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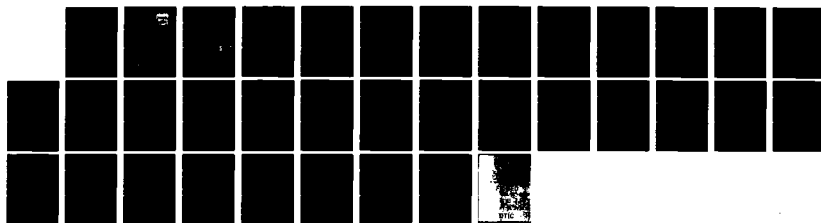
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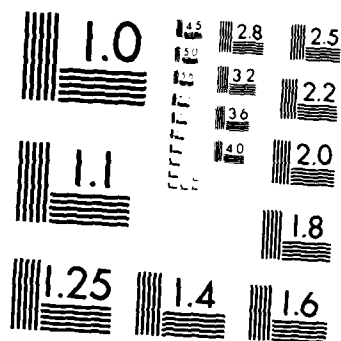
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# STUDENT ESSAY

MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES: CAN THEY BE PARTNERS  
IN THE PURSUIT OF STABILITY IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN?

BY

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24 MAY 1983



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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The essay examines past and present Caribbean policies for both Mexico and the United States. It highlights strategic importance of the region to the United States. Threats to Caribbean stability are enumerated and described. Mexico's views regarding the Caribbean are shown to differ substantially from those of the United States. The author concludes that policy failures on both sides, Mexican and American, have contributed to current regional problems. Nevertheless, an opportunity for greater cooperation exists. Recommendations are wide ranging and controversial in light of current US policy.		

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES: CAN THEY BE PARTNERS  
IN THE PURSUIT OF STABILITY IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN?

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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24 May 1983

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ABSTRACT

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This essay examines the foreign policies, past and present, of Mexico and the United States as they relate to the Caribbean Basin. The strategic importance of the region to the United States is highlighted. Threats to the stability of the Caribbean Basin are enumerated and described. The evolution of US foreign policy is portrayed. Mexico's views regarding the problems in the Caribbean are shown to differ substantially from the US. Finally, conclusions are presented accompanied by recommendations for the future US policy in the region.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Basin is one of the most volatile areas of the world today. The Basin, which consists of the countries and islands contiguous to the Caribbean Sea, to include Central America, the northern coast of South America, excluding Columbia which is generally referred to as a Pacific state, and the islands of the greater and lesser Antilles, is the United States' backyard.

Since the nineteenth century, the United States has maintained its supremacy in the region through direct and indirect military intervention, alliances with local oligarchies and economic domination. The poverty, repression and underdevelopment which characterize the region today are part of this legacy of American economic penetration and political influence. These conditions have led to increasing social and political unrest which, for the first time, are threatening United States control over events in its own backyard.

Historical influences in the Caribbean Basin have not solely been from the United States. Most of the area was under the domination of colonial powers such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain and the Netherlands. Many states, formerly under colonial rule, have received their independence in this century.

Mexico has become an important influence in the Caribbean Basin over the last fifty years as she has gained stability after her revolution. In addition, the Soviet Union and Cuba have made inroads into the affairs of Caribbean Basin countries. Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution of 1959 has brought an awakening to the United States that it has been painfully slow



in placing proper emphasis on the economic and social development of the region. The absence of special attention to the Caribbean reflects the United States' inclination to pass lightly over the problems of our neighbors to the south while we maintain our primary attention on Europe.

Numerous administrations have attempted to formulate a foreign policy for the Caribbean Basin. However, in comparison to the US foreign policies for Europe, the Far East, Middle East, Southwest and Southeast Asia, the policies articulated have been minor in scope and assistance. Other nations have likewise had token policies toward the development and assistance for the Basin. Largely the interest paid to the region by all nations has been that of exploitation of its resources, manpower and land for their own benefit and not to the benefit of the region.

The purpose of this individual essay is to examine the importance of the Caribbean Basin to the United States, the influences in the region which are threatening its security, the Mexican and United States foreign policies in the region and finally to answer the basic question in the title of the essay--Can they (Mexico and the US) be partners in the pursuit of stability in the Caribbean Basin? I will also offer some conclusions and recommendations from a novice's point of view.

#### WHY THE CARIBBEAN BASIN IS IMPORTANT TO THE UNITED STATES

Very early in the history of the United States it was recognized by the government leaders that the whole of the Americas should become "an empire of liberty" free from the outside influences of Europe. The Monroe Doctrine, "manifest destiny," the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Roosevelt Corollary, the Good Neighbor Policy, the Alliance for Progress, human rights and the Caribbean Basin Initiative have all given rise to the

importance of the Caribbean Basin and South America to the United States. The 1947 Rio Treaty and the 1948 Charter of the Organization of American States codified the principles of nonintervention, hemispheric defense and regional cooperation. The United States was a signatory to each. Geographic location of the Basin makes it of strategic importance.

