follows, “nowadays there is a new set of clear and present dangers to national security, sovereignty, and public safety in Central America: transnational criminal networks of terrorists, narcotics and arms traffickers, alien smugglers, and traffickers of people.”

Central American governments are not passive and are implementing an array of tactics. Guatemala took the decision in late 2005 to overhaul its drug enforcement administration, “Servicio de Analisis e Investigacion Antinarcoticos” (SAIA); the revamped SAIA is designed to work closely with the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to guide its initial phase. However, efforts have not proved conclusive. Besides the problem with the maras, each country faces administrative, political and economic problems. For example, Guatemala has a problem with its national police; during the first half of 2005, 700 officers were purged after being charged with offences such as kidnapping, extortion and homicide. In its search for a solution, the government appointed 15 retired military officers in June 2005 as special commissioners to oversee the functioning of police stations, which enraged the police chiefs who worry about the militarization of the police. Furthermore, while fighting the maras, economic problems have pushed the government to drastically streamline its

29 “Gang Raid Kills 12 in Guatemala” BBC News (September 20, 2005).
30 “Guatemala to Lead in Recasting Army’s Role?” Latin American Newsletters (Security and Strategic Review: July, 2005).
31 Ibid.
defense establishment; last year it more than halved the number of military personnel, from 26,285 to 14,900 (though it still has the largest defense budget in Central America).\textsuperscript{32} Thus, a coherent approach has been difficult to apply.

As mentioned before, with militarization or demilitarization not options, governments have sought help to eradicate the mara problem. Coordination efforts have not materialized at a regional level yet, but each country is aware of the security problems being faced, especially at their borders, and have periodically teamed up to try to solve the problem. For example, in March 2005, Guatemala joined El Salvador in the first attempts to establish a joint border security force; two separate units drawn from the police operating within a 20-kilometre belt on either side of the common border, each within its own country, but in loose coordination with the other. The Fuerza Binacional, as it is called, appears to be successful mainly at targeting the maras and smugglers.\textsuperscript{33} Separately, Guatemala has since decided to deploy a joint army-police force along the border with Mexico where the mara problem has been growing in recent years. In early September 2005, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras joined forces with Mexico and the US to conduct the first transnational police operation against the maras (under the coordination of the FBI).\textsuperscript{34} The carefully planned drive called “Plan Internacional de Operaciones Simultaneas Contra Pandillas,” involved more than 64,400 law-enforcement officers and resulted in the arrest of 685 suspected gang members.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} “Guatemala to lead in recasting army’s role?” \textit{Latin American Newsletters} (Security and Strategic Review: July 2005).
\textsuperscript{34} “Five Countries In First Anti Gang Operation” \textit{Latin American Newsletters} (Security and Strategic Review: September 2005).
Pressed by political need, Central American Presidents have continuously expressed their desire to see a rapid reaction force deployed as soon as possible, in order to be able to move beyond bilateral efforts. At first, a couple of years ago, the region’s security chiefs and their governments were seeking to improve the exchange of intelligence and to develop a regional arrest warrant system which would shortcut extradition proceedings and arrangements for crossborder ‘hot pursuit.’ However, due to US recommendations and to attract its financial support, the initiative was redefined at an extraordinary meeting in Tegucigalpa, where Central American presidents agreed to instruct their security officials to draw up plans for a subregional ‘rapid response force to confront narcoterrorism and other emerging threats.’36 They have even asked the US Southern Command to help them set up the regional force. 37

Guatemalan President Oscar Berger has said that help has been offered from the DEA, which could train the personnel and provide ‘mobility’ for counter-narcotics operations. Similarly, the Interpol’s anti-mara program has received a boost by its office in El Salvador due to the security issues arising from a possible mara-terrorist association.38 However, when Central American governments receive new funding from organizations such as the US DEA to combat criminality, they forget the fresh historical conflicts, and many times miscalculate the political risks. If a peacekeeping unit of any kind is to succeed, it is of major importance that a framework specific to these countries be established, with strictly neutral help and geared to the greater goal of regaining government trust.

36 Ibid.
37 “Guatemala To Lead In Recasting Army’s Role?” Latin American Newsletters (Security and Strategic Review: July 2005).
38 Ibid.
5. Proposal: A New Rapid Reaction Force
5.1 Aim and Purpose

Terrorism, drug trafficking and the mara problem have gathered international attention, and pressing domestic security needs have built fertile ground for an interesting project to come into fruition. It has to be underlined that the problems with gangs derive from a broad array of variables, which this paper does not intend to deal with, as it implies the complex history of each country. Economic and political inequality, characterized by segregation, lack of economic opportunities, government corruption, and more, have left an angry and unsatisfied constituency. When deliberating about aid, administration of the unit and more, these issues must be taken into consideration in order to structure a proposal geared to the regional nuances. This paper delivers a building block for a more elaborate proposal that takes the delicate circumstances of each subregion into consideration.

