

Journal of Peace Studies, Vol. 12, Issue 1, January-March, 2005.

Changing Security Dimensions in the Western Hemisphere

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The nature of security in the Western Hemisphere in the post Cold-War has changed considerably. The security related challenges emerged or imposed not from outside, as it had happened during the Cold-War era. But it is very much domestic grown and posing threat not only to the Latin American civil society but has implications in the developed countries of western hemisphere like USA and in Europe. This security threat is multi-dimensional and has grown due to the narco-trafficking, emergence of leftist guerrillas in Andean region, migration, proliferation of small arms and environmental degradation.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Colombia had become one of the token examples, along with Afghanistan and Somalia, offered by international analysts when referring to the new world disorder. The idea of Colombia as a “failed state” is mainly based on the increasing levels of violence that the country has suffered since the 1970s, which climbed to extraordinary heights through the 1980s. The rise in violence since the 1970s is closely linked to the expansion of the narcotic trade— a global problem, fuelled by drug consumption in the United States and Europe - that has had serious consequences for Colombia. The murderous actions and corrupting influence of powerful drug mafias have undermined and damaged both state institutes and the social fabric on an unprecedented scale. Drugs created a transformed economic, social and political context for a new guerrilla struggle. Drugs largely explain the growth of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the Armed Revolutionaries Forces of Colombia, or the FARC), a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group of fewer than 1000 ill-equipped men in 1980 that expanded into a military force of some 15000 men in the following two decades; drug money also financed the paramilitary groups set up to fight the guerrillas. Ransom from kidnapping and extortion - the victims included farmers, multinational companies, and other private entrepreneurs - added substantial sums to their coffers, and to those of the other smaller guerrilla groups.

The consequence of the “two-front war” - against drugs and guerrillas - have been devastating to state and society. The Clinton administration “decertified” Colombia in 1996 and 1997 for its alleged lack of collaboration in the fight against drugs, despite the government’s successful dismantlement of several cartels (countries that are “decertified” may lose US economic and military aid and face trade restrictions). Weakened presidential authority and prestige, both at home and abroad, encouraged the guerrillas to set up their violent actions against the state. In the late 1990s army’s morale was further eroded by a series of military defeats at the hands of FARC guerrillas. Bolivian cocaine production has been increasing and Argentine traffickers are playing a greater role in direct exportation of Bolivian cocaine to the United States and Europe.

Development of the Paraguay-Paraná river system (Hidrovia) into an efficient regional commercial inland waterway route has begun linking Bolivian and Southern Cone Atlantic ports. Cocaine smuggling through the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR; it includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) is expected to exploit this commercial waterway. The cocaine smuggling is a threat to commercial maritime trades not only in the sub-region but also to European transit countries. The commercial significance of Hidrovia is considered in context of the potential adverse impacts of drug smuggling and other illicit trades on MERCOSUR's legitimate commerce and economic development. A report prepared by the US addresses the Government's strategy for waterways managements intended to enhance multilateral efforts to reduce the volume of drugs moved by maritime transport in the source and transit zones. Even country like Brazil is not aloof from the drug menace. The alarming number of narcotic addicts in Brazil is a major issue of concern. West and North-West part of Amazon has become a hub for the drug traffickers from Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. In South America, terrorism in Colombia first and insecurity in the Triple Border shared by Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay next constitute the central security problems in the region.

President Lula ordered the deployment of the Brazilian armed forces along the border with Colombia and Peru in order to cooperate in patrolling the free flow of narco-terrorism. In turn, Peruvian terrorist group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) is gaining ground amid the political crisis affecting President Alejandro Toledo's administration. Brazil joins forces with the United States to combat the narco-guerrilla operating in Andean countries. However, it still refuses to label the FARC as 'terrorist' as Washington and the EU have already done and the Colombian government demands. Concerning the Triple Border, the US Southern Command Chief, once, remarked that along the border shared by Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay there is an area little controlled by the State where terrorist-supporting structures are settled. In the absence of State power illegal organisations grows extensively that set the bases for terrorism, narco-trafficking and organised crime.

