

The Western Hemisphere

by John A. Cope

Overview. The outlook in the Western Hemisphere is hopeful. A modern set of motivations and mechanisms has given a positive trajectory to foreign policies and security relations for most of the 1990s. A culture of democratization and free market economics has moved among a markedly diverse group of states and has moved them away from decades of political confrontation and mutual distrust toward security- and confidence-building and economic interdependence. Symbolizing the new momentum in regional affairs, regular presidential summits, defense ministerials, Organization of American States (OAS) general assemblies, and lower-level meetings have generated both political consensus and the energy to move forward. The success of these events has come from broad ownership of the processes and U.S. signals of partnership as opposed to rather than paternalism.

Latin American and Caribbean states have made headway toward twin goals of sustainable economic development linked with effective and enduring democratic governance. While no two countries are following the same path of economic and political reform, the recent growth is not accidental or transient, nor are the changes cyclical. The motivation for

the transformations stems from far-reaching national and regional experiences and responds to the forces of the global environment. As the decade unfolded, however, momentum began to ebb, revealing that a number of societies favoring democracy have become critical of the elected government's performance. Many states are not governing responsibly or effectively and have only a limited capacity to assert authority and control domestic events.

At the century's turn, the region's new focus is on multidimensional, nonstate, and transnational challenges, ranging from criminal threats such as international terrorism, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling to public policy challenges such as poaching natural resources, illegal migration, environmental degradation, weather phenomena, and natural disasters. Given differing national views of these concerns, there is no shared regional concept of security. It is clear, however, that if states, including the United States, react impotently to the new threats, several of which may develop simultaneously, the magnitude of localized problems will soar to crisis proportions. Colombia is a conspicuous example. Several dormant territorial disputes, however, still exist in the Caribbean Basin. The importance of the armed forces has not declined in this ambiguous setting, but their role has become difficult to define.

To best advance U.S. interests, the administration should appreciate the ramifications of the region's evolving modernization and security setting. The

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United States has lost leverage. It should reconcile differences with Latin American and Caribbean (and Canadian) states and commit to developing mechanisms for genuine bilateral and multilateral cooperation. In the Americas today, partnership is less optional than imperative but is not an automatic step for any state. The United States has found no substitute for improving stability. Most of the region's challenges are transnational in nature: resolution requires interstate collaboration.

The way forward will require the United States to reengineer the structure of its traditional policy approach and adapt its mindset to get in sync with the changing hemispheric reality and move deeper into security relationships than surface-level associations that set forth declarations of principle rather than action items. *To begin, a clear, actionable statement of U.S. foreign policy purposes in the hemisphere is needed.*

The proposed strategic approach for the hemisphere is addressed in two cases. The most sensitive, immediate issue in the Americas today is U.S. engagement in Colombia in support of President Pastrana's Plan Colombia. Confronting Latin state weakness, both causes and effects, provides an opportunity to discuss reengineering the structure of the policy framework, not only for Colombia, but also for its immediate subregion and the hemisphere. The main elements include adopting a clear foreign policy purpose instead of stitching together a number of generic and country-specific interests, moving away from country-to-country engagement to genuine sub-regional partnership, and reconsidering the mindset that shapes the U.S. approach to the region.

The second case focuses on Department of Defense (DOD) relations with counterparts in the hemisphere and its successful efforts in 2000 to present a regional security strategy. This paper focuses on operationalizing the new strategy and looking at how the Department should work with institutional reform and apply the new mindset discussed above to military engagement in the Americas.

Policy Context

Inheriting good relations with southern neighbors, the new administration should continue U.S. support for promoting democracy, reforming economic institutions and human development, and confronting transnational public policy issues and

criminal challenges. The April 2001 presidential Summit of the Americas will force an early commitment to a general policy direction. Of particular interest to Latin American and Caribbean leaders will be how the incoming policymakers define U.S. interests in the hemisphere, particularly the creation by 2005 of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA),¹ as the United States proposed in 1994. Other questions include: will the new administration look no further than relations with Canada and Mexico, writing off engagement with the rest of Middle Central and South America and the Caribbean except for narcotics matters? Will they appreciate, as does China, Japan, and the European Union, that in globalized economic and security systems the relative power and importance of Latin American countries are growing? Will the war on drugs continue to dominate U.S. regional policy?

The Clinton Legacy

Relations with the other nations of the Western Hemisphere began positively in the Clinton era. In his words, the President saw "a unique opportunity to build a community of free nations, diverse in culture and history, but bound together by a commitment to responsive and free government, vibrant civil societies, open economies, and rising standards of living for all our people." Active engagement to realize his vision reset the focus and tempo of post-Cold War relations. Ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was followed by a return of high-level summitry with the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas and sponsorship of a broadly appealing regional free trade initiative. Despite making more visits to regional states than any predecessor, by decade's end the administration had not matched the expectations it had created. In particular, the President never received fast-track authority for trade negotiations, and several U.S. trade protections remained in place.

