GFN-SSR REGIONAL GUIDE:
Security Sector Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Contents

Introduction ..................................................................................... 1
A Good Place to Start ........................................................................ 6
Caribbean ....................................................................................... 12
Haiti ................................................................................................. 12
Jamaica ............................................................................................. 16
Central America .............................................................................. 19
Costa Rica ......................................................................................... 19
Guatemala .......................................................................................... 20
Mexico ................................................................................................ 24
Southern America ........................................................................... 27
Argentina .......................................................................................... 27
Brazil ................................................................................................ 29
Chile ................................................................................................. 32
Colombia ........................................................................................... 34
Peru .................................................................................................. 38

Introduction

This regional guide provides an introduction to literature on security sector reform (SSR) in Latin America and the Caribbean. It highlights key regional texts and resources that cut across a number of security sectors and countries. Because of the size of the region, several broadly representative country case studies from sub-regions have been selected to highlight particular issues of interest. Whilst not exhaustive, this guide gives an indication of the growing literature available on SSR in the region. Research on SSR, particularly region-wide comparisons, is not abundant and though English-language papers are used wherever possible, if a key document is only available in Spanish then it is included below, with a brief summary in English.
The Regional Political Context

Latin American political history throughout the twentieth century was characterised by the involvement of the military in political affairs, whether in dictatorships, coups or conflicts. This has slowly changed over the last 50 years as the region has seen a gradual trend towards democracy. A wave of democratisation crossed Latin America, with the notable exception of Cuba, from the late 1970s onwards and the region does not, generally, show signs of a return to authoritarianism. There is, however, a difference in the quality of democracy in many countries.

Experiences of military involvement varied throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Most of Central America saw harsh civil wars, for example in El Salvador and Guatemala, and political instability, including military coups and counter-coups, in many more countries. In response to a rising number of socialist governments taking power at time of heightened superpower tension during the Cold War, the US is alleged to have supported right-wing groups in Central America and the rise of military dictatorships (or juntas) across South America, most notably in Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Indeed, internal conflict did not afflict South America in the same way that it did Central America. However, there were two notable insurgencies in the continent: the Peruvian state fought a battle against left-wing rebels in the 1980s and 1990s; and Colombia continues to suffer from an internal conflict today that began with left-wing guerrilla rebels taking up arms in the 1960s and the spread to include other groups including right-wing paramilitaries and drug traffickers.

In the Caribbean, colonial dominance continued for much longer than in Central and South America, and many islands are still French or British dependent territories. The Caribbean islands have, by and large, been relatively stable over recent decades, though internal crime and violence have been ongoing problems. A significant exception here is Haiti: a UN peacekeeping force first intervened in 1994 and most recently in 2004, and the UN continues to have responsibility for much of the country’s security needs in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake.
**Current Security Challenges**

In the twenty-first century, as in much of the twentieth, the key security challenges come not externally, from neighbouring states (despite an increase in tension between Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia in 2008) or from coups or insurgencies, but from domestic criminal gangs and/or as a result of transnational criminal organisations trafficking in people, drugs, small arms and other illicit goods. Central America, in particular, has experienced a proliferation of gangs over the past two decades.

As democratic governments elected through successive, (broadly) free and fair elections became commonplace over the last decade, the security focus of most governments in the region has reflected the changing nature of the threat. Security policy has shifted from national security to public security, in particular to tackling the high levels of crime and violence. However, in many cases governments have chosen to adopt a populist hard-line and at times an anti-democratic approach to tackling crime. Moreover, the security forces and their alleged human rights’ abuses are often as much of a threat to public security as criminal gangs. Problems of insecurity are somewhat compounded where the military takes on a greater role in ensuring public security, despite its historic involvement as a state instrument of repression in many nations.

In addition to the impact of rising crime, post 9/11 US counter-terrorism efforts have had a major impact on world security, and counter-terrorism strategies have grown in prominence. In Latin America, this is most evident in Colombia: The US has played a major role in aiding the counterinsurgency through Plan Colombia, but over the past seven years, counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism priorities have been combined. The US and Colombian administrations label the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as terrorist organisations (a designation disputed by many). While elsewhere, terrorism is less of a concern, the US continues to play a major role in regional security. For instance it funds a billion dollar assistance plan, Plan Merida, supporting the security forces of Mexico to combat the violence and drugs trafficking on the southern US border, along the same lines as Plan Colombia in the Andes.

**SSR in Latin America and the Caribbean**

There are serious challenges for governments and security forces in Latin America. The security sector is in urgent need of adapting and improving its ability to ensure security for its citizens and aid the consolidation of democracy. Democratisation itself, however, has not always led to major reform; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Countries regarded as the most politically and economically developed (Uruguay, Chile and Costa Rica, for example) have generally engaged in more reform than the poorer countries of the region, such as Peru. Reforms that
have taken place in countries that are under political or economic stress, for instance Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, are sometimes very contradictory and occasionally regressive (such as increasing the involvement of the military in internal security). Yet it is impossible to generalise: Brazil, the continent’s largest democracy, is in as much need of reform as most other countries in Latin America; and some of the poorest countries of Central America initially undertook significant reforms of their security sectors towards the end of the twentieth century, in part due to high levels of post-conflict international funds, but these processes have since slowed down due to a lack of human and material resources.

SSR in some form is required in all countries, but though the SSR needs of each country are often similar, they are always unique. For example, several countries within the region do not, for various reasons, have their own armed forces (Costa Rica, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) depending instead on alternatives such as regional security mechanisms or an alliance with the United States. Other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, have a federal structure of government and this is reflected in the structure of policing – these countries have both a federal police force and individual state police forces. In Colombia and Mexico, a key SSR concern is the role of the armed forces in internal security. These give but a small indication of some of the differences between countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Civilian oversight in countries such as Chile, Brazil and Argentina has improved in recent years whereas countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Paraguay have security institutions of dubious merit. Ecuador has experienced periodical military defiance of the executive, including a coup in 2000. Similarly, Venezuela was victim to a coup attempt in 2002, as was Paraguay in 1996.

The relationship between civilian political leadership and the police in Latin America is complex. Whilst most countries have enacted laws and regulations to assert civilian control and oversight, they have been unevenly enforced. Furthermore, citizens still suffer mistreatment and abuse from the authorities whilst police violence is a daily occurrence in many countries.

Despite the clear need for SSR, reform programmes have been applied unevenly both across sectors and countries. By and large, they have been insufficient to address the major challenge of ensuring public security and have often been met by resistance from the security institutions concerned. The armed forces and police have undergone some reform in many countries, but a noted trend is the militarisation of the police and a ‘police-isation’ of the military, rather than the creation of two separate security organisations with distinct responsibilities. There has been an important process of justice reform in Latin America, and around thirteen countries have taken significant steps towards reform; Chile’s reform of the criminal justice systems is noted as perhaps the best example of success in this area. However, the justice sector in many countries is
close to collapse and corruption is endemic. The same could also be said about the penal system throughout the continent. Prisons are, universally, in a dire state and conditions are frequently described as inhumane. Over-crowding, poor health and nutritional facilities, and high numbers of pre-trial inmates locked up for long periods of time are common criticisms.

