UNITED STATES-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE POST-COLD WAR, POST-9-11 YEARS

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During the past decade United States policymakers have focused on two major issues in hemispheric relations: trade and investment liberalization and security, particularly as it relates to narcotics traffic and organized crime. The terrorist attack on New York and Washington D.C. in September 2001 as well as the intervention in Iraq by the George Bush administration during 2003 have diverted considerable energy and funding to the Middle East theatre, but those events have not weakened the administration's commitment to achieving trade and investment liberalization in the Americas as well as containing the threat posed by the link between guerrilla activity and organized crime and international narcotics trafficking in the region. Indeed, the events of September 11, 2001 sharpened the focus of the United States on those developments in the Americas which could be perceived as threats to U.S. national interests.

At the end of the last decade, John Cope, writing for the U.S. National Defense University, suggested that the U.S. was now confronted with major new challenges in the hemisphere for which it was ill prepared. "Deep and widespread changes in the hemisphere's political and economic environment over the last twenty years have introduced anomalies that the existing U.S. paradigm did not anticipate," he suggested.

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He cautioned that the United States is "moving in this security milieu without a clear view of the horizon or a plan of action to get there."[1]

It is now generally understood among policymakers and academics that the concept of national security has evolved considerably over the past few decades from a preoccupation with traditional military threats involving state to state relations to now include a range of non-traditional threats, often involving non-state actors. The 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami, for instance, identified such challenges to national security as sustainable development, access to quality education, democratization, free trade, and the establishment of civil society. Such challenges go well beyond what Political Scientist Samuel Huntington identified in the mid-1990s as the main post-war source of conflict: the clash of civilizations, with a focus on culture, especially religion, as the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War era.[2]

This mixture of traditional and non-traditional security threats was also evident in recommendations that were made to the incoming Bush administration foreign policy team at the end of November 2000 by a coalition of groups and individuals under the umbrella of the North-South Center at the University of Miami. Their memorandum to the President-elect, entitled "The Case for Early and Sustained Engagement with the Americas," identified several main issues which the United States needed to address. They included: freedom and democracy; trade and growth; drugs and regional security;

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[1] John A. Cope, "Hemispheric Security Relations: Remodeling the U.S. Framework for the Americas," Strategic forum, National Defense University, No. 147 (September 1998), p. 1.
[2] Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). See also Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven Miller, eds., Global Dangers: Changing Dimensions of International Security (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

environmental concerns; and the bilateral challenges posed by Brazil, Cuba and Mexico.[3]

Since the end of the Cold War the security situation in the Americas has altered significantly. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba was left isolated, and its capacity to impact on both the internal affairs of countries in the region as well as on the East-West relationship was effectively eliminated. U.S. officials continue, however, to see Cuba as a security threat, continuing to be a state sponsor of terrorism in the Americas. One State Department official in late 2003 suggested that during the previous year alone the United States had deported 18 Cuban spies in the U.S.[4]. Nonetheless, Cuba has ceased to be the high level security threat that it was when closely tied to the Soviet Union.

The fact that Cuba is not a direct security threat has not removed it from the U.S. political and security agenda. The main challenge at present is the capacity of the United States to influence to some degree the transition in Cuba to a post-Castro era. Since Fidel is only 75 years of age and in reasonable health, there is little likelihood that there will be a significant change in leadership in the coming decade, and it is also evident that Fidel has made his brother Raul his heir apparent. Although Raul may lack some of the popular following associated with Fidel, he has considerable power as Second Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party and Minister of Defense. It is with the departure of both brothers from the Cuban power structure that the future of Cuban politics will become more problematic, and in the event of major instability, a struggle for

[3] North-South Center, 2000.

[4] Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, to the Inter-American Defense College, October 20, 2003, Department of State, threats to Security in the Western Hemisphere, located at http://www.state.gov/g/rls/rm/2003/25564pf.htm.

power, and another large scale migration, there will likely be pressure from the influential Cuban-American community and their supporters in Congress for the U.S. to intervene.[5] Any U.S. intervention in Cuba would be unpopular in many Latin American circles as well as with significant segments of the American population and would pose major diplomatic and political problems for an administration contemplating such action.

