

## LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP: SUSTAINABLE SECURITY IN LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

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### 1) SUMMARY

This report summarises the analysis from a consultation of specialists on Latin America and the Caribbean applying the concept of sustainable security at a regional level. Hosted by Oxford Research Group (ORG) and the Norwegian Peacebuilding Centre (Noref), the recommendations include:

- Addressing political fragmentation in order to provide the capacity to respond effectively to the security challenges of climate change, militarisation and increasingly marginalised populations. A number of regional powers - particularly Brazil - are well placed to provide leadership but it would require a national consensus on a *regional* leadership role at a time when Brazil's focus is on developing a stronger *global* role;
- Initiatives such as the South American Defence Council should be given top priority in foreign and defence policies and their institutionalisation should be adequately funded and supported by all member states;
- New policy options are needed in the short-medium term to combat increasing environmental stresses and resource depletion;
- States across the region need to regain public confidence in relation to their ability to meet the security needs of their populations without resorting to military force. This will need to include steps to de-militarise the police, intelligence agencies and policies to limit the general remit as well as specific missions of the armed forces;
- Over the next 5-10 years, a radical shift towards sustainable approaches to security will be hugely important. If there is no change in thinking, security policies will continue to be based on the assumption that an elite minority can maintain its position, environmental problems can be marginalised, and the lid can be kept on dissent and insecurity.

### 2) INTRODUCTION

Currently Latin America and the Caribbean is a region that finds itself somewhat out of the global spotlight. The region is not at the heart of the financial crisis but instead is, on the whole, a victim of the collapse of the global economy. At the end of the first decade of the 'global war on terror', the region has played a marginal role in the conflict and its flashpoints in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Even in the debates and developments in what has been termed the 'regionalisation' of global politics, Europe and Southeast Asia have absorbed the focus with discussion of Latin America and the Caribbean acting more as an afterthought than a key point of analysis. Yet this is unlikely to remain the case for long. In a region where poverty, militarism and environmental limits are coalescing, Latin America and the Caribbean is becoming a testing ground for responding to security challenges that are increasingly global in nature.

The region has seen the rise of new sources of insecurity in the everyday lives of its citizens. Yet these new challenges cannot be addressed without engaging with the significant historical legacies of conflict and underdevelopment. The Cold War played itself out in Latin America in cruel and violent ways. Left-wing insurgencies against ruling elites were suppressed with great violence by military and paramilitary groups often supported directly or indirectly by the United States. Of the large population of émigrés who fled their countries under the repressive rule of military juntas, some congregated in cities in the US such as Los Angeles, where young men in particular were attracted to the inner city gang cultures which have subsequently been brought back to the region, particularly in Central America.

Since the trend towards democratic transition emerged in the region from the late 1980s onwards, social movements have continued to press for more than just a return to elected civilian government; they have sought social and economic rights, security sector reform, and to deepen the quality of democracy. Yet

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democratic reforms are threatened by a potent mix of security threats which are increasingly transnational in nature.

The expansion and evolution of drug trafficking have added a new dimension to the region, generating insecurities of a new and very dangerous kind, which are increasingly transnational. Levels of social violence have spiralled in the region and Central and South America is today second and third to South Africa in terms of numbers of homicides in the world. In a number of countries in the region, the state is known to ally with armed non-state actors, to 'suppress' the threats, but in the process concedes power to militias and paramilitary groups and, even when states are relatively strong, abusive police and other state security actors continue to threaten human security. Hard line approaches to security attracts popular political support as people desperately look for a solution to daily fears for their lives and that of their families.

Environmental stresses and levels of marginalisation add to this sense of pervasive insecurity. For example, the region is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In the absence of a culture of equity and social protection, climate change will exacerbate the persistent conflicts over access to resources in Latin America and the Caribbean. Such conflicts already blight the region and have done so for many decades and similar conditions can be observed in other regions including sub-Saharan Africa and many parts of Asia. Low level conflicts over access to water are frequent in many rural areas of Latin America; they do not make the headlines but can erupt into violence. These are often conflicts between the poor, and reflect the neglect of peasant agriculture as well as historic processes which forced indigenous populations onto marginal lands.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region of high levels of poverty and is considered to have some of the highest levels of socio-economic inequality in the world. A major factor in ongoing poverty is inequality, and inequality in multiple domains: vertical in terms of income groups, and horizontal in terms of social divisions around gender, ethnicity and race.

To address these issues, security experts, academics, journalists and civil society leaders from across Latin America and the Caribbean were brought together by ORG and Noref in January 2010. The meeting explored the implications of a 'sustainable security' framework for the region (see Appendix I for a list of participants). All the participants attended in a personal capacity and this report does not necessarily represent a consensus view or the view of any individual participant, organisation or government. The consultation was the fourth in a series of regional meetings held as part of ORG's *Moving towards Sustainable Security* programme.

