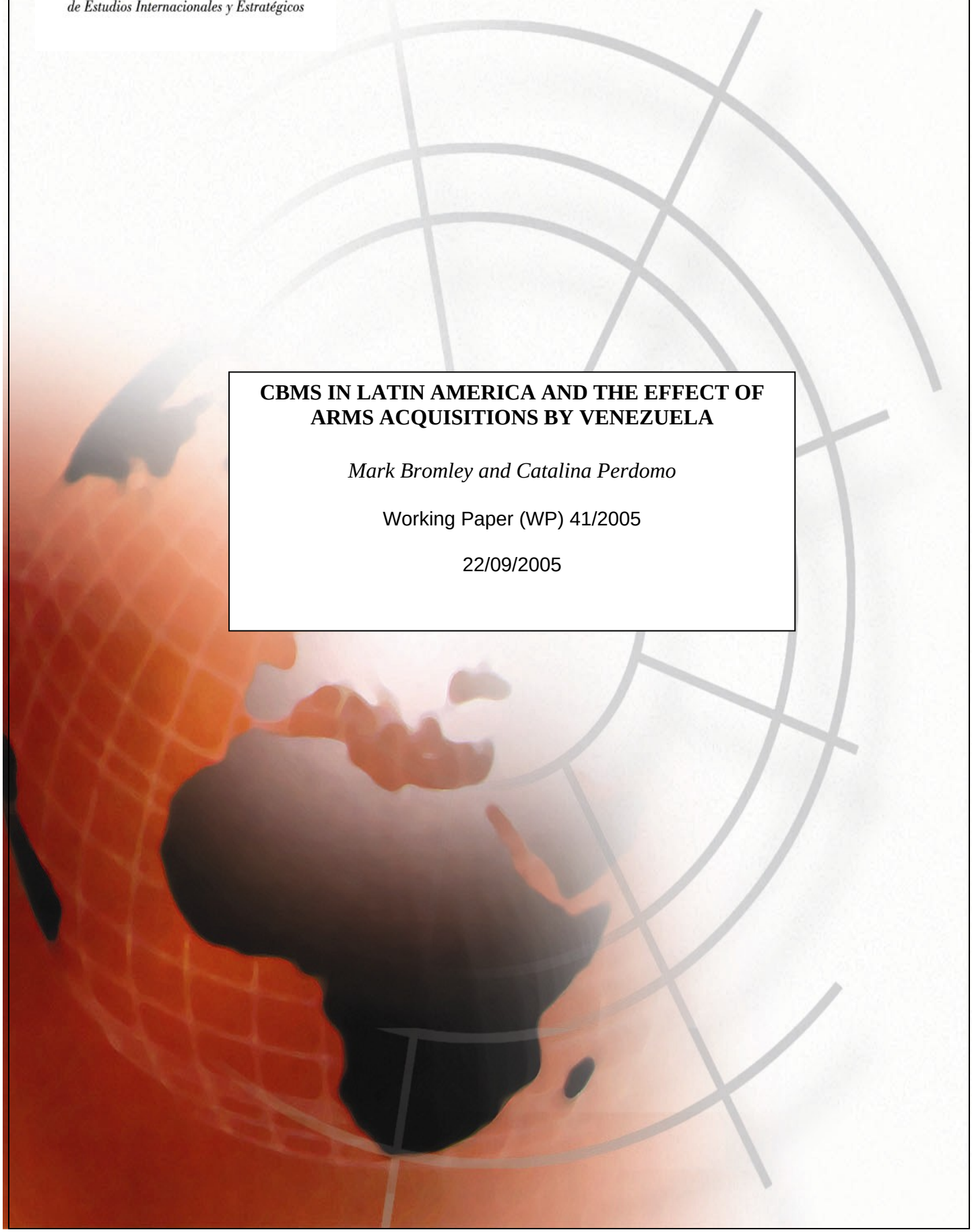
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# CBMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE EFFECT OF ARMS ACQUISITIONS BY VENEZUELA

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# CBMs in Latin America and the effect of arms acquisitions by Venezuela

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**Summary**: The acquisition of military technology need not be a threat to regional stability and security. Nevertheless, the diffusion of military technology brings risks, and certain weapon systems acquired in certain contexts can have an adverse effect on regional stability. In addition, in certain regions of the world, particularly Africa and Latin America, illegal flows of small arms and light weapons (SALW) from one country can pose a threat to the national security of another. This, in turn, can have a negative impact on interstate relations.

## Introduction

The acquisition of military technology need not be a threat to regional stability and security.

Nevertheless, the diffusion of military technology brings risks, and certain weapon systems acquired in certain contexts can have an adverse effect on regional stability. In addition, in certain regions of the world, particularly Africa and Latin America, illegal flows of small arms and light weapons (SALW) from one country can pose a threat to the national security of another. This, in turn, can have a negative impact on interstate relations. In order to offset some of these dangers, states have developed a range of mechanisms to promote confidence and transparency by sharing information on their arms procurement processes or taking steps to strengthen their export controls. In many cases, particularly in Europe, these steps have been formalised as confidence-building measures (CBMs).

In recent years Latin America has developed a fairly sophisticated package of CBMs.[1] These measures include agreements focused on limiting misunderstandings caused by arms acquisitions and strengthening controls on SALW transfers. In the first half of 2005 considerable alarm was expressed over the potential impact that a series of arms purchases by the Venezuelan government could have on regional security. The acquisitions caused concerns both because of their potential impact on the regional 'military balance' and because of the possibility that surplus weapons would find their way into the hands of rebel groups in Colombia. These events provide an interesting opportunity to examine the strengths and weaknesses of Latin America's development of CBMs. Although CBMs cannot provide a solution for situations of real tension, or resolve long-standing political disputes, they can serve to generate confidence and enhance understanding. However, the

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[1] Some argue that Latin America has created Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), rather than CBMs. However, this paper will refer to CBMs since they are the first step in a gradual process to develop the more complex CSBMs. Given that these measures in Latin America have a long way to go in their development –they are recent and relatively feeble– it is too soon to call them CSBMs.

effectiveness of Latin American CBMs has been affected by the political conditions in Latin America and the approach that the region has taken to their implementation. These problems are particularly apparent in the Andean region, where existing agreements are not being implemented in an effective manner and opportunities to develop new mechanisms have not been pursued.

Section II reviews CBMs in Latin America. It begins by defining CBMs in a general sense and then goes on to describe the security challenges that Latin America currently faces and how these problems are exacerbated by misunderstandings surrounding national arms acquisitions and illicit flows of SALW. Third, it describes the development of CBMs in the region with a particular emphasis on measures focused on arms acquisitions and transfers of SALW. Fourth, the section analyses how the impact of CBMs in Latin America has been circumscribed by the political conditions within the region and the way in which states have developed and implemented the agreements. Finally, the section considers how and why the level of participation differs so significantly between the Andean region and the Southern Cone.[2] Section III provides a close analysis of Venezuela's military 'build-up' and the concerns it has sparked within the region. Section IV elucidates the main findings and conclusions.

Aside from throwing some light on recent events the study also allows for a wider evaluation of the effect that CBMs can have on lessening the impact of arms acquisitions and illicit arms transfers on interstate relations by addressing specific questions. In particular, what role can CBMs play in a political climate as bitter and divided as that which currently pervades the Andean region? Do CBMs reach their limit when they are faced with intractable political differences such as those that currently distinguish Venezuela from Colombia and the US?

