

2004

## Hemisphere Volume 14, Fall 2004

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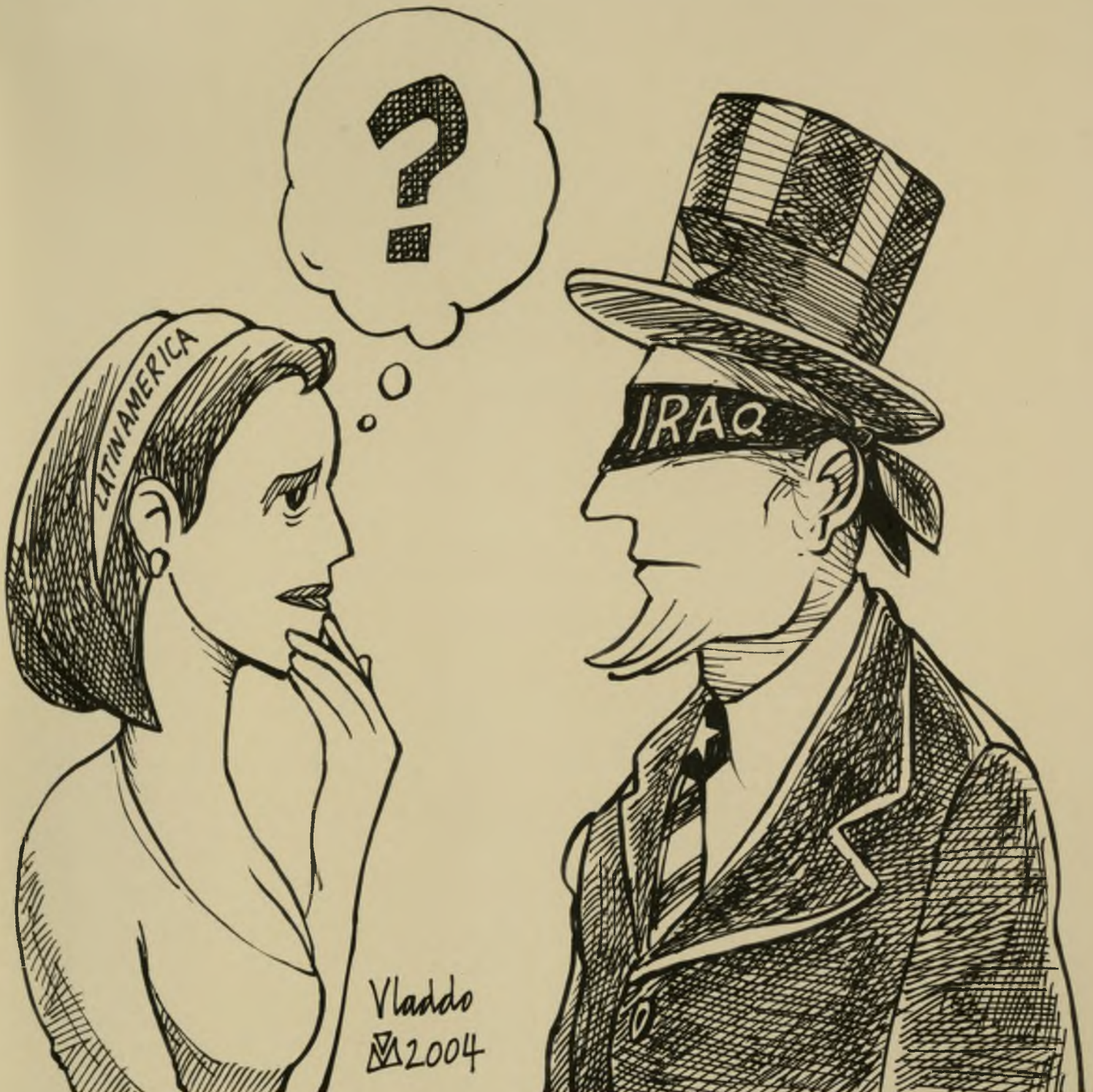
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Hemisphere Volume 14, Fall 2004

# Hemisphere

A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

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Cover art by Vladdo, political cartoonist for the Colombian news magazine *Semana*.





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# FROM THE EDITOR

**T**his issue of *Hemisphere* went to press just weeks before the US presidential elections. As the campaign reached its high point and the candidates debated their positions on foreign policy and domestic issues, we heard very little about Latin America. At most, the region received only passing notice in the context of national security, with concern over the possibility of terrorists entering this country via the Mexican border.

This situation is very different from the one we saw four years ago. In the 2000 campaign, President Bush staked his claim to foreign policy expertise on his familiarity with Mexico as governor of Texas. Here at Florida International University, we remember his visit to our campus in the summer of 2000, when he pledged to make Latin America the centerpiece of his administration's international relations.

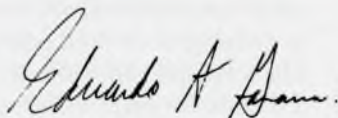
For a short time, it looked like that might really happen. At the April 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada, President Bush was a strong advocate of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). And many people on both sides of the US-Mexican border felt a surge of hope at the sight of him shaking hands with Vicente Fox over a proposed immigration accord in September of that same year. But just days after their meeting, the September 11 terrorist attacks completely changed the nation's focus. Three years later, with attention still concentrated on national security and Iraq, immigration has moved far down on the list of political priorities and the FTAA talks have stalled.

In this issue of *Hemisphere*, we have chosen to examine the current state of some of the most important themes in US-Latin American relations: trade and economic ties (including remittances); immigration and labor; democratization; and, of course, security policy, including terrorism, illegal narcotics and, especially, border issues. Likewise, because of the overwhelming importance of the US relationship with Mexico, our book review focuses on this topic.

I would like to extend a special thanks to our contributors, especially María Teresa Romero and Patricio Crooker, who wrote special reports for us on the important referendum processes in Venezuela and Bolivia this summer and their consequences for those countries, the wider Latin American region and relations with the United States.

We also feature a special essay by Tony Maingot, *Hemisphere's* founding editor, who retired from the faculty of Florida International University this year. He has gone back to the very first piece he wrote for this magazine 16 years ago and updated his survey of the main trends in Caribbean politics and economics.

We are proud to have compiled such an extensive archive of commentary and analysis over the past decade and a half and we are enthusiastic about continuing that tradition as new leaders come to power and regional events unfold. Here in our editorial offices we are already looking ahead to our next issue, which will focus on Brazil. As always, we have a wealth of material to work with.





# The Caribbean, 15 Years Later

by Anthony P. Maingot

In the inaugural issue of *Hemisphere* (fall 1988), I described the Caribbean as a region of "sovereign but balkanized and fragile states." I argued that the region might be reaching the limit of its privileged economic arrangements with both Europe and the United States. The situation as I write 15 years later is even more alarming than I had anticipated: The independent states which compose the region's premier economic arrangement, CARICOM, are in danger of being marginalized not only globally but indeed in their own backyard. Both economic and political factors explain this worrisome trend.

From the economic point of view, the erosion of the privileged protocols which the CARICOM countries enjoyed has been dramatic. Gone are the CBI, the use of "936" funds from Puerto Rico's dismantled arrangement with the US Treasury, and the aid and non-reciprocal arrangements of the various Lomé conventions. SELA—the Latin American Economic System—has turned out to be a paper tiger and whatever advantages are derived from the much-touted Association of Caribbean States, economic benefits are not among them. Replacing all these arduously negotiated agreements is the Cotonou Agreement, composed of a series of Economic Partnership Agreements which emphasize "free trade" rather than aid and one-way non-reciprocal trade. I put free trade in quotes because even as the doctrine of free trade is being foisted on small economies, large



*Caribbean economies dependent on traditional exports such as sugar, bananas and minerals are at the mercy of "free trade" dominated by US and European agricultural subsidies.*

economies make a mockery of the principle by continuing the heavy subsidy of their agricultural commodities. As such, the inability of the regional economies to break their dependence on traditional exports (bananas, sugar, minerals) and to dismantle the "infant industry" provisions which make so much of their manufacturing uncompetitive converts the empha-

sis on free trade into a perilous affair. Beyond those issues which are hardly susceptible to immediate and effective decision-making, other structural realities have little or nothing to do with political will. The long and short of it is that size does matter. Start with population (read, labor force and markets): In a future Free Trade Area of the Americas, CARICOM (including



the eight million Haitians) will represent 1.74% of that 800 million-person market. The total GDP of CARICOM is a mere 0.23% of the US GDP and the openness of the Caribbean economies continues much as before all the talk of “common markets.” Intra-CARICOM trade is still only 15% of its total, and fully 89% of that is represented by petrochemical exports from Trinidad and Tobago.

All these structural realities ought to give pause to any residual beliefs that there is still negotiating mileage to be had from playing the Third World card. The painful drama of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling on the banana issue demonstrated that when large US or European companies join forces with large Latin American producers, Caribbean Lilliputs get squashed. Now it is sugar which will prove bitter pickings. The Caribbean exports 1.6 million tons, or 3.6%, of the global trade in sugar. No matter: When Brazil, Australia and Thailand went after Europe’s subsidies of its massive beet sugar industry, Caribbean entreaties that their minute sugar protocols be excluded (as “third party rights”) from any WTO decision fell on deaf “Third World” ears. The rules of the game took no account of size. Even the normally staid *Financial Times* (August 6, 2004) weighed in with the blanket judgment that the WTO had struck “a blow for justice and good sense.” The Caribbean response was immediate. The Jamaicans lamented that the “solemn commitments” and “sanctity” of the Cotonou protocol had been violated (*Jamaica Observer*, August 9, 2004), the Guyanese declared that the WTO decision “clearly shows the ruthlessness of world trade” (*Stabroek News*, August 9, 2004), and the Barbadians decried the

“tunnel vision” of the WTO. All, of course, to no avail. When it comes to opposing “free trade,” small economies are spitting into the wind.

But if a sort of economic law of necessity shields Caribbean elites from taking all the blame for the vagaries of world trade, the same cannot be said about regional geopolitics. If there are limits to the sovereign actions of small states, there are also constraints on the hegemonic inclinations of major ones, even in their historical spheres of influence. This is especially the case in the post-Cold War era and it also explains why some of the recent CARICOM geopolitical posturing harbors serious risks. I am not referring to the CARICOM states’ principled stand on trade and relations with Cuba; that stance is shared in some way by all except the perpetually short-sighted (when it comes to Cuba) US. I am referring to the obdurate support for President Jean Bertrand Aristide of Haiti, as misguided a stance as we have ever seen coming from the generally agile and wily diplomacy of the islands. Two explanations appear plausible. First, since Haiti is a full member of CARICOM, the organization logically felt that it had a duty to stand by a democratic partner especially when, and here the second reason kicks in, the removal of Aristide was seen as a blatant act of US imperial arrogance. The problem is that neither argument is watertight. Aristide was governing in full defiance of Haitian constitutional mandates, and the decision not to send troops to keep him in power (the only way to avoid his defenestration) was as much a French project as it was American. The CARICOM diplomatic pirouettes did nothing to save Aristide and certainly have done nothing to enhance the com-

munity’s prestige. To the extent that there is peacekeeping and nation-building taking place in Haiti, it is a Latin American, not Caribbean, project. The decisive actions of Brazil and its Mercosur allies represent a clear geopolitical watershed in the area and have for all practical purposes sidelined Haiti’s Caribbean neighbors. It is a telling point that the recent unanimous vote of the 19-member Rio Pact to sustain a “long-term” peace mission in Haiti included the assenting vote of Guyana, which presently holds the rotating Caribbean seat in the Pact. This is the same Guyana that in CARICOM forums was adamantly—and quite vocally—in favor of the restoration of Aristide.

The conclusion has to be that while small states might well be powerless to withstand the economic pressures of a globalized world, the same does not hold for geopolitical decisions. The latter field allows for political adroitness and diplomatic finesse to increase “symbolic” or “soft” power. Past leaders of the Caribbean had substantial reserves of those qualities. It is too bad that the present leadership is presiding over the erosion of that magnificent legacy.

Fifteen years after the first *Hemisphere* editorial, the region appears more balkanized and feeble than ever. ■

*Anthony P. Maingot is Hemisphere’s founding editor and Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Florida International University. Most recently, he is the co-author, with Wilfredo Lozano, of “The United States and the Caribbean: Transforming Hegemony and Sovereignty” (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).*



REPUBLICA BOLIVARIANA  
DE VENEZUELA



ASAMBLEA NACIONAL



# Venezuela after the Referendum

by *María Teresa Romero*

Observers are debating the course US foreign policy will take toward Venezuela after the August 15 referendum, which reaffirmed the mandate of President Hugo Chávez. Teams from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Carter Center endorsed the official results, which showed approximately 59% of participants voting “no” to the opposition’s attempt to recall Chávez from power. In the past two years, despite important commercial (oil) ties, the more than four-decades-long “special” relationship between the US and Venezuela has degenerated into a climate of tension and confrontation. At first glance, it seems possible that the consolidation and relegitimation of the current Venezuelan government could lead to a more moderate and friendly mutual foreign policy and a normalization of bilateral relations. This trend could be reversed at any moment, however, depending on the policies of the Chávez government not only toward the United States, but toward the rest of the hemisphere and Venezuelan society itself. The US continues to distrust Chávez; Washington may have accepted, and formally legitimated, Chávez’s government, but it has not embraced his domestic and international revolutionary pretensions.

