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The Second Meeting of the  
Andean – U.S. Dialogue Forum

IDEA International

Lima, Perú

June 1-2, 2010

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**June 1-2, 2010**

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IV. Biographies of the participantes



## **Andean – U.S. Dialogue Forum**

June 1-2, 2010

Lima, Perú.

### **Tuesday, June 1**

<b>08:00 - 08:30 am</b>	<b>Breakfast at the Sonesta Hotel.</b>
<b>08:30 - 09:15 am</b>	<b>Words of welcome and presentation of the members.</b>
<b>09:15 - 11:00 am</b>	<b>Presentation of national situations</b>
<b>11:00- 11:30 am</b>	<b>Coffee break.</b>
<b>11:30 - 12:45 pm</b>	<b>Presentation of advancement on the topic of a Common Agenda for the 6 countries. Discussion.</b>
<b>12:45 - 01:00 pm</b>	<b>Closing of the morning session</b>
<b>01:00 - 02:45 pm</b>	<b>Lunch at the Sonesta Hotel.</b>
	<i>The guest of honor will be Ambassador Popolizio, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Perú</i>
<b>02:45 - 03:30 pm</b>	<b>Discussion about group work topics.</b>
<b>03:30 - 04:30 pm</b>	<b>Full presentation of the results of the group work.</b>
<b>04:30 - 05:00 pm</b>	<b>Coffee break.</b>
<b>05:00 - 06:00 pm</b>	<b>Continued presentation of the group work topics.</b>
<b>06:00 - 06:30 pm</b>	<b>Closing</b>
<b>06:30 - 07:30 pm</b>	<b>Rest</b>
<b>07:30 pm</b>	<b>Departure from the hotel to the Historic Center of Lima.</b>
<b>08:00 -11:00 pm</b>	<b>Welcome dinner at the Club Nacional.</b>
<b>11:00 pm</b>	<b>Return to the Sonesta Hotel.</b>

**Wednesday, June 2**

<b>08:30 - 09:00 am</b>	<b>Breakfast at the Sonesta Hotel.</b>
<b>09:00 - 10:45 am</b>	<b>Next Steps of the Forum: Planning visits for the U.S. members to the Andean countries.</b>
<b>10:45 - 11:00 am</b>	<b>Coffee break.</b>
<b>11:00 a 11:45 am</b>	<b>Continued discussion about Next Steps.</b>
<b>11:45 a 12:45 pm</b>	<b>Work in groups</b> <i>One group per work topic and one group for the Common Agenda of the 6 countries.</i>
<b>12:30 - 12:45 pm</b>	<b>Group photo</b>
<b>12:45 - 02:45 pm</b>	<b>Lunch at the Sonesta Hotel.</b> <i>Free time for relationship-building and networking.</i>
<b>02:45 - 04:15 pm</b>	<b>Discussion about projects to adopt in the Second Phase.</b>
<b>04:15 -04:45 pm</b>	<b>Coffee break.</b>
<b>04:45 - 05:30 pm</b>	<b>Discussion about the Forum Document and communication policies.</b>
<b>05:30 - 06:00 pm</b>	<b>Participant evaluation (questionnaire) and closing words.</b>

## **Document of the US Andean – U.S. Dialogue Forum**

*The following document is a proposal that has been drafted by the Secretariat in an effort to summarize the main concepts expressed by the members of the Dialogue Forum.*

The Carter Center and International IDEA, as part of a joint initiative, decided to promote a closer relationship between the five countries of the Andean Region (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) and the United States by convening groups of influential actors from a variety of sectors of civil society in each country.

The main purpose of the initiative is to strengthen relations and cooperation between the Andean Region and the United States through greater mutual understanding, the creation of common agendas and creative solutions to problematic issues.

As a venue for dialogue among members of civil society, the Forum aims to contribute to progress made by the countries' governments, identifying new areas of mutual cooperation and providing a base of support for diplomatic efforts among the governments of the six countries.

At an initial dialogue session held in Atlanta on 23 and 24 February 2010, the Forum members agreed that the initiative is highly promising and offers a strategic opportunity to explore, from the standpoint of civil society, possibilities for jointly addressing the economic, political and social challenges currently facing the region.

At the first meeting in Atlanta, the group decided to develop a Report on a Common Agenda of the six countries, through consultations among the members of the forum and key informants in the countries, to gain an understanding of perceptions and expectations regarding relations among the countries in the Forum. The report will also endeavor to indicate erroneous perceptions and misunderstandings that exist among the countries, which have sometimes hampered a joint response to common problems, and will highlight points of convergence that can serve as the basis for strengthening mutual cooperation.

## Documents and articles about Andean – U.S. relations

### *Andean – U.S. relations under President Obama*

#### **“Remarks at the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas.” United States Department of State. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State. May 12, 2010.**

Good morning. Thank you very much, Susan. And thanks, of course, to Eric and John and Arturo. And it is a special personal pleasure to have my neighbor, David Rockefeller, here. He has been such a leader on behalf of so many important causes, but I know how close this one is to your heart, David. And I'm very pleased that you could join us for this Council of Americas meeting, and I'm delighted to not only welcome you back to the State Department, but to invite you to use today and the format of this meeting to share with us your thoughts and ideas about the way forward.

I know I speak for many colleagues in the State Department and USAID, as well as the rest of the Obama Administration, when I think so many of you in this room as I look around and see all these familiar faces – Mack McLarty and others who are here for everything you've done to transform our hemisphere, to create broader markets, to promote trade and to spread opportunity and prosperity.

I was looking at the GDP numbers. That's unfortunately part of the job that I have these days, because diplomacy doesn't stop with meetings between elected officials. But of course, what's happening in the economy, particularly during this period of global challenge, is critical. And this hemisphere, particularly Latin America, is doing better than average if you look at the world as a whole. So for that, we are very grateful and many of the companies, as well as countries and their leaders represented here today, are – really do a lot of the credit for having navigated through a very difficult time.

But I know that we have so much more work ahead of us. And I'm looking forward, Director General Insulza, to being in Peru for the OAS General Assembly. And for – my priorities, Latin America and the Western Hemisphere always remain at the top of the list. I can't stay long today because, of course, I have to go meet President Karzai and meet with the President on our agenda there, but I always am thinking about what more we can do to enhance our partnerships, to make more progress together.

And I wanted to just talk about three issues. One, I see my friends from Colombia and Panama, and I hate seeing them, I have to be honest. (Laughter.) We are, as President Obama said, committed in the State of the Union to our free trade agreements with both countries, but we are also facing very difficult political challenges. But I am absolutely here to reiterate that commitment. Both Panama and Colombia have worked very hard to deal with some of the questions that were raised by this Administration and certainly by our Congress, and I think that we are going to pursue this. I can't predict the outcome, but it is something that the President and I in particular feel strongly about. You'll hear from U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk later in the program.