Small arms proliferation in Latin America is another menace which is posing a grave danger to the state and civil society. Costa Rica and Panama the two countries are an important bridge for arms trafficking from the north (Chiapas, Mexico) en route south (Colombia), and to attack this trafficking it is necessary to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation in every aspect. MERCOSUR members have shown an urgent need to push for convergent firearms legislation in MERCOSUR as well as compliance of existing legal mechanisms. Other interests included tightening border controls, in particular at the triple border shared by Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay — an area known for weapons contraband and corruption - and ensuring that these countries' governments make good on their national, regional and international commitments to reduce illicit trafficking. Firearms control is squarely on the political agenda in Brazil and Argentina, the two largest weapons producers in the region. Even economic bloc like Andean Pact (Andean Pact countries include, Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador) is concerned about the grave impact of small arms proliferation. To fight the menace all the member countries of Andean Group have taken a joint approach to contain illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons that takes into consideration small arms' links with terrorism, corruption and the worldwide drug problem. For this purpose, Decision 552 of the Andean Pact

rule seeks to control the manufacture, trade, transport, holding, hiding, usurping, carrying and use of said weapons as well as their identification, confiscation and eventual destruction.

Migration is another area of concern in the western hemisphere. Though, the problem does not have any near security threat to Latin America but the large scale Hispanic migration causes worry to the US. The immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico and Cuba, is the most immediate and most serious challenge to America's traditional identity. Americans like to boast of their past success in assimilating millions of immigrants into their society, culture and politics. But Americans have tended to generalise about immigrants without distinguishing among them and have focused on the economic costs and benefits of immigration, ignoring its social and cultural consequences. As a result, they have overlooked the unique characteristics and problems posed by contemporary Hispanic immigration. The extent and nature of this immigration differ fundamentally from those of previous immigration, and the assimilation success of the past are unlikely to be duplicated with the contemporary flood of immigrants from Latin America. Many Mexican immigrants and their offspring simply do not appear to identify primarily with the United States. Now, the biggest problem the US is facing is the cultural clash between the values of Hispanics and the values in American society. Even, Samuel P. Huntington expressed the view that the United States ignores this challenge at its peril (Foreign Policy, March-April, 2004).

The multidimensional approach to security defined in terms of military, economic and environmental concerns, and their interdependence, forms the bedrock of common or comprehensive security thinking. The issue of environment has become a part of Brazilian mainstream foreign policy.

The main goals of Brazilian environment policy include the pursuit of sustainable development, the protection of the environment and the furthering of related global accords on these issues. Brazil ensures that its environmental reality is efficiently known abroad with transparency and objectivity, despite years of misinformation that Brazil is destroying the "Lungs of Earth" the Amazon forest. The international campaign and concern in relation to Amazonian deforestation and its importance to the global climate has been seen by Brazil as a threat to its sovereign right over its own territory. Brazil has always insisted that sustainable development is made possible through transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries. Brazil has also played an instrumental role in furthering the Montreal Protocol through the implementation of freezing and phasing out dates for Ozone depletion substance within time frames that are considerably more stringent than those internationally agreed. Thus, international environmental issues including those pertaining to the preservation and exploitation of resources in the Amazon region— covers other countries too, having frontier with Amazon, such as Venezuela, Colombia, Peru.

One may question the wisdom of economics overtaking the conventional political and military dimensions of security. One may as well take into calculation the overwhelming influence of the hemispheric hegemon viz., the US over the foreign and security policies of the Latin American countries. Notwithstanding the processes of economic liberalization and globalization, one may still highlight the syndrome of economic dependence of Latin America. Still, however, it is

undeniable that Latin American countries have worked within the constraints and options that are available to it in the international system.

Now the security has taken a new and a broader connotation, that of enhancing domestic competitiveness in the global economy, securing new markets and avenues of cooperation, and improving one's bargaining position in trade negotiations in WTO and issue-specific mechanisms such as the Cairns Group of the Agricultural Product Exporting Countries. Latin American countries have averted the suspicion and potential resistance among its neighbours through skilful and cooperative economic diplomacy, for instance through the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) since the mid-1980s, the Andean Pact and Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). Economic regionalization has enabled Latin America to also diversify its external dependence, and to that extent increase its autonomy, by reducing economic and trade dependence on the United States through expanded and deepened relations with European Union, ASEAN and several Asian countries

United States is focusing its policies extensively on the war against terrorism and nuclear proliferation in the Iraq, Iran and North Korea. However, the multiple problems emanating at its own backyard has been given a low priority. Uneven and low development can always push migrants from Latin America to the US. Hence, economic development of these regions is required. Threats, not external but domestic in nature and evolution, such as drug trafficking, small arm proliferation and terrorism waged by leftist organisations are real challenge to the civil society in Latin America. Latin American countries have to find the solution of these threats through multilateral approach. US surely can facilitate positively to its neighbours through its resources.