

# Documento de Trabajo

## Working Paper

**Armed Forces Participation in Populist Nationalist  
Projects in Latin America**

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# Armed Forces Participation in Populist Nationalist Projects in Latin America

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## Summary

Given the existence of a common problem that to differing degrees affects the entire region, it is worth considering whether the changes being introduced by the current populist nationalist governments include measures that will ensure civilian control of the armed forces in the sphere of defence.

## Introduction

In Latin America, it is a fact that military power is subordinate to civilian power and the possibility of a military *coup d'état* is unthinkable. However, this does not mean that the process of democratization is complete. The main reason is that despite the significant headway that has been made, government authority is not strong enough to eliminate the independence of the military. To different degrees and with significant differences from country to country, the military has maintained areas of autonomy and political and social influence. In this regard, the missions assigned to the armed forces have been one of the decisive factors either encouraging or restricting these areas of power.

The role of the Armed Forces is a key factor both in the configuration of the basic defence structure and in the determination of defence policy. In a democratic society, the general lines of defence policy must focus on neutralising and, if necessary, fighting foreign threats. Exceptionally, and depending on the circumstances, the armed forces can help resolve internal emergencies, lending their capacities to political authorities in catastrophes and crisis situations. Missions aimed at defending national sovereignty are therefore considered appropriately military. However, at present, to a greater or lesser extent Latin American governments are assigning internal security missions to their armed forces, since they are overwhelmed by their own lack of strength and resources to combat new threats to civil insecurity, drug trafficking and terrorism. In these cases, the problem is not only that the armed forces are taking on roles for which they were not designed, but also, there is the risk that the military will end up managing and controlling areas of power that correspond to the civilian sphere. All this could lead to a consolidation or increase in military autonomy, something that is incompatible with civilian control and with the democratisation of defence.

Given the existence of a common problem that to differing degrees affects the entire region, it is worth considering whether the changes being introduced by the current populist nationalist governments include measures that will ensure civilian control of the armed forces in the sphere of defence. The measures taken and the projects for change proposed by the Presidents of Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador –Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Daniel Ortega and Rafael Correa, respectively– are justified by the intention to carry out a ‘democratic revolution’, to use the term most often used by these leaders. In this particular case, by analysing the defence policies and, in particular, the missions assigned to the armed forces, the aim of this paper is to determine whether this ‘revolution’ signifies true transformation and whether the proposals made are an option which will tend to eliminate military autonomy or, on the contrary, will strengthen it. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the democratic model proposed by these leaders.

Although there are more factors that must be considered, the missions assigned to the armed forces will be used as a reference point to determine whether or not these governments are implementing policies aimed at encouraging civilian control. The purpose of analysing these measures is to investigate the criteria used in these ‘democratic revolutions’ to establish civilian-military relations and the priority given to civilian control.

### **The Options Facing the So-called ‘Democratic Revolution’**

Many Latin American security and defence specialists agree that further reforms are necessary in the sector in order for civilian control to be achieved.<sup>1</sup> They believe that, to date, these reforms have lacked planning, with no political or institutional criteria to guide them. In general, we see that this effort to modernise has been insufficient and the direct result is that the armed forces have the autonomy to develop their own institutional and budgetary policies, and even to develop their own missions.<sup>2</sup>

Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela and Nicaragua –countries now led by populist governments– face major challenges to reform their defence structure. Despite the differences between them, none of these countries has managed to complete a democratisation process in this respect. Even when their situation is compared to other subregions such as the Southern Cone, they have further to go. In these countries, the armed forces have traditionally held onto their own spheres of power. In Bolivia and Ecuador, even after the arrival of democracy, they have continued to play a major role as arbiters of national policy.<sup>3</sup> In Ecuador, the backing provided by the big business group run by the armed forces has served only to strengthen this role. In Nicaragua, despite the end of the Sandinista regime, its military leaders have remained in the highest ranks and have retained prerogatives that have given them power and influence.<sup>4</sup> As for Venezuela, even before Hugo Chávez became President, and despite the advantage of not having been subjected to a military regime before, the country faced major challenges in achieving civilian supremacy.<sup>5</sup>

While the region’s diversity in terms of structure and specific situations cannot be over-emphasised, certain common problems can be observed, albeit to differing degrees and intensities. One of these is the unfinished process of democratisation. This also has a bearing on the area of defence, since the transformation of defence is intrinsically linked to the general democratisation process in each Latin American society and a large part of the citizen body now questions the results of the process. The democratisation of defence cannot move forward without a general democratisation process in the legal, institutional, political and social spheres. The flaws in this process have a direct impact on the inability of Latin American governments to fully implement civilian control.

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<sup>1</sup> Claudia Fuentes & Claudio Fuentes (Coords.), *Gobernabilidad del sector seguridad en América Latina*, FLACSO, 2006, p. 33 and ff. This is a report prepared by FLACSO at the request of the UN Department of Political Affairs and the UNDP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. A large part of the conclusions of the report were obtained through a survey carried out with 13 experts from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Peru.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33 and ff. Among the experts from the countries mentioned, only those from Argentina and El Salvador answered negatively to the question: ‘Do you believe that the armed forces in your countries have enough independence to impose their doctrine?’.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the presence of the armed forces in Ecuadorean and Bolivian politics and society, see Berta García Gallegos, ‘Ecuador: democratización y FFAA; el contexto histórico, social y político en una relación ambivalente’, p. 185-221, and Sonia Alda Mejías, ‘El reto de alcanzar la supremacía civil en Bolivia’, p. 27-50, in Isidro Sepúlveda & Sonia Alda Mejías (Eds.), *La Administración de la Defensa*, T. II, IUGM, Madrid, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Roberto Cajina, ‘Transición política, democracia y reconversión del sector Defensa’, p. 293-304, in Sepúlveda & Alda, *La Administración de la Defensa*, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Miguel Manrique, ‘Cambio y reestructuración del Ministerio de la Defensa y la FA venezolana a comienzos del siglo XXI’, in Sepúlveda & Alda, *La Administración de la Defensa*, *op. cit.*, p. 405-438.

The current crisis in governability is aggravating this problem. Many governments in the region have made use of their armed forces to repress social mobilisations fuelled by public discontent. The extent of the protests has even led to the fall of several constitutionally elected Presidents.<sup>6</sup> However, in addition to mobilisations and protests, citizens have chosen to support alternative political options whose attractiveness resides in their quick response to popular demands. The main proposal made by Presidents Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Rafael Correa and Daniel Ortega is to bring about a ‘democratic revolution’, which these leaders claim is based on establishing a direct relationship with the people in order to ensure that government decisions respond to popular demand and needs.<sup>7</sup> The global nature of the populist proposal, which aspires to provide a new democratic model, also affects the area of defence. The proposals made by these governments are considered possible solutions to the problems common to the region, particularly in terms of civilian leadership versus military autonomy.