**Challenges for Reform and Key Recommendations**

Wide-ranging reform is urgently needed in every area of the security system throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Three main factors have stymied attempts at security sector reform: weak civilian leadership, especially regarding police and military reform; weak or limited civilian capabilities; and weak international incentives to promote reforms. Key areas of reform required include*:

- limiting the autonomy of the armed and security forces;
- strengthening the capacities of civilians working in the security sector;
- creating policies to regulate the intelligence sector;
- specifying and limiting the roles and responsibilities of the security sector;
- coordinating policies and activities among sectors;
- limiting the political use of the armed forces and police; and
- strengthening the role of the legislature in security issues.

This guide points to some of the main research from academia, civil society organisations and governments that analyses the security sectors and SSR programmes. The reports and publications that follow contain key recommendations specific to countries and sectors for policymakers and other actors involved in security sector reform in Latin America and the Caribbean.


**GFN-SSR Resources**

**Report on the Security Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean**
This report published by FLACSO aims to contribute to the understanding of security sector related political and institutional processes in the region since the return of democracy.

**No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform**
This publication aims to operationalising donor countries’ policy commitments to local ownership of SSR. It includes a chapter on intersectoral dialogue on SSR in Guatemala.
ssrbulletin
The region has been featured three times as a case study in the GFN-SSR:
ssrbulletin: SSR in South America (May 2008); Guyana (July 2008); and Haiti (October 2008).

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A Good Place to Start

SSR: General

FLACSO-Chile, 2007, Report on the Security Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, FLACSO-Chile, Santiago (also available in Spanish)

What is the experience of security sector reform in Latin America and the Caribbean since the return to democracy? What are the security reform issues specific to the region? This report by the Facultad Latinoamerica de Ciencias Sociales, Chile (FLACSO-Chile) analyses security policy and reform in defence, public security, and intelligence in 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Many countries have only recently emerged from military autocracies; concepts such as civilian oversight, accountability and transparency are novel to many and underdeveloped at best. Drawing on individual country reports (see below), the report compares and contrasts progress on key security indicators, including legislative framework, civilian control and steps taken towards reform. Policy recommendations highlight the need for the need for coordinated and comprehensive reforms that focus on increasing accountability, limiting the political use of the security services, and enhancing civilian and legislative oversight.

FLACSO-Chile, 2006, Reporte Sector Seguridad en America Latina y El Caribe: Informes Nacionales, FLACSO-Chile, Santiago (only available in Spanish except Barbados and Jamaica)

- Central America and the Caribbean: Barbados (English only), Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica (English only), Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama
- Andean Countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru
- Southern Cone: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay

What are the key characteristics of the defence, public security and intelligence sectors within each country in Latin America and the Caribbean? These detailed reports analyse the changes that have taken place in the security sectors across the region. Each report starts with a brief introduction to the social and economic context of the country, and then examines the defence, public security and
intelligence sectors. The principle themes covered include civil leadership, the roles of democratic institutions and the missions of the police and armed forces. Bibliographies provide extensive links to the websites of government departments and security forces.

Fuentes, C., 2009, Political Dimensions of Security Transformation in Latin America, IDS Bulletin, Volume 40, Number 2, pp. 79-87

Transforming the security sector in Latin America has been one of the most challenging tasks following democratisation in the region. What has impeded the progress of citizens' rights and institutional democratic reform? This article discusses the complex and intertwined political conditions that surround military and police institutional reform, concluding that progress must be made within the broader political system, not just in the security institutions themselves. Civil society organisations and advocacy networks have a crucial role in empowering citizens to engage in reform.

Civilian Oversight


What are the experiences in regional approaches to security sector governance in Africa, the Americas and Europe? What lessons can be drawn for promoting good and democratic governance of security sector institutions in these and other regions? This book by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) compares and assesses regional security sector governance approaches. Since the end of the Cold War, the international security environment has changed to encompass a range of non-military and trans-national dimensions. Progress towards effective implementation of security sector governance depends on states’ capacities to reconcile democratic security sector objectives with the global counterterrorism agenda imposed by the United States after 9/11. This study contains three chapters specifically on Latin America:

- Füri, C., ‘The 2001 Quebec City Plan of Action: Toward a Convergence of Security and Democracy Agendas in the Americas’;
**Defence Reform**


To what extent do civilians maintain institutional control over armed forces in Latin America? This research examines the organisation of defence institutions in sixteen Latin American countries and its implications for civil-military relations. Most countries of the region have not achieved the ideal-typical model for maximising civilian control, although some come close. Other countries have a defence structure that leaves too much military power unified. In yet others, there is a dual command structure that weakens the defence ministry and merges military power high up the ladder of influence.

**Policing**


Does the civilian political leadership exercise sufficient control over the police in Latin America and the Caribbean? This paper analyses the security sector reforms that have occurred over the past decade in the region. It concludes that, in spite of reforms aimed at increasing accountability and oversight, in many counties police autonomy remains high, with the civilian political leadership needing to exercise tighter control over police actions.

**Justice Reform**


Published by the Justice Studies Centre of the Americas (CEJA), these reports provide an excellent overview of the justice sectors in every country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Each document examines the organisation of the justice system before going into greater detail on a wide array of justice issues including legal and penal codes, the police, the power of the judiciary and justice reform projects currently underway.

What is the current state of the administration of justice in Latin America? Which countries are the relative success stories and which countries have made less progress towards reform? This paper summarises the results of a conference that brought together justice experts from across the region and focuses on the reform process within Guatemala and five countries in South America. While Chile has made the most progress towards reform through a substantial transformation of its criminal justice system, the general record is less positive. Political and economic instability in many countries has made reform much more difficult. To overcome these difficulties, policymakers should promote political support for long-term and coherent policies and look to improve both efficiency and transparency within the justice sector.

**Penal Reform**

Dammert, L and Zúñiga, L., 2008, *La Cárcel: Problemas y Desafíos Para las Américas* FLACSO-Chile, Santiago (currently available in Spanish but will shortly be available in English from the FLACSO-Chile)

In what state is the penal system in Latin America and what is its current purpose? How serious a problem are overcrowding, violence and the inadequate healthcare of inmates? How are the particular concerns regarding the incarceration of females? What are the working conditions of the officials and guards on whom the security and well-being of the prisoners depend? This paper attempts to provide answers to these questions. Of all the security sectors in the region, the prison sector has received the least attention. While some of the blame falls on those working within the sector, government public security polices should take more responsibility. These have focused on being tough on crime, which has led to further pressure on the penal system without a concomitant increase in resources. The collapse of the judicial systems in many countries has exacerbated a situation in which prisons have been transformed into ‘universities of crime’. This report makes a number of recommendations to regional governments including: invest in existing prisons instead of solely building new institutions; make greater use of non-custodial sentences; improve conditions for those who work in the prisons; and improve the record-keeping of the prison population. Strong civil leadership is essential to improve the dire state of Latin American prisons and incarceration needs to be seen as the option of last resort rather than the solution to all criminal problems.

