

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

SIGNIFICANCE OF HEMISPHERIC SECURITY FOR MEXICO

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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Significant world changes have occurred in the last decade. The end of the Cold War has impacted the balance of power among nations. All countries have had to face the social, economic, and political effects of this transformation. Mexico is not the exception. Her strategic position, interests, diplomatic tradition, necessities of development, and most important, the victory of Vicente Fox affect the Mexico's stability.

There is not currently enough evidence that organized crime, rebel groups and drug-traffickers have made a deal in order to attack the state institutions, a symbiosis already shattering Colombia. However, from a realistic perspective, it's likely to be a turbulent future for Mexico. This research paper examines the option of regional security cooperation as an instrument for development and stability, and also the necessity to modernize the Mexican Army.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF HEMISPHERIC SECURITY COOPERATION FOR MEXICO

INTRODUCTION

After the terrorist attacks of Sep 11, 2001, the international community was convinced of the necessity to revise the rules and norms that govern the international order, something that was established by the great powers or most powerful countries. The numbers of non-state actors on the world scene have multiplied, thus transforming the old international system. Today the relationships among nation-states are not yet set around a new group of rules and norms.

Mexico has decided to adopt a more active role in the determination of the new international order. For Mexico, its most important aspiration in the 21st Century is to achieve general disarmament and the definitive proscription of war and of the use of force in international relationships. This idealistic posture is contrary to the global tendencies in an anarchical world.

Important advances in security cooperation have been achieved in Latin America, however, the hemisphere is not prepared yet to form a fixed military structure. Mutual distrust, different security perceptions, an evolving concept of sovereignty, U.S. unilateralism, and the apparent lack of an extra-continental threat dilutes the necessity to establish multilateral military forces.

This research analyzes the current and future elements that today will force Mexico to become more involved in multilateral military operations. What actions should Mexico adopt to better protect its people from the many challenges to peace and stability that it is likely to face in the future?

LATIN AMERICA AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The general perception about Latin America is that it is a region of common identity because of the common language and historical roots. The reality is that Latin American countries are quite different from each other. Latin American and Caribbean countries vary from mini-nations to a mega-country. Some states have people almost exclusively of European origin, others with a strong African presence, and others with a large indigenous population. Some of them have a strong economic and demographic interdependence with the United States, while others prefer to look to Europe. Latin American countries are not alike and they are not developing at the same pace. Even the paths that they prefer to take differ from place to place. Argentina, Haiti, Mexico, and Nicaragua are very different.

Latin America and the Caribbean states have embraced free market economies, subregional free trade arrangements, and constitutional democracies that have stimulated close relations with the United States. However, change to a global economy and more democratic governance has been very rocky. It was supposed that with the adoption of open market economies, and more democratic and less authoritarian or dictatorial regimens in the region, the economic growth should have been stronger. In the economic field, José Antonio Ocampo, Director of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), says that the lack of clear projects of government, without appropriate mechanisms of public arbitration and mainly without social protection nets, has caused the rich ones to become richer and the poor ones to become poorer. According to ECLAC, the region will finish 2002 with a setback of 0.8% in gross domestic product, which contradicts the optimistic prediction of the International Monetary Fund of 3.6%.¹ These setbacks to economic recovery in the region, along with the world context of decline, mean the possible beginning of greater social crisis. Figures of the International Monetary Fund and of ECLAC reflect that in the last two decades the GDP has been smaller than the Latin American population's rate of growth. In the period 1983-1992 the registered GDP was 2.3%. In the following decade (1993-2002), it will have an annual growth of hardly 1.5%.

According to ECLAC it is necessary to grow at an average yearly rate of 5.7% in the period from 2002 to 2015, with the purpose of reducing the existent levels of poverty in half. Of the 480 million inhabitants in the region, some 43% live in poverty.

Democratization envisions a gradual and not necessarily an easy transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. The pace of democratization in Latin America has been too fast. Twenty years ago, the Commonwealth Caribbean, the United States, and Canada, arguably were considered the only democracies in the hemisphere, today there are 34 American nations with a representative government. States now face the difficulties of building modern institutions that can deliver public services effectively and efficiently and are accountable to an electorate and to elements of government.

Strong resistance to democratic progress is a reality. High unemployment, low wages, and slow growth have increased the gap between rich and poor. Population growth, domestic crime and globalization will test weak democratic institutions that exist. Numerous surveys suggest that Latin American and Caribbean societies want democracy rather than authoritarian regimes. But, they also rate development more important than democracy. Recent studies show that Latin American public opinion considers development (52%) more important than democracy (25%), and that trust in congressmen is lower than that given to managers.

Seemingly, most of the citizens would be willing to sacrifice democracy and accept an authoritarian government with the purpose of solving their problems.

Security challenges in the region include terrorism, narcotics trafficking, natural disasters, environmental problems, organized crime, and corruption.² These challenges to governance in the hemisphere may affect each state differently. In Argentina and Brazil, unemployment and economic stability are the top threats to their stability. Central America is threatened by crime and natural disasters. Colombia is at risk due to the guerrilla insurgency. Mexico suffers from the unequal distribution of income and drug trafficking.

