

# Security and Democracy in the Region

By LUIGI R. EINAUDI

**R**egional dynamics currently facilitate military support for democracy and peaceful conflict resolution in the Western Hemisphere. Yet although conditions have greatly improved, continued success will require both civilian and military leadership. With Canada, Mexico, and the United States in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Anglophone Caribbean still as solidly democratic as ever, and democratization in South America complementing the resolution of in-

rates in several Latin American countries have for some years been higher than in the United States and Canada. If this trend continues, the glaring gaps in the quality of life between North and South America could narrow in the future.

But the most impressive trend is political convergence. Since the early 1980s, democratic systems have withstood leadership changes, severe austerity, and major adjustments. Democracy and economic modernization are proving compatible and are contributing to a reborn awareness of the value of freedom. But there is no guarantee that new opportunities for regional cooperation will be fully developed. Already there are reactions against the reformist optimism that opened the 1990s. Yet the potential for a new era of hemispheric prosperity and good neighborhood is real.

## Security Concerns

Extracontinental threats have lost significance, but travail in Haiti and looming instability in Cuba make clear that local problems remain. More generally, the ills of poverty, misgovernment, terrorism, drug traffic, and mass migration can overwhelm the most settled boundaries, entrenched relationships, and precise legal guarantees.

A southward flow of automatic weapons through Miami has replaced Cuban-trained guerrillas as threats to local authorities. Criminal and terrorist groups hostile to organized societies possess levels of technology and firepower that contrast starkly with the historically unarmed governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean and even the capabilities of some Latin American nations. From Chiapas down the Central American isthmus and along the continent's Andean spine,

ternationalized conflicts in Central America, the 1994 Miami summit credibly set the integration of the entire hemisphere as a common goal.

Change toward a more harmonious regional order is broadly evident. In sharp contrast to strategic rivalries in other parts of the world, Argentina and Brazil ended their nuclear competition and accepted international safeguards. With Chile, they banned chemical and biological weapons. In another sphere, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela followed Chile in dismantling centralized economies.

And giant federal Brazil is adapting well to new democratic and productive forces. Growth



Joint Combat Camera (Kyle Davis)

Argentine, Barbadian, and U.S. police monitors in Haiti.

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explosive mixes of race, poverty, political violence, and institutional failure cause more casualties than the headline-grabbing calamities of earthquakes and hurricanes combined.

Democratic traditions largely enabled the Commonwealth Caribbean to escape totalitarian temptations even in the 1960s and 1970s. But articulated interests and favorable changes do not guarantee social stability. Exacerbated by economic dislocations and modern

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communications, old injustices and social problems can challenge the responsiveness of national elites and international cooperation. And unattained development and missed opportunities can expose and magnify the faultlines of otherwise forgotten resentments against neighbors.

Our hemisphere cannot be isolated from the broader world. The end of the Cold War has challenged global order on a scale comparable to the end of the world wars. The response to the disintegration of the Soviet empire remains unclear. Will we overcome centrifugal nationalisms as happened after World War II or indulge them as occurred following World War I? Moreover, will we find workable responses to deforestation, population overflow, and global warming?

Not only are such issues taxing in themselves, however; we are barely able to discuss them for lack of common reference points. Politics, like nature, abhors vacuums, so this is one in name only; but it is filled with far more particularisms and localisms than the grand strategists have been accustomed to accommodating, which may actually be part of the problem.

### Regionalism

For all its shrinkage the planet is big and complicated. The United Nations can't do it all, nor can the United States. And most other countries have their hands full with domestic concerns. A compromise between the abstraction of globalism and weakness of unilateralism already exists. It is called "neighborhood" and has the attributes

of proximity, language, culture, shared problems, and history. That neighbors can solve some problems best is being demonstrated from NAFTA to the European Union, from the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

Yet an acceptance of regionalism comes only grudgingly. Globalists see it as second best or as indicative of failure, nationalists as another threat to national identity, and liberal economists as a protectionist "circling the wagons." In today's uncertain conditions, however, regionalism can be a building block to work out principles and relationships for broader global cooperation.