The Caribbean Basin is vital to the US for both strategic and commercial reasons. It was pointed out by one of the guest speakers at the Army War College that 80% of the shipping necessary to reinforce Europe in a NATO war would pass through the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. With Cuba 90 miles from the coast of Florida, she can easily interdict one of the main channels through which supplies would pass enroute to Europe. The security of the US ranks first and since the Caribbean Basin is on the southern flank it must be protected. The sea lines in the region must be kept open.

The Caribbean Basin is referred to as the US "backyard"/"front yard" and an "American lake." By whatever term it is called, it remains a fact that if the Caribbean were lost to our use it would have far-reaching effects on the national security of the US. The Panama Canal is an economic lifeline through which vital resources and a significant amount of the US energy supply flows. Although the canal is being gradually turned over to Panamanian control, the US interest in its freedom of access to the canal will remain paramount. The US is committed to the canal's security.

The sea lanes of the Caribbean carry exports from the US to nations throughout the region and other locations. The countries of the region are, likewise, places of extensive US commercial investment. US oil, mining, agricultural, and banking interests are found throughout the Basin.

Among the raw materials which are imported to the US from the Caribbean Basin are: petroleum from Venezuela and Mexico; bauxite from Jamaica

and Suriname; and also copper, nitrate, manganese, titanium and chromium pass through the Caribbean Sea enroute to the US. Other imports to the US from the region include coffee, bananas, sugar, and cattle. Tourism from the US is an important economic boost to such nations as the Bahamas, Barbados and Jamaica. The United States is and will remain the principal source of aid, technology, and investment in the Basin. The way must be kept open for American capital goods, technology and finance.

The Caribbean is believed to have significant offshore fields of oil and gas. Venezuelan and Mexican oil reserves are considered substantial and the discovery of oil in Guatemala has given the US, an energy-hungry colossus, a natural interest in this area. In addition, a considerable amount of the oil imported to the US is refined in the Caribbean, namely in the Bahamas, Netherland Antilles, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago and the Virgin Islands.

Another factor which makes the Caribbean important to the United States is the peoples of the Caribbean. Their numbers are growing in virtually all nation states. In addition, the numbers who are immigrating to the United States, both legally and illegally are substantial. Between 1970 and 1978, 17.5 percent of the legal immigration to the United States came from the Caribbean. This figure, for example, exceeded the legal immigration from Mexico in the 1960's and 1970's while the illegal immigration probably matched Mexico's.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Caribbean Basin is in the US backyard, the political relations with the region are constantly subject to review. The US prefers democracy and respect for human rights, however, this preference is not always prevalent. Diplomacy has to be tailored to each nation state recognizing that orderly socioeconomic change may not be possible. The US finds itself dealing with a variety of governments ranging from democratic

in Costa Rica and Venezuela to governments undergoing insurgency in El Salvador and Guatemala. Furthermore, the Marxist-Leninist governments in Cuba and Nicaragua, who are activists in Grenada, El Salvador and Guyana, have tended to challenge the US hegemony. More on this threat will be discussed later.

For a substantial number of years, the US attitude was that no real threat to the security of the Caribbean Basin existed so attention was devoted to US interests elsewhere. The nations best diplomats were not sent to the region nor was there an integrated intelligence network established which could have kept our government informed about how the various nation states could best be assisted. Now the attention of the US government is focused on the region and it is playing catch-up. Military assistance has been drastically increased over the past four years. Aid in kind is likewise being supplied by the Soviets and their surrogates.

#### THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

The growing capability of the Soviets to project power to greater distances is reflected in the Caribbean Basin. The significance of the increased presence can best be seen in Cuba. In the early 1960's, the Soviets deployed missiles to Cuba which threatened the security of the United States. This resulted in President Kennedy demanding that the missiles be dismantled and removed from Cuba. The Soviets complied but only after the US signaled it was prepared to risk nuclear war to force the removal.

The Soviets have over the years, since Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba, given untold amounts of economic and military aid to the Castro regime. The Soviets have established a strong point in Cuba and have no intentions to back out of their strategic position there. Estimates vary,

but it is safe to say over 10,000 advisers and technicians are in Cuba as well as a 2,600 man combat brigade. The naval and air facilities which the Soviets have access to in Cuba have given them interdiction capabilities in the Caribbean Basin where it is clear they have targeted a concerted penetration effort.

Moscow's objectives in Latin America as summarized by Raymond Duncan are:

--To sharpen the economic conflict between Latin America and the United States;--To deny strategic raw materials and markets to the United States while acquiring them for itself;--To strengthen Latin American Communist parties; and--To check Chinese influence in Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

Cuba is the only country in the Caribbean Basin where the above objectives have been achieved. The Soviets through their strategic Cuban position have been exporting communism throughout the Western Hemisphere. They are conducting a low profile, low risk war, by using surrogates, which is eroding the US hegemony in the Caribbean Basin.

The Soviets are paying a great deal for the inroads they have made into the region. They find it an expensive proposition to provide billions of dollars in aid to Cuba and probably will not get themselves into "another Cuba" because of the cost. Moscow recognizes the Caribbean Basin as the US strategic rear. Likewise, they understand the region's economic and military security importance to the United States and they seek to advance their own interests through power projection while undermining US influence. Cuba plays a large role in this for the Soviets.