But our commitment to trade is one that we feel strongly about. We just have to deal with the political winds and we need more help from the private sector. We need more strong advocacy on behalf of the importance of trade and why it is good for the United States and American workers. My friends from Mexico, who will be here in great numbers next week, know that we have some challenges on that front as well. I don't want to ignore that because we have some outstanding trade issues. But again, we are trying to work through those and bring those to resolution, and we're very excited about President Calderon's visit.

We also have made a big commitment to energy security, new forms of energy, the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas that we rolled out at the Inter-American Development Bank. I don't see Director Moreno here, but I know he'll be here later in the program.

We believe that we can do so much more on both energy and climate, and we need your help on that front as well. The United States is prepared to invest government funds to solicit private sector funds to try to develop the energy sectors. We are particularly concerned about how so many countries in the Caribbean and Central America are dependent on imported oil at great cost to their economies. I believe that we will see oil start to go back up in price and that will further impinge upon the budgetary choices in the Caribbean and Central America, and we need to get ahead of this and not see the consequences that will inevitably flow that will hit the hardest on the people least able to manage those costs. So, trade and energy investment, that's one big basket of issues that I know you'll be addressing. We need your ideas, we need your constructive criticism, and we need a strong, deep partnership on the way forward.

Secondly, security – you can't go anywhere in Latin America without hearing about the challenges to security. Our friends from Colombia have waged a heroic and largely successful struggle against the drug traffickers, but it isn't over. It's not over in Colombia and it is certainly not over anywhere else in the hemisphere. The countries bearing the brunt of it today are in Central America and Mexico. The brutality, the barbarism of the drug traffickers in Mexico is just beyond imagination. And we need smarter, more effective strategies to deal with this continuing threat to civil society, to governmental legitimacy, to the writ of government out into areas that need to be controlled. We have some good examples of what does work, but we are nowhere near what I would consider to be an effective strategy.

We have invested a lot, as you know, in Plan Colombia. We've put a lot of funding into the Merida Initiative. Arturo was recently in Central America talking about the partnership that we are working on to assist those countries that are particularly vulnerable. But this is a huge threat. It's a huge threat to the governance and the economies and the quality of life throughout Latin America, but particularly in Central America and Mexico. So again, the United States is committed, we're going to do everything we can to help, and we want to be smart about the help that we provide.

And finally, the issues of inequity, of immigration are ones that are particularly important and they are linked to everything else. While I think that we can take a lot of

joy in the positive GDP growth, our income disparity continues to grow. And that is not good news for anybody. That is a source of social and political instability. It feeds a lot of the criminal activity that unfortunately is now dominated by the traffickers of drugs and arms and people. And we have to do a better job.

Now, we've seen successes in Colombia, in Mexico, in the cash transfer programs. We are working hard under one of our principal deputy assistant secretaries, Craig Kelly, in the Pathways to Prosperity. We are really trying to work with governments and the private sector to increase economic opportunity. But this must be at the core of everything we do. We cannot be successful and produce the kind of sustainable growth and progress without economic opportunity being more broadly spread.

And there are a number of issues that are at work here. I have been speaking with my colleagues throughout the hemisphere and with heads of state and government about the need to increase revenues for governments. And that's just another way of saying taxes. If you look at the tax revenue to GDP rate in Brazil, it's one of the highest in the world. It is not an accident that Brazil is booming and that it's beginning to decrease the inequities in that society. And that's a complex, big society. But they are making progress. It has been a policy going back several decades which has been pursued with great commitment and it's working. Too many other countries, you look at the tax revenue to GDP percentage, it's among the lowest in the world. That is unsustainable.

So while we talk about what we need to do in Latin America, we need to stay focused on how we empower and how we create mechanisms within the public sector that are going to be able to lift up those who are on the bottom. We don't have the poorest people in the world in Latin America, with the exception of Haiti, but we have the most inequity. And therefore, we've got to have a partnership among the public and the private sector to address this.

And let me just end with a word about Haiti. I am so grateful to every country represented here, because every country in the hemisphere contributed something to Haiti after the earthquake. Even those that were small and themselves coping with difficult social and economic conditions have made their contributions. And we have to stay united on this effort.

Some of the countries that are represented here, particularly the Dominican Republic, which has been a great neighbor when their neighbor was in need and overcome a lot of past history, but so many others have done just an extraordinary job in getting through the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. More people in Haiti are now getting clean, safe drinking water than they got before the earthquake. So we have to build on that progress and try to build back better, as my husband has famously said about his role at the United Nations and working with the Haitian Government.

So we've done a lot. We have a lot to be proud of in this hemisphere. But I'm not satisfied and I don't think that any of us should be, because there is still a big agenda before us. But I'm grateful to this council, the work that you've done, the example you've set, keeping the focus on the Western Hemisphere despite whatever trouble

spots were springing up elsewhere in the world, and I am committed to doing everything I can to have this hemisphere be a model and to combine our strengths, overcome our weaknesses, work in a real spirit of partnership and friendship, and I welcome your thoughts and ideas about how we in the Obama Administration can be more successful in doing that.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

**“Andean Region Trip Review (Interview).” United States Department of State. Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary of State. April 12, 2010.**

**QUESTION:** Assistant Secretary Valenzuela, welcome back, you just came back from a 3 country trip to the Andean region. Why did you go and what were the main themes of your visit?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY VALENZUELA:** I did go travel to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and this is an Andean tour. In each of the countries, I was able to meet with the president as well as foreign minister, although in some ways, what I most enjoyed about the trip was to meet with embassy people in each of the embassies, U.S. embassies, but also to speak with university students. I am a college professor so I enjoy doing that. I also visited some projects that the United States government supports through USAID and through other initiatives in various places. It was a great trip.

In Colombia, for example, I was able to visit an extraordinary project with a private foundation that helps Afro-Colombians who have been displaced because of the conflict in Colombia, the narco-trafficking conflict in that country, and who are essentially trying to get their lives in order. These are very poor people. But this foundation is a wonder foundation. It’s called Little Grains of Hope, that is the name of the foundation and it was very moving to see what they do.

In the Peruvian Andes, I was able to actually go down to the jungle area, in upper Huallaga, in Northern Peru, to see an absolutely phenomenal development project. With assistance from the United States, through various different agencies, peasants who used to grow coca in this area of Peru are now growing cacao. In fact, not only are they growing cacao, they are producing their own chocolate. One of the cooperatives there of about 1500 peasants won a prize recently in Paris for the quality of their chocolate. They also produce coffee and various sorts of things. This is what we need to do, the main theme of the trip was to talk to leaders in each of these places on how we can move ahead with social inclusion, poverty alleviation, making sure that our populations are more competitive which means in investment in infrastructure, investment in human capital and education. At the same time, we’ll work more effectively together on things that are really complicated such as public insecurity, the drug trafficking, criminal violence and things like that which have affected these countries in a major way.

