

*Edited by*  
*Gary Prevost, Harry E. Vanden,*  
*Carlos Oliva Campos, & Luis Fernando Ayerbe*

---

# US NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS *in* LATIN AMERICA *and the* CARIBBEAN

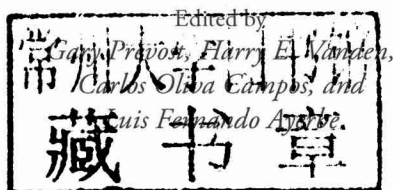
---

*The Concept of Ungoverned Spaces and Failed States*

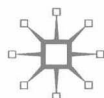


# US National Security Concerns in Latin America and the Caribbean

## The Concept of Ungoverned Spaces and Failed States



palgrave  
macmillan



US NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Copyright © Gary Prevost, Harry E. Vanden, Carlos Oliva Campos,  
and Luis Fernando Ayerbe, 2014.

All rights reserved.

First published in 2014 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world,  
this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited,  
registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills,  
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies  
and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States,  
the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978-1-137-37951-1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the  
Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: March 2014

# US National Security Concerns in Latin America and the Caribbean

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
1 Introduction <i>Gary Prevost and Harry E. Vanden</i>	1
2 From the US Department of State, USAID, and Washington-Based Think Tanks: The Search for Ungoverned Spaces in South America <i>Luiza R. Mateo and Aline P. dos Santos</i>	9
3 The United States and the Security Agenda in the Caribbean Basin after 9/11 <i>Carlos Oliva Campos</i>	41
4 The Militarization of Mexico-US Relations: Ungovernable Areas and a Failed State? <i>Jaime A. Preciado Coronado and Angel L. Florido Alejo</i>	61
5 Maras, Contragoverned Spaces, and Sovereignty <i>Harry E. Vanden</i>	81
6 Central America: Ungoverned Spaces and the National Security Policy of the United States <i>Ignacio Medina Núñez</i>	93
7 Security Issues on the Mexico-Guatemala Border and Their Relationship to the New National Security Policy of the United States <i>Daniel Villafuerte Solís</i>	113
8 Old Wine in New Wineskins: Incorporating the “Ungoverned Spaces” Concept into Plan Colombia <i>John C. Dugas</i>	143

9	US Response to the Haitian Earthquake in the Context of the Concepts of Failed State and Ungoverned Spaces <i>Gary Prevost</i>	179
10	Conclusion <i>Gary Prevost, Carlos Oliva Campos, Luis Fernando Ayerbe, and Harry E. Vanden</i>	187
	<i>Bibliography</i>	189
	<i>About the Authors</i>	203
	<i>Index</i>	207

# Illustrations

## Maps

4.1	Index of failed states, 2011	70
4.2	Drug trafficking routes in Mexico	72
4.3	Mexican drug cartels and their area of influence	73
4.4	Casualties associated to delinquency due to presumed rivalry, 2007–2010	73

## Tables

2.1	Subcategories of ungoverned areas	12
2.2	The fragility framework	30
2.3	USAID programs to South America (2010/2011)	33
5.1	US ICE removals: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras	86
6.1	Central America: Population	95
6.2	HDI 2010–2011 in Central America and Mexico	96
6.3	Central America: Average income per capita in 2009	97
6.4	Fund for Peace failed state index	100
6.5	Military and police assistance from the United States to Central America 2008–2013	107

## CHAPTER 1

---

# Introduction

*Gary Prevost and Harry E. Vanden*

The concepts of “ungoverned spaces” and “failed states” where the limited presence of the state is seen as a challenge to global security have generated a rich intellectual debate in recent years. In this edited volume, scholars from Latin America and the United States will analyze how the US foreign-policy making circles have applied the concepts to the creation of new US security initiatives in the Latin American region during the post September 11, 2001 era. The concept of failed states is not a new one, having entered US political thinking in the early 1990s, but the September 11, 2001 events focused attention on the failure of the Afghan state to prevent the operation of Al-Qaeda on its territory. The situation in Afghanistan, and subsequent growing concern about states perceived to be similar, only intensified concern about the role of failed states in harboring or aiding armed groups with the intent to harm the interests of the United States. This outlook was codified in the US National Security Strategy of 2002, which declared, “America is now threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones.”