Republicans and Democrats alike await the next steps of the Venezuelan government. Both parties are familiar with Chávez’s unpredictable behavior, his brand of military populism, his strong leftist

## *US policy toward Chávez is unlikely to change*

leanings and authoritarian tendencies. The question is whether he will use his referendum victory to intensify his policies of political repression and domestic confrontation, institutional dismantling and human rights violations. Chávez’s friendship with Fidel Castro and other Latin American radical groups is well known; after the August vote, he was congratulated by Colombia’s FARC and ELN guerrillas, as well as a new Venezuelan guerrilla group, the Bolivarian Liberation Front (FBL, in Spanish). Leaders from both major US parties worry that Chávez could become Castro’s right-hand man in South America, aggravating tensions with the US and fueling conflicts in neighboring countries.

### **A Polarized Society**

Immediately after the referendum, Chávez promised to safeguard Venezuela’s foreign economic and political ties, especially with the United States. His foreign minister, Jesús A. Pérez, reiterated Venezuela’s desire for friendly international relations. Before long, however, Chávez was back to his habitual anti-imperialist rhetoric. Albeit in a more moderate tone than the one he adopted for the referendum campaign, he inveighed against the Bush administration, its policy toward Latin America and the model of liberal democracy that,

according to Chávez, the US “is trying to impose on the rest of the world.”

The behavior of the Venezuelan government before and during the referendum process and the opposition charges of fraud and irregularities raised considerable concern in the US government, civil society and the press. In fact, the Bush administration delayed its official reaction to the referendum until Venezuela’s National Electoral Council (CNE) completed an audit of the results and the OAS and Carter Center presented their reports. The US accepted the outcome, but it vehemently opposed voting on the draft resolution before the Permanent Council of the OAS, which urged “all actors to accept and respect the results of the referendum.”

Whether or not the opposition’s cries of fraud are ever substantiated in a way that satisfies the international community, the United States knows—and the OAS Secretary General, César Gaviria, acknowledged before that organization’s Permanent Council—that numerous problems occurred before and during the referendum process. These included abuse of power, manipulation, delay tactics, intimidation, attempts at censorship and blatant irregularities (illegal migration of voters and failure to consult voting lists, elimination of numer-





ous voters from the voting registry, addition of 230,000 new voters without clear documentation in the two months preceding the referendum, registration of more than 1.5 million foreigners, exclusion of 18,000 non-Chavistas, etc.), as well as the underlying problem of government control of the CNE, as various independent reports and international figures invited to observe the proceedings noted. Indeed, a report by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology concluded that the likelihood of fraud in the referendum was 99%.

During the voting Venezuelans also had to endure, as never before in their democratic history, an onslaught of populism and demagoguery. The government openly manipulated votes during the campaign, taking advantage of high oil prices to step up the pace of pop-

ulist handouts. In the weeks leading up to the vote, the president distributed \$1.6 billion in oil money to the poor. At the Vatican, Venezuelan Cardinal José Castillo Lara complained that Chávez was buying the votes of the country's poorest citizens, paying \$50-\$60 in exchange for a pledge to vote "no" to the recall. The Church and other sectors of Venezuelan society also denounced government spending on electoral advertising.

The United States is well aware that the referendum has done nothing to bridge the great rifts between Venezuelans and that in fact, more polarization, crisis and division are likely. Even if the allegations of fraud are never proven, a significant percentage of the population remains distrustful of the government, state institutions and the electoral authorities. The referendum, instead of coming closer to

resolving the crisis in Venezuela, may have deepened it. Assuming that the CNE's official results are accurate, 41% of Venezuelans (those who voted yes to the recall) firmly oppose the Chávez government, and another 30% (those who abstained) are indifferent. If Chávez does not dramatically change course and win over those who voted against him or didn't vote at all, there can be no peace—social or political—in Venezuela. Poverty also remains a persistent problem. Despite government spending, poverty has not been alleviated in Venezuela, but in fact has increased. With oil revenues at their highest point in history, the poverty rate rose from 52% in 1999 to 72% in the first quarter of 2004.

At the moment, despite the many calls for reconciliation and dialogue, it is difficult to imagine a 180-degree shift in the govern-

ment's conduct or its policies. In his victory speech, Chávez made it clear that the vote to keep him in power was not only an endorsement of his government and its revolutionary policies, but also of its "Bolivarian" ambitions for the country and the continent. The day after the referendum, government supporters attacked opposition protesters, leaving one dead and eight wounded. One week later, the government withdrew official recognition of the opposition coalition's Democratic Coordinator, confirmed the sentences of political prisoners, and began an aggressive campaign to win upcoming state and municipal elections. At the same time, the government-friendly majority in the National Assembly resumed its practice of rubber-stamping bills that, opposition and civil society critics say, infringe on civil liberties, especially freedom of expression and property rights.

With Chávez legitimated and triumphant, and an opposition that has been weakened but remains fiercely committed in its hatred of him, Venezuela's future outlook is less than heartening. We can expect to see radicals from both sides—government supporters and opponents—dominate the more moderate social and political groups that defend the democratic system, escalating the domestic confrontation. The scenario most people would like to see—reconciliation, political harmony, a transparent and serious democratic process—is, unfortunately, the one least likely to occur; at least not the way things seem at present.

### **"Venezuela Is Too Important for Neglect"**

Given these conditions, it is safe to predict that Venezuela will continue to be a source of concern for

the United States in both the short and long terms. Whoever wins the US presidential elections, George W. Bush or John Kerry, he will be obliged to keep an eye on Venezuela and respond to developments there. As the *Washington Post* warned after the referendum, "Venezuela is too important for neglect."

The new US president cannot simply undo the damage to political relations and, to a lesser degree, trade between the two countries over the last few years. Depending on Chávez's actions, the new US leader can attempt to rebuild the "special" bilateral relation that characterized US-Venezuelan relations before Chávez took power, or, conversely, take definitive action to distance the US and perhaps even break off diplomatic relations if necessary (e.g., if Chávez poses a serious threat to US or regional security). In late June, less than two months before the August 15 referendum, the US Senate held a special hearing on the state of democracy in Venezuela. Republican and Democratic senators, as well as high-ranking Bush administration officials, expressed doubts about the possibility of holding a fair and transparent referendum process. Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) went so far as to warn that "if the government of Venezuela continues with these positions (attacking the US and collaborating with enemy governments and alleged terrorist groups), then we will have no choice but to declare the Venezuelan government to be hostile and unfriendly to the United States."

Nelson's words reflect a bipartisan consensus on the issue of Venezuela. The potential threat the Chávez government poses to US and hemispheric security, and the importance of Venezuela's oil

resources, have created a remarkable similarity of opinion among Republicans and Democrats. Despite the strategic differences that come to the fore during an election year, the two parties are likely to adopt a common foreign policy toward Venezuela in the case of a serious crisis. This consensus is unlikely to change regardless of the outcome of the November elections.

Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution represents a difficult challenge for the United States, and it is likely to do so for some time. The current government in Venezuela has tested the commitment of the United States—and all the members of the OAS—to the principles of democracy. In general, both the US and the OAS have responded slowly, and weakly, to events in Venezuela, due to a combination of economic and geostrategic interests and the complexities of dealing with an authoritarian government that poses as a democracy, came to power through democratic means and, thanks to the referendum, enjoys renewed legitimacy. Compared to the rest of the inter-American community, however, the United States has taken a responsible and consistent approach to the abuses and provocations of the Chávez regime. ■

*Maria Teresa Romero is a professor in the Department of International Affairs at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. She writes a regular column for El Universal newspaper in Caracas and is director of the political analysis newsletter Visión Venezolana.*



# A Victory for Democracy

by *Patricio Crooker*

**O**n Sunday, July 18, 2004, the people of Bolivia sent an important message to the nation and the world when approximately 60 percent of eligible voters went to the polls in the country's first democratic referendum. They were asked to answer yes or no to a series of five questions concerning whether and how Bolivia should export oil and natural gas. These questions played an important role in the popular protests that drove President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada from power in October 2003 and have continued to bedevil the new administration of Carlos Mesa. After a battle to make the referen-

dum happen, the president was pleased with the impressive turnout and the results, which empower the government to exert greater control over the nation's energy resources. Despite the efforts of radical leaders to organize opposition to the popular consult, the National Electoral Court brought off the voting in record time on a very low budget. From the Andean highlands to the nation's valleys and tropical regions, the Bolivian people used this opportunity to support a fragile democracy in a peaceful and orderly process.

With its new mandate, the government faces another battle, this time with oil companies and the Bolivian Congress to create a new and just

energy export law. Less than two weeks after the referendum, President Mesa began consultations with the Congress to draft new legislation in response to the referendum. The government's prompt actions, in conjunction with the well-ordered referendum process itself, are intended to send a positive image of Bolivia after more than two years of protests, deaths and violence in this poor country, which has a wealth of natural resources.

The October 2003 unrest represented a call to Bolivia's political parties to become more representative of their constituents and to the government to be more transparent and open about its policies—especially



*President Carlos Mesa led an intense public relations campaign in favor of the yes vote.*







*Bolivians were asked to answer yes or no to a series of five questions concerning the country's oil and natural gas exports.*

concerning the export of energy reserves, a contentious issue in a country with a history of foreign exploitation of its natural resources. In organizing the referendum, the Mesa administration faced considerable pressure from leftist groups to include an option to nationalize the nation's energy sector, but the president was adamant in his views that nationalization would be disastrous for Bolivia. Some radical leaders urged the public not to vote and threatened to burn ballots and close down voting locations. Unfortunately, the national press played an important role in inciting these doubts, in some cases inflating the threats and views of leaders in the movement against the referendum. In the city of El Alto, where most of the October 2003 revolts

took place, the days leading up to the vote were characterized by uncertainty as to the outcome and the potential for more unrest. Even there, however, international observers and the international press were impressed with the semblance of order and popular participation. Before all the polls had closed, as the first results were coming in via the media, some radical leaders—surprised by the high level of popular participation and the clear victory of the yes vote—backpedaled on their threats and negative propaganda. The real winners were those Bolivians who participated in the referendum and believe that democracy is the only way to bring change for the better.

The unusual case of having a president with no party base in Congress

made the referendum a unique but dangerous opportunity for Bolivia. To achieve the consensus to pass his projects, Mesa led an intense public relations campaign in favor of the yes vote that explained the benefits of a positive response to the referendum's five questions. His high public approval ratings give him an important tool to pursue his agenda, while the direct form of democracy represented by the referendum gives Bolivia an important opportunity to solidify its young and damaged democracy. For the first time in more than 22 years of democracy, Bolivians were asked to participate directly in an important policy making decision. Although critics complained that some of the five questions were too long or ambiguous, the positive result helped to legit-





*The voting was peaceful and orderly, even in the highland city of El Alto, the site of most of the violence leading up to President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's resignation in October 2003.*



*The results of the referendum empower the Mesa government to exercise greater control over the nation's energy resources.*

imize Mesa's government. The new legislation being drafted will increase the taxes and royalties of private investors as well as the participation of Bolivia's national oil company, YPFB. Investment is very low at the moment as private oil investors closely monitor proposed changes to Energy Law 1689, passed in 1996 by the Sánchez de Lozada administration.

The popular consult was a victory for democracy, helping to unify Bolivia and end speculation about a division between the country's western and highland regions, where most of the October 2003 protests took place, and the east, where most of the oil and gas fields are located. The events of last fall forced changes in the way politics work in Bolivia. The July 2004 referendum is part of those changes and raises hopes for a more secure future for the country's democratic governance. ■

*Patricio Crooker is a photojournalist based in Bolivia and a frequent contributor to Hemisphere.*



# Politics, Access and History

by James F. Siekmeier

As a college professor, I once wrapped up a class on modern Latin American history by putting General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte of Chile on trial for human rights abuses. That is, one group of students was assigned to prosecute, and another to defend, his contentious 1973 to 1989 regime. The general was convicted—revelations of torture clinched the prosecution's case—but the battle was a tough, bitter one. Pinochet's defenders argued that he saved Chileans from the anarchic, atheistic Communism that would have resulted if leftist Salvador Allende Gossens (1970-1973) had remained in power. This mock debate—not really “mock,” since it was mid 1999 and Pinochet was under house arrest in Great Britain for human rights violations—allowed the students to glimpse the enduring pain and powerful legacy of the Pinochet regime, a legacy that has cast a long shadow on Chilean history and US-Chilean relations.

Two months too late for the students in my class, in summer 1999, the United States released the first installment of a large cache of documents pertaining to US-Chilean relations from 1968-1991. This set of material, the Chile Declassification Project (CDP) of 1998-2000, was the result of an inter-agency effort during one of the most difficult periods in the history of relations between the two countries. Because the Pinochet period was such a contentious one, many in the United States felt that the

release of the information was an unstated moral obligation. The world needed to know more about what happened during the Pinochet period; more specifically, about US knowledge, support of, or complicity with Pinochet's actions. In a nation that has historically valued openness as the first, necessary step toward government accountability, the CDP was, in the words of one official who worked on the project, an almost “cathartic experience.”

## “I Think You Are Entitled to Know What Happened Back Then, and How It Happened”

The United States decision to declassify the CDP documents came after about seven years of post-Cold War (relative) calm and nine years after the Chilean government had made the transition from military dictatorship to democracy. The catalyst was the startling arrest of a notorious leader, but the background to the decision is important.

