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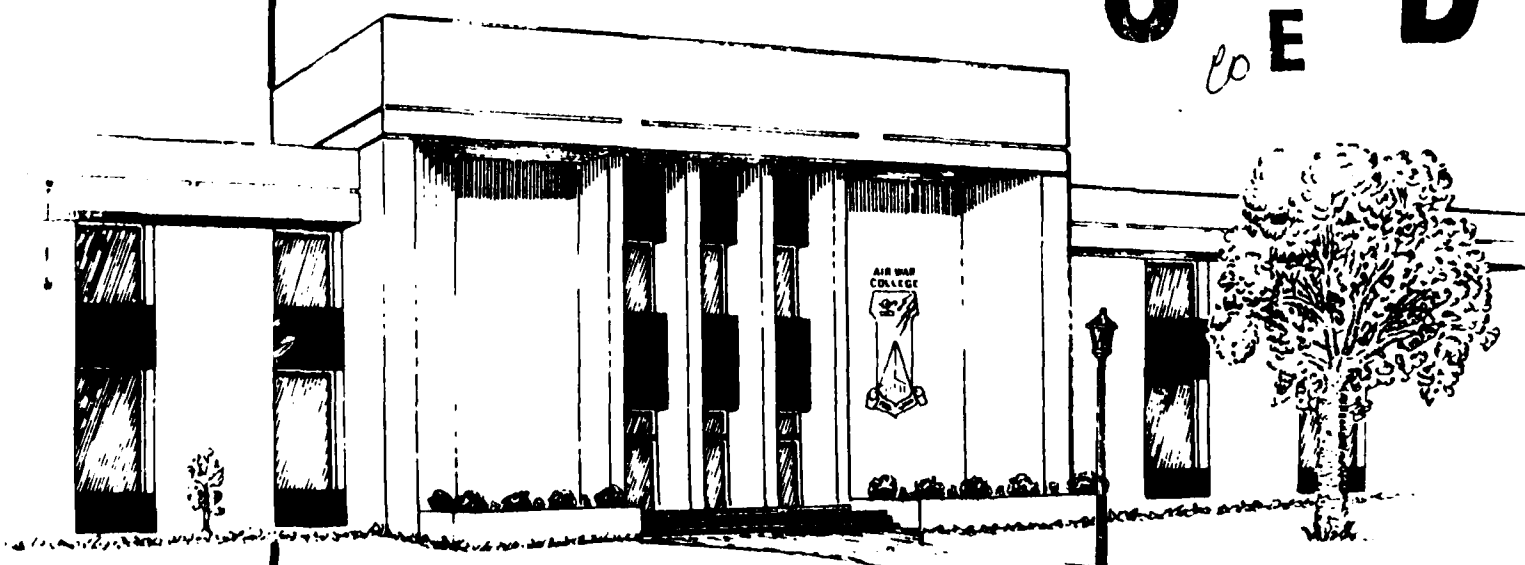
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FUTURE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO
HONDURAS AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CARY R. TRAFTON

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AIR UNIVERSITY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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FUTURE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO
HONDURAS AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION

by

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A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Doctor James McKenney

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Future U.S. National Security Strategy with respect to Honduras and the Central American region

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The study looks at the past and current U.S. National Security Strategy towards Central America, focusing on Honduras, the linchpin country of the U.S. policy. The basis for the National Security Strategy towards Central America, the domino theory, is discussed in detail and analyzed for its relevance to the Central American region. The present day U.S. policy is found wanting, calling for a new policy to help Honduras and the Central American region recover from their severe economic woes. Recommendations for a new U.S. National Security policy toward the Central American region, and for Honduras in particular, are suggested. (K2) ←

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Cary R. Trafton (M.S., Troy State University) is a Tactical Air Forces (TAF) fighter pilot. He served in TAC, USAFE, and PACAF and has completed a staff tour at Headquarters TAC. He also served a JCS joint tour in Ankara, Turkey. He has traveled extensively in the Middle East, Europe, and the Far East. He is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1989.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine United States-Honduran relations; determine the effectiveness of the U.S. National Security Strategy toward Honduras and the Central American region; and offer some alternatives for a future National Security Strategy.

Background

U.S. interest in Honduras started early in this century when U.S. based companies established large banana plantations in the northern part of Honduras. These companies built their own infrastructure and influenced the Honduran government to suit their own needs. However, these huge banana plantations became the catalyst for trade union movements. From 1916 to 1934, attempted strikes were repressed by the Honduran military and company strike breakers. During the dictatorship of General Tiburcio Carias from 1933 to 1948, unions were all but destroyed. But in 1954, in a famous two month strike against the United and Standard Fruit companies, Honduran workers won the right to unionize. (2:127-134; 15:99-102)

Since the early 1960s, the U.S. government has tried to influence the Honduran trade union movement through the American Institute for Free Labor Development

(AIFLD). However, this influence has concentrated generally on a privileged sector of Honduran trade unionism who have concerned themselves on limited demands while ignoring the broader popular efforts to improve the economic situation of the poor in Honduran society. Also, the Honduran government has tried to divide the labor movement; but union and peasant organizations continue to promote change and show strong support for a democratic process. (3:114; 19:241-244; 2:127-139)

Honduras today has a highly unequal distribution of land: 60 percent of the country's agricultural land is divided among only 6 percent of its farms. Most Hondurans are subsistence farmers, and there is an estimated 200,000 landless farm workers. (15:101-102) This situation has not bode well for Honduras. The country relies on agricultural and commodities exports for over 80 percent of its export earnings. Not only have prices for these commodities fallen in recent decades relative to the costs of imports, but much of Honduras's foreign exchange earnings have accrued to the foreign companies that dominate the nation's commercial and financial sectors. A further drain on capital has been service payments on Honduras's almost \$3 billion foreign debt, which soaks up 40 percent of export income. (2:127-135)

These problems have been worsened by the economic

policies dictated from Washington which have forced Honduras to lift restrictions on foreign firms and concentrate on export industry. Additionally, by drawing Honduras into the Contra war against Nicaragua, the U.S. has frightened investors, and the massive inflows of U.S. economic aid have been directed more to helping the country pay off its foreign creditors than to alleviating poverty. (19:197-201; 3:114; 15:101-102)

In 1980 the Carter administration, alarmed by the success of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, persuaded ruling General Policarpo Paz Garcia to permit the election of a civilian government in exchange for increased U.S. military and economic aid. A Constituent Assembly was elected in April 1980, and presidential elections followed in November 1981. Before the 1981 elections the military forced the two traditional parties, the Liberals and Nationals, to agree that the armed forces would remain independent and exempt from investigation, would control foreign policy, and would have a veto over cabinet appointments. The Liberals won and Roberto Suazo Cordova was sworn in as president in January 1982. (2:135-139; 15:103-105)