As each of the regional consultations take place, a set of coherent proposals have emerged that are fed directly into the policy-making processes in Europe and the United States, as well as inform the development of regional security policies that can be promoted by partner organisations around the world.

### 3) SUSTAINABLE SECURITY

As in much of the world, the current security discourse in Latin America and the Caribbean is dominated by what might be called the 'control paradigm': an approach based on the false premise that insecurity can be controlled through military force or balance of power politics and containment, thus maintaining the status quo. The most obvious global example of this approach has been the so-called 'war on terror', which essentially aimed to 'keep the lid' on terrorism and insecurity, without addressing the root causes.

There is a growing consensus amongst many analysts and grass roots organisations that approaches to national, regional and international security are deeply flawed, and are distracting the world's politicians from developing realistic and sustainable solutions to the non-traditional threats facing the world.

In contrast, this report explores an alternative approach, that of sustainable security. The central premise of sustainable security is that you cannot successfully control all the consequences of insecurity, but must work to resolve the causes. In other words, 'fighting the symptoms' will not work, you must instead 'cure the disease'. Such a framework must be based on an integrated analysis of security threats and a preventative approach to responses.

Sustainable security focuses on the interconnected, long-term drivers of insecurity, including:

- Climate change: Loss of infrastructure, resource scarcity and the mass displacement of peoples, leading to civil unrest, intercommunal violence and international instability.
- Competition over resources: Competition for increasingly scarce resources – including food, water and energy – especially from unstable parts of the world.

- Marginalisation of the majority world: Increasing socio-economic divisions and the political, economic and cultural marginalisation of the vast majority of the world's population.
- Global militarisation: The increased use of military force as a security measure and the further spread of military technologies (including CBRN weapons).

All of these trends are present in the Latin American and Caribbean security dynamic, as demonstrated in the next section of this report. The sustainable security analysis makes a distinction between these trends and other security threats, which might instead be considered symptoms of the underlying causes and tend to be more localised and immediate (for example terrorism or organised crime). It promotes a comprehensive, systemic approach, taking into account the interaction of different trends which are generally analysed in isolation by others. It also places particular attention on how the current behaviour of international actors and western governments is contributing to, rather than reducing, insecurity.

Sustainable security goes beyond analysis of threats to the development of a framework for new security policies. It takes global justice and equity as the key requirements of any sustainable response, together with progress towards reform of the global systems of trade, aid and debt relief; a rapid move away from carbon-based economies; bold, visible and substantial steps towards nuclear disarmament (and the control of biological and chemical weapons); and a shift in defence spending to focus on the non-military elements of security. This takes into account the underlying structural problems in national and international systems and the institutional changes that are needed to develop and implement effective solutions. It also links long-term global drivers to the immediate security pre-occupations of ordinary people at a local level (such as corruption or violent crime).

By aiming to cooperatively resolve the root causes of threats using the most effective means available, sustainable security is inherently preventative in that it addresses the likely causes of conflict and instability well before the ill-effects are felt. In doing so, it incorporates and builds upon many elements of previous important attempts to reframe the way we think about security, including:

- Common security: Security is dependent on cooperation, demilitarisation and mutual trust;
- Comprehensive security: Security must go beyond military defence, and take into account the other social, environmental and economic issues that are vital to national stability;
- Human security: A people-centred, rather than state-centred, view of security is necessary for national, regional and global stability;
- Just security: Security is dependent on international institutions and the rule of law;
- Non-traditional security: Governments must move beyond defining security in terms of relationships among nation states and address newly developing trends and transnational security threats.

#### 4) DRIVERS OF INSECURITY

While there are many immediate security concerns in the region, there are perhaps four principal drivers of insecurity over the medium- to long-term:

- State practices and insecurity
- Militarisation
- Urban-rural divides and socio-economic divisions
- Environmental and energy insecurity

##### a) State practices and insecurity

One of the key features of the modern sovereign state is said to be that it holds a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. In many Latin American and Caribbean states, this theoretical construct is divorced from reality. Increasingly states are colluding with non-state perpetrators of violence which in turn devolves power away from the state. Yet this process is complex given the range of different types of non-state actors involved to varying degrees with different government agencies. For example, autonomous gangs exert significant influence over relatively weak states, as in Jamaica and in other cases there are what are often referred to as 'shadow states' that control parts of state function in countries such as Guatemala. Local authorities are also often involved with non-state actors as in Argentina where in some provinces the links between politicians, the business sector and police constitute powerful knots of violent power that control drugs, prostitution, and other illicit trades. Like many parts of the global south, this is a region where Weberian notions of 'the state' simply don't necessarily translate into political reality. The role

played by states is much more diverse. For example, unification of ethnicities within nation states isn't taking place in ways which would be normally expected.