The end of the Soviet-Cuban relationship facilitated a resolution of the Central American crises in the early 1990s, specifically in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Although considerable internal challenges continued in both countries, the electoral defeat in Nicaragua of the Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega in February 1990 largely satisfied the international community, ended the U.S. financial support for the Contras, and provided a transition to peace.

In the Caribbean and Central America, other than Cuba, Haiti and possibly Panama pose the main security challenges to the United States, in the first instance because of the continued lack of political stability and economic development and in the second because, obsolete as the Panama Canal may be, it is still a major route for commerce and still vulnerable to terrorist actions. In the case of Haiti it is less than a decade since the most recent U.S. military intervention (1994) when American forces were deployed to remove a military regime and restore the elected government of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The U.S. intervention and the subsequent involvement of the United Nations in an effort to stabilize Haiti's political structure and improve its economic condition have had minimal impact. Poverty and political instability remain the norm in the country. In the case of Panama, a combination of several factors make Panama

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[5] Schulz, "The United States and Latin America," p. 22.

vulnerable. The U.S. intervention in 1989 to depose Manuel Noriega, the absence of a Panamanian military, the incursions of Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries on the southern border, and the use of Panamanian territory for narcotics traffic have all combined to weaken the Panamanian capacity to deal alone with its political, economic and security challenges. The canal itself is vulnerable but so is the stability of Panamanian politics. As one analyst remarked two years ago, there is sufficient concern in U.S. political and military circles about the stability of Panama that the U.S. Southern Command has contingency plans to intervene in the country either in cooperation with Panamanian authorities or unilaterally.[6]

There has been some degree of U.S. concern over the past two decades with possible nuclear proliferation in the southern cone, specifically in Brazil, which in the 1970s had plans to develop nuclear weapons, and the Argentine military had similar intent. The shift away from military governments in both Argentina and Brazil in the 1990s neutralized such ambitions, although concern remains that Brazil has considerable missile building capacity and its nuclear plants have more potential than those of India and Pakistan. As various analysts have suggested, whether or not Brazil were to return to its 1970s agenda would depend more on political intent than on technical capacity.[7]

Elsewhere in the region, terrorism and guerrilla activity waxed and waned in the course of the 1990s. President Fujimori in Peru, for instance, whatever his other errors

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[6] General Wilhelm, testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, June 22, 1999 cited in Schulz, “The United States and Latin America,” p. 26. More generally on the Caribbean see Ivelaw Griffith, “The Caribbean Security Scenario at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Continuity, Change, Challenge,” The North--South Agenda (September 2003).

[7] Schulz, “The United States and Latin America,” p. 27; Max Manwaring, “Brazilian Security in the New world disorder: Implications for Civil-Military Relations,” in Richard Millett and Michael Gold-Biss, eds., Beyond Praetorianism: The Latin American Military in Transition (Miami: North South Center, 1998).

of governance, eliminated the Shining Path as a threat to national security. In Chiapas, Mexico in 1994 indigenous people, organized under the banner of the Zapatista National Liberation Army and led by Commandante Marcos, revolted against Mexican government authorities, demanding land redistribution and improved living conditions for the indigenous peoples of the region. The revolt attracted international attention, but it posed no real threat to the Mexican government or to United States national security, and it gradually disappeared from media attention, even if the economic and social problems in the region remain unresolved.

By the beginning of the 21st century only Colombia had a serious guerrilla insurgency, and this insurgency attracted United States attention, before and after September 11, 2001. Colombian leftist guerrilla groups, dominated by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) have been a challenge within the country since the 1960s, although the social, economic and political roots of insurgency predate the Cold War.[8] The situation became increasingly complex in the course of the 1980s as the guerrilla insurgency became more closely tied to the international narcotics industry. By the mid-1980s U.S. officials were concerned about the close link between insurgency and narcotics in Colombia, although what the Republican administration of Ronald Reagan presented to the American public in that decade was couched largely in domestic terms, that is the impact that illicit drug imports and use was having on American society. The Colombian challenge became even more complex as paramilitary organizations gained strength. Initially formed primarily by landholders seeking protection in a society in which a weak