The Clinton administration's national security decisionmaking process preferred a hub-and-spoke framework, dealing country-by-country based on functional interests or in response to a crisis. Policies often reflected strong, and sometimes contradictory, congressional and nongovernmental points of view on issues and on how to realize the U.S. position. During the 1990s, policymakers placed emphasis in

U.S. foreign policy and security relations narrowly on select generic areas, such as drug trafficking (Colombia and other states in the Caribbean Basin) and human rights (Colombia, Chile), and on specific states, such as Mexico (NAFTA and immigration) and Cuba (the status quo). A relatively new concern is the impact of weak democratic governance on national and subregional stability (Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru).

For many regional issues, the line separating domestic and foreign affairs has become hard to distinguish and as a result policies associated with them are ambiguous. Trade, immigration, and narcotics issues and most matters affecting Mexico, Cuba, and Haiti have active political constituencies in the United States among immigrant groups and different lobbies. The globalization of economic and foreign affairs, the advent of multinational criminal networks, and advances in communication further complicate the difficulty of developing one comprehensive policy that balances the various dimensions of an issue.

Contrary to the common view, the United States has played a relatively minor role in the region's shift to free market economics and its democratization. The most important contributions have been economic. Encouraged by domestic banking and commercial interests during the 1990s, the United States restructured Latin American and Caribbean debt, completed a subregional trade agreement (NAFTA), proposed notional bilateral and multilateral (FTAA) trade agreements, and supported Mexico and Brazil in their financial crises. The catalyst and driving force for economic reform, however, was the failure of Latin America's state-centric import-substitution model. Similarly, the region's push to establish democratic regimes stemmed from societal despair with discredited military and authoritarian governments, not U.S. influence. The United States advocated and supported the economic and political changes when they occurred. In doing so, unlike experiences with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion, Washington has never clearly defined U.S. expectations beyond first-level norms (hold elections and respect human rights), nor provided, even for itself, comprehensive guidelines for measuring progress. Nongovernmental organizations have tended to be the advocates for many of the standards frequently mentioned, giving them the appearance of policy.

U.S. Security Relations with American States

From the early 19th century, the United States has sought to keep the hemisphere stable and at peace, regardless of political cost, but with minimal resources expended, so that its global interests and engagement would not be compromised. Economic development, democratization, and military intervention were viewed as equal paths to stability and ways to preempt unwanted outside involvement. Regional activities of rival extra-hemispheric actors and their political ideologies, from fascism to communism, threatened the domestic stability of each country. After the Cold War, the United States began advocating the positive power of democratic norms, open economies, and trust-building regional cooperation as the best long-term framework for pursuing stability and peace. A controversial assumption for this strategic vision has been that democratic governments are more likely to encourage free trade, uphold the rule of law, compromise to avoid conflict, and collaborate against common threats.

In its quest for stability and peace, the administration inherits a unique symbiosis between the United States and its neighbors, north and south, and a distinctive mindset. Both are based on the hemisphere's asymmetry in national power. These characteristics and their significance for security relations in the region cannot be taken for granted. Many Latin American and Caribbean states retain the residuals of decades of distrust. For these nations, the powerful United States is still a benign bully. Regional neighbors are instinctively sensitive to U.S. power. Washington's view, action, and even indecision create apprehensions and insecurity. Interacting with the United States, neighboring governments face a dilemma. They want, on the one hand, to tap U.S. power to help realize their own objectives, but, on the other, they feel compelled to resist the push of U.S. leadership, even on issues of common interest. The initial South American diplomatic response to Peru's fraudulent May 2000 election, for example, focused first on containing potential U.S. interference rather than on violations of democratic norms. The U.S. fixation on narcotics trafficking that now defines the core of U.S. security relations with the region is not shared by most Latin American and Caribbean states, including Colombia. The centerpiece of their desired relations with the United States is a concern about economic underdevelopment.

The second characteristic is an assertive, U.S. assistance-based mindset. When engaging an issue or a country, the U.S. impulse and style has been to control, seek reasonably quick results, and ensure accountability. Either by tutoring leaders, supplying training and material assistance, or in other ways manipulating governments, an impatient Washington always has 'pushed lest nothing get done.' Consultation with neighboring states is rare. Occasional partners have been found to collaborate in a U.S. effort, but usually without interest in their substantive input or in reciprocity. This longstanding mindset dominates U.S. policy circles and can be seen in the annual certification process and the heavy drug focus of U.S. support for Colombia's President Pastrana.