The theoretical background and historical context provided above point to the fact that Central America is not ready to undergo a multinational terrorist and peacekeeping regional unit that can legitimately target complex structural crime. Thus, it is important to stress that this proposal seeks to redirect the strategies being considered by the countries into a Conflict Prevention and Peacekeeping Unit (CPPU). The regional rapid security force, which is currently in the planning phase, continues to rely on old military tactics and old alliances. As in the majority of conflicts, the underlying causes are overlooked because of the immediate need of security, the need to attack a tangible enemy – maras, terrorism, etc – instead of the root causes of the conflict.
The military efforts undertaken have not been fully successful and will not be successful because factors such as a lack of basic needs, of education, unemployment, etc, will breed criminal activity. Good government policy, which finances social programs, reintegrates gang members and more, has to become part of an integral agenda to reduce criminality in these countries. There is an immediate need to curb violence, and there is a part to be played by a multinational peacekeeping unit, which is to revive trust in military and government efficiency. Without a new approach, old mistakes can easily be repeated.

5.1.1 Overall Objectives

The proposed CPPU main aim in the field should be that of humanitarian action in the diverse forms that will be proposed. The overall objective will be to regain government trust by providing a transparent, efficient and honorable service, which connects with the population in need to a level above and beyond their assigned technical duties. It will have three basic goals:

1. Early warning: develops Standard Operating Procedures and concepts of operations and conduct, country/community studies for potential deployments, promotion of information analysis and field communication
2. Humanitarian relief: available for rapid deployment to a natural disaster
3. Peacekeeping/Preventive deployment: serves as an advance party in crisis management before larger, longer term forces arrive

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In other words, the main objective will be to establish a regional conflict prevention and peacekeeping unit with the capacity and ability to carry out early warning, humanitarian relief and minor peacekeeping, and to increase the contribution of Central American and friendly nations for the urgent need of humanitarian action.

5.1.2. Organization

Putting together a multinational force is a colossal task and the separation of responsibilities has to be measured out based on each country’s range of possibilities. However, a framework of action should have the following characteristics:

- Unit must be given access by pertinent countries about relevant data for conflict analysis
- Unit must be capable of undertaking technical reconnaissance missions prior to deployment
- Unit must be prepared for operational deployment prior to its commitment, including such requirements as the development of Standard Operating Procedures and the completion of pre-deployment training
- Must be responsible for organizing trainings and exercises that improve the coordination and cooperation among the military units
- Should have adequate emergency response capabilities for its entire prognosticated deployment time, and be deployable at very short notice
- Ability to relate positively with surrounding populations and to build a sense of community
To understand the deployment focus of CPPU, this last point is of key importance. A clear example can be identified which highlights the importance of relating positively with communities. Japan’s disaster relief branch of its Self Defense Agency (JGSDF) is a great source of training knowledge for humanitarian natural disaster emergencies as well as providing a framework of creating a positive relationship between the battalions and the communities that harbor them. JGSDF is a ‘battalion’ trained and equipped for natural disasters, regional security and peacekeeping; the SDF disaster relief role is defined in Article 83 of the Self-Defense Forces Law of 1954, requiring units to respond to calls for assistance from prefectural governors to aid in firefighting, earthquake disasters, searches for missing persons, rescues, and reinforcement of embankments and levees in the event of flooding. In Japan, this branch of the military has helped to boost military legitimacy, with a great majority of Japanese (77 %) believing that disaster relief is the most useful SDF function.

Thus, the SDF has continued to devote much of its time and resources to disaster relief and other civic action. Between 1984 and 1988, at the request of prefectural governors, the SDF assisted in approximately 3,100 disaster relief operations, involving about 138,000 personnel, 16,000 vehicles, 5,300 aircraft, and 120 ships and small craft. In addition, the SDF participated in earthquake disaster prevention operations and disposed of a large quantity of World War II explosive ordinance. The forces also participated in public works projects, cooperated in management of athletic events and conducted aerial surveys to report on ice conditions for fishermen and on geographic formations for construction projects. Besides extensive experience in effective personnel training for worst case scenarios, the SDF strategy of maintaining a harmonious relations
with communities close to defense bases is key for the prevention goals of a regional unit and its success with the public, hence, the SDF builds new roads, irrigation networks, and schools in those areas. Though this example might not perfectly match the proposal being presented here, as the SDF has not been used in police actions, nor is it likely to be assigned any internal security tasks in the future, it is a key building block from an important donor country.

