Domestic and International Challenges to Security and Their Impact on Democracy

Christopher Sabatini
National Endowment for Democracy
chriss@ned.org

I'd like to thank Ambassador Miguel Ruiz-Cabanas, Chairman of the Committee on Hemispheric Security and the Organization of American States for the opportunity to speak at this historic event. This event represents a unique opportunity to incorporate the views and opinions of civil society in these discussions, and I applaud the committee's foresight and initiative. I hope that this is the first of many steps towards integrating civil society in the discussions and implementation of measures to improve security and defense in the region.

Others have talked about security and defense issues both conceptually and as they relate to inter-state relations. I will talk about security as it relates primarily to democracy within the individual countries and the role the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security, working in collaboration with civil society groups in the region, can play in addressing these concerns. As the final declaration from the 2001 Summit of the Americas stated and the convening of this forum demonstrates, international/hemispheric security is of primary importance to the hemisphere, not only for peace and cooperation in the region, but also for the strengthening and stability of democracy.

Ultimately these issues of international/regional/domestic security have to be considered together; security and democracy are tightly intertwined goals of the OAS and the Summit process. My speech here is not an effort to analyze the concept of international security in the hemisphere, but to analyze it in relation to democracy and the ways in which civil society can help promote a new democratic, security agenda.

With this in mind, my presentation is divided into three parts:

1) First the definition of security, particularly in light of new threats and the introduction of new themes under the concept of security;

2) Second, the domestic and international pressures for changes in the concept of security and their implications for democracy; and

3) Third, ways in which these concerns can be addressed within the current multilateral framework of the OAS and the Summit Process with the participation of civil society.

I.   **The Definition of "Security:"**

The concept and definition of what is security has—in recent years—become stretched to take on new meanings. Much of what in earlier days was referred to as development, law enforcement, disaster relief, and the battle against terrorism and narco-trafficking has at one time or another come under the definition of security. Today, we hear the word security attached to issues of health, economic stability, corruption, crime, delinquency, threats to internal stability, narcotics, terrorism.

By citing everything as security, however, it gives these issues a heightened sense of alarm. The risk is that if we include everything under the category of security, it blurs traditional—and important—distinctions about security and by implication the role of law enforcement and the armed forces in addressing them.

At their base, the expansion of this concept of "security" to other dimensions—some of them valid—is dangerous primarily in the extent to which they promote a militarization of non-military issues or encourage the expansion of the armed forces into areas in which there is little or no civilian oversight or control.

This concept stretching of "security" comes from two sources: 1) domestic pressures and 2) international pressures related to combating terrorism and narcotics trafficking.

To cite these is not to condemn them or to dismiss them out of hand—rather, both represent very logical responses to interests and conditions. I'll talk about each of them in turn:

II.   **Domestic Pressures:**

In many countries throughout the region, mounting citizen concern over the effectiveness of civilian institutions in providing for basic needs—such as combating and preventing crime, delinquency and general social decay, the delivery of basic services such as health care and education, and economic growth and stability—has led to growing disillusionment and in some cases the rejection of civilian institutions, and the growing re-evaluation of the military and its role. Increasingly, the military is filling the vacuum left by weak civilian institutions, building upon their already substantial organizational and economic advantages to consolidate a greater role over state functions and missions, often with the support of large portions of the citizenry.

In these cases, the response to "securitize" or even to "militarize" these issues has strong roots in the already weak states in the region. Simply put, as demands increase, weak states have struggled to respond, and in the perceived failure of civilian governance—as surveys have demonstrated--citizens have turned to an institution that has demonstrated

itself to be above political squabbles and that has at least given the impression of effectiveness: the armed forces.

This is not necessarily a question of values, but rather—at its heart—a civilian governance issue, and one that extends not only to the state but to political parties as well. As I'll describe below, these conditions require a more coordinated response, building on the already strong multilateral framework that has developed in the last eight years.

III. International/Regional Pressures:

In the new environment of transnational threats arising from terrorism, narcotics trafficking and international crime syndicates, there has emerged a new concept of security as well. Governments, throughout the region are recognizing that globalization means not only the increased flow of information and money but also the increased ability of criminal and terrorist networks to move financial resources across borders, ship arms and ultimately undermine government control and integrity, and threaten innocent civilians through random acts of violence.

These pressures and this emerging re-conceptualization of "security" in a global age also have their implications for domestic politics and civil-military relations. To be sure, and make no mistake about it, these threats--in order to ensure the safety of citizens and of the modern nation state--need to be addressed, but they should also be addressed cognizant of the impact they will have on civilian institutions and democracy.

Discussions of the role or the expansion of the responsibility of the military, security and intelligence sector need to be developed and carried out in collaboration with elected civilian governments and through civilian institutions (such as defense ministries and congressional defense committees) and civil society.

Attimes, in their foreign policies countries often speak with many different voices, and some of those voices contradict one another—or in the worst case the mission of one department or office may undermine the longer term vision or strategy of another department. Historically, within many countries this has led to a distortion of institutions—in particular the armed forces—outside the framework of civilian and/or democratic oversight. For those that have studied the history of civil-military relations or have lived under the consequences of these actions, it is clear that an overriding emphasis on the armed forces while marginalizing civilian institutions and citizens:

- degrades civilian institutions;
- gives primacy to the armed forces over decision making not just over the policies concerning the use of force but also in the state, and
- undermines fundamental democratic processes such as accountability and transparency.

IV.   **What Instruments Are Required to Address These Threats**:

Given both of these pressures for the re-conceptualization of security—and their attendant threats to democratic stability—what instruments are best suited to address them?

