PUBLIC SECURITY IN THE AMERICAS:
NEW CHALLENGES IN THE SOUTH-NORTH DIALOG

Working Document

Edited by:

John Bailey
Georgetown University
Introduction: New Security Challenges in the South-North Dialog

John Bailey

Introduction: From “National Security” to “Public Security”

The point of departure for this book is that security threats are undergoing significant changes in the Americas. The thesis is that there are points of convergence and divergence about security as this is coming to be viewed by the United States government, particularly the executive branch, and its perception by other governments in the region. By and large the points of convergence offer the basis for productive dialog about security cooperation. But the areas of convergence go only part way. There remain areas of primary concern for key Latin American and Caribbean countries that appear not to be fully comprehended by the U.S. government. At the same time, the meaning and significance of anti-terrorism in U.S. policy is evolving in fits and starts in a context of uncertainty in the United States itself. Thus its implications for the rest of the Americas remain unclear.

It is beyond the present scope to offer an explanation for the changes in perceptions of security. Two sources of change, however, seem obvious. One is the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, followed by the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001. These mark two points in an apparent watershed in U.S. security policy. The end of the Cold War also removed the specter of Soviet and Cuban-backed subversion in the Americas and contributed to the resolution of armed conflicts in Central America. Another, quite different, source of change is the political and economic
transition that most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries began in the mid 1980s and which continues today. The new sets of policies in turn unleashed powerful political and social forces, some of which assumed negative, threatening forms such as crime and violence.

To oversimplify the resulting differences in threat perception, residents of Latin American and Caribbean countries are most occupied by threats to their persons and property in daily life caused by widespread crime, violence, corruption and inefficient and/or corrupt law enforcement and judicial administration. In response, governments in the region have developed doctrines of “public security,” although there is considerable variation in the specific terminology from one country to another. U.S. residents, on the other hand, are concerned about crime and “ordinary” violence to a lesser extent at the beginning of the 21st century and more focused on threats connected with terrorism, both domestic and trans-state. As the sole remaining superpower, the U.S. government’s security agenda includes many other types of threats as well, but it is the terrorism issue that holds central priority at least in its declaratory policy.¹ Thus, the U.S. government introduced a policy of “Homeland Security,” which combines public security and national security and differs in important aspects with respect to Latin American and Caribbean doctrines.²

To be expected, the changing perceptions interact in complex ways. In some respects decision-makers in the United States and most Latin American countries appear

¹ The threat of terrorism is the central focus of “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” the President’s annual statement of executive branch policy. See [http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nassal.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nassal.html) accessed September 21, 2002.

to comprehend the new security threats involving their respective countries. In other respects, however, there are significant differences both in the threats themselves and in the degree to which the threats are understood by policy-makers of different countries.

A note on terms is useful here. By security I refer to the protection of vital assets to which a person or collectivity assigns particularly high value from threats that are seen as significant. Securitization, the political process through which collectivities designate which assets are truly vital, how they may be protected, and what threats are most significant, is an ongoing process of utmost importance to a political system. This is because securitization assigns priority, that is, grants emergency status above “normal” politics, to selected issues, thus placing them at the top of the policy agenda. Securitization is typically dynamic over time. Changes in the political system may alter the agenda of assets to be protected. New sources of threats may be identified, to join or replace existing threats; or the forms that threats can take may change over time. New techniques or technologies may be developed to respond to threats. In sum, debates

