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Sommario/riassunto	High levels of crime and violence in Central America's northern triangle are a major preoccupation of politicians, policy-makers and citizens. Public authorities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have sought repressive measures to increase public safety and to contain such violence, for which youth gangs (maras) are principally held responsible. Substantiated by interviews with key stakeholders in Geneva, Switzerland, this desk review offers a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and the intended effects behind the suppressive strategies of the respective governments. Viewing the gang phenomenon through the lens of securitization theory allows for a new understanding of how the maras are dealt with. This paper also traces how the concerned states have shaped a certain construction of these gangs and reveals a blurred line between the political and the security sectors. The analysis finds that interests other than combatting a security threat, as well as the particular historical and societal contexts of the three countries, decisively influence how the maras issue is addressed.