Historically the United States saw itself solidly anchored in the Americas from the Monroe Doctrine to the Good Neighbor policy. But World War II ended the "America First" debate, and the United States has had worldwide commitments ever since. This global outlook was reinforced during the Cold War. With the dissolution of the Soviet empire, the United States became the only genuinely global power. It is the only country that sees itself as having a role in every region—in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa as well as throughout the Western Hemisphere.

From this perspective, NAFTA may be a first step toward re-anchoring the United States in the region. Certainly Washington has not moved so directly to bolster its position in its immediate neighborhood since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Good Neighbor policy. However, NAFTA cannot be a mask for a Fortress Americas policy. Canada and the ABC states (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile) are mainstays of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and peace operations. Future success "beyond NAFTA" will be neither exclusionary nor isolationist, but rather GATT-compatible in economics, democratic in politics, and universalist in spirit.

### Cooperation

With the entry of Canada in 1990 and of Belize and Guyana in 1991, the Organization of American States (OAS) became for the Western Hemisphere what the United Nations represents for the world: a body whose membership includes its entire potential universe. (The only obvious exception, Cuba, is still formally a member and many look forward to the day when a democratic Cuba will reoccupy the seat it was suspended from in 1962.) More importantly (unlike the U.N. charter which does not invoke the word "democracy"), the OAS charter commits all its members to representative democracy. Acceptance of the principle of nonintervention by President Roosevelt in the 1930s gave meaning to the sovereign equality of states, thus helping to lay the cornerstone of the modern inter-American system. For years, however, OAS wallowed in internal contradictions, cheap rhetoric by dictators, and Cold War distortions which combined to sap its potential and earn public disdain.

Conditions changed as this decade began. In 1991 the annual OAS general assembly was hosted in Santiago by a Chilean government eager to draw attention to its transition from military to civilian rule. In 1973, the coup by General Pinochet against the elected government was not even commented on by OAS, many of whose members were under military rule. All 34 delegations in Santiago represented democratic governments. The result was revolutionary: unanimous adoption of resolution 1080 calling for automatic consideration of any interruption of democratic processes in a member state. Over the next two years, this OAS procedure was applied in the case of Haiti to withhold recognition of the regime issuing from a military coup, and also in Peru and Guatemala to oppose unconstitutional seizures of power by civilian presidents.

Since 1990 the organization has been in the forefront of efforts to define the legal grounds for international cooperation in support of democracy. OAS missions have disarmed insurgents in Nicaragua and Suriname while protecting human rights. Moreover, observers supported elections in



U.S. Navy (Alexander Hicks)

Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, Haiti, Venezuela, and Guatemala. Implementing the Miami summit will rely to an extent on the success of OAS as a coordinator and a sounding board.

### Sovereignty

The world is marked by truly transnational forces, some with appalling destructive power. Added to the evils of dictatorship and protectionism are pollution, mass distribution of

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drugs with their antisocial effects, and population growth that often overwhelms existing social arrangements. At the same time, electronic communication has created a new and transcendent universe.

The search for solutions must respect what is invisible from space and increasingly ignored on earth: the international boundary distinguishing one sovereignty from another. Although very much under challenge by impending waves of anarchy, with entire areas beyond the reach of any central government, the nation-state remains the basic unit of world organization. And states need to be organized and energized before they can

cooperate, even to face urgent global problems.

From the standpoint of international cooperation, in fact, democracy may be as important among nations as within them. In our hemisphere, the veto-free OAS structure and accompanying search for consensus brings a notable dose of democracy to relationships expressed through the organization. A regional approach has two advantages: bringing all concerned parties together is an efficient form of communication, and maintaining the equality of states by sharing information and discussion on a one-country/one-vote basis re-

duces the asymmetry of purely bilateral settings and facilitates cooperation—even bilateral cooperation. The first advantage typifies multilateralism and is singularly useful in supplementing normal communication channels. The second has special significance in this hemisphere, where bilateral cooperation can be inhibited by the disproportionate power of the United States. Gradual negotiation of common positions in a regional setting is thus a way to resolve transnational issues without sacrificing the rights of sovereignty.