Starting in 1997, the Spanish government, under the terms of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, requested that the US share any information it might have about human rights violations under Pinochet. A small group of Spanish and Chilean officials worked behind the scenes to build a case against the Chilean general. Their efforts culminated dramatically in October 1998, when a team of Spanish judges arrested Pinochet for human rights violations committed during his tenure as Chilean head of state (he had been indicted

two years before). The arrest took place in England, where Pinochet had traveled for medical treatment. The Spanish judges—headed at first by Manuel García Castellón and later by Baltazar Garzón—accused Pinochet of carrying out “criminal activities...which [had] as their object the physical elimination, disappearance, or kidnapping of thousands of persons, having previously been subject to generalized torture.”

Once Pinochet was arrested, the United States found itself forced to take sides. The Spanish had arrested the former dictator but the Chileans wanted to be the ones to determine Pinochet's fate. On the one hand, Spain (and other nations, along with relatives of US citizens who were victims of Pinochet's repression and members of the US Congress) wanted to try Pinochet in a Spanish tribunal, in part to set a precedent for universal jurisdiction of repressive leaders. The Chilean government, on the other hand, was concerned that a foreign trial of Pinochet would inflame the country's military.

Because of its covert action to undermine the Allende regime and support Pinochet, the US government found it impossible to ignore the issue. Indeed, the US had been involved in Chilean affairs since the 1960s, when US covert assistance to Edward Frei Montlava, the Christian Democratic presidential candidate in 1964, comprised about one-half of his campaign budget. Some US officials sided with the Spanish government and its argument that Pinochet's human

## *The Chile Declassification Project of 1998-2000*



*La Moneda palace in Santiago, Chile on September 11, 1973, during the coup d'état led by Augusto Pinochet against constitutional President Salvador Allende. Recently released documents shed light on the US role in Chile during and after the coup.*

rights abuses had affected Chileans and non-Chileans alike, and that his arrest was a test case for international justice. Many US citizens and the international human rights community supported the idea of a tribunal to bring to light more information about Pinochet's human rights abuses. Other US officials, however, argued that the Chileans had the right to try their notorious former general and head of state.

In the end, the US sided with the Chileans. Underlying this decision

was the fact that one of the cornerstones of the transition to democracy in South America in the 1980s was amnesty for the heads of state of former military regimes. Putting Pinochet on trial broke a tacit agreement (between the former dictators, Latin American society and the US government) that crimes against humanity committed by South American military leaders would not be prosecuted. The US authorities knew their decision to side with the Chileans would be controversial. To placate US citi-

zens—including families of the victims of Pinochet's repression—and the international human rights community, they decided to conduct a thorough declassification of US government documents.

The Clinton administration had a history of declassifying documents in an attempt to come to terms with the past. In this case, the divulging of historical information fit well with another administration policy: apologizing for US misdeeds in Latin America during the Cold War. On a visit to



Central America in 1999, President Clinton apologized for US aid to repressive military regimes in Guatemala from the 1960s through the 1980s. A remarkable confluence of events, therefore, propelled the Chile Declassification Project: the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s; the Clinton administration's penchant for openness and apologies for US Cold War policies that contributed to the deaths of innocent people; the behind-the-scenes work of the human rights community and other advocates for openness and their allies in the US Congress; and—the catalyst—the remarkable arrest of Pinochet at the behest of a group of Spanish judges. President Clinton succinctly summed up the goal of the CDP: "I think you are entitled to know what happened back then, and how it happened."

### A Policy of Openness

The Chile Declassification Project represented one of the largest inter-agency declassifications of foreign policy documents in the history of this country. Approximately 23,000 documents were declassified. The project was directed by a National Security Council directive, or "tasker." According to Peter Kornbluh, the author of a book on the project, the point of the CDP was "to insist in encouraging a consensus in Chile on reinvigorating its truth and reconciliation process to address such questions as the fate of the disappeared." The declassification included three separate installments of documents from the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Justice, and the National Archives and Records Administration,

## The Chile Declassification Project brought to light considerable evidence regarding ongoing debates in American foreign policy about the extent of US responsibility for the 1973 coup that brought Pinochet to power, as well as US knowledge of his government's subsequent human rights abuses.

including the presidential libraries of Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan. The first installment contained approximately 5,800 documents from 1973 to 1978; the second, about 1,100 documents from 1968 through 1973; and the third and last, approximately 16,000 documents covering the period from 1968 to 1991. The remarkable thing about the project is that its scope was expanded to include not only Pinochet-era documents, but also materials from before and even after the general's rule. (The documents, released in 1999-2000, are on the State Department's website, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), under Freedom of Information Act [FOIA], Declassified Documents Collections.)

Despite its path-breaking nature, it is important to realize that the CDP is not the only inter-agency declassification project the US government has conducted. Indeed, it can only be understood in the context of other document release projects. These have concerned individual countries, among them Guatemala, El Salvador and Argentina, as well as such wide-ranging topics as Nazi expropriations of Jewish assets during World War II and the John F. Kennedy assassination.

The CDP came into existence in part because of a new trend toward

openness in the federal government. The Clinton administration codified this policy of openness with Executive Order 12958, signed by the president on April 17, 1995. It shifted the burden of proof regarding the secrecy of documents from the parties requesting access to those who produced the documents. Previously, federal government agencies could keep a document classified simply by asserting that its release would hurt US national security interests. E.O. 12958 required the agency that produced a specific document to explain why keeping it classified was important to the nation's security.

The Chilean project proved to be unprecedented in many respects. Despite some understandable disputes between agencies, the inter-agency process (coordinated by the National Security Council) by which the documents were produced proved to be a model for inter-agency cooperation. The most high-profile dispute occurred when the CIA changed its mind about releasing some sensitive documents, and then changed it back.

The CIA released a large number of documents not only on Pinochet's human rights violations, but also on US covert action in Chile. The methodology of the CIA's review changed over time. At

first, the document search and declassification at the agency was rather narrow, limited to CIA knowledge of Pinochet's human rights abuses. Finding such documents proved difficult, as the agency's files were organized by operation or asset, not categories such as "human rights." The broad language of the NSC tasker, however, meant that the CIA could not simply throw up its hands and declare defeat. Since the tasker called for the release of information that had to do with "political violence," the search was necessarily wide and deep. CIA officials favored a narrow definition of "political violence" that excluded coups d'état, but they lost that argument. In the end, according to one CIA officer who worked on the CDP and who did not want to be identified, virtually all covert action was defined as a form of political violence. According to this interpretation, the NSC tasker could require that the CIA release documents on US covert action in Chile that were unrelated to CIA knowledge of Pinochet's human rights abuses.

### Raising New Questions

"It's not a part of American history we are proud of," concluded Secretary of State Colin Powell in February 2003, referring to US covert action in Chile in the early 1970s. Although not an official apology like the ones issued by the Clinton administration, the secretary's comment is in that vein. The anti-Allende activities of the US government, and Washington's support of the Pinochet regime, reflected disturbing tendencies in US foreign policy—a crusading zeal to change another nation's policies to more closely resonate with US values; interference in the electoral politics of an established democra-

cy; and a virulent fear of left-wing or radical change in a society where the distribution of wealth had been skewed towards the very wealthy for centuries. But the CDP reveals equally deep, but more positive trends in US society: the idea that openness can lead to greater understanding, even learning from history, and that coming to terms with the past can bring healthy reflection on past excesses.

The CDP brought to light considerable evidence regarding ongoing debates in American foreign policy about the extent of US responsibility for the 1973 coup that brought Pinochet to power, as well as US knowledge of his government's subsequent human rights abuses. Academics and politicians will no doubt continue to debate these questions in the future, but the documents appear to show that US government agencies had at least some inkling of Pinochet's human rights violations.

Many scholars tend to see documents as "smoking guns," the Rosetta stones that will allow them to decipher all of US policy or answer big historical questions. It is important to step back and think about who released a document and why. Taking an even bigger step back, it is also important to realize that policymakers are capable of writing documents that distort or cover up the truth. But the fact that scholars' access to the Chilean documents hinged on a political decision—some would say political expediency, given the US government's desire to avoid an international trial of Pinochet—does not detract from the truly remarkable fact of their release.

The CDP also has implications that go far beyond US-Chilean relations from 1968-1991. For example, it revealed information about Operation Condor, the informa-

tion-sharing policies of a loose network of Southern Cone intelligence agencies formed in the early to mid 1970s to fight communism and "internal subversion" in Latin America and elsewhere. Operation Condor sponsored the first deadly act of terror on US soil—the September 1976 car bomb in Washington, D.C. that killed the former Chilean ambassador to the United States, Orlando Letelier del Solar.

The CDP does not give a full accounting of the US knowledge of, or role in, Operation Condor, but the documents it contains represent an important first step for researchers interested in this period. As scholars delve more deeply into the information released under the CDP, they are certain to find that the documents it made available raise (and may answer) important questions concerning US foreign policy that are not even being asked now.

Above all, the CDP is an important educational resource. Only through a careful study of the historical patterns of US diplomacy can citizens make informed decisions about the successes and failures of past US foreign policy. Such knowledge is an important factor in selecting our nation's leaders and determining the future tone of its international relations. ■

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*The ideas expressed here are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the US Department of State. The author would like to thank Peter Kornbluh, Catherine V. Tall, Edward C. Keefer and Stephen M. Streeter for helpful comments on this paper.*



# Gangsters and Prostitutes

by Vincent T. Gawronski

Great nations indeed may have always acted like gangsters and small nations like prostitutes, but the United States also has some loyal friends. Great Britain (at least, Prime Minister Tony Blair), for example, unwaveringly backed the US-led Iraq war effort because of the longstanding “special relationship” between the two countries. (Or, more cynical observers would argue, because the opportunity returned Great Britain to a role “East of Suez” after a 30-year absence.) Why, however, would a regional grouping of relatively small nation-states, which have directly experienced US quasi-imperialism, politically and militarily support the United States in Iraq? Specifically, why would every Central American government, in addition to that of the Dominican Republic, support the unilateral US decision to invade Iraq when the UN Security Council, Mexico and nearly all the South American governments did not—and when clear public majorities throughout the region, including Central America itself, expressed strong opposition to the invasion? Three isthmus countries—El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua—went so far as to send small troop contingents (with the Dominican Republic) to Spain’s Plus Ultra Battalion to assist in “stabilization missions,” humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts. Why would they do this?

The answer lies in the evolving nature of asymmetrical inter-American relations, which are now more intense and complicated than

“The great nations have always acted like gangsters, and the small nations like prostitutes.”

—Stanley Kubrick

*The Guardian*, June 5, 1963

when classic dependency theory was popular. Simply put, the Central American and Dominican elites committed their countries to supporting the United States because they feared that even a neutral position on the Iraq invasion might irritate a notably sensitive, even cranky, Bush administration. Too much was at stake. Combined total merchandise trade between the five Central American countries and the United States exceeds \$23 billion, and the recent inclusion of the Dominican Republic in the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) will bring the total to more than \$32 billion. With the hemisphere moving toward a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the governments in power in Central America and the Dominican Republic at the time of the Iraq invasion were pro-United States and pro-free trade, with centrist or conservative ruling political parties (see Table 1 on page 20).

Given their orientation and fearful of eventual US reprisals, conservative and neoliberal elites felt compelled to support US actions. This was easier in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when world opinion supported a military response. Surveys conducted after 9/11 indi-

cated that Latin American countries with domestic terrorism experience expressed greater support for the US war on terror and had a higher opinion of the United States. The pattern was not uniform across the region, however; as Marta Lagos wrote in the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* (spring 2003),

*In general, Central American countries have a much more favorable (85 percent) opinion of the United States than the rest of the region (71 percent); some of those countries' economies depend on dollars sent by relatives working in the United States, which are a significant part of the national income. Their perception of terrorism as a world threat is higher (66 percent) than it is in South America (57 percent), much higher than in Mexico (46 percent). Their solidarity with the war against terrorism is accordingly higher, reaching almost one in two citizens of the Central American countries.*

Opinions deteriorated as the Bush administration pushed for Iraqi “regime change,” which had little to do with the war on terrorism.

## *Asymmetrical inter-American relations*

Nonetheless, a coalition of lesser “powers” backed the United States by sending troops, including Honduras (370), El Salvador (360), the Dominican Republic (300), and Nicaragua (230).

One year after the invasion, eight countries had more than 1,000 troops in Iraq. The United States, of course, had nearly 135,000. Few countries contributing troops expected to be involved in combat operations or to be directly attacked. Their contributions were symbolic, but the violent escalations of April 2004 and new socialist Prime Minister José Zapatero’s decision to withdraw Spanish troops forced coalition members to reconsider their commitments. Nicaragua decided earlier not to replace troops in rotation for financial reasons. Honduras and the Dominican Republic followed Spain’s lead, despite US diplomatic pressures. El Salvador, for now, will stay.

Historically, US relations with Central America and the Dominican Republic almost always have been uneasy, but the United States can now more easily coerce, reward and punish its friends and allies than ever before. For example, the US Department of State’s list of 63 countries whose companies could compete in bidding for reconstruction projects in Iraq was limited to those whose governments expressed support for the US invasion. In Latin America, only those countries satisfying US Department of State contract standards—Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia and the Dominican Republic—were awarded bidding rights, and in the

end no company from these countries made a bid.