One concern is that the levels of specific threats or the combination of several of them could potentially lead to a disruption of the democratic process that would in turn generate a significant negative impact both inside and outside a country. This phenomena could result in social, economic and political destabilization, generating negative repercussions on democratic values — commonly shared by the countries in the hemisphere — due to different levels of democracy consolidation in each nation.³ In a heuristic politico-seismological metaphor, Aguero suggests that we should ask how deep, long, and wide are the faults underlying the democracies in Latin America; how much pressure has accumulated underground; and how severe are the disjunctures; and what is likely to happen, a big earthquake or minor tremors?⁴

Latin America is a complex region. Any prediction of future problems is just speculation. The farther one attempts to project the future, the less accurate the forecast is likely to be. Even if one takes a more optimistic view of the future, the trends describe above should provide a warning against contentment. The next 25 years are as likely to be marked by political turmoil and humanitarian crisis as by democratization and socioeconomic development.⁵

HEMISPHERIC COOPERATIVE SECURITY: FEASIBLE?

United States foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean has traditionally been dominated by security interests.⁶ From the Monroe Doctrine during the 19th century, to the anti-communist strategy during the Cold War, the U.S. policy sought to neutralize external threats to U.S. hegemony in the region.⁷ Washington also sponsored counterinsurgency in Central America in the 1960's and 1980's in the context of the East-West confrontation in an attempt to “protect” the weak democracies of this sub-region. Other policy objectives were based on the assumption that economic progress and profits for U.S. transnational business interests could not be achieved in an unstable political environment. These are the traditional reasons that explain why the region has preferred to solve armed conflicts outside of the Inter-American system.

From the Latin American point of view, collective security structures created during and after the World War II, such as OAS and the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), are seen as instruments of the United States to act unilaterally. The US acted unilaterally in 1961 during the Bay of Pigs invasion. In 1963, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the OAS refused support from the IADB. The OAS proved powerless to stop, and indeed in many ways encouraged, the wave of coups in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was incapable of doing anything effective to control the spread of revolution and war in Central America in the late 1970s and 1980s. The same proved true with the limited war between Ecuador y Peru in 1981. From the Latin American point of view, the organization proved to be useless when the Falklands War broke out between Argentina and Great Britain in 1982.

However, when the Americas de-emphasized the need to balance power against other states at the end of the 20th century, the region had an impressive record of peaceful conflict resolution. Peru and Ecuador have largely resolved border disputes after effective diplomacy and military peacekeeping actions carried out by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States after border fighting erupted again in 1995. Latin American and Caribbean states have declared the region a nuclear-free zone.

In 1995 the biannual Defense Ministerial Meetings began creating an important channel for dialogue. Under the OAS leadership, countries are beginning to accept confidence-building measures such as promoting transparent defense policies, improving information sharing, and encouraging cooperation. This security approach was eclipsed by threats to the domestic order that challenged stability.

The need for hemispheric cooperation has never been more pressing as we face the challenges to our security at the start of the 21st Century.⁸ The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on New York and Washington are clear examples of the magnitude of the 21st Century threats. Important advances have been reached in the search for an effective conflict resolution system to deal with traditional state-actor threats in the region. The seven summits of the Americas achieved important goals since the first meeting in December 1986. One was the declaration of the nuclear weapons-free zone, after finally convincing Brazil and Argentina to sign the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Another was the declaration of Santiago of 1991, which declared that regional security depends on democratic stability, and formulated joint political action to prevent or stop any threat to this stability.

OBSTACLES TO HEMISPHERIC SECURITY

Despite years of manipulation and dominance by the United States, the OAS is the most experienced and credible regional institution that retains potential to serve collective interests. In order to reinvigorate Inter-American security regime it is necessary to overcome several obstacles that dilute the formation of an overarching security architecture, such as U.S. unilateralism, and the evolving concept of sovereignty.⁹ It is also necessary to solve the dilemma of different perceptions on what constitutes a threat to security and stability. In the case of Mexico, several pervasive asymmetries, misperceptions, and negative attitudes remain in the bilateral relationship with its northern neighbor. Mexico is recalcitrant when pressed to be part of a regional, collective, or multilateral security cooperation as a conflict management system.

United States Unilateralism and the New International Order

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States remains the hegemonic superpower. Today the United States dominates the international financial system by providing the largest foreign market and the single largest pool of investment capital. The Congress of the United States not only legislates the tactics of foreign policy but also seeks to impose a code of conduct on other nations. The United States considered itself both the source and the guarantor of democratic institutions around the globe, increasingly setting itself up as the judge on the fairness of foreign elections and imposing economic sanctions or pressures if its criteria were not met.¹⁰ U.S. interests encompass the full scope of international issue areas. It therefore plays a leading role in shaping the international order.¹¹ From the Latin American viewpoint, U.S. hegemony continues to prevent the formation of multilateral military organizations due to its economic, political, and military presence. In such a framework, member states cede autonomy and sovereignty in its decision-making process.