A Linchpin

Honduras has increasingly become a centerpiece of the U.S. policy in Central America. U.S. military exercises

and military construction in Honduras continue on a permanent or at least a semipermanent basis. The U.S. Military Assistance Program continues to provide an amount in excess of 100 percent of the Honduran military budget. The forces fighting against Nicaragua, the Contras, continue to operate from Honduras. (44:196,232-234)

At the same time, the Honduran political system struggles with its fledgling democracy. The people of Honduras, on a per capita basis, are the poorest in Central America. And the Honduran government has made clear, from time to time, that it is not altogether pleased with the level of U.S. assistance and the nature of U.S. security commitments to their country. (2:159; 92:60)

Despite the country's return to democracy in 1982, social justice and human rights problems still exist. The legal system is rife with corruption and political favoritism and continuing human rights abuses have undermined public credibility. (1:426; 92:61)

The Honduran government's tepid interest in resolving any of these problems further weakens civilian authority and has encouraged growing disenchantment with the democratic system as a means to resolve public problems. (65:409,435-436)

Honduras' geographic location has guaranteed that it would become a crossroads for the diverse political currents

of the region. And the conflicts among these currents have exacerbated the human rights situation in the country, thereby ensuring a severe deterioration in the availability of rights guaranteed through the Honduran Constitution. (65:411; 92:61)

Hondurans are increasingly resentful about the use of their territory as a staging area for the Nicaraguan Contras. There seems to be a consensus that the presence of the Contras in Honduras undermines Honduran security interests. This consensus derives from fundamental concerns for the country's sovereignty as well as disenchantment over the future of the Contras. (54:403-404)

Few in Honduras now believe that the United States will continue to support the Contras. And they resent that their country has been involved in an interminable low-intensity conflict which has diminished their ability to deal with pressing economic and social problems. (98:35)

Honduras is the least developed country in Central America. Its economy is structured on a base of tropical and sub-tropical agriculture, livestock, forestry, and some mining. Bananas, coffee, and timber dominate the country's economy and for many years have accounted for more than 40 percent of the gross national product. (82:34)

In the aftermath of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and growing regional disorder, the Honduran

economy has declined, characterized by disputed trading patterns and tight credit conditions. (2:162-163)

Enduring issues of economic reform must be confronted, particularly for the agricultural sector. While U.S. support for the development of nontraditional exports will help to diversify the economy and generate foreign exchange, it will neither solve the crushing population growth nor the inevitable public mobilization for land reform. The support of projects fostering basic grains production must be enhanced so that people can be fed. (2:231-232)

The country's private sector must also be given stronger encouragement to reinvest in the country and take some financial risks. The government has done little to promote meaningful private sector initiatives. Unemployment has increased and predictions for an upturn in economic performance in the near future are very grim. (91:438)

Thus far, U.S. policy has overemphasized military security. It has forgotten that security is also a function of institutions that work; and institutions must respond to the needs of the people. Institutions ultimately work because of commitment and leadership. Democracy is not simply a form of government, it is a process. (14:134-135,141; 61:45; 3:114; 10:54)

The United States has a commitment to nurture that

process, to give it energy and vigor. And, the U.S. needs to be more attentive to providing both moral and material incentives to nurture Honduras' fragile institutions. (46:281-283; 14:153)

While the U.S. has done reasonably well on the material side, it has forgotten the moral dimension. This is more subtle, and often more difficult for a country as big and powerful as the United States. (1:427-428; 77:98)

The private sector, political parties and their factions, labor unions, and even the military seek only modest aspirations: a sound business environment, good and honest government, public accountability, and last but not least, employment opportunities. (14:154; 94:125-129, 231-240)

Security is not simply a function of military capability. It is a function of institutions which work and a belief in those institutions among the body politic. This latter component should not be secondary to military security issues. (14:144-145; 58:83; 61:53; 37:437; 3:132)

CHAPTER 11

UNITED STATES-HONDURAN RELATIONS

U.S. Interests In Honduras

Central America has now been at war with itself since 1979. Honduras has become an important actor in the regional conflict by virtue of its key geographical position. A combination of U.S. influence and Honduran elite preference has resulted in the establishment of a semipermanent U.S. military presence in the country. (44:235-236)

U.S. interest in the country has been primarily motivated by two factors: first, a desire to neutralize (terminate if possible) Sandinista influence in Central America; and second, a desire to defeat militarily or diminish significantly the power of El Salvador's guerrilla faction, the Faribundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). (34:421-422,438; 42:221) In each case Honduras has played a critical role, one which has helped the country to receive unprecedented military and economic aid. During the 1980's the United States has reinforced its military presence in the country. This reinforcement was designed to send strong messages to both the Sandinistas and the FMLN, as well as Cuba and the Soviet Union, about the U.S. willingness to use military force if necessary in the

region. (14:322-323)

The implications are that the United States has paid too little attention to the institutionalization of the democratic system, preferring instead to concentrate its efforts on coordination of the anti-revolutionary efforts. (14:134-135,141,322-323; 42:221; 55:99) Ultimately, U.S. policy toward the country can be faulted for its overemphasis on the security aspects of bilateral relations. While the U.S. attended to and in some respects helped define the country's legitimate military concerns, it overlooked a range of important civilian problems associated with the country's democratization. These concerns related less to the amount of aid that could be thrown at any one problem and more to the fine points of political leadership and the exercise of power. Security is not only imperiled when a country cannot defend its borders but just as importantly when it cannot address and respond to its people's legitimate aspirations. (116:270-271; 14:139-140; 114:28; 92:62)

Honduran Concerns

Honduran perceptions, accurate or not, pose numerous problems in its relations with the United States. The heart of their concerns is over where their alliance with the United States is leading them; over how reliable an ally the United States is; and, over what effects its ties with the

United States has been over the past years. (14:146; 44:204)

There is clearly no thought of switching sides radically. The Hondurans are anti-Communist, anti-Sandinista, anti-Salvadoran, anti-Cuban, and pro-United States. They want close relations with the United States. They recognize a high degree of dependency on the United States, and they recognize that the U.S. has the potential to help them escape from some of the incredible economic and social problems which they face. (44:101-114,203-204)

Their perception of unreliability is based on a lot of things. It is based on their reading of history, a reading which is hard to argue. They look at the U.S. past record in the world and in the region. They look at the U.S. tendency to focus on areas when issues are "critical" to the U.S. way of thinking, and then forget them, leaving long range problems behind when the U.S. focus of attention passes to another region. (77:99-101; 114:28; 37:402)