Though early warning has been defined as the first goal of CPPU, the importance of forming a relationship between the unit and the population it interacts with is highlighted because this issue will most probably have the greatest social impact. The acceptance of such a unit by Central American citizens could help heal decades of mistrust in their own militaries, enhancing the democratic values not only of the militaries but of governments as well. As has been mentioned, Japan’s SDF disaster relief branch boosted military legitimacy because it makes the citizenry feel included as well as to be able to see clear examples of the military being socially productive. This does not mean that the entire military establishment will work for disaster relief, it means that a portion of it will be dedicated to work more closely with the population to improve the relationship of both sectors. Such ideas sound idyllic and are rarely implemented, however, Central America has the even closer example of Costa Rica to understand the social and political benefits of a more ‘inclusive’ police and military system.

5.1.3. Contribution

As has been noted, corruption scandals plague Central American police forces and bureaucracy, stressing the need for a unit that can stand for itself and produce effective
operations with fewer political restraints. The greater challenge will be to organize in an expedient manner the financial issues as well as the training and unit locations. The unit has to remain mobile between participating nations, requiring agreements on interoperability issues, and also an arrangement on the strategies for single operations. Though standard peacekeeping operations deployment finance is normally settled in accordance with procedures established by the UN for each mission, mainly according to voluntary country contributions; in order to give greater financial stability to the project, a set, possibly annual, contribution from each country could be defined for the budget. The funds can be set aside specifically for use when disasters or emergencies occur, which would make the unit more frugal and independent with its finances, as well as more responsive in times of need. The unit could also be given the freedom to finance itself through the auspices of other countries, for specific projects to be undertaken (from community building to emergency preparation), such as from the UN, Japan’s training contribution, etc.

Leadership should be transferred from one country’s administration to the other in accordance with established rules, providing a framework that enhances continuity. Keeping the unit apolitical can be achieved with such a system of leadership sharing, assuring that all countries will have eventual control of the unit. Once such issues as funding and leadership have been addressed, the unit should be divided into its respective ground divisions. The two most important divisions will be conflict analysis unit and a second on-the-ground peacekeeping unit.

Whether or not the conflict analysis unit will be mobile has to be determined by the amount of cooperation offered by each country. Mobility would entail access to
information and clear communication channels. The unit has to have and to encourage proper communications with other pertinent agencies in order to maintain accurate records and manage gang or terrorist enclaves within the parameters set for them. As both issues involve dealings with an already existing government agency, the CPPU will be an influential element to help streamline communications services. Of key importance for this then would be the prioritization of bureaucratic procedures for the CPPU and continuous improvement of the military communications system to fit future demands. Deficiencies in communications are a current problem that has to be overcome no matter what. In this matter, the UN could continue to be of great assistance, suggesting methods to streamline communications channels and further help delineate pre-conflict indicators.*

Secondly, for the personnel on the ground, training should be given to selected participants from each member country and, as in the JSDF, only to the highest quality professionals. High moral standards and efficiency can help boost the image of the unit and make membership in it a competitive and desirable position. Since military and police personnel have collected a flawed human rights record and have segregated the population, training is necessary. This would include carefully selected topics of focus, in general, “a conflict prevention unit would have to be an integral formation consisting of elements from [different] types of arms, including manouvre units, medical, logistics and communications, will only be employed for deployments of up to 6 months duration, and

* For example, four main points to establish indicators should be considered: 1) Establish what type of event one wishes to receive warning about and the time frame of warning. 2) Look for motivation and capability indicators. 3) Consider historical context, distinguishing clearly between background conditions and catalysts. 4) Make sure indicators occur early in the sequence that leads to violence. See Peter Breecke “A Pattern Recognition Approach to Conflict Early Warning” In John Lavies (Eds) Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 1998), 125.
it should not be considered for routine rotation of forces in connection with ongoing missions.”

The US Justice Department’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistant Program (ICITAP) has, for the last five years, helped El Salvador focus on community policing and to improve internal and external communications. As a result, El Salvador is the only country in the region with a working national emergency police response system, a computerized crime analysis and deployment network and an Intranet that connect the precincts internally. As the US is directly affected by the problems lingering in Central America, it would be cost effective for the US then to continue with its original training and support of an independent Central American unit that can be successful and thus create an example for other institutions. Expertise will then have to be broad, and help sought from several agencies.