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[8] Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda and Gonzalo Sanchez G., eds., Violence in Colombia 1990-2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace (Wilmington Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001).

state failed to provide adequate security, the paramilitary groups came together under the banner of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, led by Carlos Castaño. The guerrilla insurgency, the narcotics cartels and the paramilitary organizations were more a reflection of the failure of the state to establish its authority than a threat either to the existence of the state itself or to United States national security, but in the course of the 1980s and 1990s U.S. officials increasingly came to view them as a threat to American and hemispheric security.

Instability in the Middle East and the frequent threats to the security of oil supplies over the past thirty years, have contributed to a heightened U.S. preoccupation with the security of the Americas. The instability that has characterized Venezuela under the volatile presidency of Hugo Chavez, the slow departure from statism in the Mexican natural resource sector, and the danger that Colombia will in a few years become a net importer of oil have combined to increase the U.S. concern with the potential further destabilizing impact the Colombian insurgency has had in the region. This is especially important where Venezuela is concerned since it supplies more oil to the United States than the countries of the Persian Gulf region. Hence the conflict between the Chavez government and the Venezuelan state oil company, PdVSA, in the course of 2002-2003, which resulted in considerable loss in output as well as in development, presented a considerable threat to energy security in the region. The general importance of Latin America to U.S. energy security was articulated clearly in a 2000 report by the U.S. National Intelligence Council of the CIA:

"Latin America – especially Venezuela, Mexico and Brazil – will become an increasingly important oil producer by 2015 and an important component of the emerging Atlantic Basin energy system. Its proven oil reserves are second only to those located in the Middle East.[9]

Significantly, that report also stressed the importance of a number of non-traditional threats to global security which go well beyond the security of energy supplies. These included environmental degradation, migration flows, the spread of infectious diseases, narcotics trafficking, and trafficking in persons. The Council urged that such threats be taken seriously and preventive action be taken to minimize the impact of such activities and developments on the United States and the international community. In the fall of 2003 a senior official in the Bush administration contended that the administration was taking measures to offset these challenges.[10]

In the specific case of Colombia the events of 9/11 and the election in August 2002 of Alvaro Uribe Velez as President of Colombia combined to intensify the attention of the United States toward the twin problems of the guerrilla insurgency and the production and internacional traffic in illegal narcotics. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 led the U.S. to include FARC, the ELN and the AUC paramilitaries on the list of more than thirty international terrorist organizations, although there is no evidence of collaboration between the Colombian groups and any internacional organizations which pose a

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[9] "Global Trends 2015: A dialogue about the Future with Nongovernment Experts" The full report is available on the CIA website at www.odci.gov/cia/publications/globaltrends2015.

[10] Paul Dobrianky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, "Threats to Security in the Western Hemisphere," Remarks at the Inter-American Defense College, October 20, 2003. Located at http://www.state.gov/g/rls/rm/2003/25564pf.htm.

security threat to the United States. Within a month of his inauguration President Uribe paid an official state visit to President Bush. His objective was clear: to impress on the Bush administration and the U.S. Congress the seriousness of his intent to address both narcotics and the guerrilla situation and outline the progress that had already been made toward that end with U.S. financial and military assistance under the terms of Plan Colombia.[11]

In February 2003, with its primary attention directed to Iraq and the escalating crisis in that region, the Department of State nonetheless submitted a report to Congress which underlined the importance in American policy of the Colombian situation and of continuing foreign assistance to Colombia. The State Department report was in part a response to the request of the House of Representatives for clarification of the administration's foreign policy goals in Colombia. In 2002 the House had expressed concern that "the administration has inadequately articulated clear objectives of U.S. policy in Colombia, what actions would be required, and what it would cost to achieve those objectives."