John Ikenberry explains in his article "America's Imperial Ambition" that modern international order has been defined by the mainstays of American foreign policy and its two grand strategies. One is realist and the other liberal by orientation. The realist grand strategy created a political rationale for establishing major security commitments around the globe. The liberal strategy created a positive agenda for American leadership.¹² By the end of the 1990s, the result was the most stable and prosperous international system in world history. A global coalition of democratic states tied together through markets, institutions, and security partnerships. Open trade, democracy, and multilateral institutions relations went together with

help of U. S. rules protecting “American interests,” conserving its power, and extending its influence globally.

The problem is that new ideas of U.S. grand strategy are shaping — fostered by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks — today’s hegemonic international order. The new strategy called for American unilateral and preemptive, even preventive use of force, facilitated by coalitions of the willing.¹³ It calls to be less bound to its partners and global rules and institutions while it seeks to play a more solitary and anticipatory role in attacking terrorist threats and confronting rogue states seeking weapons of mass destruction (WMD).¹⁴

Sovereignty

The Treaty of Westphalia —signed in 1648— shaped international relations to this day under the principle of sovereignty. Today the Westphalian order is in systemic crisis. Its principles are being challenged, though an agreed alternative has yet not emerged. Noninterference in the domestic affairs of other states has been abandoned in favor of a concept of universal humanitarian intervention or universal jurisdiction.¹⁵ Javier Perez de Cuellar wrote in 1991, “It is now increasingly felt that the principle of non-interference with the essential domestic jurisdiction of States can not be regarded as a protective barrier behind which human rights could be massively or systematically violated with impunity.”¹⁶

Simultaneously, the dominant concept of the nation-state is itself undergoing metamorphosis. China, Russia and United States reflect multi-ethnic attributes. The European Union is composed of geographically small states seeking to unite in order to be more prominent. Other transnational groupings exist, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Each of these units are driven, sometimes subconsciously and others deliberately in defining its identity, by the dominant power of the region.

In the case of Mexico, historical domination by United States over internal issues of Mexico provides a reason to fear a major intervention and loss of sovereignty. But today this is more symbolic than real.¹⁷ During the last four decades it has been more an issue of losing political control and less an issue of losing sovereignty. The entire political system in Mexico has been obsessed over political control. The seventy years of political domination of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) created this tendency. That said, the economic crisis of 1982 marked the turning point in which Mexican political elites lost a measure of sovereignty, power and control in order to gain economic growth. When President Carlos Salinas de Gortari took office in 1988, he began to change the economic structure. He initiated a closer

relationship with the United States, adopting “Washington Consensus” policies market-oriented economy, reinforced by democracy and respect for human rights. As a result, the power structure of the political system started breaking down.

After eight years of NAFTA, decline of sovereignty might have been expected to lead to erosion of security and the collapse of government, but this has not happened. As internal sovereignty has declined, the cause of individual freedom has improved.¹⁸ Today individuals in Mexico can find more effective political representation and enjoy the benefits of full political democracy. An independent media as well as influential activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) act as watch dogs on environment, health, safety, labor, human rights and democracy issues.

Perception to Security Threats to Stability

Ten years after the end of the Cold War, the international community does not have yet a clear definition of security. The confusion lies more with different perceptions of values and social units that need protection, than with the concept of security. The problem, thus, is to define which social units (e.g., individuals, states, international institutions, and state systems) and values (e.g., physical safety, political independence, and economic well being) apply.¹⁹ Nonetheless, as the concept of security is broadened to include aspects of social reform, economic progress, judicial effectiveness, and official accountability,²⁰ an international framework for cooperation seems more appropriate than ever.

U.S.-Mexico Asymmetries

For better or for worse, Mexico and the United States are wedded to each other. They share a long border that separates the world’s most developed economy from one still suffering underdevelopment, and millions of poor people. United States military interventions in Mexico, on behalf of “American interests,” are not forgotten. As the 20th Century closed, however, economic partnership put an end to the long Mexican tradition of putting the relationship at safe distance from the dangerous neighbor. Today Mexico is the second most important trade partner of the United States. U.S. firms own some of the most important and fast-growing enterprises in the Mexican economy. Mexicans are modifying the demographic composition of the United States. From the 35 million of U.S. citizens of Hispanic origin, 20 millions are of Mexican origin. Mexicans and Mexican-origin people in the United States are shaping politics, culture, life and work especially in California, Texas, and Illinois. They have a significant presence throughout much of the country.

In the security arena, the bilateral relations between Mexico and United States never have been easy. In fact, for much of the 20th Century the United States was seen as the only serious threat to Mexico's international security. The only options available to Mexico ranged from open alliance with the United States or abnegation.²¹ None of these options fulfilled Mexico's aspirations. The problem with aligning with the United States required allowing it influence over every issue in Mexico. The problem with the abnegation option was that it was unable to address some of the Mexico's own security and bilateral issues with the United States. The United States had another perspective on the bilateral relations. The minimum outcome was for Mexico to have no military allies and to be incapable of posing a security threat to the United States.²²

Under these differing perspectives, Mexico adapted and the United States granted a stable and cost-effective security strategy of abnegation. It contained U.S. influence on defense and security matters. It provided Mexico a deterrence effect from extra-continental threats. It did not require the allocation of considerable sums from the national budget to maintain a large army. It also facilitated the supremacy of civilian authority over the military. Mexico was the only country to have no military coups or other unconstitutional transfers of presidential authority after World War I. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pattern shifted. As the century ended, the two countries enjoyed stronger relations. Some factors that account for that shift are the end of the Cold War and the adoption of tested approaches in economic realm, where the international community suggested the fostering of market-based trade and investment. The change in the international system facilitated bilateral cooperation, while the severe financial crisis in Mexico in the 1980s compelled its political leaders to review national strategy urgently. The Presidents of Mexico and the United States, Carlos Salinas and George Bush, as well as other young U.S.-trained Mexican economists, set up the foundation for institutionalized economic cooperation.