To maintain the unit streamlined and focused, the unit cannot take on a multilateral mandate. Because of the complexity of peacekeeping, intervention is provided by a diverse range of actors to coordinate multiple sector reconstruction. For example, traditionally, the civilian police help in the restructuring of the legal framework, to strengthen the diplomatic, economic, technical, and humanitarian aspects. Thus, it is common that in peacekeeping operations the military component, both armed and unarmed (military observers) are mainly responsible for maintaining a secure environment in which the police could work, for example. However, if Central American officials feel more comfortable having the civilian police in charge of all aspects of the

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40 Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Operation, Funding, Administration and Status of the Multinational United Nations Stand-By Forces High Readiness Brigade.
41 Arana, 2005, 5
intervention, this could also work in the delivery of humanitarian aid and early warning. But, by training members of the military to engage in issues beyond state defense or military offensive action, it could be more advantageous for the reputation of the military in general and for the spread of best practices to the rest of the military. CPPU, as it has been proposed then, is a military unit with the normal hierarchies, training and duty, but with a concentration on prevention of conflict and fostering a positive environment in the communities it interacts with, instead of the direct use of force. This also means, that in the event that such a unit is not necessary and becomes eliminated or merged with other military units, the members would be already trained to integrate accordingly.

Finally, Spanish, the common language that unites the majority of Central America, should be made the official language. Though the US is a key actor in the region, English as the official language would erode the sense of political independence of the battalion. There is no political statement behind the creation of the battalion, no dogmatic preference, just a desire for impartiality in the sensitive subject of security. Moreover, such a battalion, it has to be emphasized, is not to replace the military or the police, but is a solution to contain immediate problems in a more transparent and efficient manner.

5.2. UN Support

The UN has to maintain a decisive commitment to participate in such issues in Latin America. Thus, CPPU will be operating under the provision of the countries that compose it under the auspices of the UN. The Central American countries might not be

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It is important to point out however that Central America has overcome its reconstruction stage, thus CPPU should not focus on other typical tasks undertaken by the civilian police such as monitoring elections, or monitoring the human rights situation.
currently envisioning a UN ‘intervention’ but it is not the first time that the UN invents opportune and creatively negotiated solutions in order to get involved.\textsuperscript{44} Any unit that deals with crime control that is framed under the auspices of the US DEA or even the Organization of American States (OAS) for example, will trigger old historical animosities, debilitating acceptance by the Central American population. The UN is proposed to be a key player in this project and not the OAS because, in the view of the Latin American masses, the OAS has an apparent attachment to US interests. The reality of such matters is non-important here, the views and desires of Central American citizens are what have to be considered.

It is, however, correct to seek approval from the OAS, and to advance the continuation of current projects undertaken by them, but at the same time to be sure to detach the unit from organizations that hold a biased position in peoples’ minds. The internationality of the UN gives them an advantage in political discussions of sovereignty and political interests, if the UN can play to its advantages. It is in each countries’ best interest to produce effective military units that can have broad appeal, the UN is one of the few, if not the only, bodies in the world with the experience, capacity and neutrality to manage funds given for conflict prevention/peacekeeping training.

Furthermore, the UN has vast expertise in the matters of offering training and helping craft norms that could establish correct practices, as well as to give unity and autonomy to the new unit. A conflict prevention unit for Latin America would not only be important for the region’s security issues, but also for the UN mandate itself. In the post Mogadishu/Rwanda world, it is critical for the UN to show results; by helping make

such processes legitimate the UN can enhance its prestige as well. In Alvaro De Soto’s words,

So one of the questions we have to ask ourselves is a truly topical one, because MINUGUA in Guatemala and MICIVIH in Haiti have just been renewed for only two months (which is a rather difficult way to run a railroad), but they are likely, I think or hope, to be continuing at least until the end of the end of the year. They are in a period of uncertainty. One has to ask oneself whether it is really worth keeping an organization such as the United Nations if it is not capable of maintaining missions of this type.\(^\text{45}\)

This proposal for a conflict prevention unit can be expanded to other sub-regions, taking into account the nuances of each country to embark on a project that could bring direct aid efficiently and that can help decentralize the UN’s pressing need to foster conflict prevention. The UN has had many successes in Latin America, by bringing critical functions in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Haiti, to name one, including special programs to incorporate former combatants into social life;\(^\text{46}\) it can then play to its strengths.