The State Department report represented an important affirmation of the oficial Bush administration perspective on hemispheric security in the aftermath of 9/11, the Québec Summit of the Americas and the lead-up to the OAS conference on hemispheric security in Mexico City in October 2003. In its report to Congress, entitled "Why

[11] Alvaro Uribe, Informe Al Congreso 2003 (20 de Julio de 2003). www.presidencia.gov.co. On Plan Colombia see Gabriel Marcella, Plan Colombia: The Strategic and Operational Imperatives (Miami: North-South Center, 2001); Luz Nagle, Plan Colombia: Reality of the Colombian Crisis and Implications for Colombian Security (Miami: North-South Center, 2002); Stephen J. Randall, "Canadá, Estados Unidos, Colombia y la Seguridad Hemisférica," in Marta Ardila, ed., Colombia y la seguridad hemisférica (Bogotá: Universidad Externado, 2001).

Colombia Matters," the Department of State indicated the following, and the perspective is sufficiently important to merit quoting at length:[12]

"...democratic institutions face a wide variety of challenges throughout the hemisphere, and nowhere are these more serious than in Colombia, where the government, civil society and people are under attack by illegal armed groups of narcotics traffickers and terrorists, who are often one and the same...."

"In addition to our support for a democratic government under assault, and one with which we have strong and longstanding ties, Colombia is important to the United States for a number of other reasons:

Colombia is responsible for some 75% of the world's cocaine production and 90% of the cocaine entering the United States is produced in Colombia or passes through Colombia. It is also a significant source of heroin. There were 50,000 drug-related deaths in the United States in 2000; the United States suffered $160 billion in econmic losses in the same year due to illicit drug use.

Terrorism in Colombia both supports and draws resources from the narcotics industry, kidnapping and extortion, threatening U.S. citizens and economic interests....

Terrorist attacks resulted in over 3,000 Colombians killed in 2001...

"Beyond drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal arms smuggling, and other criminal activities, there are broad and important U.S. national interests in Colombia that include stability in

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[12] U.S. Department of State, Secretary of State in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, "United States Policy Towards Colombia and Other Related Issues," A Report to Congress, February 3, 2003. Located at www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rpt/17140.htm. See also Max Manwaring, U.S. Security Policy in the Western Hemisphere: Why Colombia, Why Now and What is to be Done (Miami: North-south Center, 2001), and Gabriela Marcella, Plan Colombia: The Strategic and Operational Imperatives (Miami: North-South Center, 2001); Luz nagle, Plan Colombia: Reality of the Colombian Crisis and Implications for Hemispheric Security (Miami: North-South Center, 2002).

the Andean region, trade, immigration, human rights, humanitarian assistance, and protection of the environment."

For two years between April 2001 and August 2003, the United States suspended narcotics surveillance flights over Peru and Colombia, as the result of the death of a missionary and her daughter, accidently brought down by the Peruvian air force. In the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2003 there was a clear split between those who supported and those who had reservations about unrestricted military aid to Colombia. An amendment to the military aid bill, which would have reduced aid to Colombia, was defeated by a vote of 226 to 195, reflecting not just partisan division but also the level of preoccupation which exists in U.S. political circles over the nature of the Colombian conflict and the role being played by the United States, in particular a general concern that the war against the narco-guerrilla is not winnable.[13] Nonetheless, in August 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell anounced the renewal of the anti-narcotic surveillance flights, although with more stringent safeguards to avoid a repetition of the previous incident.[14] A few days afterward, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, arrived in Colombia to review the results of more than $3 billion in U.S. military aid to date, and he subsequently announced that the United States would intensify its training of Colombian armed forces. During his visit to Colombia General Myers also

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[13] 24 July 2003, http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives. See also Center for International Policy, Washington D.C., at http://ciponline.org/colombia/index.htm.
[14] Associated Press, 5 de agosto 2003

expressed the perspective of the United States that Colombia's neighbours should play a more important role in combating Colombian terrorism.[15]

The most significant change in U.S. military and other forms of aid to Colombia in the aftermath of 9/11 was the decisión to make all forms of aid available to Colombian authorities to combat not only narcotics but also the guerrilla threat. The philosophy underlining this change in policy was no departure from the past, but the political conditions were now favourable to move in a direction long dictated by the reality of the Colombian situation. As the State Department report of February 2003 indicated: "the Administration and Congress increasingly came to understand that the terrorist and narcotics problems in Colombia are intertwined and must be dealt with as a whole." That had been the perspective of U.S. governments for twenty years.