### The Military

Democratization in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s involved transitions from military to civilian rule. As the backbone of displaced authoritarian regimes, military institutions were seen as opponents of democracy even among civilian leaders and move-

### Cubans being searched on arrival at Guantanamo.

ments who owed their success to support from men in uniform. Such tension must be overcome and new understandings developed if democratic governments in the region are to function in the midst of social discontent, economic reform, and international uncertainty. Building institutions and promoting justice requires setting boundaries between civilian and military authority. Are military personnel accused of human rights abuses subject to military or civil courts? Who makes the decisions on counternarcotics policy or spending on arms? Should military personnel vote?

Such questions can be controversial. Moreover, they are complicated by lack of an agreed model of authority. Liberal traditions subordinate the military to civilian authority in all matters but grant military personnel the political rights of citizenship. Corporatist traditions emphasize military autonomy in spheres of military competence, hence limiting or denying civilian authority in military affairs, but refuse political rights to military personnel.

Well into this century, Latin American constitutions regularly gave the military a corporatist right, even duty, to preside in a nonpartisan manner to determine when politicians had violated their constitutional mandates. Those practices, incomprehensible to those educated in a liberal tradition, have all but vanished from constitutions written over the last generation. But corporatist attitudes remain powerful, nowhere more than among military officers, whose function is to defend the state from its enemies and who likely see freedom as meaningless without social order. Officers have all too often been caught in cultural polarity with and against advocates of individual rights.



U.S. Army

United States (with its disproportionate power and the votes it will control) can justify military intervention in Latin America or the Caribbean under international law. One extreme formulation of this anxiety is that, using democracy and human rights as excuses, the United States seeks to use OAS and IADB as mechanisms to place armed forces in Latin America under its command as enforcers of U.S. intervention.

Two other hypotheses about U.S. policy circulating within Latin American military circles are that with the Cold War over the United States wants to abolish all national military forces in the region because it considers them obstacles to democratic enlargement and commercial expansion, and that the United States seeks to coopt Latin American militaries as police to fight the drug war outside its borders. There are two major flaws in these conspiratorial depictions of U.S. policy. The first is that these are “big lies,” incorporating enough from authentic concerns emanating from Washington to give them an air of plausibility. The second is that such misunderstandings in the past prevented effective regional cooperation that could have forestalled the use of force.

In Panama OAS took on Noriega without success for several months in 1989 before events led to U.S. action. In Haiti OAS and IADB had an opportunity to provide military training during 1991-92 under conditions that might have contributed to a political solution. But anti-military and anti-interventionist attitudes precluded OAS from acting. When the United States initiated another effort a year later, this time under the United Nations, Haitian paramilitary goon squads had been reinforced and conditions had polarized and deteriorated even further. The opportunity to reverse the coup and reduce the suffering of the Haitian people had been lost.

With the Rio Treaty in disuse and no provisions in the OAS charter for the use of force, armed peacekeeping activities will be left either to the United Nations or to unilateral action

Both civil-military and liberal-corporatist differences can be reconciled over time by habits created by the rule of law. But the challenge is mutual. The military must realize that democracy is not anarchy, that human rights are essential to their own dignity and honor, and that civil authority is the only source of legitimacy. Civilians, in turn, must accept that the nation is symbolized by the uniform as well as the flag, that unarmed world peace still remains a utopian ideal, and that military cooperation is essential to consolidate democratic gains and economic reforms.

Civilian and military leaders must deal with the single most pernicious and destabilizing element in hemispheric politics today: impunity. Abuse of power and privilege, corruption, human rights violations—these evils know neither nationality nor civil condition nor uniform. Impunity from punishment—whether the accused are civilian or military—greatly destabilizes state authority. The path to mutual respect can only be built when all are equal under the law and must obey it.

