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## THE CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO INSTABILITY IN LATIN AMERICA

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**JCSP 45**

**Solo Flight**

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**Lieutenant-Commander Donald R. Thompson-Greiff**

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# **CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL: THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME**

## **Introduction**

The intent of this paper is to focus on the security challenges that Latin America represents for North America. Several factors contribute to fluctuating stability in the region, to narrow the focus this analysis will be oriented along those that contribute to security threats. Generally, the region could benefit from economic development to expand infrastructure and communications with the aim of promoting economic security. This would shape positive outcomes related to human security, specifically to help stimulate productive solutions for the significant migration crisis through the region<sup>1</sup>. With guidance and support, this could even address the sizable inequality that exists across the regional social, and economic demographics. Canadian foreign policy already appears aligned to support countries addressing the agenda of economic development, social inclusion, and to advance economic and institutional structures<sup>2</sup>. In order to comprehend the role Canadian policy plays this paper will analyze the extent of which economic instability, inequality, and the range of governance contribute to insecurity. The goal will be to frame this analysis against the two most pressing security challenges that face Latin America, illicit narcotics and mass migration. Once the correlation is understood between economic, institutional, and security policy the conclusion of this paper will answer the following questions. What is the effectiveness of Canada's foreign policy and activity in Latin America, and how do these actions contribute to stabilizing the region? Furthermore, what

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<sup>1</sup> Muggah, Folly, and Abdenur. "The Stunning Scale of Latin America's Migration Crisis." *Americas Quarterly*. 20 June 2018

<sup>2</sup> Barillas, Marisol Argueta Barillas. "The three big issues facing Latin America." World Economic Forum. 26 March 2014

further action should be taken to realign Canadian priorities in the region to promote regional stability from the support being provided from Canada?

## **Factors of Securitization**

### The Drug Trade

The first goal is to define what security challenges exist in the Latin American region that are relevant from the Canadian context, what specific concerns are shaped by Canadian policy.

The easiest way to view this problem is looking at what is driving US military involvement in Latin America and the US security agenda given Canadian defense dependencies. The US focus is drug trafficking, migration, and terrorism<sup>3</sup>. Drug trafficking in particular is a concern that has destabilized almost the entire Latin American region, has increased the overall level of violence, and many countries regionally suffer from consequences related to the US led war to interdict the flow of narcotics into the US<sup>4</sup>.

The main epicenter of the drug trade is the insurgency in Columbia by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) leading to a major humanitarian crisis, addiction health concerns through Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, and the destabilizing impact the trade has had on Mexican society<sup>5</sup>. The main impact in North America from the distribution of illicit narcotics are the health concerns, breakdown of family and social relations, increased crime and violence that represent direct costs to municipal and federal law enforcement, judicial and penal systems, and expenses on health care from both the use of narcotics and the consequences of street violence<sup>6</sup>. From the Canadian context, the impacts predominantly involve

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<sup>3</sup> Diamint, Rut. "Security Challenges in Latin America." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol 23. No. 1, January 2004, Pg 52

<sup>4</sup> Drug Policy Alliance, "The International Drug War."

<sup>5</sup> Chalk, Peter. "The Latin American Drug Trade: Scope, Dimensions, Impact, and Response." RAND Corporation, 2011, Pg xiv-xv

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Pg xv

Ontario and Quebec, are present across Canada where street crime, and health concerns place stress on municipal services and societal connections<sup>7</sup>. The final aspect of the security challenge is the multinational aspect of the trade related the funding of transnational crime and the linkages to global terrorism<sup>8</sup>.

#### Illicit Migration / Human Security

The issue of migration from Latin America is pronounced for the states of Latin America where the majority of migrants are displaced, Mexico where many are turned away by the US, and within the US where the crisis peaked as an issue with the current US administration. The number of people migrating in Latin America was estimated as being 63.7 million people with just over 800,000 being defined as refugees<sup>9</sup>. The main effort and bulk of responsibility for this crisis has been shouldered primarily by Latin American states, and the US.