### **Latin American Reactions to the Iraq War**

A Gallup International poll of 41 countries worldwide conducted after the start of the Iraq invasion found that Argentines, followed by Uruguayans, opposed the invasion most, as did nearly as many Chileans and Peruvians in separate surveys. *Latinobarómetro* 2003 results showed that 87% of Latin Americans surveyed held unfavorable opinions of President Bush and that negative images of the United States had more than doubled since 2000 (from 14% to 31%). Although 60% of Latin Americans retained a positive image of the United States, this was down from 71% in 2000. Interestingly, Central Americans were inclined to be more positive about the United States (85%) than South Americans (65%) and Mexicans (63%) in 2003.

Globally, few leaders voiced strong support and solidarity for the United States, but only the larger, more significant countries were able to stick to their principles. Along with Chile, Mexico, a Latin American member of the UN Security Council, opposed the US decision to invade Iraq. This soured President Fox’s once close personal relationship with President Bush, who had declared early in his presidency that no other country was as important to the United States as Mexico. Many observers hoped for significant progress during the two leaders’ overlapping terms on trade, drug trafficking and, especially,

immigration. Of course, 9/11 abruptly changed the Bush administration’s priorities, and the Fox government’s principled stance on Iraq temporarily damaged Mexico-US relations. Some of Fox’s advisers urged him to be more moderate but Adolfo Aguilar, Mexico’s representative on the UN Security Council, said that Mexico would not be subordinated to the United States and was more concerned with developing a mature—“not a prostituted”—relationship with its neighbor to the north. For its part, after opposing the United States in the Security Council, Chile became less vocal in its criticism and President Ricardo Lagos and his administration refrained from direct challenges.

In marked contrast to most of Latin America, every Central American government, as well as that of the Dominican Republic, expressed support for the US-led invasion. Of course, Plan Colombia locked the Alvaro Uribe administration into politically backing the United States, although Colombia did not send troops. Guatemala considered sending some of its forces but the government realized that it could not bear the financial costs or the domestic political opposition. Panama also extended political support but contributed no troops. For 50 years Costa Rica has not had a national military, but still President Abel Pacheco stated publicly: “I would rather Iraqi children die than Latin American and Costa Rican children,” adding, “we are loyal allies to a loyal friend.” Surveys indicated that the majority of Costa Ricans opposed his stance.



TABLE 1: PRESIDENTS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS

Country	President	Political Parties in Power (2003-2004)	Ideological Orientation of Ruling Parties
Costa Rica	Abel Pacheco (2002- )	Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC)	Alliance of Christian Democrats and center-right conservatives
El Salvador	Francisco Flores (1999-2004)	National Republican Alliance (ARENA)	Right-wing conservative
	Tony Saca (2004- )		
Guatemala	Alfonso Portillo (2000-2004)	Guatemalan Republican Front	Authoritarian
	Oscar Berger (2004- )	Grand National Alliance	Alliance of liberals and center-right conservatives
Honduras	Ricardo Maduro (2002- )	National Party	Conservative
Nicaragua	Enrique Bolaños (2001- )	Liberal Constitutionalist Party	Center-right conservative
Dominican Republic	Hipólito Mejía (2000-2004)	Dominican Revolutionary Party	Social-Democrat

Source: [www.electionworld.org/](http://www.electionworld.org/)

The Nicaraguan government approved the deployment of troops to join the “humanitarian assistance task force,” but the leftist Sandinistas considered it to be an “offense to national dignity” and a CID-Gallup poll found that more than 80% of Nicaraguans opposed sending troops to Iraq. Once nicknamed “USS Honduras,” Honduras has long been an ally of the United States with a significant US military presence and millions of dollars in US aid, especially after Hurricane Mitch. The Honduran government sent a mixed battalion to conduct “stabilization missions.”

President Francisco Flores of El Salvador voiced strong support for

the United States and his administration’s troop contribution was an act of thanks for the international community’s backing of the 1992 peace accords that ended the civil war in that country. Of course, the leftist FMLN fiercely opposed the decision, but despite growing domestic opposition to El Salvador’s involvement the conservative ARENA stayed in office after the March 2004 elections. ARENA candidate Tony Saca handily defeated former guerrilla leader Shafik Handal because many Salvadorans feared an FMLN victory would stall economic growth and endanger US-Salvadoran relations. In campaign advertisements, the ruling party warned that the United

States could terminate the temporary asylum status of Salvadorans, resulting in thousands of deportations and the loss of millions of dollars in remittances.

#### The Importance of Remittances

The presence of so many Central Americans and Dominicans in the United States figured mightily in the decision by these countries’ governments to support the United States. According to the US Census Bureau, close to four million Central Americans reside in the United States and nearly half a million undocumented Salvadorans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans have temporary protective status. El Salvador and the

**TABLE 2: TOTAL GDP, HDI RANKING, ODA RECEIVED PER CAPITA, AND NET FDI INFLOWS AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP**

Country	Total GDP in billions (2002)	Human Development Index Ranking (2003)	ODA in Millions (2001)	ODA Per Capita in Dollars (2001)	Net FDI Inflows as Percentage of GDP (2001)
Costa Rica	\$16.9	42	2.2	(.)	2.8
El Salvador	\$14.3	105	234.5	37.1	1.9
Guatemala	\$23.3	119	225.2	1.1	2.2
Honduras	\$6.6	115	677.7	10.6	3.1
Nicaragua	\$4.0	121	928.3	n/a	(.)
Dominican Republic	\$21.2	94	105.4	12.4	5.6

Source: United Nations Human Development Report 2003

Dominican Republic have the highest percentages of their populations in the United States and, along with Mexico and Cuba, account for the most foreign-born immigrants from Latin America.

Remittances now surpass US Official Development Assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) as Central America's most important source of foreign capital. Often in partnership with proliferating nongovernmental organizations, ODA has been directed to support democratic governance, human rights, and commercial and infrastructure development. The United States Agency for International Development dedicated an additional \$47 million to trade capacity building in 2003, a 74% increase over 2002. Three countries—El Salvador, Honduras and the Dominican Republic—relied heavily on ODA in 2001 (see Table 2).

Nonetheless, according to the Inter-American Dialogue Task Force

on Remittances, remittances were more than twice the amount of ODA in 2002, amounting “to some \$32 billion dollars—or about 2 percent of the region's Gross National Product and more than triple the \$10 billion they comprised just a half dozen years ago.” Remittances to Mexico jumped to more than \$13 billion in 2003. They are even more important for the smaller, poorer nation-states in Central America and the Caribbean, the task force found:

*In 2002, remittances accounted for nearly 30 percent of Nicaragua's GDP and 25 percent of Haiti's. They amounted to more than 10 percent of GDP in two other Central American countries—El Salvador (15 percent) and Honduras (12 percent)—and in two Caribbean nations—Guyana (17 percent) and Jamaica (12 percent). In Haiti and Jamaica, remittances are greater than revenues from trade. In three other countries—El Salvador, Nicaragua,*

*and the Dominican Republic—they are more than one-third the value of all exports. Mexico, with a population of some 100 million, receives nearly a third of all remittances to Latin America. But El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic, with a combined population of only 33 million, capture more than 40 percent of all remittances flows to the region.*

The source country, of course, can easily tinker legislatively with remittances and use them as a “political weapon.” It is surely no coincidence that the countries that capture 40% of all remittances to Latin America contributed troops to the occupation of Iraq. The importance of remittances to daily life in many Latin American countries cannot be overestimated. Many families have become dependent on them, and for the poorest, remittances provide a

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# Widening the War on Terror

by Astrid Arrarás and Grace Ivana Debeza

Relations between the United States and Latin America changed substantially after September 11, 2001. During the first months of his administration, George W. Bush announced that Latin America would become a central priority of US foreign policy. After the 9/11 attacks, however, the locus of Bush's foreign policy priorities shifted to the Middle East. Within the framework of the "war on terror," US foreign policy now emphasizes combating participants and supporters of fundamentalist Islamic terrorist organizations. In light of these developments, some scholars and policy makers dismiss Latin America as an Atlantis, or lost continent. But the region is still important to the United States, at least in terms of security policies. Since 9/11, the United States has extended its "war on terror" to Latin America. In pursuing this anti-terrorist crusade, the Bush administration has focused on specific countries and sub regions including Colombia, the Mexican border, and the Triple Frontier area of South America.

After 9/11, the cornerstone of US foreign policy toward Latin America became the "war on terror." As part of this campaign, the Bush administration has redefined terrorism as a catch-all concept that includes guerrilla warfare, paramilitary activities, narcotics production and trafficking, illegal migration, arms and human trafficking, and money laundering. These terrorist-linked activities, the Bush adminis-

tration argues, are not limited to a particular country or region and have a spillover effect that surpasses state borders. The security policy of the United States in Latin America, therefore, focuses on the fight against terrorist activities and organizations that threaten the security of specific countries, subregions or the hemisphere in general.

## Hemispheric Trouble Spots

Colombia is the centerpiece of US antiterrorist efforts in Latin America. This war-torn country is the third largest recipient of US military aid (after Israel and Egypt). Colombia is one of the world's leading producers and exporters of narcotics and is home to three of the 28 groups listed by the US State Department as foreign terrorist organizations. Of the three, two are left-wing guerrilla organizations—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—and the other is a right-wing paramilitary coalition, the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC). These armed factions have been involved in terrorist activities such as bombings, murder and abductions, as well as narcotics production and trafficking. After 9/11, the Bush administration began viewing any country with armed groups as a potential host of terrorism. It also eliminated the distinction between terrorism and drug production or trafficking with the insight that terrorist and narcotics problems are intertwined and should be dealt with as

a whole. The Bush White House perceives Colombian "narcoterrorism" as a major national and international security threat with a potential spillover effect in neighboring countries.

In response to the perceived threat posed by "narcoterrorism," the United States made important changes in its security policy toward Colombia. From 1999 until 2002, under the so-called Plan Colombia, the United States limited its economic assistance to efforts to crack down on narcotics production and trafficking. Since 2002, President Bush has sought and obtained authorization from the Congress to continue US assistance to Colombia in these areas and to extend it to combating guerrillas and paramilitary groups. In 2002, the United States gave Colombia \$31 million for police post support and counter-terrorism equipment and training. For the 2003 budget, Bush requested and received approval from Congress to allocate \$93 million for helicopters, training and other assistance for the Colombian army to protect the Caño-Limón Coveñas pipeline, operated by the California-based Occidental Petroleum Company, from attacks by terrorist groups. To further enhance the counter-terrorist capabilities of the Colombian Armed Forces, Bush requested \$110 million in the 2004 budget. The stated purpose of this funding is to provide more equipment and training to protect the pipeline and combat narcoterrorism.

Closer to home, the United States also pays attention to poten-

## *US security policy toward Latin America since 9/11*



*A member of Colombia's antinarcotics police force on board a US-donated Black Hawk helicopter surveys the operations of a T-65 spray plane used to eradicate opium poppies under cultivation in the mountains of Huila. The Bush administration has redefined terrorism as a catch-all concept to include narcotics production and trafficking.*

tial terrorist threats from its 1,951-mile southern border with Mexico. Encouraged by Mexican President Vicente Fox and seeking to gain support from the Hispanic community, President Bush made some steps toward reforming US immigration policy toward Mexico during the first months of his administration. In the wake of the events

of 9/11, this progress came to a halt. According to the Bush administration, a liberal immigration policy with Mexico could serve as a channel for terrorists, illegal immigrants, illegal drugs, and arms and human trafficking, posing a serious threat to national security.

After 9/11, the US invited Mexico, as it had Canada previous-

ly, to cooperate in the establishment of "smart borders." The goal was twofold: to facilitate the legal movement of people and goods into and out of the United States, and to protect the United States by strengthening border security. The smart borders plan provides for laser scan identification cards for frequent border commuters, x-ray



facilities, shared computer databases, and special lanes for pre-inspected shipments. To improve border security and the development of smart borders, President Bush proposed \$10.7 billion for the 2003 budget, an increase of \$2.1 billion from 2002.

Another security concern for the United States is the area of South America known as the Triple Border Area (TBA). The region where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay converge hosts a large Arab population and State Department reports describe it as a hotbed of illegal activity, including arms and drug trafficking, smuggling, document and currency fraud, money laundering, and distribution of pirated goods. More significant in this case, the State Department also characterizes the TBA as a hub for Hezbollah and Hamas activities, especially financing and logistics. Since the bombings attributed to Hezbollah in Argentina in 1992 and 1994, US government officials have become increasingly concerned about the presence of Arab radicals in the TBA.

The 9/11 attacks brought renewed attention from the United States and the TBA countries to the presence of Arab radicals in the region. During 2002, the TBA countries cooperated in investigating and disrupting illegal financial activities linked to Arab terrorist groups. In December 2002, these governments invited the United States to join a counterterrorism consultative and cooperation mechanism known as the Three Plus One (the three TBA countries plus the United States) to analyze and combat terrorist threats. A main issue tackled by the Three Plus One has been alleged terrorist fundraising on behalf of Hezbollah and Hamas in the TBA. Since 2001,

the State Department has been unable to confirm allegations of the presence of Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda support cells in the TBA, although these leads have been examined by US and local intelligence and law enforcement organizations.

In addition to the TBA, the United States has become concerned about potential security threats in the Caribbean region. Financial institutions on several Caribbean islands are known to benefit from money laundering operations. Since the 9/11 attacks, the United States has developed some security measures along its "third border" in the Caribbean. As part of a third border initiative, the United States aims to establish security cooperation with Caribbean nations to address such problems as arms, drugs and human trafficking, and money laundering. In the specific case of money laundering, the United States is launching a set of financial security measures aimed at the banking system in Latin America, especially the Caribbean.