**QUESTION:** We understand you have had the opportunity to meet Ecuador's President Rafael Correa. Can you tell us about that meeting?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY VALENZUELA:** Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador, is an interesting gentleman. He has a PhD in economics from the University of Illinois. In fact, two days after I visited with him, he traveled to Illinois to receive an award from the University of Illinois because he is one of the most distinguished graduates. He is a man who has been elected with a significantly large majority support in Ecuador. He has a program of social change he wants to implement. We had frank conversations on some things we agree and some things –we didn't really disagree on the objectives that we try to pursue. We both share this commitment to try to cooperate better, how we can cooperate better, how we can work more effectively to address the problems of our societies. In the case of Ecuador, for example, we have very good cooperation on counter narcotics efforts. Ecuador is next to Colombia and is affected significantly by the drug trade. Even though they don't produce coca in Ecuador, I raised some concerns with President Correa about Iran. He has been in conversations with Iranians looking for investments. I made clear that the United States is extremely worried about relationships with countries with Iran, given Iran's violations of some of its responsibilities, internationally, and the condemnation that rightly Iran has received from the UN Security Council on the fact that it has not cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Cooperation. We also discussed some things that concern us about freedom of the press in Ecuador. The concern is that the majority government sometimes does not protect minority rights. We had frank conversations and it was a cordial conversation and it was a respectful conversation. That's how in all my trips I've said the Obama administration wants to deal with our Latin America policy. This is not about wanting to beat up on people willy-nilly. We want to try to engage but being very clear too what are fundamental principles and fundamental objectives are.

**QUESTION:** You had a couple of great opportunities to interact with university students first in Ecuador then in Colombia. Can you tell us about the issues that interested them?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY VALENZUELA:** Yes, the students were interested in a broad range of concerns. They are interested in themselves and what they might want to do in the world. In Ecuador, I had a lot of questions from students who wanted to know about the opportunities they had to come to study in the United States and what fields they ought to study. They are obviously interested in international affairs. In Ecuador, in particular, it was kind of fun because I spoke to university that had a campus in Quito, so I was speaking to some people there. Also through video conferencing, I was speaking to some of the other campuses, so we had a good conversation. They are concerned, obviously, about issues of poverty, inequality, the drug trade. They also asked international questions about Iran, and I tried to explain what the United States' position is.

**QUESTION:** You had the opportunity to interact with leaders at the World Economic Forum in Cartagena. Can you tell us about your message there and with whom you met?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY VALENZUELA:** Let me just say this—that in all three countries, I was able to meet foreign ministers as well as the president. I had an equally good meeting with President Uribe in Colombia and his team. And President Uribe, as you know, is leaving office soon. It’s extraordinary. He has 80% approval ratings. He has done a tremendous job in reversing a very difficult situation in Colombia. Colombia is now a very secure country. But he is leaving office because the constitutional court said that he could not go on for another term. Colombia is an example where the rule of law and where institutions are working well and where a president decides, even if he is very popular, that at the end of his term, he indeed steps down. In Peru, I met with President Garcia who has done an extraordinary good job. Peru has very high economic growth rates recently. Although they have problems in some of the jungle areas for example with the degradation of tropical forests—that was one of the things I looked at there. But as asked in your question, I did go to Cartagena for the World Economic Forum and participated in a panel there with several other leaders and with business leaders from all over Latin America discussing international problems. It was a great opportunity for me to give our message –that is that the United States is reaching out to Latin America to have stronger partnerships with all of our neighbors in the hemisphere in order to resolve the problems that we all think we can resolve together. I am very optimistic about this trip.

**Castañeda, Jorge “Adiós, Monroe Doctrine. When the Yanquis go home” The New Republic. 28, December 2009.**

**The ouster** of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya has provided Latin America with a revelatory moment. Beginning with the Monroe Doctrine--and extending through countless invasions, occupations, and covert operations--Washington has considered the region its backyard. So where was this superpower these past few months, as Honduras hung in the balance? More or less sitting on its hands. The fact is that the United States is no longer willing, or perhaps even able, to select who governs from Tegucigalpa, or anywhere else in the region for that matter. Looking back at the history of the hemisphere, this fact is remarkable--and certainly transformative. For the first time in centuries, the United States doesn’t seem to care much what happens in Latin America.

The roots of the diminishing U.S. presence can be found in the end of the cold war. It’s not that the rivalry with the Soviets was the only factor driving U.S. involvement in Latin America. Clearly, James Monroe and Teddy Roosevelt didn’t plunge their country deep into the hemisphere out of an anti-communist impulse. But the conclusion of the long struggle with the Soviets sharpened a question that may have long lurked in Washington’s subconscious: What national interests, exactly, did the United States have in Latin America?

Of course, it is tempting to view this possible retreat from the region as further evidence of Barack Obama's realist foreign policy. But consider the approach of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. During their administrations, America's grandest policy moves in the hemisphere were in the realm of economic policy--NAFTA, the Mexican bailout of 1995, CAFTA. And, when the United States did exert itself militarily, it did so in concert with regional allies--as was the case in Haiti and with Plan Colombia. But since George H.W. Bush's invasion of Panama, there have been no unilateral military interventions, no coup plots or new embargoes, not even the propping up of decaying regimes.

To understand this new passivity, we can examine the two events that have most riled the old critics of imperialism: the Bush administration's alleged complicity in the botched military coup against Hugo Chávez in 2002 and the plans to build a wall along the Mexican border. Both of these events are partly real and largely idle. Even if the coup plotters in Caracas had the tacit approval of the United States, they were almost certainly acting on their own, and sloppily. Meanwhile, the fence has yet to be completed. Recession has abated the human flow northward--and policymakers surely know that a wall will be futile once the economy eventually recovers.

At first, in the case of the Clinton years, this attitude of benign neglect made Washington popular. But then, for reasons having more to do with Iraq and Afghanistan, that popularity evaporated. And, in the end, the rise of anti-Americanism in the region didn't make much of a difference. Chávez has not stopped selling oil to the United States; Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa rants against imperialism but maintains the dollar as his country's national currency, with the Fed's quiet acquiescence.

Of course, the United States still has its critics. Some--the left, mainly--would prefer that it play even less of a role: a unilateral end to the Cuban embargo, immigration reform, voiding the military basing agreement with Colombia. Others--the right, chiefly--have called for further confrontation with Chávez. But, by and large, a strange and centrist hemispheric consensus has emerged in support of U.S. indifference. Therefore, this policy will persist, unless things get nasty.

**With the rise** of Chavismo, it isn't always possible to see the salutary benefits from this new U.S. policy. But they are tangible. It has grown increasingly difficult for certain regimes to blame Washington for their failures. From Venezuela to Argentina to Bolivia, populist governments have pursued economic and social policies, as well as geopolitical alliances, that can scarcely help their people. When these policies inevitably fail, these governments won't be able to replicate the rhetorical trickery of the Cubans or the Sandinistas. They cannot hold Washington responsible for their setbacks. At best,

they can argue that the peasants in the Andes are still hungry because of the presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, but that is not an easy sell.