Most Latin American and Caribbean states have a dualised class structure where 30-40% of the population are participating in 'normal' state-society relations whereas the rest exist as poor and disengaged citizens often concentrated in urban centres. This helps to explain why non-state actors play such a powerful role in security practices. Also, in many ways the policies of the 'minimum state' that were enacted during the 1990s (as a reaction to the previous decades of dictatorial rule) have had lasting effects on the ways in which the state operates in some countries in the region.

Key non-state actors who are playing increasingly important roles in the security realm include drug traffickers, paramilitaries and, to a lesser extent, insurgents. Compared to other drivers of insecurity in the region, drug trafficking is a qualitatively different threat due to the amount of money that it generates for the actors involved. This empowers non-state actors in a way that is largely unprecedented and provides immense challenges for policy makers. As the main weapon of drug trafficking is money, attempting to solve the problem with the armed forces of the state is unlikely to succeed. The capacity of criminal actors to use the forces of globalization as well as ongoing democratisation to prosper and expand has important effects on long-term security and in ways that are felt both politically and socially.

It is important to consider which actors are providing central and guiding roles on key development and security issues (where do, for example, indigenous groups turn to for the provision of food security or environmental security – the government, the military, insurgent groups?). In the absence of effective state institutions, one solution is to look for alternative actors to meet these security needs, particularly if the current actors are perceived to be increasing levels of insecurity. This can lead to the dangerous situation where to some extent criminal groups or paramilitaries are filling these government voids. Not only this, but it also assures the maintenance of the existing social status quo (e.g. high levels of inequality) and low intensity democracy. While this trend is not as advanced as in other regions (eg. Groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas in the Middle East), there are worrying signs of this process in the favelas in Brazil and in the gang-controlled areas of Jamaica (however it should be noted that the trend has reversed in Colombia where FARC is no longer filling government voids in certain areas as it once was).

Yet state weakness in a given area doesn't necessarily result in state fragility overall. What is clear though is that institutional weakness and ineffectiveness has direct effects on the democratisation process which in turn affects how states across the region are responding to security threats. State construction is a process of continuous negotiation between the state and a number of actors such as, and particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, the military. The quality of democracy affects the way the state negotiates the fundamental roles played by the military.

State regulation of the private sector is key to addressing many of the region's most pressing issues of energy, food, and climate security. The rule of law and, in particular, the granting of impunity is an important problem for a number of Latin American and Caribbean states (such as the "Ley de Caducidad" law in Uruguay). The issue of legal impunity needs to be thought of both in terms of a problem of state weakness (criminals having impunity) but also of state strength (past state and military leaders having impunity from prosecution for former human rights abuses or criminal activity).

While strengthening the state is important in many areas, the region is increasingly facing threats that transcend the boundaries of the state. The role of technology is important as it has linked people who are increasingly identifying less with their own state than other social movements and groups. This points to the importance of cooperative relationships between the state and civil society groups. Despite democratic reforms, widespread violence in the region against some sections of civil society (targeted harassment and intimidation etc.) still affects civil society participation in public life. In some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean there is still an entrenched division between civil society and state functions and a lack of durable state- civil society connections. Government structures can also be an impediment here. Even if there is progress here in terms of governments increasing their links with civil society groups, it is often blocked in policy terms in national parliaments and congresses. Recently, at the insistence of Venezuela (with support from Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Peru), the phrase "in accordance with the domestic legislation of the member states" was added to the draft resolution on increasing and strengthening civil society participation in the activities of the Organization of American States (OAS) and in the Summit of the Americas Process. This move was widely criticised by groups such as the Open Society Institute and Transparency International as being aimed at restricting the involvement of civil society groups (particularly indigenous groups) from criticising their national governments in multilateral fora.

## b) Militarisation

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have a long history of very deep military involvement in political and social life. Given the history of military regimes in the region, today the military usually tries to avoid being publicly associated with domestic security issues. Yet, civil-military relations are still an important factor for many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with the military increasingly gaining ground over their civilian counterparts. Particularly in Central America and Mexico, governments have explicitly asked the military to assist police and civilian forces who are often viewed as being incompetent and ineffective. This is also evident in countries such as Colombia where the police are subordinated to the military in terms of status which only exacerbates this trend.