#### **Implications for US-Latin American Relations**

The United States' emphasis on security challenges and problems in Latin America has important implications. Under the logic of the war on terror, the Bush administration is concentrating efforts and resources on bilateral relations with repressive forces in Latin American countries, including the police and the armed forces. US support for these institutions could result in unpredictable consequences in Latin America. A 2004 United Nations Development Programme survey found that only 43% of Latin Americans fully supported democracy in their countries and that 54.7% would be willing to

consider an authoritarian government. The empowering of the military and the police could threaten recently democratized countries or even the established democracies of the region. In addition, the US emphasis on security policy diverts sorely needed resources from non-traditional threats, such as poverty, social exclusion and weak democratic institutions, which also affect the security of Latin American countries.

Some recent developments raise hope for the future of bilateral security policy as well as the solution of Latin America's critical problems. The Organization of American States' Special Conference on Security Convention has made progress in including non-traditional threats on the agenda of hemispheric security. This conference could become a new platform to promote multilateral cooperation and attention to critical problems affecting the region. Without a renewed and more inclusive perspective on hemispheric security, relations between the United States and Latin America could become even more distant and strained. ■

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# The Remittance Lifeline

by Mariana Martínez

**A**lberto Rodríguez, 29, arrived in the United States four years ago with one goal: to get a job that would allow him to support his family. He could not achieve this goal in his own country, El Salvador, where unemployment rates are high due to a precarious economy.

Every morning, Alberto gets up at 5:45 and walks to the corner of Shallowford Road and Bufford Highway in Atlanta, Georgia, where he often waits several hours to be picked up for short-term jobs. Once a week, he walks three miles to a remittances center to send his savings to his wife, Isaura, who stayed behind in El Salvador with their four children. He sends almost all of his wages to feed and educate them. These remittances have been their lifeline and have allowed Isaura to start a small street business selling *pupusas* (a type of stuffed tortilla) in front of a factory. She has also been able to begin work on the initial stages of a small brick house in Soyapango, a neighborhood of San Salvador. The whole family dreams of the day Alberto will return home, but they know that it will take a long time for their dream to come true.

Alberto's story is typical of millions of his countrymen. More than two million Salvadorans have left their homeland to enter the United States, legally or illegally, in search of jobs that will allow them to send money to their families. The phenomenon appears to be unstoppable in El Salvador, where remittances reached a record high

## *Money sent from abroad helps Salvadoran families survive but hasn't changed the roots of poverty*

of \$2.1 billion in 2003 and continued to increase in the first months of 2004. According to the Central Bank of El Salvador, the volume of remittances jumped 20.4% in the first quarter of the current year. Remittances already represent 67.1% of the total value of net exports from this small Central American country and 14.03% of total 2003 GDP.

We know why Salvadorans decide to migrate and why they are sending money to their families, but several other important questions about remittances remain to be answered: How is the money being used? And, more important, are remittances improving living standards and playing a fundamental role in the economic development of the country?

In March 2004, I conducted a survey in San Salvador to try to answer these questions. The survey included 429 subjects selected from a socioeconomic cross-section of the metropolitan area of San Salvador, which has 1.2 million inhabitants. The people interviewed were adults (18 years and older) who received remittances from relatives in the United States. The survey was supplemented by an in-depth interview with a Salvadoran family and a focus

group of 15 individuals from different sectors of the capital's population.

The study found that, on average, Salvadorans receive about \$200 per month from relatives living abroad. They use this money fundamentally to cover their basic needs (food and living expenses). The extra dollars have helped increase family incomes in El Salvador, where the minimum wage is 42 *colones* (\$4.80) per day. But while remittances help alleviate the relative poverty in which people live, they do not eliminate it or create better living conditions for Salvadorans. Remittances have created an "artificial" economy that is based not on productivity but on external elements.

### **The Household Impact of Remittances**

More than 70% of respondents to the March survey said they received remittances once a month. Another 21.21% received them twice a month, and 5.36% received remittances more than three times per month. The data show that remittances are not being used in the productive cycle of the Salvadoran economy, but rather are needed to cover immediate household expenses. When the recipients



were asked how they used the money they received, slightly more than half (50.8%) said they spent the money mostly on food. Another 18.2% reported using it for education, 10.5% for health expenses, and 8.4% to pay rent. Only 4.2% used the money primarily to operate or open a small business, and just 1.6% said they put it into savings. A larger percentage of respondents used at least some portion of remittances for long-term goals once basic needs were covered. More than 50% of the recipients declared that they used part of the money to study, while 16.3% said they applied it to start their own small businesses (81.8% trade, 16.7% services, and 3.03% agriculture).

Most of those who receive remittances are women (64.4%), and those who send them are mostly men. People 30 years old or under are most likely to receive money from their relatives abroad. The likelihood of receiving money decreases after 30 and increases once again among recipients who are 50 or older. This reflects the fact that young women tend to remain in El Salvador in charge of the family unit while their husbands migrate to the US to earn better incomes. Respect for familial bonds makes it unnecessary to establish any method of control for the use of the money beyond a verbal agreement.

People 50 and older use remittances mostly for medicine and health care, while those between the ages of 20 and 30 rely on them to pay for education. An end to remittances, therefore, would jeopardize the daily survival of many families. Sustenance and education would be hardest hit, with savings and health care significantly affected.

### **Implications for the National Economy**

In the last 20 years, the Salvadoran economy has grown increasingly reliant on the flow of foreign remittances. The continuous flow of dollars into the country was one factor behind the government's decision to adopt a policy of dollarization and has created a strong dependency on the US economy. As a result, the country is extremely vulnerable to external shocks. Without the development of savings and investment, the economy will need ever greater daily flows of dollars to survive, creating a vicious cycle that only increases El Salvador's dependence on the amount of remittances its citizens receive.

The families interviewed described remittances as an element of economic survival rather than as extra income that would allow them to improve their economic status. They reported using most of the money to purchase consumer goods, not to invest or save. This trend underscores the necessity of creating a culture of savings among Salvadorans and introducing the resources from remittances into the productive cycle of the economy to generate sustainable economic growth. This will be extremely difficult as long as the recipients of remittances belong to the poorest sectors of the population.

It is vital for El Salvador to establish economic mechanisms that can generate sustainable growth. The March survey suggests one potential avenue to help change the "artificial" structure of the economy into one based on the development of internal forces. The survey and focus groups reveal that most Salvadorans would explore the possibility of opening their own small businesses if they had the resources to do so, if the national economy

improved, or if they had the necessary training. The study found that 76.2% of those interviewed who do not own their own business would be "interested" in opening one, as opposed to 23.8% who answered they were "not interested at all." The reasons for not starting a business included lack of savings (19.35%) or the state of the national economy (17.2%).

At the same time, the study found that Salvadorans, unlike most other Latin Americans, are comfortable using the banking system. In El Salvador it is not unusual to see a peasant walk into a bank to withdraw money from an account or an ATM machine. In fact, most of the interviewees said that they receive remittances through the banking system (60.6%). This is an indication of the strength of El Salvador's banking culture and of a good environment for establishing micro-loans.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Salvadoran government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) create support plans for the recipients of remittances by establishing small investment projects (urban and rural) to channel resources received from abroad in a productive manner. This ambitious goal can only be reached through development of a culture of savings (via public relations campaigns, educational programs, etc.) and establishment of micro-loans as a fundamental tool in the country's economy.

How could the government do this? One important factor would be to persuade financial institutions to change their lending policies for applicants requesting micro-loans. Instead of requiring the usual collateral, the banks should put their trust in the labor force, in the revenues that would be generated from

the initial investment of capital, and the remittances Salvadorans like Isaura receive from abroad on a regular basis. Once Salvadorans can open a small business they could use remittances to improve it or put the money into savings, while using the revenues generated by the small business to support their families and pay back the micro-loans.

The rising total of remittances is not simply a result of migration, but also one of its causes. Among the main reasons Salvadorans cite for leaving their homes are violence, public insecurity, unemployment, and the desire to help relatives by sending money from abroad. When remittances become essential for the survival of a large percentage of the population, as is the case in El Salvador, it is only logical to expect people to continue to look for income sources outside the country in the following years.

Only if remittances enter the productive economic cycle, allowing the economy of El Salvador to change from an artificial structure to a productive one that is sustainable in the long run, will Alberto and other Salvadoran migrants be able to fulfill their dream of coming home. ■

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# Binational Cooperation

by *Dennis J. Bixler-Márquez*

**T**he political and business leaders of transnational communities on international borders have learned to examine the dictates of their political centers through a prism that gauges the impact on their regions of national and global interests. The primary challenge for such communities is informing and affecting national policy to their benefit, including minimizing the unavoidable negative impact of commercial or political dislocations.

Historically, the biggest political issue that has confronted communities on the US-Mexico border is finding a place on the political and fiscal agendas of their respective nations and, in some cases, their states. Since September 11, 2001, however, national security measures have drastically modified the management of the flow of people and commerce at border crossings and ports of entry. Washington, D.C. and Mexico City have moved border management to the forefront of their bilateral relations, shifting away from their earlier unilateralism in policy formulation and application. Current globalization trends, such as the flight of maquiladoras from Mexico to China, the increase of undocumented immigration to the US, and the implementation of new security measures have prompted concerted political action by entities on the US-Mexico border and responses from federal entities in both nations.

Rather than decry the obvious

negative potential of new security policies and wait for a more auspicious time to renew the bilateral dialogue on border-relevant issues, the leadership of the US-Mexico border region recognized that the events of 9/11 had placed the border high on the political agenda and organized for political action. The challenge to transnational communities and other less integrated border areas changed from attracting the attention of their political centers to leveraging their newly gained prominence. A further challenge became how to mesh US security interests with the local and global economic agendas. In a climate of post-9/11 hysteria, the political and business leadership of transnational communities such as El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua recognized the need to transform the region's image in the eyes of the US public and government. Specifically, they sought to change the perception that an improved flow of people and commerce into the US automatically translates into lax national security and a dangerous southern border. Global corporations and trade organizations concerned about the new security measures coalesced with political groups such as the US congressional border and Hispanic caucuses and the US-Mexico border governors to lobby federal entities to improve border management. The Mexican government also realized the political and economic benefits of playing an active role in the protection of the United States' southern perimeter and became a strategic stakeholder in American security.

## **The US-Mexico Border after 9/11**

The events of 9/11 and the subsequent war with Iraq affected the political and economic relations of the United States and Mexico along their common 2,000-mile border. US Homeland Security legislation and previous stopgap measures played an important role in this binational relation. As J. M. Heyman (2001) points out, international crossings typically absorb the impact of the official national policy of the moment, particularly in administrative sectors. But while administrative problems that impinged on binational commerce and economic development in the border region intensified after 9/11, other problems were gradually alleviated during this unstable period as regionally crafted political strategies brought long-sought federal attention to the southern US border.

This analysis focuses on binational commerce and transportation on the US-Mexican border, using examples and statistics mostly from, but not limited to, the metropolitan area that includes El Paso, Ciudad Juárez and small communities in southern New Mexico that border the states of Texas and Chihuahua. Binational commerce and transportation were selected due to their importance to the maquiladora industry in Mexico and border metropolitan areas, particularly in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). US national security policy and legislation, as well as the subsequent administrative measures applied on the border, are examined in light of globalization patterns manifesting themselves in the region.

## *Homeland security and the politics of transportation and commerce*

Also included is a conceptualization of how binational and regional integration measures can be crafted politically under the umbrella of proposed federal expenditures and security regulations in the region.

### ***Commerce and Transportation***

Before 9/11, commercial relations between the United States and Mexico were strained regarding such issues as non-competitive Mexican agricultural products, binational commercial transportation under NAFTA, water rights pertaining to the Colorado and Río Grande rivers, and the perennial immigration debate. The sluggish US economy also had a negative impact on the border region, particularly the maquiladora industry. Trade between Mexico and the US declined, complicating negotiations in controversial areas such as tariffs and farm subsidies.

On 9/11, border crossing points were closed and US federal authorities began to implement stricter security measures that emulated Operation Intercept, the 1969 program that was the most intensive federal interdiction effort until that time. A Nixon administration strategy to pressure Mexico economically to play a proactive role in the war against drugs, Operation Intercept called for all vehicles entering the United States to be inspected. The documents of travelers, particularly pedestrians, were scrutinized carefully. When these measures were reintroduced in fall 2001, the time it took to cross into the United States went from an average of 45 minutes to an average of two to three hours.

Pedestrian, vehicular and commercial flows were reduced to an alarming level, affecting the regional economy immediately. The products of assembly plants owned by US and other foreign companies began to pile up on the Mexican side. Retail and wholesale sales on both sides of the border were affected as border dwellers delayed social visits and shopping trips to avoid long lines and possible mistreatment by American authorities. Long crossing times became the norm again after the start of the war with Iraq in 2003 but soon abated significantly due to infrastructure improvements and an increase in US Customs personnel.

Mexican authorities also increased their vigilance, but to a level and in a manner that did not significantly affect commerce or the binational flow of the border population. After the start of the war with Iraq, the Mexican army deployed some of its units to urban and rural border crossings. Mexican immigration officials increased their scrutiny of visitors entering Mexico from Islamic countries and of travelers bound to the US. The Iraq war prompted Mexico to launch Operation Sentinel, a program designed to protect its northern and southern borders, other points of entry such as seaports and airports, tourist sites and critical infrastructure.