The administration should not expect its security policies to be accepted on their merits. There often will be opposition in the hemisphere. Ingrained suspicions about ulterior U.S. motives and concerns about U.S. paternalism are real elements in Latin and Caribbean policy calculations. These region's leaders will criticize Washington's proclivity for seeing the rest of the hemisphere through North American eyes and for imposing solutions without consultation or a clear appreciation for the local consequences. Southern neighbors want to be treated as peers; they want to replace the false veneer of U.S. cooperation. This will only be possible when the United States shows that it appreciates reality in the different subregions of the continent and is prepared to take a realistic and moderate approach to the issues facing its neighbors

Regional Context

A list of the region's democracies in 1980 included three Latin countries, the Commonwealth Caribbean, the United States, and Canada. The prospects for more were bleak; yet, today 34 of 35 American nations have representative governments. Cuba is the exception. Democratization is a gradual and not necessarily smooth transition away from authoritarian rule. The quality of democratic practice and degree of public trust in the state vary considerably. The old two-class, Latin corporate-paternalistic system in reality retains considerable influence because in many ways it has not changed. Legislatures, judicial systems, political parties, and often the presidency have not progressed far. Many institutions are

weak or discredited. Criminal enterprises have been able to corrupt officials and undermine the state, vigilantes administer justice, and private armies of the left and the right challenge national authority. Some countries, as a result, are fighting a strong authoritarian undertow. In these frustrating circumstances, the appeal of a strong, elected, authoritarian leader committed to change, such as Venezuelan President Chavez, is easy to understand. In other countries (Ecuador and Paraguay), the armed forces still rule from the background in order to ensure the stability of the state (Ecuador and Paraguay).

The initial shift toward economic reform and open markets stemmed from the need for economic stability, lower inflation, and the restoration of growth. Governments had little choice but to promulgate market-oriented reforms such as trade liberalization, privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation, and liberalization of foreign investment. Although vested interests within state bureaucracies, together with the commercial and labor sectors, mounted strong opposition, internal conditions and prevailing international economic currents pushed change forward. At the decade's end, political parties and leaders who were critical of macro-level reforms and who promised to reduce unemployment and make income distribution more equitable, won elections in many countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. Reform processes slowed and in some cases reversed course with the re-introduction of a more assertive state trying to expand social services.

The rise of democracy and market economics also has affected international security. The decade of reform has increased hemispheric interdependence, which in turn has produced greater Latin American autonomy in world affairs and fewer differences with the United States. The development of subregional economic groupings has helped countries to renounce weapons of mass destruction, accept arms control regimes, and adopt a range of confidence- and security-building measures. The Americas have become the least militarized and one of the most peaceful regions in the world, although old interstate rivalries with decades of distrust have only begun to recede. Against this backdrop, there is not a common strategic view of security in the hemisphere. Discussions at international fora such as the Organization of American States (OAS) of various aspects of the changing regional security environment are guided by fundamental OAS principles

of peaceful coexistence, equality, sovereignty, and, in particular, nonintervention.

The unprecedented wave of political and economic reforms in the early 1990s made a difficult transition look deceptively easy. As the decade unfolded, momentum began to ebb. Societies lost the collective sense of national urgency. Popular fatigue with the pace, austerity measures, and results that were less than promised (economic growth, more jobs, and better social equity) eroded the government's political capital to continue. External forces worsened the situation. Governments generally had no safety nets for the 1997–1999 foreign economic crises (Asia, Russia, and Brazil) and the horrific weather in the hemisphere (*El Niño*, Hurricanes Mitch and Georges). They were ill-prepared to counter the corrupting influence of transnational criminal activities. The Clinton administration contributed to the malaise by its vacillation on free trade issues, particularly its inability to gain fast-track authority for trade negotiations, and its reduced regional policy support, except in counternarcotics-related activities, where resources increased over the decade.

Ramifications for U.S. Policy

When the Cold War ended, a new set of motivations and mechanisms pushed a ninety-year focus on security issues off the U.S. center stage and replaced them with the hemisphere's evolving twin cultures of democratization and free market economics. The era of unprecedented reform that followed is far from over, although its initial progress is slowing and in some countries imperiled. The new administration should appreciate the central legacies of the last decade and their significance for U.S. policy. The legacies are best explained using political and geopolitical factors.

Political Factors. Democracies in the Americas have begun to matter to each other for the first time. They make a difference to the United States for four reasons. First, collectively they have new economic and political weight in international affairs, which subregional integration has begun to demonstrate. Second, they are demographically linked to the United States, particularly countries in the Caribbean Basin. Third, they have the capacity to affect by active cooperation many of the region's transnational criminal and public policy problems. Finally, they promote and perpetuate basic values such as human rights and

the rule of law. These values are legitimate regional obligations, codified in the OAS Charter.