**Small Arms and Light Weapons**


What is the threat posed by Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Latin America? How does this problem vary across the region? What steps can be taken on the national, regional, and international stages to reduce the problems caused...
by SALW? Latin America is fortunate in not suffering from inter-state conflicts, but countries in the region have some of the highest rates of violent crime in the world. The report argues that this poses a major threat to human security. The fear of violence is one of the biggest concerns of Latin American citizens; it has an adverse effect on the economy and puts pressure on national health systems. The proliferation of SALW that fuels this violence is consequently a major concern to all security forces within the region. There are, however, particular issues relevant to each sub-region, for instance: fire-arms and urban violence in the southern cone; the links between drugs and SALW in Colombia and the Andean countries; and, more broadly, the quasi-military response to tackling the epidemic of SALW proliferation. The scale of the challenge is huge but there are a number of ways in which the impact of SALW can be reduced including cultural and legislative changes and greater regional and international cooperation.


What is the source of the small arms that are freely available across Latin America? How has the presence of SALW impacted security within the region? What effect has the proliferation of small arms and light weapons had on development in Latin America? This article, published in the NACLA Report on the Americas, reviews the multifaceted social consequences of the small arms trade. The trend of accelerating levels of crime and violence suggests that a broad-based and concerted gun control effort is needed. Gun violence is now holding back development in much of the region; fresh initiatives and the continued allocation of resources to tackling the trade will be needed to safeguard Latin America’s future prosperity.

**Intelligence**


Why has intelligence service reform in Latin America been so limited? This paper examines intelligence services in Argentina, Chile and Peru. It focuses on the number of institutions involved in overseeing reform, the degree of presidential control and the extent to which military intelligence activities are overseen by the civilian government. Reform has been limited in terms of expanding civilian authority. Incentives for civilians to pursue complicated reform have been absent, given the military’s proven ability to operate its own intelligence agencies.
Non-state Actors


What is the nature of Central American gang violence and have attempts to reduce it been successful? Urban violence is a major preoccupation of policymakers, planners and development practitioners, but it is a complex phenomenon. This article argues that repressive first-generation approaches have tended to radicalise gangs and push them towards organised crime. Meanwhile, preventive second-generation interventions have been credited with modest success, but have yielded more rhetorical advances than actual reductions in gang violence.

Related Documents


How much military assistance has the US provided to Latin American countries over the past decade? How has the nature of assistance changed? What should be done to make US aid most effective? This briefing document is an output from ‘Just the Facts’, a joint project of three US-based organisations working on Latin America. Covering the decade up to 2007, it includes statistics and analysis on US$7bn worth of defence and security assistance provided to Latin America by the US. Over the last few years, the majority of this aid has been in the form of counter-narcotics assistance and, post-2001, as part of the war on terror against ‘narco-terrorists’. The Department of Defence has replaced the State Department in the lead role in the disbursement of funds and this, the paper argues, has been at the expense of transparency, accountability and concerns such as human rights and democracy. To best address the challenges facing the region, the US should shift its focus away from military solutions and towards improving democratic and economic development.


How is Latin America and the Caribbean coping with the non-traditional security challenges it faces? This paper examines the two key axes of security dynamics: weak governance and citizen insecurity, and trans-national organised crime. It explores the inter-linkages and evaluates coping mechanisms. It identifies the most likely future security scenarios in the region and suggests a number of ways
in which regional insecurity might be addressed more effectively. These include strengthening the rule of law and judicial systems, and for important regional actors including the US and the OAS to work in a more effective manner. However, the development of a common security agenda remains an elusive goal.

More documents covering security sector reform throughout Latin America and the Caribbean can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

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**Caribbean**

**Haiti**

Haiti was struck by a magnitude seven earthquake in January 2010 that left over 200,000 dead. Security threats had been emerging prior to the disaster but any existing challenges have been amplified.

Haiti is an exceptional case in the region in many ways: it is the poorest country in the western hemisphere; it is an extremely weak state; it currently hosts an international UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH); and the international community plays a major role in all areas of politics, economics and security, including in SSR.

Haiti’s security threats include high levels of violence, drugs trafficking and the easy availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW), exacerbated by its porous borders. Consequently, in 2007 the UN Security Council broadened the mandate of MINUSTAH to include the prevention of trafficking and improved border security. Since 1995 Haiti has not had its own armed forces and hence reform has focused on the police, judicial and penal sectors. Initial reform efforts after the first UN intervention in 1994 formed part of the international community’s first attempts at SSR. Programmes to reform and strengthen the Haitian National Police (HNP) have achieved visible results, however justice reform has stalled.
SSR: General


What are Haiti's security challenges and SSR priorities following the 2010 earthquake? This report finds that – with infrastructure devastated and the police acting as relief facilitators – some SSR priorities will change dramatically, yet many existing challenges will be amplified. Justice reform is lagging behind police and prison reform, donor coordination in SSR is still lacking, and most Haitians want their country to have a second armed force. Inequitable development is a key security risk, and state-building must be prioritised as the only enduring solution to poverty, insecurity and instability.


What are the challenges of and priorities for establishing post-disaster security and stability in Haiti? This paper finds that historical institutional and governance weaknesses and deep poverty compound Haiti's humanitarian crisis. An integrated, long-term reconstruction strategy is needed, based on a very broad political and social consensus. It is important to resume and complete police reform and to prioritise preventive over forceful measures to control potential social unrest. Crucial factors will be the level of consensus reached on reconstruction between the government and the different sectors of Haitian society and more efficient cooperation from the international community.


The violent April 2008 protests against the high cost of living underscored the continued fragility of Haiti’s security situation and the need for rapid progress in security sector reform (SSR). This International Crisis Group report examines Haiti’s security sector and argues that stability lies in expediting and concluding reforms to the police and justice sector, and improving cross-border cooperation with its neighbours. These challenges are all the more urgent, as they come at a time when Haiti is struggling with severe hurricane devastation.
Despite multilateral attempts in the 1990s to institute security sector reform (SSR) in Haiti, lack of elite support, insufficient judicial sector capacity and persistent corruption has led to the current resurgence of violence. This study, published by International Peacekeeping, examines recent international interventions to institute SSR in Haiti. National dialogue with local elites and long-term donor involvement are necessary to ensure that justice, security, development and governance sectors are developed simultaneously to prevent the country from becoming a failed state.

