Colombian police policy: police and urban policing, 1991-2006

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze Colombian police policy with particular reference to the police and urban policing after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1991. This study examines how the Constitution of 1991 has impacted on the configuration, professionalization and institutionalization of the Colombian police. This dissertation concludes that the new Constitution of 1991 was crucial in transforming an insignificant organization into a noteworthy public institution with its own corporate aims and ethos and a certain autonomy regarding the government, parties, ministries and the military.

This research is divided into three main parts. The first one will focus on the police as a structure emphasizing the process of formation, development and institutionalization. It dissected the police structure into five aspects: historical configuration, structural organization, personnel, expenditure and controls. This part shows that the current importance of the police in the Colombian institutional landscape in terms of international aid, personnel and budget increase and public exposure has no precedents prior to 1991. The second part will be devoted to the study of the organizational life of the police force stressing the role played by high-ranking officers in improving the image of the police and, more importantly, in creating a vigorous institution difficult to control from outside, but at the same time, not easy to manage internally as a consequence of the distinction existing between high-ranking and low-ranking officers. The final part of this work examines urban and community policing in large urban areas taking the case of Bogotá. It focuses on the role played by the police in its implementation, successes and failures, concluding that the reluctance of the police to adopt these programmes of policing has limited their productive effects on the actual job and indeed the whole organization.