The transformation of regional politics is still too recent to be absorbed fully, but while it is clear that external military threats are of less concern, democracy must be defended. Taking an unprecedented step in 1991, governments agreed on how to avert domestic challenges to constitutional order. OAS General Assembly Resolution 1080 established a triggering mechanism for the OAS to act in the event of "any... sudden or irregular interruption" of democratic governance. The resolution, which lacks enforcement mechanisms, has been used on four occasions with varying degrees of success (Haiti, Peru, Guatemala, and Paraguay). The OAS has yet to develop a collective political response for more subtle challenges to democracy when no disruption of constitutional processes has taken place (Venezuela and Haiti).

While democracies matter to each other, they have not yet coalesced politically to build productive security cooperation and sound regionalism. Translating new shared interests into practical collective mechanisms for confronting transnational challenges has been a slow process, built with some success on the cohesiveness of subregional trade groups. Despite asymmetries among member states and other obstacles, several arrangements have emerged. The most successful group has been Anglophone Caribbean states with Commonwealth links, which began collaborating on security matters in the early 1980s. In South America, members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) are feeling their way carefully beyond matters of trade toward political and security discussions. A similar situation exists in Central America. To date, the United States has shown little interest in supporting these important initiatives. The administration should seriously explore this imperative step toward U.S. security.

Recent resolution of the longstanding Peru-Ecuador border controversy demonstrates that multi-lateral diplomatic and military cooperation can be highly effective. Significantly, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States, which are signatories to a 1942 Rio Protocol for that dispute, had no choice but to make collective action work. There are few existing mechanisms other than subregional initiatives to develop collaboration. The OAS could play a constructive role nurturing security cooperation if member

states gain confidence in its ability to distance decision-making from U.S. influence, although members have supported the creation of a permanent Committee on Hemispheric Security (CHS) and are supporting a range of confidence- and security-building measures. Secretary of Defense Perry's 1995 initiative establishing the Defense Ministerial of the Americas (DMA) meeting is another recurring opportunity to discuss (and potentially manage) subregional and hemispheric cooperation. The dilemma for Latin and Caribbean states is that never before have they had real autonomy or real responsibility in international affairs. They have not comfortably defined their position with regard to the region's security agenda. The developing crisis of state weakness in the Andean region may force reluctant Latin nations to engage in security cooperation.

Geopolitical Factors. Latin America divides geopolitically into two areas—the Caribbean Basin (Mexico, Panama, Central America, northern South America, the Caribbean islands and rimlands) and southern South America (Brazil and Peru south to Antarctica). Looking at each in turn, the Caribbean Basin has become more closely tied to the United States than ever before. Trade (NAFTA, the 2000 Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act), immigration, and drug trafficking have cemented several processes of integration—economic, demographic, social, cultural, and, to an increasing extent, political. The linkage between Basin countries and the United States can be seen in many ways: the dependence of the Caribbean on the U.S. market, the growing percentage of the U.S. population who have emigrated from the Basin, huge diaspora remittances,² and increasing Latino political activism in the United States as well as in home countries.

The United States is less able to ignore problems in the Caribbean Basin. With domestic political pressure exerted by a range of interest groups, these states react less to U.S. desires; the role today often is reversed. The new administration will need to develop structural systems and procedures that will promote equality, openness, and confidence among the main actors in the Basin. The mechanisms should emphasize early and frequent consultation by country or subregion, the sharing of information, transparency in communication among neighbors, and cooperation in policy implementation.

The United States has long had a strategic military interest in the stability of the Caribbean Basin,

which the administration should sustain. The strategic importance of the region lies in essential raw materials, especially petroleum and bauxite, the location of vital sea lanes, including the Panama Canal, and presence at permanent military bases in Puerto Rico and temporary forward operating locations in Honduras, El Salvador, Aruba, and Curaçao.³ Geostrategic considerations have lost their preeminence since the end of the Cold War, but as European and Asian states and regimes increase their strategic activity in the hemisphere, they cannot be forgotten.

Southern South America, a wealthier and less fragmented area, has been relatively stable in its progress toward economic and political integration and the creation of a zone of peace. Despite economic asymmetries, competing foreign policies, and the unequal pace of domestic structural reforms, the subcontinent has demonstrated how market economics can overcome longstanding political animosities between its major states, Argentina and Brazil. Commercial trade integration and political coordination through MERCOSUR are gaining in sophistication.