Currently, the Mexico-United States relationship is still characterized by mutual distrust, ambiguity, conflict, and cooperation. The inertia of our historical past explains why Mexican society distrusts "the Gringos" and is suspicious of this bilateral relationship. Distrust remains a serious threat to the continued good relations between the United States and Mexico.²³ On the other hand, the U.S. government still believes that corruption in Mexico remains widespread, that drug violence continues to increase, and that major traffickers are now bolder in challenging the Mexican government. One manifestation of this persistent view is the insistence of members of the U.S. Congress to monitor Mexico's use of the equipment and training it had received through the bilateral cooperation on counternarcotics. The pervasive concern of the

U.S. is that equipment could be used in counterinsurgency operations. Additionally, in 1996 when Mexico City thought that it had a deal with U.S. through the High Level Contact Group for Drug Control (HLCGDC), Washington decided to unilaterally violate the newly institutionalized coordination when it carried out the covert operation code-named "Casablanca" in May 1998. This secret operation resulted in the indictment of officials from 12 of Mexico's biggest banks, accused of laundering drug money for the Mexican Juarez and Colombian Cali cartels. Operation Casablanca was a flagrant U.S. violation of the bilateral agreements that the United States had promoted.²⁴

The U. S. attitude toward its southern neighbor often reflects disdain. President George W. Bush said on Sept. 5, 2001, that "the United States has no more important relationship in the world than our relationship with Mexico."²⁵ After the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York, Arturo Valenzuela, a former National Security Council officer for Latin American Affairs said: "Mexico completely disappeared from the radar screen."²⁶ Another example is the congressional vote to prohibit Mexican trucks from crossing the border to deliver goods throughout the United States, despite the commitment to do so in an agreement approved by Congress, further reflecting this unequal treatment. Mexico is going to be a major challenge for the United States because the Mexican economy and citizens have become so intertwined with those of its northern neighbor. This greater interdependence means that the problems of Mexico are now the problems of United States.

Mexico no longer is the "perfect dictatorship" as Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa stated. The electoral victory of President Vicente Fox gives Mexico an honorable democracy in the eyes of the U.S. government and its public. Today, more than ever, Mexico has the dignity to negotiate with honor, discretion and legitimacy. It is true that Mexico needs to improve its judiciary system, combat corruption and fully implement the rule of law, however, deep changes have occurred in Mexico in the last decade. Mexico is a pluralistic democracy with a competitive economy, yet the United States still has the tendency to undermine Mexican democracy because of peripheral issues such as isolated violations of human rights (this phenomena occurs in any country), or the stereotypical perception about democracy in Latin America.

Despite long-standing economic, political and cultural ties to the United States, there is still a sentiment in Mexico of anti-Americanism, which has been exaggerated by Mexican political and social elites. Jorge Castañeda, the former Mexican Foreign Minister, argues that Mexican political and intellectuals elites are the main obstacle for the necessary establishment of a new relationship with United States.²⁷ Castañeda believes that Mexican nationalism

should be nurtured on a set of superior values: culture, democracy, peace, and human rights—not anti-Americanism. It is contradictory that the political elites and intellectuals from Mexico infuse the anti-yanquismo when flows of investment and trade with that nation reach levels of more than 70%, and when people desire, in a direct and personal way, better understanding with their northern neighbors.

A more pragmatic approach to cooperative security is necessary in an unstable, complex, and fragile world order. In the case of Mexico, as we have seen earlier in this paper, the conflictive bilateral relationship with the United States is the main obstacle to building a new cooperative security architecture. What changes are required in Mexico to improve bilateral relationships with the United States? It will require more trade and investment, sustained economic growth in Mexico, a deepening of democracy, a reduction in Mexican corruption, an equitable system of justice, an end to the need for Mexicans to emigrate, and overall, closer military coordination and cooperation.

MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Mexican foreign policy is clearly focused on change. Mexico looks for a closer relationship with the United States and Canada in all environments, promoting a climate of cooperation, respect and legality.²⁸ The Binational Commission United States-Mexico is the most important mechanism of dialogue between both countries in the last 20 years. By means of this mechanism they discuss foreign policy matters, migration, legal matters, energy, border matters, bilateral cooperation, trade and economic matters at the Secretaries of State level. However, it does not mean it that this will be subordinated. In the current interdependence context, the mutual interest of both countries demands that we consolidate a firm and long-term relationship to assure our mutual prosperity and well-being.