## Confidence-building measures in Latin America

After introducing the concept of CBMs, this section examines the kinds of security problems that Latin America currently faces and how national arms acquisitions and illicit transfers of SALW exacerbate these problems. It then reviews the development of CBMs in the region, before taking a closer look at measures specifically targeted on arms acquisitions and SALW transfers.

Arms control consists of two main branches that differ in terms of both their scope and the devices they employ: operational or 'soft' arms control and structural or 'hard' arms control. The former aims to provide assurances with regard to the character and purpose of military activities and defence postures; it involves such elements as partnership, mutual reassurance and transparency at the security and military levels.[3] Specific measures may include: an exchange of information about military activities, capabilities and doctrine; restrictions on certain military activities and capabilities; meetings between senior defence

[2] Latin America refers to all the countries south of the Río Bravo, while South America refers to those in the Andean Region and Southern Cone. The former comprises Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, and the latter Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.
[3] Z. Lachowski, 'Confidence and Security Building Measure in Europe', *SIPRI Research Report*, nr 18, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 1. See also C. Bertram, 'The Future of Arms Control, Part II, Arms Control and Technological Change: Elements of a New Approach', *Adelphi Paper*, nr 146, *International Institute of Strategic Studies*, 1978.

officials; and exchange programmes for personnel and military units.[4] Hard arms control measures, on the other hand, are a set of tangible arrangements intended to reduce, prohibit and restrain the acquisition, deployment and proliferation of specific types of armaments.

CBMs form part of the 'soft' arms control framework. While there is no commonly agreed, detailed definition of CBMs, what is common to most definitions is the aim of CBMs to reduce the risk of miscalculation or communication failure escalating into war by hindering the use of force.[5] They can increase predictability, strengthen stability and enhance security, as well as open 'channels of communication' between adversaries, break deadlocked security relationships, improve political climates and help establish working relationships.[6] In Europe, CBMs have focused on the needs and requirements of military cooperation and understanding. However, other regions, among them Latin America, have included efforts designed to tackle, along with military measures, non-military issues such as environmental and criminal threats within their concept of CBMs. This article focuses on CBMs that are designed to lessen mistrust and tension in relation to arms acquisitions and arms transfers.

*Contextualization: 'old' and 'new' threats in Latin America*
Latin America is a region that faces a mixture of what are often misleadingly referred to as 'old' and 'new' security threats. 'Old' threats refer to interstate conflicts and tensions surrounding border disputes and other areas of interstate tension, while 'new' security threats refer to such issues as the activities of international criminal and terrorist organizations that challenge state authority in some way. In both cases, the acquisition or illicit transfer of weapons has the potential to exacerbate tensions and provoke conflict.

Since the end of the Cold War a number of initiatives for economic and security cooperation, and for further integration, have emerged in Latin America. Defence spending remains comparatively low while most of the interstate disputes over border demarcation that have led to conflict in previous years have been resolved.[7] Despite these advances, Latin America remains a region where one country's arms acquisitions can have a potentially destabilising impact on regional security. The arms acquisitions of other states are still watched closely for signs of potential changes to the regional military balance, and states routinely make purchases that are designed to prevent or respond to perceived inequalities in military capabilities. For example, in 2005 tensions have developed between Peru and Chile regarding Chile's acquisition of F-16 fighter aircraft from the US.[8]

During the Cold War, the bulk of the literature about the consequences of arms acquisitions for regional security focused on major weapon systems that have the potential to alter the military capability of one state in relation to another. According to Arnett, 'Traditionally, weapons have been considered as contributing to "strategic" or "crisis"

[4] Inter-American Defence Board, 'Summary of Military Confidence and Security Building Measures 1999', Sep. 2000, at *www.jid.org/files/pdf/csbms/summary.pdf*, p. 8.
[5] The definition is described more in detail in J.J. Holst, 'Confidence-building Measures: A Conceptual Framework', *Survival*, vol. 25, nr 1, Jan.-Feb. 1983.
[6] M. Desjardins, 'Rethinking Confidence-building Measures', *Adelphi Paper*, nr 307, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996, p. 5.
[7] B. Arévalo de León, 'Good Governance in Security Sector as Confidence-building Measures in the Americas: Towards Pax Democratica', *DCAF*, Geneva, 2002, p. 14.
[8] 'Peru: Government Unhappy over Chilean Arms Purchases', *Latinews Daily*, 18 April 2005, at *http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com.*

stability if they do not invite preventive war or pre-emption in a time of high crisis'.[9] However, after the Cold War increasing attention has been paid to the destabilising effects of SALW. This issue is particularly relevant in parts of Africa but also in Latin America, where illegal groups armed with SALW have demonstrated an ability to pose a military challenge to the state. Hence, illegal or clandestine transfers of SALW from one state have the ability to undermine the security of another. Andrew Hurrell cites such illegal flows of arms as one of the downsides of free trade and liberalization in contrast to the alleged positive impact by bringing increased security and prosperity to the region, particularly in the Southern Cone. Thus, according to Hurrell, 'The liberalization of economic exchanges facilitates illicit flows of all kinds, especially when this liberalization forms part of a more general shift in power from the state to the market. Such illicit activities may then spill over into interstate relations'.[10]

*The development of CBMs in Latin America*

Latin America's first step in the field of arms control was in the area of hard arms control rather than soft arms control. In 1967, the Treaty of Tlatelolco established a nuclear weapon-free zone in the region.[11] However, subsequent attempts to build on the success of the Tlatelolco Treaty and develop mechanisms of restraint with regards to conventional weapons proved to be less successful and a number of abortive efforts followed. For instance, the 1974 Ayacucho Declaration stated the intention to consider arms limitations. However, a 1978 attempt to build upon the declaration and agree to concrete regional arms limits was fruitless. Similarly, a conference in Mexico, also held in 1978, attempted to apply the spirit of the Tlatelolco Treaty to conventional arms but also failed to bring any results.[12]

After the end of the Cold War the governments in the region shifted their focus from hard arms control to soft arm control mechanisms. In 1994 the first Inter-American Conference of Experts on CBMs in the region was held in Buenos Aires, followed by the Santiago Regional Conference on CBMs in 1995.[13] The set of recommendations produced by the Buenos Aires meeting remain the main reference point for CBMs in the hemisphere. Meanwhile, the Declaration of Santiago contained a programme of action for the hemisphere calling for each country to share information on military exercises, participate in the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) and UN Military Expenditures reporting mechanisms, promote exchanges of information concerning defence policies and doctrines, and invite foreign observers to military exercises.[14] In 1998, the San Salvador Conference recommended a complementary group of new CBMs. The participants called for improving and broadening the information submitted by states to the UNROCA and