And the change in regional dynamics is even more profound than that. The past decade has seen the rise of governments--like those of Lula in Brazil, Michelle Bachelet and Ricardo Lagos in Chile, and Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay--that have ideological differences with Washington but a strong desire for a good working relationship with it. These governments can fend off the most radical segments of their left-wing constituencies, who frown on any relationship with Washington, by citing the end of U.S. imperialism in the hemisphere. When the so-called "Shiite" faction of Lula's Workers' Party protests against hosting George W. Bush for lunch, he can reply that, whatever one may think of Iraq, Bush did not inflict any harm on Brazil; when Chávez rails against the U.S.-Colombian military agreement, Chile and Uruguay can reasonably respond that, while they may not like the deal, it does not affect them.

This U.S. stance is also a positive development for symbolic reasons. Too much is made about the imperative for U.S. atonement or humility; they are both overrated. Nonetheless, the United States does carry baggage in the region, and the history of its engagement with Latin America is not a proud one. Breaking with that past, at least by not repeating it, is a good idea and wins points in most quarters of the hemisphere. There is a legitimate debate about the motivations for U.S. intervention in Latin America, as well as its consequences. But placing that history behind us allows for a relationship stripped of the rhetorically strident and often vapid atmospherics of the past.

**Unfortunately, this new** strategic environment is precarious. Over the long run, the U.S. policy of benign neglect stands a good chance of isolating Hugo Chávez. But such policy depends on turning the other cheek--and perseverance in turning the other cheek depends largely on the intensity and frequency of the slaps one receives.

The least-dangerous threat posed by Venezuela and its allies is economic: that companies will be nationalized without compensation; that a gradual drop in Venezuelan oil exports to the U.S. Gulf Coast will turn precipitous; that defaulting debt will trigger a regional financial crisis. None of these scenarios would be the end of the world, but Barack Obama could hardly pursue his jocular attitude toward Chávez if they materialized. Another danger lies in the Caracas caudillo's domestic policies. If he goes too far in muzzling the press, intimidating the opposition, and tampering with the electoral process or the courts, Washington will find itself unable to ignore his authoritarian crackdown.

But it's Chávez's foreign activities that could prove most menacing. For now, his partnership with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is more bluster than substance. The idea that the two dictators' countries can truly help each other, given their economic similarities, is far-fetched. But it is possible to imagine situations in which Chávez would lend Iran a truly destabilizing hand. If Tehran faces trade sanctions, especially an embargo on gasoline sales, Venezuela could help mitigate the damage with exports. Venezuela could also serve as a base for transshipment of Russian arms sales to Iran, with the hope that Israel would not detect them until it is too late. Finally, Iran could farm out sensitive stages of its nuclear program to Venezuela, where it would hope to avoid the watchful eye of inspectors. Any of these scenarios could provoke the United States to abandon its deliberate passivity.

Chávez has already shown a penchant for mischief, particularly within Latin America. So far, he has meddled successfully in the electoral processes of smaller countries--Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras--and much less successfully in larger nations--Mexico, Peru, and Colombia. His flops have permitted a certain tolerance for his triumphs. At the end of the day, who governs in Managua is no longer a matter of huge preoccupation in most foreign ministries.

But the larger countries are a different kettle of fish. Two, in particular, stand out as tempting targets for Venezuelan adventurism. Colombia is Chávez's ongoing obsession. He cannot bring this country into his orbit electorally, but he could conceivably try to move it into his column through other means--revolution, insurrection, pressure from across the border. Peru, the more likely candidate for his meddling, will hold elections in 2011 under highly adverse circumstances, with its (unjustly) unpopular ruling party and no viable centrist alternative to the Chavista, Ollanta Humala. In either case, successful Venezuelan involvement would in all likelihood trigger a U.S. response of one type or another. These countries are simply too large, with too many U.S. investments and a central role in the drug trade.

**While the region** has reason to cheer this turn in U.S. policy, it simply can't afford for the United States to disappear. On matters such as immigration, free trade, and the battle against corruption, almost nothing can be done without U.S. cooperation or leadership. Or take the steps toward drug decriminalization made by California, Nevada, and Oregon. These shifts in policy could be more important for the hemisphere than the 40-year-old "war on drugs" or the Mérida Initiative or Plan Colombia. The producer countries of the drug trade will not advance toward decriminalization unless the consumer country *par excellence* moves in that direction first.

Economic development in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America is hardly conceivable, let alone possible, without a significant U.S. contribution, both monetary and conceptual. Building up infrastructure, stabilizing currencies, and establishing

effective and transparent antitrust institutions are tasks that countries cannot carry out alone, given their integration with the U.S. economy.

Many of the region's traditionally anti-interventionist nations--Mexico, Brazil, Argentina--are coming to understand the need to anchor Latin America's democracy in a strong, intrusive, and detailed legal framework, the same way that free-trade agreements, as well as World Bank and IMF programs, have solidified economic policies that are finally yielding results. The United States must be part of this framework, to coax these countries along and to bestow credibility upon whatever is built. Many of the institutions that enshrine this emerging consensus--the American Convention on Human Rights, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights--would be meaningless, like the League of Nations, if Washington were not a part of them.

These new structures are filled with potential. But, to deal with crises both ongoing and looming, they will need to devise answers to knotty questions: How will they address the subtle and innovative threats to electoral fairness, an impartial judiciary, and freedom of the press posed by Chávez's authoritarian drift? When does the legitimacy of a democratically elected president transform itself into the illegitimacy of undemocratic governance? When should free-trade privileges be suspended--when labor rights and environmental rule are threatened, or when democracy is interrupted?

Whatever policies emerge from these discussions would be meaningless without the United States. This is why the South American attempts at replacing the Organization of American States with a new organization that excludes the United States, Canada, and perhaps Mexico are futile at best, counterproductive at worst. The void left by U.S. retrenchment would be occupied by someone--and the alternatives are not attractive. Mexico is consumed by domestic tribulations, and Brazil is bound by an anti-interventionist diplomacy; only Caracas and Havana (the former with money, the latter with skill and experience) can fill the vacuum.

The end of the era of intervention should be hailed by the region. Washington's less intrusive presence will broaden the leeway certain governments have and force others to assume their responsibilities. But world events do not seem likely to permit an indefinite U.S. disengagement from the region, nor would that be desirable.

Washington has drifted into its current position with little forethought. But, to avoid the worst-case scenarios, it will need to actively manage its relations. The challenge presented by the Latin hard left must be confronted in a new fashion. Obama will need an actual doctrine--or, at least, coherent policy--to guide his decisions: a calculus that distinguishes between matters that are properly part of a country's domestic policy and those that entail violations of freely consented international agreements. By making this

distinction, the United States could shed its history and get off the defensive, shifting the onus to Chávez. James Monroe's doctrine would officially be retired. A new era could truly begin.

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**Haugaard, Lisa; Adam Isacson; George Withers; Abigail Poe; Joy Olson; Lucila Santos; and Colin Smith. "Waiting for Change: Trends in U.S. Security Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean." Center for International Policy, the Latin American Working Group Education Fund, and the Washington Office on Latin America. May 2010.**

**(It is attached)**

**Oppenheimer, Andrés. "Es hora de pasar de las palabras a los hechos." *La Nación*. April 20, 2010. (\*sent to translator)**

President Barack Obama's official proclamation declaring April 11-17 "Pan American Week" was a nice gesture, but it's time for him to turn from words to action and take specific steps to improve U.S.-Latin American ties.