While the failed state concept has remained central to US war making strategy in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, the center of US attention in the last decade, it has been broadened to include the entire world including Latin America. The list of countries judged to be in danger has grown to encompass states as diverse as Colombia, East Timor, Indonesia, North Korea, Cote d’Ivoire, Haiti, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan. The extension to Latin America has been significant because



it has meant that during the past 12 years US policy in the Western Hemisphere has shifted away from the primarily economic emphasis of the 1990s, the era of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) project, back to a security focus reminiscent of the Cold War era. The last decade has witnessed a significant increase in US military presence in the region highlighted by the relaunching of the Caribbean-based Fourth Fleet, the militarization of drug fighting efforts in Mexico, and the establishment of several new military bases in Colombia, the staunchest US ally in the region. While not based solely on the failed state or “contested spaces” rhetoric, the shift has in part utilized that rhetoric to justify the renewed military focus in spite of any concrete evidence that terror plots aimed at the US homeland have been created in Latin America. It is the author’s perspective that the renewed US security focus in Latin America has little to do with real fears of terror attacks emanating from the region and more to do with defending long-standing political and economic interests in the region in the face of progressive political movements in the region that have come to power in recent years with an agenda of challenging traditional US hegemony in the region.

Beginning in 1998 with the election of populist Hugo Chavez to the presidency of Venezuela, there has been a clear Leftward trend in Latin American politics that continues all the way to the present. Most scholars analyze the trend as occurring in response to the failure of neoliberal economic policies, known as the Washington Consensus, that were pursued by Latin American governments in the 1980s and 1990s acting in close concert with the governments in Washington and the international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Because the incoming Left governments in a range of countries including Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Ecuador saw the United States as at least part of their problems, the leaders pursued policies that in one manner or another sought greater independence from the United States. This newly independent stance was most immediately recognized when between 2003 and 2005 Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela blocked the completion of the FTAA project that had been the centerpiece of the US policy in the region since its launch in 1994 by the US president William Clinton. The defeat of the FTAA has been followed by a series of initiatives aimed at Latin American political and economic integration independent of the United States that has included the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Union of South American Nations, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean

States. While all of these projects and several others of a narrower scope are still at an early stage of development, the newly independent stance of many key Latin American countries over the last decade has presented a challenge to US policy makers unaccustomed to such positions from its neighbors to the south and primarily preoccupied with challenges to US security in the Middle East and Asia. The result has been a Latin American policy pursued by the administrations of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama that treats the region, not as a priority but still highly important to US national interests. It is in that context that analyzing US policy in the region, over the past decade, often country by country, through the lenses of the concepts of failed states and ungoverned spaces yields some valuable insights into how Washington has promoted its twenty-first-century security proposals in the face of a significant amount of Latin American skepticism—in some countries like Brazil and Argentina but with greater acceptance among traditional US allies in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

The changing nature of US-Mexican relations is captured in all of its complexity by Mexican researchers Jaime Preciado Coronado and Angel Florido Alejo in their chapter “The Militarization of Mexico-US Relations: Ungovernable Areas and a Failed State?” These authors detail how, in the post September 11, 2001 era, during the Mexican presidencies of Vicente Fox and, more so, Felipe Calderon, US-Mexican relations in the security field have undergone a qualitative shift that now includes much greater day-to-day collaboration between police and military officials of the two countries than existed at any time in the past. Preciado and Florido demonstrate how this new relationship, long desired by the United States, has come to be justified, using at least in part the rhetoric of ungoverned spaces and the possibility of a failed Mexican state—all done in the framework of increased drug violence in Mexico over the past decade.