3 Threats to assets may be objective, as when a hostile force invades one’s own territory or when domestic terrorists attack important links in national infrastructure systems. Threats, however, may also be matters of perception and thus subject to debate and negotiation. Buzan (1977, p. 19) argues that scholars took up positions in three main camps. First, the “traditionalists” maintained that security should be reserved for the study of interstate conflict and issues of war and peace. In their view, the broadening of scope to include economy, environment, terrorism and the like, threatened to dilute the clear definition of the term and subject. Second, the so-called “wideners” argued that the scope of study should be broadened to include nonstate actors and matters that implied significant threats to citizens as well as states. Although the focus might be less precise and the field itself made more complicated, a focus on issues that merit the emergency response of states and societies, including coercive military and police responses, could serve to delimit the field sufficiently. A third group adopted a “Critical Security Studies” approach, which “. . . wants to challenge both traditionalists and wideners by applying post-positivist perspectives, such as critical theory and post-structuralism.” Their central premise is that threats are not given in nature, but rather are socially constructed. That is, what constitutes a threat is the product of the interactions of persons and groups. Critical theory thus seeks to expose the political interests behind how threats come to be defined as such and tries to suggest alternative ways of viewing reality.
about security revolve around three sets of issues: (1) which assets are valued; (2) what constitute significant threats; and (3) how are these threats to be managed?

The New Context of Security in the Americas

The end of Cold War in the late 1980s brought only a partial re-thinking of national security policies in the United States. Threats most frequently noted include regional conflicts, weapons of mass destruction (with particular concern about nuclear proliferation), terrorism (including attacks on the Internet system) and organized crime. Regional priority shifted somewhat away from Europe and toward the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Asia (Korea, China). Overall, existing force structure was maintained, along with development of new capabilities. The United States continued to maintain large-scale conventional military forces, even though conventional threats receded. Further, until September 11 the most significant threats were seen to be largely external (e.g., rogue states such as Iraq and North Korea; emerging competitors such as China) and not to U.S. territory. After September 11, terrorism was assigned top priority, and—for the first time since the U.S. Civil War of the 1860s—the protection of U.S. territory was foremost. Thus, the focus of public security adopted by the U.S. government concentrates almost exclusively on terrorism in its many forms.4

Profound differences in the overall socio-economic circumstances between the United States and the Latin American and Caribbean countries are fundamental. The United States experienced a long cycle of growth throughout the 1990s, entering into a relatively mild recession in the first year of the 21st century. During this same period,

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crime rates declined continuously. In contrast, most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries experienced a wrenching economic and political transition, beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the present. This “dual transition” from relatively closed economies to liberalized markets and from forms of authoritarianism to more democratic political systems brought significant turmoil as the long-dominant state-centric and protectionist model was disassembled. To date, however, the expected levels of economic benefits of transition have not appeared. Overall economic growth rates remain below the averages of the 1960s and 1970s. Poverty, inequality and unemployment may have worsened, at least in the short term. Threats of regression to authoritarianism, or to widespread social breakdown, have appeared in the cases of Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela. In this context, one of the most important challenges in the region is the upsurge in problems of crime, corruption and varieties of internal violence.

Socio-economic circumstances and global commitments underlie a longstanding difference in priorities between the United States and Latin America with respect to security policy. From the late 1940s to the end of the Cold War, U.S. security policy in the Americas reflected its top global priority: containment of Soviet influence particularly and anti-communism generally. The institutions promoted by the United States (e.g., the Inter-American Defense Board, the Rio Treaty, the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank) sought the exclusion of Soviet influence from the region, along with promotion of stability and economic development. The United States promoted democracy as well. But when faced with a perceived trade-off between

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5 These data are reported in the Introduction to Bailey and Chabat (2002).
stability and democracy, especially if democratic opening increased the influence of currents perceived as pro-Soviet or pro-Cuban, the tendency was to opt for stability.

To many Latin American and the Caribbean leaders, however, communism, Cuba and the Soviet Union were secondary threats in comparison with those presented by poverty and unemployment. In terms of a hemispheric security dialog the United States tended to put anti-communism ahead of economic development issues, while most of the leadership in the region tended to reverse the priorities. The result was something of a disconnect in perceptions of security threats. Even though U.S. officials recognized the relationship between socioeconomic development and democracy and supported economic assistance programs, they usually preferred to contain the discussion of security to inter-state conflict and to threats of Soviet-Cuban subversion. Latin American leaders typically lobbied for expanded development assistance and sought to broaden the scope of security dialogs to include poverty and underdevelopment as priority threats. It is noteworthy that threats presented by widespread corruption were absent, at least from the public discussions of security.