Since Fidel Castro came to power after the Cuban revolution nearly 25 years ago, the Caribbean Basin and Latin America have felt his influence. Cuba's leverage in regional affairs as a critic of US policy and capitalism has brought favor from many leftists in the region. Its direct support of national liberation movements in Jamaica, Grenada, Nicaragua, Guatemala,

Honduras, Columbia and El Salvador have contributed to regional instability. The poverty, oppression, and sheer underdevelopment in much of the Basin have been the breeding ground for Cuban subversion.

Castro is a self-declared enemy of the United States, dedicated to undermining US interests and influence throughout the Caribbean. The deliberate expansion of Cuban and Soviet military capabilities in America's backyard coupled with their coordinated effort to create a hostile bloc of states has significantly increased the possibility of a dangerous confrontation in the Caribbean. The Cubans are destabilizing nations throughout the region with Cuban-trained, Cuban-armed, and Cuban-sponsored insurgency.

With Cuban and Soviet assistance the Sandinistas, named after the legendary nationalist guerrilla leader Augusto Cesar Sandino, in Nicaragua overthrew the brutal and corrupt Somoza regime in 1979. The guerrillas have operated with a junta to establish their control over the country. Marxist influence is clearly evident, especially in the schools, the armed forces, and the media. The leaders of the Sandinistas have established close relations with the Castro regime and the Soviets. Over 4,000 Cuban advisers are in Nicaragua. Most of its leadership has visited Cuba and hundreds of military personnel have been sent to Russia for technical and aviation training. Sandino airfield has been upgraded with Soviet equipment and in a recent TV speech President Reagan presented photographs of Soviet equipment and missiles in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua is now being used by Cuba to focus on similar outbreaks of communist-led revolts in Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica. To highlight the flow of arms into Nicaragua, in April 1983 Brazil intercepted and seized four Libyan aircraft which had stopped for fuel in Brazil with a declared load of medical supplies for Nicaragua. When one of the aircraft had mechanical problems the Brazilian government inspected the aircraft and

found them loaded with ammunition and arms instead of medical supplies. This caused much embarrassment to the Soviet surrogate who was claiming nonintervention in Nicaragua.

The Cubans and Soviets are also providing assistance to Grenada in the form of supplying weapons, construction equipment, the promise of a satellite earth station and development of an airfield and a seaport. The airfield construction and improvement will give Grenada a 9,800 foot runway which will be able to support Cuban troop flights to Africa, Soviet reconnaissance flights and fighter aircraft. Cuban advisers and technicians are known to be present on the island. The government of Maurice Bishop has clearly embraced the Castro regime, but as he professes, this was done because no one else answered his requests for assistance.

The Soviet/Cuban ability to project power in the region has definitely made progress. With Cuba as the main base and now with Nicaragua and Grenada bases of operation, it is possible for the Soviets to cover virtually all of the Caribbean Basin with reconnaissance and fighter aircraft, intelligence gathering equipment, naval activity and forward basing of equipment.

Cuban and Soviet intervention is not the sole source of instability in the region. The origins of violent conflict in the Caribbean Basin lie in historical, social and economic inequities that have generated frustrations among people trying to improve their lives. National economic crises throughout the region, social injustices, and dominating and repressive oligarchic regimes have made the Caribbean Basin vulnerable to the appeals of violent radical groups. Havana and Moscow have developed a wide spectrum of economic, educational, health/welfare, technical, and political assistance designed to fit the changing regional settings. They have

merely taken advantage of events and situations as they unfolded, using armed struggle when needed.

The United States must bear some of the responsibility for instability in the Caribbean Basin also. Throughout the past two centuries the US has militarily intervened numerous times in the region, often to protect US investment and restore order to a country. Economic exploitation of the economies in the region was, and maybe still is, practiced.

Since the 1800's the US policy has been to deny the region to any foreign hostile power, thinking that if the Caribbean Basin was secure the US interests would be okay. This is not a bad policy, however, the numerous administrations which have professed this policy have done so mainly with words and military intervention. The economic and social aid to the region, by and large, has been a small percentage of the total assistance provided worldwide by the US. Programs have been designed, raising the hopes of the people in the Basin, only to have the following administration change priority or place other demands on the region before assistance was provided. All this on again, off again rhetoric has lessened the confidence of the region's nation states in the US. Our policies have been confusing and full of promises. This will be discussed in greater detail later. Military assistance to El Salvador has grown recently causing concern in the American Congress and in the Mexican government over the US intervention. The CIA actions in support of counterrevolutionaries has likewise brought increased instability to the region.

There is greater preoccupation and more interest in the Caribbean Basin being shown now by the US than ever before. The Reagan administration is interested in reformulating policy which will best serve the interests of the countries of the Caribbean Basin. The question is, is it too late?