The new international system that is being constructed is based on rules that are not created by the United Nations, neither are they the traditional principles of foreign policy of Mexico. Mexico would have preferred that the international system be based on these principles: non-intervention, artificial equality of the states, and the rejection of the use of force. The fact is that the new rules and norms are interventionist, more than non-interventionist. They are more hegemonic than harmonious. This process will take place with or without Mexico.

With this decision, the Mexican government reiterated its decision to play a central role in the drafting of a new international architecture and the security measures that uphold it. For such a reason, Mexico has also decided to assume a more active and responsible policy of participation in international forums on issues of the new international agenda: environment,

natural resources, indigenous matters, crime prevention, drug trafficking, corruption, and organized crime.²⁹ Its democratic genuineness, diplomatic ability, and position as country-bridge (soft power factors that allows countries which are not powers like Mexico, to play an active role in the international scenario), permits it to use these credentials to contribute to the definition of new rules for the international system. The factors mentioned above allow Mexico to even exercise a strategic weight and add substantial influence to our geopolitical and economic profile.

Mexican foreign policy strategic objectives are to revise and renovate the hemispheric security system. The purpose is to develop new mechanisms suitable to face the new threats and real necessities of the nations of the Americas. It also has the objective to intensify the participation and influence of Mexico in international forums, contribute to the revitalization of the multilateral system, and make foreign policy a central instrument to achieve the goals of the economic and social development of Mexico.

Historically the relationship between Mexico and Central America has varied from the distrust of a possible Mexican "imperialistic" interest (predominant perception during the 19th Century and most of the 20th Century), to moments of economic help, and political and diplomatic understanding. The approach between Mexico and Central America, contrary to the general acceptance, is rather recent. The Mexican policy of cooperation with Central America was intensified since the 1970s for three reasons: the political and social crisis of the region, particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador, was interpreted as a threat to Mexican national security; the overvaluation of oil reserves as the main source of revenues; and the message to United States that Mexico is a force in Central America.³⁰

The political-military crisis of the 1980s allowed Mexico to foresee the risks of an extremely fragile situation at its isthmus' border. The massive displacement of indigenous Guatemalan peasants to Mexican territory and their establishment in Chiapas and Yucatan peninsula; the activism of Central American insurgent groups in Mexico; the pressures of United States for the imposition of stricter police and migratory controls in the border of Mexico with Central America; and finally the indigenous rebellion in Chiapas revealed the vulnerability of the region.

The new millennium began with multiple bonds of multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the seven countries of Central America. Under the scheme of a "privileged association," Mexico has substantially increased the economic, cultural, educational, and technical-scientific cooperation within the region. The mechanism of *Dialogo y Concertacion de Tuxtla*, which began in January 1991, in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Chiapas), is the most important

demonstration of the new climate of understanding and cooperation between Mexico and Central America.

COOPERATIVE SECURITY

According to the results of a questionnaire on new approaches to hemispheric security, presented to the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States (OAS),³¹ the region seems interested in a reconsideration of the traditional approach of security, defined in terms of the external military threat during the Cold War period. In this region the notion of cooperative security is being increasingly used as a contemporary concept to reduce threats that are not uniquely military in nature, and which may originate inside participating states. OAS Secretary General Cesar Gaviria at the inauguration of the Regional Conference on Measures for Confidence-building and Security in Santiago, Chile, November 8, 1995 offered this:

“What concept of security is applicable to this new environment to take advantage of its possibilities and maximize its potential for peace? Progress has been made in this regard in the Americas. Many have suggested that the new guiding principle should be cooperative security, whose principal objective is the establishment of security conditions dependent for their stability on mutual confidence, control of the military potential, and predictability of the actions of the participants.”³²

Some countries of Latin America have adopted the concept of human security as the approach that should underlie the new concept of security (the first ring of cooperative security). Human security as a concept became relevant after the Cold War due to three main factors: (1) the end of bipolar rivalry—which justified the predominance of the classical understanding of security; (2) the worldwide spread of democratization; and (3) the major activism of non-governmental organizations (NGO's), through which civil society undertook the so-called “track-two” diplomacy to promote an international political agenda addressing questions much more relevant to individuals than to states.³³ The United Nations is the main promoter of human security. Most of the UN agenda deal with different aspects of human security. Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s speech at the opening session of the UN General Assembly on September 2, 1999, urged world leaders to protect human security in the 21st Century.

The trend that Latin America and arguably all regions of the world are following in order to have internal order and global peace can be described in terms of cooperative security. The concept of cooperative security became popular since the end of the Cold War. At the dusk of that period, the international community shifted concerns from the survival of the state (so-called “hard security”) to an interest in economic well-being (“soft” security).³⁴ According to Richard

Cohen, the concept of cooperative security could be explained in terms of four concentric and mutually reinforcing “rings of security:” Individual Security, Collective Security, Collective Defense and Promoting Stability.³⁵ The first and last rings are new elements that are shaping international relations.

He argues that Cooperative Security must look both ways, inward and outward. Individual Security, a synonymous of “Human Security,” is the nucleus from which all other forms of security must radiate. Today the interconnectivity among states and people, concerns about the human condition within a state has become a concern of the international community.³⁶ Our own security is increasingly indivisible from that of our neighbors at home and abroad. While governments continue to be important, global integration of world markets and instant communication have given a role and profile to those in business, civil society, and NGOs and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).