At the threshold of the 21st century, once again the security dialog in the Americas finds the United States and the Latin American-Caribbean nations with priorities that partially coincide but that also diverge in important respects. The United States is attempting to confine the definition of security to the protection of the lives and property of its own citizens and those of allied countries from physical attacks by domestic or trans-state terrorist networks or by so-called rogue states. As in previous times, the tendency in Latin America and the Caribbean is to expand concepts of security to

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6 Might be useful to cite data that show Latin America as the overall most violent & crime-plagued region in the world.
embrace not only physical threats to lives and property but also to include threats posed by widespread poverty and underdevelopment. New in the security dialog is the willingness on all sides to include problems presented by corruption.

To explore these issues, we sought out specialists on the United States, the Caribbean, Central America and the Southern Cone to analyze recent trends in security in their respective subregions. The search itself proved to be a challenge, as the field of security studies is relatively new in Latin America and the Caribbean and the security situation of the United States is highly unsettled. Further, we sought analysts with strengths in policy and institutions, as well as in the theoretical aspects of security. In the end, we were fortunate to recruit two individuals who combined extensive backgrounds in government service with strong academic abilities and two others who combined strong academic backgrounds with significant government service. In an effort to promote a productive exchange, we drafted for the group a short memorandum setting out their understanding of how the issues might be framed. We assembled the group in January 2001 at a seminar in San Jose, Costa Rica, co-hosted by Georgetown’s Center for Latin American Studies, the National Strategy Information Center, and United Nations Institute of ILANUD. There the analysts presented their preliminary findings to a diverse group of current and former law enforcement, intelligence and military officers, as well as to academic specialists in International Relations and other pertinent fields, all from various parts of the Hemisphere. A follow-up meeting was held at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in October 2001, in order to include U.S. policy-makers and academics in the dialog. Thus, the traumatic events of September struck in the
middle and at the core of our discussion, and we struggled to absorb their significance for the regional security dialog.

Chart 1-1 (below) represents our effort to draw on the experiences of the analysts and participants to identify assets to be protected, types of threats, forms that threats can assume, as well as governmental and societal responses. The Chart, which we drafted initially at the San Jose meeting and revised at the Georgetown meeting, served to organize our discussion about the similarities and differences in varieties of security. I shall first characterize the various conceptions of security and then summarize the authors’ contributions.

### Varieties of Security: Principal Themes and Issues

Georgetown University – National Strategy Information Center  
October 5, 2001 (draft 24 Sept. 02)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who or What Should be Protected?</th>
<th>Who or What Present Threats?</th>
<th>What Form(s) Do Threats Assume?</th>
<th>What Are State-centered/Coalition-Building Regional Approaches to Combating and Reducing Security Threats?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Security</strong></td>
<td>State and key state institutions.</td>
<td>Nation-states and state agencies.</td>
<td>State-centered/military, diplomatic, intelligence, coalition-building regional approaches to combating and reducing security threats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sovereignty and territorial integrity, Political stability and internal order, Democracy and individual freedoms Economic growth and competitiveness</td>
<td>Trans-state actors, including terrorists, organized crime Structural, “non-actor” threats from population movements, environmental degradation, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Security</strong></td>
<td>Personal safety Personal assets and goods Rule of law Democratic institutional development</td>
<td>External and internal organized crime, especially drug trafficking Weak internal institutions (e.g., inefficiency, poor training, inadequate resources) Common crime Urban violence Terrorists</td>
<td>Instrumental, targeted violence and intimidation in public spaces Diffuse violence by individuals and gangs Domestic violence Corruption Official impunity and predatory law enforcement Disregard for basic civil and human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Poor health, malnutrition</td>
<td>State reform (etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- State-centered/military, diplomatic, intelligence, coalition-building regional approaches to combating and reducing security threats.
II. National Security

This longstanding conception of security assigns priority to protection of the state and key state institutions engaged in vital functions such as finance, defense, administration of justice, and the conduct of foreign affairs. National security involves defense of sovereignty both with respect to the state’s role as the ultimate expression of legitimate coercion in internal affairs and to its role as an independent actor in inter-state relations. Sovereignty also implies legitimate defense of territorial boundaries. Internal order and sufficient political stability to permit the effective functioning of state institutions are also matters of national security. With Cuba as the sole exception, all of the countries of the Hemisphere include the defense of democracy and the protection of individual freedoms as matters of national security. Finally, protection of the economy is usually included under the umbrella of national security. Economic growth and poverty reduction are emphasized throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, while the United States typically focuses on maintaining competitiveness with the other leading economies.