This increased monitoring had some objective consequences for the regional economy and public perception of the border. Even though the war on drugs took a back seat to national security concerns, contraband to the US diminished and

interdiction of narcotics and illicit merchandise increased dramatically in 2002. Fugitives from American justice who had crossed back and forth over the border with impunity were captured routinely in 2002 and 2003. But drug traffickers sought alternate routes into the US and the smuggling of human cargo increased, as well as its cost in terms of dollars and lives lost.

The positive results of increased monitoring and interdiction did not go unnoticed in the United States, where the American public asked, why wasn't the border policed this way previously? On both sides of the border, political and civic leaders, chambers of commerce and international transportation associations began to lobby US federal authorities for agents and equipment to create a more efficient inspection system. They warned of a catastrophic deterioration of the border economy if an enhanced inspection system and ancillary improvements failed to materialize. On the US side, the lobbying was led by local spokespersons emphasizing patriotism and recognizing the necessity to maintain a state of vigilance for the sake of national security.

### ***Initial Security Measures to Monitor Trade and Transportation***

Renewed federal attention to the border region brought some early positive results in the form of infrastructure development. The national security program authorized by Congress in 2002 assigned sophisticated equipment for the inspection of commercial vehicles, trailers and containers. Homeland security legis-



## **Administrative binational cooperation on the border is politically feasible, even under difficult political circumstances. If US national security policy is properly incorporated into requests and dialogue on regional requirements, smart borders are possible.**

lation authorized the development and implementation of an electronic registration system for passports, visas and other documents, as well as the tracking of all who enter and leave the country legally by 2005. This tracking system incorporates biometric technology that enables the recognition of body features, allowing closer inspection of human traffic across the border. In 2003 most visitors and immigrants were still registered only when entering the country. The new outflow inspection will likely cause delays in the tourist and commercial flow from the US to Mexico until effective logistics for its implementation are in place.

Ironically, many border interests, as well as federal agencies directly concerned with border security, had clamored for improvements of the immigration, customs and law enforcement infrastructure on the border for decades before 9/11, with few results. It was not until the region's leadership articulated a new marketing strategy—labeling the requests as integral components of the new national security policy and, to a lesser degree, a stimulus to regional commerce—that the federal authorities acceded. The same pattern is true of pre-9/11 requests for the electronic visa readers held by many visitors. The Immigration and Naturalization Service did not receive this equipment until after

9/11, when its use was deemed vital to national security.

### **Binational Relations and Regional Integration in an Era of Heightened National Security**

On March 22, 2002, Presidents Bush and Fox signed the US-Mexico Border Partnership Agreement in Monterrey, Mexico. The so-called "Smart Border Plan" aims to implement a modern inspection infrastructure to facilitate an efficient flow of people and commercial traffic. Some of its provisions, such as advanced inspection of US-bound cargo and the establishment of new vehicular express lanes at crossing points for travelers categorized as a low security risk, were implemented gradually in 2003. It shows that administrative binational cooperation on the border is politically feasible, even under difficult political circumstances. If US national security policy is properly incorporated into requests and dialogue on regional requirements, an "intelligent and dynamic border," in the words of Mexico's Consul General in San Antonio, Carlos Vidali, is a viable outcome.

Although the US and Mexico are far from resolving such difficult issues as amnesty for undocumented Mexican immigrants or Mexican support in the United Nations for US Middle East policy, progress is certainly possible in other areas. The

political costs of Mexico's unwillingness to support the US during the UN deliberations on Iraq remain unclear, despite Colin Powell's protestations that the US still views Mexico as a friend. Diplomatic efforts have overcome other scandals in the past. Recently, despite the discovery by the Mexican press that the American company Choice Point fraudulently obtained Mexico's voter registration lists on behalf of US intelligence agencies, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge met with Mexico's Secretary of the Interior, Santiago Creel, to discuss an undocumented immigrant amnesty and border regional security. Mexico has attempted to leverage its support for US national security in the border region by including the issue of amnesty for undocumented immigrants in the US. In turn, the US Congress has tried to link an amnesty to the privatization of Mexican oil. As these back and forth negotiations indicate, it is possible to reach agreements in some areas and to continue, defer or even develop new lines of dialogue in others. Such a pragmatic approach is consistent with the two nations' recent diplomatic history.

### **Homeland Security, Borders and Emerging Globalization Trends**

In an era of increased national security, the binational communities along the US-Mexico border must incorporate their needs and aspirations into the extant rules of federal financial sponsorship, policies and regulations applicable to the region. Néstor Rodríguez and Jacqueline Hogan (2001) find that border regions such as El Paso/Ciudad Juárez and Laredo/Nuevo Laredo have a successful track record as transborder communities despite the national regulations that divide them. This strategy is increasingly the most viable avenue for adapting

to the global imperatives of the new millennium.

Binational cooperation and regional integration are key mechanisms for addressing border issues and reducing the burden of administrative procedures designed to fortify national security. Officials representing border areas in both countries encourage such a strategy. Jeffrey Jones, a Mexican federal senator from a region of Chihuahua adjacent to the US border, argued eloquently in 2002 in favor of region-based planning: "The relationship between Mexico and the US first occurs on the border. The border region must develop and propose solutions and initiatives based on its binational conceptualization." New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson has pro-

posed that his state, Chihuahua and West Texas promote a synergetic regional agenda to better leverage economic development and trade, and San Antonio's Consul Vidali calls for systemic dialogue on the border and its problems in the binational organizations directly concerned with them, such as the International Water and Boundary Commission. Scholars too recommend integrated planning for the development of transborder values and epistemologies unique to specific border sectors. Luis Ernesto Derbez, Mexico's foreign relations secretary, predicts that solutions to immigration and other areas of mutual concern may come in small increments depending on political and economic conditions, such as the winding

down of the war with Iraq and reduced national security alert levels.

Last year, the inhabitants of the border listened with optimism, and some reserve, to Tom Ridge as he promised representatives of the National Association of Counties that his department will safeguard the nation's borders using methods, infrastructure and technology that ensure the safe and fluid movement of commerce and people. Significantly, Ridge delivered this message at a meeting of local polities, the first to absorb the impact of federal policy. ■

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## COMING SOON

### FIU Report on "Terrorism Preparedness in Florida"

Dr. Michael W. Collier, Lead Investigator

This two-year field research project by Florida International University's Latin American and Caribbean Center and Institute for the Study of Transnational Crime and Terrorism investigates the readiness of Florida's first responders to handle a terrorist attack. Included are an assessment of the security posture of Florida's critical infrastructure and a statewide telephone poll of Florida citizens about terrorism preparedness issues.

While Florida is often seen as a national leader in emergency readiness programs and is better prepared than before the 9/11 disasters, the state is far from ready to respond to future attacks. The citizens surveyed for this project strongly supported terrorism preparedness programs, indicating they would give up more civil liberties and pay higher taxes to ensure the safety of their families.

To order an advance copy, call the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University, (305) 348-2894, or email Michael Collier at: [collierm@fiu.edu](mailto:collierm@fiu.edu).



# Dream or Déjà Vu?

by Charles D. Thompson, Jr. and Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon

**W**hen President George W. Bush announced his plans for immigration reform on January 7, 2004, he immediately ran into opposition. The president called for a vast guest worker program that would legalize hundreds of thousands of immigrants, chiefly Mexican farm workers. Guest workers would be given three-year, renewable contracts with American employers and granted safe and legal passage between their homes and the United States; however, the program would withhold ordinary work visas, provide no path to permanent residency or citizenship, and allow undocumented workers in the United States to participate only after they paid a fine.

Criticism came without delay. Conservatives were skeptical of any immigration program that would give rights to and legitimate the past behavior of undocumented workers. Tom DeLay, the Republican House Majority leader, expressed "heartfelt reservations" about a proposal that "seems to reward illegal behavior." Progressives criticized the proposed program for failing to go far enough, for focusing on US economic and security needs over the rights and welfare of the guest workers themselves. The Farmworker Justice Fund proclaimed that the president was "essentially proposing a new era of indentured servants," adding that the US had "experimented with indentured servitude and 'guest-worker' programs [before]; they

"As a nation that values immigration, and depends on immigration, we should have immigration laws that work and make us proud. Yet today we do not. Instead, we see many employers turning to the **illegal labor market**. We see millions of hard-working men and women condemned to fear and insecurity in a massive, **undocumented economy**. Illegal entry across our borders makes more difficult the urgent task of securing the homeland. The system is not working. Our nation needs an immigration system that serves the American economy, and **reflects the American Dream.**"

*President George W. Bush*

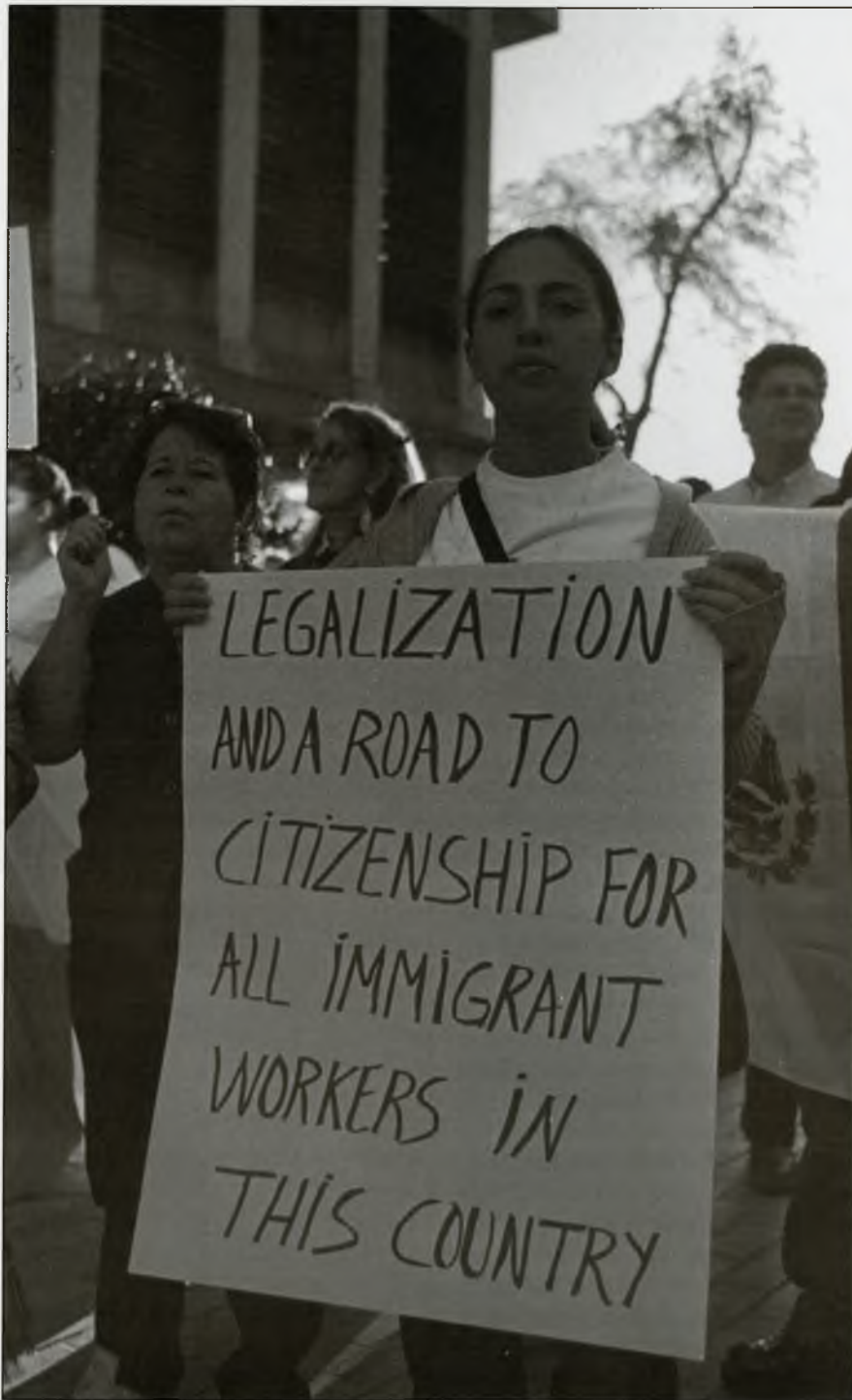
*January 7, 2004*

"George Bush's plan leaves foreign workers as **fodder** for our **fields and factories** without giving them a path to **legalization** and a **fair shot** at the American Dream."

*Senator Joseph Lieberman, D-Connecticut*

*January 7, 2004*

## *The debate surrounding George W. Bush's proposed immigration reform*



failed miserably and caused great misery." Even Mexican President Vicente Fox expressed some doubt about the program's ability to gain congressional approval before the next election. It became apparent at once that Bush would face an uphill battle in making any headway with his immigration plan.

### **Fifty Years of US Guest Worker Programs**

The president's proposal was not a new initiative, as he implied. In fact, the United States has been experimenting with guest worker programs for more than half a century. The Bracero Program of 1942 was intended to provide replacement workers for World War II soldiers and continued until 1964, bringing nearly five million Mexicans to the US for temporary farm work. The H-2 Program began in 1952, mainly to supply sugarcane workers. In 1986, as part of President Reagan's Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the program was split into H-2A and H-2B, the former concerned with farm workers and the latter with industrial labor.