[9] E. Arnett, 'Technology and Military Doctrine: Criteria for Evaluation', in W.T. Wander, E. Arnett and P. Bracken (eds.), 'The Diffusion of Advanced Weaponry: Technologies, Regional Implications, and Responses', *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, Washington DC, 1994, p. 6.
[10] A. Hurrell, 'Security in Latin America', *International Affairs*, 74, 3, 1998, p. 540.
[11] Full text available at OAS:
*http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/csh/english*
[12] US State Department, 'Regional Arms Control Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean', 30 June 2003, at *http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/22054.htm*
[13] For a list of the CBMs in Latin America see OAS:
*http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/csh/english*
[14] US Department of State, 'Regional Conferences on Confidence and Security Building Measures', 2 July 2003, *http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/22249.htm*. See also S.T. Wezeman, 'The Future of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms', *SIPRI Policy Paper*, nr 4, at *http://editors.sipri.se/pubs/UNROCA.html* and United Nations, 'Reduction of military budgets', General Assembly Resolution 35/142 B, 12 December 1980, at *http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/35/ares35.htm*

establishing a common methodology for measuring military expenditure in the region. Finally, the Miami Experts Meeting on CBMs in 2003 provided a roadmap for new CBMs for the hemisphere. The main outcome was a recognition that, in order to be effective, Latin American CBMs would need to have a broader focus beyond the issues that European measures had traditionally concentrated on. Instead, they would need to tackle resolving interstate border tensions, lowering pressure for arms spending, promoting democratic norms, and fostering a climate of trust, transparency and cooperation in the hemisphere. The conference also recommended permanently institutionalising the CBMs process through a forum of discussion.[15]

As a result of these initiatives, Latin America has developed a range of formal and informal CBM agreements. The two agreements that are most relevant for limiting tensions caused by arms acquisitions and illicit transfers of SALW are the 1997 Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (OAS Firearms Convention) and the 1999 Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions (OAS Transparency Convention). The first agreement is focused on enhancing military stability and accountability while the second is directed towards interstate security and crime prevention. Both agreements are legally binding on the parties.

The OAS Firearms Convention was opened for signature in November 1997 and entered into force in July 1998. The convention requires states parties to establish laws governing the import, export, and tracing of firearms, ammunition, explosives, and other related materials, along with enforcement mechanisms.[16] In particular, the convention facilitates the sharing of information on arms smugglers and their actions, requires the establishment of basic export controls and encourages the provision of legal and technical assistance as required by States Parties.[17] In contrast to the OAS Transparency Convention, the Firearms Convention has 26 parties, or approximately three-quarters of the OAS member states. Those which have signed but not ratified the convention are small states plus the US and Canada.[18]

The OAS Transparency Convention was adopted in June 1999. It is modelled on the UNROCA, a mechanism established in 1991 calling on governments to share information on all imports and exports of seven categories of major conventional weapons. However, the OAS Convention is a more developed instrument in that the reporting requirements cover both indigenous acquisitions and imports. In addition, states are required to report on all acquisitions within 90 days of their incorporation into the armed forces.[19] The OAS Transparency Convention entered into force on 21 November 2002, 30 days after the sixth

[15] US Department of State (see note 14), p. 3.
[16] M. Schroeder, 'Small Arms, Terrorism and the OAS Firearms Convention', *FAS Occasional Paper*, nr 1, March 2004, at *http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/OAS_Firearms_Convention.html*, p. 15.
[17] Schroeder, see note 16, p. 4.
[18] OAS, 'A-63: Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials', *OAS Department of Legal Affairs and Services*, at *http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/sigs/a-63.html*
[19] Wezeman (see note 14), p. 22.

OAS member state ratified it. 20 of the 34 OAS member states have signed it, but according to the most recent data only 10 states have ratified it.[20]

*Political conditions within Latin America*

Despite the advances in the development of CBMs in Latin America, problems persist that limit the effectiveness of their application. This is apparent if one applies some of the lessons learnt during Europe's development of CBMs to the Latin American case. Caution should of course be exercised when comparing the European and Latin American contexts but, because this study focuses on measures designed to limit the negative impact of arms acquisitions and illicit arms transfers, reference to the European experience is useful. In this field in particular, Europe has provided the inspiration for later CBMs initiatives in other regions.[21] Lessons derived from the European experience can be grouped in two categories: (1) the objective political conditions necessary for the development of effective CBMs; and (2) the approach states should take when attempting to implement CBMs.

The potential for developing effective CBMs is linked to the provision of particular economic, military and political conditions. In this regard, the European experience indicates that the development of effective CBMs is largely dependent on two main factors: (1) stability and predictability in a given region; and (2) the existence of a shared political culture among the states involved.

Stable and predictable governments as well as stable and predictable intergovernmental relations are necessary to ensure the accountability of governments and the predictability of their adherence to agreements. In the absence of these conditions, there is a tendency to question states' implementation of the agreements and a higher probability of cheating. One example of this is the low level of commitment and, some would argue, even cheating, by the Soviet Union in 1975-85 in relation to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act on CBMs in Europe.[22] Strong democratic regimes are important because they tend to institutionalise agreements reached at the inter-governmental level. In contrast, in weak democracies or non-democratic regimes, decisions are taken more easily but agreements are less likely to be implemented in a consistent and coherent way. In addition, low levels of state capacity allow criminal groups to pursue illegal activities that involve social violence, drug-related criminality and armed insurgencies. As argued above, these transnational challenges can also serve to perpetuate interstate tensions and obstruct advances in the field of CBMs.

Despite significant advances in recent years, stability and predictability are factors that are not present everywhere in Latin America. There is a lack of a state presence in parts of certain countries, a prevalence of fragile democracies and, in many areas, the threat of regression to military rule. Fragile and in some cases failed democratically elected governments have been a common pattern in the region, with the latest cases in the past two years being in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and, to a certain extent, Venezuela –thus encompassing almost the entire Andean region–.[23] CBMs in most of Latin America are

[20] Wezeman (see note 14), p. 22, and OAS, 'A-64: Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions', *OAS Department of Legal Affairs and Services*, at *http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/sigs/a-64.html*

[21] Lachowski (see note 3), p. 188.

[22] Lachowski (see note 3), p. 11-12.

[23] In Ecuador, Lucio Gutiérrez, known for orchestrating the 2000 coup against President Jamil Mahuad, was elected to the presidency in 2003. On April 2005, the Ecuadorian Congress deposed Gutiérrez from his post. In Bolivia, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada resigned in October 2003 after two months of rioting and

agreed through presidential meetings entailing personal commitments that remain 'government policy' rather than 'state policy'. Those who participate in the meetings on CBMs often constitute a limited group of officers who lack the funds to finance the proposals. Meanwhile, the executive often lacks the capacity to enforce new directives.[24] There is also a risk of moving towards nationalistic sentiments, which usually endeavour to mobilise opinion demanding a greater political role, or pressing for militarisation and rearmament, as was the case of Peru under President Alberto Fujimori.[25]

In areas with antagonistic political cultures, there is a high risk of divergence, which could limit the potential impact of CBMs. It can be argued that the US has adopted policies on arms control and disarmament that differ sharply from those pursued by countries in Latin America. In particular, under the current Bush Administration, US policy has undergone a notable shift whereby threat assessments have been driven to a much greater extent by the intentions of states than by their capabilities. Hence, it is not the possession of particular weapon systems *per se* that contributes to shaping US policy, but the type of government that possesses them. In effect, less emphasis is placed on agreeing multilateral measures that apply equally to all states and more emphasis on policies that target particular countries or situations that the US interprets as threatening.

This policy represents a shift from that pursued by the Clinton Administration. When President Clinton's revised policy on arms exports to Latin America was announced in 1997, the US government stated that it was, 'committed to promoting conflict prevention and resolution, and confidence and security building measures (CSBM) and arms control measures which support regional stability'.[26] In April 2005 the US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, was asked about recent arms purchases by Venezuela, Brazil, Chile and Colombia. Rumsfeld replied: 'Well, if you have a peaceful, democratic country that for whatever reasons desires to have certain kinds of capabilities, that's one thing... But if you have a country that ends up buying 100,000 AK-47s, you have to ask the question, what are they going to do with them all?'[27] Hence, an assessment of whether or not Venezuela's purchase of Kalashnikovs has the potential to have a negative impact on the region has little to do with the weapons themselves and everything to do with the nature of the government in Caracas and the US policy towards that government. The US position is also reflected in its failure to play an active role in supporting the various regional CBM initiatives. For example, the current US administration has failed to ratify the OAS Firearms Convention.