Granted, Obama, who is scheduled to visit Miami on Thursday for two fundraisers, has bigger fish to fry. The U.S. economy is still hurting, al Qaeda terrorists may strike at any time and America is waging two costly wars abroad.

But Obama would do himself and the United States a great favor if he paid more attention to his neighbors. In addition to being a major supplier of energy, Latin America buys as many U.S. goods as Europe, and may be one of the most promising U.S. export markets in the world.

## **ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT**

It has already been a year since Obama promised a "new chapter of engagement" with Latin America at the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad on April 17, and he has little to show. Among the things that he should do:

- Push immigration reform: Despite his campaign vow to pass a new immigration law "in my first year as president," Obama has failed to spend much political capital on this front. He probably felt that he had to put all his energies into passing healthcare reform.

But now, he has no excuse. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) has vowed to push for a vote on immigration reform in coming weeks, before the November congressional elections.

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) have proposed a bipartisan bill that among other things offered a path to citizenship to millions of undocumented U.S. residents who admit they broke U.S. laws, and require that all workers show biometric ID cards to prospective employers. The White House praised the bill, but it's unclear how much political weight it will put behind it.

- Push for passage of free-trade agreements with Colombia and Panama. After initially balking about these pending trade deals, Obama called on Congress in his Jan. 27 State of the Union speech to ratify them but has yet to make a serious effort to win congressional approval of the two agreements.
- Reduce U.S. farm subsidies, and especially cut the 54-cent U.S. tariff on Brazil's sugar-cane ethanol, which is much cheaper and environmentally friendly than U.S. corn-based ethanol. This would help both South America's agricultural producers and U.S. consumers.
- Renew the deal allowing Mexican truckers to enter U.S. territory, as called for by the North American Free Trade Agreement.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood told Congress last month that the U.S. government is "finalizing a plan" to make that happen, but an April 12 Reuters news agency story said that a solution to the conflict "is still not in sight."

- Launch new hemispheric education and health agreements. That would help increase the number of Latin American students in U.S. colleges, which is lagging increasingly behind Asians, and encourage U.S. insurance companies to pay for American patients' care in U.S.-certified hospitals in Latin America.

A medical tourism and retirement deal with countries in the region would help reduce U.S. medical costs, which are up to 70 percent lower in Latin America, and at the same time would be a boon to Latin American countries' health, tourism and real-estate industries.

- Appoint a special envoy to the Americas, as Obama vowed during the campaign. Since there are no members of Obama's cabinet with a history of interest in the region, a high-level Obama envoy would help keep the region within the White House radar.

### **THE TIME IS NOW**

My opinion: Obama deserves credit for a greater openness to dialogue and promising "equal partnership" with Latin America, moving from George W. Bush's political arrogance.

And Obama has made some important gestures, including reversing travel and remittance sanctions on Cuba, and admitting that much of Mexico's drug trade and violence is fueled by U.S. drug consumption and U.S. arms trafficking. Furthermore, Obama reacted swiftly and generously following the Haiti quake.

But there should be a one-year expiration date for Obama's "I'm-not-George-W.-Bush" stand on Latin America, and that deadline has passed. Now, it's time for fewer goodwill proclamations and more specific -- and ambitious -- actions.

**Richter, Paul. "U.S. diplomacy stumbles in Latin America." *Los Angeles Times* – *Latimes.com*. January 3, 2010.**

Just eight months ago, President Obama was calling Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva "my man" and suggesting that the South American country could become a leading U.S. partner in the region.

Since then, Brazil has criticized the U.S. approach to the coup in Honduras and warned the United States over plans to expand its military presence in Colombia. U.S. officials,

for their part, have complained about Lula's increasing efforts to form economic and political ties with a leading American adversary, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. "Stop punishing him," Lula shot back a few months ago. The differences with Brazil underscore how the Obama administration's Latin American relations have become marred by tensions and suspicions.

Polls indicate that Obama remains highly popular with Latin Americans, but his administration's relationship with some regional governments has been tested by a series of developments. Those include the June 28 military coup that toppled Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, a deal with Colombia giving the Pentagon use of seven bases for flights to combat drug trafficking and insurgency, stalled free trade deals, and Iran's growing ties with Brazil, Venezuela and Bolivia, among other Latin American countries.

Another area of tension is the anti-drug fight. Although U.S.-Mexican cooperation remains broad, Central American and Caribbean countries are increasingly complaining that they receive less help than they need, and there are growing cries for the United States to do more to lessen demand at home, said Daniel Erikson of the Inter-American Dialogue, a think tank that specializes in Latin American issues.

Latin American leaders who hoped to move up the U.S. priority list have discovered that the new president, like his less popular predecessor, has most of his foreign policy attention focused elsewhere -- namely Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The administration created expectations that were enormous, but sooner or later reality was going to catch up," said Juan Carlos Hidalgo of the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. "That's what happened."

It was always probable that the Obama administration would come into conflict with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and the allied left-leaning governments of Cuba, Bolivia and Ecuador. After some early praise, Chavez has been critical of Obama, declaring recently, in a message carried by state media, "the Obama illusion is over."

But the United States has had differences with governments closer to the center, too. These nations have been pleased with Obama's calls for closer consultation, and his moves to wind down the U.S. mission in Iraq -- a major element in the hemisphere's unhappiness with President George W. Bush.

But many governments were unimpressed with U.S. efforts to negotiate Zelaya's reinstatement in Honduras.

**Ward, Francis. "Are Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales Enemies of the United States?" Council on Hemispheric Affairs – Coha.org. May 12, 2010.**

*Adversaries, yes. Enemies, no (at least not yet). However, they are enemies of global capitalism which, in the eyes of some Americans, makes Chávez and Morales enemies of the American people. But this is one of many misleading impressions which inadequate Latin America coverage by U.S. media helps to perpetuate.*

On Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010, the people of Bolivia went to the polls to elect (2), 500 officials in local and provincial elections, including the governors of nine departments (provinces – same as states in the U.S.) in Bolivia. The election was a crucial test of the spreading strength and influence of Evo Morales and his Movement for Socialism (MAS) political party. Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador are three relatively poor South American countries whose populations include a high percentage of Indians or indigenous people, who were inhabitants prior to Columbus' arrival to the New World in 1492.

Morales was first elected president in 2005 as a democratic socialist, the first ever full-blooded indigenous person to become the leader of Bolivia or any other Latin American country. He was re-elected by a wide margin in December 2009. The growth of indigenous political power throughout Latin America was a major development which has since received inadequate press coverage in the U.S. This means that most Americans were inadequately prepared to properly assess a major political trend in their own hemisphere.

