

XVI. Western Hemisphere

Introduction

The critical issues facing the United States in its relations with the Western Hemisphere in the 1990s were the consolidation of democracy; the promotion of internal peace, stability and reconciliation; regional economic growth and reform against the backdrop of globalization; regional integration; reduction of extreme poverty and income inequality; and the challenge of developing new means and models to address transnational problems, including narcotics production and trafficking.

The decade bore witness to the triumph of democracy in every country except Cuba and Haiti. It also saw a new era in positive bilateral relations with virtually all countries in the region. Geography, trade, travel, migration, and technology combined to produce an unprecedented level of integration and interdependence. Thus hemispheric issues—crime or migration or economic growth or natural disasters—increasingly had a direct impact on the United States and required new responses. Increasingly, the United States sought to work in partnership with other hemispheric countries to address common problems. The Summit of the Americas process, inaugurated in Miami in 1994, embodied this new cooperative relationship between the United States and its neighbors and facilitated cooperation and integration, with the next Summit scheduled for April 2001 in Quebec.

Mexico and the Caribbean

North American Free Trade Agreement and Caribbean Basin Initiative Enhancement

In 1993, it fell to the Clinton administration to secure congressional ratification of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which the Bush administration had negotiated. NAFTA called for a hemispheric free trade zone encompassing Mexico and the United States. The Clinton administration made approval of the pact one of its highest priorities and mounted a vigorous campaign, underlining the economic advantages of freer trade with Mexico. Congressional passage was seen as a signal both of the bilateral relationship the administration wanted to forge with Mexico and its willingness to engage Latin America at a time when these countries sought stronger ties with the United States. The promotional campaign also stressed the damage that would be done to the U.S. commitment to open markets and a liberal world trading order if NAFTA was not passed. After an intense legislative lobbying effort, the House passed NAFTA on November 17, 1993, and the Senate followed 3 days later. In the 6 years since the Agreement entered into effect on January 1, 1994, Canada and Mexico emerged as the top two U.S. trading partners, displacing Japan.

NAFTA represented the centerpiece of the new economic relationship the United States wanted to build with the hemisphere and a concrete sign of its commitment to a new era of partnership and cooperation. On a related front, Congressional passage of CBI (Caribbean Basin Initiative) enhancement in 2000 capped a six-year effort to extend NAFTA-like benefits to some of the poorest countries in the region.

Cuba

The fundamental goals of the Clinton administration toward Cuba throughout this period were the promotion of respect for human rights and encouragement of a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government. This policy had two fundamental components: (1) maintaining pressure on the Cuban government for change through the embargo initially imposed in October 1960 and through the 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act ("Libertad Act"); and (2) providing humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people and working to aid the development of civil society in the country. During this period the United States became the largest source of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. Since 1992, the government licensed more than \$2.5 billion in humanitarian donations.

After the fall of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, members of Congress sought to increase pressure for peaceful democratic change in Cuba and to deter international involvement with property claimed by U.S. citizens that had been expropriated without compensation by the Cuban Government. This led to the development of the "Libertad" Act, also known as the Helms-Burton Act after its principal sponsors. When, in 1996, Cuban MiGs shot down two unarmed, civilian aircraft in international air space, killing three U.S. citizens and one U.S. resident, Congress passed the act by overwhelming margins and President Clinton signed it into law on March 12, 1996. Among other features, the act codified the embargo, strengthened sanctions against the Castro regime and mandated sanctions against persons who "traffic" in confiscated property in Cuba claimed by a U.S. national. In response to Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in early 1999, the President announced in March a number of steps in support of the people of Cuba and U.S. policy to help the Cuban people prepare for a peaceful transition to democracy.

The United States continued to fulfill its 1994 commitment to process 20,000 Cubans each year for entry into the United States, and U.S. and Cuban Government representatives met periodically to review migration issues under this accord.

The Clinton administration continued to press the Cuban regime to democratize and to respect human rights, while seeking to engage and assist the Cuban people in order to promote a peaceful transition to democracy. The administration also assiduously worked to encourage the international community to recognize Cuba's failure to observe and respect international human rights standards as evidenced by the successful U.S.-led effort at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva to document human rights practices in Cuba.

Haiti

In elections held in December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide won 67 percent of the largely free and fair vote. Aristide took office in February 1991, but was overthrown by the army the following September and forced to leave the country. In the 3 years following the coup, political violence caused the death of more than a thousand Haitians. The coup also spurred large-scale exodus from the country. From 1991 to 1994, the U.S. Coast Guard rescued over 41,000 Haitians whose boats had foundered after setting sail for the United States. This total was more than had been rescued over the previous 10 years.

In June 1993, with strong U.S. support, the United Nations imposed an oil and arms embargo, which brought the Haitian military to the negotiating table. President Aristide and General Raoul Cedras, head of the Haitian armed forces, signed the UN-brokered Governors Island Agreement on July 3, 1993. The agreement detailed a process for restoring constitutional government and the return of President Aristide by October 30, 1993. However, the military derailed the process which led to the reimposition of economic sanctions. The political and human rights climate continued to deteriorate as the military and the de facto government sanctioned repression, assassination, torture, and rape in open defiance of the international community's condemnation.