The second new element of Cooperative Security looks outward. Promoting stability may require intervention in areas outside their territories when peace and security of its members are threatened. Interventions with humanitarian ends seek to change the bond among sovereign states for a series of measures to protect the individual. It includes the possibility of using armed force when there are violations of human rights in a certain country, even without the authorization of the national authorities. This thesis lacks a clear framework in which to base its interventions according to rights and, therefore it can become one more instrument to preserve political hegemonies in the world, without achieving the purpose that supposedly inspired those actions.

Several models have emerged. The European Union (EU) framework of cooperative security is characterized by dense institutionalization of contacts, denationalization, economic integration within the region, mutual respect for rule of law, and liberal democracies of security policy, fostered by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Another is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which differs considerably from the EU and NATO. ASEAN members are not bonded together by a comparable body of laws; economic integration is less intense and many of their members are not fully liberal democracies. The common ground of both models can be found in its ultimate objective of preserving the stability of the region and preventing the likelihood of conflict, the fourth ring of cooperative security (promoting stability).

Several instruments or institutions already exist in the Americas that promote stability (outer ring of cooperative security). In the economic arena the region enjoys the benefit of economic integration with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and numerous subregional groupings and bilateral economic

arrangements. The OAS and the Rio Treaty (TIAR) give the appearance of a cooperative security framework that advocates the defense of democracy, human rights, collective security and defense security. Although these existing mechanisms have demonstrated their effectiveness in providing stability, prosperity, and peace, they are still based on the obsolete East-West confrontation and do not fulfill the core values and interests of some of the countries of the region. For instance, on September 6, 2002 Mexico decided to drop out the Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR), a pact from the Cold War era aimed at protecting Latin America from communism. President Vicente Fox had called it “useless and obsolete” because the hemisphere is facing threats that were no longer not simply military or ideological, but ranged from AIDS to poverty to international terrorism. The decision taken just days before the anniversary of September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, was made from the Mexican view that the Americas needed a new approach to hemispheric security.

THE SEARCH FOR AN INTERAMERICAN-MILITARY SECURITY SYSTEM

The complexity of the topic does not yet permit quick achievement of concrete results. It is important to remember that within the OAS are 34 member nation-states of different political orientations, different challenges on security and defense, different foreign policies, and different perceptions on how to confront threats to their national security. Mexico is reticent to develop security structures under the framework of the Inter-American system.³⁷ Several examples in the past demonstrate this trend. For instance, Mexico vigorously rejected the creation of an Inter-American force against Nicaragua in May 1979. Nevertheless, Mexico made efforts to create cooperation instruments outside of the OAS and TIAR.

Future global trends indicate that it is imperative to have more effective security frameworks of coordination and cooperation. These frameworks should provide unity of effort and effective synergy against the challenges to political, economic and social stability of the hemisphere, not to mention global stability. The traditional and non-traditional threats the region faces require coordinated, flexible, cooperative and multilateral responses. Since no one state can alone confront narcotics trafficking, natural disasters, environmental problems, or organized crime, these threats are, in fact, being addressed today at the bilateral, sub-regional, regional and international levels.³⁸

A shared perception of non-traditional threats to national security is broadly accepted in the hemisphere, and we must take advantage of this trend and examine it along with the issues which still obstruct the emergence of a common security agenda.³⁹ Some of the challenges are primarily economic and social and not security issues. Dr. Michelle Bachelet, Minister of

Defense of Chile, mentioned that “apart from narcotics trafficking, there exists a variety of problems of transnational character that have the potential of originating international conflicts such as the disintegration of failed states or the persistence of environmental degradation, among others.”⁴⁰ Therefore, we must be careful in identifying non-traditional threats in order to use the right tools to solve them.

The hemispheric security system should generate effective policies that promote socioeconomic development of the countries of the region. It should guarantee the respect of the fundamental rights of the states by promoting the solidarity and trust among the American countries, and to consolidate peace through opportune and appropriate preventive measures.⁴¹ According to Bolivia’s Ambassador Marcelo Ostria Trigo, who chairs the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security, member states for too long viewed hemispheric security in narrow, internal terms. However, the approach is shifting to a more flexible and cooperative approach. “Any effort to define shared concepts of hemispheric security should take into consideration such fundamental OAS principles as peaceful coexistence, equality, sovereignty and, in particular, non-intervention,” said Ostria Trigo. It should essentially be a preventive process and not based on systems of coercive measures. These agreements should be respected and taken into consideration in the conception of a cooperative security system that places emphasis on the prevention of conflicts and in the recognition of the peculiar strategic contexts of each sub-region of the Western Hemisphere.⁴²

The cornerstone of the Inter-American security system is U.S. leadership — particularly when it is based on shared values and interests. For a long time, the U.S. adopted policies based on disdain towards Latin America and the Caribbean countries. But today, the North-South integration requires strong leadership to overcome not only the security challenges, but most importantly (from the developing countries point of view), to overcome the problems arising from a wide gap in the level of economic development. Leadership and partnership exercised by the great power of the North, in the provision of economic integration with fair trade agreements, will greatly improve the chances of successful integration.⁴³ It is highly unlikely that Latin American fears of U.S. hegemony will disappear entirely, but if U.S. foreign policy actions win the confidence of Latin American countries by working multilaterally for shared goals, then perhaps this fear will eventually fade as an obstacle to hemispheric collective security.⁴⁴

The conflict with Iraq has intensified global interest. The international community still hopes that the U.S. will abstain from acting unilaterally and follow the resolutions that the United Nations (UN) dictates. Doing so will create a unique precedent and reflect a new attitude of the

most powerful nation of the world. It will increase U.S. credibility in the new international order under the norms of the UN and reduce fears of imperialism.