In its coverage of the gubernatorial and municipal elections, the daily *La Prensa* prophesied a setback for Morales during the elections scheduled for April 4 when predicted victories turned out to be defeats in the heavily contested Media Luna regions of the country, as well as in the capital city of La Paz. While he didn't actually lose many races, there was a substantial cut in MAS' winning margins with the shift in momentum away from Morales' political objectives. Those familiar with the MAS rise in popularity and power were surprised when even initial statistics following the vote showed a decline in that party's percentage of the vote from 60% to 50%.

An April 9 article by the World Markets Research Centre said, "Despite allegations of fraud, the official vote count confirms that the ruling Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) has won the majority of the regional departments in last week's elections. The National Electoral Court (CNE) released the results yesterday, giving an irreversible victory to the MAS in the majority of departments, despite the fact that in some cases the counting is still incomplete, Reuters reports.

A Lexis-Nexis search of U.S. news media from April 4 – May 4, 2010 yielded only one item – a relatively short one of 358 words – an Associated Press story on April 5 which said, "Allies of leftist President Evo Morales made modest advances in state and local elections Sunday, according to independent exit polls. ... Pro – government candidates for governor had comfortable leads in five out of nine state races, according to exit polls released by television broadcasters ATB and Unitel."

In the past five years, Morales has brought sweeping changes to Bolivia, including approval of a new constitution that grants more rights to Bolivia's indigenous majority, and nationalization or state control of the country's natural resources. (The BBC reported on May 1 that the Morales government had taken control of four privately owned companies which generate electricity. The companies account for more than half of Bolivia's electricity market.) Bolivia has the second – largest reserves of natural gas in South America, and also large deposits of lithium, which has many important chemical uses, including powering cell phones. Morales' MAS political party also has a solid majority in the country's legislature, indicating that he may have witnessed some loss in personality; Morales' influence, however, was not at all slackening.

Morales' power is concentrated in the five western departments of the country, which have the largest percentage of the nation's indigenous people. However, the four predominantly "Euro – centric" provinces to the east – with the heaviest concentrations of middle and upper – income people (many of them whites of Spanish ancestry) – are controlled by Morales' political enemies who vehemently oppose his putting the country on the path to socialism. Tensions between Morales supporters and opponents have risen dramatically over the past two years, with several eastern provinces claiming to be autonomous or quasi-independent of the control and authority of the central government. Further battles may loom in the future. At stake is the long- term control of Bolivia, the control of its natural resources, and whether the income from natural resources flows to Bolivians (including the indigenous) or to the stockholders of Western mining companies.

Except for the one AP story, American [\*\* see item in Notes section] news media barely took notice the Bolivian elections. On the election weekend, there were no stories (not even news briefs) in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* or other daily newspapers. *The Syracuse Post – Standard* generally does not carry stories on Latin America. The exceptions were the recent earthquake in Chile and the ongoing story of Mexican drug trafficking and accompanying violence of Mexican drug gangs.

Neither was there coverage of the Bolivian story by any of the three cable news channels (CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News), or the three broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC). Unfortunately, this is typical of how media in this country have reacted to the profound political changes which have swept through Latin America during the past 12 years, bringing in their wake a tidal wave of fundamental change. Evo Morales' initial election as president of Bolivia, with the huge backing of a newly enfranchised indigenous movement, was every bit the political, social and moral equivalent of Nelson Mandela's election as the first black president of South Africa, with the backing of millions of newly enfranchised black voters who had only recently emerged from the tyranny of white minority apartheid rule.

### **Liberal/Left Trend in Latin Politics**

Many Latin American countries have elected liberal or progressive (at times, even some profoundly socialist) political leaders in response to failed free – market or neoliberal economic policies followed by Latin American leaders in the 1980's and 1990's. In recent years, Hugo Chávez was elected as president of Venezuela in 1998. Chávez immediately announced his intention to pursue a socialist "Bolivarian Revolution" to lift Venezuela's poorest (including some indigenous) out of centuries of grinding poverty and powerlessness. Chávez purposely named his revolution for Simón Bolívar, the 19th Century hero who led the fight to win independence for Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia from Spanish control (4).

Four years after Chávez's inauguration came the election of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva as president of Brazil. "Lula's election to the presidency in 2002 sent shudders through Brazil's economic elite, which was worried that the former rabble-rouser would lead the country down a populist path, as Hugo Chávez did in Venezuela. Lula emphasized poverty reduction as a national priority of his administration; he also turned to different

economic approaches to put the nation on a sound footing and to develop in an orderly manner (5).

Two years later, Chile elected its first woman president, Michelle Bachelet, a confirmed socialist whose father had been murdered during the reign of terror by Chile's notorious dictator, Army General Augusto Pinochet, who seized power in a bloody coup on Sept. 11, 1973. Bachelet was tortured and imprisoned under the military regime.

Nicaragua's president, Daniel Ortega, was the onetime leader of the revolutionary Sandinista guerrilla movement that overthrew the regime of right-wing dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979. In June 2009, another former revolutionary guerrilla leader, Mauricio Funes, became president of El Salvador. Funes was the candidate of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), which had waged more than two decades of guerrilla war in El Salvador from the 1970's to the 90's. The warring factions have since made peace and the FMLN is now a political party that was able to defeat the reigning rightist ARENA party in the 2009 elections.

Earlier this year, Uruguay elected as its president 74-year-old José "Pepe" Mujica, once a dedicated member of Uruguay's revolutionary underground guerrilla *Tupamaros* movement. A *Miami Herald* columnist commented,

At a private birthday party for former President Julio María Sanguinetti attended by about three dozen family members, business people and politicians mostly opposed to Mujica, I found few who feared that the president – elect will lead a Venezuelan – style radical leftist regime. ... Others worried that some of Mujica's hardline aides – including his wife and former fellow guerrilla, Lucia Topolansky, who will become a leading senator, and interior minister – designate Eduardo Bonomi, who will be in charge of the police – may support anti – capitalist 'Bolivarian' political groups to pave the way for a Venezuelan – inspired radicalization. (6)

When one adds to this list the election of socialist Rafael Correa as president of Ecuador, it leaves little doubt that a leftward drift can be discerned in Latin American politics. However, the trend is not entirely to the left. Michelle Bachelet, who by law could not seek a second term this year, was succeeded in January by right – wing businessman Sebastián Piñera, one of the richest people in Chile. He became the first right – of – center president of Chile since the country emerged from the Pinochet dictatorship in 1988. Another wealthy right-wing businessman/politician, Ricardo Martinelli, was elected president of Panama in 2009. There was also Felipe Calderon, a moderate conservative considered friendly to the U.S., who was elected president of Mexico in 2008, but only after winning a razor – thin majority over a left/progressive opponent in a runoff. Before Calderon's election, the highest – profile right-wing politician in Latin America was Alvaro Uribe, the outgoing president of Colombia and arguably Washington's staunchest ally in the hemisphere.