### **Internal Security Missions and Revolutionary (?) Solutions**

Another problem common to the region is the risk of militarisation as a result of assigning internal security missions to the armed forces. Influenced by the concept of Human Security, the Declaration on Security in the Americas, adopted by the Organisation of American States (OAS) in October 2003,<sup>8</sup> proposed a multidimensional concept of security for the hemisphere, thereby broadening the traditional definition of national security. The risk of this approach is encouraging or strengthening the intervention of the armed forces in domestic affairs.

In Latin America, both civilian and military leaders are tempted to manipulate this multidimensional concept of security.<sup>9</sup> Civilian governments, faced with their own inability to attend to popular needs, maintain complete control of national territory and/or enforce the law, have fallen back on the armed forces. The main missions assigned to them have been to repress social protest and to fight drug trafficking and common criminality.<sup>10</sup> For their part, the armed forces have been very receptive to these missions, given their strong desire to uncover ‘new threats’ to justify their role since the end of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> However, as internal security missions become increasingly important, the main result is the risk of *militarising internal security*. Although this is a growing trend, a great variety of situations must be considered. The problems differ and certainly

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<sup>6</sup> This was what happened in Ecuador with the fall of Abdalá Bucaram due to popular pressure in 1997, and to Jamil Mahuad in 2000 and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005. In Peru, widespread protest forced Alberto Fujimori to resign after committing electoral fraud. In Argentina, protests forced Fernando de la Rúa to resign in 2001 and, in Bolivia, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada resigned in 2003, as did Carlos Mesa in 2005, after popular protests paralysed the country.

<sup>7</sup> On the governability crisis and the alternatives to populism, see Sonia Alda Mejías, “‘La revolución democrática’ de los nuevos movimientos sociales y de los populismos de izquierda ante la crisis de gobernabilidad en América Latina”, *Iberoamérica: nuevas coordenadas, nuevas oportunidades, grandes desafíos, Cuadernos de Estrategia*, 136, IIEE-IUGM, 2007, p. 53-88.

<sup>8</sup> ‘OAS Declaration on Security in the Americas’, issued by OAS countries on 28 October, 2003, [http://usinfo.state.gov/esp/Archive\\_Index/Declaracin\\_OEA\\_sobre\\_Seguridad\\_en\\_las\\_Americas.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/esp/Archive_Index/Declaracin_OEA_sobre_Seguridad_en_las_Americas.html). According to this concept of security, the ‘Quito Declaration’ (from the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers of Defence of the Americas, November 2004, <http://www.icj.org/IMG/pdf/MoDdec.pdf>) does not establish lines of division between the responsibilities corresponding to the armed forces and to the security forces.

<sup>9</sup> *Seguridad Internacional Contemporánea: Consecuencias para la Seguridad Humana en América Latina y el Caribe*, International Seminar, FLACSO, Chile, 20-22/VIII/2003, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001406/140625s.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Most Latin American constitutional texts provide for armed forces participation in internal security, either fully or in support of police forces; see: <http://www.iugm.es/ADEFAL/index.htm>, TABLAS section, where armed forces missions in the region can be found. In Central America and Brazil, the armed forces are directly involved in the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime, and in public safety; in Mexico, the military has been fighting drug trafficking for years. In South America this is also the case in Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia. However, in Peru today, the fight against drug trafficking is no longer a military mission, although the military collaborates with the police regularly to ensure domestic order. The Bolivian armed forces also had this mission until recently.

<sup>11</sup> Lilian Bobea, ‘¿Juntos pero no revueltos?: De la militarización policial a la policialización militar. Tendencias e implicaciones’, in *Políticas de Defensa: Desafíos externos y restricciones internas*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2002, p. 30.

have not been dealt with in identical fashion in all the countries, making generalisations impossible. In fact, in some countries attempts have been made to keep the armed forces away from internal security.

In any case, the risk of militarising internal security has a direct impact on civilian-military relations, since militarisation can give the armed forces power and influence that ultimately leads to greater military autonomy. As mentioned, one of the main obstacles to the democratisation of defence in the region is the persistence of military autonomy, in large part due to inability of civilian powers to consolidate their leadership in civilian-military relations. As an alternative to the militarisation of internal security, the new populist governments propose that the armed forces should devote themselves to social development, although this involves the risk of *securitising the national development agenda*. The idea is that the repression of social mobilisations and the fight against drugs, based on the forced eradication of crops, are military missions, while at the same time ensuring that the armed forces are involved in national development work. It is surprising that these missions are considered an essential contribution to the desired process of revolutionary change, since they represent neither a break with the past nor anything new. Quite to the contrary, these missions have a long tradition. They were carried out by the armed forces not only during the Cold War, but also after the transitions to democracy. Although the intensity varies, the constitutions of practically every country in the region continue to consider this work a military mission.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Concept of Defence in Populist Nationalist Projects**

Despite its long tradition, this type of military mission fits coherently with the civilian-military alliance promoted by these governments, since the participation of the armed forces in national development is one of the instruments used to attempt the ‘democratic revolution’, especially in Venezuela and Bolivia. However, beyond the relevance attributed to this civilian-military alliance in achieving this goal, all these governments share the need to bring about a ‘citizen’s revolution’ (*revolución ciudadana*) –the term used by Rafael Correa– to govern in accordance with popular demands and needs. In the face of the ‘partidocracies’ and corrupt democracies that have been dominant to date, it is a question of establishing true ‘citizen power’, as Daniel Ortega also proclaims.

These processes are based on and guided by so-called *refundaciones nacionales* (‘national re-foundations’). Except in Nicaragua, constituent assemblies have been convened to write new constitutions enshrining their main objectives.<sup>13</sup> These include laying the groundwork for a democracy that encourages direct action by citizens and leaders, and a direct relationship between them to ensure that the people’s mandate is carried out. Anti-imperialism, nationalism and anti-capitalism are other positions shared by these leaders, who are convinced of the need to recover the State’s ability to act on the economy and social issues.

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<sup>12</sup> See the ‘Programa de Investigación sobre la Administración de la Defensa en América Latina’ (ADEFAL) of the Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado, <http://www.iugm.es/ADEFAL/index.htm>, TABLAS section, where we see, in a country-by-country analysis, that this mission is remains in place in most Latin American countries.