Their concern is based upon the effects on their economy over the past years; that is, that a close tie with the United States, far from helping their economy, has seemed to produce a deepening of the economic crisis. They find themselves pressured more than ever by debt problems. They find themselves constantly on the verge of a crisis with the International Monetary Fund. They find themselves facing an overwhelming burden of unemployment. (54:402)

They find themselves with little ability to attract new foreign investment, in part because the emphasis on policy has been so much on regional crisis, the news coverage has been so much on violence and the Contras, that foreign investors are not interested in going into a country which has this image and which enters the news only in this regard. The perception of Honduras predominantly is as a military platform for the United States and that has certainly been discouraging of new investment. (23:111-113; 12:100; 42:90; 14:140)

This combined perception produces an uneasiness, a feeling of unreliability, and a feeling of disappointment. It may be that the Hondurans had oversold themselves, they had exaggerated the benefits that could be expected from support of U.S. policy. But, the Hondurans would argue that the U.S. had oversold them. Many Hondurans believe that they have had from the U.S. the worst of all possible worlds. They have had verbal statements which have exaggerated, and in many ways distorted Honduran importance; while at the same time, they have had actions which they feel have actually undermined or minimized Honduran importance. (65:412,435; 77:57; 61:53; 114:28)

A key issue in dealing with the United States obviously has been the Contra issue. Again, part of the problem may have been miscommunication early on. Hondurans

in the military, in politics, and in the private sector, had largely assumed that when the Contras were begun, it was to be a short range project. They believed that the United States would do whatever was necessary to produce a desirable situation in Nicaragua; that either the pressures would work and the Sandinista government would change and break its ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union or that the Sandinistas would be ousted. (91:419-420,438; 37:435)

What the Hondurans did not anticipate was hanging in there for the long haul. They did not realize that they were signing up for an endless campaign of pressuring without disposing of the government in Managua; a campaign which endlessly exacerbated conditions along their frontier, providing nothing but increased sources of internal insecurity within their own nation. (34:421-422; 37:435)

In seeking reassurances, the Hondurans have sought several things. They have sought renegotiation of existing treaties, and they have even talked about the establishment of a permanent U.S. military base in their country. Their concerns are very real and very serious, and need to be addressed seriously. (77:55-57,97; 94:45)

The real question the U.S. must answer to itself: What are U.S. long term intentions toward Honduras and the Central American region? The answer to this question should include a clear vision of Honduras' own long term security,

keeping in mind that security interests will always be affected by indigenous social problems and profound economic strains. (104:40-44; 42:225)

CHAPTER III

PAST AND CURRENT U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

U.S. Security Jeopardized

U.S. National policy toward Central America began in the 1980's based on a justification that revolutionary governments or similar movements within the region jeopardized U.S. security. This view was precipitated by an assumption that revolutions or like movements were sponsored by the Soviet Union, either directly or through Cuba. The inevitable conclusion of the above policy and assumption dictated that any revolutionary movement that succeeded, or partially succeeded, must be a victory for the Soviet Union and a defeat for the United States. To further emphasize the threat to U.S. security, physical analogies that emphasized geographical contiguity were often used; the domino theory and a spreading cancer are but two examples. (58:78; 12:95; 14:321)

The U.S. policy contended that further down the road stood the prospect of proliferation of Soviet bases in the region at almost any point the Kremlin chose. Hanging in the balance was a Soviet threat to reintroduce nuclear weapons into the area. Nuclear weapons in the form of SS-20 medium-range missiles that could reach targets virtually throughout the United States, the whole of Mexico, and much

of mainland South America. Nuclear weapons mounted on MIG-23 Floggers destined for supply in great numbers for Central American countries under Soviet dominance. (26:115-116: 55:99)

What would be the effects on the United States if it permitted Moscow to stay that course? Leaving out prospects of further territorial encroachments by the USSR northward into Mexico and southward into mainland South America, prospects that would become quite real unless the United States forced a change in the Soviet course, the U.S. would be faced with a military challenge within its immediate environs of a type it has never known before. The great benefits the U.S. enjoyed for more than a century and a half of freedom from necessity of guarding against threats from the south would be lost. (5:72-74)

The U.S. would have no choice but to refocus its military forces increasingly toward the south, resulting in a drastic decrease of its strategic capabilities in more distant but crucial theaters. This would put into jeopardy U.S. global positions and interests as well as its ability to support and protect allies. A further inevitable consequence would be increased military burdens on the American economy and even a certain degree of militarization of its society. (5:73-74)

The U.S. agenda became simple, straightforward, and

extremely compelling: for U.S. self preservation, the United States had to counter, contain, and indeed reverse the crucial threat which the Soviets were presenting in Central America. (74:25-26) The beginning point of this essential policy was a clear-cut defeat of Soviet designs in Nicaragua and El Salvador. A cornerstone of the policy was that no great power who failed to meet its geographical security requirements ever remained great or long survived. (26:115-116)

A Divided U.S.

Heading into the late 1980's, two opposing views divided the Congress, as well as the American people, on the U.S. military involvement in Honduras and the Central American region. The first view followed the path discussed above: democratization is endangered mainly by the threat of communism. The aim of U.S. foreign policy should be to provide for U.S. security by preventing the expansion of pro-Soviet forces in Central America. The U.S. policy toward Nicaragua and El Salvador, and for that matter the entire region, should be to win a decisive military victory over the forces of the Left by eliminating them from the political scene. A minimum goal, failing the above, should be isolation and progressive debilitation of the Sandinista government and the Salvadoran opposition. (109:217-220,225)

The basis for this strategy was that the United

States had to take a strong stand in the region to demonstrate U.S. resolve, shore up allied governments, stop the spread of leftist guerrilla insurgency, put pressure on the openly Marxist-Leninist government in Nicaragua, and prevent the Soviet Union from gaining a foothold on the North American continent. Known as a forward military strategy, this policy would not only be the most effective means of accomplishing these goals, but the United States would have the capability in place to intervene militarily in the region, should the contingency arise. The Honduras commitment was seen in this context as a concrete demonstration of U.S. resolve with high deterrent value. (43:13; 74:25-26; 7:51)

The opposing view was that "other than democratic" governments in Central America did not pose a threat to the strategic rear of the United States. Since these governments did not involve a direct threat to the supreme U.S. strategic interests, the U.S. should limit itself to means and ends sanctioned by a broad national and international consensus. Also, the United States should employ means tending to enhance restraints on the use of force in international relations. This view further stipulated that any policy not commanding strong congressional support should be rejected, both because dissension is a warning of a weak policy and because efforts

to implement said policy will incidentally hamper congressional-executive cooperation in numerous other political arenas. (109:230-232)