National security typically identifies other nation-states and their key agencies of defense, intelligence, and diplomacy as potential threats. Trans-state actors, i.e., groups or networks operating both independently and with state support, are also potential
threats. Terrorists are of greatest concern to the United States, while varieties of organized crime, especially drug traffickers, most concern Latin American and Caribbean countries. A category of structural or “non-actor” threats might be identified as well. An example is unregulated population movements across territorial boundaries. Especially for the smaller countries of Central America and the Caribbean, major storms, earthquakes or other types of natural disasters may threaten national security.

Threats to national security frequently take the form of boundary disputes between sovereign states. The United States largely resolved its border issues with its neighbors in the 19th Century, but a number of contentious cases remain throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The United States focuses on threats presented by so-called “rogue states,” e.g., Iran, Iraq and North Korea, and their possible use of weapons of mass destruction. The use of similar weapons by trans-state terrorist groups is also a worrisome form of threat. Latin American and Caribbean countries consider organized criminal groups, especially their ability to corrupt law enforcement and judicial administration, as a principle form of threat. The most serious manifestation of this is seen in the effects of drug-trafficking networks on the smaller countries of Central America and the Caribbean.

In the national security perspective, the primary forms of response are state-centered. These typically include military, intelligence and diplomatic instruments. Typical strategies include coalition-building among states and the use of international organizations, such as the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Defense Board. The role of civil society in this perspective is limited to support, such as providing resources or maintaining vigilance against threats, which are largely viewed as
Public Security

Rather than protecting the state or state institutions largely from external threats, public security focuses on the safety of persons and the protection of personal assets from both internal and external threats. In its simplest daily manifestation, public security refers to the physical and psychological safety of persons from threats or actual physical aggression by others. Public security also emphasizes rule of law, which implies both effective governmental law enforcement as well as the citizens’ safety from extra-legal or illegal coercion by state officials. Finally, public security, like national security in the context of the Western Hemisphere, includes protection of democratic institutions.

The sources of threats to public security are principally crime, violence, terrorism and domestic institutions characterized by incompetence, corruption and impunity. Throughout much of Latin America and the Caribbean, the principal threats are multiple forms of crime and interpersonal violence; these threats increased significantly in the mid 1990s and have remained at a high level into the 21st century. The region also suffers from corrupt and inefficient law enforcement and judicial institutions. In the U.S. case, crime and violence were significant issues in the 1970s and 1980s, but appeared to diminish in importance in the 1990s. Corruption appears confined to specific individuals, groups and agencies, especially at the state and local levels—although corruption at the federal level is also revealed frequently. The overriding concern, particularly at the national level, involves terrorism.

Responses to threats to public security involve both state institutions and civil society. Typically, governments invest resources in hiring additional police officers and
in strengthening the judicial system at all stages, from crime prevention through investigation, prosecution, imprisonment and rehabilitation. Additional efforts go toward streamlining cooperation among security forces, including police, intelligence, military and border control agencies. Governments may turn to privatizing some aspects of police or judicial operations. Efforts are devoted to international cooperation as well.

Somewhat in contrast to national security, however, public security places greater attention on cooperation between government and civil society. This can assume multiple forms. Some are positive, such as citizen membership on police oversight panels, neighborhood watch or patrol organizations, participation by service organizations in safety training and crime prevention measures, and the like. The point to stress here is that public security requires active civic involvement and the awareness that a civic culture of lawfulness is required to complement public efforts to construct a society in which the rule of law can be achieved.