Brazil, with the eighth largest economy in the world, has become too important for the United States to ignore. Unlike the U.S. commercial sector, political Washington has been slow to recognize the rising importance of exports to and investments in the countries of southern South America. The U.S. percentages are still less than those of the European Union's engagement. For their part, Brazil and its partners want strong trade and diplomatic links with the United States, which remains the best market for high-value Latin exports (Europe's main interest is in raw materials). The southern states, however, cultivate their independence from the United States with closer commercial, financial, and political ties in Europe and Asia—and especially among themselves. In what can be seen as the future direction of regional integration, as well as a sign of growing Brazilian self-confidence, President Cardoso recently hosted the first summit of the 12 South American heads of state. The agenda focused on strengthening democracy, movement toward a South American economic and trade area, and, perhaps most important for the region, modernization and development of cross-border transport and energy infrastructure.

The administration's future relations with South America must recognize Brazil's leadership in the subcontinent's move toward policy integration as a counterweight to the United States on regional and global issues. Brazilian-U.S. relations could become tense in two areas before 2005. The first area of concern is the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The U.S. emphasis on negotiating among individual states differs from Brazil's focus on trading blocs. At the moment, the United States is in an ambiguous negotiating position without fast-track authority for FTAA. The Bush administration must gain congressional approval early to establish U.S. credibility on its trade initiative. Failure would be a major setback for U.S. hemispheric relations, not to mention the global image of the United States. Brazil, on the other hand, is trying to strengthen its negotiating position by deepening the cohesion of MERCOSUR and adding more South American states in an effort to improve its global position. It is not clear, however, whether or how faithfully Chile, Peru, and Venezuela will follow Brazil's lead.

The second area of potential concerns is Colombia and the Amazon Basin. Brazil shares U.S. concerns about growing Colombian instability and border tensions between Andean nations. The northern South American arc of state weakness falls into overlapping geopolitical zones of influence, those of the United States in the Caribbean Basin and of Brazil along its Amazon frontier. Washington has tended to minimize the significance of this situation, but most South American governments, which desire to minimize U.S. military presence and avoid intervention on the subcontinent, do not. States with Amazonian frontiers share many concerns about violations of national sovereignty by the United States. They range from environmental issues and rights of indigenous peoples to nascent economic integration and the permeability of the border to illegal migration and narcotics trafficking. The inability of the Colombian state to control its borders, the military strength of guerrilla and paramilitary armies, and the deteriorating situation in the country have forced surrounding countries to tighten control of their border areas to minimize a spillover effect. From the Brazilian Army's perspective, this preventive posture also responds to a longstanding concern about U.S. military activities around the Amazon Basin.

The tension of overlapping security interests calls for a diplomatic approach based on respect for

Brazilian (and South American) sensitivities. The administration should appreciate the strong distaste for the appearance of countries fighting drug terrorism in their region under U.S. supervision. The unwelcome image of fighting communism under perceived U.S. supervision has not been forgotten. The United States should adapt its assertive mindset to the circumstances.

Current conditions suggest that the prospects for multilateral cooperation are better if the United States is mindful of sovereign concerns. Brazil and its South American neighbors better understand the power of the well-financed nonstate adversaries challenging the Colombian state and are beginning to recognize their vulnerability. In responding to the threat, South American states are more willing to accept Brazilian leadership. In the view of these states, Brazil knows and lives the reality of the region and has a realistic and moderate behavior. The tempo of Brazilian diplomatic contacts with Peru and Venezuela, in particular, has increased. The successful conclusion to the Peru-Ecuador border dispute in which Brazil played an important role provides a sound model for future association around the Amazon Basin.

In this setting, the administration should consider an approach to Brazil with five elements. The United States should (1) treat the issue as a subregional matter and emphasize early and genuine consultation with states that are willing to engage; (2) exploit Brazil's potential for leadership among these nations; (3) offer to exchange real time information with transparency in communication among neighbors; (4) work through Brazil to provide expert advice to Colombia's neighbors; and (5) seek further diplomatic and military cooperation wherever possible.

Reengineering the Structure of Regional Policy

The administration should recognize that the conceptual approach to advancing U.S. policy goals in the Western Hemisphere that it inherits is not a reliable guide for the future. The experience of the Clinton paradigm, the decade of reform in the Americas, and the unfolding security environment suggest three conclusions.

First, democratic advances have been many, but the quality of democracy remains poor in many countries and at risk in others. The core difficulty is a general weakness in responsible democratic governance.

As democratization and the process of economic reform recently lost momentum, the reality of how weak many Latin and Caribbean governmental institutions really are, how little control some states have over their territory, and the general incapacity of intelligence services, militaries, and police forces became glaringly and dangerously apparent. In Colombia and several other countries, the inroads of organized crime, guerrilla insurgencies, and paramilitary backlashes have exacerbated the difficulties of governance. These pressures are more effects than causes of the underlying national distress, a realization that current U.S. policy does not reflect.