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strikes. Sánchez was replaced by Carlos Mesa, who also resigned in June 2005. President Alejandro Toledo, from Peru, is the most unpopular president in the region and is struggling to finish his presidential term. In his country, a furious mob lynched a mayor, while in Bolivia another mayor was lynched and then set on fire. Finally, in Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez was ousted from power in April 2002. However, international criticism of the coup, especially in Latin America, and support from his followers, returned Chávez to power just two days later. See M. Shifter, 'Breakdown in the Andes', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, nr 5, Sept.-Oct. 2004, p. 126-138, and *The Economist*, 'How Alejandro Toledo became Latin America's least popular president', 8 July 2004, at *http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=2906018*

[24] R. Diamint, 'Security Challenges in Latin America', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. XXIII, nr1, 2004.

[25] S. Bowen and J. Holligan, 'The Imperfect Spy: The Many Lives of Vladimiro Montesinos', Lima, PEISA, 2003.

[26] 'Report on the Security Needs of Latin America and the Impact of Lifting the Existing US Ban on High Technology Sales to the Region', Secretary of State in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, 25 June 1998, at *http://ciponline.org/facts/hitechrp.htm*

[27] A. Oppenheimer, 'Rumsfeld Needs an Even-Handed Approach to Arms', *Miami Herald*, 10 April 2005, at *http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com*

The main problem with US policy is that other states will go along with it only to the extent that they share, or can be persuaded to share, US views concerning which states should be viewed with concern. In addition, the policy reflects a particular perspective on the legitimacy of interfering in the internal affairs of other states. It presupposes that some states can be trusted to acquire certain weapon systems while other cannot. This assumption implies a right to intrude into matters that other states in the region regard as the sovereign right of national governments. In general, Latin American states continue to subscribe to a traditional understanding of state sovereignty and frown upon intervention in a state's domestic affairs.

*Latin America's approach to CBMs*

For Latin America, as for some other regions, the European experience provides three important lessons with regard to the most effective approach that states can take when seeking to develop and apply CBMs. First, CBMs should not be used as a device for solving the problems of weak democracies and states in conflict. Second, it is important to avoid including both military and non-military issues in CBM measures without tackling the process in a 'target-orientated' way. Finally, flexibility should be maximised by avoiding stringent legal agreements and emphasizing binding political accords. Latin American countries have still some way to go in learning from these experiences.

In the first place, Latin America is currently facing the difficulties of treating CBMs as a device for solving the problems of weak democracies and states in conflict. While European CBMs were a response to the overarching existential threats of the Cold War, in Latin America the primary force motivating their emergence was the need to democratise the armed forces after many decades of authoritarian rule.[28] Security sector institutions in Latin America, and the corresponding international arrangements, still bear the mark of their development within the context of authoritarian rule.[29] In the Latin American context, it is legitimate to view the development of good governance as a necessary CBM.[30] However, this is not something which CBMs are necessarily designed to do effectively. In addition, given the broad objective of the CBMs in this region, there is a weak focus in enhancing better relations among countries.

Second, Latin America has attempted to incorporate both military and non-military issues in the early stages, thereby failing to develop CBMs in a selective way**.** CBMs need to be 'target-orientated' in order not to lose the scope and capacity needed to enhance military relations**.** The focus of South American CBMs has been structured by a recognition of the dangers posed by the 'new security threats' that have emanated as a consequence of the state weakness, absence of political ambition, feeble rule of law and the high level of criminality and internal violence. The difficulties of ensuring an institutionalised and credible state presence in all areas of the respective country have created a demand for international cooperation within the region for tackling these transnational dangers. However, these CBMs are preparations for eventual extra-regional threats, instead of measures for the enhancement of security conditions between the states. This has imposed limitations on the use of the CBMs in Latin America, notwithstanding the existence of concrete tensions among countries.[31] Simultaneously, this broad approach means that the

[28] Arévalo de León (see note 7), p. 14.
[29] Arévalo de León (see note 7), p. 2.
[30] Arévalo de León (see note 7), p. 15.
[31] Arévalo de León (see note 7), p. 3.

entire security-building process will be held hostage to a lack of progress in the military sphere.[32]

Finally, the institutional and governmental weaknesses in Latin America have led these countries to emphasise the development of strong, *legally binding* agreements. For instance, both the OAS Transparency and Firearms Conventions are legally binding on the parties. As a consequence, such agreements lack the flexibility that enables the countries to adapt to new security situations. CBMs are most successful when they take the form of *politically binding* accords, which lessens the chance of countries remaining trapped in obsolete agreements which do not reflect current security concerns. However, Latin America should also learn that political will, if it exists, can build a stronger sense of compromise and ownership in the agreements.[33]

*Unequal advances in the field of CBMs*

The Southern Cone has developed a range of bilateral agreements that are separate and distinct from those that cover the region as a whole. The development of a new atmosphere for security cooperation can be seen in the series of bilateral agreements signed between Chile and Argentina, Argentina and Brazil, and Chile and Brazil, as well as mechanisms including other countries in the region.[34] The most tangible of these is the Common Standardised Methodology for the Measurements of Defence Expenditures put forth at the request of the governments of Argentina and Chile.[35] The Andean Community of Nations (CAN) has examined the possibility of adopting a similar mechanism, but no concrete advances have been made.[36]

Concurrently, there has been a marked difference in the level of success in the field of CBMs between the Southern Cone and the Andean region. For instance, only 25% of Latin America countries' yearly submissions to the UNROCA are accurate, and these are made mainly by countries in the Southern Cone –Argentina, Brazil and Chile–.[37] The remaining 75% of national submissions are contradictory since they indicate that no transfers have taken place, while the suppliers' data indicate the opposite.[38] The benefits resulting from the OAS Firearms Convention are also unevenly distributed within the region. For example, a recent study of this convention found that Colombian law enforcement officials were dissatisfied with the level of cooperation they were receiving from neighbouring states.[39]

The uneven success in the field of CBMs is partly explained by the irregular distribution of security threats within the hemisphere. The Southern Cone and the Andean region share the same security pressures imposed by the so-called 'new' threats', but the degree of

[32] Lachowski (see note 3), p. 190-191.
[33] Lachowski (see note 3), p. 190.
[34] Arévalo de León (see note 7), p. 13.
[35] T. Sheetz, 'Una evaluación del documento cepalino: metodología estandarizada común para la medición de los gastos de defensa', *Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad*, year 18, nr 1-2, p. 107-121.
[36] OAS, 'Meeting of Experts on Confidence and Security Building Measures', Permanent Council of the OAS, Committee on Hemispheric Security, OEA/Ser. G., CP7CHS-528/02 rev. 3, 28 January 2003, p. 3.
[37] Peru is the only country from the Andean regions which submits accurate data to the UNROCA. See M. Radsek, 'Examinando la transparencia de América del Sur en materia de adquisiciones de armas: la política de información de los Estados suramericanos frente al registro de armas convencionales de las Naciones Unidas', *Institut für Iberoamerika-Kunde*, Germany, p. 217-218. Venezuela has submitted data to the UN register in only two occasions (in 1998 and 2003) while Colombia has submitted data only once (in 1993).
[38] Radsek (see note 37), p. 217-218.
[39] Schroeder (see note 16), p. 27.

intensity differs substantially, with Andean countries, more strongly affected, fuelling traditional interstate disputes. In addition, the greater levels of state capacity in the Southern Cone mean that the region is less affected by the destabilising effects of criminal groups and better able to implement the agreements it reaches.