This view also saw the Central American situation as a moralistic issue and contended that U.S. policy should be designed based principally on moral concerns; therefore, the U.S. should not consider the use of force in solving moralistic issues. (37:402; 109:231-232; 77:98; 1:427-428)

This view also argued that the large American military presence in Honduras was not a proper policy for the United States to pursue; that the large U.S. military presence reinforced the traditional stereotype of the United States as an "imperialist" power intent on dominating Central America, and thus fueling anti-U.S. sentiments. Therefore, not only did U.S. military activities in Honduras undermine efforts to achieve a political solution, but also vastly increased the risk that the United States would become militarily involved in regional hostilities. (43:13-14)

The U.S.S. Honduras

The Reagan administration chose the first view throughout the 1980's; a view often seen as stemming from the "Domino Theory." The President employed the domino metaphor in his 1980 statement on U.S. policy in Central America when he stated: "We are the last domino." (101:104)

The domino theory was also at the heart of the Kissinger Commission Report, which warned that if Nicaragua were unchecked, "we would then face the prospect, over time, of the collapse of the other countries of Central America, bringing with it the spectre of the Marxist domination of the entire region..." (83:136)

After the Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua and the civil war began in El Salvador, the United States cast about for some nation from which it could help defend the region. Honduras, the new democracy and a country with strategic borders with Nicaragua and El Salvador, became that country; and thus was launched what is often called the U.S.S. Honduras. (2:157-159) Also known as the "republic for rent," the United States overtly transformed Honduras from a banana republic into a virtual U.S. military base. (106:24; 15:282; 68:53)

The U.S. delivered helicopters, counterinsurgency planes, mortars, howitzers, communications equipment and patrol boats to Honduras. They built airfields and sent military advisors. The United States established a large military presence and a substantial infrastructure in Honduras. (115:8; 15:282; 3:116) U.S.-Honduran joint exercises have occurred virtually nonstop since August 1983. The U.S. military construction program has included roads, hospitals, airports, trenches, and living quarters. U.S.

military personnel live at or use 12 bases in the country.

(1:427; 77:56; 3:116)

Although critics of all these facilities in Honduras see them as staging areas, the U.S. military calls them a perfect training ground. The remote nature of most of the Honduran facilities, coupled with the hot and humid Honduran climate, provide a jungle training area within close proximity to the United States. (27:31-32)

CHAPTER IV
THE MYTH OF THE DOMINO THEORY
The Domino Theory Argument

The domino theory argument has typically contained four basic assumptions. First, revolutions are essentially external events of subversion or proxy aggression sponsored, armed, and led by expansionist forces of international communism. Second, a revolution in one country heightens the potential for revolutions throughout an entire region because successful revolutions quickly spread through an emulation effect and because revolutions actively seek to export themselves. Third, because an entire region is placed in jeopardy by revolutionary actions, the United States must move rapidly and decisively to prevent the fall of the first country, as there will be few workable policy options later, when internationally sponsored revolutionary aggression has begun to irreversibly spread. Finally, whether or not a communist takeover of the first country in a region would in itself be important, the inevitable "fall" of an entire region would certainly threaten vital American interests, including national security. (12:94-108; 14:329-350; 18:43-72,193-194; 23:7-20; 26:19-31; 58:4-22; 42:222-223; 55:137-138)

The Domino Theory Is Unpersuasive In Central America

The domino theory in Central America is unpersuasive in all four of its arguments. It exaggerates the external role of the Soviet Union and Cuba. It oversimplifies the relationship between revolutions in one country to potential revolutions elsewhere in the region. It underestimates the potential effectiveness of policy options other than covert or direct military intervention. And, most importantly, it exaggerates the stakes for the United States even if the "dominos" should fall. (24:425; 12:106-108; 114:34-35)

The domino theory overestimates the effects of communist ideology and underestimates the effects of regional nationalism and traditional national conflicts. (116:270-271; 15:365-369) Also, the notion that revolution in one country could be exported to others has been based on a misconception of the revolutionary process. History has borne out that the outcome of internal revolutions almost always depend far more on indigenous circumstances than on external assistance. (60:217; 12:106-108; 68:85; 69:69-73, 81-82)

Looking specifically at Central America, it is not clear that the first domino has completely fallen. It is probably still an oversimplification to describe Nicaragua as a communist dictatorship, let alone a proxy or puppet of Cuba or the Soviet Union. Although the Sandinistas are predominantly Marxist and the political system is becoming

increasingly authoritarian, a political opposition still exists (albeit under various constraints) and much of the economy is still in private hands. Thus, Nicaragua is neither totalitarian nor a police state. Also, the major role of the Catholic clergy in the revolution and their continued importance within the Sandinista coalition has provided a significant check against a slide into Soviet or even Cuban-style communism. (71:408,431-432; 75:469-470; 37:435; 92:61)

On the reverse side, a communist victory in El Salvador would conjure the effect of alarming and mobilizing powerful indigenous anticommunist forces, who would redouble their efforts to defeat radical challenges to the status quo. (11:73) That is what happened in Central America following the Guatemalan revolution in 1954, the Cuban revolution in 1959, and the Nicaraguan revolution after 1979. Several analysts have noted that since the Sandinista revolution, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras have all moved to the right, contrary to domino theory predictions. (57:197) In this sense, the domino theory is contradictory in one of its own basic assumptions; if some dominos fall, others in the region will not fall but will take measures to ensure that they will not be next. (11:73; 57:197)

Paradoxically, Central American countries often speak about a reverse domino effect. They are just as

worried about seeing a string of extreme right-wing states that they consider just as big a threat to their sovereignty as communism. (15:234; 80:210)

In summary, there is no basis to believe that the domino theory would be borne out in Central America. Even if one of the countries should "fall" subsequent revolutions would not necessarily occur. Even if subsequent revolutions did occur, they would not necessarily be communist. If they did occur and were communist, they would not necessarily be totalitarian in their domestic policies. And, should one or more revolutions occur and they were immoderate Marxist regimes with close ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union, many options would be open to the United States. (24:427-428,434) Options that would include political and economic measures, and if truly vital interests were actually threatened, military measures. Also, in light of possible changing times that seem to be taking place today in the Soviet Union, two new options may also be available: one, negotiations with the Soviet Union on all Third World situations, and specifically Central America; and two, the "patient" option-patiently awaiting the international fragmentation and domestic political evolution that has characterized the communist world in recent times. (85:58)

Would U.S. National Security Be Threatened?

The last assumption, the threat to U.S. vital

interests, including national security, is the most critical one in the domino theory argument. Often ignored or accepted as fact, even by domino theory critics, the real question becomes: would the spread of communism in Central America really threaten U.S. national security or other truly vital interests?