Second, the hub-and-spoke mentality in the design and execution of U.S. policy works at cross-purposes to the need for active cooperation in confronting transnational challenges. It makes partnership an afterthought rather than an inherent part of the policy framework within which the United States works. The multifaceted nature of U.S. relations with countries and subregions in the hemisphere underscores the importance of cooperation. It is the only way that the United States can be certain that its concerns will be addressed. Latin American and Caribbean states, however, want genuine reciprocity. The U.S. penchant for clothing its self-interest in the terms of universal values or the “good of all” no longer works in the hemisphere.

Finally, adapting to the reality that other American states have sensitivities and their own interests must be part of U.S. planning and decisionmaking processes. This step is crucial if engagement with the United States is going to appeal to neighbors and Washington is to build trust in U.S. leadership on a broader foundation than asymmetric power and imperial style. A policy mindset that reflects a willingness to work with others and an acceptance of different points of view is crucial for developing partnerships that can operate with effectiveness in the new security environment.

The United States possesses the power for leadership in the Americas, but it lacks commitment to a small number of clear, reasonable, long-term foreign policy purposes to guide relations. The current approach suffers from two basic weaknesses. First, the concept of democracy is too vague for circumstances in the hemisphere. It should be interpreted in terms that provide logic, direction, and coherence to a patchwork of U.S. generic and country-specific policies, making them understandable and less threatening to neighbors. Second, commitment to multilateral cooperation

should be extended beyond economic integration to focus on related political and security dimensions. A reengineered structure for U.S. policy moves it forward from the 1990s. The new framework recognizes that political conditions at home and in the hemisphere have changed and that circumstances require a more focused policy to guide the United States in an increasingly complex reform and threat environment.

The best long-term guarantee of stability and peace in the Americas is to pursue two foreign policy purposes: *the reinforcement of responsible democratic governance* and *the development of a hemisphere that is whole and undivided and that works together to realize common interests*. Multilateral and bilateral trade and security cooperation are the focus of the second purpose. The need to adapt the impulse and style of the U.S. mindset also is implicit. This strategic agenda is consistent with principles underlying U.S. values, identity, and established national interests. The approach also is consistent with accepted regional obligations codified in the OAS Charter and in international law.

Confronting State Weakness in Colombia

The administration inherits a Colombian policy embodied in a \$1.3 billion aid package. The policy is highly controversial in the United States, in the region, and among European allies. The United States is given credit for coming to the aid of South America’s oldest democracy, a normally resilient and resourceful society that has begun to show signs of decay. The apparent collapse of President Andres Pastrana’s peace initiative, which held hope for a return to stability, coincident with an economic downturn, surging domestic violence from the left and right, and the state’s inability to respond to multiple crises, have triggered a dramatic loss of faith in national leadership. The criticism of the Clinton administration’s policy centers on the primacy of fighting drugs, its militarization of a traditionally nonmilitary fight, and its insinuation that other countries should join the fight under U.S. supervision. For many critics, Plan Colombia is not a Colombian plan, but a U.S.-funded and executed plan. President Clinton’s commitment leaves no recourse but to stay engaged in the near-term and find a way to continue to keep supporting a friend during what will be a long ordeal.

The current policy assumes that continued U.S. support and perseverance, time to complete military training of counterdrug units and introduce helicopters and special equipment, limited support to neighboring states, a positive upturn in Colombian results in the field, and insignificant U.S. casualties will confirm the validity of the Clinton policy and encourage Congress to sustain it. A reevaluation of this policy suggests two courses of action. Both recognize that it is Colombia's responsibility to set a course for reversing its national deterioration and that its efforts will take time to show positive results. The first option is to continue the current multidirectional game plan that ties U.S. support to four parts of Plan Colombia—the peace process, drugs, the economy, and the society (judicial reform, human rights, alternative development)—with heavy emphasis on the counterdrug dimension of each part. This option is a bilateral policy, although with some financial support going to Ecuador and Bolivia.

This option reinforces a two-war approach: a U.S.-supported war on drugs and a Colombian-supported effort to reestablish state authority in the country and maintain public order beyond narcotics. In a few areas such as human rights reform within the military, the two approaches overlap. Assistance initiatives designed to reorient the military institution toward counterdrug engagement are being resisted. United States policy has pushed the response to Colombia's dilemma to two tracks that are not designed for mutual support. Many national leaders are uncertain how long U.S. support will last and whether the training, intelligence, and equipping will ever reach beyond the counterdrug rationale. These Colombians are restructuring and expanding the armed forces, equipping units from European sources, and preparing to engage the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) nationwide. Until the armed forces are ready, U.S.-supported counterdrug efforts and aggressive independent paramilitary forces will maintain pressure on the guerrillas. However, the paramilitary forces also are gaining in strength and sophistication and will present a more serious threat to the state. The two-war approach inevitably will place a severe strain on relations between the United States and Colombia.