The different levels of economic integration between the two regions also largely explain the different levels of success in the field of CBMs. The Southern Cone's development of security cooperation initiatives has been supported by the economic integration entailed by the MERCOSUR agreement.[40] Economic liberalisation and increasing levels of interdependence affect the security environment in different ways. In particular, they promote new concepts of interest and identity among social groups and political actors. 'Institutionalized economic regionalism is important to security, not because the costs of fighting become too high according to some abstract measure, but rather because it anchors and promotes processes of socialization and enmeshment through which definitions of interests and identities may shift, altering the values of members and the ways in which costs/benefits and rational action are construed'.[41]

In sum, the weak democracies and low institutional capacity in Latin America have created an unstable and unpredictable environment for the development of CBMs in the region. This situation is not helped by the US' pursuit of policies on arms control and collective security that are out of step with the rest of the region. In addition to these unfavourable conditions, the effectiveness of Latin American CBMs is also hampered by the approach that the region has taken to their development. Latin America has attempted to use CBMs as a device for solving problems of weak democracies and states in conflict rather than pursuing the process of CBMs in a 'purpose-oriented' way.

**Venezuela's arms acquisitions in 2005**

The limited capacity of CBMs in Latin America, and particularly in the Andean region, can be seen in the recent dispute surrounding Venezuela's arms acquisitions. This section examines these acquisitions: it describes the equipment being purchased and discusses the reasons behind the purchases and the concerns they have sparked within the region. Specifically, it analyses the role of CBMs in resolving the tensions surrounding the acquisitions.

During the first half of 2005 Venezuela signed four significant contracts or accords relating to arms imports and was rumoured to have examined a number of other deals. The agreements included a US$170 million deal for 12-24 Super Tucano light attack aircraft from Brazil signed in February 2005,[42] and two separate deals with a combined value of US$200 million for 15 helicopters signed in February and June 2005.[43] In addition, Venezuela signed an accord in March 2005 with Spain for the sale of 12 C-295 aircraft, ten for transport and two for surveillance.[44] Venezuela is also acquiring four patrol boats, four

[40] D. Flemes, 'Institution Building in Mercosul's Defense and Security Sector Reform (II). The Common Containment of Transnational Security Threats', *Institut für Iberoamerika-Kunde*, Germany, Arbeitspapiere des IIK nr 22, October 2004.
[41] Hurrell (see note 10), p. 538.
[42] J. Forero, 'Arms Buying by Venezuela Worries US', *New York Times*, 15 February 2005, p. 14.
[43] 'Russia to Supply Military Helicopters to Venezuela', *ITAR-TASS*, 11 June 2005, at *http://www.web.lexisnexis.com*. Venezuela is expected to order a total of 33 helicopters during 2005.
[44] M. Agüera, 'Spain Draws Fire for Sale of Material to Venezuela', *Defence News*, 25 April 2005, p. 13.

corvettes and a number of freighters from Spain.[45] The total value of these deals is believed to be around US$1.7 billion.[46] Finally, Venezuela has signed a deal to buy 100,000 7.62-mm AK-103/AK-194 assault rifles from Russia. This may also involve the licensed production of additional rifles in Venezuela.[47]

Rumours regarding a possible Venezuelan purchase of MiG-29s have been circulating since 2001.[48] Speculation over the deal peaked during Chavez's visit to Russia in November 2004, but Venezuelan officials subsequently sought to play down the likelihood of a sale.[49] More recently, reports have circulated that Venezuela has shifted its attention away from MiGs and is now interested in purchasing Su-27 or Su-35 combat aircraft, also from Russia.[50] In addition, reports indicate that Venezuela is installing a network of radars along its borders with Colombia using German, Chinese or Ukrainian technology.[51] Venezuela is reported to be evaluating the purchase of EMB-145 aircraft from Brazil and armoured vehicles from Austria, Belgium, Switzerland or the UK.[52] Finally, it was announced that Venezuela has contracted a Belgian company to upgrade its fleet of F-16 combat aircraft[53] and has signed a US$7.5 million contract with an Israeli company, Rafael, to equip the aircraft with Python IV air-to-air missiles.[54]

The recent acquisition decisions by Venezuela can be linked to a number of factors: (a) the discussion during the first half of 2005 regarding the shift of Venezuela's military doctrine; (b) the poor state of Venezuela's military forces and the worsening security along the Colombian border; and (c) the attempt by Venezuela to diversify its sources of military equipment beyond the US.

Perhaps the most important factor is the likely shift in Venezuelan military doctrine. Driving the shift is a perception that the Venezuelan revolution is vulnerable to attack from the US and that Venezuela thus must be prepared to defend itself, just as Cuba defended itself at the Bay of Pigs in 1961.[55] According to General Melvin López, Venezuela's head of the National Defence Council, the new doctrine would be focused on an 'asymmetric war' based on the use of guerrilla tactics and the involvement of the population at large.[56] While Venezuela's national security doctrine has historically focused on repulsing a military invasion from Colombia with conventional tactics, the new doctrine calls for an

[45] 'Zapatero asegura que la venta de armas a Chávez no puede ofender porque beneficia a los pueblos', *El Mundo*, 30 March 2005, at *http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2005/03/30/espana/1112166166.html*
[46] 'Venezuela: Summit Backs Chávez', *Latinnews Daily*, 30 March 2005, at *http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com*
[47] 'Venezuelans Buying and Planning to License-Produce AK-103s and AK-104s', *Flash News*, 6 December 2004, at *http://www.fav-club.com/flash/fn35.htm*
[48] 'Venezuela Renews Interest in MiG-29s', *Air Forces Monthly*, July 2004, p. 14.
[49] 'Purchase of Russian Weapons Not for Arms Race: Venezuela', *Xinhua News Agency*, 9 November 2004, at *http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-11/09/content_2193752.htm*
[50] 'More Details on Venezuelan Interest in Sukhoi Fighters', *Flash News*, 10 May 2005, at *http://www.favclub.com/flash/fn38.htm*
[51] 'Venezuela to Install Radar Network on Frontier', *Forecast International Government & Industry Group*, 13 December 2004, at *http://emarketalerts.forecast1.com*
[52] 'Venezuela Interested in Embraer Surveillance Aircraft', *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 22 March 2005, at http://emarketalerts.forecast1.com, and A. Webb-Vidal, 'Venezuela Seeks Arms Edge over Colombia', *Financial Times*, 26 June 2004, p. 5.
[53] 'Venezuela Air Force Selects SABCA for F-16 Airframe Overhaul', *Forecast International Government & Industry Group*, 6 February 2004, at *http://emarketalerts.forecast1.com*
[54] 'Python IV AAMs for Venezuelan Air Force', *Flash News*, 30 May 2003, at *http://www.fav-club.com*
[55] 'Las armas de Chávez', *Semana*, 9 February 2005, at *http://semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=84641*
[56] 'Chávez Arming to Fight Attack by US', *Miami Herald*, 12 February 2005, p. 1.