But civic involvement can also assume negative forms as well, which can work against constructing the rule of law. Passive-negative forms include the tendency toward self-protection through gated communities, the fortification of private homes and expanded possession of handguns and other types of personal weapons. Of greater concern are active-negative forms such as vigilantism or the contracting for private justice. Increasingly in the 1990s, instances of vigilantism, including lynchings, were reported in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Also, it is not uncommon for government security actors to provide unauthorized support for private security. This can take the form of violent “cleansing” targeted against homeless indigents, homosexuals, petty thieves, and others perceived as undesirables.
Variations on Public Security

A number of other terms frequently appear in treatments of security. Most of these are variations on public security, and emphasize protection of persons and property. We need not develop this theme at length here, other than to briefly note some of the more prominent terms. Readers will find extended discussions in the chapters that follow. “Citizen security” is employed to emphasize protection of the person from extra-legal state coercion, often in countries emerging from brutal dictatorships. The term emphasizes as well the citizen’s civil rights and the protections afforded by law. “Inhabitant security” is sometimes used to cast the net broadly enough to include those who technically lack citizenship, such as children or non-nationals residing legally or otherwise in a particular country. “Human security” is intended to expand coverage to include health, nutrition and housing. The evolution of usage is related to the context of individual country experiences, and the particular choice by actors provides clues about their priorities.

Preview of the Contributions

Eduardo Estevez has written extensively on security issues in Latin America and also has served in a number of policy-making capacities in Argentina’s public sector in the period of redemocratization. His discussion of South America emphasizes the ways in which repression suffered under harsh military dictatorships and the efforts to rebuild democracy affect perceptions of security. He emphasizes citizen security in relation to the quality of democratic life. Citizen security contributes to democratic consolidation when it guides policy in public security, which Estevez defines as means institutionalized by the legal system.
Estevez casts a broad net with respect to who or what is threatened by new or established challenges. Most importantly at risk are democratic values and institutions. Following this are: stability and governability, human capital and the economy, and groups at special risk, e.g., youth. Estevez virtually ignores conventional threats, such as border disputes or forms of inter-state competition. In his view, the most important sources of threats come from violence associated with various types of crime and, to a much lesser extent, terrorism. Estevez distinguishes these from the forms of violence associated with rapid urbanization and the rupture of traditional social controls. He also considers the state’s inability to protect the citizenry and the associated problems of police violence and impunity as key sources of threats to security.

These sorts of threats are brought to bear in multiple expressions of violence. Each country in the subregion is characterized by a distinctive combination of forms of crime, violence, and state impunity. For this reason, He suggests cross-national comparative case studies as the most useful approach to understand the particular patterns of violence in the region. His chapter provides useful data by country on trends in crime and violence.

Estevez’s contribution also provides extensive descriptions of governmental policy responses by various countries in South America as well as policy innovations flowing from the work of international agencies, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations. As does Laura Chinchilla in her discussion of Central America, Estevez describes a number of subregional cooperative efforts, e.g., by the countries of Mercosur-plus Chile and Bolivia, to confront shared problems of
transnational crime. His coverage of civil society responses stresses preventive measures to confront problems of crime and violence.

An expert on Central America, Laura Chinchilla is currently a member of Costa Rica’s National Assembly. She also served as Vice-Minister and Minister for Public Security in the Figueres Olsen administration (1994 - 1998) and as an international consultant on police reform for Africa and Latin America. Her discussion of Central America reflects her training in public policy and underlines the significance of the end of the Cold War and the complex transitions to democracy in that region’s shift in emphasis from national security to public security. The difference between the two conceptions, she argues, is much more than semantic. A national security agenda that was concerned about political dissidence, social protest and armed insurrections has evolved into one that focuses on crime and varieties of types of violence. Rather than protecting institutional stability one sees greater emphasis on the protection of persons and property. And rather than a preeminent role for the armies of the region, the new emphasis aims at strengthening the civilian police and judicial agencies. Overall, hers is a “good news, bad news” story. While much of the reforms in the region can be viewed as positive, crime and violence are perceived as continuing to increase. Thus public opinion tends to call for harsher measures, creating incentives for violent forms of self-protection (e.g., vigilantism), for repressive rather than preventive intervention, and for the return of the military to police roles.