The alternative course of action reorients Colombia policy based on the reengineered foreign policy

structure for the hemisphere proposed above. The new U.S. direction focused on reinforcing democratic governance and working collectively to solve subregional problems immediately puts a less argumentative face on U.S. policy. The United States recognizes that Colombia's problems go beyond drug trafficking and that the country cannot solve them without outside assistance—a difficult admission for a Latin nation. This approach underscores that the United States can be an external catalyst to help Colombia with its problem and that the intent in doing so is not to exploit Colombia to solve its own domestic drug problem in the United States. The new approach does not mean that the United States has lost interest in Colombia's narcotics production and trafficking systems. These concerns remain, but they are put in a different context: the drug industry's success is a symptom of a deeper cause, the state's crisis of responsible governance. Actions are taken to reestablish the state's authority and legitimacy, and to improve the national capability to protect sovereignty and enforce the law.

The U.S. support to Plan Colombia has a different internal logic in this option. The crisis of responsible democratic governance is considered to be subregional, with its center in Colombia. In varying degrees, all neighboring countries endure crises of state authority and legitimacy that make them vulnerable to many of Colombia's problems. In Ecuador, it is quite serious; in Brazil, it is not. The U.S. policy response would be multicountry and multitrack in each state, focusing assistance on the operation of social institutions, the state of law and order, the ability to secure national borders, and the promotion of development programs in poor and remote areas of each country. The United States would encourage coordination of efforts among neighbors on many bureaucratic fronts, including defense and military reform and the counterdrug dimension.

The new approach is about regional leadership sensitive to the security concerns and views of neighboring states. In the Colombian case, collaboration with Brazil is essential. As outlined above, the administration should advocate a division of labor in which Washington continues the primary support to Bogota while Brazil works primarily with the countries that surround Colombia. The aim would be to share intelligence data and operational information about activities in their respective border areas, and, if appropriate, to cooperate in missions outside Colombia. No

foreign state would take direct action in Colombia or vice versa. The United States would stay in the background and participate in periodic multinational working group meetings at a senior civilian level to discuss transborder issues and strategies.

The principal benefit of the second course of action is its explicit endorsement of the fact that the Colombian state and its democratic society need professional military and police institutions with sufficient capability and the broad, modern training necessary to support the civilian government in its efforts to assert lawful authority and maintain control of Colombian territory against drug traffickers, insurgent-mercenaries, or paramilitary forces, all nonstate actors operating outside Colombian law. The new approach expands the possibility of U.S. support of intelligence agencies and the armed forces beyond counterdrug-related activities of the three sets of adversaries. A lasting peace remains the goal of the Colombian government and society. In this course of action, the state could pursue this aim from a position of strength.

The principal difficulty with this option is encouraging states to devote scarce resources to participating in cooperative security initiatives. No tradition of working together exists, and the principle of national sovereignty often has been raised as an excuse to do nothing. Today, the response of the states concerned may be different; there is more experience with subregional cooperation and with an increased awareness of the inability to defend alone against transnational threats. The response may be different. The new approach minimizes the “lightning rod” concern about U.S. dominance by deferring to Brazil’s leadership. The rationale for collaboration stresses that it is in the larger interest of the subregion, not the United States, for the countries to cooperate and that Colombia, their neighbor, benefits.

The way ahead in Colombia is a conundrum for the United States, one that epitomizes the security challenges it faces across the hemisphere. (Many Latin American states face similar challenges.) The Colombian problem embodies a tension between U.S. domestic and foreign affairs. The tension, which often pits the drive for near-term results against time-consuming efforts to correct the core issues, has led to ambiguous policies and has occasionally caused domestic concerns to threaten regional relations. Keeping counternarcotics policy in perspective—it is a symptom, not a root cause—could help ameliorate the

strain. The situation in Colombia affects several neighbors, making a comprehensive subregional policy approach important. The state’s security problem has strong economic as well as and political ramifications, and both sets of issues must be addressed. Progress in Colombia requires that old mindsets about relations with neighbors be adapted for the hemisphere’s new security environment and the primacy of security cooperation. Perhaps most important, Colombia presents a need for perspective in understanding the puzzle that society faces in order to help the state with its long-term solution.

The Changing DOD Role

The DOD often has been the face of Washington’s foreign policy in the Americas. This trend has continued during the 1990s with military operations in Panama and Haiti, counterdrug support to Peru, Colombia, and other Caribbean Basin states, and a robust combined exercise program. Lower profile military-to-military contacts remain among the U.S. Government’s most enduring policy tools, although in practice these ties produce better access than real influence. The Department’s recent successful efforts in interacting with counterparts at defense ministerials and with senior civilian policymakers from five countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico) through annual bilateral working group meetings have introduced a new dimension to its engagement with the region.