The military also has a near-total monopoly on intelligence gathering across the region. Brazil has attempted to reform its intelligence service with this in mind but there are lingering concerns about whether the technical side of intelligence gathering and analysis is still dominated by military forces. The precedent set by Guatemala has added to this scepticism where the experiment in making intelligence civilian run failed and the military took over again. Where there is an external dependence for intelligence, such as in Argentina, Peru, and Colombia, the reliance is totally on the United States (particularly in relation to drug trafficking and organised crime) which limits the degree of independence for states in their security policies. The Colombian-US intelligence sharing relationship is particularly problematic in this regard.

One of the global impacts of the 9-11 attacks on the United States and the subsequent decade-long 'war on terror' has been a reversion to militarised approaches to security problems in all regions and Latin America and the Caribbean has not been immune from this trend. Military budgets and capacities as well as the production of arms and access to arms markets have all increased. Chile, Colombia and Venezuela have all increased their military spending and Brazil's military budget has reached an all-time high. Land-locked Bolivia has even invested over \$10 million in its navy academy. This is all taking place against the backdrop of debates around whether we are seeing new security dilemmas arising in the region. The military in the South of Latin America are particularly concerned with defending natural resources such as gas and water from the North (particularly the increasingly energy-hungry Brazil). These states are increasingly modernising and reequipping previously neglected elements of their armed forces. The notion of 'external enemies' in the North is often used by southern states for domestic political purposes.

State-led militarisation is also spilling into the private sphere where the problematic state and non-state actor relationships discussed above can also be observed in the military sphere. The use of private security organisations is increasing across Latin America and the Caribbean (a trend not unique to the region) which in effect is creating well-armed mercenary forces employed to protect business and other interests from criminal gangs and insurgents.

Widespread availability of weapons is a key problem across the region. Both state and non-state actors and the general population more broadly are becoming increasingly well armed. This leads to excessive and armed force being used by the police and military as it responds to social unrest, gang warfare and organised crime making it a cyclical driver of insecurity.

Security crises in the region, such as civil conflict or an increase in organised crime, often result in emergency measures being enacted. Such measures tend to emphasise short-term military responses ('troops on the ground'). Yet in contrast, the underlying drivers of insecurity actually require long-term and holistic strategies and not short-term emergency measures to be effective.

## c) Urban-rural divides and socio-economic divisions

The urban-rural divide is a major structural factor in insecurity. Whilst Latin America and the Caribbean is around 75% urbanised, nearly every extended family has some members still living in rural areas. Territory has become central to this divide where those who depend on arable land for their livelihoods are in a particularly vulnerable position vis-à-vis the powerful interests of states and corporations (eg. use of land for biofuels, mining etc.). This generates patterns that have a strong influence on minorities (women, indigenous and ethnic communities etc.) and will exacerbate the effects of other problems such as those posed by climate change, particularly affecting the rural poor.

At the same time, as processes of rural-urban migration increase and the numbers of urban poor grow, overcrowded 'slum' areas of megacities such as Mexico City and São Paulo continue to foster conditions conducive to daily violence for many. In a paper written for the World Bank in 2008, Judy L. Baker has noted that in urban areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, the poor are the most likely to both be seriously affected by violent crime and yet also be held responsible for such acts. This points to the cyclical nature of economic and societal divisions as driving insecurity. Militarised responses to urban crime and



violence, such as the Brazilian government's use of helicopter gunships in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, fuel the increasingly well-armed gangs and drug syndicates in their quest to obtain ever more high-tech weapons.

What has emerged as being particularly important as a driver of insecurity are the links between the urban-rural divide, class structures and economic globalization. For example there is a strong linkage between the ways that globalization has facilitated the scaling-up of the drug trade which in turn impacts on rural and urban populations but in very different ways. Drug trafficking not only helps rural people survive but also subverts democratic reform of the institutions of government and the police in the cities.

The logic of capital accumulation in the region links to these security problems; on the one hand are the mafias and drug cartels and the other the elite classes. Yet there are increasing linkages between the two. This link can be seen in Colombia where, despite the fact that many paramilitary groups are heavily involved in drug trafficking, in this instance powerful paramilitary groups have cleared areas of both drug traffickers and coca growers which then allows large corporations to use the land. In Guatemala, drug trafficking has become a dominant (illegal) model of capital accumulation but the main legal alternative for capital accumulation is mining which often adds to the insecurity of rural and indigenous communities and intensifies environmental stresses. Mexico presents perhaps the most serious case where criminal actors are now heavily dominating the domestic economy and the combination of poverty, corruption and a reliance on violent responses from both the Mexican and US governments are ensuring that a sustainable solution is a distant prospect in the short-term.