Forming a regional CPPU does not have to be a daunting task for the UN or the countries fostering it. The UN has ample experience in peacekeeping logistics and emergency relief, as well as experience setting up peacekeeping operations, with a wealth of knowledge concerning behind-the-scenes administrative tasks. The evolution of peacekeeping activities is in itself a proof of the UN’s maturation. When the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was relaunched in 1992, despite low financial and personnel resources, it achieved a professional level of planning and coordination across

\(^{45}\) De Soto, Alvaro. “International Missions and the Promise of Peace and Democracy” In Tommie Sue Montgomery (Ed) *Peacemaking and Democratization in the Western Hemisphere* (Miami: North-South Center Press at the University of Miami, 2000), 7.

\(^{46}\) Antonini, Blanca. Scenarios for Multilateral Approaches to political Transitions in the Western Hemisphere” In Tommie Sue Montgomery (Ed) *Peacemaking and Democratization in the Western Hemisphere* (Miami: North-South Center Press at the University of Miami, 2000), 304.
a challenging spectrum of tasks. Effective planning and coordination are key for the
success of a mission, from budget forecasts to equipment readiness. Thus the DKPO also
established a situatton center, to maintain around the clock communications with the field,
an education unit to increase the availability of trained military and civilian personnel for
timely deployment and the Lessons Learned Unit, to improve logistics.47

Other UN branches not only serve as a reference and as potential resources but are
already providing training, opening the possibility to expand their role in the region,
instead of building from the ground up. For example, the Office of Coordination for
Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations (OCHA) has trained professionals “from
national agencies and ministries from countries of the South in techniques for the
prevention of natural disasters, the preparation of adequate humanitarian contingency
plans, and the development of simulation exercises.”48

Though putting together a multilateral force brings more challenges than merely
the logistical demands, experience concerning multilateral peace support operations is not
lacking. The Multi-national Standby Force High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations
(SHIRBRIG) brings a wealth of knowledge concerning the operation of brigades, and is
an excellent historical source to help delineate the political path of a Central American
batallion. Building a multinational batallion implies the standardization of laws, the
development of training objectives, command control, etc. SHIRBRIG not only
successfully came into being with a streamlined design in accordance with all members

47 Langille, Peter. “Conflict Prevention: Options for Rapid Deployment and UN Standing Forces”. In
Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse, (eds.), Warlords, Hawks and Doves: Peacekeeping as Conflict
48 Conoir, Yvan, The Conduct of Humanitarian Relief Operations: Principles of Intervention and
Management (New York: UNITAR Programme of Correspondence Instruction in Peacekeeping
(with the three clearly defined branches that it is composed of; the Steering Committee, the Planning Element and the Brigade Pool of Units) but it has also participated successfully in three peacekeeping operations, UNMEE, UNAMIS and UNMIS. Moreover, this year Spain takes over the Presidency of the Steering Committee of SHIRBRIG from Romania, demonstrating ability to hand over command efficiently.

The proposed CPPU has a greater advantage over SHIRBRIG in the sense that its mandate can be promoted as non-threatening to a powerful country’s interests. SHIRBRIG does not have the support of key international players and its limited scope is due to the fact that it is related to international peacekeeping which is an extremely sensitive subject. However, CPPU will be composed of only Central American nations, so no need for further alliance is immediately necessary. The US would be wrong to boycott such an attempt because it does not imply broad international peace enforcement but a targeted effort to contain conflict.

Finally, one of the most important pieces of aid the UN can offer is to help set final assessments for improvements of mission and donor proposals. This can further help the unit be independent and establish a culture of efficiency and responsibility. For example, considering notes by Peter Langille, a scholar with ample experience in training enhancement, role specialization and rapid deployment for UN peace operations, the unit should be able to respond to the following,

- Did it help reduce national response time?
- Did it measurably increase confidence in the unit’s capacity to plan, manage, deploy, and support at short notice through polling of community perceptions
- Did it alleviate the primary worries of potential troop contributors and other member states?

- Did it generate wider political will and adequate financing?

- Did it encourage broad participation, intra- and internationally?

- Did it enhance the training, preparation, and overall competence of potential participants?