asymmetric, low-intensity response against invading US forces.[57] The plan entails strengthening the country's military apparatus and the purchases from abroad form one aspect of this effort.[58] In addition, Venezuela is increasing the size of military units across the country, improving the state of readiness of both regular and reserve units and upgrading all military equipment and materiel.[59] The plan also includes the creation of militia units known as People's Defence Units (UPDs).[60]

The Venezuelan armed forces are poorly equipped as a result of several years of under-funding. Venezuela's military spending declined from 1.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001 to 1.3% in 2003. According to an independent report, its armed forces are a 'hollow shell' that is so weakened by budget cuts that soldiers patrolling the border region often lack uniforms, boots, helmets, body armour and ammunition. The army is smaller than is sometimes reported and some major equipment cannot be used effectively.[61] The C-295s being purchased from Spain are slated to replace the existing fleet of Alenia G-222 aircraft. Eight G-222 aircraft were acquired in 1985 but, largely because of high maintenance costs, only one remains in service.[62] At the same time, during the past two years several incidents have destabilised the relationship between Venezuela and neighbouring Colombia, as a consequence of the spill-over of Colombia's internal conflict (these events are discussed in more detail below). Thus, the Russian helicopters, for instance, are intended to increase the Venezuelan military's ability to intervene in the area along the border with Colombia.[63]

Simultaneously, the recent acquisitions reflect an attempt to diversify Venezuela's sources of military equipment beyond its traditional main supplier, the US. Relations between Washington and Caracas have continued to deteriorate in recent years, making it important for Chávez to vary his supplies of military equipment.[64] Venezuela's flotilla of fighter aircraft is principally made up of US-built F-16s and continued access to spare parts is in the say of the White House.[65] In February 2005 Chávez accused the US of delaying the delivery of spare parts for his country's F-16 fighter jets.[66]

Critics of Chávez have sought to emphasise less benign motives behind the recent arms acquisitions. Some argue that the purchases are an attempt by the Venezuelan government to distract the populace from internal problems by stirring up nationalist sentiment.

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[57] 'Venezuela: A New Security Doctrine', *Stratfor: Premium Global Intelligence Brief*, 7 February 2005, at *http://www.stratfor.com/*

[58] 'Chávez's Plans for "Integral Defence"', *Latin American Security & Strategic Review*, SSR-05-02, February 2005, p. 6-7.

[59] 'Chávez's Plans for "Integral Defence"' (see note 58).

[60] 'Chávez's plans for "Integral Defence"' (see note 58) and 'Venezuela: A New Security Doctrine' (see note 57). Chávez has subsequently announced that a military reserve force of 1.5 million Venezuelans will be trained in order 'to defend, with the people, the sovereignty and greatness of this land'. See Sarah Wagner, 'Venezuela to Create Military Reserve Force of 1.5 Million', *Venezuela Analysis*, 4 April 2005, at *http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/print.php?newsno=1572*

[61] C. Coello, 'Analysis: Chávez Buys Russian Military Equipment', *United Press International*, 21 October 2004, at *http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com*

[62] 'Further Details on Venezuelan Air Force C-295 Procurement' (see note 50).

[63] 'Las armas de Chávez' (see note 55).

[64] A key element of the Venezuelan government's modernisations plan is 'the creation of a wider network of equipment providers which, some analysts say, is aimed at avoiding dependence on the US'. See J. Higuera, 'Colombia, US Worried by Venezuelan Build-up', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 March 2005, p. 8.

[65] 'Las armas de Chávez' (see note 55).

[66] P. Markey, 'Venezuela's Chávez Clashes With US Over F-16 Parts', *USA Today*, 14 February 2005, p. 6.

According to Román Ortiz, Professor at the University of Los Andes, Chávez is trying to 'acquire military power in order to sustain his ideological project… a false perception of superiority could help Chávez in his search of a more aggressive foreign policy'.[67] The UPDs are seen by opposition and human rights groups as an instrument of internal political control rather than a response to a real military threat from abroad.[68]

*Colombian concerns: 'old' and 'new' threats*

Irrespective of the reasons behind Venezuela's acquisitions, the response they have generated, particularly in Colombia, reflect both 'old' and 'new' security threats. First, some warn that Venezuela's acquisition of new weapon systems, particularly frigates from Spain and, possibly, MiG-29s from Russia, will have a destabilising effect on the regional military balance and spark an arms race. Furthermore, concerns have been raised that the transfer and licensed production of large numbers of Russian rifles will result in surplus weapons 'cascading' into the hands of illegal armed groups in Colombia.

In October 2004 the Colombian Senate Foreign Relations Commission reportedly requested that the United Nations investigate the alleged Venezuelan arms purchases from Russia, citing their potential impact on the regional balance of power.[69] In late November 2004, amidst fresh reports that Venezuela was moving towards the acquisition of MiG-29s, Colombian legislators summoned Colombia's defence and foreign ministers to answer questions regarding the risks posed by Venezuela's arms build-up.[70]

Colombia's concerns over the regional balance of power have focused mainly on the rumoured purchase of combat aircraft from Russia, while the purchase of Russian helicopters has largely been viewed without considerable concern. According to one defence analyst, Alfredo Rangel, Colombia has demanded greater protection of the border from Chávez and the helicopters would permit greater vigilance. However, the MiG-29s would be viewed as virtually a hostile act towards Colombia.[71] Concern has also been expressed about the purchase of corvettes from Spain. Former Colombian President Andrés Pastrana has warned that Venezuela may use the patrol boats to support its claim to the contested waters in the Gulf of Venezuela, a dispute that nearly led to war in 1987.[72]

Despite the Colombian government's attempts to play down the strategic significance of these acquisitions by Venezuela, there are signs of real concern regarding their potential impact on the military balance between the two countries. In April 2005 the then Colombian Defence Minister, Jorge Alberto Uribe, admitted that Colombia was 'not comfortable' seeing Venezuela's 'military machine being strengthened'.[73] Also in April, reports surfaced that Uribe had raised stronger concerns in a confidential statement to the Colombian Senate. The Defence Minister noted, 'It's an undeniable fact that Venezuela's military build-up deepens the military imbalance in the Andean region'.[74]

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[67] 'Las armas de Chávez' (see note 55).
[68] 'Chávez's Plans for "Integral Defence"' (see note 58).
[69] C. Coello (see note 61).
[70] A. Webb-Vidal, 'Chávez Goes Shopping for Guns and MiGs as Colombia Looks on Nervously', *Financial Times* (USA Edition), 30 November 2004, p. 2.
[71] A. Webb-Vidal (see note 70).
[72] A. Cala and J. de Cordoba, 'Arms Deals Strain Madrid-US Ties: Spain's Sales to Colombia, Venezuela Put Rapport With Washington at Risk', *Wall Street Journal*, 5 April 2005, p. 16.
[73] 'Colombia Upset at Venezuela', *Federal News Radio*, 11 April 2005, *http://www.federalnewsradio.com/index.php?nid=25&sid=249463*
[74] 'Chávez Military Buildup Creating "Imbalance"', *Miami Herald*, 27 April 2005, p. 10.