<sup>13</sup> In Venezuela, the Constitution of 1999 represents this turning point. In Bolivia, the new Constitution has been the source of political tension. A new constitution has been drafted and is pending approval by popular referendum. The text was approved amid violent protests in December 2007, inside an army building and only by representatives of the government party, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). This referendum will take place after the referendum set for 10 August to decide on the recall of the President, Vice-president and Prefects. In Ecuador, elections were held on 30 September 2007 to choose representatives for a Constituent Assembly that is now discussing a new constitutional text. All articles of the constitution must be approved by 25 July 2008. A referendum on the Constitution is scheduled for October of this year. The exception is Nicaragua, where President Ortega has not proposed the need for a new constitution, since to do so would undermine the legitimacy of his own earlier work: the current Constitution was passed in 1987 by the Sandinista regime.

There are also common points in the area of defence, although like in the rest of the areas mentioned, there is no coherent body of doctrine used as a common reference point to build government policies, given the rejection of ideology that characterises these populist governments. But, despite everything, there are enough common social, political and economic principles for these new governments to establish a 'regional popular power block' (BRPP)<sup>14</sup> which, led by Hugo Chávez, sets out to defend and expand its project for a 'Bolivarian revolution' in the region. Hugo Chávez has brought these principles together under the umbrella of '21<sup>st</sup> century socialism' –the term also used by Rafael Correa. Evo Morales, however, has made particular reference to 'community socialism' to define his ideological position. However, despite each leader's attempt to highlight the uniqueness of his own type of socialism, and despite the ideological heterogeneity and vagueness that characterises each one, they all share the principles mentioned above.

One way or another and with different levels of priority, the current governments of these countries have tackled the issue of defence, although Venezuela and Bolivia have done so in greater depth than Ecuador and Nicaragua. Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales have made defence a top priority, both of them emphasising the importance of civilian-military unity, based on collaboration between the people and the armed forces. This is not the case of the governments of Daniel Ortega and Rafael Correa. For the moment, the military issue is not at the top of their governments' agenda. Since they began their election campaigns, there have been no references to defence. President Morales hardly mentioned this issue during his campaign either, nor in his election programme. However, immediately after taking office, he declared the importance of the armed forces and the need for comprehensive reform in the area of defence.<sup>15</sup> This was not the case with Rafael Correa or Daniel Ortega, who left defence as a footnote in their presidential speeches. This does not mean, however, that important changes have not been made. In Ecuador, these include the 'Plan Ecuador' and the proposals made by the Ministry of Defence to be debated soon in the Constituent Assembly. President Correa has now decided to undertake an overhaul of the military intelligence system, though this decision is not based on keeping an election promise, but rather on the current crisis with Colombia. In Nicaragua, the reform of Decree 290, carried out shortly after Ortega became President, has had a direct effect on the Defence Ministry's configuration and powers.

### **Civilian-military Unity**

The importance that Chávez and Morales attribute to defence is explained in large part by the relevance they attribute to the relationship between the people and the armed forces. While the latter have traditionally been considered enemies, these leaders now expressly desire that they become allies.<sup>16</sup> The solidity of this union is supported by a peculiar way of reading history: according to Evo Morales, the armed forces and the indigenous peoples worked together for the 'liberation of our peoples' in the Independence era.<sup>17</sup> According to this version, what is different

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<sup>14</sup> This was how H. Dieterich, ideologue of the Chavez regime, referred to those countries which, in principle, were aligned by their identification with the Left. Originally, this block was made up of Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina, which were all led by 'progressive' governments. When Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua joined, this led to the formation of an international alliance and has served to compensate for the founding members' lack of a 'revolutionary calling'. Regarding this regional power bloc, see Heinz Dieterich, 'Bloque regional de poder (BRP): Única salvación nacional y popular posible en América Latina', II and III, *Rebelión*, March-April 2004, and by the same author: 'Hugo Chávez: salto cualitativo en el Bloque Regional de Poder', *Rebelión*, 4/X/2005.

<sup>15</sup> 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en la posesión del Alto Mando militar y policial', La Paz, 24/I/2006,

<http://www.comunica.gov.bo/index.php?i=enlace&j=documentos/discursos/200601/24.01.06PoseAltoManMil.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Sonia Alda Mejías, 'Los nuevos movimientos sociales: ¿nuevas amenazas o aliados de las FFAA?', *El mundo Iberoamericano ante los actuales retos estratégicos*, Monografías del CESEDEN, Ministerio de Defensa, nr 2007, p. 91-124.

<sup>17</sup> This attempt to rebuild a past that recreates the unity between the armed forces and the indigenous population is not characterised by much historical rigour. First of all, references to the Armed Forces in the Independence era do not make sense, because the institution did not exist. Professional armies were not created until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As for the participation of the indigenous population in this process (which is not at all in doubt), it must be kept in

today is that the current military effort is aimed at recovering the country's natural resources and providing social assistance.<sup>18</sup> The period of enmity and conflict was supposedly due to the oligarchic governments that had manipulated the armed forces in their own interests against the people. This would exonerate the armed forces of any responsibility, since they would have been victims of manipulation by those past governments, as President Morales has declared on several occasions.<sup>19</sup> Now that the ties have been re-established, the social work done by the armed forces would make them key players in the 'revolution' sought and proclaimed by today's governments. However, even if we accept that such unity exists, there are differences between Venezuela and Bolivia in this regard.

In Venezuela, as a result of this relationship, it is understood that the State and society are jointly responsible for defending the nation, as stated in the National Armed Forces Act (*Ley Orgánica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional*). The level of citizen involvement in defence goes as far as direct participation in the case of a hypothetical asymmetric war that the country could face. Due to the military superiority that the Chávez regime attributes to its main enemy, the US, and the existence of a threat of invasion by this great power, Chávez has justified the creation of a defence strategy which considers citizen action a crucial factor in fighting and defeating such a powerful enemy. The Cuban idea of *guerra de todo el pueblo* ('war of the entire people') against the US is an essential part of the Venezuelan strategic framework. Based on the concept of a 'popular war of resistance', the idea, as in Cuba, is that each citizen would be a fighter in a war of attrition in which the attacker would be progressively weakened to the point where the armed forces could deal with it.<sup>20</sup> In the latest constitutional reform put forward by President Chávez, it was proposed that this concept of a people's war be included in the Constitution, thus consecrating civilian-military unity. However, the results of the referendum of December 2007, in which constitutional reform was rejected, have frustrated this possibility. The institutional expression of this concept of war on all fronts, including the common people themselves, is found in the National Reserve and the Territorial Guard.<sup>21</sup> The culmination of civilian-military unity would have been the inclusion of the Reserve in the armed forces, under the name of Bolivarian Popular Militias.<sup>22</sup> However, for the moment this will not happen, since this was one of the proposals of the failed constitutional reform. This new military structure would represent 'the union of the people and the armed forces; the union of the national armed forces with the rest of Venezuelan society'.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the results of the referendum have not discouraged the Venezuelan President, who continues to strengthen and reinforce the Reserve. During the celebration of the sixth anniversary of the 'Day of the Recovery of the Nation's

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mind that not all indigenous communities supported the cause of independence; rather, some remained loyal to the monarchy.