How can Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Haiti be improved? This book chapter from the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) assesses the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), deployed in 2004. SSR is crucial to Haiti's stability and security, and while MINUSTAH's success in SSR has been limited, UN agencies have a key role to play. Areas for improvement include coordination and evaluation. Basic stability, government willingness and local ownership are essential for SSR in Haiti.

This document outlines the context-specific approaches to Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Haiti. It forms part of a larger report by the United States Strategic Studies Institute, which explores emergent principles for implementing SSR. In 2004 the United Nations implemented the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), deployed in Haiti to redress a cycle of international intervention and create a secure and stable environment. However, despite this and robust SSR programming in support of the rule of law, Haiti remains a failed state facing numerous challenges.

How can the Haitian government and international community reduce violence and promote sustainable reform in Haiti? This paper, by Action Aid, analyses the current situation in Haiti and makes recommendations for changes to the United Nations
Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), based on what is feasible and can be realistically implemented in the existing circumstances. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and rule of law are critical to ensure sustainable peace; therefore MINUSTAH and the new Haitian government must renew their focus on these priorities.

International Crisis Group, 2007, **Haiti: Justice Reform and the Security Crisis**

Latin America/Caribbean Briefing №14, 31 January 2007, International Crisis Group, Port-au-Prince/Brussels

What are the challenges facing justice reform in Haiti? What lessons have been learned from the failed interventions of the 1990s? This policy briefing from the International Crisis Group examines Haiti's justice system, efforts at reform and the security crisis. It argues that Haitians and international donors need to review past failures and devise, fund and implement a comprehensive rule-of-law strategy. Building a sustainable criminal justice system will require both short-term actions to address the current crisis and longer-term institution-building.

International Crisis Group, 2007, **Haiti: Prison Reform and the Rule of Law**

Latin America/Caribbean Briefing №15, 4 May 2007, International Crisis Group, Port-au-Prince/Brussels

What risk does prison overcrowding, understaffing and insecurity pose for wider security and justice sector efforts in Haiti? This policy briefing from the International Crisis Group examines the problems facing the Haitian prison system. It argues that extreme prison overcrowding threatens Haiti's security and stability. The most urgent need is to relieve existing prisons by using other space temporarily, while supporting the detention commission in accelerating treatment of pre-trial cases. These measures must be accompanied by construction to meet prison requirements for a generation.

**Small Arms and Light Weapons**

Control Arms, 2006, **The Call for Tough Arms Controls: Voices from Haiti**

Control Arms Campaign, Amnesty International, the International Action Network on Small Arms, and Oxfam International.

What impact has irresponsible arms sales had on people's lives in Haiti? How have groups that commit human rights violations been able to obtain weapons? This report from the Control Arms campaign examines the supply of arms to Haiti and its effect on individuals and communities. It argues that irresponsible arms transfers are fuelling atrocities in Haiti. Governments must take responsibility for the supply of arms, by agreeing a new international arms trade treaty.
GFN-SSR resources

More documents covering security sector reform in Haiti can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Haiti in the thematic areas of justice, fragile states and conflict.

Documents:
- Justice related documents on Haiti
- Fragile states related documents on Haiti
- Conflict related documents on Haiti

Jamaica

Jamaica has been broadly politically stable since independence in 1962 but has serious economic and social problems. The country is blighted by one of the highest levels of crime and violence in the world, caused both by criminals and through legitimate and extra-judicial killings by the security services themselves, according to reports by leading NGOs. Jamaica is a key point in the transit and trade of drugs and weapons, which further fuels the cycle of violence and poverty.

The Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) has been associated with extra-judicial killings, corruption and have been criticised for contributing to security problems and acting with impunity. The country’s inability to address the problems caused by crime is perpetuated by an overloaded and inefficient justice system, which in turn stifles efforts to improve dire penal conditions.

Reforms are underway, including the JCF strategic review and the Justice System Reform Task Force recommendations, as well as community safety programmes. However, initial implementation of justice reform has been slow and internal resistance against reform has been exploited by political groups.
**SSR: General**


What strategies is the Government of Jamaica planning to implement in order to establish a safe and secure environment? The Jamaican Government’s National Security Policy sets out an agenda for a prosperous, democratic, peaceful and dynamic society, which upholds the fulfillment of human rights and builds social progress based on shared values and principles of partnership. It argues that for all Jamaicans to enjoy a better quality of life and realise their full potential, everyone must become involved.

**Justice Reform**


What impact have reforms in the criminal justice system had on crime and violence in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica? This working paper from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government shows how the governments of the Dominican Republic and Jamaica currently measure the performance of their criminal justice systems and assess their impact on crime and violence. The paper argues that justice and safety in both countries would benefit from better coordination among institutions, including introducing information systems capable of tracking system-wide performance. Furthermore, both governments might more explicitly link the work of criminal justice systems to a broader, multi-sector strategy of crime and violence prevention.


What are the problems with the Jamaican justice system? What is the future vision for the system, and what reforms can enable this vision to be realised? This report followed a 10-month investigation into the Jamaican justice system by a government appointed task force, composed of members of the justice system, the government, and representatives of civil society with advice from the Canadian Bar Association. It briefly considers the current state of Jamaican justice and problems including delays and poor infrastructure, as well as strengths such as general confidence in the judiciary. The majority of the report looks at the reforms necessary to achieve the new ‘vision statement’ of fairer and more accountable
justice. Recommendations range from improving pre-trial detention facilities to initiating a public legal education strategy.

**Policing and public security**


What progress has been made in improving public security in Jamaica and upholding human rights? How can the remaining challenges be addressed? This report identifies key security concerns as: state failure to provide protection; killings by police; and lack of police accountability. The government has embarked on reform processes reform that, if correctly and fully implemented, could remove many of the factors contributing to Jamaica's public security crisis. Some (slow) progress has been made in reforming Jamaica's public security institutions, but so far little improvement in security has been seen in deprived inner-city areas. Significant political will is required to overcome obstacles to reform such as institutional resistance.


What are the key causes of the increase in violence across Jamaican cities? How has the state attempted to tackle this problem in areas of social exclusion? What is the role of the security forces in fuelling the violence? This report by Amnesty International argues that there is a public security crisis in Jamaica and that security institutions are failing to ensure the human security of Jamaican citizens. Human rights’ violations by the police are commonplace and the lack of effective oversight mechanisms means that police can and do act with impunity. The situation is particularly bad for the poorest residents of inner cities who face a daily threat from both gangs and the police. Amnesty’s principal recommendation is that the Jamaican government create a comprehensive public security plan focusing on the protection of human rights. It should include a crackdown on corruption, reforms to create a more responsive and accountable police force, and a reduction in the use of excessive force by the police. There needs to be greater regional cooperation in the field of public security, and increased international assistance to Jamaica is essential.

**GFN-SSR resources**

More documents covering security sector reform in Jamaica can be found online in the [GFN-SSR Document Library](#).
The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Jamaica in the thematic areas of justice and conflict.