- And did it instill a unity of purpose and effort among the various participants?\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{49} Langille, 2000.
5.3. Terrorism

Though intra-state terrorism has waned in the region, present realpolitik demands that the regional rapid reaction force take on such an issue. Not only do practical reasons such as funding necessitate that Central American countries propose such a unit as part of a counter-terrorist strategy, but also due to important migration issues in and from countries with low levels of law enforcement. As Secretary General Koffi Annan stated in his keynote address to the closing plenary of the International Summit of Democracy, Terrorism and Security *A Global Strategy for Fighting Terrorism*, “terrorists exploit weak states as havens where they can hide from arrest, and train their recruits.”\(^{50}\) However, designing CPPU to focus solely or mostly on investigation, search and arrest of suspected terrorists would divert its resources and relationship with communities, thus it would be wiser to append the terrorism and migration issues to the broader goals of the project.

The current regional rapid security force plans specify an approximately 700 member battalion, and would be divided into segments devoted to conflict analysis and warning, and peacekeeping/natural disaster relief. The proportions devoted to each segment would be decided following careful analysis of the workloads. An important fact however is that a battalion of the size proposed cannot deal head to head with the intricate gang problem, the ultimate solution for which lies beyond the military. However, if such military forces that are applied are not seen as trustworthy, an important first step is to reassure the population of the transparency of an agency that can respond to immediate threats. Even if the unit does not have its frontline title as ‘terrorism’ it

\(^{50}\) Annan, Koffi. *A Global Strategy for Fighting Terrorism* (Madrid: 10 March, 2005) Keynote Address To The Closing Plenary Of The International Summit Of Democracy, Terrorism And Security
offers a proactive approach to the problem; not an offensive approach but a preventive one, helping to build the legal norms of the country, the information gathering, the analytical and the communication systems, which will help prevent terrorist acts from occurring or originating in the Central American states.

Not pursuing an explicitly anti-terrorism agenda is also important so that terrorism concerns do not fuse with the mara problem, since it can expand the indiscriminatory use of force by governments. The tactic has always been to increase the number of military personnel, police officers, and in general, an increase of force, which always falls short due to lack of a comprehensive structural approach. For Salvadorian President Antonio Saca, and many more, it seems logical to continue with the “mano dura” strategy, believing that introducing harsh measures will bring an immediate sense of security. But this only reinforces the framework of instability and the increase in violence mentioned by Chernick, and is proven by the continual increase in violence and in the mara/drug trafficking problem. The approach cannot be a full-fledged civil war against their own nationals but a more calculated strategy to motivate the population to retract any support they may be giving to rogue groups. The maras are a tangible problem, rooted in inequality, poverty and historical circumstance.

This is a red flag to the Central American governments; introducing counter terrorism efforts that replicate the past will only perpetrate the current problem, because the military and police in these countries do not have transparent and judicious criminal justice processes. Thus, duties that are more elaborate can expand with time, but at this stage, fully implementing a multilateral terrorist strategy would mean jumping crucial

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steps for an intra- and international consensus against violence, before helping citizens switch their trust in the government and not in informal sources of power. As mentioned above, the unit will work to develop a positive contact with communities during training and while in an operation, thus gaining valuable information in remote areas, but this has to be developed first, then it can expand its role.
Setbacks

In any multilateral endeavor, challenges arise which can hamper successful completion of a proposal. Central America faces several administrative hurdles; each country has to harmonize legislation to establish such a transnational unit, has to deliver a training proposal, agree on the infrastructure to be used, etc. The human rights record of Central American militaries is a major setback for the creation of any battalion. The population might turn unresponsive and critical, expecting corruption to continue even in a decentralized battalion. Threats ranging from drug involvement or use by battalion members to inadequate or inappropriate response to misallocation of resources are always latent, even if preemptive measures are taken. Hence, there is a requirement for political independence of the battalion, while at the same time to employ systems to keep it in check by governments and the populace. Furthermore, lack of commitment and corruption might set back countries’ intentions to involve the UN, and may implement any of several political tools to delay a real threat to crime and gangs, such as shunning the UN.

Externally, the US influence in the sub-region can also be prejudicial. Without lingering on Cold War history, the US, due to economic and new security issues has maintained a tight grip on Central American governments. For example in mid-2005, the Pentagon accused the Sandinistas (who controlled the legislature) of blocking the destruction of the remaining portable surface-to-surface missiles in the state arsenal. Though it was posited that these missiles were a critical threat if taken into the ‘wrong hands,’ the only factual excuse backing such a vigorous claim from the US government was a ‘sting’ operation in January 2005 in which Nicaraguan police were directed
towards someone displaying a sample missile for sale – however, one which was unserviceable and that had not come from the government stores but rather from former members of the US-backed Contras.\textsuperscript{52} Though the specific missiles are unable to bring down a jet fighter or a larger airliner, the US threatened to cut Nicaragua’s aid if the missiles weren’t destroyed at their command.\textsuperscript{53}