A look at what vital interests or a threat to U.S. national security really entails is in order. Vital interests, as opposed to desirable interests, are at stake when the structure of the international system is seriously endangered; or when the U.S. democratic political institutions, social stability, economic health, or physical security are directly threatened. (79:7-15; 95:53-67)

There are four arguments that prevail on why Central America is of vital importance to the United States: first, economic access to Central America must be available; second, the flow of illegal immigration from Central America into the United States must be controlled; third, strategic footholds in Central America must be denied to "enemies" of the United States; and fourth, America's global credibility would be in question if it did not respond to international communist aggression in its own hemisphere. (80:186-205, 208-209; 81:15; 99:15-18; 61:49; 114:27-28; 73:16; 55:137-138; 38:7-12)

Addressing the first argument, Central America is of

limited rather than vital economic interest to the United States. There are no critical raw materials in the area, and trade and investment are relatively minor. The more important point is that in normal circumstances economic self-interest would ensure that Central American states, regardless of their ideologies, would encourage U.S. economic access of all kinds, for the U.S. is the largest market and source of private and public capital in the area. (31:57-59; 80:186-205,208-209; 12:116; 81:15; 42:223,225) This is not to say that the U.S. does not have economic interests in the Central American region. Current economic interests are important and may become more so in the future; however, they are not of vital importance to U.S. security. (76:80,82)

If there are circumstances that might lead Central American countries to close their doors to the United States, they could likely be nationalist resentment at U.S. interventionism and counterrevolutionary policies. (2:166; 7:89) Also, Central American states have more diverse economic options than in the past, for Japan, Europe, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela have provided some new sources of external aid, trade, and investment. The bottom line: U.S. access to economic interests in Central America are far more likely to be undercut than strengthened by continued efforts to assert U.S. hegemony. (53:14-15;

12:106-108; 58:77-78)

The illegal immigration argument asserts that Marxist governments in Central America will generate millions of refugees fleeing totalitarianism and heading for the United States. It is estimated that more than 300,000 Salvadorans and Guatemalans have come to the United States; however, they were not fleeing Marxism, but the violence of their own governments and economic misery. (12:98)

While the economic decline in Nicaragua today has increased emigration to the United States, both legally and illegally, to the tune of about 15,000 in the last six months, (56:1) it is not the advent of revolutionary governments that is most likely to generate large numbers of refugees. Rather, it is the devastation of a country's economy because of protracted war that will force people to leave their land. The resolution of the refugee problem would be an end to war. (22:270-271; 17:77-78)

Counterrevolutionary warfare or increased repression designed to prevent or defeat revolutions actually further flight from Central America to the United States. (17:77-78) An end to war would reduce the incentives to emigrate. Even if there were a revolutionary victory, war would be over, repression and violence should lessen, new regimes might institute more effective political controls over emigration, and land reform or other measures of economic redistribution

might be enacted. Any of these developments would lessen the flow of immigration. Most refugees who fled the attacks of Somoza's National Guard in Nicaragua returned when the war ended. (100:226-227; 9:414-415; 37:435)

Denying strategic footholds to "enemies" of the United States in America's "backyard," "southern flank," or "strategic rear" has been a centerpiece of the U.S. Central American policy. (54:401; 5:74,77; 98:36) The argument states that the emergence of new communist states in Central America would threaten American passage through the Panama Canal and the Caribbean shipping lanes through which pass over half of U.S. foreign trade and oil imports. (4:73; 114:34; 5:73-74) It is hard to come up with a plausible scenario in which a new Marxist state in Central America would conceive of attacking the Canal or vital sea passageways. For 25 years the Soviet Union and Cuba have had that capability, through land bases in Cuba and Soviet submarines at sea, and have never used it. (5:74; 12:97-98; 42:220,222) Any attack on American shipping or the Panama Canal would be considered an act of war by the United States and the devastating U.S. response that would surely follow would deter any tiny Marxist state in Central America. (12:97-98)

The current Central American policy also argues that U.S. resupply by sea would be endangered by Soviet maritime

warfare in a European war or a Middle East scenario. Because U.S. resupply would originate from ports in the Gulf of Mexico, Soviet submarine warfare would focus on the narrow choke points in the Caribbean Basin sea lanes. Thus the Soviet strategy would be greatly enhanced by Soviet acquisition of new base rights in Central America. (83:109-110; 4:73) This argument begs the question: what is the likelihood of a new Central American revolutionary government providing the Soviets with submarine base rights knowing the risks they would pose to themselves from such actions? Another counter to the argument is that it is hard to see what adding new naval facilities in Central America would add to what the Soviets have had in Cuba for more than two decades. Additionally, any Soviet actions to add naval facilities in the Central American region would negate the recent Soviet administration inroads with western nations. (85:55,58; 5:74; 42:220,222)

The risks to genuine U.S. security by new Soviet or other communist military bases in Central America is not a plausible argument. If the theoretical threats somehow did actually materialize, communist aggression could be readily deterred by a reiteration of an American commitment to use whatever force was necessary to defeat it. (98:36)

The last argument of the domino theory is that America's credibility as a global power is dependent on its

preventing communist revolutions in Central America. As stated in the Kissinger Commission: "Beyond the issue of U.S. security interests in the Central American-Caribbean region, our credibility worldwide is engaged. The triumph of hostile forces in what the Soviets call the 'strategic rear' of the United States would be read as a sign of U.S. impotence." (83:111; 8:viii; 42:220-221)

First, it is important to note that after any Soviet expansion, America's allies have reacted by strengthening their joint ties and alliances to resist any further communist gains. In Asia, the U.S. defeat in Indochina brought forth strengthened anticommunist cooperation among the ASEAN states. Also, when there was fear over the loss of credibility of the American commitment to defend Europe from Soviet attack, European NATO countries strengthened the alliance and even France initiated closer cooperation with NATO. (101:83-87)

Second, and more important, what kind of credibility has the United States earned in the Central American region with its on again, off again aid to the Contras? (54:402; 37:435) There is not a single Central American country that does not harbor some measure of jealousy and suspicion against the United States. The U.S. is seen as self-seeking, condescending, uncaring, and as a constant threat to the national pride and self determination of its

hemispheric partners. Recent increased tensions between the Honduran people and the U.S. military highlight how volatile a policy of intervention can become. (1:428,431; 58:83; 42:225; 3:116-117)

The credibility theory is unpersuasive in its argument. Current U.S. policy is based on two erroneous premises: that Central America is vital to U.S. security, and that indigenous radical revolution is merely another form of Soviet expansion and aggression. These premises should be abandoned and the United States should shift to a policy of nonintervention in Central American revolutions. (53:9-10; 12:99)

It was once commonly argued that the U.S. and Central America shared a common political tradition; a heritage of anticolonialism and at least an ideological commitment to democracy, creating a special bond. Therefore, because of these ties, U.S. democracy would be endangered by the spread of communism or any antidemocratic ideology in the hemisphere. In actuality, there are broad political, economic, linguistic, cultural, and geographical differences between the United States and Central America. (23:111-112; 26:1-13)

U.S. foreign policy should make the obvious distinction between the democracies of Western Europe, Japan, and Israel and the dictatorships of Central America.