On July 31, 1994, the United Nations, again with active U.S. support, adopted Security Council Resolution 940 authorizing member states to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure of Haiti's military leadership and restore constitutional rule and Aristide's presidency. In the weeks that followed, the United States took the lead in forming a multinational force (MNF) to carry out the UN's mandate by means of a military intervention. In September, with U.S. troops prepared to enter Haiti in a matter of hours, President Clinton dispatched former President Jimmy Carter, who was joined by retired General Colin Powell and Senator Sam Nunn as a negotiating team, to discuss with the de facto Haitian leadership the terms of their departure. As a result, the U.S.-led MNF deployed peacefully, Cedras and other top military leaders left Haiti, and restoration of the legitimate government began, leading to Aristide's return on October 15, 1994.

Elections for parliament and local government offices were held successfully between June and October 1995, although they were delayed by seven months and marred by serious administrative problems and some violence. President Aristide's Lavalas party and its affiliates swept into power at all levels. In the December 1995 presidential election, with Aristide barred by the Haitian Constitution from succeeding himself, prominent Lavalas figure Rene Preval won overwhelmingly.

Haiti's political and economic progress was impeded by a prolonged and divisive political impasse. Following the January 1999 dissolution of the Haitian parliament, most of the country's local and national governmental bodies were either absent or unable to function. On May 21, 2000, the first round of long overdue local and parliamentary elections was held, overseen by a Organization of American States (OAS) Election Observer Mission supported by the United States Government. Voter turnout was high, but the post-election period was beset with serious problems. Most significantly, electoral authorities applied a vote tabulation methodology, which was contradictory to that prescribed in the election law, a methodology which distorted the outcome of the parliamentary races. In light of the failure of government authorities to correct this electoral defect, the United States suspended official assistance to the Government of Haiti (retaining humanitarian assistance channeled to NGOs). The United States and OAS also declined to send electoral missions to observe the November 2000 election which returned Aristide to the presidency of Haiti.

Summit of the Americas

The Summit of the Americas process provided a common agenda for the democratically-elected leaders of the hemisphere, reflecting their shared values and

responsibilities. It provided a unique mechanism for the heads of state and government to discuss solutions to common political, economic, and social problems in a multilateral and comprehensive way. The Summit process brought together freely elected leaders united in their commitment to democracy, human rights, and free markets. This effort paved the way for greater hemispheric cooperation, as seen partly by the increased number of ministerial meetings and official exchanges, and the convergence of policy goals among member countries.

The 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas was the first of its kind in 27 years and the largest such inter-American conference in history. Significantly, it was the first where all the participants were democratically elected. They agreed to an action plan to enhance cooperation and committed themselves to mutual policy goals, ranging from expanding free trade to combating corruption and reducing crime.

Most importantly, the leaders agreed to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) no later than the year 2005. This vision of a comprehensive free trade zone encompassing more than 800 million people reflected a common view that prosperity in the entire hemisphere would be enhanced by the elimination of trade barriers and the creation of a single set of fair trade rules.

The Miami Summit celebrated the hemisphere's shared commitment to democracy and market economies. The second Summit, held in Santiago in 1998, moved that commitment into a new phase of "second generation" reforms designed to restructure institutions and make the benefits of reform available to all. It also officially launched the negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and both ministerial- and technical-level negotiations toward that goal took place regularly. The third Summit, scheduled for Quebec City in 2001, was to build on the accomplishments and work initiated in the 1994 Miami and the 1998 Santiago Summits.

Colombia

Few threats to the United States had as direct and negative an effect on our national well being as did illegal drug trafficking. This made the U.S. counternarcotics efforts among its most important policy priorities in the Western Hemisphere. One country key to these efforts was Colombia, the world's leading producer of cocaine. U.S. counternarcotics interests in Colombia were inextricably linked to that country's capacity to strengthen its democratic governance, jump start the legitimate economy, undertake a genuine peace process to resolve the country's long insurgency, and ensure respect for the basic human rights of the Colombian people.

President Ernesto Samper assumed office in August 1994. However, a political crisis relating to large-scale contributions from drug traffickers to Samper's presidential campaign diverted attention from governance programs, thus slowing, and in many cases, halting progress on the nation's domestic reform agenda, and limiting our own willingness and capacity to cooperate with the Colombian Government. In August 1998, Andres Pastrana was sworn in as the President of Colombia. In a visit with President Clinton, before being sworn in, Pastrana expressed his hopes for bringing about a peaceful resolution of Colombia's long-standing civil conflict, and his commitment to cooperate fully with the United States to combat the trafficking of illegal drugs.

Serious economic and political problems limited the Pastrana administration's ability to advance its peace and economic agendas. The government faced high unemployment (over 20 percent in 2000) and the impact of global financial instability and a growing fiscal deficit. Additionally, the growing severity of countrywide guerilla attacks by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), as well as the growth of drug production and the spread of paramilitary groups, made it doubly difficult to address the country's problems.