The financial and strategic help of the US should not be belittled, but the UN can help maintain the independence of the CPPU. The advances made on multilateral help within the region, as in February 2006, when several Central American countries signed a regional security agreement to improve communication between all of the security forces in order to target criminal gangs,\textsuperscript{54} have to continue to be expanded, promoted and organized. It is necessary to prevent future escalation of violence, to start working on structural problems in these countries, not only on poverty and inequality but also on government trust and legal impartiality. In this way, the new battalion would be prepared for the immediate emergency needs of Central American nations, and gaining with it, experience to become a greater part of the general security strategy of the region.

\textsuperscript{52} “Pentagon Builds a Case Against the Sandinistas for ‘Blocking’ the Destruction of Missiles” \textit{Latin America Newsletter} (Security and Strategic Review: June 2005).
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
Possibilities for the Future

The American nations share a similar political, economic and social background, which is represented in their common security concerns. Moreover, though poverty stricken nations around the world differ historically, they generally have similarities that allow for some preliminary comparisons. Developing counties are plagued by inequality (financial and legal) and poverty, due to a plethora of causes, and have to deal with several consequences/realities such as corruption, illegality, crime, etc. Much of the instability in such countries lies in the erosion of trust in government caused by the government’s inability to provide basic political needs. Thus, there is a need to craft new ideas on how to regain confidence in authorities, to harvest social stability as the building block of economic development.

A clear example of a possible expansion of CPPU is to South America, more precisely, to the countries that are known as the Andean community. The Andean Community of Nations (CAN) have very similar geographic and political structures. The CAN began as the dream of a customs union which focused mainly on regional economic integration, but has evolved in the last five years to acknowledge peace and security as specific aims of the organization. It created the Andean Peace Area and approved the Andean common external security policy in July 2004 to combat drug and small arms trafficking. It is well known that the Andean region’s borders are isolated, poor and

55 Members are: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. <http://www.comunidadandina.org/ingles/who.htm>
56 SICE The Andean Community in Motion: A Progress Report
58 Ibid.
very porous. The complexity of border drug and arms trafficking has to be taken into account in order to be able to understand the needs of a regional peacekeeping unit.

The main cocaine processing stronghold in South America is Colombia. Despite decades of conflicts and different approaches to solving it, currently, President Alvaro Uribe has gained popularity because he combats guerrilla movements directly. Though the rise in military spending by 3.5 percent of the GDP increased its activity, weaponry and men, recent guerrilla (FARC) attacks show its capacity to retaliate outside its stronghold.\(^59\) The hundreds of kilometers of jungle and rivers throughout southeastern Colombia, along the borders with Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, are home to some of its largest coca plantations,

The FARC indicated how important to it are the large southern departments of Caqueta and Putumayo (and parts of the Meta, in particular the Llanos del Yari area), by making their conversion into a demilitarized zone a precondition for any humanitarian accord with the government.\(^60\)

The powerful Medellin drug cartels, associated with the paramilitaries (AUC), are said to have bought large tracts of land in Venezuela’s eastern regions near Maracaibo Lake. In 2004, clashes between the AUC and heavily armed Wayuus (the main local indigenous group) over coca shipments and contraband drew attention to the AUC failure to respect the ceasefire agreed to with Uribe’s government, and caused 400 refugees to flee into Venezuela in April 2005. Furthermore, some 20% of Colombia’s illegal drugs are said to transit through Ecuador, and drug money is easily laundered in that country’s dollarized economy.\(^61\)** Drug and arms traffic affect the region’s already unstable

\(^{59}\) Ibid. 4.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid. 5.  
\(^{61}\) Ibid. 11.
government and demonstrate that security in the region is so limited that migration of terrorists can easily reach Central America and Mexico, a main destination for people intent on illegal immigration to the US. Furthermore, arms smuggling has increased petty crime in the region, causing Peru to have, for example, the highest rate of home burglary in South America.  

There has been an exponential increase in citizen unrest in the Andean community, observed not only in the recent recycling of presidents across the region, but also in the increase in lynchings of public officials; in 2004, Peru alone had more than 1,900 lynchings and attempts, according to National Police archives. Paradoxically, regional stability exists because of lack of government control, as citizens are ‘free’ enough to manage the law in their own hands. While each government is preoccupied with its own social ails and minor neighboring disputes, violence simmers slowly below the surface.