As in much of the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, the mid 1980s in Central America saw political and economic transition accompanied by an upsurge in violent crime. Due in part to its geographic location between producing and consuming
countries, an important component of the surge in violence was related to drug-trafficking. By way of positive responses to these trends, considerable effort went into reforming legislation and modernizing police and judicial agencies. Chinchilla also describes the efforts to promote regional cooperation among the Central American countries, which was facilitated by their common commitment to democracy. Problems of inter-state conflict are unimportant in her analysis. She notes, however, that public discontent with continuing high levels of crime and violence have led to troublesome trends. Politicians have been too ready to offer quick fixes to deep-seated problems by expanding the criminal code and hardening penalties rather than by emphasizing longer-term approaches, such appropriate training and crime prevention, or by introducing innovations such as community policing. Also, the military forces have re-entered areas of law enforcement, such as joint patrolling with police forces.

Chinchilla also discusses the outlines of a new security agenda for Central America. This new agenda emphasizes human security, democratic security and community policing. Human security, as discussed above, moves away from the protection of states and territories and puts the security of individuals in the broader context of sustainable human development. The approach seeks a more holistic vision of individual security by addressing root causes of crime and violence; it also stresses the interconnections among human rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance. She analyzes as well a regional “Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America,” whose overall goal is to promote civilian and democratic forces in the various countries. Chinchilla also describes a community security project begun in 1998 in most
of Central America, which tries to promote greater civil society involvement in crime prevention and control.

While not necessarily pessimistic, Chinchilla’s account underlines the gravity of the problems of crime and violence in Central America and the importance of the public’s perceptions of insecurity. In this sense, what is seen and felt is more important for behavior than what may be “real.”

Ivelaw Griffith combines careers as a journalist and academic, serving presently as Dean of the College at Florida International University. He frequently consults with national and international organizations on security matters. His discussion of the Caribbean deals with the security issues and institutions facing the region, and suggests areas for further scholarly analysis. In terms of concepts, he "... views national defense as pertaining to the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the national state, largely from threats by foreign state and non state actors; public security as pertaining to the maintenance of internal law and order; and citizen security as relating to the protection of the civil and political rights by people resident within the nation, both citizens and non-residents."

Griffith examines both conventional and nonconventional threats brought to bear by state and non-state actors. External conventional threats are seen especially in territorial disputes, such as that between Venezuela and Guyana. Unlike South and Central America, which experienced a more profound period of harsh authoritarianism and violence in the 1960s and 1970s, in the Caribbean there has been perhaps greater continuity of concerns about nonconventional threats to the mostly small island nations. In this vein, Griffith emphasizes the multidimensionality of the threat landscape, which
includes natural disasters. Very important also is organized crime, especially transnational organized crime, the most threatening form of which is drug trafficking and related activities. But internal subversion by criminal groups is also a significant security threat. At risk are people's freedoms, cherished political economic and social values, democratic politics and political stability, free enterprise, social equality and respect for human rights.

The most important forms that the threats take are seen in the consequences of crime. Specific criminal acts have increased in recent years in both violent crime (e.g., murder, assault, kidnapping, robbery) and nonviolent crime (e.g., fraud, theft, forgery, and money-laundering.). Griffith quotes an official to the effect that: "'Mounting crime and violence have been declared leading national problems, and the issue of law and order has assumed higher priority in national planning and policy-making. . . . Fear of crime is destroying . . . freedom of movement, freedom from harm, and freedom from fear itself.'" Along with crime and violence, the problem of corruption of both state and society has assumed alarming proportions. Griffith mentions, but does not elaborate on, other threats on the Caribbean scene, such as the problems of HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation.