### The Past

Democratization in the hemisphere has strengthened regional political cooperation, but not military relationships. Moreover, the end of the Cold War has undermined the extra-hemispheric threat rationale on which regional military cooperation has been based for more than half a century, first against the Axis, then the Soviet bloc.

The 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War highlighted fundamental differences in perceptions and military alliances. In Latin America (as distinct from Canada and the Caribbean), association with the United Kingdom made the United States almost as much a loser as Argentina, some of whose leaders had acted believing the United States would understand their cause. The Rio Treaty, then already under ideological attack, appeared scrapped by U.S. loyalty to NATO.

In Latin America as a whole, the abandonment of Cold War rationales turned the clock back to historic national rivalries, arms transfers, long-standing boundary disputes, and mutual distaste derived from writing one's history as an anti-history of neighbors. In Central and South America, these external issues were compounded by uncertainties over civil-military relations, mechanisms of command and control, or internal distribution of police and intelligence functions.

There is also a panoply of problems associated with the United States. The disproportion of power between the United States and its neighbors, turned into fear by the historic use of that power to intervene militarily, has blocked clear subordination of the military instrument—the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB)—to the political body (OAS). The reasoning is that, if the latter is authorized a military arm, the



The White House

by the United States. Neither is a satisfactory embodiment of collective regional will.

### Mission Expansion

The end of the Cold War prompted a search for new military missions and rationales—even as downsizing was underway. One of the most important is peacekeeping, a mission spurred by the Gulf War reminder that danger still abounds despite the “new world order.” While Canada has a peacekeeping tradition, out-of-area activities by Latin American militaries have been infrequent. Brazil and Mexico fought in World War II and Colombia took part in Korea. Such contributions are multiplying as countries of the region participate in peace operations—Argentina in Croatia, Cyprus, Mozambique, and the Persian Gulf; Brazil in Angola, Mozambique, and former Yugoslav republics, as well as on the Rwanda-Uganda border; Chile in Cambodia, Kashmir, and Kuwait; and Uruguay in Cambodia, Mozambique, the Persian Gulf, and the Sinai.

Within the hemisphere, Brazil contributed officers to the OAS mission in Suriname and the U.N. effort in El Salvador, Venezuelans served with the United Nations in Nicaragua, and an OAS-authorized, IADB-planned demining effort in Nicaragua was

### Haiti drew less military than political support from the hemisphere

manned by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Argentina, Canada, Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) states, Guatemala, Honduras, and Suriname participated in Haiti in an effort which drew less military than political support from the hemisphere.

These efforts should not be mistaken for a new equilibrium. International organizations are by definition mendicants, and it is hard to think of a faster way to financially bankrupt

them than to ask them to undertake missions. Even more importantly, participation in peacekeeping operations will not replace the process of redefining the role of the military. Moreover, we should not have needed Somalia to remind us to greet changing missions with skepticism. History is replete with situations in which new missions and doctrines can lead to trouble. Their adoption without careful preparation can create political instability and bring discredit to military institutions. In the 1960s, counterinsurgency and civic action missions in Latin America contributed to displacement of civil authority and ultimately to military coups. In the 1980s, assigning increased military assets to the drug war resulted in political controversies but fortunately not in coups. As the 1990s progress, redefining the role of the military will require careful and unprecedented consultation with civilian authorities. Most issues are much more difficult than

peacekeeping, which, though expensive, has obvious benefits for military modernization and international order.

Some difficulties are economic in form but political in content. What materiel acquisitions are necessary in an environment of reduced tensions? What will be the budgetary balance between military and social spending? In an era of government downsizing, no sector will get all it wants. Other questions are quintessentially political. How much downsizing is enough? How can civilian demands for transparency be reconciled with security?