The UN is not silent on violence in the CAN, and focuses especially on development and narcotics. The Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) has a wide prevention and control program, financing and facilitating many projects that assist border control officers around the world to intercept drugs and drug traffickers. It also develops regional strategies and brokers agreements to ensure that countries are

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** The increase of production has occurred due to the increase in prices after a decline in coca prices in the 90s. Today farmers can cash in $50 for each arroba of coca leaf in areas such as the Huallaga (Peruvian jungle), improving the resources for the cocaleros to establish an articulated movement with powerful leaders and a clear agenda. See Artemio’ y Líderes Cocaleros del Huallaga Estrechan Cooperación” El Comercio Perú (Investigation Unit: 23 February 2005). And “Cocaleros Estrechan Lazos con Sendero” El Comercio Perú (23 February 2005).

63 “Pagamos más de S/ 1.267 Millones para Protegernos” El Comercio Perú (5 June 2005)

64 “Pueblo Continúa Tomando Justicia Por Sus Manos” El Comercio (21 November, 2004)

cooperating fully with each other at both the strategic and operational levels.\textsuperscript{65} The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) helps research and produces analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and expand the evidence-base for policy and operational decisions; as well as field-based technical cooperation projects to enhance the capacity of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.\textsuperscript{66}

However, the UN has focused on behind the scenes aid, and since the help is not immediately recognizable, the UN loses credibility in the hearts and minds of citizens and politicians. However because of the withdrawal of Venezuela and possibly of Bolivia of the CAN due to disagreements with Peru, Colombia and Ecuador about a Free Trade Agreement with the US, the need for UN involvement is more important than ever.\textsuperscript{67} Terrorism has not completely been eliminated in the region and drug trafficking has become a much more entrenched fact of daily life, yet political whim halts concerted efforts to improve the security and economy of the area. The CAN, as in Central America, has produced several attempts at security integration, which have the potential to streamline security related agencies and rebuild trust in government. The UN can gain from aiding a conflict prevention battalion in South America in a way similar to the benefits gained from such a unit in Central America, assuring the maintenance of peace in the greater region.

Conclusions

The aim of this proposal is to shed light on the current security problems Latin America is facing and the role that the UN can play in the region. Though the existing conflicts have not escalated to the level of a full fledged war, countries are, in many cases, on the brink of a humanitarian crisis. Yet the efforts undertaken and the current proposals to target criminality multilaterally have not, and will not, eradicate crime because they are not dealing with the structural causes of it. New strategies to defeat violence in the region are necessary and the most appropriate actor to bring such an approach into place is the UN. The UN can help with the impartial decentralization of military endeavors, so a multilateral force that can focus on conflict analysis and humanitarian relief can create the security and trust that Central American populations seek.

Trust in government has become key for stability in the region. The sphere of politics is bound to societal interaction through political representation, political parties, social movements, interest groups, and public opinion and it is materialized through elections. The bondage of representation has the capacity to generate legitimacy, though if it fails in this regard it can also produce alternate denouements, such as apathy, alienation and low voter turnout. In the worst of cases the breakdown of representation can create another set of options outside the political system. When the populace reaches a high level of frustration yet finds no mechanism for political representation, other forms of political participation, such as protests, can occur. Disjointed masses of

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protestors thus send governments up and down at their whim, exacerbating the weakness of the state to rule.

Thus, solving drug trafficking, terrorism and gang related crime takes more than military might and even more than economic stability. Unless citizens unite to resist transgressions of the legal public order, illegality in all its forms will thrive. Impoverished governments such as those in Latin America do not have the resources to enforce laws administratively or even militarily. Hence, they have to rely on making sound laws that people would willingly want to follow. The UN has a role to play in our current world order, and should become more effective and more decentralized in order to manage and prevent conflict, using its wide expertise in peace operations, norm building, human rights, economic development and more. It has vast resources accumulated through decades of successful and unsuccessful experiences, which cannot be lost for the sake of global security. Latin America has been a ground for positive UN operations, with which it can continue with strategic training and by helping Latin America to take responsibility for its problems through the application of proper knowledge and competence.

The proposed Conflict prevention and Peacekeeping Unit is not a magic wand that will eliminate terrorism or gang related problems. There is no single office in any Latin American government that could aspire to such goals, this can only be achieved through an efficient and concerted effort that not only confronts immediate problems but also builds the ground for a peaceful future. This view implies the existence of governmental institutions that are capable of providing basic political needs, such as security and a legal framework that inspires citizen trust.
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