Colombian-United States relations have been close during the short time that Alvaro Uribe has been president. President Uribe was the sole voice in South America to support the U.S. war against Saddam Hussein and his regime in Iraq, although Uribe's decision was not a popular one in many Colombian political circles. Nonetheless, there are areas of tension between the two countries, one of the most important of which has been the Colombian objection to Bush administration opposition to the Internacional Criminal Court and its insistence that Colombia sign an Article 98 agreement exempting U.S. soldiers from any prosecution under the Court, in spite of the fact that under the terms of a 1962 bilateral agreement American military and civil officials working in Colombia already have immunity from prosecution by non-American courts. One result

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[15] El Nuevo Heraldo, 13 de agosto 2003.

of the Colombian position was that in mid-2003 the Bush administration froze some $5 million in military aid to Colombia.[16]

The U.S. approach to the Colombian situation has been regional in nature, recognizing the extent to which Colombia's neighbours are affected by the narcotics and guerrilla threat and the danger posed to regional stability. The result has been a significant increase in aid to Colombia's neighbours under the Andean Regional Initiative during the Bush presidency. U.S. aid to Panama, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela in 2002 increased in each instance between 20% (in the case of Bolivia) and 220% and 345% respectively in the case of Panama and Brazil.[17] The entire issue of border security has been a perennial one in Latin America and one of considerable strategic concern to U.S. policymakers. The Andean region has been an acute example of the danger of conflicts spilling over national borders and potentially resulting in a widening of a domestic conflict, but at the same time, the Mexico-U.S. border also remains a sensitive and highly politicized one in terms not only of security but also in terms of migration.[18]

The Colombian case has been the most significant identified security threat in the region in recent years. More broadly, U.S. officials have been consistent in identifying the nature and objectives of U.S. policy in Latin America. In late 2003, Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, indicated in a presentation to

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[16] The Economist (23 August 2003), pp. 28-29.
[17] Latin American Working Group, International Policy Report, "Just the Facts 2001-2002."
[18] Fernando Bustamente, "The Question of Confidence Building Measures in the Subandean Region," in Joseph Tulchin and Francisco Rojas Aravena, eds., Strategic Balance and Confidence Building Measures in the Americas (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998).

the Inter-American Defense College that U.S. goals emphasized promotion of democracy and human rights, advancing trade and investment as a means to stimulate economic growth and generate employment, reduce poverty through strengthening education, health and other basic services; fight corruption; protect citizens from domestic and international terrorist threats as well as narcotics traffickers and international criminal organizations, whether trafficking in narcotics or people.[19] Dobriansky underlined an important issue in the changing understanding of security in noting that the Pentagon Office of Force Transformation envisages the general sources of violence devolving from the state level to the individual level, in particular terrorists. They see this trend derived in part from the general trend toward globalization and a transformation from the industrial age to the information age.

The United States and its hemispheric neighbours in the early 21st century have sought to address the issue of regional security through the institutions of the Organization of American States. At the Quebec Summit of the Americas in 2001, Canada requested the OAS Committee on Hemisphere Security to review all issues related to common approaches to international security in the hemisphere. In the aftermath of the Quebec Summit, the OAS worked toward the development of new policy guidelines pertaining to hemispheric security, especially after the events of 9/11: "New Approaches to Hemispheric Security." In the course of 2002 the OAS surveyed its members for their views on the security challenges confronting the Americas and the desired approaches to addressing those challenges. The U.S. response reflected a concern with both traditional and non-traditional security threats. The U.S. ambassador to the OAS in

[19] "Threats to Security in the Western Hemisphere," October 20, 2003, Department of State, located at http://www.state.gov/g/rls/rm/2003/25564pf.htm.