No single explanation fully addressed the deep roots of Colombia's troubles, but they included limited government presence in large areas of the interior, the expansion of illicit drug cultivation, endemic violence and social inequities. In order to confront these challenges, the Pastrana administration unveiled its Plan Colombia in late 1999, an integrated strategy to deal with these long-standing, mutually reinforcing problems.

The main objectives of Plan Colombia were to promote peace, combat the narcotics industry, revive the Colombian economy, improve respect for human rights, and strengthen the democratic and social institutions of the country. In July 2000 the U.S. Congress approved a \$1.3 billion assistance package for which the Clinton administration had strongly lobbied. President Clinton signed Supplemental with the Colombia aid package on July 13, 2000. This package provided the basis for significant assistance to both Colombia and to its neighbors that might also be affected by the "spill-over" from the Colombian Government's actions to confront narco-traffickers and the guerrillas. (Additional details on U.S. counternarcotics policy in Colombia is in Chapter VII.)

Strengthening Democracy and Regional Security

Throughout the period, the United States energetically promoted democracy and peace both unilaterally and together with like-minded hemispheric partners. The United States supported the evolution of the Organization of American States (OAS) into an effective international organization actively engaged in promoting democratic reforms in response to election crises in Peru, Ecuador, Haiti, Guatemala (1993) and other trouble spots.

The long-running border dispute between Ecuador and Peru erupted into an intense but localized war in January–February 1995. The United States, one of the four Guarantors of the Rio Protocol of 1941, worked with Argentina, Brazil, and Chile to broker a peace agreement in February 1995, which led to the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of the Military Observers Mission to Ecuador-Peru (MOMEP) to monitor the dispute zone. The United States supported and participated in MOMEP. In October 1998, after receiving a boundary determination from the guarantors, Peru and Ecuador signed a Peace Accord that definitively resolved their border differences. The United States Government, as one of four guarantor states, was actively involved in facilitating the 1998 Peace Accord and remained committed to its implementation. The United States pledged \$40 million to the Peru-Ecuador border integration project and another \$4 million to support Peruvian and Ecuadorian demining efforts along their common border.

In accordance with its treaty with Panama, the United States withdrew its military forces from Panama and on December 31, 1999 completed the final transfer of the

Panama Canal to Panama. Nonetheless, the United States would maintain a close interest in the operations of the Canal well beyond that date.

Through its assistance efforts and diplomacy, the United States sought to defend and strengthen democracy where it was threatened. As already mentioned, it took the lead in restoring Aristide to the Haitian presidency after he was deposed by the military, and then publicly spoke out against the irregularities that marred the May 2000 parliamentary elections in Haiti. In Central America, the United States strongly supported, both politically and through assistance programs, efforts to consolidate peace, democracy, and national reconciliation after the internal conflicts which wracked the area in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The administration's vigorous public pronouncements helped preserve the constitutional order in Ecuador in January 2000, after some field-grade military officers and indigenous leaders took over the Congress building and announced the formation of a new government. As a result of U.S. actions, supported widely in the hemisphere, the insurrectionists stood down and power was turned over to Vice President Noboa, the constitutional successor. Similarly, the U.S. strong defense of democracy preserved constitutional order in Paraguay, 1999–2000, in the face of the coup plotting, the assassination of Vice President Argana, and the resignation and flight of then President Cubas.

In May 2000, the United States criticized irregularities surrounding Peru's presidential election. The United States then led support for the June OAS General Assembly resolution voicing concerns about the electoral process. The OAS created an OAS Mission to Peru to develop an action plan to implement a series of democratic reforms addressing the judiciary, electoral system, intelligence agency, and the freedom of the press. In the aftermath of President Fujimori's sudden resignation in November 2000, the United States remained committed to the democratic reform process in Peru.

Following the December 1994 devaluation of the peso, Mexico experienced a severe financial crisis that threatened its own stability as well as that of other emerging markets in Latin America. President Clinton, using his own emergency authority, led a group of international lenders in making available to Mexico over \$40 billion in international assistance, including \$20 billion from the United States. This action helped stabilize the Mexican economy, enabling Mexico to repay the loans to the United States more than 3 years ahead of schedule and with \$580 million in interest. This engagement and the resolution of this crisis helped to create the context for further economic and political reform which culminated in the historic victory by Vicente Fox in the July 2000 presidential election.

Similarly, the United States supported timely financial assistance packages for Brazil in 1999 and Argentina in 2000 and encouraged economic reforms throughout the region. This assistance helped contain the hemispheric effects of the global financial crisis of 1998–1999 and promoted recovery in the Western Hemisphere.

Prompt U.S. humanitarian and financial response to Hurricanes George and Mitch (\$621 million) significantly improved the lives of millions in Central America and the Caribbean after the devastation left by those storms in 1998. The U.S. commitment to and engagement with the Caribbean was earlier underlined by President Clinton's

participation in the May 10, 1997, Summit with Caribbean leaders in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Organizationally within the Department of State, one concrete manifestation of this deepening hemispheric integration was the transformation of the old Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA) into the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) with the decision of the Secretary to add Canada in 1999. The incorporation of Canada into WHA reflected an economic and geo-political reality and prompted the Bureau regularly to re-think how it looked at the totality of U.S. relations with the hemisphere.