Documents:
- Justice related documents on Jamaica
- Conflict related documents on Jamaica

Central America

Costa Rica

Costa Rica has the longest democratic history in Central America and has had one of the most stable political systems in the region. It was the first country in the world to formally abolish its national army, the formation of which was forbidden in its 1949 constitution. The judiciary is independent from the legislature and executive, but lengthy pre-trial detention is commonplace in prisons that need substantial investment. Despite these positive features, however, the perception of public insecurity within the country’s borders is a major concern. This sense of insecurity combined with abuses by the police force has led to a series of reforms of the internal security sectors.

Policing


Has the implementation of police legal training and police legal assistance led to improved police officer compliance with the rule of law in Costa Rica? What factors influence the effectiveness of police human rights strategies (PHRS)? This article examines the implementation of PHRS in Costa Rica and their effect on police compliance with the rule of law. It finds that police legal training and police legal assistance have strengthened police officer compliance with the rule of law. The most important factors in ensuring compliance, however, are sustained socio-political commitment and institutional support from key actors at police station level. Recommendations include more concerted institution-wide support of reform, shaping human rights’ strategies to the demands of daily policing, and updating training.
Guatemala

Guatemala was home to one of the many proxy conflicts fought throughout the world during the Cold War. The civil war that began in 1960 ended in 1996 and the peace accord of the same year established a blueprint for SSR, recognising the role of the security forces in exacerbating the civil war. However, a referendum on the constitutional reform that included elements of SSR was defeated. While some reform has taken place, the military continues to play an important role in Guatemalan society.

Since 1996 several democratic elections have taken place but the legacy of war is evident in a lack of transitional justice and the persistence of impunity. Guatemala is one of the poorest and most violent countries in Latin America (if not the world), with high rates of homicide a consequence of criminal gangs, widespread drugs trafficking and easy access to small arms.

Criminal justice institutions are weak, corrupted, and often the source of much of the violence they are supposed to be preventing. As a result – and as often seen in Latin American countries – private security guards outnumber police officers. There has been a rise of clandestine groups, many of which are directed by ex-senior military officers and politicians. Furthermore, the country has experienced a proliferation of Mexican gangs and criminal organisations that traffic illegal drugs and adopt babies. Consequently, it is the poor and most vulnerable who receive the least protection, though politicians are not immune from violence.

SSR: General


What role did civil society play in military reform in Guatemala? What lessons can be learnt from their involvement? This case study is one of several in a guide to local ownership of security sector reform. In Guatemala, a ‘research-based dialogue’ was crucial in overcoming resistance to SSR and in facilitating official acceptance of civil society involvement in the reform process. This involved the
establishment of a neutral space for dialogue and meetings rather than more confrontational political negotiations. Meetings involved military leaders, government institutions and significant input from civil society. This study argues that generating a Guatemalan identity for SSR led to progress that might not have occurred with predominantly foreign input.

Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC), 2005, *Security Sector Reform in Guatemala*, BICC, Bonn

This short briefing provides an overview of SSR in Guatemala up until 2005. It summarises the developments in all areas of reform including defence, penal, police and judicial reform, as well as no-state security actors and parliamentary oversight of security forces.


The 1996 peace accords formally ended Guatemala's civil war, but failure to address the conflict's root causes and to dismantle clandestine security apparatus has weakened its institutions and opened the door to skyrocketing violent crime. The UN-sanctioned International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) has made some progress in addressing high-level corruption, but in June 2010 its director resigned, saying the government had not kept its promise to support CICIG's work and reform the justice system. The President needs to consolidate recent gains with institutional reform, anti-corruption measures, vetting mechanisms and a more inclusive political approach, including to indigenous peoples. Reform of the police and military as well as the corrections and justice systems are among the priorities.

**Civil Society**


Can civil society organisations play a role in building citizenship and confronting violent actors and acts of violence? This Institute of Development Studies Working Paper argues that they can, and explores civil society participation in Colombia and Guatemala. Building citizenship in chronic violence contexts requires simultaneous attention to citizenship and to violence, and it is also important to clarify the relationship between power and violence.
**Defence Reform**


How did the Guatemalan security architecture effect a transformation from militarisation to focus on public security? The political history of Guatemala is almost exclusively one of authoritarianism and hence the shift to democracy has required a wholesale change in its politics, culture and society. The paper analyses this shift in the wake of the 1996 peace accords. A Part-Agreement within the accords sought to create a democratic framework in which the military and other security services would operate in order to transform the governance of the security sector. Despite some advances in civil-military cooperation and understanding, weaknesses remain including an incomplete regulatory framework for the military and insufficient oversight, while the National Civilian Police is in need of strengthening to become fully independent from the armed forces. Politicians need to be resolute in their approach to military reform, and civil society needs to become further involved in the national debate beyond advocating change – for example through providing technical assistance for the state.

**Intelligence Reform**


What reforms have taken place in Guatemalan intelligence since the 1996 peace accords? How successful have the reforms been in achieving their aims of a more accountable and democratic agency that does not threaten the human rights of its citizens? This paper by the Washington Office on Latin America assesses the Guatemalan intelligence system and the reforms that have taken place between 1996 and 2005. The intelligence system was responsible for the deaths and disappearances of at least 200,000 Guatemalan citizens during more than 35 years of conflict. The 1996 Peace Accords attempted to transform the old intelligence apparatus within a new framework of democratic security but a clear and well-defined state policy for the sector is lacking. The paper calls for a number of changes including structural reorganisation and the development of new systems of democratic control and oversight.

**Justice Reform**

How does aid to transitional justice work? What are the patterns, types and causes of such aid? Little is known about the dynamics of external economic assistance to national transitional justice (TJ) efforts. This paper examines the aid for transitional justice mechanisms that was given to Rwanda and Guatemala from 1995 to 2005, to assist two countries that were "post-conflict", in a process of transition from a past period of massive armed violence. Lessons can be drawn on the sustainability of the transitional justice processes, and on the complementarity of funding in this field. For instance, donors should try to maintain the balance between promoting local ownership of transitional justice and promoting the overall aims of transitional justice while security sector reform should not overwhelm other transitional justice mechanisms.

Policing

Scheye, E., 2005, *Reflections on Community Based Policing Operations in Guatemala*, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

What are the current capabilities of the Guatemalan National Civilian Police (PNC) and the Ministry of Governance with regard to community-based policing? How effective has international policing assistance to Guatemala been? This report from USAID examines community-based policing programming in Guatemala. It finds that eight years of international police assistance has failed to strengthen appreciably the sustainable policing capacities of the Ministry or the PNC.

More documents covering security sector reform in Guatemala can be found online in the [GFN-SSR Document Library](#).

**GFN-SSR resources**

More documents covering security sector reform in Guatemala can be found online in the [GFN-SSR Document Library](#).

**The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)** also has a number of related resources for Guatemala in the thematic areas of justice, fragile states and conflict.