April 2002 informed the OAS that there are three principles which should be considered the basis of security in the region: democracy, prosperity and the maintenance of peace.[20] The ambassador indicated that these principles were consistent with Article 2 of the Charter of the Organization of American States, which includes a commitment to: ''mutual respect for sovereignty, Inter-American cooperation and solidarity, the pacific settlement of disputes, adherence to democratic ideals, the fulfilment of obligations derived from international law, and the protection of human rights.'' Although the OAS and the 1947 Rio Treaty were adopted in the context of the Cold War tensions between East and West when Communism and the Soviet Union were viewed as a threat to the security of the Americas, U.S. officials have presented those Cold War institutions as relevant to the early 21st century. The American ambassador stressed in his response to the OAS survey that "The Rio Treaty is as relevant today as when it was adopted in 1947. Although the likelihood of cross-border state aggression has declined significantly over the past decade, this threat remains a concern and the Hemisphere should be able to rely on the solid structure of the Rio Treaty to handle such contingencies."

U.S. officials also stressed that it was important to have a definition of security that was flexible but not so broad as to reneder it meaningless. The United States indicated that non-traditional threats to security, such as poverty, infirmity, the environment, and the violation of human rights, while important, could not be

[20] "United States Response to the Committee on Hemisperic Security's Questionnaire on New Approaches to Hemispheric Security,'' April 25, 2002. Para una perspectiva con mas enfasis sobre asuntos militares, vea Max G. Manwaring, compiler, ''Building Regional Security Cooperation in the Western Hemisphere: Issues and Recommendations,'' (The North-South Center, University of Miami; Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, March 2003). James T. Hill, Commander, United States Southern Command, indicó en el informe:que ''Today's foe is the terrorist, the narcotrafficker, the arms trafficker, the document forger, the international crime boss, and the money launderer.''

addressed within the framework of the traditional security structure of the Organization of American States, with the result that U.S. officials preferred to see a general inter-American declaration on security that would be sufficiently broad to incorporate those non-traditional challenges.

Pursuant to soliciting the views of its member states, in late October 2003 the Organization of American States held a special conference on security in Mexico City. The conference produced a Draft Declaration on Security in the Americas which was approved by the Parmanent Council on 22 October. The opening section of that document articulated the extent to which non-traditional threats to security had joined traditional considerations. It stated in part :

Our new concept of security in the Hemisphere is multidimensional in scope, includes traditional as well as new threats, concerns, and other challenges to the security of the states of the Hemisphere, incorporates the priorities of each state, contributes to the consolidation of peace, integral development, and social justice, an dis based on democratic values, respect for and promotion and defense of human rights, solidarity, cooperation, and respect for national sovereignty.[21]

Among the non-traditional threats, the OAS identified the following: terrorism and transnational organized crime; extreme poverty and social exclusion of broad sectors of the population; natural and man-made disasters; illicit trafficking in persons; attacks to cyber security; the possibility of access to and the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists.

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[21] Oganization of American States, Special Conference on Security, Draft Declaration on Security in the Americas (Mexico city, 22 October 2003), p.2. An already dated but insightful essay on U.S. strategic issues is John A. Cope, “ A United States View of Strategic Balance in the Americas,” in Joseph Tulchin and Francisco Rojas Aravena, eds., Strategic Balance and Confidence Building Measures in the Americas (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998).

The OAS conference agreed on a number of resolutions, few of which had any likelihood of leading to concrete action in the short term. There was agreement that the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security coordinate cooperation among the member states and the agencies of the OAS involved in the defense and security of the hemisphere and that the Committee develop strategies to deal with the ”new” threats to security, including a reassessment of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (the Rio Treaty) and the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogotá). The member states also called for a clarification of the juridical and institutional relationship between the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) and the Organization of American States.[22]

The United States has considerable military interaction with a number of other countries in Latin America, although none of them at the same level of intensity as Colombia in the past decade. With Mexico and much of the Caribbean the focus has been on anti-narcotics activities. The U.S. provides annual training, almost exclusively in the United States not in Mexico owing to Mexican sensitivities, for approximately 1,000 Mexican soldiers. It conducts extensive training in counter narcotics, especially helicopter repair and maintenance of aircraft used in interdiction and surveillance. The anti-narcotics focus in Mexico intensified in 1996-97 when the U.S. provided 73 used helicopters. These were returned to years later, as Mexico substituted other suppliers, but the anti-narcotics program continued.[23]