<sup>18</sup> 'Palabras del Presidente de la República Evo Morales, Ayma, en la inauguración del año académico militar en la escuela de sargentos de Cochabamba', 11/II/2008,

<http://abi.bo/index.php?i=enlace&j=documentos/discursos/200802/11.02.08InauAcadeMilitarCocha.html>.

<sup>19</sup> This message is often repeated by the president; one his most recent statements in this regard serves as an example: 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en el CXVII aniversario de la creación del colegio militar', 18/IV/2008,

<http://abi.bo/index.php?i=enlace&j=documentos/discursos/200804/18.04.08AniverColMilitar.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding this strategic concept, see: 'Pensamiento militar venezolano 2005',

<http://www.militarvenezuela2005.blogspot.com>.

<sup>21</sup> 'Reservists are all adult Venezuelans –both men and women– who are not in active military service and who have completed their military service, or who have voluntarily joined the reserve units created for this purpose'. 'The Guardia Territorial are all Venezuelans –both men and women– who voluntarily organise to carry out the respective duties of local resistance. Guardias Territoriales are true psychological operators. They are the means by which to focus and take action towards different targets and audiences: the general population, the troops themselves, and the enemy'. See <http://www.reservanacional.mil.ve>.

<sup>22</sup> President Chávez's proposed reform of article 329 of the Constitution was made in these terms, <http://archivos.minci.gob.ve/doc/reforma280807web.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Statement by government parliamentarian Irán Aguilera regarding the constitutional reform, <http://elnuevodia.com.ve/content/view/22488/41/>.

Dignity' (*Día de la Recuperación de la Dignidad Nacional*, 13/VI/2008),<sup>24</sup> he announced the creation of the 'National Reserve and Mobilisation Command' (*Comando General de la Reserva Nacional y Movilización Nacional*), with its own budget and under the President's direct orders. Seven new battalions were also activated.<sup>25</sup> The counterpart of this reciprocal relationship, on which civilian-military unity is based, is the armed forces' contribution to national development and to the Bolivarian revolutionary project. The level of military involvement in this project, however, has ended up handing the military the power to formulate and, in particular, to implement these social policies.

In Bolivia, the relationship between the people and the armed forces is expressed in the same terms of reciprocity. Though it is less involved and intense, it is becoming increasingly similar to the Venezuelan model.<sup>26</sup> This civilian-military union has been decisive in the formulation of a new defence system and, coherent with this idea of unity, the civilian population has become involved in national defence. It is true that, to date, no citizen militias or reserves have been organized to help militarise society,<sup>27</sup> but the participation of all the country's citizens is considered essential to the design of this 'asymmetric' defence system, also known as the 'struggle of the patriots'. This new defence plan has been designed as part of a 'new perspective on hypothetical conflicts' over natural resources, calling for a 'prolonged struggle by small towns and villages, aided by communities throughout the country'.<sup>28</sup> The involvement of the civilian population and a war of resistance are components common to the Venezuelan 'war of popular resistance' concept and the Cuban 'people's war' strategy. The armed forces, for their part in this reciprocal relationship with the people, will respond 'to the need for change, transformation and social justice that the people need and demand to free themselves from dependence, political and economic neocolonialism, misery, backwardness... and the systematic usurpation of their wealth and natural resources'.<sup>29</sup> Although this scheme directly involves the military in national development, the armed forces do not design or manage social policy as they do in Venezuela, although they are essential for implementing it. In any case, and despite the differences in this area as well, it must be kept in mind that there is a gradual trend towards greater powers and a bigger role for the armed forces in the country's social and economic policy.

In Ecuador, the current government has not given the same importance to defence, nor does it conceive of the relationship between the armed forces and the populace in the terms described above. The priority it has recently given to the armed forces has more to do with the recent crisis

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<sup>24</sup> Commemorating Hugo Chávez's return to power, 72 hours after he was temporarily overthrown by an attempted coup in April 2002.

<sup>25</sup> During this commemoration, Chávez defined the National Reserve as 'popular battalions for resistance... The Reserva Nacional continues to grow; it is simply the people in arms, together with the armed forces on the front lines', <http://www.eltiempo.com.ve/noticias/imprimir.asp?id=146301>.

<sup>26</sup> On Venezuela's influence and relationship with Bolivia on defence issues, see Sonia Alda Mejías, 'La participación de las FFAA en la Revolución democrática del MAS. El proyecto de Evo Morales', in I. Sepúlveda, *Seguridad Humana y nuevas políticas de Defensa en Iberoamérica*, IUGM, Madrid, 2007, p. 468-471.

<sup>27</sup> The *ponchos rojos* ('red ponchos') could be considered a militia. However, they were not created by the government; rather, they were formed earlier and there is no plan to use them to prepare the civilian population for a possible war. However, President Morales convened this militia to defend national unity along with the armed forces when faced with the aspirations for autonomy expressed by the rich provinces of eastern Bolivia. Publicly, Morales even compared their mission with that of the regular Bolivian army. Criticism of these statements forced the President to disarm them and exchange their weapons for food. Their leaders say they have 100,000 armed men, but their weapons are very old and inoperative.

<sup>28</sup> 'Discurso del Comandante General del Ejército en el 197 aniversario de la creación del Ejército Nacional', 17/XI/2007, [http://www.aviacionboliviana.net/uae/not\\_001107a.htm](http://www.aviacionboliviana.net/uae/not_001107a.htm). 'In the field of operations, and in new light of hypothetical conflicts over our natural resources, especially energy, minerals, ecological resources, aquifers and arable land, such conflicts will no longer be limited to bordering countries. For this reason, we have designed an asymmetrical defence system called the "struggle of the patriots" (*lucha de patriotas*), conceived as a prolonged struggle by small populations –assisted by communities all across the country– which will ceaselessly fight the invader until he is defeated, with the natural environment itself as an ally'.