In early 2001, DOD will publish its second security strategy report for the Americas. This version will be unprecedented. In addition to outlining the nature of defense engagement, it will set forth for the first time the Department’s own strategic approach to the region, translating the broad instructions from the prevailing U.S. policy into more specific outcomes that the DOD can help bring about using its military *and* civilian capabilities. The guide for action recognizes the different security contexts and political-military challenges in the hemisphere’s subregions and articulates a five-prong strategy. The Department will:

- Remain engaged in the hemisphere
- Support efforts to ensure democratic control of defense and law enforcement institutions
- Support efforts to strengthen effectiveness, legitimacy, and transparency of regional and subregional security structures and regimes

- Support cooperative approaches to the peaceful resolution of border disputes and to respond to transnational threats and humanitarian crises
- Seek to build mutual confidence on security issues and develop long-term bilateral and multilateral cooperation among defense ministries and security forces.

The strategy captures the substantive shift in the orientation of defense engagement since the Cold War and dovetails with the reengineered structure of regional policy proposed in this paper. Implicit in the new approach is the challenge of meshing civilian and military implementation when, for years, the only DOD vision has been a military one articulated by U.S. Southern Command. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) must organize and coordinate its nascent civilian, political-military activities with the Command's engagement plans. This requirement symbolizes the changing role of DOD in the hemisphere. The Department's civilian face must become more visible in support of responsible democratic governance.

DOD is structured for operational engagement by the armed forces. These activities traditionally have included life- and property-saving rapid responses to natural disasters, multinational military exercises, humanitarian assistance projects, and many forms of professional support to the war on drugs and antiterrorism. Operational engagement provides positive defense diplomacy and some professional military training. It reassures neighbors of continuing U.S. commitment to the Americas and demonstrates willingness to act in concert to address common (usually bilateral and drug-related) challenges. As a strategic approach, it can provide an environment conducive for building trust between neighbors, stimulating cooperation among other armed forces, and encouraging the development of interoperable military capabilities. Operational engagement is an important policy tool, particularly in the absence of foreign military assistance programs.

The overall impact of operational focus tends to be short term, unless the engagement contributes to a larger strategic and multilateral context, such as a security regime. Neither the United States nor any of its neighbors has committed to pursue such a context. While military exercise programs are multinational, U.S. defense relationships today continue to be bilateral and limited in scope, tailored for specific peacetime circumstances. With Latin American and

Caribbean states moving toward more cohesive sub-regional security cooperation, the administration should examine the development of genuine defense cooperation in the hemisphere, including Canada and Mexico, to accomplish specific peacetime missions such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

As an element of the often-cited goal of strengthening democracy, operational engagement has been unsuccessful in nurturing and supporting Latin defense sector reform. Exposure to U.S. forces (and high-ranking military officials) through meetings, short-duration military exercises, and professional exchanges has done little to inspire or support institutional change. During the 1990s, Latin defense-sector reform moved at its own pace without direct U.S. assistance, unless a government requested technical support.

Political-military engagement has focused on professional education for civilian officials and military officers by the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) at the National Defense University since 1998 and a range of standard foreign military officer and civilian education opportunities based in the United States. The standard courses generally introduce students to the U.S. political-military culture, facilitate their discussions about civil-military relations, and offer exposure to a wide range of experiences and ideas from American and foreign students. None of the programs except for CHDS is specifically tailored for the region and its defense culture. This form of engagement is a long-range investment in the reform of civil-military relations.

In support of defense sector development and reform, OSD has begun to offer the five selected counterparts an array of specialized staff interactions in such areas as civilian personnel planning and environmental security. A small number of technical exchanges also occur, and some functional intelligence is shared. Initiatives usually are ad hoc responses to requests or U.S. offers made during one of the bilateral working group meetings. More information could be provided to ministries of defense and military services about, for example, defense planning, service management (organizing, training, and equipping forces), and institutionalizing military jointness. DOD currently lacks an organized program for these initiatives.

In addition to structuring an OSD program to guide its political-military engagement in the hemisphere, the administration should recognize that its

bilateral contact suggests, perhaps unintentionally, a U.S. obligation to expand the relationship with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. It is unclear where this trend is headed on its own merits, but consideration should be given to expanding this engagement beyond just these countries.

Notes

¹ The Summit in Quebec City will focus on three baskets of issues: strengthening democracy, realizing human potential, and creating prosperity.

² As an example, Mexico annually receives \$7–8 billion, slightly less than the amount of foreign direct investment. El Salvador gains approximately \$1.6 billion.

³ Temporary forward operating locations in El Salvador, Aruba, Curaçao, and Ecuador support DOD's counterdrug mission