In Central America, U.S. military aid has never returned to the high levels attained during the crises of the 1980s, but it remains significant. Central American

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[22] Ibid., p. 12.
[23] Latin American Working Group, International Report, Just the Facts 2001-2002.

assistance is a combination of peacekeeping, counter-narcotics operations and some humanitarian assistance. El Salvador, for instance, receives aid to assist with narcotics control as well as for general military operations. Specifically, U.S. Navy and customs personnel operate under a Forward Operating Location at the Comalapa airport for counter-drug surveillance over the eastern Pacific. Conversely, Nicaragua and Guatemala are two of the only countries in the hemisphere which do not receive U.S. technical and combat training through the International Military and Education and Training Program. In the case of Nicaragua the policy is the result of the continued Sandinista presence in the military. In the case of Guatemala the policy derives from the ongoing perception of serious human rights violations in the Guatemalan military.[24]

In the Southern Cone region, in June 2001 the Pentagon announced the sale of F-16 fighters to Chile, the first sale of this nature since 1997 when the U.S. lifted a twenty year ban on sales of high tech weapons to Latin America. Significantly, the sale of the F-16s did not include AMRAAM missiles. Brazil and the United States have for some time been in negotiations for the acquisition of advanced fighter aircraft, but Brazilian authorities have been anxious to enhance the capacity of their own aerospace industry to construct the aircraft. Argentina's financial collapse in 2002-2003 made it an unlikely market for U.S. military technology. Nonetheless, Argentina has among the closest military links with the United States in Latin America, indeed is the only country in the area to hold the status of a non-NATO Ally, a status that has given Argentina privileged access to U.S. surplus technology.[25]

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

The Al-Qaeda inspired terrorist attacks on 9/11 have heightened U.S. concerns over some sensitive areas in the Southern Cone, in particular the border region involving Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, the tri-border area. This region has had a long history as a major source of smuggling and contraband, but the events of 9/11 have made U.S. and regional officials more acutely aware of the fact that the tri-border region has a large Arab immigrant population with strong Islamic fundamentalist leanings and suspected links to Islamic terrorists.[26] There is basis for this concern. A map of the area was recovered from an Al-Qaeda safe house in Kabul after the U.S.-led invasion, and in 2002 the Paraguayan press reported that Al-Qaeda had established terrorist training camps in the area, although no intelligence reports have confirmed this contention. Nonentheless, the U.S. Department of State's counter-terrorism co-ordinator, Cofer Black, visited the region in December 2002, and intelligence officials have indicated that Islamic extremists from the tri-border area have been visiting Muslim communities in nearby countries, in particular Iquique in Chile, Guayaquil in Ecuador and Maracaibo in Venezuela. Officials have also indicated concern of links with Sao Paolo Muslims, the largest Muslim population in Latin America. Although U.S. officials have not reported any Al-Qaeda operations in the tri-border area, they are concerned about the financing provided from the region to Islamic terrorist organizations, including Hizbullah and to a lesser extent Hamas. In addition, the Virginia-based Terrorism Research Center has indicated that the tri-border area was a safe haven for terrorists, who are able to move in and out of the area without leaving a documentary trail. Argentine officials have also reported evidence of linkages between the tri-border area

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[26] Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor (1 February 2003).

and alleged sleeper cells in Buenos Aires, and of course Argentina has had particular reason for vigilance since it is the only country in the region to experience Islamic fundamentalist attacks: the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community centre.[27]

The United States has placed a considerable degree of emphasis on trade and investment liberalization as part of its hemispheric and global strategy. The keystone of that policy is currently the effort to establish a Free Trade Area of the Americas, a goal that has been clearly articulated at the last several summits of the American states but which continues to be elusive. The underlying premise of this policy goal, and the tie to U.S. security, is the link between economic development and prosperity in the Americas and the health of the U.S. economy. It has been pointed out that Latin America is the fastest growing market for U.S. goods and that it is anticipated that by 2010 U.S. trade with all Latin American countries will exceed the value of trade with Europe and Japan combined. Donald Schulz argued in 2000 in a paper published by the U.S. Army War College, that democracy and economic integration are “not simply value preferences, but are increasingly bound up with hemispheric security.[28]