Significant attention has also been paid to the purchase of rifles from Russia. Those who argue that these weapons are destabilising do so not because of their potential impact on the regional military balance, which is likely to be minimal, but because of the possibility that surplus weapons will find their way into the hands of illegal rebel groups in Colombia. Since Chávez came to power there have been repeated allegations that his administration is actively helping Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) operations in Colombia by providing them either with arms and logistics or safe haven within Venezuela.[75] In 2001 a report on arms trafficking to the FARC by the Colombian intelligence organization, the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), alleged that 'the Colombian subversives had the support of some Venezuelan government organizations'.[76]

Nonetheless, a recent study by RAND states that, while it is possible that sympathetic individuals within the Venezuelan military have supplied both weapons and ammunition to FARC and the ELN, 'there is no definitive evidence at this point that links the administration of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to a deliberate policy of arming Colombia's guerrillas'. However, the report goes on to state that 'it is possible that sympathetic individual members of the Venezuelan military have supplied both weapons and ammunition to FARC and the ELN'.[77]

The image of individuals or small groups operating without the authorisation of the government is supported by Kirk Hawkins' description of the nature of Chávez's rule. Describing the use of violence by Chávez's supporters, Hawkins states that, in many incidents, those carrying out the violence were acting without the direction of the government. 'As a movement, Chavismo is simply not that well organised, and Chávez is careful to avoid acting in ways that violate the letter of the law.'[78] Nonetheless, Hawkins also notes that 'Chávez's inflammatory remarks are taken as important cues by some of those who follow him, and their illegal or unethical actions often go unpunished'.[79] It is also worth noting that equipment from other armed forces besides Venezuela's, including Ecuador and Peru, are reported to have made their way into the arsenals of the FARC and ELN.[80] There are also examples of corruption within the Colombian military, which has resulted in weapons being sold to the rebels.[81]

Nonetheless, the purchase of 100,000 rifles by Venezuela has aroused considerable suspicion in Colombia. The Colombian government has largely refrained from criticising the purchase in public and confined any disquiet to off-the-record briefings. According to an official statement from the Colombian Defence Ministry, there was 'no concern' over the proposed purchases, although Colombian intelligence officials have privately

[75] J. McDermott, 'Colombia Struggles to Counter Arms Smuggling', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 2004, p. 36.
[76] Quoted in O. Libon, 'Documents Detail Peruvian Participation in FARC Arms Case', *La República*, 23 October 2001, FBIS-LAT-2001-1023.
[77] K. Cragin and B. Hoffman, 'Arms Trafficking and Colombia', *RAND*, 2003, at *http://www.rand.org/*, p. xix.
[78] K. Hawkins, 'Populism in Venezuela: The Rise of Chavismo', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 24, nr 6, 2003, p. 1157.
[79] K. Hawkins (see note 78).
[80] McDermott (see note 75).
[81] McDermott (see note 75).

expressed worries that rifles replaced by the new purchases could end up in the hands of Colombian guerrillas.[82]

*CBMs and the case of Venezuela*

A closer examination of the way in which the disagreement over Venezuela's arms purchases has developed reflects many of the factors identified in earlier analyses of CBMs in Latin America. Exchanges of information have taken place between Venezuela and Colombia, but they have occurred mainly at the ministerial or heads of state level and there has been little attempt to develop formalized agreements or institutionalised systems of information exchange. However, this failure is itself a product of the political factors identified above that have mitigated the effective development of CBMs. In particular, there is a lack of stability and predictability both with regard to relations between Venezuela and Colombia and the level of governmental capacity and willingness to develop effective CBMs. In addition, there is a lack of shared political culture between the principal actors, particularly the US and other countries in the region, which has further undermined the potential to develop and apply effective CBMs.

There has been a recognition of the importance of transparency as a means of limiting mistrust over Venezuela's arms acquisitions. Indeed, the large amount of information that is available in the public domain concerning Venezuela's arms acquisitions is in itself a reflection of the level of openness that the government is displaying about its purchases. There are even limited signs that Venezuela has taken steps to share information with the US government. In May 2005 the US ambassador to Caracas, William Brownfield, received a briefing from the Venezuelan government on the transfer of rifles from Russia which he said went some way to dispelling US concerns: 'Now we already know the amount of and model of the assault rifles, and other details we did not know before'.[83] In addition, in April 2005 Venezuela became the tenth country to sign the OAS Transparency convention although it has yet to ratify the agreement.[84]

However, the exchanges that have taken place have not involved anyone different from ministers or the presidents themselves and there have been only weak intentions to create serious political agreements. This reflects a pattern that has been displayed in the series of efforts that have been undertaken to smooth over a range of other disputes between Venezuela and Colombia. In each case the disputes have been resolved, often with the help of mediation by other states in the hemisphere, or in meetings between the presidents of the two countries. While this demonstrates an ability on the part of South American states to resolve immediate sources of tension between Colombia and Venezuela, there are few signs that significant steps are being taken to develop future mechanisms that could help reduce potential sources of reiterative mistrust and misunderstanding.

In June 2004, tensions between Venezuela and Colombia increased sharply over the capture of more than 100 supposedly Colombian paramilitary fighters. Chávez claimed that the group were part of a mercenary invasion force hired by domestic opponents with links to Colombia and the US.[85] Three months after the dispute was resolved by a presidential meeting, relations were again plunged into difficulty after five Venezuelan

[82] 'Venezuela Eyes Russian Arms', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 December 2004, p. 6.
[83] 'Doubts over Venezuela's Arms Deal Cleared: US Official', *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 May 2005, at *http://english.people.com.cn/200505/20/eng20050520_186006.html*
[84] 'A-64: Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions' (see note 20).
[85] A. Webb-Vidal, 'Venezuela Seeks Arms Edge Over Colombia', *Financial Times*, 26 June 2004, p. 5.

army soldiers and a woman engineer with the state oil company Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) were killed near the border with Colombia. The Colombian government blamed FARC rebels for the killings while Venezuela claims that right-wing paramilitaries were responsible.[86] The two presidents met and discussed the matter but focused mainly on economic issues. In December 2004 relations between Venezuela and Colombia again became strained after the kidnapping of a FARC official based in Caracas by Venezuelans in the pay of the Colombian government.[87] In response, Chávez froze diplomatic and economic relations with Colombia and demanded a formal apology from Uribe.[88] Following mediation by Cuba, Brazil and Peru, the two sides reached a compromise later worked out by the Foreign Ministers of both countries at the CAN summit held in Lima on 27 January 2005.[89] Again, no specific CBMs were discussed in order to prevent future misperceptions and misunderstandings.

*The complicating role of the US*

In contrast to Colombia, the US has shown less willingness to make a distinction between the different Venezuelan arms purchases and has sought to present the package as a whole as a potential threat to regional stability. In addition, the US has been far more forthright in raising the spectre of arms being passed on to the FARC and ELN. Finally, the US has invested a great deal of political capital in trying to block sales to Venezuela from both Russia and Spain.