THE NEW HEMISPHERIC SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: DEMILITARIZED?

Mexico has systematically opposed the formation of hemispheric combined forces. Mexico's posture of proposing a demilitarized hemispheric security model has diverse origins. The TIAR responds to security concepts from World War II and the Cold War, and therefore is obsolete. The forums that have tried to create a structure of cooperative security in the Americas have failed because they are from another time; the absence of a conventional enemy at sight, and given the asymmetric bilateral relationships (Mexico-U.S.), they dilute any integrative effort. Additionally, as noted earlier, the tendency of Washington to act unilaterally over issues that threaten its interests, the recalcitrant nationalistic legislative leaders in Mexico City, and mutual distrust, ambiguity and conflict on the bilateral relationship are the main obstacles to reinvigorate the hemispheric security system.

Mexico exists within a process of change that began with the necessity of being integrated economically with the United States. This process of change coincides with the end of the Cold War and changes in the international order. Vicente Fox's ascent to the presidency represents the turning point in a Mexican foreign policy, one that is more participative in international forums, with the objective of developing better mechanisms to confront the new threats and real necessities of Mexico. Under this panoply of new ideas, the participation of the Mexican Military in multinational military operations is something that shall be realized in time.

If consensus on hemispheric security threat perceptions can be reached, as well as a better understanding among elite politicians of what constitutes issues of national security, multilateral military operations within the Americas, sponsored by the OAS, will become a reality. To make these happen, the United States needs to exercise true leadership and partnership towards Mexico. After September 11, 2001 the relationship reverted to the normal roughness that has characterized historically this relationship. The withdrawal of Mexico from the TIAR, the position adopted by Mexico at the UN Security Council regarding the strategy to disarm Saddam Hussein, and the strong unilateralism of George W. Bush has paralyzed matters of strategic interest for the Mexicans. This infers that Mexico does not offer unconditional backing to the national defense strategy of the United States and vice versa.

Washington is embracing the idea of building a hemispheric security architecture. In Santiago, Chile, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld pleaded for the creation of regional forces for peace operations that could unite forces to stabilize places in conflict around

the world. Argentina has supported such efforts and continues contributing in that regard despite its current financial difficulties. Rumsfeld also exhorted all the regional governments to work together to impede vigorously the growth of areas "not governed" that become shelters for terrorists, drug dealers, kidnappers and traffickers of weapons.⁴⁵

An interesting perspective on this issue is offered by Colonel Joseph R. Nuñez. He proposes a security architecture of multilateral cooperation, liberal peace and soft power. He argues that "The role of Washington within the Americas is to work closely with other states to promote the two pillars of liberalism, democracy and capitalism. This requires a completely different strategy, an expanded dialogue, and a willingness to cooperate in a truly multilateral manner." In essence the security architecture must have standing multinational forces (SMFs) that can handle humanitarian assistance missions, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and other small scale contingencies (SSCs). The primary end must be able to deploy expeditiously to deal with natural disasters, border disputes, failed states, and other challenges that rapidly emerge.⁴⁶

This security architecture could bring several benefits for satisfying security needs of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Respect, friendship, trust, mutual understanding, and most importantly, respect for sovereignty and mutual goals properly structured has also been outlined by Donald Schulz for a new hemispheric security architecture.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the possibility of forming a multinational framework of security cooperation in Latin America would subvert the US military strategic tendency to act unilaterally and encourage it to act multilaterally.

THE MEXICAN ARMED FORCES AND NATION'S ELEMENTS OF CHANGE

The Mexican Armed Forces (MAFs) by constitutional mandate are called to serve as the permanent body to guarantee the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty of the nation. The MAF are also called to combat drug trafficking, organized crime, arms smuggling and the networks of international terrorism. Due to these missions focused on internal security and the lack of external threats, the MAF have not had the necessity to acquire high levels of technology and modern weapons systems, and are widely perceived as being completely focused on preserving internal security. The situation described above, as well as the impoverished population's urgent necessities, and the frequent natural disasters, demand the engagement of the MAF in internal security issues and civic-action programs. Today and tomorrow the MAF will continue to be an important pillar in the maintenance of the rule of law in Mexico. Although internally focused, the MAF, coincidentally with the inception of NAFTA, have put great stress on modernization of the institution.⁴⁸ Streamlined, mobile, and quick-reaction

forces are the primary vision for the Mexican army in order to deal with the most pressing challenges of the 21st Century.⁴⁹

The MAF could realize great benefits if involved in a SMF. The unique possibility to modernize at least a small combat component (brigade size unit), could be the bridge to overcome logistical and training deficiencies. The opportunity to strengthen the civil-military relations by exposing the MAF to the scrutiny of the international community and to the national public opinion, are practices that were little known until today. The issue of the technology gap between the U.S. Army and the Mexican Army should not be an obstacle to establish an integral relationship on military matters. If Mexico decided to modernize its Armed Forces, it would be a good idea to start concentrating its efforts in forming at least one light armored brigade, instead of wasting money in maintaining three armored brigades with equipment from World War II.