<sup>29</sup> 'FFAA', Programa del Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS).



with Colombia regarding the FARC,<sup>30</sup> than with an ideological stance or a proposed programme. It is quite likely that the recent, comprehensive reform of the military intelligence system would not have been undertaken by President Correa had the conflict not occurred. The decision is motivated by the President's firm belief that the CIA had infiltrated the Ecuadorean intelligence service and was passing information on to Colombia. Since the start of his mandate, his government has tackled other issues that provide a clearer idea of his concept of defence, beginning with the official adoption of 'human security' as a reference point in defence doctrine. However, the multifaceted nature of this concept has led to the militarisation of the social agenda in a large part of the region, legitimising the armed forces' focus on internal security and, in particular, on national development work.<sup>31</sup> Plan Ecuador,<sup>32</sup> the security plan developed by the Ecuadorean government for the border with Colombia, is being developed around this concept of security. The special emphasis put on human security is clear in the government's intention to include it in the new constitution, something it has proposed to the Constituent Assembly. The economic activity allowed to the armed forces in this project would seem to confirm that human security would legitimise the armed forces' traditional role as a powerful economic agent in Ecuadorean society.<sup>33</sup>

In Nicaragua, no particular relationship between society and the armed forces seems to have been established. Defence and the role of the military do not seem to be a priority, but at the same time, the decisions that have been made have not tended to strengthen civilian management of defence. Specifically, the reform of Law 290, shortly after Daniel Ortega became President, has drastically reduced the powers of the Ministry of Defence, frustrating the possibility of ensuring civilian management of defence.

In addition to the general differences that distinguish these governments in terms of the centralisation of defence, there are specific differences between them in terms of the missions assigned to their armed forces. Civilian-military unity provides the framework and justification for the social and economic missions being carried out Venezuela and Bolivia in particular. Ecuador already has a long tradition in this area and the government is trying to continue it under the new concept of human security. The government of Nicaragua, meanwhile, has not introduced any changes. The Nicaraguan armed forces have been doing this kind of work since the 1980s, and more systematically since the 1990s, along with other tasks. In any case, and despite their differences, these governments, with their common goal of bringing about a democratic revolution, have fallen back on a mission already traditional among Latin American armed forces. Such a mission runs the risk of handing over areas of management and power to the military – areas that in a democracy correspond to the civilian sphere– thus strengthening the autonomy of the armed forces.

### **National Development and the Armed Forces**

Among the differences and the common points discussed above, the importance that the civilian-military unity proclaimed by the governments of Venezuela and Bolivia has on the conception and organisation of defence has been stressed. In the context of this reciprocal relationship, the military's contribution is to participate in national development. This involves the armed forces devoting themselves to education, poverty, social assistance, the environment and economic activities aimed at the management and/or exporting of natural resources. Through this reciprocity,

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<sup>30</sup> Ecuador broke off diplomatic relations with Colombia over the military attack of 1 March 2008, against a guerrilla camp in Ecuadorean territory, in which 'Raúl Reyes', a leading member of the FARC, was killed.

<sup>31</sup> See *Seguridad Internacional Contemporánea: Seguridad Internacional Contemporánea: Consecuencias para la Seguridad Humana en América Latina y el Caribe*, International Seminar, FLACSO, Chile, 20-22/VIII/2003, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001406/140625s.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> <http://midena.gov.ec/images/pdf/planecuador2007/planecuador2007.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> 'Propuesta preliminar del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional sobre los temas referentes a la "Fuerza Pública" a ser considerados por el Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior (CONESUP) en la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente'.

both the population and the armed forces are players that contribute to defence and to the developing the desired revolution. The issue is that this involvement leads inexorably to the politicisation of the armed forces as active players in the revolution. It is an issue that President Chávez has openly accepted and proclaimed, but which, by contrast, the Bolivian President does not recognise. Although Ecuador and Nicaragua have not accepted this unity, this does not mean that there is no risk of militarisation or that the armed forces have not taken on a greater role in activities and spaces that correspond to the civilian government, nor does it rule out possible attempts to politicise the armed forces.

The same concept of security that these governments have made official strengthens the military's presence in the civilian sphere. The all-encompassing nature of this security encourages the militarisation of areas of civilian initiative and civilian management. In Venezuela, defence is considered to be 'based on modern concepts of the defence economy, with broad and comprehensive criteria'.<sup>34</sup> Based on this multi-faceted concept, everything may be considered part of the security agenda, and national development may be considered the cornerstone of national security. This is how it is understood in Bolivia, with the recent adoption of an 'indivisible' concept of security in which it is impossible to distinguish between internal and external security. 'Security is understood as a whole' and, as a result, it is 'implicit in sovereignty, independence, integrity, union, solidarity, dignity, identity, food, health, housing, freedom, justice, equality, work, recreation, culture, identity, continuity of the population, etc'.<sup>35</sup> Based on this concept of security, the armed forces' reciprocity with the people legitimises a wide range of action that is manifested in the spaces it occupies in the State administration, especially in social and development policy. In Ecuador, the Correa government's commitment to human security may be the main argument linking the armed forces to national development.

Here again, Venezuela provides the best example of this thinking. Military involvement in national development was formalised in the Constitution of 1999, article 328 of which assigns 'active' participation in this area to the armed forces. Following this, the Proyecto Bolívar 2000 project was approved as a civilian-military plan designed to deal with the country's most pressing social needs.<sup>36</sup> To implement this project and fulfil the constitutional mission entrusted to the armed forces, the Proyecto País foundation was also created in 1999 as an agency attached to the Ministry of Defence.<sup>37</sup> Under the Bolívar project, the armed forces were given a guiding role in the design and implementation of public policy, both in the economic and social areas. To attend to the projected social needs, 'missions' have been founded to deal with health, education, infrastructure, employment, security and food. In the case of food, popular markets have even been set up, reminiscent of the Cuban Youth Labour Army (EJT).<sup>38</sup> The high level to which this work has been institutionalised, as well as its military management and implementation, give a rough idea of the degree to which the development agenda has been securitised. President Chávez's proposal for constitutional reform not only indicates an affirmation of this option, but also the desire to give the armed forces a broader scope of action. This proposal contained a substantial change in the

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<sup>34</sup> 'Concepto estratégico militar de la Fuerza Armada Nacional', [http://www.seguridadregional-fes.org/upload/0965-001\\_g.pdf](http://www.seguridadregional-fes.org/upload/0965-001_g.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> 'Discurso del Comandante General del Ejército en el 197 aniversario de la creación del Ejército Nacional', [http://www.aviacionboliviana.net/uae/not\\_001107a.htm](http://www.aviacionboliviana.net/uae/not_001107a.htm).

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.mpd.gob.ve/prog-gob/proyb2000.htm>. Proyecto Bolívar consists of several phases: (1) *Proyecto País* (Propaís), which provides emergency assistance to the neediest and most socially marginalized population; (2) *Proyecto Patria* (Propatria), which will include public employees and unemployed workers in socially valuable activities and will organise communities for productive work; and (3) *Proyecto Nación* (Pronación), under the management of Cordiplan, a phase during which infrastructure projects will be implemented, including in the petrochemical, gas and agricultural industries, as well as a massive education project.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.mindefensa.gov.ve/FUNDAPROPAIS/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=41](http://www.mindefensa.gov.ve/FUNDAPROPAIS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=41).