Throughout the past decade, there have been various efforts to reform or even abolish existing guest worker programs. Only months before Bush's proposal, in fall 2003, legislators introduced a new bill called the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act, commonly known as "AgJOBS." This bipartisan bill, resulting from long negotiations between labor unions, farm organizations and farm worker advocacy



## Photo Essay: Immigrant Workers

groups, had already been co-sponsored by 88 representatives and 50 senators when Bush announced his own proposal. AgJOBS contains two parts. The first, a two-step "earned adjustment" program, would allow undocumented farm workers who had been performing agricultural work in the United States to gain temporary resident immigrant status and, after completing a further three to six years of work, permanent resident status. The second part of the bill calls for the current H-2A program to be revised substantially, granting more rights and better working conditions to immigrants.

The contrast between AgJOBS and the president's proposal is striking. The former envisions progressive steps that could lead to US citizenship. The president's proposal offers no such long-term initiatives. The reforms contained within AgJOBS are concerned primarily with farm workers' rights, such as guaranteed work, fair wages and travel compensation. Bush's program emphasizes homeland security and the US economy.

At this writing, it is unclear if either of these programs will be adopted, or what the future holds for guest workers who come to the United States. What is clear, however, is the need to study existing guest worker programs before we adopt any further expansion plans. Only by interviewing and documenting the lives of the workers themselves will it be possible to arrive at a just and democratic labor and immigration policy. Before proceeding further with immigration reform, we must know how guest workers are treated in the transition between their country of origin and the United States, what rights they have while they are here, and what communication, if any, they have with their own govern-



ments when they are away from home.

One way to find answers to these questions is to study existing guest worker programs. The largest of these is the H-2A Program mentioned above. The southeastern American states, especially North Carolina, lead the nation in hosting H-2A workers and are a natural starting point for such an examination. North Carolina receives the largest number of H-2A workers annually, currently about 24% of those in the program. These laborers harvest a variety of crops,

including Christmas trees, cucumbers, sweet peppers and other vegetables, but the crop most responsible for the heavy influx of guest workers is tobacco. In 2001, 14,600 H-2A employees were working in southeastern tobacco fields, 7,800 of them in North Carolina.

In the South, tobacco has long been a cash crop farmed with the help of landless labor—slaves at first and then, following abolition, sharecroppers, although the region was also home to thousands of small family tobacco farms. With time, as small farmers lost their



*The North Carolina Growers Association contracts with the Chihuahua Bus Company to transport H-2A workers. North Carolina receives the most H-2A workers of any state in the country.*

*H2-A workers at Wester Farms in Louisburg, North Carolina carry computer chips that record the number of buckets they pick. Here, a worker has his latest bucket recorded.*





## Photo Essay: Immigrant Workers

tobacco acreage to large farms and the domestic labor force sought better paying jobs, another source of workers was needed. With the US government's support, southern tobacco farmers began to recruit Mexican workers. But these migrant laborers moved from farm to farm throughout the growing season and farmers deemed them unreliable. The search for a reliable labor pool prompted North Carolina tobacco interests to pursue a guaranteed labor supply through H-2A.

Much of North Carolina's success in attracting H-2A workers is due to the North Carolina Growers' Association (NCGA), an organization started in 1989 with the sole purpose of matching H-2A workers with North Carolina farmers. To begin with, the NCGA had only 40 farmer members who together employed 350 workers. By 1998, it had grown to 800 members and 7,000 workers. By 2003, the number of H-2A workers had climbed to 12,000. Farmers favor H-2A workers because of their reliability—they are bused from Mexico to individual farms where they remain for the entire season. Also, farmers pay no Social Security or other taxes on H-2A wages. By far the greatest advantage of the H-2A workers, however, is the farmer's ability to control the flow of labor in and out of the farm.

In his January 2004 speech, President Bush insisted that any immigration reform must reflect the American Dream. Yet with the notable exception of bringing undocumented workers into the program, his proposal differs little from the present H-2A system. This raises an important question that only further fieldwork can answer: Does the H-2A program reflect the American Dream, or is it merely a continuation of the same



*H-2A workers on their way to North Carolina at a lunch stop in Houston, Texas.*



*The trip to the United States costs some H-2A workers as much as \$1500 of their own money for transportation and fees collected by Mexican "coyotes."*



*Picking cucumbers. H-2A workers are bused to individual farms where they remain for the entire season.*

policies the US has followed for more than 50 years?

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Guest Worker Programs**

To seek an answer to this question, among others, Cynthia Hill and Charles D. Thompson, Jr. (co-author of this article) have produced a documentary film entitled "The Guestworker: *Bienvenidos a Carolina del Norte* (Welcome to North Carolina)." For this project, they followed H-2A workers from their arrival on a North Carolina farm in June 2002 to their return home to Mexico in November of the same year and continued documenting them the following year. Hill and Thompson focused on a

single household of workers, on one particular farm, as representative of the larger contingent of H-2A workers in the United States. The film is narrated by one of the workers, Candelario González Moreno.

"The Guestworker" allows H-2A workers to speak for themselves and shows the reality of life on one North Carolina farm. It documents all aspects of the H-2A worker's life, from grocery shopping and cooking to the long days spent in the fields. Many of the workers are grateful for the safety of the H-2A program, particularly the older workers who can no longer risk the arduous path of illegal border crossings. Most are glad to have a written work contract to protect them.

The H-2A program also has negative aspects, however. In interviews, dozens of the H-2A workers in Hill and Thompson's film longed for rights that are currently denied them. These include greater job security and the freedom to live with their families year-round in the United States. H-2A provides no retirement or Social Security benefits, and without any hope of citizenship, rights to collective bargaining are curtailed. Much of the enforcement of contracts is left up to the NCGA, a private organization essentially owned by farmer members.

Workers are also fearful of what they call the "*lista negra*," or black list. This is a list controlled by

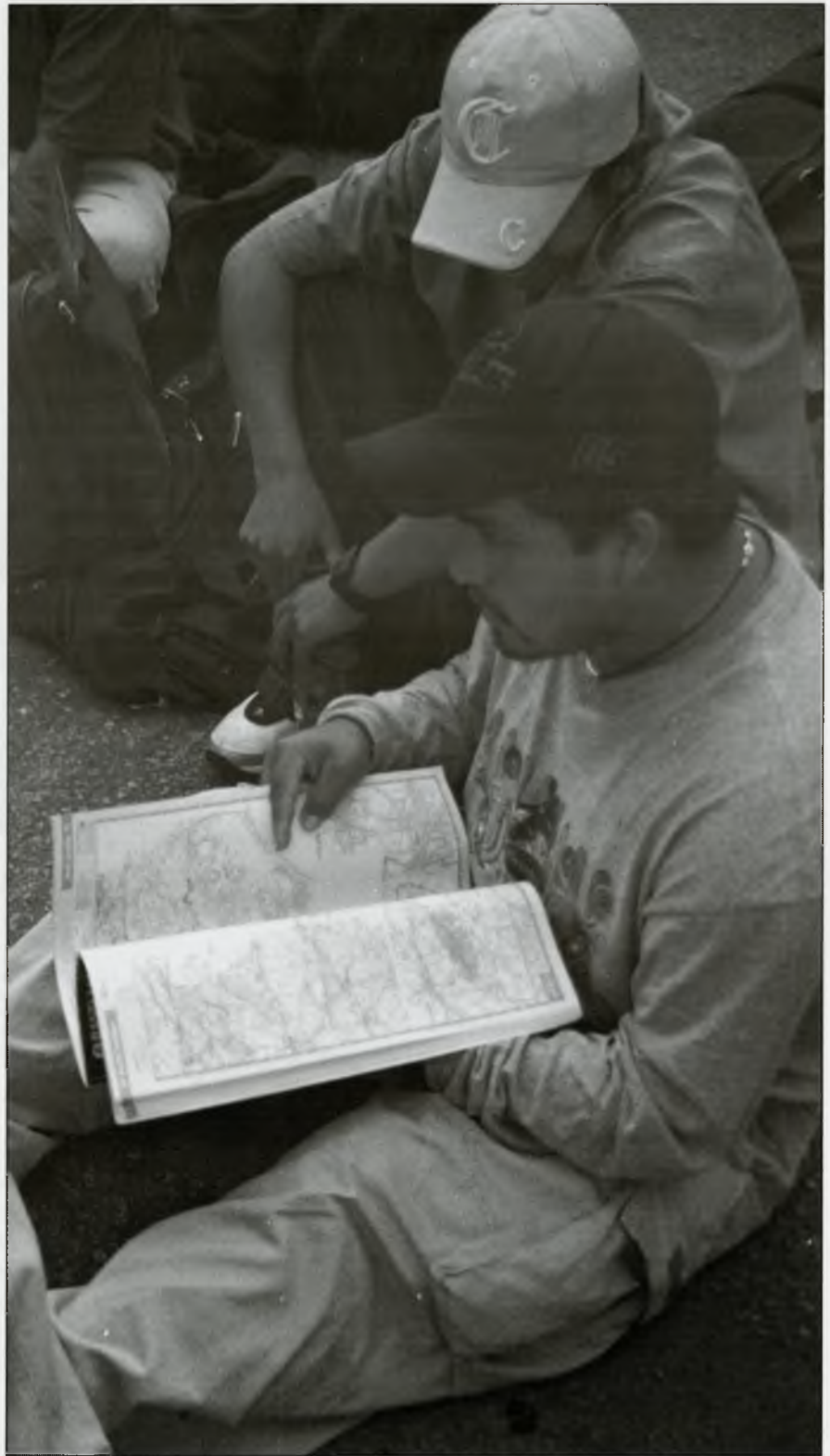


## Photo Essay: Immigrant Workers

growers that contains the names of workers eligible for continued employment in future years. If a worker leaves before the end of the growing season, even because of illness, he is forbidden to return for three years. After the three years are up, he is placed at the bottom of the list, making it unlikely that he will get a return spot.

There are further downsides to the H-2A program. The trip to the United States costs some H-2A workers as much as \$1,500 of their own funds for transportation and fees collected by Mexican "recruiters," otherwise known as "coyotes." While employers reimburse much of this fronted money by the end of the season in November, before that time workers often pay exorbitant interest rates on borrowed funds. This debt effectively keeps them on the farms, even if the work is not to their liking or they are abused.

Compare these conditions with those described by President Bush in his description of the American Dream for immigrants. He speaks of a "welcoming society" that has encouraged the "hard work and the faith and the entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants" to flourish. Current guest worker programs, the president claims, have allowed "the talents and dreams of the world" to be used to benefit the United States. Many immigrants, he says, staying true to the American Dream, have taken the "familiar path from hired labor to ownership." Are such concepts compatible with the current structure of the H-2A program? Existing fieldwork suggests they are not, although much work remains to be done before we can reach a firm conclusion. What can be said with certainty, though, is that for any new guest worker proposal to bring immigrants closer to the American Dream, the current sys-



*Mexican H-2A workers making the journey to North Carolina study a map to familiarize themselves with their destination.*

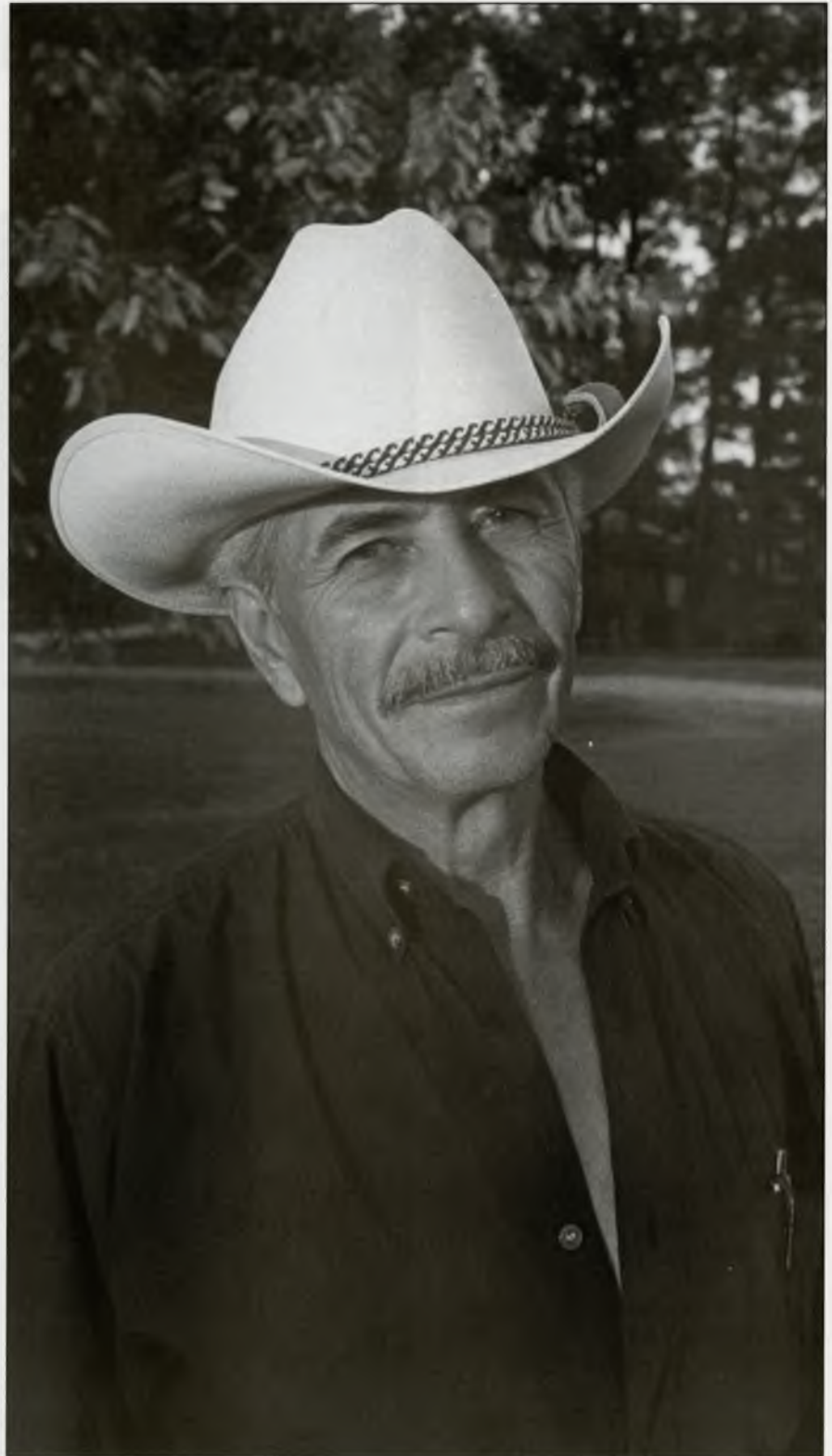


*H-2A workers waiting outside NCGA headquarters in Vass, North Carolina.*

tem of immigration must be carefully studied and the mistakes of the past must be avoided. ■