The United States had long sought closer police and military ties to Mexico similar to those it enjoyed with most other Latin American countries but traditional Mexican nationalism going back to the nineteenth-century Mexican-American War and the decades-long nationalist stance of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had stunted those US hopes. The arrival at power, in 2000, of the National Action Party (PAN), along with closer ties to the United States opened the possibility for security relations on a different level. Such a change occurred with the launching of the Alliance for Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)

bringing together police and military officials of Mexico, Canada, and the United States for the first time in a more systematic way. The SPP gave rise to the Mérida Initiative in 2006 and the North American Leaders Summit starting with the Obama administration in 2009. The Mérida Initiative was supported by the US Congress with over US\$1.2 billion over four years for the Mexican fight against drugs. It is in this funding and its justification that the intersection occurs between the rhetoric of ungoverned spaces and justification for unprecedented security cooperation.

Mexico had long been a transshipment point for drugs manufactured in the Andean region bound for US markets. However, after 2000 as the result of some US success in closing Caribbean drug routes to the US mainland, drug-shipment activity increased in Mexico. With the greater activity came the inevitable increase in drug cartels and with that the levels of violence between them as they vied for control over a multibillion dollar business. Of course, this trend represented a serious challenge for the Mexican law enforcement that did not have a great reputation for either honesty or competence during the long years of PRI power. As the drug-related deaths grew rapidly after 2000, PAN and US officials seized on the idea of confronting the drug challenge by militarizing the issue in the framework of the SPP and the Mérida Initiative arguing that the Mexican police were increasingly ineffective. Significant sections of the major Mexican cities like Ciudad Juarez were becoming ungoverned spaces where the drug cartels were the defacto rulers and could only be removed from such a position by the direct intervention of the Mexican army funded in part by the US government in its long-standing “war on drugs” and justified in the wider framework of threats to US security of drugs and other illicit activities flowing from such ungoverned spaces. By implication such ungoverned spaces, especially those close to the US border, could even foster armed attacks against the United States, Al-Qaeda style. While the latter was never actually a serious claim, it smoothed the way for the spending of US tax dollars on expensive new security projects in Mexico at a time of cutbacks in other US government spending.

Preciado and Florido detail how the militarization of drug fighting under President Felipe Calderon primarily served to increase the level of violence without stemming the influence of the cartels or the flow of drugs into the United States. Roughly 65,000 people died in the drug wars during 2006–2012 Calderon’s presidential term. Calderon’s PAN was politically repudiated by the Mexican people in the 2012 election when their candidate finished a distant third even though the overall

Mexican economy remained reasonably healthy. Most analysts saw the election as a referendum on the drug fighting policy of the PAN and the electorate chose Enrique Peña Nieto, the candidate of the PRI, endorsing his pledge for a new drug fighting policy. However, Nieto actually made no pledge to reverse the militarization of Mexican drug policy and in meeting with the US president Obama in December 2012, before taking office, made clear that the cooperative efforts of the SPP and North American Summits would continue as they were developed during the years of PAN power. It is clear that there would be no return to the historic nationalist stances of the PRI. Peña Nieto clearly accepts the resetting of US-Mexican security relations as a major achievement for Washington, given the strategic importance of its southern neighbor. This shift might have been achieved independent of the events of September 11, 2001, and the rhetoric of ungoverned spaces but both things facilitated this important development.

The shift in US policy toward Mexico is probably the most significant development of the past decade in terms of US security plans in the Western Hemisphere but our other authors demonstrate the ungoverned spaces rhetoric has yielded other significant developments including new agreements and actual military bases from Central America to the Caribbean to South America.