Trade and investment liberalization, the so-called neo-liberal agenda of the past decade, has not been greeted with unanimous support in Latin America. The Argentine financial collapse in 2002 fueled an already existing skepticism, and Latin American reservations were evident at the Cancun meetings of the World Trade Organization in August 2003. Even before the Argentine financial collapse, there were high levels of

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Donald Schulz, “The United States and Latin America: Shaping an Elusive Future,” Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College (March 2000), p. 2.

unemployment, closure of once profitable textile factories in Buenos Aires province, unable to compete with cheaper goods manufactured in Asia. The Cancun WTO meetings also witnessed a new aggressiveness on the part of Brazil. The election earlier in the year of Luis Inacio Lula da Silva as the Workers Party president of Brazil had initially been met with panic in financial circles inside and outside Brazil, but in his first year in office he has taken a fiscally cautious approach, addressing Brazil's massive debt by paying the service on the cash debt. Nonetheless, there is a new assertiveness under Lula. He has stated that "We no longer accept participation in international politics as if we were the wretches of Latin America … a minor country where people only know how to play soccer and dance samba." Brazil was not solely responsible for the general failure of the Cancun WTO, but it became clear that Brazil has ambitions of its own on the continent. Significantly, improved U.S. treatment of Brazil as a "respected" partner was one of the recommendations made to the Bush administration pre-inauguration team in late 2000, as noted earlier in this paper.[29]

The critical issue surrounding the FTAA is whether the Latin American countries, especially the major economies such as Brazil, want to tie their economies almost strictly to the United States. It has been pointed out that actual tariff barriers to trade in the hemisphere are relatively minor, and the real challenge is lowering the barriers to foreign investment in Latin America.[30]

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[29] Joseph Tulchin made the point late in the last decade that many Latin American countries' leaders are ambivalent about U.S. hegemony in the region and uncertain about the best course of action: to court or oppose that hegemony. See Tulchin, "Hemispheric Relations in the Twenty-First Century," Journal of Inter-Americvan Studies and World Affairs, vol. 39, no. 1 (Spring, 1997), 33-43.

[30] Patrice M. Franko, Toward a New Security Architecture in the Americas: The Strategic Implications of the FTAA (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000), pp. 45-47.

In the early years of the 21st Century the challenges facing the United States in Latin America and the Caribbean are a blend of the traditional and the new. What is most striking about the challenges in the post-Cold War years is the complexity that faces policymakers. Prior to the 1990s, with the polarization that seemed to characterize the world, it was all too simple to transfer the issues of the bipolar world to Latin America and the Caribbean, as much as the bipolar model failed to recognize the Latin American realities. The United States now faces a re-energized Brazil, with its own agenda for the region, continued strengthening of sub-regional groupings such as Mercosur and the Andean Group; a major demand of rising social, economic and political expectations throughout the continent, expectations that have in part been fueled by past and current U.S. policies. In addition, the illicit trafficking in narcotics that a series of U.S. administrations, Republican as well as Democrat, have seen as a serious challenge to national security, continues with little abatement in spite of the billions of dollars that have been invested in military operations, crop eradication and alternative crops, interdiction and education programs. Above all, there is reason for only cautious optimism about the stability and indeed depth of the democratization trend that in the course of the 1980s and early 1990s swept military governments from power throughout the region. There as well, the events of 9/11 and the heightened security policies pursued by the United States and its regional partners may well serve to give renewed importance and strength to Latin American militaries and security forces in the coming decade. The Bush administration's preoccupation with Iraq and Afghanistan and the high level of indebtedness that the United States has incurred will leave fewer resources available to address Latin American challenges as well as divert expertise

that could be allocated to the development of a long term U.S. strategy for the Americas.