



COLLEAGUES FOR THE AMERICAS SEMINAR SERIES

"Hemisphere Relations at a Turning Point" "

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Featured Guest: **Joseph S. Tulchin, Ph.D.,** Director, Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Joseph Tulchin is one of the most knowledgeable scholars in the United States on contemporary Latin America, hemispheric affairs and U.S. foreign policy, and comparative urban development in the region. He became Director of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Latin American Program in 1989. Previously, he was a Professor of History at Yale University before becoming a Professor of History and Director of International Programs at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Throughout his long career Dr. Tulchin has taught or lectured in nearly every country in the hemisphere, published more than 100 scholarly articles and more than seventy books. Recent books include *Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective*, co-editor (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), and *Latin America in the New International System*, co-editor (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001). As part of his program, Dr. Tulchin oversees the Argentina @ the Wilson Center, Brazil @ the Wilson Center, the Mexico Institute, and the Comparative Urban Studies Project. Dr. Tulchin is a three-time recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship; a NDEA Fellow; and a National Fellow (Hoover Institute). He received his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University.

Dr. Tulchin addressed and answered questions from an audience at the National Defense University and at Headquarters, US Southern Command via VTC. A summary of his remarks follows.

This is not the first time that US-Latin American relations have reached a turning point. Three trends characterize the current situation. First, security agendas are asymmetrical. Second, Latin America is suffering a crisis of governance. Finally, a striking new development is taking shape: for the first time a community of Latin nations has begun to form based on common values and interests. The United States does not appear to see this development clearly because the first point (asymmetrical security agendas) obscures our perception of this phenomenon.

Asymmetrical Security Agendas

This trend is not new, but the U.S. response after the attacks on 11 September 2001 has exacerbated it. Counter-terrorism and the global war on terror (GWOT) top Washington's agenda. Latin American leaders do not see terrorism as the principal threat to their countries. The United States has adopted a zero-sum approach toward security relations with neighbors. If a country or the region does not support the GWOT, it is ignored. On official visits, U.S. leaders request cooperation, and while counterparts are sympathetic, terrorism is not their priority. Washington's response is extremely damaging to our ability to achieve our security goals.

There has not been much dialogue with Latin American leaders, no issue linkage or negotiation, no diplomatic give and take. The United States is wearing earmuffs. The United States should listen not only because it is neighborly, but also, more importantly, because we cannot deal with today's security issues alone. Washington should be open to colleagues and work with them. Security for most of Latin America works at different levels. Their greatest threats start on the domestic level with local crime, extreme poverty, lack of state services, and transnational-armed gangs. Many of the domestic threats have international ties and are foreign policy problems that require cooperation among two or more nations. One of the best examples of today's complexity is a favela outside of Sao Paulo. A gang linked to narcotics interests in Medellin, Colombia governs this community of over a million people. Thus far the Brazilian government has been unwilling or unable to reestablish its authority and control. In many similar cases, national leaders have found it necessary to redefine their security challenges and address them cooperatively with neighboring states.

Crisis of Governance

The issue in this trend is the quality of democratic governance rather than the structure of the democracy. For the first time since independence, every Latin country (except one) is governed by elected civilian officials and qualifies as a democracy. Today, however, domestic and international pressures are forcing elected leaders to examine the quality of how they govern. Countries in the hemisphere are showing evidence of political instability, and elected governments are increasingly unable to maintain order. This is particularly true in the Andean region, where societies rarely have experienced successive, stable governments. Perhaps the most troubling recent trend is the use of "the street" as an instrument of political power. Events last month in Ecuador are a disturbing reminder of how mass protest triggered by one or more lapses in good governance can be used to precipitate a presidential departure, a circumstance in which the Armed Forces were the final arbiters and South America's regional power, Brazil, gave political asylum to the deposed president.

As the United States considers the gray areas in Latin American and Caribbean democracies, Washington should formulate how it intends to respond to poor governance. It is essential that the United States remain the constant beacon for creating more robust rule of law as a key to democracy. The U.S. government needs a clear policy, consistently applied, rather than reacting to events in a knee-jerk fashion. The Administration's rapid response to the short-lived anti-Chavez coup in 2002, for example, still undermines U.S. policy toward Venezuela. In addition, the United States needs a policy concerning when to recognize governments that come to power after mob disturbances in the capitol lead to ouster of an elected government. Washington should avoid unhelpful language

and misleading characterizations, such as "left-leaning coalitions." In reality, this is a non-existent group that poses no threat to this country. Populism should be better understood: left-leaning governments are not necessarily bad.