## THE EVOLUTION OF US FOREIGN POLICY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Successive American governments have asserted an active claim to hegemony in the Caribbean Basin. The United States' strongest influence in the Western Hemisphere has traditionally been directed to the Caribbean and Central America, not the whole of Latin America. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was considered the cornerstone of US policy in the years after the independence of Latin America. The United States' concern was for the new nations not to fall under the influence of powerful European countries. In actuality, "it is really the Caribbean, and not the Western Hemisphere as a whole, to which the Monroe Doctrine applies."<sup>3</sup>

Military intervention has been a common course of action by the United States as it forged its interests in the Caribbean Basin. US forces have, for various reasons, been employed in Cuba, Mexico, Honduras, Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic from the mid-1800's to the mid-1900's. Major General Smedley D. Butler, United States Marine Corps is quoted:

I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue in. . . I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras 'right' for American fruit companies in 1903.<sup>4</sup>

Thus under the guise of the Monroe Doctrine the United States has "protected" the Caribbean Basin based on the assumption that the two regions shared common interests which the northern power had the right to interpret.

The US challenged the British power in the region in the mid-nineteenth century. British naval superiority and commercial dominance defied the United States' interest in a route across Nicaragua which would link the

Pacific and Atlantic oceans. A treaty was signed between them but later was violated by the United States as Nicaragua granted it exclusive rights to transit across the country.

Likewise, the US and Spain were at odds over Cuba. The US wanted to purchase Cuba and all the while US investments in Cuba grew primarily in the sugar industry. Finally, in 1898 the US went to war with Spain in support of Cuban independence. The results of the war, among others, gave the US possession of Puerto Rico, as a spoil of war, and occupation of Cuba from 1898 to 1902. In 1901, Cuba technically became an independent republic but the Platt Amendment allowed the US to intervene in Cuban affairs and to establish military bases on the island to include a naval base at Guantanamo Bay.<sup>5</sup> This facility is, to this date, under US control. American economic and political domination in Cuba had been secured without its seizure as a colony. However, Puerto Rico became a colony of the US in all but name.

Theodore Roosevelt, a hero of the Spanish-American War, became president in 1901 and with his presidency came further pursuit of national self-interest. Disguised by appeals of moral obligations to protect the Caribbean and "United States destiny," the US government encouraged and helped finance a Panamanian independence movement from Columbia. The new Panama aligned itself with the US and the Panama Canal Zone was established in 1904. Now armed with bases in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the acquisition of the Canal Zone, the US had strategic control of the Caribbean.

The US continued to enforce hegemony in the Caribbean Basin often in rivalry with European powers. Great Britain, France, the Netherlands and Denmark had colonies in the Caribbean. The US purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917 to further assert its right to defend its "backyard."

Sugar, coffee and bananas were the primary products of the Caribbean. The colonial powers, as well as the United States, exploited the economies that produced these single crops. Business investments from the United States were favorably received in many of the dictatorial countries of the region. The "banana republics" became dependent on the export of one or two crops for consumption in European and North American markets.

Land ownership was taken over by a few of the ultra rich and foreign investors, the United States included. The profound influence exerted by "the few" impacted on the economic, political and social developments within the region. Indians lost their land and were forced to work on large plantations in conditions of semi-slavery. One US company in particular, United Fruit, extensively penetrated the economies of Central America, Cuba, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. It built railroads and ports to support its operations. The profits from United Fruits' operations for the most part, were sent to the US and were not beneficial for the economic growth of the respective countries. Encouragement to invest in the Caribbean Basin came from "dollar diplomacy" of the Taft administration.<sup>6</sup>

The growing United States economic stake in the region received US government protection. Intervention by US forces in the Caribbean to protect US interests; to calm instability caused by political immaturity and the promotion of democracy were actions followed by the respective administrations of Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, and Coolidge.

The liberal use of military intervention and coercive diplomacy brought about a critical parting of the ways between the US and the nations of the Caribbean Basin. Ill will for the US policy was founded. Hindsight now shows the above policy and use of force to be a critical turning point

which has produced the difficulties seen today in our inability to bring stability to the Caribbean Basin.

From the early "heavy handed" policies we saw commitments from subsequent administrations for a re-orientation. The Good Neighbor Policy was designed to show our southern neighbors the US was opposed to armed intervention and simply wanted to be a brother among the other nations of the hemisphere. President F. D. Roosevelt, in a Pan American Day speech, said:

The essential qualities of a true Pan Americanism must be the same as those which constitute a good neighbor, namely, mutual understanding, a sympathetic appreciation of the other's point of view. It is only in this manner that we can hope to build up a system of which confidence, friendship, and good will are the cornerstones.<sup>7</sup>

The Great Depression brought a decline in US investments in the Caribbean. Likewise, a diversion of attention to the world situation leading up to World War II occurred. Expansion of US bases in Panama, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands was accomplished. Additional basing was obtained in Mexico, Cuba, and from British held Trinidad, Barbados, St. Lucia, and British Guiana. This expansion in the Basin reflected the gradual emergence of the US economic and political supremacy over all other powers who had interests in the Caribbean. The US provided military, as well as economic, assistance to its good neighbors on bilateral and multilateral bases. A spirit of cooperation and harmonious relations rose to new heights.