The U.S. need only to reiterate its commitment to help regions that are truly "vital" to U.S. national interests and to whom the United States has deep moral commitments based on political, historical, and cultural ties; this done, U.S. credibility towards all regions of the world would be enhanced and the credibility argument would never again surface as an issue. (53:14-15; 12:106-108; 58:77-78)

CHAPTER V

PAST POLICIES DICTATE A CHANGE

Central America Is Not An East/West Rivalry

This research has examined the reality of the domino theory and Soviet and/or communist threats in Central America. There is a crisis of major proportions in the region, and the effects are tragic for the people who live there. However, the actual situation does not resemble the dreaded picture drawn by the U.S. government. Central American conflicts cannot continually be described as a part of the global East/West rivalry. (116:278-280; 58:72; 12:98,128; 42:219; 114:33) In reality, the roots of the Central American crisis lie within the region, in long established poverty and oppression. Revolution is a response to this history of injustice. The real danger is that local conflicts may be engulfed in regional war if the United States continues investing its prestige and power to ensure that fundamental social changes do not take place. Alternative policies would serve both U.S. and Central American needs far better than the present attempt to rely on military power in order to maintain U.S. control. (14:367-368; 80:211-212; 67:109,112; 114:33; 61:53; 42:225)

U.S. policy in Honduras offers a clear illustration of the contradictions between rhetoric and reality. During

the 1980's Honduras has become an essential U.S. base of operations in Central America. It is the primary staging area for the Contra war against Nicaragua, and plays an important role in U.S. efforts to defeat the Salvadoran revolution. In support of these objectives, the United States provided Honduras with over one billion dollars in aid between 1982 and 1987 and has sponsored a major military buildup there. (116:280-281; 58:75-76; 61:41) U.S. armed forces have conducted maneuvers in Honduras almost continuously since 1983, often jointly with the Honduran army. As the country has been militarized, its national budget has become dependent on U.S. aid, producing powerful pressure on the Honduran government to give the United States whatever military and political support it asks. (64:405,448; 58:75-76)

The impact on Honduras itself has been heavy. Most of the American dollars have gone, directly or indirectly, into the military buildup. Little has been done to feed malnourished children or create jobs for their unemployed parents. U.S. aid to the Honduran armed forces has strengthened their power in national politics and a lack of civilian control over the military is a major obstacle to real democracy. During the U.S. buildup political "disappearances" began to occur in Honduras for the first time. (64:405,438,448; 12:128)

These examples indicate that what the U.S. policy towards Honduras and the region preaches about democracy, human rights and human welfare is not the real basis for U.S. strategy toward Central America. Maintaining U.S. dominance in the region has been the bottom line. (58:76; 114:28; 68:49) The cumulative impact of the U.S. Central American policy has been increased instability, economic decline, political polarization, growing state terrorism and deterioration in democratic practices; all a threat to Honduran stability, the very stated objectives U.S. policies were supposed to avoid. (14:144; 61:45; 35:410-411; 62:120-121)

The situation in Central America has been a paradoxical one. Three states (Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua) are combating guerrilla insurgencies. Two states (Honduras and Costa Rica) are allowing insurgent guerrillas to operate from their own territory. The United States is aiding two right wing governments (El Salvador and Guatemala) against left wing insurgents, and in another, Nicaragua, is backing right wing guerrillas fighting to overthrow a Marxist type government. Conflict in Central America is alive and causing acute instability and economic disaster. (78:276; 55:138)

Throughout the 1980's the United States has sought to dictate events in Central America primarily through the

use of proxy military forces. The human and economic toll in the region has been devastating. The economic, social, political, and moral costs to Central America and the United States have come to public attention and are unacceptable. The shortcomings of the current policy have been disclosed. The United States needs to construct and implement alternative policies towards Honduras and the Central American region. (17:67-68; 12:128; 58:83; 114:29,34; 55:99-100)

A new policy should be one of peace and development, founded on demilitarization and diplomacy, offering a more prudent and realistic course for the United States. The rationale for a fundamental policy change is clear: war and development are incompatible; war can only be ended through a prolonged process of diplomacy; and, in the long run, development that does not combine social justice with growth will only destabilize. Inequitable development threatens peace in the future just as it has in the past. (14:366-368)

Central American Nationalism

The history of the United States has been full of outspoken nationalism, and yet the U.S. has had significant difficulties in coming to terms with nationalism in the Third World. The Sandinistas' slogan "a free homeland or death" is dismissed by the U.S. as rhetoric only. And yet the Sandinista slogan, and others like it, show that

Central Americans believe their own dignity is closely tied to changed relationships with the rest of the world, and particularly with the United States. (58:78-83; 114:29-30; 36:104,136) The existing century-old relationship, where the U.S. has dominated local politics and economics, defined the acceptable limits to change, and intervened when it chose, is not acceptable to most Central Americans. Is it no wonder that Central American nationalism almost inevitably contains a large dose of what the U.S. perceives as anti-Americanism? (80:211-212; 58:77; 114:29-30)

The U.S. has no choice but to learn to live with Central American nationalism because it will not go away. Quite the contrary, it is the most widely shared political perspective in the region, often linking groups that are otherwise far apart on the political spectrum. (116:282-283; 61:52-53; 35:412) A more mature U.S. policy would view this nationalism as essentially constructive. Not only does it provide a common meeting ground for otherwise contending groups, but it is the surest guarantee that foreign powers will not be welcome in Central America if they attempt to subordinate local interests to their own or impose alien strategies that do not respond to local needs. (80:211-212; 42:236)

What Direction Should The U.S. Go?