*Charles D. Thompson, Jr. is education and curriculum director of the Center for Documentary Studies and an adjunct professor of cultural anthropology at Duke University. He is co-editor, with Melinda F. Wiggins, of "The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor, and Advocacy" (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002) and co-director, with Cynthia Hill, of the film "The Guestworker: Bienvenidos a Carolina del Norte." Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon is a PhD candidate in history at Duke University. He has published articles in "The Historian," "Terrorism and Political Violence," and "Peace and Change."*

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*Candelario González Moreno, a Mexican H-2A worker and the subject of a documentary film on guest workers in North Carolina.*



# Is Mexico Too Difficult to Bear?

by Juan Carlos Gamboa

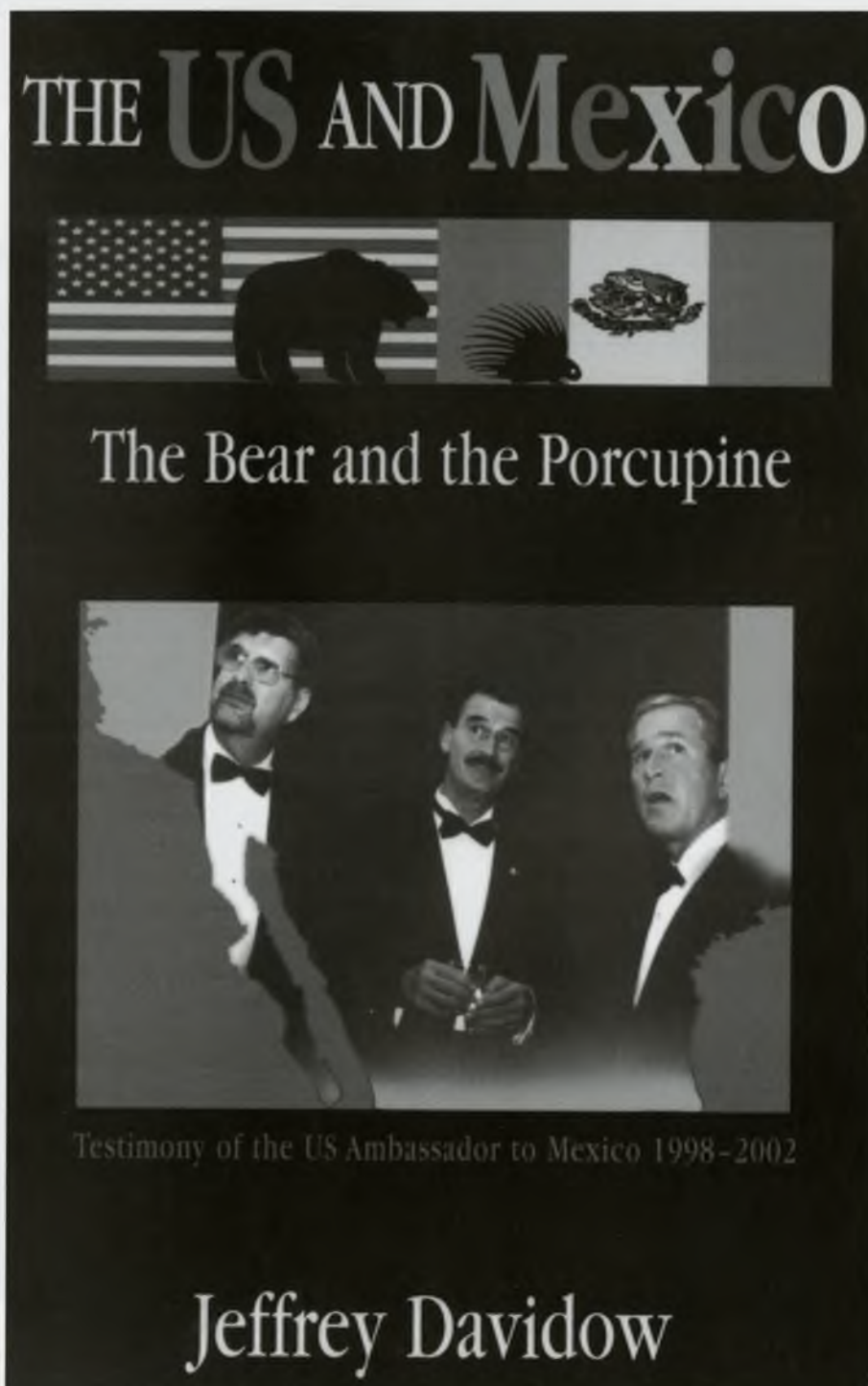
*The U.S. and Mexico: The Bear and the Porcupine*

By Jeffrey Davidow  
Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2003, 254 pages.  
\$69.95 hardcover; \$24.95 paperback.

Easy to read and packed with delightful anecdotes, *The Bear and the Porcupine* is an informal memoir of Jeffrey Davidow's four-year tenure (1998-2002) as US ambassador to Mexico. The book features his recollections of some of the most important political events in Mexico's recent history: the election of Vicente Fox as president and the consolidation of the country's democratic transition after more than 70 years of semi-authoritarian rule under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

The book's title refers to the historical relationship between the sometimes admiring and always prickly Mexican "porcupine" and the usually well-intended but often insensitive American "bear." Davidow offers readers a first-hand account of the many misunderstandings that make it difficult to achieve improved cooperation between the two countries.

The analysis is spiced with a healthy dose of gossip about influential Mexican and US political personalities. On the Mexican side, former Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda comes off as impulsive and undisciplined, while on the US side, Ari Fleischer and Madelaine Albright are portrayed as an arrogant brat and a prima donna, respectively.



But nothing seems to amuse Davidow more than the maneuvers of Mexican politicians during an electoral season. "I enjoy the company of politicians in campaign," he writes. "Like dogs in heat, there is a simplicity and transparency to their objectives. Observing Mexican politicians is doubly fun because they truly enjoy backstabbing and gossiping, two of the world's great spectator sports."

Also enjoyable are Davidow's anecdotes about visitors to the Mexican Embassy from "Planet Washington." In his view, uninformed and pushy American officials don't mix well with oversensitive Mexicans who seem convinced that the White House spends much of its time plotting ways to undermine Mexico's sovereignty. Davidow illustrates such sensitivities with anecdotes of his daily interactions with members of the Mexican press, whose questions were invariably variations on the theme, "How are you planning to violate our sovereignty today, Mr. Ambassador?"

But *The Bear and the Porcupine* is much more than political gossip and entertainment. It provides readers with a keen analysis of some of the issues that have defined the nature of US-Mexico bilateral relations in the past few years. Among the book's many contributions is Davidow's fascinating insider account of the failed attempt by President Fox to reach a comprehensive agreement on immigration with the United States. In the ambassador's view, Fox's failure had less to do with the change in American priorities after September 11 than with Mexico's pushiness and misreading of US political reality.

Davidow also offers an insightful interpretation of one of the most contentious issues facing the neigh-

boring countries: drug trafficking. His discussion includes a thoughtful assessment of the detrimental effect of the so-called "certification" process. Every year, until the law was revised in 2002, the US Congress required the president to certify countries' cooperation with US anti-narcotics programs. Countries that were not certified risked losing US foreign aid. In practical terms, Mexico's certification as an ally in the war against drugs was little more than an empty threat. A decision not to certify Mexico would have presented the US with a security, immigration and trade problem that the country could not afford. And in any case, Mexico receives little financial help from the United States. Nevertheless, Mexico cares deeply about its international image and resented the humiliating annual ritual. Says Davidow: "The most negative effect of the certification law was that for years it focused Mexican attention on an extraneous issue—the perceived American arrogance inherent in the process of judging others—and, in doing so, provided a pretext for Mexico to ignore the reality of its drug scene."

While pointing out some of the many misunderstandings that permeate the bilateral relationship, Davidow also underscores initiatives that have helped strengthen constructive communication between the two neighbors. In particular, he credits the annual meetings of the Binational Commission, which bring together cabinet members from both countries and provide them with the opportunity to bond with their foreign counterparts. Perhaps even more important, under pressure to show "deliverables," the meetings often force the two bureaucracies to create academic exchange programs, information-sharing systems, and innumer-

able other tangible products that effectively reinforce US-Mexican relations year after year.

The ambassador is a firm believer that a greater level of convergence between the two countries is inevitable. In this vein, he concludes the book by envisioning the potential for a common currency, open borders and even a North American parliament. Davidow is anything but naïve and recognizes the political hurdles these proposals entail. But instead of discarding them outright, he suggests concrete initiatives to promote increased integration: a customs union with common external tariffs; a joint legislative commission to hold hearings and legislate separately on common issues; and increasing the number of Mexican guest workers allowed into the United States.

Whether or not Davidow's vision becomes a reality or remains a pipe dream, he has already contributed to an improved understanding of the United States' relationship with its southern neighbor. His firsthand account of the dynamics and issues that complicate the interaction between the two countries is difficult to find in academic volumes, and he presents his experiences with a candor that readers on both sides of the border will find invaluable. Add the gossip and it makes for a very enjoyable read. ■

*Juan Carlos Gamboa, PhD is a senior vice president for government affairs at the Miami office of Fleishman-Hillard, an international communications firm.*



## US-Latin American Relations

by Marian Goslinga

**T**he United States has a long history of involvement in and with Latin America. The relationship has varied from intense adulation to benign neglect—as dictated by US interests. Although at present the US has its attention focused elsewhere in the world, events and issues in Latin America remain a matter of ongoing concern.

For a chronology of the 55 US interventions in Latin America since 1890, see <http://www2.truman.edu/~marc/resources/interventions.html>, a website maintained by Truman State University. The bibliography that follows deals with some of these events, as well as other aspects of a relationship that has veered between prickliness and affinity.

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*Marian Goslinga is the Latin American and Caribbean bibliographer at Florida International University.*



# Gangsters and Prostitutes continued from page 21

**TABLE 3: PER CAPITA GDP, INCOME DISTRIBUTION, PER CAPITA REMITTANCES, AND AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD REMITTANCES (US\$)**

Country	Annual per capita GDP (2002)	GDP per capita of poorest 20% (2002)	GDP per capita of poorest 40% (2002)	Remittances per capita (2002)	Average annual remittances received by recipient households
Dominican Republic	2,080	530	480	230	1,590
El Salvador	2,080	300	350	230	2,300
Costa Rica	4,100	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,800
Guatemala	1,750	340	400	140	2,150
Honduras	920	90	130	110	2,060
Mexico	3,740	770	890	100	3,020
Nicaragua	470	50	80	130	1,170

Source: Report of the Inter-American Dialogue Task Force on Remittances (2004).

crucial social safety net, as the Inter-American Dialogue task force noted: "In Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and a few other of Latin America's poorest nations, remittances may be more than doubling the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of the population." Remittances are essential to the quality of life of the poor and even the middle class, and they relieve demands and pressures on government social services (see Table 3).

As North and Central America and the Dominican Republic integrate economically and converge under CAFTA, dependence on the United States will increase, as will the asymmetry in their relations. That is, Central America and the Dominican Republic will remain relatively unimportant to the average American as the United States becomes even more important to Central Americans and Dominicans.

Except for trade and immigration issues, US foreign policy towards the region since the end of the Cold War has been an "afterthought." The Central American countries barely register as blips on Washington's radar screen; in contrast, the United States *is* domestic politics in Central America. One need only compare the massive architecture of US embassy buildings in the region with the government buildings of the host countries.

In sum, while the redefinition of national and international security partly explains the Central American and Dominican governments' support of the US-led invasion of Iraq, the real reasons lie in the feared costs of challenging the United States at a sensitive time. The dominant neoliberal elites of these countries simply could not, and cannot, jeopardize their increasingly beneficial political and economic relationships

with the United States. Their governments supported the United States in Iraq primarily out of pragmatic considerations of dependent vulnerability and feared retribution. To close with Stanley Kubrick's analogy, these small nations, like prostitutes, are consummate pragmatists. They have to be. ■

*Vincent T. Gawronski is an assistant professor of political science and political science coordinator in the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences at Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, Alabama. A longer version of this paper was presented at the Midwest Political Science Association 2004 Conference in Chicago, Illinois.*

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