The link to Canadian security is not a clear, the main arguments that attempt to link Canadian involvement to this issue relate to an international social duty, the altruistic approach that many associate with Canada. There are a number of articles and opinions that Canada should play a role in this crisis, in particular as it relates to the UNHCR's request for Canada to play a larger role in resolving this human security crisis and not hiding behind the Safe Third Country Agreement brought into effect in 2004<sup>10</sup>. The main linkage is the growing social resentment of the US approach and the growing body of evidence of migrant mismanagement is contributing to the human security challenges, that many believe was byproduct of the US led

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<sup>7</sup> Fitzpatrick, Brian. "Canada's cocaine cowboys: How a two-year RCMP sting led all the way to Mexican kingpin El Chapo." *The National Post*. 27 December 2019

<sup>8</sup> Giraldo, Jeanne and Trinkunas, Harold. "Transnational Crime." *Contemporary Security Studies*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Oxford University Press: 2013. Pg 353-354

<sup>9</sup> The Lancet. "The unfolding migrant crisis in Latin America." *The Lancet*, Volume 394, Issue 10213, 30 November 2019

<sup>10</sup> Heilman, Jaymie. "By adhering to the Safe Third Country Agreement, the Canadian government is willfully ignoring the plight of Central American refugees." *Policy Options*. 20 June 2018

war on drugs<sup>11</sup>. What remains is unattended migration which represents a threat regionally to political, societal, and economic security<sup>12</sup>.

Canadian responsibility should be linked to the direct economic benefits that are drawn from the Latin American region. Overall, 5.7% of all Canadian foreign direct investment resides in Latin America (\$44.6 Billion)<sup>13</sup>. The second largest sector that Canadians invest in, the one specific to Latin American security concerns, is mining, oil and gas extraction<sup>14</sup>. The extraction sector in Latin America has garnered attention in the House of Commons which highlighted that corporations often been the benefactor from poor leadership or governance in host nations. This often results in negative impacts on human rights standards, fair compensation to local communities (specifically aboriginal), and ultimately violence which has led to targeted killing of people opposed to foreign investment<sup>15</sup>. The part of the discussion that is relevant is that the violence related to the extractive sector generates unrest and instability which contributes to the migratory crisis in Latin America, albeit a small contribution. It is challenging to securitize violence as a result of Canadian involvement in the extractive sectors in Latin America. Increased violence and crime combined with weakened government control represents a direct threat to Canadian Economic interests. The erosion of Canada credibility as a result of the transactional relationship of the extraction sector should continue to be a discussion within Canada.

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<sup>11</sup> Borger, Julian. "Fleeing a hell the US Helped create: why Central Americans journey north." *The Guardian*. 19 December 2018

<sup>12</sup> Emmers, Ralf. "Securitization." In *Contemporary Security Studies 3rd ed.*, edited by Alan Collins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, Pg. 138-139

<sup>13</sup> Canada. Global Affairs Canada. *Canada's State of Trade: Trade and Investment Update – 2014*. 8 October 2014

<sup>14</sup> Tremblay, Pascal. "Direct Investment Between Canada and the World.," *Library of Parliament*. Publication No. 2014-26-E, 21 August 2014

<sup>15</sup> Levitt, Michael. "Race to the top: Improving Canada's extracting sector corporate social responsibility strategy to safeguard human rights in Latin America." *Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and Subcommittee on International Human Rights*. 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, January 2019

## United States involvement in Latin America

### Drug War

A critical aspect to discussing Canadian policy in Latin America is acknowledging the role that the US plays regionally and the implications for Canada. The clearest example is the role the Canadian Armed Force (CAF) has in supporting the US led Drug War. Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the US and Canada, this permits the US Coast Guard to employ law enforcement personnel from CAF vessels to interdict illicit narcotics. Without this MOU, Canada would not have an organized means to apply jurisdiction without using the laborious means found in the UNCLOS. This symbiotic arrangement allows Canada to have a security role to impact drug trade using US Coast Guard law enforcement authorities<sup>16</sup>. Despite CAF involvement, the main conclusions drawn from the US war on drugs is that the flow of illicit narcotics has yet to reduce or undermine the cartels in a meaningful way<sup>17</sup>. By association, CAF involvement has equally had an insignificant impact.