What should the nature of U.S. interests in Central

America be? There is a strong case that there are no truly "vital" interests in the region at all; no potentially serious threats to American democracy, social stability, economic prosperity, or physical security. However, the U.S. does have some "important" interests in the region: the prevention of interstate aggression, the support of democracy where it exists, the preservation of reasonably democratic, stable, and friendly governments, and the exclusion of Soviet offensive military bases from the area. (23:90-93)

In developing policies to further these "important" interests, the U.S. should bear in mind that power is limited, and as a result policy cannot be designed to guard against every conceivable threat, only the most plausible ones. Rational policies should consider the gravity of the potential threat, the likelihood of the threat actually materializing, and the availability of a range of policy options to deal with important threats, if and when they actually materialize. (80:208-212)

In Central America, the spread of communist revolution is both unlikely and should not be alarming. (60:217; 12:106-108; 61:52-53; 37:436; 16:433) Even if it remains a generally desirable U.S. foreign policy to avert radical revolution in Central America, it is not essential; for this reason, the means should be political and economic

and not military. (80:209-210) Some available and more desirable measures that the United States should contemplate include: diplomacy to negotiate a policy of mutual nonintervention with Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union; economic and political support for genuinely democratic reformers but not for repressive governments; increased American economic assistance, debt-relief measures, and government subsidized private investment on terms that benefit both the recipients as well as the investors; and the elimination of trade barriers to Central American exports. (17:63-78)

Should these measures be insufficient, nationalism and economic self interest would be likely to ensure that any future communist governments in Central America would remain independent of Cuba and the Soviet Union; unless self defeating U.S. pressures forced them to turn to those countries for economic and perhaps even physical survival. (29:211-213; 116:282-283)

The U.S. should not impose unilateral initiatives on Central American leaders; it should work with them to expand growth in the region. They know that structural reforms, continued austerity and financial responsibility will be expected of them, and they are ready to do their part. They are also ready to fight corruption and attack the narcotics traffickers. (113:110-115) And they want to preempt radical

approaches, both from the revolutionary left and from the national populist right. What they seek from the United States, apart from attention and respect, is international economic cooperation. (24:427-428,434; 12:106-108; 10:54-58,85-87)

In the early 1980's Cuban influenced revolution threatened to spread through the entire Central American region. Today, however, the region is moving away from extremism and polarization and Cuba's influence has lost most of its appeal. Central American governments today are highly suspicious of any outside interference and are trying to expand their political spectrum to solve their more pressing economic problems. Also, moderate forces in the region are demonstrating resiliency, further easing political crises throughout the Central American region. (24:425-426; 42:223-224)

Given the ideological differences among the five heads of state and the different forces throughout the region, substantial agreement will be difficult to achieve. But leading figures in the region, including President Cerezo of Guatemala, consider the effort vital. "We Central Americans need to show that we are mature, and that we don't always have to wait for Washington to pronounce itself before we know what to do," Mr. Cerezo said in a recent interview. (56:1)

To reassert leadership, the U.S. must revise its goals. Both U.S. interests and values would be best served by relinquishing its obsession with victory and replacing it with the linked goals of tranquilizing Central America and reigniting regionwide economic growth. To achieve these goals, the U.S. must seek negotiated settlements of the civil conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador and concurrent guarantees of mutual tolerance among the Central American states. And, an important aim of any negotiated approach should be to remove Central American conflicts from the arena of East-West confrontation. (109:227-228; 12:98,128)

Counter revolutionary policies in Central America have not succeeded and have become morally unpalatable to many Americans and most Central Americans. (58:83; 17:67-68; 20:108) It appears very remote that Marxist regimes, currently endangered by the mere fact of their existence, would irrationally provoke a direct confrontation with the United States or any country in the non-communist hemisphere, by attacking their neighbors, threatening the Panama Canal, disrupting American shipping, allowing the emplacement of Soviet nuclear weapons on their territory, or cooperating with Soviet or Cuban military expansionism. (4:73; 12:97-98; 5:73-74) Potential threats to truly "important" U.S. interests in Central America are remote; and all could be deterred by declaratory policies or could

be defended against in the unlikely event that deterrence would fail. (12:97-98)

There are unlikely to be fundamental changes in U.S. policies until there is a reevaluation of the domino theory and other underlying premises and myths that lie at the heart of those policies.

CHAPTER VI
RECOMMENDATIONS

Honduran Specifics

Recognizing that development can only occur with peace, peace therefore becomes the first and foremost objective in order to help Honduras economically. Peace is a precondition to renewed and sustained private investment and productive public investment, both in the economy and in the governing of the country. (114:36-37; 55:97; 2:231-233)

The immediate aims of a U.S. policy towards Honduras should be to reverse the militarization process. A negotiated approach would help Honduras better able address its severe internal problems as it would be far less subordinated to U.S. changing policy and military aims. By entering into agreements with Nicaragua and El Salvador, tensions would be reduced and crossborder movements of arms and insurgents could be eliminated. 15:107-108; 20:107; 22:164-167; 12:109-128)

A coalition of reform-minded military officers, civilian politicians, and business leaders should work with peasant and labor organizations to develop workable reform programs. U.S. development assistance for Honduras should encourage agrarian reform and provide continued capital investment for transportation and basic infrastructure

projects. Reforms, land-tenure patterns, foreign exchange patterns, tax structures, and social services are all a prerequisite for broadly shared development. Social reform offers the hope of reversing long-term trends toward increasing poverty and inequality and of recreating the social stability necessary for development. (5:124-126; 9:67-68; 7:220-226)

Reform, however, conflicts with the domestic political agenda of the conservative economic and military elites who are the main U.S. allies in Honduras. Therefore, the United States must seek a broader alliance with social groups advocating reform, and welcome political allies among the progressive center and left to help create a constituency for the reforms that are necessary in order to attain social stability. (7:220-226; 20:107; 114:36)

As the leading negotiator to eliminate strife in the Central American region, the United States could help restore investor confidence in Honduras by urging the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to increase the number of projects to Honduras, further enhancing the investment climate. In turn, the Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) would be willing to undertake new exposures in Honduras. (12:97-98; 7:366-368) The United States should seek international arrangements to help relieve the economic crisis in Honduras by encouraging multilateral agencies such

as the IMF and the World Bank to take the lead in requests for aid. (113:110-115; 23:111-113)

The United States should promote the transfer of U.S. capital and technology as incentives to U.S. businesses to "export" many of their operations to Honduras. Investment incentives and increased trade opportunities would give Honduras greater access to the U.S. market, aiding in their recovery and providing a strong stimulus to the Honduran economy. (12:97-98; 58:80-81; 23:94-95)

Underlying all U.S. actions to help Honduras, the United States should develop the capability to understand Honduras in its own terms and context rather than through the traditional U.S. biased view. This more mature approach would require empathy and understanding of Honduran regional problems and internal nationalism. (55:138; 114:36-37)