Griffith emphasizes the state responses more than societal ones. He provides a useful discussion of the special importance of police forces in a region in which conventional armies and defense forces are not highly developed. He notes, for example, the development of paramilitary units within police forces that are tasked with confronting nonconventional threats. As to societal responses, he notes the rapid growth of private security forces, citing recent experience in Jamaica. One of Griffith's concerns
is the potential that "use of force" responses to public security threats may undermine democratic values and practices.

Phil Williams has made important contributions to the “frontiers” of security scholarship, with innovative work on international organized crime and cyber terrorism. He provides a useful discussion of security as a concept (one that helped inform the chart that grew out of our conversations) as well as a wide-ranging interpretation of U.S. conceptions of security as these evolved during the Cold War and the decade or so following. He also provides a timely analysis of the immediate effects of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the re-thinking of security. His basic argument is that the U.S. security paradigm was fundamentally stable and evolved incrementally in the post-World War II period, thus the “inertia” suggested in his subtitle. During the Cold War a clear distinction was drawn between internal and external threats, with the latter of much greater concern and an emphasis on military responses to a competitor who constituted a global threat. A more subtle thinking appeared in the recognition that joint survival required recognition of “common” or “international” security, and policy oscillated between hard-line and negotiating approaches, sometimes combining them.

The post-Cold War security paradigm was modified to incorporate new security challenges, but there remained many in the policy-making community who were skeptical about a more comprehensive approach to security and who wanted to maintain the focus on military strength and unilateral action. Even with some shift and expansion of security to include new threats (e.g., proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, transnational organized crime) the concept remained fundamentally unaltered. Even so, Williams suggests that important revisions of concepts and approaches took
place during the Clinton administration, which adopted a broader conception of national security. “Unfortunately, it did too little to establish or legitimize this conception either with the U.S. public or in the national security apparatus. The allocation of resources was not congruent with either the new challenges or the new roles and missions that had been identified.” At bottom, domestic economic and political priorities took precedence, and the Cold War paradigm survived with a few additions and accretions.

Williams also gives a useful first analysis of the Bush administration’s security policies both before and immediately following the September 11 attacks. Prior to the attacks, the administration reverted to a narrower conception of security than that of his predecessor. At the same time, however, the Bush team was showing signs of taking a more critical look at Pentagon thinking and practices. Congressional testimony and the Quadrennial Defense Review gave unprecedented attention to homeland defense from threats defined largely in traditional military terms. In the aftermath of September 11, the administration drastically revised its conception of security to stress the comprehensiveness of the terrorist threat, which can originate from abroad or at home, from state-based or stateless actors. Williams provides a sketch of legal, bureaucratic and policy responses to the new threat perception and concludes with speculations about the security challenges to the United States in the 21st Century.

Implications for a South-North Dialog

Discussions of new conceptions of security are ongoing in a number of different forums. Mexico has taken the lead in convening discussions under the auspices of the Organization of American States to propose an agenda of negotiations that will lead to the eventual replacement of the Rio Treaty. The recent Extraordinary Summit of the
Americas, convened in Monterrey, Mexico, in January 2004, included security as a priority item. These issues are also dealt with at the agency level on an ongoing basis.

Given the realities of power asymmetries, U.S. priorities on anti-terrorism will have a number of for Latin American security policies and practices. The priorities concern improving the quality of information with respect to the movement of persons and goods, and upgrading the quality of specialized units to carry out preemptive operations when needed. These priorities in turn suggest both technical-bureaucratic and political issues for Latin American policy-makers. In summary form, these include:

Technical-bureaucratic issues:

Upgrade internal intelligence and response capabilities;

Assignments of new combinations of duties to police and military forces;

and,

Design of new mechanisms for national-international coordination.

Political issues:

Debate on the significance of terrorism as a national security issue; (Is this more an imposed U.S. priority than a national interest?);

Debate on who are the terrorists;

Creation of procedural safeguards to monitor security forces; and,

Design of safeguards that can protect national sovereignty.

Given the difficulties of the dual transition agenda, and the weaknesses of law enforcement and judicial agencies with respect to both efficiency and protection of civil and human rights, the anti-terrorism debates will be central to the broader challenges of democratic consolidation.
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