

Stojarová, Věra, Martin Hrabálek
and Pavlína Springerová:
*Security in the Andean Community of Nations:
The Member States in the 21st century*

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There are many possible approaches towards analyzing South American countries or differing ways of specifying regions. This book adopted the Andean Community of Nations as a reference point for analysis of security issues, therefore limiting its focus to only Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Even if Venezuela does not belong to the full membership of the above mentioned group any longer, it is included because of its geostrategic importance for the entire region. The book is composed of five country-specific chapters.

The introduction sets the common framework which is applied for analysis to the five countries. Risks for regional security become clear when countries are compared from the same standpoint. No matter the globalization, the regional ties do still preserve its potential and the

Andean Community is not an exception. The considered timeline comprises recent history and current status up to mid-2009. The criteria set for the analysis have been selected according to the Copenhagen School, a wider concept of security revised during the 1990s, taking into account the end of a bipolar world.

It is important to mention that the referred criteria conceive the state as the most important referent object, dominating referent subjects and consequently the base line for analysis, however refusing a narrow state-centric approach. Therefore states are dealt with separately, emphasizing the most troubled sphere that endangers the respective state's security. Potential threats are classified into five categories: military, political, societal, economic and environmental. The same structure of subchapters presents a

comprehensible case study overview of the current threats posed by the referred countries to the region.

Such an attempt is quite unique in the sense of a geographical and methodological approach. Each chapter studies in detail real or potential risks for the state. The first chapter by Pavlína Springerová is the largest and attempts to encompass the rather turbulent developments in Bolivia, which does not provide an easy survey in some parts of the text, but her conclusion contributes to the clarity of her message. Martin Hrabálek clearly pursues the point, the Colombian and Venezuelan parts are written by him. The third author, Věra Stojarová, provides the reader with knowledge of Peru and Ecuador in a comprehensive manner, emphasizing the organization of the indigenous movement and insurgent groups.

Returning to the components of overall security, the first are economic and societal, dealing mainly with poverty and stratification of the society that can correspond with the ethnic origin of citizens. The societies of the mentioned countries are highly unequal, that is a well known fact. Authors of the analysis try to trace its implications for the security. Even if the indigenous factor is absent or irrelevant, the stratification follows the criteria of skin color than reflected in the social status of the individual. Poverty is often a reason for joining military groups, be it guerillas or paramilitaries. The fighting activity drives many people from their homes, creating large numbers of internally displaced persons.

The second aspect that is dealt with is political security. Generally speaking, the whole region suffers from internal rather than from external threats. There are frequent violent struggles, civil protests or mobilizing rhetoric. The absence of foreign enemy could be considered as the principal cause of weak institutions.¹ A polarized political scene can be detected in Bolivia and Venezuela, both countries with populist leaders promoting the socialism of the 21st century, creating many supporters as well as opponents. Ecuador follows the same line of foreign policy; however its president, Rafael Correa, provides a full range of unrestricted freedoms to the citizens and thereby not creating sharp tensions in society. One of the general characteristics is the unstable party system and division of society according to the ethnic cleavages, mainly stressing the indigenous factor within the population leading to deprivation of those governed and consequently to negative politicization.

Overall economic development does not seem very optimistic as a majority of the production is only bound to commodities, mainly gas or oil. The exceptions are Colombia and Peru, which have been successful in diversifying their trading portfolio. A problematic export article, no matter how profitable, is drugs. All the countries encounter the dilemma between legitimizing the growing of coca leading to production of drugs and abolishing it, therefore eradicating the plantations. Bolivia's president, Evo Morales, as a leader of the coca growers' union, insists on the motto *Coca yes, cocaine no*.

Authors look at the problem from the ideological point of view, distinguishing between left-wing rhetoric that clashes with more the liberalist leadership of right-wing leaders such as Álvaro Uribe in Colombia.

Military security composes the third pillar, playing the main role in the Colombian case, regarding the operation of guerilla groups on its territory. It is not surprising that guerillas and various types of rebels are seriously endangering the rule of law, mainly in Colombia², however spilling over into some of the neighboring states, i.e., Ecuador and Venezuela. Tensions arise over anti-guerilla plans by the Colombian army in the territory of Ecuador and on the other hand suspected safe harbor from Hugo Chávez on the Venezuelan side of border.

Last but not least the book adds environmental factors to those that cannot be ignored, which is an added value of this book. All of the countries rank very high in terms of biodiversity. The unifying feature in the region is deforestation that wipes out virgin forests from the face of earth. International companies, coming mainly in pursuit of extracting

the natural resources, e.g., gas and oil, often fail to comply with environmental standards. Local governments began only recently to deal with protection of nature since the environment was not a priority. Mention has to be made that, beside other sources of pollution, the liquidation of coca plants result in environmental disaster, contaminating the arable land and poisoning water. High levels of urbanization cause air pollution and bad sanitation, which is interconnected with societal security.

Authors perceive security as a complex of connected areas. The book gives a general, yet detailed survey about how each country contributes to the level of (in) security in the entire Andean region. It shows the interactions of analyzed states in selected fields and the potential sparks of conflict escalation. Even if not all of the contributions are as reader-friendly as others it is full of valuable with important and up to date information about the region. The conclusion looks quite optimistic taking into account recent developments; however numerous issues demanding a balanced approach to tackle all mentioned spheres of security still remain a challenge for the future.

Notes

- ¹ Thies, Cameron G. (2005) 'War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America', *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, 3: 451.
- ² Currently the most active guerilla movement is called *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), but there have been other structures such as *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) and paramilitary forces whose primordial task was to protect citizens against guerillas.

References

- Stojarová, Věra, Martin Hrabálek and Pavlína Springerová (2009) *Security in the Andean Community of Nations: The Member States in the 21st century*. Brno: CDK.
- Thies, Cameron C. (2005) 'War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America', *American Journal of Political Science* 49, 3: 451–65.