



National Defense University

Institute for National Strategic Studies

COLLEAGUES FOR THE AMERICAS SEMINAR SERIES
"Western Hemisphere Policy - Where are we? Where are we going?"

MARCH 6, 2003

Featured Guest: Michael Zarin, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State

On March 6, INSS hosted the second 2003 "Colleagues for the Americas" seminar. The seminar, titled "Western Hemisphere Policy - Where are we? Where are we going?" focused on on current and future trends of U.S. Western Hemispheric policy. The featured guest was Michael Zarin, responsible for Western Hemisphere Affairs for the U.S. State Department's Policy Planning Staff. The following report summarizes the key points presented by the featured guest.

This seminar is one of a monthly series conducted by the INSS Western Hemisphere group. Additional information about this series is listed at the end of this report.

The Policy Planning Staff, created in 1947 by George Kennan, serves as a source of independent policy analysis and advice for the Secretary of State. Their mission is to take a longer term, strategic view of global trends and frame recommendations for the Secretary to advance U.S. interests and American values.

In his opening remarks, Col. Jay Cope (Ret.), head of INSS' Western Hemisphere group and host of the seminar, explained that given the post 9-11 foreign policy landscape and other regional priorities, U.S. diplomatic engagement with Latin America is not very apparent. To help the public better understand current diplomatic activities in the region, the State Department posted a fact sheet on their Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs' web page with a listing of current engagements in the region. To view the fact sheet, go to: <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/>. In his talk, Mr. Zarin will further illuminate these major U.S. policy initiatives in the Latin American region.

Michael Zarin offered some thoughts on the Bush administration's priorities and accomplishments concerning the hemisphere during its first two years and then projected ahead and identified some emerging trends and expectations for the next two years:

Priorities and Accomplishments-

Colombia: From early on, the new administration saw the need to reorient its Colombia policy to more accurately reflect the reality of that country's struggle against the narco-terrorist-guerrilla threats that are hacking away at the foundations of Colombian democracy. With bipartisan support, the administration succeeded in erasing the artificial distinction between counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism and is now well positioned to assist the Government of Colombia, backed by popular support, in its multi-faceted, integrated campaign against these multiple threats.

Brazil: The administration has given a very high priority to establishing a solid and constructive partnership with Brazil, both with the Cardoso government as well as the new Lula administration. The Brazilian side has demonstrated a similar desire to work cooperatively and, despite expectations some might have had to the contrary, the relationship is off to an excellent start. There are points of contention between the U.S. and Brazil, but those should not be allowed to dominate or overwhelm the many more areas where our interests and objectives coincide.

Trade: Free trade is a high administration priority. It inherited an essentially stalled trade agenda, and even though it took the administration longer than it had hoped, it gained congressional approval for trade promotion authority –and did so in a difficult economic and political environment. It then acted quickly to reinstate and expand ATPA (Andean Trade Preference Act) and complete an FTA (Free Trade Agreement) with Chile. It has also begun negotiating a free trade agreement with the Central American countries. The administration is moving forward enthusiastically with its highest hemispheric trade priority – the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas).

OAS and multilateral engagement: The Bush administration has given priority to invigorating the OAS as a forum for action. The Inter-American Democratic Charter, for example, is becoming the focal point for the OAS' most important task: supporting, strengthening, and defending democracy in the hemisphere. The Charter is already demonstrating its utility in places like Venezuela and Haiti and could also provide an example for other regions in the world. The Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism is another case study of the OAS' value in forging common responses to common threats. The convention is a practical response to the September 11 attacks, providing not rhetorical commitments, but concrete actions that governments of the Hemisphere commit to undertake. Other security cooperation in the hemisphere include working with Canada and Mexico on border and related security measures as well as with many other hemispheric partners on such challenges as strengthening border, port and airport security, and counter-terrorism efforts.

Millennium Challenge Account (MCA): While not specifically focused on Latin America, the MCA could well have a very positive effect beyond the extra \$5 billion proposed to the U.S. foreign aid budget. The administration's focus on confronting corruption and promoting good governance is part and parcel of the MCA framework. The struggle against corruption clearly resonates throughout the region, and with good reason. Corruption weakens democratic institutions and practices and undermines people's faith in their government. It is a major drag on development and growth.

Political Trends-

Some observers are focusing on the supposed rise of the left in Latin America with Lula (Brazil) and Gutierrez (Ecuador). Mr. Zarin sees more of a mixed bag given the presence of others like Uribe (Colombia), Sanchez de Lozada (Bolivia), Flores (El Salvador), Maduro (Honduras) and Bolaños (Nicaragua). He contends that the trend lines are more complex than a simple left-right construct. Latin American publics appear less interested in ideological formulas of the left or the right and more concerned about their governments' effectiveness in delivering on democracy's and the market's promise.

Looking Ahead-

Mr. Zarin outlined the countries and issues that the administration would be focusing on in the coming few years:

- Continuing to support Colombia's efforts to combat the narco-terrorist-guerrilla threats it faces
- Working to bring to fruition the promise of more constructive relations with Brazil
- Dealing with the ongoing challenges in Venezuela
- Supporting Argentina's efforts to produce a sustainable economic recovery plan
- Continuing broad-based, high-level U.S./Mexico relations
- Advancing the free trade agenda

The June meeting in the INSS Colleagues for the America Seminar Series will feature Mr. Dan Fisk, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central American Affairs and take place on Monday, 23 June 2003. For more information, please contact Minas Khodagolian, NDU-INSS, (202) 685-3849, email: khodagolian@ndu.edu.

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