The era of the Good Neighbor policy saw another development which would lead to difficult times in future years and that was, the rise of the dictators. Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Somoza in Nicaragua, Jorge Ubico in Guatemala, Tiburcio Carias Andino in Honduras, Batista in Cuba and Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez in El Salvador all brought considerable wealth to themselves and most favored the US investments in their

countries. Generally, the United States recognized these strongmen because of the favorable relations they maintained with the US. However, the social conflicts and military domination over the people was bringing about unrest throughout the region.

After World War II the United States was aggressive in its pursuit of economic growth. The rise of the socialist bloc, the Cold War and communist movements were reasons for the US to aggressively pursue development of the Caribbean as a strong and viable region. The US did not want Soviet aggression to reach its "backyard." The dictatorships mentioned above were successful in suppressing popular discontent but had not eliminated it. Socioeconomic reforms, wider political participation, and human rights were demands heard from the people.

Compared to other areas, however, the Caribbean Basin did not present enormous problems to the United States. Its remoteness from the Cold War and lack of a communist threat caused the Truman administration to place it on the back burner. Eisenhower's views seemed different and when elected he dispatched his brother to investigate what policy reforms the US should pursue. As it turned out, the Eisenhower policy changed little until the revolution in Cuba brought Fidel Castro to power. This event brought a Marxist-Leninist threat to the Caribbean. Soviet ties with Cuba likewise caused concern so increased economic aid was planned for the Caribbean. Also an intervention into Cuba was planned.<sup>8</sup>

The Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Alliance for Progress, the intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 all came about as the US tried in the Kennedy and Johnson administration to stabilize the political and economic unrest of the region.

The CIA backed Bay of Pigs invasion was modeled after the 1954 Guatemalan operation, which overthrew a leftist government. It was a complete

disaster and defeat for the Cuban exiles. Castro consolidated his position and strengthened his ties with the Soviets. The revolution made the United States resolutely determined to prevent another Cuba.

Cuba was excluded from the OAS and most countries of the region, except Mexico, cut off relations with it. Mexico has maintained relations with Cuba throughout this period, a definite sore point for the United States.

The Alliance for Progress announced by President Kennedy and carried on by President Johnson was designed to develop economic, social and political stability with cooperating countries. The underlying hope of the Alliance was to ward off foreign influence and maintain political stability against communism.

Fear and outrage were expressed in various corners of the Caribbean due to the US backed invasion of Cuba. These feelings grew when in 1965 President Johnson ordered a military intervention into the Dominican Republic to "prevent another Cuba." The administration was alarmed at what was believed to be a potentially pro-communist turn in Dominican politics and Johnson sent Marines and Army elements in to restore order.

The war in Vietnam meanwhile captured much of the attention of the US government. The Caribbean was once again among the low priority areas. However, unrest continued to surface. In Panama riots occurred. These riots set in motion negotiations which eventually led to the signing of a new treaty for liquidation of US sovereignty over the Canal Zone.

In Guatemala guerrilla warfare was mounting. US government aid was initially turned down but later accepted when new leadership was elected. Military aid, police aid, and mobile training teams were dispatched. Terror and murder were common place on both sides in Guatemala.

Throughout this time, Cuba was exporting its brand of revolution and providing assistance, mainly obtained from the Soviets, to a number of Caribbean Basin countries. In El Salvador and Nicaragua almost continuous fighting has been in progress with the situation in those countries changing daily. Honduras and Columbia, likewise, experienced fighting which could easily grow in intensity and engulf those nations.

President Nixon came into office in 1969 and declared military and economic assistance would be furnished to the Caribbean and South America when requested and as appropriate. He felt that the nations directly threatened would assume the primary responsibility for providing the manpower for their defense. Even with the war in Vietnam still in the forefront of American policy, military assistance programs were increased during Nixon's administration. The sale of arms was also widely accepted in the region. Congress meanwhile was reluctant to approve increased economic aid. Beyond reinforcing the military establishments of the region, Nixon never developed a coherent policy toward the Caribbean Basin.

It, like other administrations before, failed to appreciate the nature of the social changes taking place in the region. Growing demands for access to political and economic power by a new emerging middle class and the working class was not dealt with by developing appropriate policies. An opportunity in Nixon's term of office to force the Central American oligarchies to share some of their economic and political power slipped by. This has led to serious consequences and paved the way for the United States demise as a viable channel for political change and strengthened the revolutionary movements which were demanding basic structural transformation.

President Carter came to office in 1977 as a strong advocate of human rights. He favored elected democratic governments and exclusion of the military from government. Relations with Somoza in Nicaragua cooled while

steps to normalize relations with Cuba were initiated. The Carter administration launched a diplomatic, political and economic offensive in the Caribbean by dispatching high ranking government officials and his wife to act in his behalf. Carter placed restrictions on economic and military aid to the dictatorships in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador.