### Migrant Crisis

The US involvement in the migrant crisis started out near the end of the Cold War when US administrations supported the destabilization of several Latin American states, contributing to the hard political and economic conditions that manifestly produced the conditions for the migrant crisis<sup>18</sup>. Despite having a long history of accepting immigrants from Latin American countries<sup>19</sup>, the current US administration's approach contributes negatively to the Latin

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<sup>16</sup> Canada. Government of Canada. *Operation CARIBBE*. 27 November 2018

<sup>17</sup> Chalk, Peter. "The Latin American Drug Trade: Scope, Dimensions, Impact, and Response." RAND Corporation, 2011, Pg xvi

<sup>18</sup> Borger, Julian. "Fleeing a hell the US Helped create: why Central Americans journey north." *The Guardian*. 19 December 2018

<sup>19</sup> Bedolla, Lisa Garcia. "Immigration: Latino Migration and U.S. Foreign Policy." *Center for Latin American Studies*. University of California – Berkeley: 25 October 2018

American migrant crisis<sup>20</sup>. The main point for consideration resides in the Safe Third Country agreements where Canada has determined that the US is a safe third country removing the ability for Canada to challenge the US administration's handling of the crisis. Many independent organizations state the US is not safe for all refugees, including those from Latin America<sup>21</sup>.

## **Canada's Regional Policy**

### Foreign Policy

The policy Canada has provided for Latin America lacks coherency, especially in respect to security. Ideally foreign policy related to security must holistically address support to existing political, and economic institutions<sup>22</sup>. The support to the political institution is essential as failing states are often a product of poor political leadership<sup>23</sup>, and economic policy due to the intrinsic connection to security. Despite the relative importance economically, the region does not come into the focus of Canadian policy.

From the Speech from the Throne there is an absence of specific Canadian policy in the Latin American region, the one notable exception was Canadian involvement in NAFTA. This publication states that generally, Canada as a compassionate international partner would target resources for international development assistance<sup>24</sup>. This does provide context for Canadian involvement regionally in respect to the provision of aid and development. The exact concept of aid and development is ethereal when viewed through a security lens because by itself supplying

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<sup>20</sup> Congressional Research Service. "Latin America and the Caribbean: U.S. Policy Overview." Version 12, 11 March 2020

<sup>21</sup> Canadian Council for Refugees. "Safe Third Country". N.D.

<sup>22</sup> Ayoub, Mohammed, "State Making, State Breaking, and State Failure." *In Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007, Pg 110-112

<sup>23</sup> Rotberg, Robert. "The Challenge of Weak, Failing, and Collapsed States." *In Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007, Pg 85-88

<sup>24</sup> Canada. Governor General. *Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the Forth-third Parliament of Canada*, December 5, 2019, Pg 14



aid has had no direct impact on security concerns. Development and aid in the case of Latin America does not address the narrow school of human security because it does nothing to address the politically motivated violence against migrants or refugees. It also does it address any of the broader school given the migrant crisis remains a major issue despite aid Canada provides. Overall, \$888 million dollars are committed by the Government of Canada (GoC) throughout Latin American countries of which \$73 million are utilized in bi-lateral developments related to security<sup>25</sup>. Despite the spending regionally, it is not clear there is a significant impact to curtail the challenges faced by Latin American states. The main focus of the funding is on ensuring weak or failing states do not collapse, namely Haiti, and Guatemala<sup>26</sup>.

Going back to NAFTA, this agreements importance to Canada, US, and Mexico cannot be understated. However, the NAFTA agreement has been responsible for economic hardship and damage to countries in the Caribbean states<sup>27</sup>. The linkage between the economic viability of Caribbean states is linked to the illicit flow of narcotics in the Caribbean basin in how well these nations can fund and contend with the drug trade, the less economically viable states are the more likely the trade will be successful. Without a substantial effort by Canada to coordinate bilateral agreements with regional nations these states are unable to effectively resource effective responses to this threat<sup>28</sup>.

NAFTA did have potential benefit where the agreement prepared predominantly the US, but also Canada to look at the region as markets of opportunity and develop the Free Trade Area

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<sup>25</sup> Canada. Government of Canada. *Statistical report on international assistance 2018-2019*. 15 May 2020

<sup>26</sup> Fund for Peace, "Fragile States Index: Annual Report 2019", *The Fund for Peace*, 2019

<sup>27</sup> Durand, Paul. "Who Lost the Caribbean?" *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*. The University of Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2016, Pg 6

<sup>28</sup> Wigglesworth, Robin. "Caribbean struggles to stem resurgent tide of drug trafficking." *Financial Times*. 18 December 2013.

of the Americas (FTAA)<sup>29</sup>. After 13 years of negotiation, that arrangement was never accepted due to the unfair advantage it provided to the US. After FTAA, Canada is still exploring opportunity to become involved in the Mercosur Free Trade agreement with the largest economies in the region<sup>30,31</sup>. Canada's involvement in the economic prosperity of the region appear to be in the works but has yet to formulate a strategic policy objective after the FTAA process was ceased in 2003. As Miller aptly identifies, "*Canada's engagement became more transactional and less strategic*<sup>32</sup>." An economically strong and viable Latin America would weaken the influences of the drug trade, and better position regional nations greater ability to remedy the illnesses that are contributing to the migration crisis.