<sup>38</sup> The Cuban example is a key reference point for the organisation of defence in Venezuela. The *Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo* (EJT) is considered the productive arm of the revolutionary armed forces (FAR); it attends to the needs of the population in terms of medicine, food, production and even recreation.

missions, since it proposed 'active participation in national development', specifically referring to 'the nation's economic, social and technological plans'.<sup>39</sup> This formulation justifies military presence and intervention in all areas of civil society.

In Bolivia, the missions assigned to the armed forces have been refocused under the presidency of Evo Morales. At the start of its term, his government declared that the borders had been abandoned and that the recovery of external security was an essential mission. Cooperation and involvement in regional integration processes were considered the best way to develop external security. The Morales government also deplored the little interest shown by previous governments in international peace missions. However, despite these declarations, they do not appear to reflect the government's top priorities. Carrying out work to foment national development is above all other possible missions. This is not really new work, since it is included in the current national constitution and has a prior history among past military dictatorships, in which the armed forces did work in the civilian sphere.

Starting in the government's first year, emphasis was put on supporting development projects and environmental conservation programmes in rural areas.<sup>40</sup> The initial measures focused on medical attention campaigns, infrastructure construction, participation in literacy campaigns and environmental protection.<sup>41</sup> In addition to this work, the army also began distributing the *Juancito Pinto* child benefit<sup>42</sup> in 2006 and the *Renta Dignidad* pension in 2008.<sup>43</sup> Along with this work, the armed forces have become involved in customs control. This government agency is headed by a retired general and the La Paz regional customs office is also headed by a military officer. The activities scheduled for 2008 multiply the duties carried out by the armed forces, which are now present in numerous areas of economic and social activity. The military is already involved in EMAPA, the government agency devoted to fomenting food production, and now it is also helping with food distribution. Other duties that have been considered include road and highway control, and oil and gas transport, with the armed forces providing tankers. In March this year, the President himself proposed that the navy could become involved in exporting minerals. Efforts would also be made to export iron from El Mutún (Santa Cruz).<sup>44</sup> A navy project has also been approved for the construction of the first public, state-owned port terminal in Puerto Guizarro (Santa Cruz), which will be used for soy and non-ferrous mineral exports by river. The reconsideration of an old army proposal may also have encouraged the government to involve the armed forces in food production, since they have the land, know-how and resources for this.<sup>45</sup> Consideration has also been given turning barracks into technology centres, something the president has called 'the university of the poor, for the poor, through the armed forces'.<sup>46</sup> There is no doubt that President Morales' desire to turn the armed forces into a 'great enterprise', not only as the defender of the country but also as a 'development enterprise', clearly expresses the missions that the leader believes the military should undertake.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.mindefensa.gov.ve/Reforma%20Constitucional%20referente%20a%20la%20FAN.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> 'Defensa de la Patria', Proposal to the Constituent Assembly (Part Four).

<sup>41</sup> *El Diario*, 14/III/2006. The idea was to create 'eco-battalions', see *La Razón*, 10/IX/2006.

<sup>42</sup> Government programme based on providing aid to families to encourage regular school attendance among children.

<sup>43</sup> The pension consists of a payment of US\$320 a year for persons over age 60 without retirement income, while retirees of the same age receive US\$240 a month.

<sup>44</sup> A summary of the different missions carried out by and planned for Bolivian armed forces is at:

[http://www.laprensa.com.bo/noticias/16-03-08/16\\_03\\_08\\_segul.php](http://www.laprensa.com.bo/noticias/16-03-08/16_03_08_segul.php). Regarding the exporting of iron in particular, see 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en el aniversario de la escuela naval militar', 24/IV/2008.

<sup>45</sup> *Los Tiempos.com*, [http://www.lostiempos.com/noticias/23-05-08/23\\_05\\_08\\_ultimas\\_nac11.php](http://www.lostiempos.com/noticias/23-05-08/23_05_08_ultimas_nac11.php).

<sup>46</sup> 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en el acto de posesión del Alto Mando militar', 2/I/2008, <http://abi.bo/index.php?i=enlace&j=documentos/discursos/200801/02.01.08PoseAltoMandoMil.html>, and 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en el 197 aniversario del Ejército boliviano', 14/XI/2007, <http://abi.bo/index.php?i=enlace&j=documentos/discursos/200711/14.11.07AniversarioEjercito.html>.

<sup>47</sup> 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en el 197 aniversario del Ejército boliviano', 14/XI/2007, <http://abi.bo/index.php?i=enlace&j=documentos/discursos/200711/14.11.07AniversarioEjercito.html>.

The theoretical underpinnings for assigning these missions to the armed forces are the same as in Venezuela. In both cases, there is an emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between the people and the armed forces, through which the process of revolutionary change is to be brought about. The military contribution in this relationship is to national development and social policy. Despite this common approach, in Bolivia the military has a lower profile in the design and management of social policy than in Venezuela. The Bolivian army lacks Venezuela's resources and institutional framework for implementing this work. Nonetheless, it has sufficient presence in civilian society for there to be a risk of securitising the social agenda, especially when, as has been discussed, the list of activities related to economic activity and social work continues to lengthen.

As we have already discussed regarding the governments of Ecuador and Nicaragua, the type of missions assigned to the armed forces makes a military presence in civilian affairs appear likely. The Correa government backs military participation in national development, as we see in the reform proposals submitted by the Ministry of Defence to the Constituent Assembly. This mission was already provided for in the previous Constitution, but the difference is that the Ministry proposes that the military activities undertaken in this mission must be coordinated with the government agencies in charge of planning and implementing development policies.<sup>48</sup> This measure could prevent the armed forces from designing development policies on their own, without input from government authorities, but it does not necessarily prevent the securitisation of social and development policies, since the government itself could encourage this by assigning missions in this area to the armed forces, as has occurred in Venezuela and Bolivia.

The discussion on the armed forces reached the Constituent Assembly in early June 2008 and the position defended by Defence Minister Javier Ponce and by the members of Alianza País, the government party, confirms the positions taken in the initial proposal. With equal intensity, they say that the armed forces must stop being the guarantors of the legal system, while supporting the entry of the armed forces into social and economic activities as a way of contributing to human security.<sup>49</sup> This kind of military mission has a long tradition in Ecuador: in fact, the armed forces became a powerful economic player in the national economy as a result of their contributions to national development.<sup>50</sup> Although the recent constitutional Defence Act passed in January 2007 does not stop economic activities, it at least limits them strictly to the area of defence; however, the government proposal could moderate this trend. Far from establishing greater restrictions or specifying the established limits, its constitutional reform proposal calls for an increase in military economic activity. While article 190 of the Constitution that is still in effect states that 'the armed forces may participate in economic activities related to national defence', the Ministry of Defence proposed that in addition to these activities, the armed forces could also 'collaterally' take part 'in the social and economic development of the people, in accordance with government policies'.<sup>51</sup>

The President's emergency decrees show that he does not intend to reduce the armed forces' presence in economic activity or their contribution to social development. Rather, he has encouraged this activity since 2007. After declaring that state-owned Petroecuador was in deep trouble, he ordered the navy to manage it until it recovered. Although the Constitution and current legislation ban members of the armed forces from participating in work not related to their national security duties, continuation of this management has been approved and was recently extended with

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<sup>48</sup> 'Propuesta elaborada por el Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, sobre los temas referentes a la "Fuerza Pública" a ser considerador por el Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior (CONESUP) para la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente', July 2007.