Documents:
- Justice related documents on Guatemala
- Fragile states related documents on Guatemala
- Conflict related documents on Guatemala
Mexico

Mexico has seen a dramatic rise in violence over recent years and this has had a major impact on both security and security sector reform. The violence associated with warring drug cartels and the inability of the country’s police forces to deal effectively with it is so serious that tens of thousands of soldiers were deployed to the worst-hit areas of Mexico in 2007. The rise in violence along the United States’ Southern border prompted the US President to request billions of dollars in funding for equipment and training to support the Mexican armed forces and national police institutions through Plan Mérida. This plan, however, caused considerable controversy in both countries as a result of its focus on a military solution.

While the military is in need of assistance, the police are also in need of reform to improve their ability to tackle the country’s internal security threats and root out widespread corruption and human rights abuses. A holistic approach incorporating all security sectors is essential.

Bribery is rife throughout the judicial system while prison conditions are extremely poor and fail in their roles as both a deterrent and a centre for rehabilitation. Efforts to reform the judicial sector between 2000 and 2006 failed to win Congressional approval but the initiative triggered a national debate and signaled federal approval for states to implement reform at a sub-national level. This subsequently led to the approval of a package of legislative and constitutional reforms in 2008, which covers virtually all aspects of the judicial sector, including the police, public defenders, the courts and the penal system.

**SSR: General**


What will be the impact of the US’s Merida initiative on security in Mexico and Central America? Are resources being directed in the most effective way? This memo addresses the proposed US-Central American counter-narcotics package. It notes that in theory the Merida initiative may have the potential to improve public security. However, the paper argues that in its present form the initiative focuses on the armed forces and on operational law-enforcement issues such as equipment, while neglecting longer-term institutional justice and police reform that would have a much greater impact on improving human security. Moreover, the initiative lacks accountability or oversight mechanisms that are crucial in a country where corruption is so endemic. The Merida plan alone will not reduce the flow of drugs into the US and should not be judged on that basis. The initiative should instead be judged by its effects on public security and civilian security institutions in Mexico and Central America.
**Defence Reform**


Despite past problems, the Mexican armed forces have made significant progress towards becoming professional institutions. This study, from Queens University, examines the history and structure of the Mexican armed forces and suggests areas of possible military cooperation between Canada and Mexico. It looks at the process of political change and the effects this has had on civil-military relations. The armed forces are well-trained and dynamic organisations that are respected by Mexicans and, although they could liberalise further, they are adapting well to democratic change.

**Justice Reform**


Mexico’s official human rights organ, Comision Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (CNDH), is failing to promote reforms to improve Mexico’s dismal human rights record. What has gone wrong? This research, by Human Rights Watch, argues that the CNDH could play a far more active role but it has been limited by its own policies and practices. For such an institution to be a catalyst for change, rather than a chronicler of the status quo, it must be proactive and persistent in promoting solutions.


What judicial reforms is Mexico embarking on? What must happen to create a more democratic rule of law for the country by 2016? This paper explains Mexico’s justice sector challenges and proposed reforms. Mexico is currently suffering a public security crisis. In 2008 Congress approved reforms that touch virtually all aspects of the judicial sector. Reform will require time, resources and effort, and will involve a great deal of trial and error.
**Policing and public security**


Does community policing work in Latin America? What can be learned from experiences of community policing in Mexico City? This paper analyses the experiences of community policing in Mexico City since 2006, and critiques the theory and practice of the approach applied to Latin American countries. Community policing is widely promoted as beneficial to urban law and order through improved citizen-police relations and cooperation. However, experiences from the Policia de Barrio programme in Mexico City show that clientelism, police corruption and political factionalism make community policing a symbolic exercise that does not genuinely improve public security.

**Related Documents**


How can drug trafficking between the US and Mexico be reduced? This Washington Office of Latin America and Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme brief examines current and past drug policies implemented by the Mexican government and argues that government responses dominated by law enforcement and militarisation do little to address the issue in the long-term. The most effective way to address drug trafficking is through increased efforts to curb demand for illicit drugs in the United States and Mexico.

More documents covering security sector reform in Mexico can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

**GFN-SSR resources**

More documents covering security sector reform in Mexico can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Mexico in the thematic area of justice.
Southern America

Argentina

Argentina has experienced military dictatorship and an economic collapse in 2001. Severe economic difficulties left a large portion of the population in poverty and triggered unrest leading to escalating crime rates.

The police in Argentina are associated with excessive violence and the repression of protest whilst police criminality has emerged as a serious security problem and a threat to democracy. Police institutions are further hamstrung by significant financial and organisational weaknesses including low wages, an overly hierarchical command structure, and excessively militarised training.

Past reform proposals in Argentina have involved: encouraging the police to defend individuals rather than governments; reducing the power of governors relative to mayors and civil society groups; and challenging the police's role in criminal investigations. These proposals have sought to address long-standing features of Argentina's policing structure.

The literature suggests that Argentina is experiencing crisis of public security, a consequence of which has been the proliferation of private security agents in urban areas such as Buenos Aires.

Policing and public security


Do government statements affect the institutionalisation of democratic policing practices? This article examines newspaper coverage of three major incidents of police violence in Argentina, finding that state actors adopt differing positions towards this use of force in their reported public statements. Government officials oscillate between denying the occurrence of police violence, justifying such police action and absolving themselves of responsibility. This inconsistency contributes to the persistence of police violence. While institutional reforms aimed at changing police practice are important, in addition state actors must maintain a clear and relatively consistent discourse in favour of democratic policing. State discourses can affect policy outcomes by holding police verbally accountable to minimum standards of democratic policing.

Why is police reform in Argentina so difficult? This article examines three obstacles to police reform: 1) federal institutions that magnify the effects of disputes over the police among national, provincial, and municipal government; 2) illicit benefits for political parties from unreformed police forces; and 3) deep ideological divisions within civil society over the appropriate policy response to increasing levels of crime. Each of these obstacles has generated an important, yet distinct, paradox. Efforts to improve police institutions must be intensified, but with a more accurate and detailed understanding of the paradoxes to be overcome.

**GFN-SSR resources**
More documents covering security sector reform in Argentina can be found online in the [GFN-SSR Document Library](#).

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Argentina in the thematic areas of justice and conflict.

Documents:
- Justice related documents on Argentina
- Conflict related documents on Argentina

Helpdesk reports:
- [Argentine Financial Crisis (2001-2002): Please identify literature on the social impacts of the financial crisis in Argentina (2001-2002) with particular attention to the causes of social unrest (including unemployment). Please include information on the policy responses implemented.](#)
Brazil

Brazil is the continent’s economic and military power. However, the country itself is blighted by extremely high levels of insecurity amid one of the highest homicide rates in the world. Police violence and human rights abuses’ are part of everyday life as the country struggles to deal with the proliferation of organised crime, drugs trafficking and small arms and light weapons. Informal militias, funded by the profits of the drugs trade, control many of the favelas (shantytowns) in and around Brazil’s cities.