Here, I believe the evolution of the role of the OAS and the Summit of the Americas process represents a very positive trend. By opening up the discussion to civilian non-governmental groups and providing greater opportunities for collaboration under many of the commitments and initiatives taken under the multi-lateral process, these processes can continue to shape the new security agenda in a positive way for democratic stability.

As all of you know, the evolution of the OAS's and the Summit of the Americas commitment to security has been significant. From the first declaration of the Miami Summit, which committed governments to building mutual confidence to the most recent declaration of the Quebec City summit, which committed governments to improve the transparency and accountability of defense and security institutions through information sharing and personnel exchanges, there has been a clear, solid evolution of commitments among governments to strengthening the democratic component of security and defense.

The commitments that emerged from these Summits and the follow-up Confidence and Security Building conferences provide a solid framework for action and one in which civil society can play an important role, including in areas of: training, information sharing, research, and inter-governmental collaboration.

That role was articulated most clearly in the recent Confidence and Security Building meeting in February in Miami. With this in mind, I'll conclude by taking a few of these very positive initiatives that came out of the meeting and highlighting ways in which civilian nongovernmental organizations should be allowed to play a greater role. In this vein, civil society groups (such as NGOs, think tanks, and academic institutes) can help fulfill the responsibilities of the OAS in articulating and responding to this new security framework in a way that ensures greater citizen in put and responsibility.

1.   The first of these is in the **promotion of greater budget transparency in defense**. First mentioned in the CSBM conference of Santiago in 1995 and reiterated and strengthened subsequently, the call for developing common standardized methodologies for measuring defense expenditures and promoting greater budgetary transparency is one in which civilian nongovernmental organizations and academics are already involved and in which their participation should be strengthened. The International Budget Project, an international NGO, has made significant advances in untangling and understanding public budgets in areas such as poverty alleviation programs and women=s health programs. Today, NGOs in Latin America are

engaged in applying the same methodology to the field of defense budgets. But more needs to be done, particularly in collaboration with governments.

Military budgets shouldn't be understandable and sharable only between governments; they should be available to citizens themselves, and citizens not just in one country, but throughout the hemisphere. To this end, civil society organizations (think tanks, NGOs, academics, universities, even journalists) should be included in this discussion. Clear, transparent understanding of budgets benefits everyone. It is fundamentally a democracy issue—when governments don't provide estimates of cost of military operations or events in a timely, transparent and timely manner democratic oversight and accountability is weakened.

I strongly urge the representatives at the Special Conference on Security to consider ways in which nongovernmental civilian institutions can contribute to this process.

2.   The second is the proposal that came out of the February meeting in Miami to **create a clearing house of documents on defense policies, structure, and organization**: Here the OAS can work in collaboration with universities and civil society to organize this and make it widely available. Much of this is already underway with RESDAL and its database (www.resdal.org). Support for this effort, with collaboration with the OAS, can help fulfill these recommendations and ensure the sharing of concrete information among governments and citizens on defense policy matters and organization.

In this regard Georgetown's Political Database of the Americas—which collects elections laws, elections results and the contact information of electoral institutions, and places it on the website for public use.

I strongly urge the representatives of the Special Conference on Security to consider establishing a database—building on the existing RESDAL database—that consolidates defense and defense-related information and makes it available to the public. Such an effort would involve only a small grant to an NGO, but would provide a powerful and long lasting service to the region.

3.   The third of these is the **promotion of a dialogue among legislators on defense and security policy**, another recommendation from CSBM meetings: In this regard cooperation with universities and think tanks in the region, many of which are already doing this informally, could be used to train legislators and their staffs on defense matters and oversight.

I strongly urge the representatives of the Special Conference on Security to consider ways to support the training of congressmen and women active in defense and the creation of a hemispheric network of congressional representatives and staff working on this issue.

4.   And last, the Miami CSBM meeting proposed a **Conference with Civil Society on Confidence-Building Measures and Security and Defense**: This is a very strong and concrete step and one which on the basis of these meeting we could begin to explore how to follow up. A meeting of civil society representatives could be used to explore ways to promote budget transparency, exchanges, information sharing, and research to strengthen civilian institutions (governmental and nongovernmental) in the area of security and defense. Such an event could provide a great opportunity to bring a select group of individuals and groups together with the OAS and other multilateral institutions to discuss these issues and to feed into future Summit processes by engaging relevant experts and drawing from their experience and innovation.

Let me just raise one other, possibly sensitive, topic: and that is the role of the IDB. The Inter-American Development Bank has been understandably reluctant to engage in issues directly related to defense and the armed forces.

Yet, there is a huge gap. If we are to understand defense and security (and defense policy) as critical to democratic stability in the region, then the IDB could begin to explore ways in which it can promote the study and understanding of governance as it relates to defense, even at its basic: *through comparatively analyzing defense ministries and congressional defense committees.*

Studies have been done of central banks, judicial systems, public administration, health ministries, education ministries, and local governments. Perhaps, as a key to understanding the security framework out there today, similar studies could be promoted for defense ministries and other institutions related to defense policy.

The trends today of weakening civilian governance and the emergence of new threats to security make these issues all the more important, not just for security's sake alone, but for the sake of the democratic future of the region.   These trends make all the more important the forums provided by multilateral institutions and summits. The OAS's Committee on Hemispheric Security, as the region's first and preeminent forum for the consideration of defense and security issues is the natural space, and institutional forum that can bring governmental representatives, civil society and others together to not only discuss and analyze these trends but to develop cooperative ventures to address them. In this mission, I think we are all united, and I hope that the fruit of this discussion is conveyed in Mexico. There is an active, serious civil society dedicated to these issues. Integrating them into these discussions—as you have done today—and looking for ways to collaborate with them in the future will make a great and historic contribution not just to international security in the hemisphere but to democracy, as well.

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