The United States pledged to defend Honduran sovereignty and territorial integrity in May 1985 when it signed annexes to the existing military cooperation treaty between the United States and Honduras. (39:45) In so doing, the U.S. should let the Honduran government tell the United States whether or not it would be prudent to relocate SOUTHCOM to its country; and how much military support, personnel, and equipment it would like to have in its country, not vice versa. (55:138; 9:433-434; 114:36-37; 12:104-105; 32:97-98)

The United States can substantially help Honduras economically, politically, socially, militarily, etc.; however, the United States should treat Honduras with respect as a sovereign nation, resisting the temptation to interfere in the affairs of the country. The United States can do the most good by taking its cues from the Honduran regime itself. (15:107-108; 42:236)

A More Constructive U.S. Policy

A new U.S. National Security Strategy toward Honduras and the Central American region should begin with the most immediate and imperative steps of negotiation to bring peace to the region, and then build toward longer range measures to bring about demilitarization, development, and reconciliation. As has been stated earlier, war and development are incompatible. (2:231-233; 12:109; 58:80; 55:97)

To help bring peace to the region, the United States should cease the continued militarization of Honduras and Costa Rica and stop efforts to destabilize or overthrow the Nicaraguan government. Additionally, it should cut off aid for waging war in El Salvador and Guatemala and support negotiated national solutions to the conflicts in those countries. The U.S. should support efforts for democracy in the region, including free elections in every country, as well as supporting other forms of popular participation in

community, labor, and religious organizations. (12:109-128; 58:80; 20:107; 22:164-167)

The United States should take the lead in assembling an international program of assistance to rebuild a postwar Central America and provide a basis for renewed, equitable, and environmentally sound growth. The U.S. should target development assistance to programs that increase the participation of the poor in the region's economies and support genuine land reform programs, including credits and technical assistance for peasant cooperatives. U.S. aid should be conditioned on compliance with internationally recognized standards of human, political, and labor rights, as well as respect for indigenous people's culture and tradition. (93:436-437; 53:10-11) The U.S. should support a rejuvenated Central American Common Market aimed at balanced regional development and the satisfaction of basic needs. A balanced regional development should include more equitable trade and financial relations between Central America, Latin America and the United States. (53:10-11; 74:26; 94:275-285; 114:36)

Most importantly, the United States should foster citizen-to-citizen contact between the U.S. and Central America through cultural and educational exchanges, sister city arrangements, and similar programs designed to exchange skills and promote understanding. (30:36-56; 114:36)

If the United States can help resolve Central American conflicts peacefully, and can come to accept the realities and positive aspects of nationalism and popular mobilization, a new model of U.S. relations with the Central American region will begin to emerge.

An Economic Alternative

A new U.S. policy toward Honduras and the Central American region must detail a fundamental shift away from the current approach and focus on economic issues. (14:366-368; 17:72; 12:100) The first important step should entail the U.S. switching from a bilateral to a multilateral approach in the Central American region. Current U.S. policy encourages maximal economic links between each individual country and the United States, Nicaragua excepted. An alternative policy would encourage diversification of economic and political relations with Europe, Canada, Japan, and nonaligned nations of the developing world. By virtue of proximity and size, the U.S. would always remain the key actor. Major partners in this multilateralism should be the larger Latin American nations to the south, whose economies are sufficiently diverse to offer many needed goods, services, and markets to Central America. (53:15-16; 58:82-83; 14:140; 42:225; 114:29-30; 23:113; 12:100-104)

Current bilateral agreements with Central American

countries prevent the formation of a multinational framework. Based on a common political vision, a multinational framework would offer several economic advantages. (42:225; 114:29-30; 12:111-113) A multilateral process structured in a similar manner to The Caribbean Group for Economic Cooperation and Development would allow for more efficient coordination of scarce resources. It would make donors feel it was in their best interest to match contributions made by others, thus sharing the aid burden more widely. Also, such a system would allow for the transfer of aid resources without the political tensions and resentments that accompany bilateral programs. (12:111-113; 14:140; 53:15-16)

True economic multilateralism cannot exist until U.S. allies in Europe, Asia, and in the Caribbean Basin really believe that the United States will pursue diplomatic efforts to end regional strife. (42:225; 114:29-30; 58:82-83; 12:100-104) A policy of economic multilateralism requires a nonhegemonic political approach to the region and a serious diplomatic effort to end the civil strife. A strong multilateral consensus that united development and diplomacy would position the United States to lead the stabilization, reform, and recovery efforts throughout Central America. (23:113; 114:29-30; 12:111-113)

The next step should be switching from an

antiregional to a regional approach. Special economic incentives in the current Caribbean Basin Initiative actively discourage economic relations between Central American nations, giving preference instead to trade and investment from the United States. (41:419; 23:94-95; 58:80-81) The United States should initiate a complete turnaround in this area. A revitalized Central American Common Market should be a high priority, as should closer relations with other countries in the greater Caribbean area. (116:272-274; 66:415-416)

Currently, Central American nations are pitted against one another in competition for external markets, attempting to export the same products and competing for private investment by offering cheaper labor and more favorable tax advantages. (12:100-104) Central American nations cannot grow individually at the expense of their neighbors. The U.S. should promote a new policy, encouraging greater cooperation between nations in production, commerce, and finance, and oriented to a more balanced growth approach. This policy would strengthen internal and regional markets and reinvigorate domestic output of staples and other foodstuffs. (17:73-74; 12:100-104)

Current U.S. policy favors those countries that embrace U.S. hegemony, military alliances, investment, and

development strategies, while striving to punish and even destroy governments that follow more independent economic and political policies. The United States should respect all U.S. neighbors as sovereign nations, even when they modify their political models or diversify their economic relationships. A Central America safe for diversity would also be a region in which democratic practices stood a better chance of becoming the norm rather than the exception. (9:433-434; 12:104-105; 55:138; 114:36-37)

The United States must switch from a short-term to a long-term policy process towards Central America. Current economic policies are short-sighted and short-term. They pressure Central Americans to produce and export more of the same traditional agro-products, diversifying a bit only if private capital is willing to invest in new ventures. Over the long run, this strategy simply locks Central American nations into a pattern of crisis and underdevelopment. The United States should develop, in concert with the Central American countries, an enhanced program to stabilize commodity prices and export volumes in order to achieve increased income gains. (12:107; 14:140; 23:111-113; 114:28-29; 55:138) The economic alternatives listed above would help the region break out of this vicious cycle. Fundamental policy changes are required so that Central America's future will not be mortgaged irrevocably to past

ideas and continued economic decline. (17:72-78)

Most important, any new policy involving U.S. aid should be conditioned on compliance with clear standards of human, political, and labor rights. Popular participation, through political parties, unions, peasant associations, or other mass organizations, must be supported as a positive force for development, not feared as a threat to U.S. interests or security. (17:72-73; 12:125)

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