The GoC has listed its priorities as reinforcing connections with countries in the region. The list of objectives includes addressing social, economic, and security issues for Canadian partners<sup>33</sup>. The GoC priorities also list important partnerships to include Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Peru, United States, and Mexico. This is linked to the desire for Canada to orient its relationships around responsible nations ruling out states that fail to adhere to basic democratic values such as Venezuela, understandably. The absence of policy governing states such as Guatemala, and El Salvador is concerning as these nations represent some of the most violent regionally. They appear to be absent as Canada has limited political or economic interests in these states, which supports the argument that Canada's involvement in the region is transactional. These two nations contribute negatively to the challenges of both migrant populations and the movement of illicit narcotics and would benefit from Canadian involvement.

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<sup>29</sup> Miller, Eric. "Engagement and Pragmatism: Towards an Enduring Canadian Strategy in Latin America" *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*. The University of Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2016, Pg 5

<sup>30</sup> Amadeo, Kimberly. "FTAA Agreement, Its members, With Its Pros and Cons". *The Balance*. 7 February 2020

<sup>31</sup> Canada. Government of Canada. *Canada-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement*. 11 September 2018

<sup>32</sup> Miller, Eric. "Engagement and Pragmatism: Towards an Enduring Canadian Strategy in Latin America" *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*. The University of Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2016, Pg 2

<sup>33</sup> Canada. Government of Canada. *Canada and Latin America and the Caribbean*, 10 February 2020

What remains unclear is if the recent use of the Munroe doctrine by the current US administration to build a case to intervene in Venezuela is a factor influencing Canadian involvement<sup>34</sup>. What is clear is the lack of Canadian involvement only prolongs the road to regional stability as Latin American states navigate this territory without strong impartial support.

The region lacks direction with respect to either engagement, or priorities to address the security concerns of either the drug trade or the migrant crisis. The Canadian Global Affairs Institute indicates that Canada should participate in Latin America, including the development of a relevant foreign policy. Also identified is that Canada needed to be engaged regionally to include an expansion of both the quantity, and in level of diplomatic representation specifically in Cuba, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil<sup>35</sup>. All four states are omitted from the GoC list of important partnerships, and in the case of Paraguay, an important security consideration with respect to this country being used as a refuge for transnational terrorism<sup>36,37</sup>.

### Security Policy

The main Canadian security policy is Strong, Secured, Engaged (SSE), when deriving what Canadian Strategic interest exist in Latin America the following action items come from that document:

- [Canada will]...maintain a presence... and contribute to operations in support of North American Security, including in the Caribbean<sup>38</sup>.
- Canada will continue to work collaboratively with partners throughout the hemisphere to develop regional capabilities, encourage operational

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<sup>34</sup> Schake, Kori. "Let the Monroe Doctrine Die." *Foreign Policy*. 29 May 2019

<sup>35</sup> Miller, Eric. "Engagement and Pragmatism: Towards an Enduring Canadian Strategy in Latin America" *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*. The University of Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2016, Pg 10-12

<sup>36</sup> Ottolenghi, Emanuele. "Paraguay Is a Fiscal Paradise for Terrorists." *Foreign Policy*. 14 February 2019

<sup>37</sup> McDermott, Jeremy. "Transnational Crime 'Abiding Threat' to National Security: US Intelligence." *InSight Crime*. 1 February 2012

<sup>38</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. D2-386/2017E. *Strong, Secured, Engaged Canada's Defence Policy*, Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017, Pg 35

flexibility and foster military professionalization<sup>39</sup>.

- Canada has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in areas such as capacity building, gender mainstreaming – the routine consideration of gender in public policy development – as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster response<sup>40</sup>.

Looking at these three components of SSE helps the Department of National Defense orient resources to support North American security, the focus on the Caribbean can be inferred to be a footnote of the policy when compared against the significant responsibility Canada has to NORAD and continental defense. Governance is provided but not emphasized for the Caribbean given the relatively low importance compared to the other defense commitments continentally.