### **national sovereignty and security are different sides of the same coin**

What happens in rural areas where military units are virtually the sole representatives of authority? What happens when criminals have more firepower and mobility than police? The traditional authoritarian answer is to order the military into action. The democratic answer is slower but maybe more stable in the long run—to bring military and civil authorities together to decide what to do.

Finally, there are voices for military intervention against domestic corruption, inefficiency, and crime. Such calls are typically softened by populist appeals and promises; but interference by the military in the prevailing legal order offers little hope for the disadvantaged. It would be hard to imagine a quicker end to the promise NAFTA holds for the hemisphere than a return to the false solutions of authoritarianism embodied in even the most apparently “justified” coup.

### **Future Directions**

The border conflict between Ecuador and Peru in 1995 brought into focus several issues with major implications for hemispheric security. Perhaps the most crucial have to do with military missions and how to organize cooperation.

First, traditional concerns such as defending national frontiers remain legitimate missions for the military. Settling such disputes is key to stability,

economic progress, and modernization. But until these conflicts are resolved, governments will have to factor territorial concerns into their defense plans. Military modernization and arms transfers will thus stay on the hemispheric agenda for the foreseeable future. Much of the Cold War security system was built on U.S. excess stocks from World War II and Korea which have not been available for some time. Moreover, even with bargains the cost of weapons from the developed world are close to prohibitive. Worse, minimal acquisitions may

be perceived as threatening by other countries. The purchase by Ecuador in 1995 of four Kfir fighters was enough to raise fears of a South American arms race. Yet these aircraft were one-for-one replacements that introduced no new technology.

A logical approach would be an arms transfer regime responsive to the twin imperatives of defense and restraint, and respected both regionally and internationally. It should provide for prior consultation and confidence building measures among and within countries and be flexible enough to ensure weapons for national defense yet restrained enough to preclude destabilizing and wasteful transfers. For example, restraint on one system could be accepted in return for assured supplies of another. No transfers would be consummated without involving both military and civilian leaders. Conditions for a supply/restraint regime are coming into being. Weapons of mass destruction have been banned. Constitutionally elected democratic governments are dominant. But levels of civil-military communication required to define a regime with confidence and verification are still weak.

Second, the Ecuador-Peru clash showed that multilateral cooperation on sensitive security issues is possible. Close coordination between civilian and military officials in guarantor nations, among guarantors, and between guarantors and both parties was critical. That required patience, discretion, respect for sovereignty, and intelligible procedures. The Rio Protocol, the Declaration of Peace of Itamaraty, and the mission terms of reference covered

every step and enabled MOMEPE to maintain independent communications and transport. Another secret of its success was that the mission focused on military concerns it could address professionally; it was explicitly precluded from political matters. For example, while MOMEPE had responsibility for separating forces and defining a demilitarized zone, resolving the underlying conflict was left to the diplomats. MOMEPE actions were distinctly identified as not bearing on where the border was or should be.

Finally, experience has shown that, despite political convergence, inter-American security cooperation still must be approached with caution. National sovereignty and security are in many respects different sides of the same coin. Despite common rhetoric, working principles emphasize limits and separate spheres of action and interest.

The 1995 Defense Ministerial of the Americas gathered together defense officials regardless of whether they were civilian or military. The meeting was pivotal to using political convergence in fostering not only better inter-American communication but also civil-military dialogue within a constitutional context. Future conferences could develop common guidelines for training exercises and arms transfers (including reliable supplies and controls). But in the immediate future, the best way to further communication may be through informal dialogue, education, and study rather than any organized action. Civilian and military leaders still tend to inhabit separate universes with no general agreement on their respective roles. More should be done by training civilians in security matters, military officers in human rights, and both in public administration and regional comity. In a similar vein, OAS has emphasized confidence-building measures.

The United States should avoid acting alone in hemispheric security matters. Working with other nations will sometimes fall short, but consultation will uncover allies. And if Washington develops solutions with others rather than unilaterally by the sheer weight of its power, it will help consolidate security and democracy to the benefit of all the peoples of the Americas. **JFQ**