There was skepticism about the intentions and effectiveness of Carter's human rights policy as loopholes developed. The US government assistance program represented a small percentage of total United States commercial financial flow to Central America. Withholding such assistance on human rights grounds had an insignificant effect due to the much greater volumes of private investment which continued uninterrupted. Before leaving office Carter's administration saw the Caribbean Basin as one of its major preoccupations. Contradictions in his own policy had brought much of the pressure for the US to define a more detailed and coherent policy towards its backyard neighbors. The feeling was Carter had failed to protect the country's vital security interests in the Caribbean Basin.

Ronald Reagan became president in 1981 and with his administration came a condemnation of Carter's policies towards the Caribbean Basin. Not only had Carter played down the importance of the US backyard, he allowed the Soviet Union and Cuba to penetrate it. Carter's human rights policy was condemned for discriminating against right wing pro-US regimes and allowing left wing governments and movements to flourish.<sup>9</sup>

Dealing with the Soviet threat and subversion by surrogate Cuba in Central America have clear priority in the Reagan administration. Expansionism had to be stopped. El Salvador became the administration's first test case. Concern over it falling, after Nicaragua fell in 1979, would signal a "domino theory" with Guatemala and Honduras next. US Naval presence in the Caribbean has been increased to show the resolve of the US.



Meanwhile, the deep economic crisis throughout the region has not improved. The economies of the Caribbean continued to stagnate with the trade deficits and foreign debt growing at an alarming rate.

President Reagan in February 1982 proposed his Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to the Congress. Its basic elements are: an emergency FY82 appropriation of \$350 million to assist countries where foreign exchange is scarce; elimination of tariffs on all products, except textiles, during a period of twelve years; and tax incentives encouraging US investment in those countries of the area that welcome foreign private investment. The US will also be ready to negotiate bilateral investment treaties with interested countries to help attract needed private capital for development.<sup>10</sup>

The CBI is an integrated program which coordinates the US help with that of Mexico, Canada, Venezuela and Columbia. It represents the sort of sustained commitment to cooperation with the Caribbean Basin which our strategic interests and our proximity to the region require. However, nothing is easy. The Congress failed to pass the CBI (although most of the \$350 million in economic aid was disbursed by authority of a supplemental appropriation) and numerous screams from the unions and business sectors have been heard. Also, the other countries have backed out of the CBI.

To further emphasize the importance President Reagan places on the Latin American community, he visited several countries including Costa Rica, Columbia and Honduras in December 1982. He met with leaders of all Central American countries except Nicaragua to discuss the issues and initiatives within the region. The jury is still out on exactly what will be the results of the Reagan policy.

In an address of a joint session of Congress in late April 1983, President Reagan sought bipartisan and public support for more military aid

to El Salvador in order to hold the line against Soviet/Cuban backed subversion in the region. He cited his goals as support of democracy, reform and human freedom; economic development; security for threatened nations and negotiations among the nations in the region.<sup>11</sup>

In his Annual Report to the Congress for fiscal year 1984, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger states our objectives in the Western Hemisphere are:

To maintain the security of the North American continent, the Caribbean Basin, and the Panama Canal; to promote economic development and the strengthening of democratic institutions, and to support the independence and stability of friendly governments; to counter the projection of Soviet and Cuban military power and influence in the Caribbean Basin and South America; and to strengthen US political and defense relationships with friendly countries.<sup>12</sup>

This remains a supreme challenge.

#### THE MEXICAN APPROACH IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

Mexico lives under the "Colossus of the North," the United States. Relations between Mexico and its northern neighbor have always been sensitive. Remembered by the Mexicans are: the loss of one-half of its territory to the US; military incursions by the Colossus, including the occupation of Mexico City; and significant manifestations of what Mexicans consider United States economic imperialism. Living with the influences of its giant neighbor has caused Mexico to move slowly in the foreign policy arena. Likewise, the domestic and financial problems Mexico has experienced over the last hundred years have caused her to be more concerned with internal affairs than external matters. Mexico, unlike the United States, has only recently played any significant role in the Caribbean Basin's struggle for stability.

Mexico has not intervened militarily in the affairs of the nation states of the Caribbean. Her course of action, contrary to the US, has been nonintervention. Thus, the first substantial difference of foreign policy between the two countries is apparent. Since World War II, the Mexican military's principal mission has been the preservation of internal order. Mexico's ability to project its military outside the nation has been limited because of the internal mission, low military budgets, and the military's lack of modern equipment.

Other differences between Mexican and US foreign policies since the 1960's have been over Cuba. After the Cuban revolution, Mexico refused to vote in favor of Organization of American States sanctions against Cuba. She then refused to go along with sanctions that were approved by OAS. Earlier, Mexico did not support the US action in 1954 in Guatemala when the US intervened because of perceived communist inroads in the election. Mexico was also at odds with the US in 1965 as it voted against an inter-American peacekeeping force in the Dominican Republic. Throughout the last 22 years Mexico has maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba much to the displeasure of the United States.<sup>13</sup>

At the December 1982 inauguration of President Miguel De la Madrid some of the invited guests were leaders of the leftist opposition in El Salvador and Guatemala, commanders of the Nicaraguan Sandinista forces and the vice president of Cuba. Their warm welcome underscores the fundamental differences between the Washington and Mexico City position on dealing with communist influence in the region. Mexico's own revolutionary history has made her less frightened of left-wing movements than the US.