<sup>49</sup> *El Universo*, 3/VI/2008.

<sup>50</sup> Bertha García Gallegos, 'De la "acción cívica" al "apoyo al desarrollo"; la seguridad interna como doctrina de resolución de conflictos', research project, *Las dimensiones societales y estratégicas de la reconversión militar en el Ecuador*, COMUEP and PUCE, 1996.

<sup>51</sup> 'Propuesta elaborada por el Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, sobre los temas referentes a la "Fuerza Pública" a ser considerador por el Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior (CONESUP) para la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente', July 2007.

the appointment of a new military officer in May 2008. However, this is not the only measure taken; a new emergency decree has put the armed forces engineering corps in charge of implementing roadway projects such as highways and bridges. Despite criticism of these decisions, President Correa has continually encouraged a military presence in national development. In June 2007, without a public tendering process, Petroecuador awarded a project for liquefied gas storage to Flota Petrolera Ecuatoriana (FLOPEC), an armed forces company. Essentially nationalist and statist arguments were used to justify this action. As long as the armed forces have trained professionals and sufficient resources to tackle these duties, it is a way of preventing this work and the resulting profits from ending up either with a multinational or with a powerful company owned by the national oligarchy.<sup>52</sup> To the extent that the armed forces do this work, 'the money stays in the public sector', to quote the leader.<sup>53</sup> Evo Morales has also used very similar arguments to justify the armed forces' economic activities.<sup>54</sup>

In Nicaragua, it is more a case of continuity than of change. To date, President Ortega has not announced anything new regarding the missions that have been assigned to the Nicaraguan armed forces. On the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Army's founding, General Omar Haleslevens, listed the missions carried out by the forces in 2007. These included missions related to national development and the government's social policy. Outstanding among them is army participation in the *Hambre Cero*<sup>55</sup> ('zero hunger') programme, which distributes resources to different municipalities around the country and transports education material for the *Yo sí puedo* ('I can') education campaign. The armed forces have also been working to distribute water, clean dams and rebuild rural roads, as well as taking part in environmental protection and humanitarian work in response to natural disasters. The armed forces were also involved in preventative health campaigns and environmental protection.<sup>56</sup> This year, the government carried out a campaign to ensure agricultural production and the military's contribution was considered particularly important. The *Plan de Seguridad en el Campo* (rural security plan), designed to ensure agricultural activity, includes the fight against drug trafficking, livestock rustling, kidnapping, piracy at sea, illegal fishing, illegal trafficking in arms, persons, wood and protected species, and other activities related to organised crime. It also sets out to support the security of the country's main socio-economic development programmes, with agriculture and livestock clearly among the highest priorities.<sup>57</sup>

In general, working on national development can give the armed forces a space for independent political action and a legitimacy that is inversely proportional to that of civilian leaders. The work they carry out across broad areas of their respective countries, without any monitoring or civilian presence, enables them to capitalise on the political benefits of this action. In the end, citizens come to view the military as the only authority that helps them. This work also ensures them the capacity to establish local client networks that guarantee them room for independent political action,

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<sup>52</sup> 'Entrevista a Rafael Correa', 13/I/2008,

<http://archivo.eluniverso.com/2008/01/13/0001/8/E6F9445F4D18452BBBCB4D5139031F55.aspx>.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* This position has been defined by Correa as 'patriotic nationalism'. Homero Arellano, former Navy Admiral and defender of government policies believed that this response was a way of managing national resources that is 'nationalistic, honest and sovereign', see <http://www.periodicopcion.net/article155030.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> 'Palabras del Presidente de la República, Evo Morales Ayma, en el 45 aniversario de la Escuela Naval Militar', 24/IV/2008.

<sup>55</sup> Social programme of the current Nicaraguan government aimed at eradicating extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition, as well as lack of water.

<sup>56</sup> 'Acto de conmemoración del XVIII aniversario del Ejército de Nicaragua. Discurso del Jefe del Ejército de Nicaragua Omar Haleslevens', 1/IX/2007.

<sup>57</sup> 'Producir para liberar Nicaragua del hambre y la pobreza VI', Speech by General Oscar Balladares, Chief of General Army Operations to the president and the country's producers, 7/VI/2008, [http://www.presidencia.gob.ni/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=83:producir-para-liberar-nicaragua-del-hambre-y-la-pobreza-vi-&catid=46:junio2008&Itemid=54](http://www.presidencia.gob.ni/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83:producir-para-liberar-nicaragua-del-hambre-y-la-pobreza-vi-&catid=46:junio2008&Itemid=54).

especially in very poor and defenceless areas.<sup>58</sup> All this contributes to progressive militarisation and the consolidation of military autonomy.

### **Internal Security Missions under Revolutionary Governments**

The military's contribution to national development is meant to be a way of separating the armed forces from other internal security work, essentially repression. In keeping with the declared alliance between the people and the armed forces, Evo Morales announced that the armed forces would no longer be an enemy and, therefore, would no longer repress social movements or carry out the forced eradication of coca crops. Justifications for this decision include the deaths and human rights violations associated with these missions in the 1990s. To date, the decision has been respected and the armed forces have stopped doing police work, though they continue to do other internal security work.

This point of view is shared by the Venezuelan government, which used the same reasoning to make it clear that the armed forces would cease to be repressors, but rather, the natural allies of the people. The conclusion that may be drawn is that, while there is a risk of the social agenda becoming securitised under these populist governments, at least the national security agenda is not becoming militarised. In other words, although under these governments the armed forces may continue to take part in domestic activities, they are not, in principle, going to be involved in domestic security, which is a function of the police forces. However, this is not necessarily true in all the cases considered here. In its proposal for constitutional reform, the Venezuelan government defended the idea that, like the fight against drug trafficking, internal law and order should remain a military mission.<sup>59</sup> This is nothing new, however, since the 1999 Constitution contains this mission, which was simply reiterated in article 328 of the proposed constitutional reform. Public safety would also be considered a military task. The Bolivian government, for its part, has not been using the armed forces to repress social movements, but has gradually been adding police work<sup>60</sup> to the long list of military duties.