This policy needs to be understood within the wider context of current US policy towards the Chávez government and US attitudes towards arms control and cooperative threat reduction in general. The US has adopted a policy designed to isolate the Chávez administration while failing to take positive steps to strengthen regional arms control and cooperative security agreements. However, on both counts US policy has been broadly rejected by other countries in the region that share neither Washington's assessment of the threat posed by the Chávez government nor the underlying principles governing its attitude towards arms control and collective security. This difference between the US and the rest of the region demonstrates a lack of shared political culture, a factor identified above as necessary for the development of effective CBMs.[90]

Relations between the US and Venezuela have grown progressively worse since Chávez came to power in 1999. In February 2005 it was reported that the US had undertaken a policy review that was expected to recommend trying to isolate Venezuela from its neighbours. According to the State Department's Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs, Roger Noriega, the US had 'tried to establish common ground with the Venezuelan government... But, unfortunately, President Chávez has sabotaged our

[86] 'Venezuela's Paper Army', *Stratfor*, 6 October 2004, at *http://www.stratfor.com/*
[87] 'Caracas Snatch Heightens Unease Over Uribe's "outreach"', *Latin American Security & Strategic Review*, SSR- 05-01, January 2005. p. 11-12.
[88] 'US Blamed for Venezuela-Colombia Row', *ISN Security Watch*, 24 January 2005, at *http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details_print.cfm?id=10631*
[89] G. Espinosa-González, 'Venezuela-Colombia Crisis: Where was Washington?', *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, 16 February 2005, at *http://www.coha.org/NEW_PRESS_RELEASES/New_Press_Releases_2005/05.16%20Venezuela-Colombia%20the%20one.htm*
[90] The main US ally in South America over the last five years is Colombia. However, Colombia, along with the rest of the region, is still anxious to uphold the principle of non-intervention. Some would argue that Argentina is also a close ally of the US, because of its status of major non-NATO ally since February 1998. However, the two countries have moved further apart following the election of centre-left president, Nestor Kirchner in 2003.

efforts'.[91] The two-pronged strategy will consist of an attempt to build regional consensus on isolating Chávez while simultaneously supporting domestic opposition to his government.[92] The US position is ostensibly driven by a belief that Chávez is sowing instability in the region and that his regime is becoming increasingly undemocratic and repressive. Meanwhile, an ulterior third motive is the fear that Chávez might redirect the oil he currently supplies to the US to alternative destinations.[93]

While the Colombian government has sought to distinguish between the types of weapon systems being acquired by the Venezuelan government and has focused its concerns on the purchase of Russian rifles and the potential MiG deal, the US has shown a greater willingness to portray the arms purchases as negative in general. According to US State Department Spokesman Lou Fintour, 'Venezuela's plans to purchase various types and large quantities of weapons are extremely troubling'.[94] In addition, the US has been far more vocal in raising the spectre of weapons finding their way into the hands of rebel groups in Colombia. When the acquisition of Russian assault rifles was announced, Noriega publicly expressed the US concern that some of the weapons could 'fall into the hands of criminal or irregular groups that operate in Latin America'.[95]

The US has also sought to pressure Russia and Spain regarding their decisions to supply weapons to Venezuela. In December 2004 the Bush Administration sent a letter of protest to the Russian Embassy in Washington, criticising Russia's sale of rifles to Venezuela. Bush administration officials followed up the warning by expressing their concerns directly to the Russian Defence and Foreign Ministers.[96] Meanwhile, following Spain's agreement to sell transport planes and frigates to Venezuela, US Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated, 'I personally think that Spain is making a mistake... I guess time will tell'.[97]

Washington's attempts to isolate Chávez because of his arms acquisitions have found little echo in the region. The Brazilian President has strongly defended Chávez and denounced US interference in Venezuela's internal affairs.[98] In March 2005 Brazil, Colombia, Spain and Venezuela signed a joint statement reaffirming the principle of non-interference in sovereign affairs.[99]

As noted above, US policy in this area is governed by a particular attitude towards regional security and arms control. However, the policy is based on an assessment of the threat posed by the Chavez government which is far more alarmist than the assessment of the rest of the region. In addition, the policy reflects different views between the US and the rest of

[91] 'Chávez Arming to Fight Attack by US' (see note 56).
[92] 'Treating Chávez as a Regional Threat', *Latin American Security & Strategic Review*, SSR-05-03, 9 March 2005, p. 9-10.
[93] 'Treating Chávez as a Regional Threat' (see note 92).
[94] David Morgan, 'Planned Russian Arms Sale to Venezuela Troubles US', *Reuters*, 10 February 2005, at *http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=574&u=/nm/20050210/wl_nm/venezuela_usa_arms_dc_1&printer=1*
[95] 'Chávez Arming to Fight Attack by US' (see note 56).
[96] R. Scarborough, 'Russian Arms Sale to Chávez Irks US', *Washington Times*, 10 February 2005, p. A01.
[97] 'Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with Andres Oppenheimer, Miami Herald', News Transcript from the US Department of Defense, 5 April 2005, at *http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/2005/tr20050405-secdef2461.html*
[98] J. Gindin, 'US Continues to Push for Containment of Venezuela's Chávez', *Venezuela Analysis*, 1 April 2005, at *http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/print.php?newsno=1568*
[99] 'Venezuela: Summit Backs Chávez' (see note 46).

the region concerning what is an acceptable level of interference in another state's sovereign affairs. The US's heavy-handed attempts to isolate Chávez have backfired to such an extent that they have weakened the possibility of regional pressure being exerted on Venezuela to either curb its arms acquisitions or take a more active role in regional CBM initiatives.

**Conclusions**

CBMs can facilitate the strengthening of interstate relations in a mutually reinforcing way. In particular, they can help to lessen the negative impact of arms acquisitions by introducing mechanisms of information sharing and transparency. In addition, CBMs can help to alleviate the tensions caused by illegal flows of SALW by strengthening national export controls. Nevertheless, CBMs cannot, in and of themselves, produce a solution where deeper interstate tensions prevail or where governmental capacity or willingness is weak.

Latin America has developed a range of CBMs, including mechanisms focused on these specific challenges. However, the overall effectiveness of these measures has been hampered by the political conditions within the region and the approach that Latin America has taken with regard to their implementation. Among the political factors, the most significant are an absence of stability and predictability and difference in political culture, particularly between the US and the rest of the region. With regard to the approach towards implementing CBMs, the problems include a lack of selectivity with regard to the objectives of agreements. These issues are more prevalent in the Andean region than they are in the Southern Cone. This is reflected in its weaker commitment to Latin America-wide CBMs and its failure to develop additional region-specific measures such as the Southern Cone's agreement on military expenditure.

Evidence supporting this analysis can be found in the dispute concerning Venezuela's arms acquisitions in early 2005. Tensions between Colombia and Venezuela focused on the possible impact that the arms transfers would have on the regional military balance and the fear that surplus arms would find their way into the hands of Colombian rebels. While efforts have been made to resolve these tensions, in common with previous fence-building exercises between Caracas and Bogotá, they focused on meetings at the heads-of-state or ministerial level and there were few attempts to strengthen or develop systems of information sharing or cooperation in order to prevent future disagreements. As a result, while the immediate tensions between Colombia and Venezuela appear to have been resolved, there is a possibility that they will flare up again in the future.

Nonetheless, the regional picture is not entirely negative. The discussions between Venezuela and Colombia, although they did not result in new or strengthened CBMs, did demonstrate a commitment to information sharing and a recognition of the role that CBMs can play it reducing tensions surrounding arms acquisitions. Meanwhile, the experience of the Southern Cone demonstrates the region's ability to develop CBMs with a real impact on reducing tension, even if their structure and application do not match the European model. In fact, because the political characteristics and security concerns of the Southern Cone and the Andean region are similar, the latter should make a greater effort to learn from the experiences of the former. Recognising the limitations of CBMs while pushing for their development and implementation can have a real impact on enhancing confidence in the Andean region, both with regards to arms acquisitions and also on a range of other issues.