#### d) Environmental and energy insecurity

Far from being a distant future threat, environmental insecurity is already a key characteristic of the security environment in Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, in the Andean region of Peru extremely cold weather is coming much earlier which is eroding livelihoods based on alpaca farming. The local indigenous communities are increasingly facing challenges to their very survival due to these climatic changes. At first the animals for which they rely on for livelihoods were dying in increasing numbers but now recent reports have shown that rates of child mortality are rapidly rising in areas such as the Huancavelica region.

In the Santa Rose region of Guatemala, coffee growers are already struggling to maintain production in the face of drought, which climate scientists attribute to global temperature rises. In other regions of Guatemala, farming is being affected by torrential rain and other extreme weather conditions. Similarly in the low-lying land areas of Nicaragua where coffee production is critical to many rural communities, it is expected that large areas will soon become unsuitable for crops as temperatures rise.

These environmental constraints add to the already large list of security challenges faced by poor indigenous and rural communities discussed above. There are increasing tensions in Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Brazil, Mexico and other countries between local and international investors and the indigenous communities over land and resources. In the case of Peru, the communities that are already facing the effects of climate change are also still dealing with the aftermath of civil unrest, such as the displacement that resulted from the conflict between state forces and the Shining Path movement in Peru (who's related Maoist revolutionary groups in the Andes region were never completely eliminated). The displacement of peoples is highly likely to be exacerbated by a warming climate.

Water management and land management are becoming new points of tension between states and non-state actors as well as between rural and ethnic communities across the region. These environmental pressures are also exacerbating other trends highlighted above such as the role of the state in responding to human security challenges. For example, in Guatemala, there are already problems with non-state actors stepping in to fill the void left by the state when it doesn't respond effectively raising serious accountability issues.

Resource pressures have also sparked intense political debates in countries such as Ecuador where President Correa and his natural allies on the left have been divided about how far to go in terms of exploiting natural resources for domestic economic development. The president's recent plans to protect the Yasuní national park from oil exploration but only in return for development assistance from the rich industrialised countries have highlighted the way in which resource politics has become a lynchpin in the balance between poverty reduction on the one hand and environmental protection on the other. Given that the region as a whole has about 10% of the world's known oil reserves, at least in the short-term energy-hungry giants such as China are likely to increase their presence adding extra external pressure to the resolution of these issues, as will growing concerns over the role of foreign-owned companies. Competition over new resources is a high likelihood in the context of increasing climate change. For example, lithium is

an important resource in the manufacture of energy-efficient ion batteries used in powering hybrid cars. Around 80% of the world's known lithium reserves are found in Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile with Bolivia holding around half of these. It is telling that Bolivia is already gaining the potentially dubious honour of being labelled 'the Saudi Arabia of lithium.'

## 5) BLOCKAGES TO CHANGE

Many of the drivers outlined above can be addressed and mechanisms put in place to resolve the long-term causes of insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, there are three major, though not insurmountable, blockages to achieving such a change:

- Conceptions of security
- Historical legacies and economic models
- Regional institutions and identity

### a) Conceptions of security

What became known as the 'Doctrine of National Security' (DSN) that kept military regimes strongly entrenched throughout the region, usually with the very active support of the United States, has lost the support it once had. But serious questions remain about defining what security is, what threatens it and how it should be attained.

While the concept of human security, where individuals become the referent point of security rather than nations or states, has often been used to analyse the profoundly insecure existence of the poor and disposed populations of the region, there are risks associated with 'securitising' issues of development and sustainability. For many governments in the region, and in much of the public discourse and analysis, securitisation has become linked to the idea of effectiveness of results. Yet securitising an issue severely risks turning back processes of demilitarisation of the public sphere. This is particularly so when the policy agenda is dominated by the idea that the only effective means to address major structural questions like land use problems or social inequalities are military ones.

The securitisation process often occurs as it focuses attention and resources on an issue (the media often plays a strong role in this). Yet this can lead to unintended consequences. For example, in Mexico the media highlights the number of deaths every day associated with drugs and the population then support the government's militarised approach to drug trafficking. But the media often exaggerates the levels of violence as it helps sell newspapers which means that serious questions surround how informed the public is about both the scale of the threat as well as the genuine effectiveness of the government's response.

In general it is not securitisation per se that is the problem but the tendency to respond to issues designated as security concerns solely through military means. It is the step from securitisation to militarisation that acts as a blockage to change.

Different ways of framing security such as that of Colombian President Uribe's 'democratic security' work in effect to empower some actors at the expense of others. In particular, such policies and doctrines, whilst aimed at empowering the state to protect its citizens, entrench the asymmetrical power relations of the elite and the poor and marginalised populations. What is needed instead is a conception of security which builds institutional capacity to respond to current security issues and emerging threats discussed above in a non-military or non-coercive way. For example, when climate change is taken seriously as a security threat, there is at present, a dearth of non-violent capacities to respond. Similarly, the response to emergency situations such as earthquakes and floods at present is to look to the military to address the symptoms of the disaster without putting the necessary resources into building sustainable and resilient communities able to better withstand such events.