### **Little News Coverage, Less Understanding of Latin America**

American news media have provided saturation coverage to Chile's March earthquakes and its aftermath. And there are regular reports of drug – related violence in Mexico in the ongoing conflict between that country's powerful and well – armed drug gangs and

its police and military. This is true because of the potential that exists that the violence will spill over into American border cities like El Paso and San Diego. And while there were some stories about Sebastián Piñera's election in Chile, the U.S press has been woefully inadequate in covering and explaining the complex political and social trends which caused the election of so many liberal/left politicians in Latin America at a given moment.

### **Hugo Chávez and the Rise of the Bogeyman**

There has been a rising crescendo of coverage of the problems and conflicts between Hugo Chávez and his mounting opposition in Venezuela and now the U.S. Of course, the coverage is overwhelmingly negative, focusing almost entirely on what Chávez has done wrong, rarely focusing on his success in bringing needed reforms to benefit the country's poor and dispossessed. American media have told the story over and over of how Chávez has closed down radio stations and placed restrictions on other media. But there's been little, if any, mention of how print and broadcast media throughout Latin America have always been controlled by and identified with the dominant middle and upper classes, never with poor people, in the highly stratified societies with huge gaps between rich and poor. American journalists and news executives are quick to leap to the defense of any news organization that is pressured when it criticizes government officials (as media often do in Venezuela), but not always as quick to seek contextual reasons for the cause of the conflict in the first place.

American press coverage of Latin America is still done through the prism of the Cold War, when Americans were bombarded with the idea that the whole world was divided between two camps – pro – Communist and anti – Communist. This simplistic view was reduced to the most basic of formulae of countries being either friends or enemies, good guys or bad guys. American allies, of course, were always the good guys and generally received benevolent news coverage. The countries or leaders presumed to be allies of the Soviet Union or China were the bad guys and received mostly critical or negative coverage. This compound for a quick understanding of international relations facilitated comprehension, but its biggest flaw was that the formula was often wrong and gave Americans a deceptively distorted and chronically inaccurate picture of other countries and leaders.

Today's coverage is disturbingly similar to the Cold War formula of good and bad guys. News stories tend to lump Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Cuba together as the socialist malefactors and Colombia's Uribe, Chile's Bachelet (now Piñera), and Brazil's Lula as the good guys because of their cordial relations with the U.S. (Though American journalists take pride in their independence from government, there has always been and remains a close correlation between policies of the U.S. State Department and how the U.S news media report foreign affairs.) Brazil and Chile have made no secret of their desire to close the huge gaps between the very rich and very poor in their countries. Neither Brazil nor Chile has resorted to nationalizing vital industries or pressuring media outlets as Chávez has done, and Brazil, Chile and Colombia are also less critical in public of the role of the U.S. in world affairs or of global capitalism. Most observers don't expect Sebastián Piñera to attempt any major reversal of the economic or social policies established under Bachelet, but in reality, Latin American politics are less uniform and somewhat more problematic than would be the case of their U.S counterparts.

## **Chávez the Enemy**

Hugo Chávez was briefly deposed by a coup attempt in April 2002 that ultimately failed. Since being returned to power, his policies without question have polarized various sectors of Venezuelan society. Chávez also has allied himself with Iran's controversial president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as well as maneuvered changes in the constitution to allow him to run for president indefinitely. Chávez has clamped down on political opponents, closed some radio and TV stations, and acted like an insipid dictator who aspires to assume total control of Venezuela. This makes it easier for critics in the U.S. and elsewhere to demonize Chávez as the hemisphere's looming Hitler or Stalin. And Chávez's reckless behavior and confrontational personality makes the job easier.

Chávez also has become Latin America's most vocal critic of the U.S. With all of this, it may seem natural that most Americans would regard him as their enemy. Chávez undoubtedly wants to check the power and influence of the U.S. in regional affairs. So does Iran. And so does Evo Morales, China, some liberal or socialist politicians in Britain, Spain and the rest of Europe. But this does not automatically make them enemies of the U.S. Adversaries, yes. Enemies, no. An enemy country would actively try to thwart various American policy initiatives in the region. There's no evidence that Chávez is doing this or leaning in that direction. Also, an enemy would want to strike the U.S. militarily, to harm American citizens, or to launch terrorist strikes against American properties or interests. Despite his anti – American bluster, Chávez has given no signs of moving in any of these directions. Also, Chávez has sold oil at cheap prices to those Americans living in poverty in various parts of this country, including Boston, which his critics have dismissed as a propaganda stunt. But a true enemy of the U.S. would not have provided any benefits to Americans, not even for the sake of propaganda. Also, Chávez has made overtures to improve relations with the U.S., but there has been little inclination on Washington's part to explore whether the overtures are serious and worth pursuing.

## **Bolivia and the U.S.**

There are also strained relations between the U.S. and Bolivia. During the past two years, some Morales supporters in several of Bolivia's eastern provinces have been killed or wounded during violent encounters with anti – Morales forces. Morales subsequently accused the U.S. of abetting the violence against his supporters. He leveled accusations against the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, Philip Goldberg, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) of intervening in the domestic affairs of the country. These prompted Bolivia to expel Goldberg, and the U.S. promptly retaliated by sending home Bolivia's envoy to Washington.

Morales makes no secret of his vehement opposition to global capitalism and he perceives America as its driving force. But being anti – capitalist is not the same as being anti – American. However, observers like Glenn Beck and Bill O'Reilly of Fox News, schooled in the old Cold War formula of mindless attacks against presumed ideological enemies, would argue that any anti – capitalist is automatically an enemy of the U.S.

The U.S. press seems reluctant to explore the roots of anti – capitalist sentiment throughout Latin America. The main reason is that most Americans don't seem particularly interested in what happens in Latin America, despite its geographical closeness and obvious racial, cultural and language ties between the Americas to the south, and their all-powerful neighbor to the north. "Latin America, it is safe to say, gets scant respect from Washington. Mention the region at a meeting of foreign policy cognoscenti who are not Latin American specialists, and eyes immediately glaze over," wrote Francis Fukuyama in the November/December 2007 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. He continued, "There may be a quick discussion of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, but attention will swiftly return to the Middle East, Russia or China. ... Coverage of Latin America in the mainstream media is little better. It merits attention primarily when it causes trouble for the United States. Thus, more ink has been spilled on Chávez for the past few years than on the entire rest of the region combined. The only associations that many in the United States have with Latin America are problems with drugs, gangs and illegal immigration" (6).

Fukuyama's criticisms, while somewhat commonplace, are right on target. I reviewed 30 issues of the *New York Times* in a random selection from February 1 – April 4, 2010, where many stories concerning the Chilean earthquake came to the fore. Other Latin American countries had racked up following tallies:

- +++ • Argentina, two briefs on the Falkland Islands dispute with Britain.
- +++ • Brazil, two stories, titled "Rio de Janeiro Journal."
- +++ • Colombia, one "Cali Journal" story.
- +++ • Cuba, one story.
- +++ • Mexico, four briefs and four complete stories.
- +++ • Venezuela, two briefs and four complete stories.