The US-renewed focus on security in the past decade was by no means limited to a resetting of relations with Mexico. In the fiscal year 2012 according to the “Just the Facts” database maintained by several Washington-based NGOs, US military and police aid to Latin America and Caribbean totaled nearly US\$1 billion. For the previous five years, the police and military aid totaled more than US\$7.5 billion. In 2010 alone, US arms sales to the region were another US\$1.7 billion. These figures do not include the costs of the deployment of thousands of US troops to bases in the region and the ships deployed including the Caribbean Fourth Fleet. The US approach is a Western Hemisphere-wide strategy neither limited to any one country or part of the region, nor limited to the use of the ungoverned spaces, failed state framework. According to Achin Vanik, in the post-Cold War era, the United States has used six markers to justify US strategic initiatives, “humanitarian intervention,” “weapons of mass destruction,” “global war on terror,” “regime change in the name of democracy,” “failed states,” and “war on narcotics.” While not all of these markers have been front and center in justifying US policy in Latin America, most have figured prominently. For example, US policy in Colombia going back to the late 1980s has been justified using three of the markers. Initially, the war on drugs

followed in the post September 11, 2001 era by the added rhetoric of failed states and the “war on terror.” In his chapter on Colombia, long time Colombia expert John Dugas from Kalamazoo College analyzes how the United States has shifted its rhetoric on Colombia over time while maintaining its basic strategy of supporting the Colombian government in its 50-year war against revolutionary guerillas, primarily the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). As Dugas also details, the Colombian government has remained the United States’ most important strategic partner in South America throughout the last decade as other neighbors like Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia distanced themselves from US security initiatives. The largest blow to US plans in the Andean region came when the Ecuadorian government of Rafael Correa refused to renew the US base at Manta that had been established at the beginning of the new century with a previous US administration. The loss of the Ecuador base prompted the United States to lean even more on Colombia for additional bases there, a request that so far has not been met by the Colombians.

In addition to the Mexico and the Andean regions, a major focus of US security policy in recent years has been in Central America and the Caribbean Basin. New initiatives have been pursued on both a bilateral and regional basis. In the last three years, two important regional agreements have been sponsored by the United States, the Central American Security Initiative (CASI) and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). Each agreement is modeled after the Mérida Initiative with Mexico and provides more than US\$1 billion in new funding for cooperation in the legal, policy, and military fields between the US governments and the governments of the Central American and Caribbean area. These regional agreements compliment bilateral initiatives made by the United States to several governments in the region, most notably Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, and Costa Rica. As several of the authors in our volume describe, the rhetoric of ungoverned spaces and failed states figure prominently in the justification for these initiatives together with the war on drugs. As Harry Vanden discusses in his chapter on drug gangs in El Salvador and Guatemala, US authorities, with rhetoric similar to that of Mexico argue that the power and scope of these gangs, most originating from the United States, have resulted in spaces in San Salvador and Guatemala City controlled not by the local authorities but by the drug gangs. Most importantly, this analysis allows the US government to propose to the local governments of Guatemala and El Salvador increased police and military aid (rather than economic aid to attack the roots of the problem) falling under

the rubric of the CASI. However, it is interesting how the different governments based on political ideology have responded to the United States. The conservative Guatemalan government elected in 2011 has eagerly embraced the US plans while the progressive Salvadoran government of Mauricio Funes was skeptical of the militarized approach and recently arranged a truce with the drug gangs as an alternative, nonmilitary solution to regaining control over San Salvador's most violent neighborhoods.

In their articles on Costa Rica/Nicaragua and Guatemala/Mexico, respectively, Ignacio Medina and Daniel Villafuerte discuss how the fluid character of those two border areas have drawn the attention of US policy makers within the rubric of ungoverned spaces with resulting security initiatives toward the countries involved. In the case of the Mexican/Guatemala border, it is acknowledged that the remote character of that region historically to the capitals of both countries has meant that it is a good area for the passage of both people and goods, including drugs. As a result, new efforts to create a police and military presence along that border have moved forward under both the Mérida Initiative and CASI. These are impoverished regions of both countries and in the Mexican case, the scene of the two-decade old Zapatista uprising. Rather than focus on social and economic programs to address the underlying problems of the border region, the implemented actions are purely militaristic and unlikely to stem the drug trafficking in the absence of more serious efforts to control the demand in the United States.