### b) Historical legacies and economic models

As is clear from the discussion of militarisation above, the legacy of military regimes (from late 1950s to the early 1990s) is crucially important to the responses of Latin American and Caribbean governments to security challenges today. Whilst there is a tendency towards de-militarisation across many states in the region, the instruments of military domination often persist. Often military representatives are the only representatives of the state in rural areas (eg. military dentists, military nurses etc.). This explains the enduring links between the military and civilian populations in countries such as Guatemala and Peru.

Exclusive land use models are also an historical legacy with dramatic effects on human security in the region. This has produced a fundamentally path-dependent legacy where the options available to communities and villages are heavily constrained by past policies. Whilst there are some differences from

country to country, land use exists as a generic problem across the region where the entrenched power of the land owning classes acts as a very important driver of social unrest and violence. An important legacy of military regimes in countries such as Guatemala is that former military officers today are part of the traditional land owning class. This issue of land ownership and use strongly relates to many other security problems across the region including the marginalization of indigenous populations, gender inequalities and urban-rural divides.

Whilst the embrace of neo-liberal economic models in some countries across the region has lifted levels of overall growth they have also become a key blockage to implementing a sustainable security approach. There is an increasing privatisation of resources and social policies in many countries across the region. Accompanying this process is a decreasing sense of the value of public goods. As environment, energy and resource governance issues increase in importance, particularly for rural and indigenous communities, this trend blocks the resolution of the simmering tensions over land use, energy security and adaptation to a rapidly changing climate.

Despite new developments such as democratisation and accelerated globalization, there are strong continuities in many of the problems with poverty and marginalisation over time in Latin America and the Caribbean (in fact some new developments such as globalization have intensified the effect of these continuities). Structures of poverty are absolutely central to the marginalisation of enormous sections of the population even if there are new forms of expression of these long-term problems. The region has the most unequal distribution of income in the world. Only extreme poverty, not more widespread poverty tends to be addressed. The informal economy (largely made up of what is technically illegal business) is a large supplier of jobs. The state is often happy to encourage this yet this informalisation process creates informal solutions which destroys civil society groups, particularly trade unions.

### c) Regional institutions and identity

Unlike the Middle East, North Africa, and South and Southeast Asia, the region has, to a large degree, remained outside of the post 9-11 politics of the 'war on terror.' Therefore, despite significant developments such as the 2001 Argentinean economic crisis, as a geopolitical region, Latin America and the Caribbean quickly dropped in strategic importance for the West from the beginning of this century.

Distinguishing between the sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean is very important. Public life and the way societies react to global developments like the financial crisis or climate change are different in particular areas. For example some governments and societies are reacting to environmental stresses by include a stronger sense of a distinctive indigenous response than others. Due to political and ideological differences, the sub-regions are becoming more separate. The Central America – South America divide is becoming more prominent and this can affect security issues particularly in terms of the level of coordinated response to transnational threats. These divides are one of the main blockages to addressing the increasing militarism in the region.

Added to this are the external influences of great powers ready and willing to supply major arms contracts with, for example Russia backing Venezuela and Bolivia and the United States supporting Colombia (while maintaining military and intelligence links with many other states in the region). This leads to a politically fragmented region where the classic 'spiral model' and 'security dilemma' come to characterise the militarised responses to regional tensions. This in turn leads to high levels of mistrust which obstructs coordinated regional responses to the drivers of insecurity discussed above.

Regional stability is also being undermined by the political isolation of certain states. Colombia is becoming isolated due to its close relations with the US and the structural isolation of Cuba and self-imposed isolation of Venezuela (and in a lesser degree the two other ALBA countries Ecuador and Bolivia) add to the sense of regional fragmentation.

Whilst Brazil has emerged in recent years as a potential regional leader, this role is constrained by a lack of domestic support with calls from some quarters to adopt a greater *global* leadership role (particularly as part of the so called 'BRIC' countries) and to devote fewer resources to *regional* leadership. While there is a much expanded Brazilian economic presence in the region, the political presence is much lower with Brazilian elites failing to put sufficient political and economic resources into such a role. After initial enthusiasm, the US now appears to be less inclined to support Brazil as it begins to construct a strong leadership role, particularly as this role becomes more independent of US influence.