Community of Nations

The gradual emergence of a community of Latin American nations willing to engage internationally is truly a new development in the hemisphere. Progress was tentative at first, but as governments gained confidence during the 1990s, developing three Summit of the Americas declarations, the OAS Democratic Charter, the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism and many other statements, an unprecedented sense of community based on democratic values gained momentum in the hemisphere. While the declarations may have seemed like empty rhetoric they led to new regional and OAS structures, such as the Central American Integration System, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE), and introduced an element of creative community action for the protection of their own democracies.

Latin American countries are becoming rule makers, not rule takers. They are finding ways to act that maximize their national security goals. Latin American countries, trying to be protagonists, act on different levels to achieve their goals. The UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti led politically and militarily by Chile and Brazil respectively is an example of a hemispheric effort in a global forum. Some American countries are slow to respond but are willing join together because of shared democratic values. This is not an anti-U.S. gesture. The underlying values are those the United States has trumpeted in the region for the last 200 years. Unless we appreciate the potential power of this new community as it responds to common security needs in Latin America, the United States will miss the benefits. Thus far, Washington appears blinded by the asymmetry of security agenda and is not seeing this trend clearly.

In the course of the seminar, Dr. Tulchin provided a number of interesting insights for consideration. Several are outlined below.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter.

- Optimistically, the Charter means more today than it did in 2001, and less than it should. The way ahead lies with Latin American and Caribbean states. The only way to achieve the standards envisioned in the charter is if the Latin community takes the lead. While no one is looking for perfection, the values should bind the hemisphere's democracies together. The Charter should not be empty rhetoric. Creating consensus out of ambiguity, fear, and different national laws will not be easy. How much responsibility for this effort they will take is unclear, but change is on their side. The case of Bolivia may provide an opportunity to use the Charter in the preservation of democracy.
- Latin America has turned Europe's historic approach to achieving community on its head. The Europeans achieved community first by working together; then they wrote declarations to present the consensus that they had achieved. In Latin America, the declarations appeared first without the experience of collaboration. Delineating democracy, therefore, will be more difficult. The community, not the United States, must decide how to move forward. The United States cannot draw the line.

Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement

- The movement is not a threat to the United States. Unilateral intervention would likely lead to trouble with our neighbors across the hemisphere. The rambunctious instability fostered by President Chavez in the name of this movement is a future problem for Brazil more than the United States. At the moment, the movement is not a major concern outside Venezuela.

U.S. Homeland Security

- The United States enjoys good cooperation on national security issues with all its three closest neighbors, Mexico, Canada and Cuba. Canada cooperates to create a secure border and hopes for a return to good neighborliness. They exercise soft power and want to use it to influence hemispheric affairs. With Mexico, despite strains and tensions, levels of bilateral border cooperation are increasing. Above all, Mexico wants to improve border safety to significantly decrease the loss of life. Cuba is concerned with the preservation of the regime and protecting the island from American intervention. In general, U.S. cooperation with all three neighbors occurring "below the radar" and kept unofficial has met with the greatest success.

Cuba

- Cuba is going to continue to be a difficult issue; however, a unilateral military response to any event in Cuba would be calamitous. A community response is more appropriate. Over the next five years, a generational shift in the military will occur: the old guard will be retired, and the entire leadership structure will be a product of the Revolution, but the Cuban-American community will feed the status quo. Ultimately, the embargo may represent the island's high strategic significance to the United States, or its utter insignificance. We should decide which is the case.

Caribbean Community

- Other sub-regions could emulate the Caribbean's example of community building. Since the early 1980s, the small island states built a small, relatively successful, joint Regional Security System (RSS) on a foundation of shared values and democracy. More recently, the same Eastern Caribbean states have successfully synchronized their penal codes in the area of narcotics trafficking and other forms of smuggling.

Role of the Armed Forces and U.S. Support

- The armed forces should only get involved in security issues if the civilian government decides that a joint activity would be fruitful. The United States

should work with domestic authorities to confront local crime that warrants an international response. If the right overture is made, the local authorities may welcome intelligence sharing, police collaboration, and involvement through international organizations. Any US undertaking must respect democracy, and work to strengthen the democratic institutions. These efforts should be civilian.

- The United States should not militarize the situation. Latin America is working to delineate the role of the Armed Forces and Police institutions. With difficulty, the army has been removed from politics in several Latin countries, but not all. A civilian-led police force is being built in many neighboring states. Reform includes the judiciary, armed forces, and police. Counter-part agencies in the United States are the proper providers of knowledge and services in the areas of agriculture, health and human services, education, etc. Militarization (despite civilian incapacities) undermines fragile democratic institutions.

The INSS Colleagues for the Americas Seminar Series is a program of monthly meetings that commenced in 1994 to further research on hemispheric security and defense issues and to contribute to the professional education of United States and foreign practitioners.

The opinions, conclusions and recommendations expressed or implied within this report are those of the contributor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any other agency of the Federal Government.

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