Nicaragua is another example of where the armed forces work both in social development and in other areas directly related with internal security, such as public safety and the fight against drug trafficking. In addition to the work mentioned above, in 2007 the Nicaraguan army collaborated with the police on numerous 'arrests' for common crimes and drug trafficking. This is the result of efforts to combat 'rural delinquency', 'illegal fishing', 'piracy' and 'drug trafficking', in short, to 'provide security for the development of productive, commercial and economic activities' in the country.<sup>61</sup> In addition to these duties, the armed forces has done considerable internal security work in collaboration with the police at different times of social conflict, although this appears to be more the exception than the rule for this government.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Regarding the political and institutional consequences of the mission to support social development, see J.R. Quintana, *Gobernabilidad democrática y FFAA en Bolivia*, Proyecto de Investigación Estratégica de Bolivia, La Paz, Bolivia, p. 18-19, <http://arc.sdsu.edu/humanrights/rr/Bolivia/PolyDem.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.mindefensa.gov.ve/Reforma%20Constitucional%20referente%20a%20la%20FAN.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> In 2007, under the Búho Plan, the military took part in the fight against smuggling and trafficking in arms, drugs, human organs and vehicles. *La Razón*, 21/XI/2007, [http://www.la-razon.com/versiones/20071121\\_006097/nota\\_256\\_509384.htm](http://www.la-razon.com/versiones/20071121_006097/nota_256_509384.htm). In April 2008, the order was given to create five joint military commands in order to prevent the smuggling of food and fuel in order to guarantee internal supply and prevent speculation by distributors and retailers. In November, the militarisation of 11 border bridges with Peru and Chile was ordered to prevent the entry and exit of illegal goods and fuel, under *Plan Negro Uno*, which ended in April 2008, [http://www.lostiempos.com/noticias/23-05-08/23\\_05\\_08\\_ultimas\\_nac11.php](http://www.lostiempos.com/noticias/23-05-08/23_05_08_ultimas_nac11.php).

<sup>61</sup> 'Acto de conmemoración del XVIII aniversario del Ejército de Nicaragua. Discurso del Jefe del Ejército de Nicaragua Omar Halleslevens', 1/IX/2007.

<sup>62</sup> In May 2008, the Army was deployed along stretches of highway occupied by striking transport workers. During the same month, there was a confrontation between the police/armed forces and rural workers; see:

Despite the significant differences between these countries, both examples show to what extent the new populist governments are facing the same problems as the rest of the region in terms of securitised social agendas, and also how they can run into the problem of militarised internal security. This does not mean that these are exceptional cases; indeed, there are other countries whose armed forces are also involved in both duties. Rather, the objective here is to highlight how these governments, despite presenting themselves as revolutionary transformers, are revisiting the same problems as the rest of the region in terms of military missions in particular, and civilian-military relations in general. Venezuela, meanwhile, must be considered an exceptional case, given its level of militarisation compared with the rest of the region, and the considering the missions and powers granted to the armed forces.

## Conclusions

This comparative analysis leads to the conclusion that the defence positions proposed by nationalist populist governments do not constitute an alternative to the deficiencies in civilian leadership in the region. One of the problems that to a greater or lesser extent prevents the countries in the region from reforming their defence structures is the fact that areas of military autonomy continue to exist, since these are incompatible with the civilian control of defence. In this regard, the missions assigned to the armed forces can either favour or restrict these areas.

When the armed forces carry out internal security work, this generally ends up giving the military duties that should be handled by civilian authorities. This tends to militarise internal security, encouraging the consolidation of areas of military autonomy and influence. This is a trend that affects a large number of the countries in the region. Latin American countries, with their significant structural weaknesses, rely on the armed forces because they are unable and lack the capacity to fight problems that directly relate to internal security, such as drug trafficking, organised crime and public safety. Except in Argentina and Chile, where the armed forces ensure security against external threats, in the rest of the region it is the armed forces that fight some or even all of the problems mentioned above. Central America provides some of the best examples of this.

Populist governments, far from restricting military activities to external security or proposing different and new options, have in fact chosen to devote a large part of military activity to national development and, in some cases, to designing social policy. This calls into question the supposedly revolutionary quality that these governments claim for themselves, since these missions have been included in the constitutions of most of these countries since the Cold War. In these cases, the armed forces are also involved in domestic affairs and participate in areas that correspond to the civilian authorities. As a result of favouring areas of military autonomy in this way, there is a risk of militarising the social agenda and certain economic activities. The case of Venezuela is particularly paradigmatic, since the military is extraordinarily over-represented in the State administration. In Venezuela and Nicaragua in particular, economic and social work related to national development is accompanied by missions associated with internal security and domestic law and order.

While the differences between these governments make it impossible to speak of a single populist defence model, the trends are similar. Considering the risk of militarisation involved in entrusting this type of missions to the armed forces, it seems clear that military autonomy is not considered a problem to be solved or even as a problem in itself. In fact, in Venezuela and to a lesser extent in Bolivia, there is a clear trend towards the militarisation of society and the politicisation of the armed forces. Since 2006, there have been growing similarities in the defence concepts expressed by Presidents Chávez and Morales, both based on the common idea of a civilian-military alliance. In Ecuador and Nicaragua, defence is not as significant an issue, though there is a trend towards increasing military influence in the civilian sphere. The attempt to directly involve the armed forces

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<http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/15311> and [http://www.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2008/mayo/27/noticias/nacionales/262135\\_print.shtml](http://www.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2008/mayo/27/noticias/nacionales/262135_print.shtml), respectively.

as key players in these so-called ‘democratic revolutions’ by assigning them certain kinds of missions, leads to a politicisation that is very clear in Venezuela. One of the most obvious expressions of this politicisation is the military salute used today: *Socialismo, Patria o Muerte* (‘Socialism, Homeland or Death’). The indoctrination of the Bolivarian Armed Forces (to use their new name) is considered essential, since President Chávez wants them to be key players in the creation of a new society based on ‘21<sup>st</sup> century socialism’. To the extent that the armed forces are considered a key player in a specific political project, it is inevitable that they will become politicised –something that the President and his Defence Minister have both said–. By the same token, Evo Morales intends to make the armed forces a political ally against his opponents. This has already happened in the eastern part of the country, where he has worked from the start to involve the armed forces in the political conflict arising from the independence movement there. But unlike the Venezuelan President, Morales has insistently denied such politicisation is occurring. Whether he acknowledges it or not, however, this process of politicisation encourages forms of military intervention and presence in the social and political spheres which, far from offering solutions, represent a step backwards in the democratic process.

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