This fragmented identity and lack of clear leadership is reflected in Latin America and the Caribbean's regional institutions. A number of different organisations including Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the OAS sit alongside the three main camps of NAFTA, Mercosur and ALBA all of which, to



some degree, compete for control over the direction of regional approaches. The OAS appears to have lost a lot of ground (particularly after the political crisis in Honduras in 2009) but there is no obvious successor to fill the void. The main four states with defence policies that have a large regional impact, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil and Chile (mainly in relation to its two northern neighbours), remain too politically divided to work effectively in concert even through a regional organisation.

It is a time of transition for the region, for the first time in decades the US is not constantly looked to as a leader. Brazil (and to a much lesser extent other regional powers such as Argentina and Mexico) are very slowly growing into regional leadership roles but lack the institutional mechanisms for progressing this beyond ad-hoc responses to individual crises. More often than not, regional actions are driven more out of a desire to keep external powers out of security-related roles (such as peacekeeping) due to sensitivities around colonial legacies rather than out of a sense of regional coherence and strategy. Sustained regional leadership and effective institutional mechanisms are required to address the long-term drivers of insecurity discussed above.

## 6) RECOMMENDATIONS

The blockages to change identified above must be urgently addressed in order to allow for the development of mechanisms that will ensure the drivers outlined in section three do not remain as sources of insecurity and conflict over the medium- to long-term. Specific initiatives in four key areas include:

- 1) **Regional coherence and leadership:** Political fragmentation must be urgently addressed in the region in order to build a truly sustainable approach to security across the entire region. A more coherent sense of regional identity will help in this (regardless of what combination of factors – history, language, geography – are used to build this), as will the strengthening of regional institutions, particularly the OAS. These institutions must be equipped with the human knowledge and capacity to respond to the security challenges of climate change, militarisation and increasingly marginalised populations. A number of powers but particularly Brazil are well placed to provide leadership on this front but this will require a clear case to be made to the Brazilian domestic population for the importance of *regional* leadership at a time when Brazil is also taking on a more important *global* role. It will also require bold moves on the part of Brazilian foreign policy elites to at times eschew the traditional pursuit of a narrowly defined ‘national interest’ in favour of a more expansive view of regional peace and stability (which will in turn make Brazil more secure). Initiatives such as the South American Defence Council, which are working on confidence building measures, should be given top priority in foreign and defence policies and their institutionalisation should be adequately funded and supported by all member states.
- 2) **Sustainable development:** Policies need to be formulated at both the regional and national levels that address the structural barriers to sustainable development (including exclusive land use models). These must include policies that go beyond only addressing the most extreme forms of poverty. Current efforts to eradicate coca and poppy crops in order to control the drug trade must be development-sensitive and at a minimum be matched by alternative livelihood schemes. New initiatives are also needed in the short-medium term to combat increasing environmental stresses and resource depletion. Public-private partnerships to scale-up renewable energy projects, such as the wind power scheme in the La Ventosa area of the Sierra Madre Mountains in southern Mexico, should be replicated and fostered throughout the region. Energy policies need to be designed in ways that minimise the avenues for competition and conflict between regional players as well as external powers.
- 3) **Regaining public confidence in non-military solutions:** States across the region need to regain public confidence in relation to their ability to meet the security needs of their populations without resorting to military force. This will need to include concrete steps to de-militarise the police, intelligence agencies and other key civilian services such as designing concrete policies to limit the general remit as well as specific missions of the armed forces. Lessons can be drawn here from Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and to some extent in Argentina which have recently developed the relationships between the civil and military sectors in interesting and positive ways. In particular, the police should be reformed in the context of anti-corruption measures and training in human rights with accompanying action to improving their salaries and benefits. The reform process will also need to include building strong but mutually beneficial relationships between states and civil society groups. There are good examples of hybrid initiatives that can be emulated such as in Brazil where, despite the often overly militarised responses of government agencies in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, new schemes where civil society groups, government and police forces are all working together on the issue of gang violence and disarmament can be effective. The Bolivian example of nation building efforts being closely connected

to civil society should also be emulated in other countries. Such action must be aimed at building the civilian expertise necessary for much greater oversight and control over the security and intelligence sector. Increasing both the funding available for independent think tanks and NGOs as well as the levels of interaction with such groups and the defence and intelligence arms of government will go some way towards achieving this goal. A concerted effort to educate journalists on the nature of new security challenges and the need for non-militarised approaches is also very important.

- 4) Re-envisioning security:** In order to equip states, regional organisations and civil society actors with the skills necessary to move towards a sustainable security framework, a new approach to the notion of security is required. The idea of multi-dimensional security as articulated in the 2003 OAS declaration is an important building block which needs to be institutionalised and operationalised at both the regional and national levels. A deeper engagement between policy makers on the one hand and academics and civil society groups working on alternative security paradigms (both in the region and around the world) on the other, will go some way towards moving from rhetoric to concrete policy change in the defence and security realm.