The country is in urgent need of police reform to improve internal security but this in itself will be insufficient while the prison system suffers from chronic overcrowding and violence is rife. Brazil's police forces are unequipped, badly trained, underpaid and frequently corrupt. Violence is escalating in Brazil's major urban centres and there is an increasing loss of popular and federal government trust in state police forces.

SSR: General

BICC, 2005, *Security Sector Reform in Brazil*, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, Bonn

This short briefing provides an overview of SSR in Brazil up until 2005. While a few years old, it summarises the developments in all areas of SSR including defence, penal, police and judicial reform, as well as parliamentary oversight of security forces.

Public security and Policing


How has the Brazilian government and its security forces responded to ongoing violence and insecurity within the country? What changes are needed to improve the effectiveness of the police? This report by Amnesty International was released in response to a wave of criminal violence that affected Sao Paulo in May 2006 and analyses both the events of that month and the state response to them. It argues that the main problems include: poorly trained and under-resourced police forces; poorer communities that have become lawless zones due to official neglect; and a prison system on the brink of collapse. Amnesty recommends the introduction of human-rights based policing; a programme to prevent police killings; and wholesale prison reform to ensure the security of both guards and prisoners.

What is the nature of the police reform that has taken place in Brazil? What effect can donors have on reform programmes? This paper, looking at reforms between 1997 and 2003, argues that the police service has made the least progress of all sectors of government and administration in reforming since the process of democratisation began 20 years ago. Attempts at police reform have occurred but are hindered by a lack of political will and internal resistance. Donors need to increase the participation of civil society in order to ensure reforms continue as political administrations change and gain police buy-in to make accountability mechanisms more effective.


How effective is police oversight in Brazil? What are the strengths and weaknesses of current institutional mechanisms for police control? This working paper from the Centre for Brazilian Studies analyses the problem of subjecting the Brazilian police to truly effective control and oversight. It argues that the current system has been an almost complete failure in bringing about police accountability in Brazil. It recommends that the standards against which police performance and conduct are measured become much clearer and more objective. Accountability should be conceived of in broader terms, with oversight mechanisms more proactive in reviewing police behaviour. Police reform should be carried out to eliminate underlying structural problems, enabling the Ministério Público to use its autonomy, resources and legal powers for police oversight.


This paper examines the increasing militarisation of Brazilian public security. It argues that the development of democracy is constrained by politicised armed forces and militarised police. Confusing security governance and institutional arrangements and the involvement of the army in policing constrain the development of democracy.
Related Documents


How can the concept of human security be used as a practical device to address armed violence? This paper from the Centre for Policy Studies presents the example of Brazilian non-governmental organisation Viva Rio that uses the human security concept as a tool to formulate policies and execute projects on the ground. Viva Rio’s work includes: the development of strategies to reduce the supply and demand of small arms and light weapons and to increase police training and reform, income generation and education programmes; research, design and implementation of specific programmes to overcome armed violence and social exclusion; and integrating security, human rights and development goals in collaboration with local and regional partners as a long-term solution to armed violence. The human security concept can be a powerful point of departure to orient governments, international and regional organisations and NGOs towards initiatives that increase personal safety.

GFN-SSR resources
More documents covering security sector reform in Brazil can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Brazil in the thematic area of justice,
Chile

Chile is one of the most developed countries in the Americas and has one of the most stable political and economic systems. Yet for 17 years it was ruled by military dictator General Augusto Pinochet following a coup in 1973. Pinochet’s rule was characterised by severe human rights’ abuses; the Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that over 3,000 people were killed or went missing up until Pinochet left office in 1990. The legacy of Pinochet continues to impact Chilean society and politics, but reform of the criminal justice system in Chile has been more successful than elsewhere in the continent, and courts are generally free from political interference. However, less reform has taken place in the security sector, including the military justice system. Moreover, though constitutionally subordinate to the executive, the military enjoys a large degree of autonomy, and is strengthened by high copper prices through a law that directs 10 per cent of copper revenues into the military’s budget.

SSR: General


What effect has the end of military rule had on the security sectors in Chile? How responsive have the armed forces, in particular, been to change? Despite the fact that Chile entered a new democratic era almost two decades ago, security sector reform (SSR) still faces enormous institutional and political resistance. This report, published by Conflict, Security and Development, examines the cautious steps that Chile’s current governing coalition is taking to institute SSR. Even in highly restricted political and institutional environments, civilians can lead SSR initiatives when they have political support and the technical capacity to do so.

Intelligence Reform

Weeks, G., 2004, The Military and Intelligence Reform in Chile, Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad’, vol.18, no.3-4, pp.253-263

How can intelligence reform assist in asserting civilian supremacy over the military? This article, published in the journal Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad, argues that the work of three successive Chilean governments has had only limited success in expanding civilian authority over intelligence. A new model for understanding the dynamics of intelligence reform is offered, involving the number of institutions involved, presidential control and civilian oversight.
Justice Reform


What was the impact of Pinochet’s military regime on Chile’s judicial system and what legacy did it leave behind? How did social change affect clamour for judicial reform? Has the role of Chile’s Carabineros (police) transformed in the wake of democratic government? Since the country’s return to democracy in 1990, Chile has implemented a broad programme of judicial reform. However, this University of Florida paper argues that Chilean judicial transformation is incomplete with reforms not addressing military jurisdiction over the country’s police, the Carabineros. Under the current arrangement, Chilean security forces continue to act with impunity at the expense of citizen security, not as effective guardians of it.


Can judicial reform in Chile be judged a success without considering the state of the military justice system? What distinguishes the armed forces’ system from other mechanisms? The military judicial system requires particular analysis when considering the overall effectiveness of judicial reform in Chile more so than in other countries. This paper looks at the role that military justice plays in Chile and argues that the armed forces system is focused on the protection of the armed forces’ interests and contrary to normal judicial principles such as the equal treatment of citizens before the law. The authors conclude that there is little political incentive to implement changes.

GFN-SSR resources

More documents covering security sector reform in Chile can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Chile in the thematic areas of justice and conflict.

Documents:
- Justice related documents on Chile
- Conflict related documents on Chile
Colombia

Colombia is the only country in South America that currently experiences an active civil conflict. During recent years the internal security situation has improved dramatically but in the second half of the 20th century Colombia was one of the most violent countries in the world. Over the past 50 years the conflict has involved a number of different actors including left-wing rebel groups, right-wing paramilitary organisations, criminal gangs and state security forces. The paramilitary groups initially grew as a result of the inability of the state to offer protection for its citizens against left-wing organisations but they, like their opponents, are increasingly motivated by profits from the cocaine trade, of which Colombia is the world’s biggest producer.