The final chapter on the region is Gary Prevost's analysis of the US government's response to the Haiti earthquake understood in the context of viewing Haiti as a failed state. Professor Prevost points out that Haiti, with its high levels of poverty, underdevelopment, and lack of successful governance, has long been near the top of the US government's list of potential failed states. The United States' concern for a failed state scenario is based primarily on a fear that such a situation would create an unacceptable flow of refugees toward the United States. As a result, when the devastating earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, the United States response was quick and decisive sending thousands of US troops to the island ostensibly to provide "humanitarian assistance," but in reality to secure the island's surviving resources for its economic elites and to make sure that there was no exodus of refugees toward the United States. As the chapter demonstrates, the US military presence actually hindered the relief effort in the early days and made little contribution to Haiti's long-term recovery. The chapter also

demonstrates how the United States using the failed state framework, justified control over long-term recovery efforts and even the supervision of the immediate postearthquake election where the US authorities blocked the participations of progressive candidate Jean Bertrande Aristide on the grounds that his return to power could result in Haiti retreating to the failed state status.

## CHAPTER 2

---

# From the US Department of State, USAID, and Washington-Based Think Tanks: The Search for Ungoverned Spaces in South America

*Luiza R. Mateo and Aline P. dos Santos*

### Introduction

The theme of “ungoverned areas” is connected to that of the so-called new threats, which, as defined by the late 1980s, cover such diverse subjects as terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, organized crime, and handling of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or of nuclear arsenals. Similarly, this approach touches upon discussions on failed states, weak states, and effective governance. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the nature of the “zones of low governability” once they have taken on relevance in discussions of international security and have had particular impact on the foreign policy of the United States.

Recognition of the fact that the lack of governance in remote, border regions, or even in urban complexes out of the reach of state authority, facilitated pernicious threat exploration and threatened international stability has become especially acute for American perceptions after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Thus, the time frame of the analysis in this chapter has been delimited to George W. Bush’s two terms (2001–2008) and to part of Barack Obama’s administration (2009–early 2013), privileging the approaches of four players in US foreign policy: the president and his advisers; the US Department of State



(USDS); the US Agency for International Development (USAID); and centers for strategic thinking (think tanks), especially the Brookings Institution, aligned with the Democratic Party's positions, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hudson Institute, closer to the positions of the Republican Party, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the RAND Corporation, that have a more independent perspective in terms of parties, focused on the interests of the US state.

From this analytical framework, we will try to list common definitions for the term “ungoverned areas,” instrumentalized both by the US bureaucracy and by think tanks. Through National Security Strategy (NSS) and the position of the USDS, we attempt to understand how threats arising from the lack of state governance are transposed to realms of national security, foreign aid, and diplomatic action. Henceforth, we focus on the hemispheric and South American contexts, mapping the perceptions as transcribed in US reports that point to exploitable locations as terrorist sanctuaries and programs for development in the region.

### **From Practice to Theory: Defining Ungoverned Areas**

After the demise of the Cold War, many of the new challenges to the United States ensued from the decay or complete absence of state authority in troubled contexts, combining humanitarian crisis, piracy and trafficking of weapons, drugs and people, refugee flows, or civil strife. Hence, conflicts unfolding in the international realm extrapolate the traditional mold of interstate confrontation and begin to involve internal security problems as well.

The conceptual construction of ungoverned areas is closely linked to perceptions of threat in the US agenda. The first qualification for states unfit to perform their functions came into use during Ronald Reagan's administration (1981–1989), in which the term “Rogue States” was used to indicate countries unwilling to follow the norms of the international community, especially in relation to the possession of nuclear weapons, and/or that often supported terrorists and criminal networks. In short, this specification was attributed to nations whose political regimes expressed animosity toward the United States (Nasser, 2009).

Rogue States became an issue once again in Bill Clinton's (1993–2000) NSS, and were situated along with threats such as ethnic and religious conflicts, proliferation of WMD, large-scale environmental degradation, and the triad of terrorism, transnational crime, and drug trafficking (Shimabukuro, 2009: 36–37). However, the term “Rogue