Mexico's basic policy has been, over the years, one of nonintervention and self-determination while the US has taken a hard-line anti-communist policy in the Caribbean Basin. Mexico frequently has offered to act as a

go-between to arrange talks between insurgent leaders and the respective governments. She has even offered her services in an effort to get Cuba and the United States back together diplomatically. More on this topic will be presented in my recommendations.

Mexico's rise to a regional power and expanded presence in the Caribbean Basin can be partially attributed to the growing diversity and sophistication of its economy. However, internal factors are only a part of it. The decline of US hegemony in the Caribbean has assisted Mexico to assume a more independent role in the region.

Mexico has provided hundreds of technicians to assist the Sandinista government and has recently used its petroleum technology to explore for oil in Cuba's offshore region. Furthermore, the Mexican Revolution of 1910, which began as a rebellion against a dictatorship, strikes similarities with the El Salvador and Guatemalan regimes which are viewed by the Mexicans as illegitimate. It would be counter to their policy of self-determination if Mexico backed the military regimes as the US has done. Mexico believes that a sweeping restructuring of societies in the Caribbean is inevitable.

By backing the revolutionary forces in Nicaragua and El Salvador, Mexico sees its action as insurance against the exporting of insurgency by these countries to Mexico. Nicaragua is clearly Marxist and the US is conducting covert (although the support is a present topic in the media) action to support the anti-Sandinista element. Since Mexico believes in nonintervention she is forced to take the opposite approach to that of the US. Mexico is convinced it can deal with Marxism. Mexico has defined the Caribbean Basin as in its sphere of natural influence. As a developing leader of the Third World, Mexico's six percent annual growth in its economy facilitates a more positive foreign policy stance.

Mexico's acceptance of a seat on the United Nations' Security Council in 1980 established her as a voice to be reckoned with on the international scene. Its more vigorous and positive foreign policy has become apparent over the last 10-15 years. Mexican elites have been anxious for this new approach to take root in international politics and to fill the gap of influence in the Caribbean Basin as the US influence declined.

In March 1983, I visited the Mexican Embassy in Washington, DC. I spoke with Mr. Walter Astie'-Burgos, a political officer, and asked his views of the stability problem in the Caribbean. Mr. Astie' argues that the area has been neglected not only by the United States, but by Mexico and Venezuela also. He stated many of the problems were indigenous to the region and were not the result of foreign intervention (Soviet/Cuban). Cited were the oligarchic regimes which oppressed the people and paid no attention to their social welfare, economic fortune or health. A gross neglect of education was also listed as a problem.

Mr. Astie' believes Mexico shares a deep concern with the US about the region but he states the US takes the ideological view whereas Mexico tends to be more pragmatic. Here, he says, is where the differences develop and little or no agreement is reached. He outlined several meetings Mexico has chaired in Mexico City, Houston, and the Bahamas which discussed the problems of the Basin. He perceives no military threat to Mexico from any neighbor thus he does not project the use of Mexico's military in the region.

I asked him about the refugee situation on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala. He said there was a considerable number of refugees who have fled into Mexico and are costing his government financially to support. He further stated he would not want to see guerrillas establish a base of operation in Mexico to operate against the Guatemalan government.

He pointed out Mexico's nonintervention policy but did say the Guatemalan armed forces have crossed the border and killed civilian refugees in Mexico.

I also questioned Mr. Astie' about how the US and Mexico could cooperate in obtaining stability in the Caribbean Basin. His reply was for the US to place more emphasis on economic assistance rather than ideological policies. He felt one of the worst things the US could do is to isolate Nicaragua. (Recent indications from the Reagan administration are, just the opposite approach is being considered.) Dialogue between the US and Nicaragua, Cuba and Grenada is necessary he argues. Mr. Astie' also felt dialogue between Nicaragua and Honduras with the US as a participant and dialogue between the "government" of El Salvador and the other El Salvador factions are both musts in order for stability to become a reality. He said the US current policy with Grenada, Cuba and El Salvador is not working.

As for the Reagan administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative, Mr. Astie' admits it is a good idea but does not go nearly far enough. He says with the \$350 million package of aid, over \$100 million goes to El Salvador which further emphasizes his point that the CBI is more a political matter than real economic assistance to the region. In the meantime, he states Mexico will continue to give oil to Caribbean Basin countries at a reduced price and/or under liberal terms. He further stated Mexico will give preference in trade to Central America to help booster the economies. Technical assistance and health aid will also be continued.

Finally, Mr. Astie' says he does not predict the fall of Mexico or Panama to any foreign power. There is no belief in a domino theory on his part. He argues the Latin mentality does not mesh with the Soviet's communism. He does predict that Cuba will continue to influence the stability

in the region in a manner more subtle than overt indorsement of violent revolution.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

I must say at the outset of this section, the research, interviews, and writing of this essay have been interesting and worthwhile to me. The insights gained have been tremendous. Certainly my knowledge of the Caribbean Basin has been broadened and an interest satisfied.