It is in the interest of the United States to have Mexico not only as a friend but also as a partner. Washington needs to exercise its leadership by helping Mexico City to resolve its fundamental problems of migration and economic development. Imagine the legitimacy of a multinational force with diplomatic tradition and principles of the Mexican foreign policy represented by its “well trained and well equipped” soldiers in peacekeeping missions. The problems of Mexico are now the problems of the United States. Both countries could benefit enormously by consolidating the four rings of cooperative security. Although has not yet been challenged, even cooperative security frameworks might need to use coercive force against terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and so on, though not on behalf of a single sovereign state as traditionally understood.⁵⁰

Because of the recalcitrant opposition of “nacionalistas” within important sectors of Mexican politics and public opinion about the involvement of Mexico’s military in multinational operations, the starting point of this architecture could be the training and combined exercises for humanitarian relief operations. Hurricane Mitch proved that Mexico is willing to demonstrate its traditional altruism for the people of Central America, and Mexican congressmen did not hesitate in granting help to our brothers in need. During this disaster, the anachronistic principle of non-intervention was not an issue. Working in concert with U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), and also with U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)⁵¹ would enhance the ability to provide effective and efficient humanitarian relief in Central American or Caribbean soil (areas of major interest for Mexico), and perhaps it could be extended in the mid-term to a peacekeeping or a SSC operation. In 1998 a major disaster struck Mexico. Neither the Mexican Army nor other institutions were capable of stopping the forest fires that destroyed hundreds of thousands of mature forests in the Mexican states of Chiapas and Oaxaca. If in the

future we have an effective framework of hemispheric security, the effects of destabilizing natural forces would be more easily overcome.

CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary to protect the people of the Americas from the threats that they are likely to face in the foreseeable future. Soft power is the key to success to reach cooperative security—by getting others to do things they see as being consistent with their own values and interests.⁵² The United States has the responsibility of taking the first step so that Mexico may become incorporated within a more effective hemispheric security mechanism, such as Nuñez's model. The sign that Mexico is waiting for is a favorable resolution for the millions of Mexican immigrants living and working in the United States. Jorge Castañeda, the former Mexican foreign minister, also used soft power by making necessity a virtue: to abandon the traditional nationalist rhetoric in exchange for negotiating a new association with United States.⁵³ Unfortunately the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 ruined that possibility. Washington lost interest in proposals from Mexico City.

The Americas have the opportunity through new leadership ideas to reinvigorate cooperative security, a regime that would not only be a more peaceful, but also a more rational approach to security through increased international cooperation.⁵⁴ The key, therefore, is to marshal the political will, which still remains largely in Mexico's hands, to move forward. It has a window of opportunity during the Fox administration to create a strategic, long-term partnership with the United States. If policymakers in both countries make the commitment of trust-building and mutual cooperation, and pursue the objective, cooperative security will become a reality. Both countries have to overcome the pervasive obstacles of mutual distrust. Mexico fears U.S. influence, and U.S. fears immigrants from Mexico. Only progress would change the psychology of Mexicans and North Americans, and ultimately Mexico would be viewed as a partner.

The problems of Mexico are now the problems of the United States. Respect, friendship, trust, mutual understanding, and respect for sovereignty are essential elements to develop security cooperation. Interdependence not only implies cooperation, but also implies participation in management of common problems, and mutual threats.

WORD COUNT = 7,976

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¹⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, "America at the Apex: Empire or Leader?" in Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 17-31.

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³³ Khatchik Derghoukassian, Human Security: A Brief Report of the State of the Art, available from <http://www.miami.edu/nsc/pages/pubs-WP-pdf/WP3.pdf>; Internet; accessed 31 Mar 2003.

³⁴ Michael Mihalka, "Cooperative Security: From Theory to Practice," in Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order, ed. Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka (n.p.: George C. Marshall Center, April 2001), 34.

³⁵ Richard Cohen argues that cooperative security is a strategic system which forms around a nucleus of liberal democratic states linked together in a network of formal or informal alliances and institutions characterized by shared values and practical and transparent economic, political, and defense cooperation. In a cooperative security system, individual states' national security objectives are linked by four reinforcing rings of security. Ring one, promoting and protecting human rights within their own boundaries (Individual Security). Ring two, maintaining peace and stability within their common space (Collective Security). Ring three, mutual protection against outside aggression (Collective Defense). Ring four, actively promoting stability in other areas where conflict could threaten their shared security, using political, informational, economic, and, if necessary, military means (Promoting Stability), "Cooperative Security: From Individual Security to International Stability," in Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order, ed. Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka (n.p.: George C. Marshall Center, April 2001), 10.

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