A Nexis – Lexis search of *The Times* from Dec. 29, 2009 – March 28, 2010 (90 days) for stories on Bolivia turned up 16 hits for that country, but only four actual stories. Similarly, a Nexis – Lexis search of *The Washington Post* for the same time period turned up 59 "hits" for Venezuela, but only 20 actual items, among them six briefs and six highly critical letters or editorials. The same Nexis search of *The Post* turned up 18 "hits" for Bolivia, but no actual stories on the country. The "hits" included mention of Bolivian sport teams, Bolivia in obituaries of diplomats who had once served there, or the names of journalists once stationed in the country.

### **Indigenous People**

The most glaring shortcoming in the scant of American press coverage of Latin America is the total absence of any stories or editorial comment on the striking rise of political activism among the traditionally silent indigenous people. Ever since the Spanish conquest of the 16th Century, the indigenous people have been brutally repressed economically and socially. But since the 1980's, there has been growing political and social awareness among them. Their upsurge in political power and effectiveness can be considered a pivotal (if not the final) nail in the coffin of European colonialism throughout Central and South America, that began with the voyages of Christopher Columbus in 1492.

The indigenous have been a key part of Chávez's support in Venezuela. They are the

backbone of Morales' political base in Bolivia, and in recent years have gained considerable strength in Peru and Ecuador. Larry Birns, the director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), a Washington-based think tank, explained in an April 6, 2010 telephone interview, that indigenous Indians were indiscriminately slaughtered in Argentina during the late 19th Century because the country's then president considered them "to be barbarians." In the 1960's and 70's during the Cold War, more than 200,000 indigenous Indians were killed in Guatemala, victims of the anti-Communist paranoia of the country's rightwing military leaders. "During these times, you could kill the indigenous Indians with impunity, with utterly no accountability," said Birns.

Mainstream American media hardly scratched the surface of this continuing genocide against Guatemala's Indians or, for that matter, thousands of other Latin Americans who were gunned-down throughout Central America and South America beginning in the 1970s. Even today, most Americans have no knowledge of the decades of rampaging violence and murder that was a daily fare for the region. Guatemala's military leaders justified the murders as necessary to root out and destroy every vestige of Communist - inspired insurgency. And we bought into that canard. Contrast this with the huge and ongoing media coverage of the crimes of Saddam Hussein against his presumed political enemies in Iraq, at a time when Saddam was supreme dictator. We saw, read and heard endless stories of how Saddam used poison gas against the Kurds and Iranians during the Iran-Iraq War from 1980-88. There also has been massive coverage of how Saddam brutalized and killed thousands of Shiites in Southern Iraq after the first Persian Gulf War ended in 1991. The violence against Shiites in the South and Kurds in the North was the reason why the victorious Allied Coalition (22 nation exercise lead by the United States) created No- Fly Zones in both sectors, which meant Saddam's air force could not fly its planes over most of Southern and Northern Iraq for many years.

The point being made is that American media covered Saddam's violence against his enemies because he was our enemy. Media didn't cover violence against Guatemalan Indians because the country's military rulers, at the time, were our "friends," based on an inexorable Cold War formula. This was one of many examples of how the "good guy/bad guy" formula gave Americans a tragically wrong impression of world affairs, causing costly repercussions.

### **Why Americans Should Care About Latin America**

Ever since the Cold War ended in 1991, journalists and news executives in this country have convinced themselves that Americans are not interested in international news. These skeptics say over and over that Americans don't care about what happens in other countries, and they don't follow the foreign coverage they are being presented in print or broadcast news. The result has been a drastic cutback of international coverage by the media. Scores of foreign bureaus have been closed in the past two decades. And news media generally follows four elementary guidelines in deciding whether to print or broadcast a given international story:

- +++ 1. If it appears to directly affect us as Americans.
- +++ 2. If U.S. troops or other official personnel are involved.
- +++ 3. If the story involves official U.S. government policy.

+++ 4. If there are strong economic or commercial relations with a country.

News media have given saturation coverage to every war the U.S. has fought since the Spanish – American War of 1898. The prevailing rule continues with the war in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, the war now winding down in Iraq. There’s also regular coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and related events in the Middle East. News media also extensively covered natural disasters like the South Pacific tsunami of December 2004, and the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile earlier this year. While hardly anybody doubted the importance of these events, the fact of the matter is the inevitability of such coverage, with the same not being true when it comes to Latin America.

The Cold War competition, from about 1947 to 1991, between the Soviet Union and its communist allies, and the United States and its capitalist allies, seemed to have its own justification for continued news coverage. Coming on the heels of World War II when Americans were intently focused on combat-related events in Europe and Asia, American journalists and news executives unanimously believed that every angle (however small) related to this titanic ideological struggle between “good and evil” deserved full news coverage.

The Cold War gave us more press coverage of Latin America than citizens of the United States had ever experienced. The press regularly covered prolonged armed struggles in El Salvador and Nicaragua. And there was periodic coverage of right-wing dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. The news angle was always one–dimensional: victory over communism. The Cold War obsession also led us to defend, befriend and support these right-wing dictators as necessary bulwarks against communist expansion. As a result, we climbed in bed with some of the worst murderers in the west – like Pinochet in Chile, the military rulers in Guatemala, and the bloody junta in Argentina, which was responsible for the deaths or disappearance of thousands.

Of course, the biggest Cold War story coming out of Latin America was the triumph of the Castro revolution in Cuba in 1959, and the huge changes it brought to our shores. Not the least of which were hundreds of thousands of Cuban exiles to South Florida and a major impact on U.S. foreign policy toward the region. And who could ever forget that four of the five burglars who broke into the Democratic National Committee offices in the Watergate Hotel in June 1972 were Cuban exiles.

Now that the Cold War is over, the prevailing assumption is that we don’t need to know or care about Latin America. But this assumption is just as blind, wrongheaded and misguided as was our earlier support for right-wing military killers in the name of fighting communism. We need to care just as much about Latin America now as we did 50 years ago and, the truism today is that for reasons every bit as important.

First and foremost, Latin America is important to us as neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. What happens there very much can affect us (though we might not always understand why). Our neighbor to the south, Mexico, is one of America’s most important trading partners. And the U.S. is zealously pursuing trade agreements with other Latin nations like Colombia and Peru. The problems of immigration and drug trafficking are but two of the many reasons why we can’t ignore Latin America.

But the region is also important for its varied and rich history, its many contributions to U.S. culture, the growing economic and commercial ties and the struggles of Latin America's people for freedom and democracy. The nations of the world are far more interdependent now than they have ever been. Citizens of the U.S. need to know and understand other people, their history and culture, just as others need to know and understand our history and culture.

Finally, the goal of news media coverage of international affairs should be to educate U.S. citizens about other countries and peoples. Yes, educate in the broad sense – to help Americans understand how others think, their values, cultures, systems of governance, their languages and what makes them distinctly important.

One of the most valued lessons we learned from the experiences of Sept. 11, was how little we understood about why so many people around the world hated the United States and why, finally, a handful of fanatics decided to act on that hatred. Americans can never afford to again take refuge in a collective ignorance about the rest of the world.

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