US and Mexican policies and outlooks regarding the stability of the Caribbean Basin do differ substantially. On the one hand, the US favors a regional and democratic solution to the difficulties. The long history of US economic investment in the region coupled with the numerous events causing US military intervention have been undertaken in the name of hegemony.

There is little doubt the region is of strategic importance to the US since it is the vital rear approach for any attack on the United States. The Monroe Doctrine has been the guide for a variety of policies the US has followed, all with basically the same theme--the Caribbean is our backyard and within our sphere of influence.

The raw materials, war stock and reserves, and private commerce which transit the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, and Panama Canal are considerable and without free access to these sea lanes the US would be dealt a severe blow. Through the projection of power the US has maintained in the past these routes have remained open.

The threats to the stability of the region are numerous. The Soviets have openly stated their desire to sharpen the economic conflict in the region while denying raw materials and markets to the US and strengthen the communist parties of the area. Those are direct threats to the stability.

Cuba, as a surrogate of Moscow, has exported insurgency, war material, and ideological support at every opportunity to further the Marxist cause. Cuba has recently turned to a more subtle approach with its medical and technical support rather than open insurgent movements. The situation today in Nicaragua is a direct result of Cuba/Soviet assistance and backing.

Not only has outside intervention been a cause of instability in the Basin but so has the corrupt, oppressive, and brutal series of oligarchic regimes. Nationalism has been renewed in a number of the region's nation states and cries for social justice, economic freedom, and political stability are numerous.

The United States, too, must be held to share in the cause of instability in the Caribbean Basin. The past military interventions into a number of countries, outright neglect for other periods, uncoordinated economic and military assistance, and a lack of continuity in different administrations' policies have all tended to confuse the governments and cause a lack of confidence barrier to develop between the US and the region.

Mexico, on the other hand, has tended to identify with revolutionary change and radical movements in the region, emphasizing nonintervention, self-determination, and negotiations among contending parties. Mexico has offered on several occasions to negotiate, or play an intermediary role in bringing about direct talks between nations. Mexico has taken a more active role over the last 25 years in the affairs of the region and by so doing has brought creditability to her actions, thus Mexico will continue to be a key player in the future. Only the domestic and economic problems within her border will stall the role of this leading Third World country.



In answering the question posed in the title of this essay, I not only formed my own opinion but sought the opinions of several knowledgeable people. Mr. Astie' has said the basic answer is no, but qualified his response with a series of ifs. Likewise, Susan K. Purcell and Caesar D. Sereseres while at the Army War College during Course 11, said no but qualified their responses with some ifs too. A Defense Intelligence Agency desk officer categorically said no. My opinion is somewhat different from those above, I am basically an optimistic conservative. As such, I say yes, Mexico and the United States can be partners in the pursuit of stability in the Caribbean Basin--provided the recommendations I present are followed.

#### Recommendations

1. Reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba right away. We have been stupid to have waited this long. After all we have relations with the USSR and China!
2. Expand on the Caribbean Basin Initiative. The proposals are only a start. Much more has to be done in the economic and social assistance programs. It will be expensive but compared to our NATO commitment it will be a fraction of the expense.
3. Expand the United States Southern Command to allow for more detailed and thorough information on the region. Task the headquarters to study the issues, needs, and problems of the region and forward the information to the political decision makers. With the upgrade of the commander USSOUTHCOM to a four star billet, maybe this recommendation is unnecessary.
4. As a corollary to the above, better education of our politicians on the history, social and economic workings, and geopolitical importance of the region is essential. In my opinion, junkets by congressmen

for a few days of "first hand investigation" is not enough. No one can be an instant expert and the area is far too important and complex for cursory visits preceding important decisions in the Congress.

5. The US government must recognize its past mistakes in the region and admit them--such as, the long-term backing of the Somoza regime, military intervention, and economic exploitation. We should seek international cooperation and mutual support from countries like Mexico and Venezuela in negotiating suitable solutions rather than "going it alone."

6. Continuous review of US policy is needed. Strong diplomats, experienced in the region, should be posted to the region. The policy should have continuity from administration to administration. The policy should not merely counter outside (hostile to the US) interferences but be innovative, meaningful policy which will produce results favorable for all countries concerned, not just the United States. Self-determination is a strong part of our history--need we forget other nations may desire it too.

7. Everyone who goes counter to the "made in USA" way is not communist. The US government must recognize others are different and what we perceive as good for them may not be. Revolutions are commonplace throughout Latin America. It has traditionally been a means of resisting poor and/or oppressive governments.

8. Explore every road for a negotiated settlement to the problems of the region. Utilize Mexico and Venezuela offers to key them. Talking is better than fighting ten times out of ten. Military intervention anywhere in the region does not seem appropriate.

9. Coupled with the above press for the withdrawal of all foreign advisers in the region as a precondition to meaningful talks between governments.

10. Although not addressed in any detail, but apparent in my research, is a need for the US to get serious about the future of Puerto Rico. If statehood or independence does not occur soon, Puerto Rico holds the potential for serious violence for the United States.

#### ENDNOTES

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**END**

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