The action item to work collaboratively with regional partners provides a relevant framework to help professionalize military forces of Latin American. Canadian military contributions regionally are limited in scope to minor exercises with an aim to develop capacity related to military cooperation such as operational planning, and military professionalization. The CAF partnerships with US Southern Command for exercise *Trade Winds*, or military coordination with the North American Security Initiative (*NAMSI*) with the US and Mexico represent Canadian contributions<sup>41,42</sup>. These initiatives are good frameworks to support regional development of security but are so limited in scope that it is hard to assess significant benefit to the partner nations involved in the activities. Further to scope, is narrowly focused on the Caribbean and continental objectives with no broader focus on Latin America. The one positive example that does stand out is the involvement of military and civilian public servants involved under the Directorate of Military Training and Cooperation which has a framework to be available in nearly every Latin American country, in 2018-2019 involving only six nations in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, Pg 92

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, Pg 92

<sup>41</sup> United States. United States Southern Command. *Tradewinds 2019*. N.D

<sup>42</sup> Canada. The Prime Minister of Canada. *Security and Defence*. 29 June 2016

Latin America<sup>43,44</sup>.

The greatest contribution made by the Department of National defense falls under the third item from SSE related to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Namely the ongoing contributions made by the Department of National Defense, and Global Affairs Canada programs to support regional stability in times of crisis.

The overall assessment of the security agenda in the region is that it is narrowly focused and under-resourced to achieve any major impact to influence either the migrant crisis or the drug trade. As discussed early in the paper, even the US led war on drugs and the immeasurable resources the US contributed are assessed as having no impact on ongoing narcotic operations<sup>45</sup>.

An important consideration is that without a holistic approach to link security agendas with the broader institutional support, and economic development it is hard to envision a meaningful stabilization with such limited contributions. One key aspect of regional involvement is ensuring meaningful engagement with partner nations, this would alleviate the apprehension of foreign involvement that appears to be transactional. This was clearly identified within SSE which stated, “*Defending Canada and Canadian interests thus not only demands robust domestic defense but also requires active engagement abroad*”<sup>46</sup>.”

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<sup>43</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *2018-2019 Member States*. 4 February 2020

<sup>44</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *MTCP Activities*. 4 February 2020

<sup>45</sup> Chalk, Peter. “The Latin American Drug Trade: Scope, Dimensions, Impact, and Response.” RAND Corporation, 2011, Pg xvi

<sup>46</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. D2-386/2017E. *Strong, Secured, Engaged Canada’s Defence Policy*, Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017, Pg 14.

## CONCLUSION

The first objective of the paper was to determine the effectiveness of Canada's policy in Latin America. Canadian policy over the last 20-years has transitioned from a broadly strategic focus to a transactional relationship focused on Canadian economic interests and is negatively contributing to whole of government efforts. This is highlighted prominently when viewing the extractive sector, especially considering that Canada represents a major international player in Latin America. The negative impact of this form of economic development is resulting in greater hardship on aboriginal and rural communities, is contributing to the migrant crisis, and has a corollary benefit for the exploitive nature of the drug trade. The House of Commons rightfully identifies this as a political issue, hurting Canadian image abroad, and eroding the limited political capital held in the region. In real terms, the lack of strategic focus related to Canadian direct investment, corporate responsibility, and support to the institution strength of partner nations is negatively contributing to the migrant crisis.

The lack of a strategic economic policy which should foster mutual development and prosperity, while considering the unique individual needs Latin American countries, leaves states vulnerable when pursuing national objectives with more opportunistic players in the region. Economic development that was once actively pursued by Canada has since become transactional, and without a focus to ensure mutual prosperity and stability. Global Affairs initiatives and the \$888 million of investment do serve an essential function to bolster states from failing in the region. This investment is necessary but lacks the review and accountability framework to ensure that spending is in line with national objectives, objectives that lack strategic focus. There is a stabilizing impact from these initiatives, more cohesive policy would make this more efficient.

Specific security policies as provided to the Department of National defense are clearer in respect to what security priorities exist in the region. What is lacking is the resources necessary to fulfill these mandates, when compared against the significant investments of US Southern Command, Canadian involvement does not make a significant impact to promote regional security. Especially when considering that the Department of National defense is active to counter illicit narcotics, and provided humanitarian assistance, but has no specific responsibility to support nations through the migrant crisis.

Canadian policy must be focused on the premise of being a partner who is present in the region. The current transactional nature of policy, and the lack of long-term commitment to regional security using a holistic approach (economic, social, security) continues to reduce Canada's ability to influence and support this region.

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