Over the next 5-10 years, a radical shift towards sustainable approaches to security will be hugely important. If there is no change in thinking, security policies will continue to be based on the mistaken assumption that the status quo can be maintained: an elite minority can maintain its position, environmental problems can be marginalised, and the lid can be kept on dissent and insecurity. Alternatively, a change in thinking could lead to an era of substantial progress in developing a more socially just and environmentally sustainable regional order for Latin America and the Caribbean.

## APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The following experts participated in the ORG-Noref Regional Sustainable Security Consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean, held London on 15 January 2010. All the participants attended in a personal capacity and this report does not necessarily represent a consensus view or the view of any individual participant, organisation or government.

**Alexandra Abello Colak**, member of the International Centre for Participation Studies and PhD candidate at the University of Bradford who works on the links between security and participation, the transformation of global and local paradigms of security and the provision of security in communities affected by inequality and violence.

**Constantino Casasbuenas Morales**, policy adviser on agriculture, trade and climate change at Oxfam Great Britain where he works on campaigns and advocacy work around basic rights of smallholders (mainly women) dedicated to agriculture and food in the relations they have with climate change adaptation and mitigation policies.

**Jorge Chabat**, Professor in the Department of International Studies at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE), Mexico City where he works on issues such as Mexican foreign policy, U.S.-Mexican relations and drug trafficking.

**Marcela Donadio**, Executive Secretary of RESDAL (Latin American Security and Defence Network). Previously she was the coordinator for a UNDP project on the security budget in Argentina and advisor to the Argentinean Ministry of Defence.

**Shiloh Fetzek**, Head of the Climate Change & Security Programme at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). She has worked in the US, Central and Latin America on issues such as the security implications of climate-related population movements, health effects of depleted uranium munitions, and indigenous self-governance in Latin America.

**Amélie Gauthier**, independent Latin America consultant. She has previously worked as a researcher in the peace, security and human rights section at FRIDE and as a political analyst for the Canadian Embassy in Madrid.

**Monica Hirst**, Professor of International Affairs at the Torcuato Di Tella University, Buenos Aires. Previously she worked at the Argentine Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and FLACSO Argentina. She also has been a Visiting Professor at Stanford University, the University of São Paulo, and Harvard University. She is also a co-organizer of a fellowship program for Research on Intermediate Powers run by the Institute for Research of Rio de Janeiro.

**Dirk Kruijt**, Honorary Professor of Development Studies at Utrecht University. He is a past president of the Netherlands Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies and has been a research fellow at Fundação Getulio Vargas (Rio de Janeiro), the Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro, the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (Lima) and El Colegio de México.

**Sabine Kurtenbach**, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Latin American Studies at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg where she works on the causes of war and violence, peace processes and the dynamics of post-war societies, particularly in Latin America.

**Jean-Paul Marthoz**, Professor of international journalism at the University of Louvain (UCL) and Vesalius College (Free Brussels University). He is also a columnist at *le Soir*; editorial director of *Enjeux internationaux*; advisor of the Committee to Protect Journalists (New York); and a member of the advisory committee of Human Rights Watch. He has worked as a journalist in Central America, Chile, Colombia and Mexico.

**Jenny Pearce**, Professor of Latin American Politics and Director of the International Centre for Participation Studies in the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford where she works on issues of violence, conflict, social change and social agency in Latin America.

**Paul Rogers**, Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, and Global Security Consultant to Oxford Research Group. He is also a regular commentator on global security issues in both the national and international media, and is *openDemocracy's* International Security Editor.

**Diego Sánchez-Ancochea**, University Lecturer in the Political Economy of Latin America and a Fellow at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. Previously he worked at the Institute for the Study of the Americas (University of London). He is also Associate Fellow of the Inter-University Institute of Latin America at the

University of Salamanca, co-chair of the Economics and Politics section at the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) and has been a consultant for UNDP and the ILO.

**Camilla Waszink**, Senior Advisor at Norwegian Peacebuilding Centre (Noref). She has previously been a policy adviser in the Arms Unit of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva and the Small Arms Survey in Geneva.

#### **FACILITATORS**

**John Sloboda**, Consultant and Director of Oxford Research Group's Recording Casualties in Armed Conflict programme.

**Mariano Aguirre**, Director of the Norwegian Peacebuilding Centre (Noref) in Oslo.

#### **RAPPORTEURS**

**Ben Zala**, Manager of the Sustainable Security Programme at Oxford Research Group.

**Rosemary Forest**, intern at Oxford Research Group.

**Samuel Plumbly**, intern at Oxford Research Group.