In response to repeated failures by previous presidents to tackle Colombia’s security problems, President Alvaro Uribe was elected in 2002 on a platform of ‘democratic security’, which led to an expansion of the role of the military in internal security. An extensive DDR programme has been carried out since 2005 together with a Justice and Peace Law to address human rights’ violations. While thousands of right-wing paramilitaries have been demobilised, the programme has been criticised for insufficient concern for the rights of victims, and many demobilised fighters have simply joined new armed groups. The United States is a key ally and has contributed billions of dollars in counter-insurgency and counter-trafficking funding and training for the Colombian armed forces. Core components of SSR, however, have only been applied to a limited extent; accountability to citizens and parliamentary oversight have not been implemented and civil society (whilst active as a voice against human rights abuses) has not been a partner in the process. Furthermore, the armed forces have been implicated in extra-judicial killings and cover-ups. Gross human rights’ violations by all sides have characterised this conflict right up until the present day.

Elsewhere, the lower rungs of the judicial system are compromised by extortion and corruption though the Supreme Court has demonstrated its independence in ruling against the government on several occasions. Recent court cases have found many politicians guilty of collusion with paramilitaries.

SSR: General


Can the concept of Security Sector Reform (SSR) be applied to Colombia? How should such reforms be implemented? This chapter outlines the limited SSR process in Colombia, which has concentrated on increasing the effectiveness of the state in fighting internal conflict, not necessarily on improving democratic governance. The
need to extend and complete SSR in Colombia is indicated by: the absence of parliamentary oversight; limited space for civil society involvement; government and security actors' limited acceptance of the rule of law; and a lack of provision for the treatment of non-statutory security forces.


How can the Colombian government consolidate security gains and improve security policy? This briefing recommends that the new government acknowledge that Colombia has still not reached the post-conflict phase. The government needs to: maintain pressure on the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC); develop and implement a comprehensive citizen security strategy; tackle the threat posed by paramilitary successors and new illegal armed groups; and advance military and citizen security policy reform.


Since the late 1990s, discussions amongst donors concerning development have increasingly focused on Security Sector Reform (SSR). This is due to the potentially negative effects on security, wealth and democracy that a corrupt or inefficient security sector can have. This paper, by Catalina Perdomo, examines the arguments underlying the scepticism of donor and recipient countries and development agencies towards the SSR agenda. It uses the cases of the United States' assistance to Colombia and the United Kingdom's assistance to Sierra Leone as examples. In doing so, the paper suggests some ways to limit the potential negative impacts of supporting SSR.

**Civil Society**


What attempts have been made to transform security in Medellin, Colombia? What role could civil society play in addressing violence? Security sector transformation should consider the content of the security agenda as well as security structures and actors. Civil society organisations have valuable understanding of local community needs. They could help to revise security goals and introduce a greater focus on human security if better participatory spaces were opened.

Can civil society organisations play a role in building citizenship and confronting violent actors and acts of violence? This Institute of Development Studies Working Paper argues that they can, and explores civil society participation in Colombia and Guatemala. Building citizenship in chronic violence contexts requires simultaneous attention to citizenship and to violence, and it is also important to clarify the relationship between power and violence.

**Defence Reform**

Marks, T., 2005, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for "Democratic Security"*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle

How has Colombia reoriented its approach towards the country’s principal security challenge - a lengthy insurgency closely linked to criminal activity? Published by the Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College, this paper assesses the sustainability of the counterinsurgency waged by Colombian President Alvaro Uribe against FARC rebels. Although not yet complete, this multifaceted campaign is likely to result in a Colombia that is more integrated, prosperous and democratic than at any time in the past 40 years.

**Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)**


How does Colombia’s Justice and Peace Law balance the needs for peace and justice? To what extent does the paramilitary demobilisation process meet international standards for justice, truth and reparations? This paper from the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior examines Colombia’s Justice and Peace Law in relation to justice, truth and reparation. It argues that while the law uses the language of human rights and justice, it is lacking in mechanisms to put these principles into practice.


Which factors determine whether former combatants can be successfully integrated into social and political spheres at the end of a conflict? This article published in
Conflict, Security and Development compares the political reintegration of the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) in Colombia in the early 1990s with the reintegration of the paramilitary a decade later. It argues that successful reintegration depends on the acceptance of relevant audiences and the capacity of former combatants to perform as social and political interlocutors.


What is the nature of the new armed groups emerging in Colombia? How effective is the Colombian government’s strategy of treating these new groups as criminal gangs? While the demobilisation of the former paramilitary block the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) was heralded by the Colombian government as a key indicator of progress towards peace, this report by International Crisis Group highlights the growth of New Illegal Armed Groups. These groups are often composed of former paramilitary members, frequently collaborate with criminal organisations and often operate much like the AUC. According to this report, the police and judiciary are ill-equipped to take on this challenge while the DDR process has been unable to ensure the successful reintegration of former combatants. To tackle this growing problem, the Colombian government needs to combine more effective judicial, police and military measures against the new and old paramilitaries with improved protection for civilians and victims of atrocities and an economic development programme that will facilitate sustainable integration.

Related Documents


How has Colombia moved from the brink of chaos in 1999 to relative stability in 2007? What are its most significant achievements and where do the most difficult challenges remain? What role has the US played in facilitating the improvements in security? This paper, by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, looks at President Uribe’s policy of ‘democratic security’ and examines progress in areas including security, human rights, governance and economics. It argues that progress is impressive as violence has been reduced, state authority extended and governance enhanced. However, more work needs to be done: the rule of law needs strengthening, cocaine trafficking remains a serious problem and the success of the DDR process is still far from clear.
**GFN-SSR resources**
More documents covering security sector reform in Colombia can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Colombia in the thematic areas of justice, fragile states and conflict.

Documents:
- Justice related documents on Colombia
- Fragile states related documents on Colombia
- Conflict related documents on Colombia

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**Peru**

Security and the security sectors within Peru remain influenced by the conflict fought against Maoist rebels during the 1980s and 1990s. Yet while the remnants of insurgent group Shining Path continue to pose a minimal threat, current security problems are more a result of criminal activity, much of which is linked to armed gangs and the cocaine trade. An effective police force is key to combating these challenges, but although police reform was a key project of former President Alejandro Toledo when he took office in 2001 after many years of authoritarian rule, change has been slow and frequently resisted. Both the security forces and the judicial system command little respect amongst the population, tainted by endemic corruption and a legacy of human rights abuses during the administration of former President Fujimori.

**Policing**


How effective was the reform transformation of the Peruvian police between 2001 - 2004? This article from Civil Wars journal argues that Peru’s police reform process suffered from fluctuating political interest and support. Consequently, although achievements were significant, they were much less than initially hoped. The article examines the host of difficulties faced in achieving reform and concludes that
additional resources and consistent political and institutional backing are necessary to foster and sustain transformation.

**GFN-SSR resources**
More documents covering security sector reform in Peru can be found online in the GFN-SSR Document Library.

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) also has a number of related resources for Guatemala in the thematic areas of justice and conflict.

Documents:
- [Justice related documents on Peru](#)
- [Conflict related documents on Peru](#)